

Superintendent's Corner

Sierra Sands Unified
School District

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From the Superintendent

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Administration

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Superintendent
- ◆ Dave Ostash, Assistant
Superintendent of Human
Resources
- ◆ Christina Giraldo, Assistant
Superintendent of Business
and Support Services
- ◆ Michelle Savko, Assistant
Superintendent of
Curriculum & Instruction
- ◆ Elaine Littleton,
Executive Director of
Special Education Services



Dear Parents, Families, and Community Members:

I want to extend a warm welcome to the 2016-17 school year. We have had a fantastic start to the year and I am excited to see our entire school community engaged in the many outstanding educational programs and opportunities we are providing for our students. The Sierra Sands Unified School District core values serve as the foundation upon which we carry out our mission: "Providing the highest quality education in a safe learning environment for all K-12 students."

As many of you know, in an effort to improve communication among all of our educational stakeholders, we have implemented a communication platform called ParentSquare. As we are expanding the capabilities of this new program throughout our district, we are receiving positive feedback from our educational community. Your input is valuable so please do not hesitate to let us know how we can improve in this endeavor.

Our district instructional leaders and staff have been working hard to assess and analyze our most recent student data results. Our Late Start Collaboration Days held on Wednesday mornings have been extremely valuable in this process as we continually strive for continuous school improvement. We are analyzing our instructional strengths and gaps along with identifying best practices and support mechanisms to ensure effective teaching is taking place. As we progress with the implementation of new curriculum standards and requirements set forth by the state of California, we will continually seek ways to improve classroom instruction.

As we all know, creating momentum and achieving positive results occurs when you develop authentic relationships among staff, parents, and students. Working in partnership is essential if we are to provide quality teaching; safe, supportive school environments; and enriching experiences. I look forward to working with all members of our school and community family as we continue to make strides in the education of our young people.

Please do not hesitate to call or send me an email if you have any question, thoughts, or concerns related to the education of the children in our community.

Sincerely,

*Ernie Bell
Superintendent*

"Engaging All Learners"

Curriculum and Instruction

Finding Focus in a Changing Environment for Improved Results

California continues to undergo more changes in the education landscape in its transition to the newly authorized federal law: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), assessments/California Assessment of Student Progress and Performance (CAASPP), and state law: Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP).

In times of such significant change, it may often seem like a daunting task to remain focused. What remains evident is that throughout the state, county, and our district there is a **continued focus on meeting the needs of our students**. Sierra Sands Unified School District works toward the Continuous Improvement Model in analyzing multiple measures of district data and involving stakeholders in our response to and prioritization of closing gaps in student performance. We find focus in a changing environment for improved results. No matter what challenges the changing landscape provides, our focus remains the same--our students.



SELPA/PSS

Before school began, the Program Specialists provided training to the new Special Education teachers in how to work with the web-based IEP system that the district uses to manage the Individual Educational Plans for students with special needs. This training allows new teachers a chance to become familiar with the IEP development process. In support of district staff, SELPA has offered several trainings in how to manage student behavior. District schools emphasize Positive Behavior Interventions and SELPA trainings are designed to assist administrators, teachers and classified staff in methods that are consistent with PBIS.



SELPA/PSS is excited to have two new district nurses. Jesse Clayson and Sandy Hanson are RNs who have joined the team to provide the medical support to district students with medical needs. They are both committed to learning the role of a school nurse and we are fortunate to have found two nurses who are dedicated to the welfare of district students.

SELPA has a new administrative intern this year. Mike Kennedy, a former Program Specialist, is completing his administrative credential with California Lutheran University. Mike is working with Richmond Elementary and Gateway Elementary Schools. He is assisting the administrators at these schools with IEPs and program implementation. Mike is also working with special education teachers at these two sites.

The SELPA/PSS staff really got into the spirit of Halloween. Staff came in after work hours, on the weekends and during the October break to change the halls of the Sierra Vista Education Center into a real Halloween experience. SVEC became a place of Wonderland, Hocus Pocus, Hansel and Gretel, Scooby-do, witches, mummies, and zombies. It is obvious that most of us had formally worked at school sites! We still needed to celebrate the holiday!

From the staff of the Sierra Sands SELPA/PSS, we wish the students, parents, and staff of the Indian Wells Valley, a happy Holiday Season.

Human Resources



The Human Resources Department is promoting a "Step Up to Wellness" competition district-wide during the fall season. Starting October 31, schools and departments are teaming up to see who can log more steps during a time when many people find themselves eating holiday comfort food, and attending more family dinners than gym sessions.

This friendly, voluntary competition invites employees to use their Fitbits (or any step counting device) to log their step activity all

their weekly (7-day week) steps to their school or department leader every Monday morning. Updates are posted on the District Intranet page on Monday afternoon so we can all angle ourselves to outpace one another!! The competition will end on Friday, December 16. *In the meantime, an all-points-bulletin has been made to employees to dust off their Fitbit, bust out the workout gear, and thrust themselves in forward stepping motion toward wellness!! Beat the holiday calories by stepping past your colleagues!!*

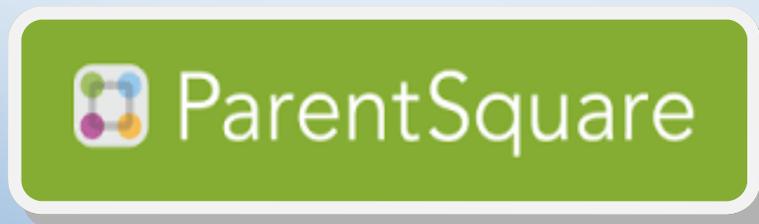
Business

The results of the November 8 elections brought the approval of Propositions 51 and 55. Proposition 51, authorizes \$9 billion in general obligation bonds for K-12 and community college facilities. State bond dollars for K-14 education facilities effectively have been exhausted for several years, leaving local school districts without a key source of state support. Sierra Sands currently does not have the capacity to raise bond funds due to low local assessed property values. With Prop. 51 approved by voters, state funding will again be available for school construction. Proposition 55 extends a key component of Prop. 30 and provides significant funding for schools. Prop. 30, enacted in 2012, boosted state revenues by increasing the state sales tax rate by 0.25 percent through 2016 and personal income tax rates for very high income Californians through 2018. Prop. 30 revenues will decline starting in the 2016-17 fiscal year as the measure's tax rate increases begin to expire. Voter approval of Prop. 55 extends Prop. 30's personal income tax rates on the wealthiest Californians, thereby maintaining a revenue source that has helped narrow the gap between California spending per K-12 student and the rest of the U.S.



Parent Connection/Technology

Sierra Sands is revolutionizing its school-to-home communications! With ParentSquare, Sierra Sands is able to reach parents where they are most comfortable, whether that is through text messages, email, push notifications on their phone, or through our website. Through this new communication platform, we are able to send out general notifications about classroom and school activities, alert notifications, absence notifications, low lunch account notices, upcoming events, and more! ParentSquare provides instant access to all of the latest information about their students classes, schools, and district.



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Construction Updates can be found on our website under the "Construction" quick link!



Dates to Remember

Non-School Days:

November 11
November 21-25
December 19-January 2
February 17 & 20
March 20-24
April 14
May 29

Construction

The summer of 2016 saw a flurry of construction activity especially at Burroughs High School. The courtyard was completely resurfaced with new concrete and more efficient lighting was installed. The library was gutted and received a new roof and will also get new air conditioning units. Work on the girls locker room and M Building are in process and just about finalized. Classroom Building G and the Multi-Purpose Room were re-occupied for the start of school. Progress was made even while encountering unforeseen conditions. Among other things, restroom sewer mains had to be repaired, while the storm water drainage system was vastly improved to handle flood water during heavy rains. Although the project suffered some delays, the campus was ready for the first day of school on August 9. At the new Murray Middle School site construction activities were not as visible during the same time period. However, site utilities were being installed and logistics were being worked out to transport fill soil from the BHS site to the Murray site to prepare it for the installation of curbs and gutters. The modular building manufacturing plans are currently being reviewed by the Division of the State Architect and once approved foundations can be poured. For updated information please also monitor the district's website and the district facilities update presented to the board each month.



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SIERRA SANDS
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

ENGAGING ALL LEARNERS