

Conversation with the Superintendent
Follow Up Questions
HÁ Hyde Elementary School

1. **Since we've adopted and are implementing Benchmark, are we not able to have reading in class with real novels anymore?**

In the Advance/Adelante program, there are opportunities for use of novels with students. For example, there is a read aloud section of the daily schedule. This read aloud can be done by using the Read Aloud Handbook which comes with the program or with a teacher choice novel. Another opportunity is during Independent Learning of the Small Group instruction portion of the schedule. During this time, students have the opportunity to read a novel that the teacher helps choose or to have autonomy to choose a novel.

2. **Why is North Zone still implementing Writer's Workshop? Is this a site to site-based decision?**

Implementation of Advance/Adelante is a district-wide expectation. Both Bradley and Mar Vista are Year One adopters and are implementing as prescribed by the program. The other sites will begin next year along with the other South Zone schools.

3. **If combo classes are going to become more prevalent, how is the District planning on supporting them with Benchmark? Currently, there is no help.**

Curriculum and Instruction is working to build out our resources and training supports for the different types of combo classes we have across the district. The Advance/Adelante online platform has a resource which helps guide combo classes in narrowing down which skills to address for instruction. Our instructional coaches are also a resource to work with individual combo teachers and help address their specific support needs.

4. **Many states in the U.S. (including New York, New Jersey, Nevada and (I think) Arizona, have transitioned to full day kindergarten but also play-based learning. Is California and PVUSD thinking about this?**

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) supports a balance of child initiated and teacher-initiated activities in a day. There should be small group instructional time which has varied formats from guided discovery to direct instruction, whole group community building instruction, and open-ended times for children to have choice and explore, sometimes putting into approximation and practice activities they have learned from more guided instruction.

At times, this can be interpreted incorrectly and become a laissez-faire type of environment that does not support learning. It is especially for children from less advantaged backgrounds that count on us to provide intentional and focused instruction informed by assessment to understand the purpose and intent of the varied formats.

Structured and purposeful play should be utilized as a time to help guide students with SEL which is developmentally and age appropriate. Teachers are prompting observing and supporting throughout this structured play time. Play environments and interactions for 5-year olds looks very different than play for young children. Literacy and math need to be folded into the environment of the play setting and the classroom needs to become a sort of textbook for kids to practice and use functionally things they are learning. This is developmentally appropriate play during all day Kinder programs that is being implemented in CA and other states. As we begin to transition into all-day Kindergarten, this is an area that we would develop.

- 5. We know that PVUSD wants to extend the day for kindergarten but losing our partner teachers results in less teacher time for students. Will PVUSD still push for Extended Day Kindergarten without providing aide time or other support?**

We did not receive the State grant for expansion of Extended Day Kindergarten. We will reapply as our students need to have extended learning time in kindergarten so they can come prepared for the demands for future grades. We will work with kindergarten teachers with the focus on the needs of students once we have the resource to implement full day kindergarten.

- 6. What is the District's plan to support more planning and collaboration time to support our core values? i.e. to reflect on our instruction, high expectations, growing integrity and a sense of empowerment in our students**

Wednesday collaboration time is for teachers to use data and the intellectual preparation protocol to drive instruction, agree on assessments and decide on temporary scaffolds. As I mentioned in my presentation, at the middle school level, we are using Sports 4 Learning as a vehicle to provide additional collaboration time. That support will be evaluated at the end of the year to determine if it is a good use of our time, energy and resources and whether or not the concept should be expanded.

- 7. How can we provide elementary teachers with more prep time to organize and modify lessons, especially with all of the changes in curriculum?**

For this year, I encourage you to work with your administration to make sure Wednesday Release Days are utilized to the full extent for collaboration and instruction preparation.

- 8. How can we increase our capacity to support schools in providing social emotional well-being and counseling?**

We have found that many of our students need more intensive services than can be provided by our socio-emotional counselors with a PPS credential. Therefore, we have been supporting PVPSA as they expand their level of services. This past year, PVPSA increased services and served more than 7,000 of our students. We also know that school-wide practices in PBIS and our SEL curriculum, Sanford Harmony, has been shown to reduce the number of students needing counseling. As we add in more Tier II practices such as Check In, Check Out and Zones of Regulation, we will see improvement

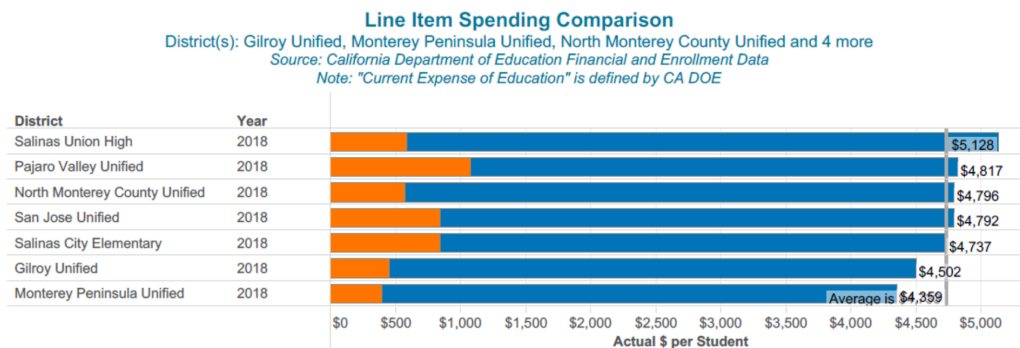
in both mental health and behavior of our students. The Socio-Emotional Counselor will work to help families access services through a variety of community agencies or private insurance. However, it is more effective when schools develop Multi-Disciplinary Teams or Wellness Teams (Consisting of admin, teacher, nurse, psychologist, PVPSA counselor, Socio-Emotional Counselor, etc.) to discuss students in need and plan interventions and referrals.

9. **Can we count on more mental health services for our high needs students? Somehow? And for students who don't qualify yet, is there a creative way to get assistants on campus in order to provide support students who are unable to access curriculum without an assistant?**

Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) is the highest level of mental health support given to students. Student must first qualify for an IEP and then if they have a need for this type of service we would do a referral and an assessment to see if they qualify. At a less intense level for basic Social Emotional Learning, we would utilize Sanford Harmony, then PVPSA and our social emotional counselors.

10. **What is the District's plan for keeping quality teachers in our District when... a) it's expensive to live here, b) other districts pay more?**

We recognize that it is very expensive to live in Santa Cruz County. All 10 School Districts within our County are experiencing the same concerns. With the last raise, we are now one of the highest paying districts in the Tri-County for take home pay. Although many Districts salary schedule shows a higher pay, because our staff does not have to pay for their benefits or a percentage of the yearly increases to benefits, our take home pay is higher. Below is a chart that shows that data. The orange portion of the line is the amount dedicated to health and welfare costs.



11. **How can we improve teachers', teacher aides' and substitutes' salaries to provide students with more experienced teaching professionals?**

We currently have the highest daily paying rate for substitutes of \$140.00 a day and \$180.00 a day if he/she subs more than 90 days per year. The next highest paying districts in our County are San Lorenzo Valley and Live Oak at \$125.00 a day. For long term substitutes, we are the third highest paying district at \$200.00 a day with only Scotts Valley at \$225.80 and Happy Valley Elementary at \$202.37 with a higher pay. In

comparison, Santa Cruz City Schools only pays \$139.21 and Soquel Union Elementary \$130.00 a day.

12. What types of grants are currently in the works to benefit Special Education Students?

We have both Federal and State Grants that support special education students. However, these grants do not cover the full cost of our programs. We applied for and received the funded research project with UCSD to support Mental Health Clinicians who are working with students who have co-occurring disorders of Autism and another mental health disorders. We have a grant called Alternative Dispute Resolution that supports work with parents and families We also received a grant to support planning and implementation of MTSS and PBIS to be fully implemented at all elementary sites. We are currently working with our District Grant Writer to identify preschool grants for special education students as we are experiencing a large increase in referrals.

13. Until SELPA staff is hired---is it possible to perhaps have Program Specialists/Directors fill in as BTs until staff is hired and those on medical leave return?

Currently our BCBA's, and our Lead Behaviorist have been acting as BT's for the program when they can. The Behaviorists, Jocelyn and Taja, fill in two to three days per week. The SELPA Department has worked with Human Resources and established a recent agreement with CSEA to hire temporary Instructional Assistants to fill positions of people that are on leave through outside agencies. The SELPA Department will interview to get qualified candidates to fill the positions. In addition to subbing, the Lead Behaviorist coordinates with office staff each morning to try to send subs or staff who are SCIA's, when their student is absent, to sites with extreme needs or staff absences. She has been working with HR to hold regular cycles of testing and interviews (including submitting requisitions, managing leaves of absence, assembling panels for interviews, calling for references and placing staff). Lastly, she has been working with HR to increase outreach in the community, attend job fairs and creating more seamless hiring processes to address the staffing shortage. For example, there is a day planned for March where applicants can come in, complete the application, test and interview in one day with a "soft offer" contingent on references and fingerprints.

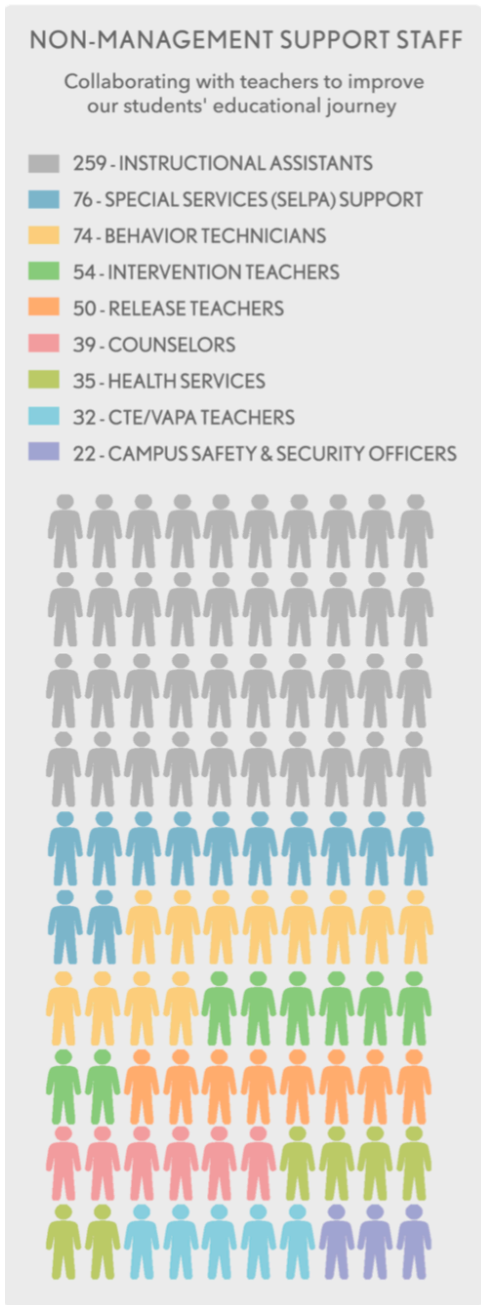
14. Is there a way to make it easier to hire staff for SELPA and to fill all of the positions for staff on medical leave?

This is similar to the information provided in question #12. The ability to work with agencies which will make it easier to fill positions of staff on medical leave as we cannot offer a permanent position. In addition, we have started work with the Task Force on this issue and will follow through with recommendations from them.

15. How can we get SELPA to properly staff our site?

We are also very concerned about the staffing issues. We are meeting with Human Resources, working with CSEA, and now agencies to try to staff the site of any vacancies. In terms of proper allocation of staff, we must look at student needs, data on how current allocations are impacting student learning and best practices to determine best

use of limited resources. Below is a chart of current support staff we have throughout the District:



16. With more Special Education students mainstreaming, what is the District doing to support the General Education teachers?

It is a legal mandate to provide special education students with the least restrictive environment. PVUSD is under review by the State and has been noticed as not mainstreaming special education students to the percentage required by law. Apart from the mandate, research and our own data shows that special education students

accelerate quicker when they have access to the least restrictive environment. To address this concern, the District has already begun training across various sites through our Learning Center pilot.

As this relates to Hyde, the BCBA's are doing an Evidence Based Practice (EBP) highlight at each staff meeting and have been coordinating with the Lead BCBA and Site Principal to do this. Some of the topics have been Visual Supports and Reinforcement. Most recently, the training was provided on responding to a student engaging in challenging behaviors. Additionally, last year the SELPA Department worked with the Diagnostic Center with the site principal to identify core components of creating an inclusive culture. They did a site visit to an inclusive school in Alameda and set up a Leadership Team to Leadership Team meeting to discuss critical features of creating equity in mindset. The SELPA Department worked with the site principal to create space in each grade level so that mainstreaming into the General Education classes could occur without going over class size requirements. Also, each case manager was asked to provide an "IEP Coversheet" for any teacher that has students with IEPs so that the teacher is aware of accommodations, modifications, communication modality, etc.