

February 22, 2016

Next Generation Science Standards; Small Learning Communities; Challenges of Increasing Student Enrollment

By Michael Futterman, TUHSD Board President

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Staff;

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, welcome back from February Break. This update provides information about the Board curriculum workshop that will take place tomorrow, Tuesday, February 23, highlights a presentation on Small Learning Communities at our most recent Board meeting, and discusses briefly the financial challenges posed by increasing student enrollment in the Tam District.

BOARD WORKSHOP: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION – 5:00 pm, Tuesday, 2/23/16

In lieu of a regular meeting, the Board of Trustees will hold a special workshop tomorrow on curriculum and instruction in our District. A particular area of focus will be on how California's "Next Generation Science Standards" will impact our District's science curriculum and how science is taught. Science departments in all our schools are currently learning about these new standards. Teachers and administrators will be forming a task force to focus on the development of science programming and course sequencing to meet the standards. This workshop will provide a valuable opportunity to begin learning about the District's direction in the area of science.

HIGHLIGHT FROM RECENT BOARD MEETING - *Small Learning Communities at Drake*

The Board of Trustees held its February 9, 2016 meeting at Drake High School. Principal Liz Seabury made a presentation on Drake's 9th and 10th grade Small Learning Communities. She described how these programs use project-based learning to help students develop skills of critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving in the areas of English, Social Studies, Science, Art and Technology. The presentation provided an excellent opportunity to learn how the unique culture of each of our schools fits within the broader District framework of providing an excellent educational experience across all of our campuses.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT GROWTH LEADS TO BUDGETARY CHALLENGES

The Tam District is in a period of increasing student enrollment. This trend is projected to continue for the next several years at least, and will have a significant impact on our programs and facilities. Unlike the majority of school districts in California, we are a "basic aid" district, meaning that we do not receive more funds from the State of California when our student population increases. Rather, the bulk of Tam District funds comes from local property taxes. The costs required to educate more students -- including hiring more teachers -- will increase at a rate greater than the projected rate of increase in property tax collections.

Superintendent David Yoshihara has formed a budget committee whose members consist of parents, students, teachers, administrators, community representatives and trustees, to help

grapple with these challenges, and to help advise the Board with regard to prioritizing where our dollars should be spent. Although we would prefer not to face the budgetary pressures arising from this situation, one productive result is that it requires that the Board and community reexamine closely our priorities in how we deliver the best possible education for all our students. This is a healthy discussion.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools, and for helping us accomplish our mission of providing the best possible education for all of our students.