

Questions for the Superintendent – May 23, 2017

Question: Are these students that you are speaking about high school students only?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: Yes, I am speaking about are our high school seniors that are not graduating. Looking at the data in our district we probably have about 75-80 students that disappear between 8th grade and high school. There are a lot of systems in place that try to get those kids back on some sort of system and track. Ultimately, we see that work for about 95% of them.

Question: What do we do about the kids that are just a couple of units away from graduating? Do we have some type of summer program for them?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: Yes, we have several programs for students that are just a few units away from graduating, including some students that can still walk across the stage, but still have some units that they need to take care of. These students are included in the 5%. When I get the list of student names, we know how short of units they are and if they are already working on those units. Those students come off the list. Ultimately, we get down to very few students who cannot walk at graduation.

Question: Are we looking at those students who don't have the units throughout the year, or are we waiting until the end of the school year? Are we looking at the students beginning in 7/8 grades?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: That is a very good question. There are systems in place for junior high, but regarding graduation we are focusing on the high school level. Our systems start in the freshman year and as they fail to attain the units required stay at grade level and on track, other programs become available to them. Our largest programs will be Calla and New Vision, our alternative high schools. But there are things that the schools do before the alternative school option is offered, such as getting them back into the classes that they need and independent study to catch up.

Question: Are there summer school programs offered here in this county?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: I will answer for our district because the county has multiple districts that it serves. The answer is yes, but what is offered for summer school is very limited. The traditional view of the big summer school programs previously offered at the high schools is no longer available because the state does not fund summer school programs. There are other ways for students to make up their credit.

Question: If you say that you have the control or you have been watching the kids from 9th grade to 12th grade, who controls the kids that do not meet the requirements during these years, the counselors? Who tells them, here is a program for you, you need to catch up on your assignments or to do something else?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: Yes, it's actually a whole team at the school site who work together, such as administrators and counselors. The first step is the teacher who tells the student that they are going to fail the course if they are not completing their work and that they need to catch up. Then it escalates up to the counselors and administrators. Then when the students get to the other programs there is more counseling and administration check-ins; things to keep them on track, once they get into New Vision, Calla, and the be.tech program.

Question: I am a mom of high schoolers, in my opinion, do the kids know about these programs? They are teenagers and they are going through a lot of changes and they get discouraged when they do not know about the programs. Maybe they do not know about these programs and they start to think that maybe they better quit school. Are they aware of what they can do and that they can even come back to school?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: I don't want to answer yes, that I think they know about the programs, or no that they don't know. As it becomes more severe, we become more intense in our communications and the kids learn about it, but I don't know that we do that early enough. That's something that we may want to look at and say, how can we talk to kids about pathways and support at a much earlier stage so that they avoid the roadblocks.

Comment from Dan Beukelman: Mr. Beukelman (Sierra High School) stated that he would like to address the previous question by Mrs. Picon. Mr. Beukelman stated that because of the LCAP we will be able to add two more counselors. This means that the counselors at all five comprehensive high schools will be able to meet with every student at least once per year. They will also be able to meet with at-risk

students' multiple times per year to explain the different programs that are available and what the students' options are, such as night school, Calla, or New Vision. Another possible option could be moving them back into a course that they've failed to make up the missing credits. Because we will have the extra counselors, it allows them to meet with the students more, and effectively address the issues. Whenever the administration team meets with students we bring up their current schedule and transcript and tell them if they are falling behind and let them know what they need to make up.

Question: If a kid doesn't need this program will they be aware of this program or know that this program exists?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: I said that I wanted to speak about one thing, but let me share with you why I think that the answer to this question is connected to our three goals, that are connected to our LCAP, that is connected to our budget, and ultimately connected to our school board. I think to get to 100% of our kids leaving us (graduating) they need to define within their family first, what they think is success after high school. Then they need to see the path to get there. We don't do a great job in this district yet of showing that path to all kids. That is what I want us to be working on. It is what the Board has said that we should work on. That is why this conversation that we are having is fantastic because we are talking about kids, not about one particular program. The answer directly is no, not currently do all kids see all things unless they need the programs.

Question: I will use my own example and it's connected with the 85 students that are missing. I don't know how many parents have kids in high school or they are going to have kids in high school. The teachers, or the high school do not take the opinion of parents seriously because the teachers believe that the kids are old enough now to make their own decisions and have consequences. I agree with them up to a certain point. I believe that the district must give parents the information to help our kids. Maybe you give the information to the kids, but they don't give it to us. Maybe you have told the kids about the resources, but the parents are not being told about the programs. The parent is asking the kids what are you going to do, but the kids say they don't know what to do. If the parents don't know about the programs then they do not know how to help their kids. One year the kids can be good and the next year big changes happen and they are not doing good. For me a great idea would be that the parents are made aware of the programs that are available. Then we can make a team with the teachers and push the kids. This age is very difficult for all of them.

Answer from Superintendent Messer: I think that the parent communication, parent outreach part is an area that we can continue to do better in. We have a community outreach department that works directly with me to get some information out. It is a lot of electronic information, that is sent out electronically. There used to be programs in our district called PIQE that we brought in from Stanislaus County. This is a program that is something we can look at and possibly add back in. I'm not exactly sure when PIQE cycled through our high schools' last.

Comment from Rosa Picon: I have been to PIQE at the school before and they do not talk about the classes that the kids need to take and the programs that they need.

Answer from Superintendent Messer: That is something that we can speak with PIQE about and ask them if they can add that part in. I have spoken at PIQE meetings before and talked about accessing district information.

Question: I am sorry that I am insisting about this, but I am representing all the English Learner families. In my community, the parents that I represent, we are kind of old fashioned and we don't get involved or we don't know about the new technology. If these things are to help kids and to work together, then maybe we can get some meetings at the schools and have information the old-fashioned way instead of being told to go to Parent Connect and sign up to get the information, then we say forget it. We can help the kids if you can give us the information so that we are aware of the tools to help the kids and then we can push them.

Answer from Superintendent Messer: That is good input. I think that this is something that we can take back and discuss on how we can do this. It may be adding to something that we already have going on, such as back to school night, but it will be a specific time and it will be in different languages because it is

not just Spanish that is needed. We have other languages that we need to translate also. It can be a kind of an open house of resources.

Comment from Mrs. Forte: Mrs. Forte stated that one place to start with this type of information is in your LCAP. Today we have provided you with a copy of the big LCAP draft (225-pages) and a copy of the small LCAP At A Glance draft (8-pages). Unique in the LCAP At A Glance draft this year is the school information that is provided. Let me give you one quick example. If you turn to page 41 in the LCAP draft, in the Annual Update, there are planned activities and actual activities. If you look at 2.1 on the bottom of page 41, it states “support services to ensure high school students are on a college or career pathway will be funded for items such as annual consultation for high school students.” Then on the right-hand side it shows you how we did this (in 2016-2017), including a program at EUHS called C.A.R.E. In the section of the Annual Update of the LCAP it will show the actions/services and some will show actual programs by school site. I know that this doesn’t provide the information in an easy way, but we are hoping that we will get better next year.

Question: Who are the two gentlemen at the front table?

Answer from Superintendent Messer and Deputy Superintendent Roger Goatcher: Superintendent Messer and Deputy Superintendent Roger Goatcher reintroduced themselves.

Question: I have a son in 11th grade. He has great grades, he participates in sports and he works. He is a very good student. What can I do to put the inspiration in him to go to college and go far after high school? My son is telling me that there is no money for college. What can we do to work together (parents & district) to inspire my son to go to college?

Answer from Superintendent Messer: What high school does he go to? Parent answered EUHS. Mr. Messer advised the parent to go to see Mrs. Peterson at East Union High School and that Mrs. Peterson would connect them with people that will explain to your son that money should never be the issue in going to college. If he is completing the requirements, then there are places to secure financial support to go to college. We are going to educate him that he is not being totally accurate right now and that he needs to go to college if that is what he wants.

Question: I know that you are very busy but I would love it if you as the superintendent would inspire the students by touring colleges with them. I think that if you are going with them on the college tours, it would inspire them more to go to college. I want the Hispanic kids to see that if you can do it, then they can too.

Answer from Superintendent Messer: I’m not opposed to that suggestion and I do enjoy attending those events. I do want to share that our high school students connect much better with their principals than the superintendent. They do not know what a superintendent is. We want to be sure that the kids hear what they need to hear. This summer I will be attending a conference called Success 101 which is about supporting our teachers that are doing those types of things with the kids.

Comment by Brenda Virgen De Reyes: I would like to see that the kids, teachers, and principals have a connection.

Comment by Superintendent Messer: That is a very good comment. We all need to keep working on that. Mr. Messer stated that he does tour schools and that he does connect with the kids, but that it can be different at the high schools.

Question: I would love for them to take care of the seniors in high school. If the kids in 8th grade are not even inspired to go to dances or go to Great America they will not be inspired to have good grades, graduate, and then go to college. These kids are then going to go to high school with already bad grades. These are probably the missing students.

Answer from Superintendent Messer: I said I was going to talk about one thing, so let me talk about how that one thing connects to this. The Board has 3 goals and one of those goals is about us connecting better in the 7-8 grades. There’s a lot of focus in the LCAP on this and it’s Mr. Goatcher’s number one job.