



Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Edition #12 2024-25 School Year – Week of October 28, 2024

Questions are quoted as I received them directly from our community.

- 1. Is the District considering a no-cell phone ban? Is the District looking into buying pouches to store cell phones? More and more schools are adopting a no cellphone policy and a local District is also seeing great success with it.**
SUSD was waiting for the release of the new legislation to ensure that we did not begin a policy which had to be altered shortly after. With the recent passage of California's Assembly Bill 1162, which grants districts greater authority to limit or prohibit cell phone use on campuses, we are moving forward with plans to align with the law starting in the 2025-2026 school year. We understand the positive impact this type of policy has had in other districts, and our goal is to create a focused learning environment while also being mindful of student, staff and families' needs.

To ensure a well-thought-out approach, we will work closely with both certificated and classified staff to gather insights and collaboratively determine the best course for implementation. As part of this planning process, we are considering various options, including the use of pouches to store cell phones during the school day, as seen in other successful programs. We look forward to continuing these discussions and will keep you and our school community updated as we make progress on this initiative.

- 2. Why is the next English Learner Townhall during the day? Staff cannot attend so it seems like a bad time to have it.**

We held our first English Learner (EL) Town Hall of the year in the evening on October 1, 2024, and appreciated the staff who were able to attend. Based on feedback from the District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC), we scheduled this second session in the morning to encourage greater family participation and meet the needs of those who may not be able to attend evening meetings.

The next EL Town Hall will be on Wednesday, November 6th, from 9:00-10:30am, at the School for Adults. We value the involvement of both staff and family in these conversations and will continue to seek ways to include everyone.

3. You sent the link to the digital copy, but I want to get a hard copy of the new State of the District Report. Where can I get one?

Thank you for your interest in the State of the District report. We have hard copies available at the District Office now if you would like to pick one up. By the end of next week, each school site will also have copies available, with 20 in English and 20 in Spanish at each location.

4. Hi there, I hope this message finds you well! I wanted to check in to see if we have any updates on when the Accelerated Reader program will be fully functioning. I really appreciate the ability to access and track my students' reading growth through the Star Spanish diagnostic, and I'm eager to utilize that data once it's available. Thank you for your help!

SUSD supports the use of Accelerated Reader (AR) across the district, though participation varies by site as AR is a site-based purchase. Once a site has submitted a purchase order, our Technology and Innovation (TI) Department promptly assigns the product in AR. Renaissance requires confirmation of payment before activation, and we monitor this regularly to ensure timely access. If any functionality issues arise, our TI team is available to assist individual school sites as needed.

5. It was mentioned last school year that for the 25-26 school year there will be new middle school math curriculum. Is that still going to happen?

To enhance math instruction in our middle schools, we are exploring a range of innovative supplemental math platforms designed to support core instruction and accelerate student learning. We will begin piloting these programs this winter and invite interested teachers to participate, as feedback from various sites will be invaluable.

In addition, we will continue to expand and deepen our implementation of *Building Thinking Classrooms*, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills in our students.

As of July 2023, the California State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted a new Mathematics Curriculum Framework. The SBE plans to complete a 2025 Mathematics Adoption by November 2025, after which it will release recommended curriculum options for districts to consider during their own adoption processes.

6. It is not clear what we can and cannot suspend for. Can staff and parents have access to the discipline matrix?

SUSD established a discipline matrix while we were under Department of Justice (DOJ) oversight. Although we are no longer under court oversight, we still adhere to the conditions set forth at that time. This matrix outlines specific behaviors that may lead to suspension, ensuring consistency and transparency in disciplinary actions.

We are committed to implementing restorative practices wherever possible, working to reduce disproportionality in disciplinary actions and supporting positive student outcomes. However, there are certain behaviors that do warrant suspension, as outlined in the discipline matrices. You can access the full discipline matrix, which provides detailed information, at this link: [SUSD Discipline Matrix](#).

7. What are the “Big 5” offenses that the District talks about?

In California, the "Big 5" offenses that mandate expulsion proceedings are:

1. Possession, Sale, or Furnishing of a Firearm
 - A student found with a firearm in their possession, whether on campus, at a school activity, or within a designated school zone, is subject to mandatory expulsion. This includes any attempt to sell or provide the firearm to others, as well as carrying it on school grounds, regardless of whether it is loaded or operable. California law holds strict consequences for any firearm-related activity to ensure school safety.
2. Brandishing a Knife at Another Person
 - "Brandishing" means the intentional display of a knife in a threatening, aggressive, or intimidating manner toward someone else. The weapon does not need to be used to cause harm to qualify for expulsion; the act of brandishing alone is sufficient. This rule aims to deter threats and maintain a non-hostile environment on school campuses.
3. Unlawful Sale of a Controlled Substance
 - Any student involved in selling illegal drugs or controlled substances, such as marijuana, cocaine, or prescription medications without a prescription, on school grounds or during school-related activities is subject to mandatory expulsion. This applies whether the sale involves small amounts or a significant transaction, as the sale or distribution of drugs poses a significant risk to the school community.
4. Sexual Assault or Sexual Battery
 - Sexual assault includes any non-consensual sexual act, such as rape, attempted rape, or other forms of forced sexual contact. Sexual battery involves inappropriate touching of another person's intimate areas

without consent. Both offenses are considered serious threats to student safety, and mandatory expulsion serves to protect students and prevent future occurrences.

5. Possession of an Explosive

- This includes having any type of explosive device, such as a bomb or other materials capable of causing harm to individuals or property. Possession of these dangerous items is taken extremely seriously, as they pose immediate risks to everyone on campus, and strict measures, including mandatory expulsion, are enforced to prevent potential tragedies.

Each of these offenses mandates expulsion due to the severe impact they can have on school safety, student welfare, and the educational environment. Schools are required by law to initiate expulsion for these offenses to uphold a safe and secure learning environment.

8. **Hello Dr. Rodriguez, Several years ago we were informed that several of the comprehensive high school would be getting new science facilities to replace the present, extremely dated and non-compliant facilities. The most recent apparent action occurred in late November of 2023, when science teachers were asked for input on which blueprints would be most suitable for our student's needs. Since then, there has seemingly been no progress or mention of the new facilities and there is no apparent timeline. It was my understanding that the funding sources had been identified and that architects had been met with to finalize plans. Our students and teachers desperately need these new facilities, as the present ones are unsuitable and unsafe for proper science instruction. Is there an update on a timeline? What is behind the lack of progress securing and constructing the facilities? Frankly, will these plans ever move forward?**

I am pleased to inform the community that, with the completion of the Facilities Master Plan (FMP), we are now able to move forward with the renovation projects for the science labs, which have been prioritized as critical "red" construction items. This means that these projects are at the top of our list for immediate attention and action.

Here's a brief overview of the planned renovations:

Edison High School: Project #4 in the FMP is dedicated to establishing program equity with a new science lab.

Franklin High School: Project #2 outlines the renovation of the old cafeteria to be transformed into science labs and a maker space, providing an innovative and versatile environment for hands-on learning.

Stagg High School: Project #4 includes renovations of the current science labs to enhance safety, functionality, and support for current curriculum needs.

Each of these projects has a distinct place within our timeline, and with the FMP in hand, we can now proceed toward securing final approvals and schedules for construction.

- 9. Last year we had purchase orders to support our special education classrooms with reinforcement items. This year we are being told to wait until budget is figured out and approved and teachers are having to purchase all of this out of pocket. Do we know when the budget will be figured out so we can move forward with these purchase orders?**

We understand how crucial it is to have the necessary resources in place to support effective teaching and a positive learning environment in our special education classrooms.

This year, each teacher has been allotted \$500 per classroom for educational materials directly related to classroom needs. For any additional items, such as reinforcement materials beyond this allocation, I encourage you to connect with your Special Ed Program Specialist. They are available to assist with requests that extend beyond the \$500 allowance and can work closely with our Special Ed Administrators to review and fulfill these needs.

- 10. AAC Devices are beneficial for most all students in the highly structured/mod-severe AUT classes. All of the students would benefit from having a high-tech device to help with their communication. Studies have shown that high-tech AAC can be beneficial, and there is no specific assessment needed to obtain this resource. My question is, why can this not be more accessible for the students. All students are given a Chromebook. Why can't students in certain programs also receive an iPad. This way the students that are non-verbal can use this device throughout the school day, and those in the classroom can assist with modeling. This would also be beneficial in IEP meetings, as parents often request this, and there is always so much push back from the district. Communication is a basic human right, and we should easily be able to provide the students with what they need.**
- We agree that assistive technology (AT) can significantly empower students, especially those who benefit from high-tech AAC devices to support their communication needs.

We are currently exploring additional software options that not only enhance literacy but also boost students' confidence and independence in the classroom.

Our team is collaborating with our district's Assistive Technology expert, along with our technology department, to ensure compatibility and seamless access to this technology. This includes evaluating and addressing each student's unique needs to maximize educational benefits effectively.

We are committed to providing equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education. With this in mind, we will soon be rolling out new resources in our specialized programs. These resources are designed to support diverse learning environments and to provide the tools students need to thrive.