

Let's Make Sac City *the* Destination District for California:

A Blueprint for Revitalizing Our School District





The Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) is the 10th largest school district in the state of California. It is the public educational system for the capital of the sixth largest economy in the world.

It is also one of the most diverse school districts in the nation.¹ 2016 is a crucial year for our school district. After years of recession, Sac City is in the best financial position it has been in its history.²

The passage of Proposition 55, as well as Measure G, a local district parcel tax, will further bolster Sac City's financial stability and growth.

¹ Sac City educates close to 48,000 pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students, learning at approximately eighty (80) different schools. Among its students, 48 or more different languages are spoken, with twenty-one percent (21%) English language learners; more than eighty percent (80%) of Sac City students are people of color. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of students receive free or reduced lunch. Approximately 6700 students receive special education services

² The District operates a \$529 million budget, with spending in 2015 increased by \$1,140 per pupil—or 13.6%—higher than in 2007-08, right before the Great Recession. The District's revenues have increased by \$150 million since 2012-13, including an increase in revenue of \$96 million in one year from 2014-15 to 2015-16. The last three years, the District has finished each with huge surpluses, totaling over \$32 million. The District's reserve funds have ballooned by more than 250%, growing from \$19.5 million in 2012-13 to \$52 million today. The best snapshot into the District's finances can be found in the District's June 2016 bond offering, Resolution No. 2879: Authorizing the Issuance and Negotiated Sale of Sacramento City Unified School District General Obligation Bonds (Measure Q) (Election of 2012), 2016 Series D in an Amount Not to Exceed \$14,000,000 and Related Documents, "Sacramento City Unified School District General Fund Revenues, Expenditures and Fund Balances Fiscal Year 2011-12 through 2015-16," page A-15, and accessed at <http://www.scusd.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/5-5-16-revised.pdf>.

The fundamental question is whether we will take this opportunity to provide the vision and program to make Sac City the Destination School District for California—where parents want their children to attend; students are challenged and rewarded with a high quality, well-rounded education; and talented educators are valued and choose to spend their careers.



5



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ALL Sac City Students Deserve to Learn in an Environment that Promotes High Quality Education



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SMALLER CLASS SIZES

Numerous studies have shown that smaller class sizes produce better educational outcomes.³ Responding to strong advocacy from teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders, the District agreed to implement 24 to 1 class sizes in Kindergarten through Grade 3 beginning in the 2016-17 school year. More needs to be done. **Educators, parents and community advocates have continuously advocated for lower class sizes as a top District priority.** Class sizes should also be lowered in Grades 4 through 12.

REOPENING SCHOOLS

We need to re-examine the disastrous decision that District leaders made to close seven schools in 2012. Smaller class sizes may require expanding the District's current physical space capacity. The development of a more specialized curriculum may require additional campuses that focus on language and performance arts, or math and sciences. Educational equity means that all Sac City students should be provided the same access to educational opportunities.

³ See, for example, William J. Mathis, "The Effectiveness of Class Size Reduction," (Boulder: National Education Policy Center, 2016).



MULTI-TIERED EARLY ACADEMIC INTERVENTION AND A REVITALIZED INCLUSIONARY SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Today, approximately 15.7% of Sac City students have special needs. This is substantially higher than California and national averages.⁴

Research shows that multi-tiered early academic intervention can determine the most appropriate pathway in the initial stages of a student's education. By using a multi-tiered model--commonly referred to as Response to Intervention (RTI)--the learning occurs in an inclusive environment which provides vital support for students with learning issues, while meeting students' needs without requiring assignment to categorical special education groups.⁵ Early academic intervention also means giving school sites the necessary resources, including psychologists, social workers, counselors and nurses--who have the professional training to provide the required intervention.

⁴ The Sac City numbers for students with special needs is from Sacramento City Unified School District Board of Education Executive Summary, "Continuous Improvement of Special Education Services: 2016-17 Annual Service Plan and Annual Budget Plan," Agenda Item 9.4, June 16, 2016, p. 1. The national (12.9%) and California (11.1%) figures are from the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, at <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64>.

⁵ See, for example, the National Association of School Psychologists Position Statement, "Appropriate Academic Supports to Meet the Needs of All Students," 2009 accessed at <http://www.nasponline.org/assets/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Position%20Statements/AppropriateAcademicSupport.pdf>.

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**High-quality education
for all Sac City
students is
NON-NEGOTIABLE.**

Regardless of school of attendance, each family deserves the best experience, which can only be achieved through the inclusion of educators, parents, and students in the complete lifecycle of the education process—from the development of concepts and priorities through the implementation and evaluation of programs.

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Terrence Gladney
Community Advocate, Past President,
Sacramento Council Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Council,
past member of LCAP Advisory Committee



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A SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOL CLIMATE TO PROMOTE LEARNING

Unfortunately, some Sac City students are being taught in facilities that were not meant to be used as classrooms, lack modern lighting and adequate technology, are overcrowded and lack adequate space to learn. Closing schools exacerbated this problem, forcing some overcrowded schools to use PE rooms, parent resource rooms and even former staff lounges as classrooms. All students deserve modern, safe, up-to-date facilities in which to learn and grow.

“ There are tremendous opportunities for the city and the school district to work together to **create an educational system our community DESERVES and will be proud of.** ”

Darrell Steinberg
Mayor-Elect
City of Sacramento



Paula Turner's photography class from Sutter Middle School



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SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR THE PARENT TEACHER HOME VISIT PROJECT

Parent Teacher Home Visits started right here in Sac City as a partnership between SCTA, Sacramento ACT and the district. Last year, more than 400 Sacramento educators at more than 40 schools made over 4,000 home visits to students in Sac City. Yet as the program has grown nationally and is recognized as a best practice model for family engagement, the budget for SCUSD is inadequate and unstable from year to year. SCUSD should increase and stabilize the budget for home visits so that all schools and teachers who are interested can benefit from this home-grown program.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION SUPPORT

SCTA and our community partners share the goal of creating a culture of restorative practices as a means to improve the school climate to achieve safe, respectful, equitable and just school sites. Developing this culture best originates from the grassroots where educators, students, and community partners work together and are empowered with the resources and autonomy to create a positive school climate. A bottom-up approach will enable school site communities to build consensus around a common vision and support for a process to improve school climate locally, rather than having programs mandated from the district.

ENFORCING STANDARDS FOR INDEPENDENT CHARTER SCHOOLS

Since the early 2000s, independent charter schools have operated in Sac City with little formal oversight and virtually no standards of accountability. Independent charters that operate in our school district should be held to the same performance standards as traditional and dependent charter schools. This includes guaranteeing that educational opportunities are provided to all students, and that disciplinary policies, financial accountability, and academic performance measures meet district-wide standards.

For more information please visit www.sacteachers.org



Paula Turner's photography class from Sutter Middle School

ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY TESTING AS THE PRIMARY INDICATOR OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Our schools have been spending ever-increasing amounts of time, money and energy on unnecessary testing that takes away from real, authentic learning in the classroom. The overuse of these standardized tests diverts focus from the range of learning experiences that promote innovation, creativity, problem-solving, communication and collaboration.

Testing, consistent with the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), should primarily support teaching and learning and must not take away from time dedicated to authentic learning. Furthermore, parents should be informed of their right to opt-out of state-mandated standardized testing and students who opt-out should be given meaningful alternative learning opportunities.

EXPANDING ARTS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FOR A WELL- ROUNDED EDUCATION

The increased emphasis on standardized testing has led to a devaluing of arts and vocational training as part a well-rounded education. To make Sac City the Destination District our children need to have the opportunity to appreciate the arts.

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I want my students' and my own children's time in school to be used for learning—not for testing or learning how to take a test. Right now countless hours are spent on testing and test practice, resulting in weeks (if not months) of lost instructional time.

**When teachers are
allowed to teach with
creativity and passion,
students not only
EXCEL
but create a
life-long love
of learning.**

”

Erin Duarte
Sac City parent and
teacher at Pony Express



Sac City Educators Should Teach in a District That is Professionally Rewarding and Promotes High Quality Education



RECRUITING AND RETAINING EDUCATORS WHO REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT

Recruiting and retaining the highest quality, fully-credentialed educators who reflect the diversity of our students should be one of the highest priorities of our District. With population growth, reduced class sizes and attrition, many estimate the District will need to hire approximately 200-400 new educators annually over the next few years.⁶

In comparison to the twenty-two other school districts in the state that have enrollment of 30,000 students or more, Sac City teachers are at or near the bottom in virtually every pay category.⁷ In recent years, Sac City has fallen even further behind, worsening the educator shortage. As a result, the District is staffing a greater number of classrooms with teachers who aren't fully credentialed or with long-term substitutes. In at least two high schools last year, introductory Spanish language courses were being taught by long-term substitutes who (through no fault of their own) did not speak or write Spanish. This can't continue in a Destination District.

⁶ In a recent study on the teacher shortage in California, Linda Darling-Hammond and her co-authors provide a thoughtful analysis of the crisis in California and also note that while student enrollment statewide will decline in the next decade, in Sacramento County, along with Kern and San Bernadino counties, student enrollment will increase significantly further heightening the competition for teachers. See Linda Darling-Hammond, Roberta Furger, Patrick M. Shields, and Leib Sutcher, "Addressing California's Emerging Teacher Shortage: An Analysis of Sources and Solutions," (Palo Alto: Learning Policy Institute, 2016).

⁷ Using the latest statewide data available (J-90 Salary and Compensation Reports for 2014-15), Sac City ranks last of 23 in salaries paid to beginning teachers (\$7300 below average), last for teachers in their middle years (Step BA + 75, Step 12—\$16,100 per year below average), and 18th out of 23 for the highest paid teachers (\$5200 below average). In addition, it takes a Sac City educator 26 years to achieve the highest rate of pay, in other district like San Juan and Elk Grove unified it only takes 19 or 20 years.

NEW AND EARLY CAREER EDUCATOR SUPPORT

Support for new teachers begins with their experience as student teachers; continues through their induction period while they earn their full credential, and extends into their first few years as educators

Work has already begun to standardize and improve the training of student teachers placed in Sac City, and the induction/mentorship provided to new teachers has also been restructured.

TEACHER-DRIVEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Sac City educators have been frustrated by the quality of professional learning for educators offered by the District. In a recent survey of Sac City educators, fewer than 10% expressed satisfaction with the overall professional learning provided by the District's Academic Office.

With the creation of on-going weekly collaborative time, there are now many more opportunities for educators to receive professional learning that is useful and meaningful. Teachers now have a real voice in determining, developing and providing the professional learning they will receive. This means replacing a centralized, top-down approach, with dynamic, innovate school-based initiatives driven by teachers with input from parents and community stakeholders.



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Creating real and meaningful change... requires listening to the diverse voices in our community. Not every school will tackle the issues in the same cookie-cutter fashion. The unique needs and interests of our neighborhood schools must be considered.

**Lasting change happens
from the **BOTTOM UP**,
not the **TOP DOWN**.** ”

Carl Pinkston



For more information please visit www.sacteachers.org



Sac City Unified is in the Best Financial Position in Its History, Spending Priorities Should Put Students First



PROPOSITION 55



Significant credit for the financial turnaround in California schools must go to voters who approved the 2012 state-wide ballot initiative, Proposition 30, which placed a tax on millionaires primarily to re-fund our schools. In November, Proposition 55 will extend the tax on millionaires to continue to provide increased funding to schools. Our vision for making Sac City a Destination District relies on the District maintaining its economic health. Passage of Proposition 55 is vital to our continued progress.

MEASURE G—THE PARCEL TAX

The November ballot will also contain a local initiative, Measure G, which will provide additional funding for our District through a temporary parcel property tax. These revenues will provide a more targeted funding stream that will help to finance important District initiatives, particularly regarding Behavioral Intervention Support and restoring music and arts in our schools. It too is an important component to our effort to make Sac City the Destination District.

SETTING THE RIGHT, STUDENT-FOCUSED PRIORITIES

Making Sac City *the* Destination District will require new priorities. Unfortunately, the District seems more focused on building a reserve fund ten times higher than the minimum required by the state rather than funding programs that would enrich the educational experience of today's students. At the same time, the District's administrators have focused more on improving their own pay and increasing the number of top administrators, at the expense of students. Every Sac City student at every school deserves to learn from a fully credentialed teacher in the classroom with the necessary support to truly put students first.

**Making Sac City *the*
Destination District in
California requires change.**

Won't you join us?



SACRAMENTO CITY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Great Teachers Together

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