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Escondido Union School District Board of Education Meeting - English

DATE
September 18, 2025

DURATION
1h 32m 6s

11 SPEAKERS
Doug Paulson Dr. Luis Ibarra All
Mark Olson Zesty
Harper Frank Huston
Joan Gardner Noemi Navarrete Rick Oser
Kathleen Sorensen
Andrew McGuire

START OF TRANSCRIPT

Doug Paulson
...order at 5:30 p.m. looking for any comment cards on closed session items. Seeing none, we will adjourn to closed session and reconvene at 7 p.m..

Doug Paulson
All right, well, we're going to reconvene the regular meeting of the Escondido Union School District. We do apologize for being late this evening. We will try to keep the meeting on course, from here on. If I could please ask Doctor Ibarra to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dr. Luis Ibarra
Please stand. Put your right hand over your heart. Ready? Begin.

All
I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. And to the Republic for which it stands. One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Doug Paulson
Alright, all members are present. We do have a report out of closed session.

Mark Olson
Just give me one second. All right. Item B, one closed session in the matter of anticipated litigation special education settlement OAH case number 2025070959. The board voted to approve the special education settlement by a vote of 5 to 0. In the matter of anticipated litigation special education OAH case number 2025060307 or 060307. The board voted to approve the special education settlement by a vote of 5 to 0.

Mark Olson
All right, moving on. Make sure I get these in order here. They're not, it's not labeled. They're not labeled. So the appointment. Okay I think it's the appointment first, right? In closed session, the board took action to approve the recommendation for appointment of Stacy Weinberg as Director of Information Systems and Technology beginning October 20th, 2025, by a unanimous vote of 5 to 0. And in closed session, the board took action to approve the recommendation for appointment of William Dowler as Director of Classified Personnel beginning September 29th, 2025, by a vote of 5 to 0. And finally, in closed session, the board consider dismissal charges against a classified probationary employee and took action to approve those charges and release employee number 667498 by a vote of 5 to 0. That concludes closed session report.

Doug Paulson
Thank you very much. We're going to move on to the approval of the agenda. Does anyone have corrections? Anything to remove rearrange? Looking for a motion.

Zesty Harper
I'll move.

Mark Olson
I'll second.

Doug Paulson
We have a motion and a second. Please vote. Okay. Could we please have a hand vote? We. Motion passes 5 to 0. Moving on to the approval of the minutes of the board meeting of September 4th. Do we have any corrections? Looking for a motion?

Frank Huston
I'll motion.

Joan Gardner
Second.

Doug Paulson
We have a motion and a second. All in favor, please raise your hand. Motion passes 5 to 0. Okay. Moving on to communications. Do we have any public comment tonight? Seeing no public comment, we will move on to a report from the California School Employees Association. Good evening.

Noemi Navarrete
Hi everyone, I don't have anything prepared, but good evening to everyone. I know we haven't been here in a while, but we wanted to show our face. And welcome everybody who's new. We appreciate you. I also wanted to extend my appreciation of all classified staff. And those at the district level, our M&O, our librarians, our office managers our custodians who make the the passing of the Williams audit possible. It is a huge undertaking. Our staff is working extra hard to make sure that we pass. And so far, I've heard successful stories. So a special shout out to Kathleen and to Tracy Gregor, who have been driving around making sure that we all have what we need. So thank you so much for that. And and of course, M&O for making sure everything is ready to go. So thank you. Have a good night.

Doug Paulson
And just to piggyback on your comments, I think the board and cabinet and everybody would like to thank CSEA for making everything possible in our district. So thank you all very much. And speaking of making things possible do we have a representative from EEEA tonight? Well, we have many representatives, but anybody wishing to speak. Alright. No report. All written communications have been distributed. Looking at the consent agenda, does anybody have any items they would like to have pulled for separate consideration? Seeing none. Looking for a motion.

Joan Gardner
Consent agenda.

Doug Paulson
We have a motion. And a second. All in favor, please raise your hand and passes five zero.

Joan Gardner
I did it, I did. Not for me.

Doug Paulson
Yeah, and it carries five zero.

Joan Gardner
Did it come up on mine? I thought that's what it said in progress. Oh, okay.

Frank Huston
All right.

[low level talking]

Joan Gardner
Oh, it's gotta be frustrating for you.

Doug Paulson
Alright, we are moving on to item K, a presentation about our, from Education Services.

Rick Oser
Good evening, President Paulson, board members, superintendent Ibarra, cabinet members. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you this evening on the 2024 data review as well as our path forward, and I will be joined by miss, director Kathleen Sorensen, who will assist with the presentation.

Rick Oser
I was told it takes a couple clicks. There it is. The third one's the charm. Okay, so tonight's presentation, we're actually going to start with some spotlighting of our fellow teachers who have had remarkable stretch growth. And just so that we could personalize some of the incredible growth that's happening across the district, then we're going to go into a general district data overview of the 2024-25 results based on our metrics. And then we're going to spend quite a bit of time really diving into what's on the horizon, our our path forward. And so with that said, we'd actually like to call up. We've actually recognized five teachers from each of the regions of the district who have had remarkable stretch growth on I-ready. And so just to put it in perspective, stretch growth is a really ambitious growth target set for each student based on their levels in reading and math. Each each student has a different stretch growth based on where they are and their grade level.

Rick Oser
And that is really focusing on the distance between where they're at and grade level standards. Now, for some of our students, if they are close to grade level, then that stretch growth will still be ambitious, but it will be able to be accomplished in one year. However, for some of our students who are significantly below grade level. That stretch growth is going to be much more significant. And in some cases, that stretch growth might actually be over the course of two years. And so the teachers that I'm calling up not only had remarkable stretch growth in reading, but also in math. So these are teachers who are really knocking at the park in both areas, reading and math. And so we have three of the teachers who are here with us today, as well as their principals, and some of them even brought a fan group. And and two of them, because of family reasons, weren't able to join us, but we're still going to recognize them. So we'd like to call up from Miller Elementary, Kim Herrera. And then from Reidy Creek, Kerry Morey. And then from Glenview, Aidee Rojas.

Rick Oser
So as we, as Doctor Ibarra and President Paulson and and and Mr. Maguire come over before we take a moment to really spotlight that or to celebrate them with a photo and some certificates. We actually, I want to really highlight how impressive their stretch growth stretch growth has been. So for Miss Herrera at Miller in Reading, 55% of her students made 100% or more of their stretch growth. Now, I-ready says we should anticipate, so the I-ready team, this is not us making it up. This is I-ready stating we should anticipate 20 to 30% of our students making stretch growth each year. So when we talk about 55%, that's in essence double of what it is, is saying we should shoot for. And then in math, 41% of her students made stretch growth. So you can see that in both areas. And here's the thing. Teachers are so hard working and humble. When I came over and congratulated Kim, she said, well, I also got these students from her fan club. So I think their second grade teachers. So. So in addition to taking the recognition, she's also sharing it. Because we know it really takes a village. But today we're celebrating Kim Herrera.

Rick Oser
And from Bernardo Elementary.

Rick Oser
So no parents here to to to celebrate the teachers. I don't think so. So I also wanted to recognize from Bernardo Elementary. Matt Downin. So Matt Downin was a third grade teacher last year, and he had 61% of his students in both ELA or reading and math reach 100% of their stretch growth. So we have a certificate and we'll make sure to get that certificate to him as well. And then from Reidy Creek, we have Kerry Morey. And she had 68% of her students meet 100% stretch growth in reading and 50% in math. So. And then from Farr Avenue. And this teacher also was not able to be here. She was really trying to coordinate family schedules, but it just didn't work. Is it Irais Sandoval Diaz. And she had 60% of her students reach 100% stretch growth in reading and 80% in math.

Joan Gardner
Wow.

Rick Oser
So we'll make sure to get her her certificate as well. And then last but definitely not least, this is a teacher that I've visited many times in her classroom. And even today when Doctor Ibarra and Mr. Maguire visited, I said, make sure you go into Miss Rojas's class. And they did. So, last but definitely not least is Aidee Rojas, a third grade DLP teacher at Glenview Elementary. She had 60% of her students reach 100% stretch growth in reading and 72% in math. And I want to point out something else. So in Rojas's class, 100% of her students were in the categories of 76% or more in stretch growth. So as green and blue across the board. So.

Joan Gardner
Wow.

Rick Oser
So thank you teachers. I know my presentation or Director Sorensen's presentation and mine are going to be really invigorating, but don't feel like you need to stay for the whole thing. I know you have a busy day tomorrow, but you're more than welcome to stay. But if you need to get home and get to sleep, I understand. So what we wanted to do was we really wanted to personalize the data and put some faces to the data. We've, cabinet has discussed that in the future. What might be really nice, as we're really focusing on stretch growth, that we actually bring not only teachers, but some of our students who have also reached this remarkable goals. So we'll be looking forward to doing that in the future. Alright. So the moment we've all been waiting for. In addition to the teacher spotlight, we're going to give a high level overview of our CAASPP data. Now board members, you've received the data books, and there's a lot of data in there. And so if you have specific questions about some of the areas, feel free to reach out to Director Sorensen, myself or anyone else from cabinet. So with that said, I'd like to call up Director Sorensen, who's going to lead us in an overview of the state level data.

Kathleen Sorensen
Good evening. Board president Paulson, board members, superintendent Doctor Ibarra and cabinet members. It's my honor to stand before you again to present our annual end of year data. So we'll be presenting first some CAASPP data and then some iready data. And again as was said earlier, this is just a very high level view because you have a lot of individual graphs to look at. So I'm going to start again with CAASPP. These are historical unmatched results. And we have 2018-19, because that was the last year of test results before the pandemic. And then if you recall the next year, the CAASPP was canceled and the year after we had the option to give I-ready instead of the CAASPP. So this is all of our results since the pandemic, and we include the pandemic or the pre-pandemic results because we want to. The goal is to meet those results and then do better than we were doing in 2018-19. So again, this is third through eighth grade. And this shows that in 2018-19, about 42% of our students were at standard met or exceeded. And on the CAASPP, anything in green and blue means that the students are at grade level. So green is standard met and blue is standard exceeded. And in the 24-25 school year we had a little less than 37% of our students who were at Standard in reading. This represents a 1% increase in the number of students who were proficient. And the other thing we want to look at is the number of students in the red who have decreased because we want to decrease the red as we increase the green and the blue. And last year we had a decrease of 2.36% in the percentage of students at standard not met.

Kathleen Sorensen
And then we're going to drill down just a little bit and look just at elementary ELA results. And one of the things that I forgot to mention in the last slide is the CAASPP results measure ELA or reading and writing. So it includes multiple choice questions on the students read text answer questions about it. But there's also writing questions. Questions about grammar, questions about what what they might write next. And in a paragraph, things like that. It's a little different. Oh, there's also a performance test where students read a text, excuse me text, and they have to respond in writing, it's either a narrative, an informative or an argument. The, it's a little different than iready because iready only measures reading and there's no performance task. So back to the elementary ELA. So last year we had 35.86% of our students who were proficient or standard exceed or sorry, the blue and the the green standard exceeded or standard Met, which represented a gain of almost 1%. It was 0.74%. The percentage of students scoring at not met though decreased by 3.27%. So we made some some better gains at getting kids out of that below grade level range. Then if we move on to middle school again, it's the same setup. Last year we had a gain of 1.54% and the number of students who met standard, and a decrease of 1.53% in the percentage of students scoring at not met. Okay, then, if we look at our all students in math, this again is set up the exact same way. The math assessment, a set of multiple choice questions.

Kathleen Sorensen
And there's also a math performance task on the CAASPP. So on this chart 29.68% of our students scored at met or exceeded, which was a gain of 1.27% over the previous year, and the percentage of students scoring at standard not met decreased by 3.84%, which is significant. And the other very significant part of this data is that we were just one half of a percentage point away from hitting the pre-pandemic 2018-19 results. The other thing that you might notice is that beginning in 21-22, the results are consistently increasing every year. Which is a really good sign, because what you don't want to see is scores that go up and down. Then if we look at our elementary CAASPP, that looks very pretty. Last year, 34.86% of our students scored at the proficient level, which was Or met. Standard met or standard exceeded, which is a gain of 2.66% for third through fifth graders. The percentage of students. And so the exciting thing about this is the percentage of, of students, this percentage was 1.9, 1.19% higher than the 2018-19. So we actually exceeded our 2018-19 results just this time with our elementary students. And then furthermore there was a decrease of 1.84% over the previous year. And again this chart is even more defined in the fact that beginning in 21-22, you can see very consistent growth in the results and beginning in 2022-23, you see a decrease, a consistent decrease in the reds, 23-24 was when we got our our new Eureka math scored math adoption, which has been very well received by teachers. So we're starting to see some increased results because they're.

Dr. Luis Ibarra
Mic.

Kathleen Sorensen
Oh.

Kathleen Sorensen
Because they're consistently using the curriculum.

Doug Paulson
Can I, can I just make a clarification? Is this showing that this year we're actually pretty substantially above where we were at pre-pandemic? Is that correct?

Kathleen Sorensen
That's correct. 2.4 for third through fifth graders were 2.66% higher.

Doug Paulson
Thank you.

Kathleen Sorensen
And if we look at our middle school results. 24.32% of our students scored at proficient, which was an increase of 1.65% over the previous year, and then the percentage of students scoring at standard not met decreased by 1.63%. So we did not we did not meet our goal in in this grade span, but we are inching closer to it. Okay. So now we'll move on to the Iready results. So I talked a little bit about how the the tests are different between Iready and CAASPP. The other difference between Iready and CAASPP is Iready is testing kindergarten first graders and second graders, whereas CAASPP is not doing that. So that makes the results look just a little bit different. Kindergarten, first graders and second graders can't be three years below grade level because they haven't been in school long enough, so that causes the data to look just a little bit different. So in, when we look at the K-8 results there was actually, for reading, there was actually a slight decrease in the percentage of students who were proficient compared to the previous year, just a very slight decrease. Then if we look at our just elementary students. Again, there was a decrease of about 1% in the percentage of students that were mid or above grade level.

Kathleen Sorensen
Because we're only looking at the blue this time. Then when we look at our middle school, again, the students scoring at mid or above grade level remained about the same as it was in the 23-24 school year. Okay, when we move on to math results. They mirrored the CAASPP a little bit more. If you look at kindergarten through eighth grade math results, there was about a 0.75% increase in the number of students scoring mid or above grade level over the previous year. Then if we look at our elementary results. We had a little bigger of an increase. We had about a 1.47 increase in the number of students scoring mid or above grade level. Then looking at our middle school math results. They showed a decrease of about half of a percent, just a little over half of a percent. Okay, then we're moving on to our English learner results. In EUSD, about 37% of our students are English learners. And this is showing iready results for K-8 for only that English learner group. So when students reclassify, they're taken out of this group. And there was a decrease of about 0.62% and the percentage of students who scored at mid or above grade level. We are less we are recognizing that our English learners are really needing some attention.

Kathleen Sorensen
So last year many of our principals really embraced the idea of professional development for English learners. So I would say probably a little over half of our schools invited staff to come do those presentations. And as a result on our LPAC assessment on the LP, where we look at the percentage of students who met their growth goal, we did have a slight increase on on that growth goal with our lpac. So we know that that we really do need to focus on our English learners and we are seeing that. That if we do have that focus, it is beginning to show some results. Okay, moving on to our English learner math. In math, we actually had a 0.5 percentage increase in this, the percentage of students scoring mid or above. And then moving on to our students with disabilities. Here you see that there was a very slight increase over the 23-24 school year of about 0.17. However we're not showing our CAASPP results here. And our students with disabilities really shined on the CAASPP and had a 1.77% increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards. And several years ago, the SPED curriculum was aligned to the general ed curriculum, with a focus on ensuring that all of our special ed teachers participated in the same training as general education teachers.

Kathleen Sorensen
And this alignment has resulted in a decrease in the percentage of students who are significantly below grade level. So you can see that when we first started giving the I-ready, we had about 41% of our students in the red, and we're now down to 36. And there there is a, almost consistent trend of of that going down. Then for our students with disabilities and math on the i-ready. A little over a .39 percent of students, there was a 0.39 increase in the students scoring mid or above. And again. Sorry, I take that back. Okay. On to the California Science Test or the CAST. This data is showing a very nice increase. This is our fifth grade. Oops. Sorry. This is our fifth grade data. And again, we're going back to looking at a combination of the blue and the green and the percentage of students who scored at standard met and standard exceeded increased by 1.37%, and in eighth grade we had even more of an increase, with an increase of 2.48% in the number of students scoring at standard exceeded or standard met. And with that, I'll let Mr. Oser. Okay.

Rick Oser
So that's a very broad overview of our end of the year. English language arts, math and science assessments, including our student groups, our English learners and special education. What we'd also like to do is highlight some of the other aspects, some of the other metrics that we continue to focus in on and really set ambitious goals as well as strategies to improve the student experience. And so we're going to spend a little bit of time focusing on school culture climate and student engagement. Student engagement, typically we're looking at many areas, but often we're we really hone in on attendance and chronic absenteeism in that area. So one of the big measures that we use for school culture and climate is the California Healthy Kids Survey. And this assessment is administered for our fifth graders and our seventh graders. And so when we look at our results in these three really critical areas: school connectedness, perceived safety and caring relationships, you can see all three of those areas for our elementary students had significant gains from 2024 to 2025. And in a little bit, we're going to talk about some of the strategies that are in place to support this growth, and then the strategies that we're going to continue to to focus in on. But clearly one of the main strategies of really honing in on our PBIS, our positive behavior interventions and supports is continuing to make a significant impact in our students experiences at school.

Rick Oser
And then also in middle school, you see, once again, that from 2024 to 2025, there's significant increases the orange line that's represented in each of those each of those categories is the state average from 2021 to 2023. And so when you look at our school connectedness for middle schools students, for our seventh graders, you can see, we're just about at the state average, but a significant increase from the previous year. And then in perceived school safety, you can see a really sizable increase that actually is significant significantly beyond the state average. And then caring adult relationships also above the state average. So just kind of taking a step back, looking at elementary school continue to make increases towards the state average. And then into middle school. You can see that we're either close to the state average or above. And I do want to recognize Director Smith who's in the audience and his team who continues to support all of the work that's at the school site, and, of course, the principals and the teachers and support staff for making that happen. When we look at student engagement, something that we're always keeping a very close eye on is attendance. And so our average daily attendance over the past couple years, we know that the pandemic hit attendance, student attendance really hard.

Rick Oser
And in 2023, I'm sorry, 2022-23 school year, we were just above 90%. Last year we were at 92.64%. So definitely significant growth in this area. But also we still have some work to do to get back to the levels of pre-pandemic. And then the other aspect in looking at student engagement and attendance is chronic absenteeism. So coming out of the pandemic, we had over one third of our students who were identified as chronic absentee. And that's I'm missing more than 10% of the school year. We've every year we've improved in that area, and we are now at well, last year we were at 21.82% of our students identified as being chronic absentee. Now definitely great growth there. And once again when we look at the path forward, we'll talk about some of the strategies that are working to address our students student engagement. And then what we're going to continue to do to hone in, in that in this area. Just for point of reference prior to the pandemic, our chronic absentee rate was around 12.5%. So we still have definitely heading in the right direction, but still quite a bit of work to to do. And the team is really focused on supporting that. Another area when we think about school culture, climate and student engagement is around suspensions. And this this chart here actually indicates there's three bars for each of the months, and these are the amount of suspensions that took place in each of the months.

Rick Oser
And you can see it's interesting depending on the year where there's spikes. I mean, just looking at this from a distance, you could see that two years ago in 23, 24, something was happening in September and October where it actually spiked even beyond the previous year. However, when we look at this over the past several years, you can see that from 22-23, when there were 796 suspensions across the district last year, that decreased to 536 suspensions. And you can see month by month the significant decrease from from the from the previous year, with only March standing out. So I'm not sure what was happening in March of last year, but but definitely heading in the right direction and once again, probably attributed to all the work around PBIs and and supporting students. The other side of this is expulsions. So these are students who who have engaged in behaviors that are mandatory for bringing them up for expulsions. And you can see once again, since 22-23, all the way up until last year, significant decrease in, in expulsions. And and that's once again attributed to lots of supports for students to make sure that they not only are making the right choices, but supporting their classmates as well to make those right choices and lots of adult support to to make that happen, obviously.

Rick Oser
Okay. So that was probably a lot of data. And quite a bit of information. And just to kind of summarize before we talk about the path forward, because I think that's the real essence of, of our conversation is really looking at the looking at the data and then really analyzing it and then determining, now what are we going to do about it. That's the main focus. So we see that in our academic areas, ELA, math and science. Those three areas there have been gains in some areas especially when we look at like elementary math, those gains are even more pronounced. But we I think we would all agree that we have a desire to see even more gains. And so so we're definitely looking at that very closely. And then when we look at school culture, student engagement we see that there continues to be significant increases in these areas, but also we're not there yet. And so we're going to continue to focus our efforts on improving those areas. And even in some of those areas where we're above the state average, we're going to continue to move forward. So the next several slides are going to really focus in on what are we doing? What are we as a district? Whether it's our district leadership, our site administrators, principals, assistant principals, certificated staff, classified staff, what are we doing at each of our schools to support the growth in all of these areas? So the first thing is we are really honing in on being data driven decision makers.

Rick Oser
So we started the year with our principals spending a lot of time rolling up our sleeves and looking at the data. And because data is only as relevant as the action that comes from it, what we like to say is data is just numbers and graphs. And sometimes you can make them pretty with different colors. But if we don't do anything, if we don't ask the questions, if we don't analyze it and get really curious about what the data is telling us, then that's that's where it ends. So it's really about the questions and then the actions that come from that. And so that's what we're going to really focus on over the next couple of slides. We know that the data information alone does not transform practice. Just knowing something does not change our practices. What it really takes is a commitment to changing the the habits that actually resulted in the data. So information alone does not transform practice. It is the intentional interpretation and application of the data that creates improvement. So thanks to Director Sorensen and Director Smith, there was a lot of data provided to principals at the very beginning of their work year.

Rick Oser
This was actually on I think their first day was like around July 25th or something. July 26th. They got a wealth of data. And then we spent a lot of time as district leadership, not only looking at the data, understanding the data, but also putting in protocols and supports so that every school would have would start the year with a data review and really going into a data deep dive. And that's not something that can be done in one day. We didn't, like, provide all this data and principals put it all together. And then we they spent one day analyzing and and making action plans. That's something that starts at the beginning of the year. During the pre-service days, but then continues on, and that continues on with the leadership teams, grade level teams, staff as a whole school site council, ELA, bringing it up to PTA, really spending a lot of time being curious about the data and making sense of it and then forming that action plan. What we'd like to really hone in on is the root cause analysis. So as I said, the data is numbers. But the more we look at it and the more we ask the question, well, why is it such the more if we keep asking that question, and if we're very curious about it, then we could get down to the root cause.

Rick Oser
And when we get down to the root cause, then that's where we form the action plan around that. But if we just look at the data on the surface and we stop there and we say, well, it's because of this, we're not really going to change the data. So our principals, district leadership has really been spending a lot of time around root cause analysis and just being what we keep referring to, just being curious, being curious. When we look at a graph and we compare it to the previous year, or we compare it to another grade level, just being curious about, well, why is it like that? And we're spending a lot of time doing that. And and it's exciting. It's fun work. So what I want to do is kind of walk the the board through some of the examples or some of the actions that are happening at the school site. So as I mentioned before, school started the year going into data overview, data deep dive and then looking at root cause analysis and starting to make their action plans. So in addition to all of the data that was provided to you and then some, because the team put together a lot of data for for principals upon their return. What we've also done is some of the data allows the teams to be exactly that curious.

Rick Oser
So here's an example of just this is actually one of our one of our elementary schools. And what we're going to do is actually walk through what schools are doing with the data, just in a very curious manner. So as I mentioned, you got all that other data that Kathleen has already reviewed. So schools did that, and now they're going into a deeper dive. And on this first slide this is I-ready end of the year results, kindergarten through fifth grade as well as a grand total. And this is an area of phonics. So this is solely phonics. Looking at students ability to, to use their their knowledge around phonics to decode words. And so right off the bat, you can just looking at this, I'm already curious. I'm already curious about several things. I'm already curious about why is there a bump up in first grade from the previous year? And remember on I-ready blue is is golden. So blue means end of the year benchmark. So student that's the percentage of students who are at that level. So I see a bump up in the percent of students who were at grade level or above grade level in phonics. But then second grade, something happened. But then third grade, I see another significant bump up by and then by fourth and fifth grade, I see that the vast majority of the students in the area of phonics are pretty much at grade level, with a handful of students who still need tier three intervention.

Rick Oser
So very curious about that. Lots of questions about that. Go on to high frequency words. So these are words that each grade level will have that are just words that are learned, they're memorized, just words that come up so frequently that a student not only needs to know them, but needs to be automatic. So when they see the word, they're not sounding it out. It's by memory. And, and because they're so common, they just need to happen with a high level of automaticity. So once again, we see something at this at this particular school, bump up in first grade with the number of students who are at grade level in this area, high frequency words and then second grade a dip. But then by third, fourth and fifth grade, Most students are meeting grade level expectations. So we just looked at two slides. These are foundational reading skills. So this is when we look at phonics and high frequency words. These are just the foundational skills. So that's already that's already enough information to be very curious right. But then when we look at higher order thinking skills, so not just the rote memorization but higher order thinking skills, we go into vocabulary. Now immediately you just look at this slide and something is different.

Rick Oser
So now the trend is different. The, the staircase is going in the, in the opposite direction. So by the time fifth grade a student is in fifth grade roughly 13% of the students are at grade level in the area of vocabulary. So kind of just taking a walk back. Phonics. We see phonics and high frequency words, foundational reading skills we see by fourth fifth grade students are have a good foundation there. However vocabulary not so much. Then when we jump over to literary comprehension. So this is reading. This is reading fictional texts. This is reading for pleasure. So reading our favorite book while we're, you know, laying in bed or on the beanbag or whatever. And you can see here that, okay, so we it's once again curiosity, change from kinder to first grade, then back up second grade. But we see overall about 40% of the students are at at grade level in and comprehension with fifth grade as these students are moving on to sixth grade about 24% of them there with 18% in the red. Now 50% of fifth grade test is literary comprehension. Um not this test, but, CAASPP. 50% is literary comprehension, 50% is informational text. By sixth grade that changed to 40% literary comprehension, 60% informational text. By eighth grade it's 75% informational text. So when we look at the next slide, now we see 16%, 16.67% of our of this school's fifth grade students at grade level. Lots of information to be curious about. Now, we're not going to do this here because it's going to take a lot of time to get to root cause analysis. And we don't know this school. I do, you don't.

Joan Gardner
But you're not telling us, are you?

Rick Oser
This is actually just a it's a typical data set that most of our schools look like this some a little bit less pronounced, some more pronounced. So it's just kind of typical data set for our schools. And we see very similar trends at most of our schools that when we look at foundational oops, wrong direction, when we look at foundational skills by fourth fifth grade students have solid foundational skills. But then when we look at higher order thinking, vocabulary, and especially informational comprehension, we see significant gaps there. So this is the type of work that schools grade level teams, leadership teams are doing across the board in Escondido. This is only half of the half of the task because we haven't even got got down to the student level. It's really at the student level when we start to look at these profiles and we start to ask those same questions. That's when that's when we're able to really hone in on the action plan. So that's some of the work that's happening at the school sites. And, and as I shared, this is a very typical data set, but it's really the work that teachers and administrators and, and school teams are doing around the data, not just settling on. Well, that's the numbers. It's about the questions and the action. So the key to our EUSD program is our multi-tiered system of supports. And this work has happened over the past several years. I know Director Newton was intimately involved in that many years ago. It's continued to evolve and has gotten to the point where it's it's a real central part of the EUSD way, our 16 schools that are in that have the community schools grants.

Rick Oser
It's based on this. It's based on our MTSS. So looking at the instruction supports in the area of academics. So think of like a a four sided pyramid or a square pyramid one side being academics. So looking at tier one, tier two, tier three, all students falling into the instrument instruction and intervention that they need based on their levels. But then also behavioral, social and emotional is another side. Attendance is the third side and then family and community engagement. So once again at the end of last year we spent a lot of time not just with our leaders understanding the districts MTSS and bringing it to the schools, but bringing in the support team and really looking at our CSAT process and then how that connects to our MTSS with the expectation that every school will use a template that a presentation template and then personalize it so that when they started the school year with an expectation that prior to September 30th, every single school provided a professional development around MTSS. So using this this work that started in the spring because we want to make sure that that everyone has the same understanding and that when we deliver tier one differentiated core instruction and a student doesn't respond to it, that we have an action plan to support them. And often that's going to be tier two.

Rick Oser
So immediate response to to the teaching and learning. And then if a student is significantly behind or significantly below grade level, then that's when the student needs tier three. And that's in each of these areas. So academic social and emotional. If they need tier three supports then we need to have an action plan for it. If in academics and reading if they need tier three supports then we need to have an action plan. If they just need tier two support, which may be just a small group remedial or reteach of the lesson, some manipulatives, some supports. Right then and there. Then that's the goal to get the student to, to mastery of that content. So it's just being responsive to the data. So MTSS has continued to be a critical piece of EUSD's instructional plan in each of these areas and with our MTSS site specialists, through the Community Schools grants, we're able to push that forward even more so. This is really the the core of that work. As you know we started the year really honing in on professional development, and we looked at several specific areas. The first key area was differentiated core instruction. So how can we do a better job providing the first teach as the best teach. On September, seems like it was so long ago. It was only five weeks ago. September 14th I think. No, 13th September 13th, oh, August 13th. We had we had a professional development day focused on differentiated core instruction. All 40 of those workshops were in this area.

Rick Oser
We're already planning for the second Empower Ed Learning conference, which will happen on the day after winter break. So we're already planning for that in the early stages of that. And we're going to continue to work with our teacher leader groups to to develop that. The other area of professional development this year is around 2 or 3 academic intervention. So what do we do when we maybe a school doesn't have intervention teachers, or maybe they have just some intervention teachers, but more students who need support than how do we as classroom teachers support that student? And some of that might actually happen after school and the Explore program. Just two weeks ago we had a workshop for teachers teaching Explore and looking at intervention. And there was just under 150 teachers who participated in this workshop around best practices for academic tier three intervention. Another key area that we're really looking at, and this is work that's going to start with our administrators and then continue with classroom teachers, is really ensuring the alignment around our the California standards, the grade level standards, and our teaching. So that's on the horizon. That's something that we're really focusing on. And and I think is really vital, especially understanding the pandemic, how that impacted student learning and how it may have resulted in, in us teaching to the students level rather than teaching to the grade level standards and providing the scaffolds. Just a hypothesis, but definitely something that we need to continue to, to look at.

Rick Oser
And then a really big effort that we started the year with and will continue is English language development. So we had how many teachers attended the Avid emerge before school year? About 110 of our teachers participated. And once again coming in before the school year on Avid Emerge, which is around Avid strategies, but through the lens of English language development. So and that was really well received. And we're already in conversations about continuing that support. So English language development whether it's Avid Emerge or utilizing our resources here in the district to support classroom teachers is a high priority. And we saw that in the data. The data tells us that this English learners and their language development needs to be a high priority. And then something that is statewide with our new preschool, transitional kindergarten, learning foundations which is the new, set. We, they're not, we don't call them standards because they're different than standards, but similar to standards for preschool and transitional kindergarten. We started the year with a lot of professional development for our preschool and TK teachers, and we're going to continue that professional development throughout the year. Really getting a lot of support with the county office on that, and then finally on project based learning, because that's how we we incorporate these these critical areas, get kids to really think critically about their learning. And and engage students in some hands on authentic learning experiences. So that's going to continue to be a focus of for our targeted professional development.

Rick Oser
So we know that we really need to support our students at their levels. That's the core of a high quality MTSS. If a student needs academic support, then we need to provide those opportunities. And so here's a couple of ways that we're supporting. So all of our elementary schools have universal access time in language arts and math, 30 minutes for each of those blocks. So in addition to their core instruction, there's time designated to provide students the instruction that they need. Now, that could look like students receiving, students being dispersed across a grade level. One teacher taking the students who need tier three intervention another teacher taking grade levels, and then a third teacher taking students who are above grade level and need extensions. Or it could be classroom teacher doing it. But regardless, we know that all of our elementary schools have this universal access time in both language arts and math. And last year, a lot of effort was put into creating the structure and maximizing that time. At the middle schools last year, middle schools had an opportunity to decouple the double period of language arts and get more creative with it. And so what we've seen happen at each of our school sites is some creative ways to still teach the English language arts standards, but then do something that is able to differentiate for that second period so that students are getting instruction once again at their levels. Maybe they need more tier three intervention or support, or maybe they need opportunities for enrichment and extension because they're already at grade level.

Rick Oser
So once again, opportunities for structured opportunities for enrichment and intervention. We know our Explore has been really useful in doing this, providing intervention, but also providing enrichment. So just this week, it seems like forever ago, but just this Monday, 499 classes across the district started with the Explore classes. Intersession and summer summer programing. We continue to utilize that once again for enrichment as well as intervention. And then finally, our schools have gotten creative with their funding. As their funding has gotten has decreased. Some schools have been able to braid title one funding and community schools funding to actually provide academic intervention if that's what the school team decided was was the priority. If they focused on social emotional learning, then they brought in a student support assistant. If they needed, if they felt that academics were the critical area, then they brought in staff to support that. And and I think with a lot of Miss Cagle and Miss Sorensen's support and navigating those financial budget areas, they've been able to do that. So just a lot of creative ways to provide this structured enrichment and intervention. So the other area that we've really been honing in on is our professional learning community. The research is clear. John Hattie's research identifies that collective efficacy, the school's belief that they can they can create academic change, that they can create the conditions for students to succeed. That belief is the single greatest influencer on student achievement, with an effect size of 1.57, which means four times the typical growth of of a typical strategy that just makes one year of growth.

Rick Oser
So we're continuing to utilize our grade level release time for really strengthening our PLCs. And that's going to continue to work or continue to be a focus. And that's where the MTSS and the PLC, they're interconnected. You can't have one without the other. You ask the question, what are we going to teach? Or what do students need to know and do? And then the next question is how are we going to assess it. And then the next set of questions is what are we going to do if a student doesn't learn it? What are we going to do if a student already knows it? So right when we get to that point, we got to respond. We got to respond to the data. And that's where the MTSS comes into hand. And then as I mentioned before there's been a lot of work around school culture climate and student engagement. Our positive behavior interventions and supports that work. We just had 19 schools. 19 schools I believe 19 schools that were recognized platinum or gold for their efforts around PBIs and and we're going to continue to grow that work. All of our schools are using sabers as a screener to identify students who need 2 or 2 or maybe 2 or 3 intervention. But all of our schools, all of our students are going to get that tier one core instruction. We now have second step, which is our social emotional learning curriculum, where students are learning these important life skills how to regulate, how to self-regulate, how to develop positive friendships.

Rick Oser
So all of our students are receiving that. That's a district wide curriculum. Whether it's TK all the way up through eighth grade. And we also know that our school redesign efforts, we now have the majority of our schools in the redesign process, and that is focusing on our Framework for the Future and helping students stay connected to schools and then Explore. We've talked quite a bit about Explore and the positive implications on school culture climate and student engagement. And then, of course, the attendance campaigns, once again led by our ISS team, schools are participating in attendance campaigns. And that's the reason why we're seeing the increase in attendance and the decrease in chronic absenteeism. So lots of great work that continues to happen there. And we continue to refine that work. And so finally there are a lot of initiatives in the district all designed to have a positive impact on these areas, whether it's academics, whether it's school culture and climate, whether it's student engagement. But these are not isolated initiatives. The work that is happening with our administrators from the district level to the site level, is understanding the interconnectedness of these initiatives. So we're not just doing community schools just for the sake of community schools. Community schools impacts our ability to reach our North Star. But community schools is also connected to the school redesign efforts, and it's connected to our Explore classes and ICAN where there is teams from schools going down to the county office to learn strategies, to engage students, to get them excited to come to school.

Rick Oser
So all of these up here, they're not isolated. They're interconnected. And so what we've been using is the administrators dashboard or principals are identifying not just the areas they're identifying and not just the metrics for growth, but the specific strategies for how they're going to get there. And then that actually becomes part of the conversation that we have at district leadership meetings where we're looking at what what are the goals, what are the actions and what evidence do we have that we're on on track. And so as we're visiting, whether it's Andy, I'm sorry, Mr. McGuire or Doctor Ibarra or Miss Frank or any of the directors when we're visiting schools, we're coming in with that lens. What does the data tell you? What are we going to see? And let's go look for evidence of it. And then let's work from that. So with that said, that is not only a overview of the data, but also our path forward. And it's not just for this year. This is the continued journey that we're going to be on. Because these are the results that or the strategies that get results. So I thank you for your time and and we I'm saying we because I'm not up here by myself. Director Sorensen, we are open to any questions or comments.

Joan Gardner
Well, you've certainly presented us with a lot of information and it will take some time to digest, but I, I would like to say I really am impressed with breaking down the language into the different domains. That was pretty genius, because you can see and I know we haven't. And I also appreciate Kathleen for that. Putting the 2019 CAASPP results because it's we can see that we have not recovered yet totally from the I mean, yeah, we've improved from last year and we're on our way, but we have not improved. We have not recovered from the pandemic and that's unfortunate. But the one thing that stood out to me was the difference between phonics, phonics doing well and and high frequency words doing great, but it's the vocabulary and the comprehension where they start falling behind. And I was wondering, first of all, if that was because of its academic vocabulary that we're moving into in the higher grades. And and that's why we're not they're not getting that. It's different than just the vernacular. So that was that was one thought that I had, but also my solution. And I'm a big reader, and I read to all of my children and they were all readers as well, going through school, so it wasn't a problem. But I think if our kids read more, we're exposed more to books and to the love of books, I mean real books. We have libraries in every school and thank the e-readers. A lot of people like them. I like still to be able to leaf through the pages.

Joan Gardner
And I think for kids that tactile response is is good for them too. That's where the vocabulary improvement comes in. And I've heard where we're talking about making sure that we have spelling tests. And I remember some teachers would assign a book and then say, pick out 5 or 10 words that, that you don't know the meaning of. Look them up. Teach kids how to use a dictionary even if it's online. Look them up, learn the definition and put them in a sentence. But again, and we got a really interesting article and we talked about this about writing physically writing as opposed to typing and the studies that have been done and the impression that makes in recall and memory and how important that is. I think if we, especially in the lower grades, when they're when we're forming those habits, if we could do more physical writing of those things. Anyhow, I'm I'm impressed and I'm hopeful. And again, this is the first time we've broken it down into domains like this, to my knowledge. And I think that will be very, very useful. I think reading is the most critical of all the things that we're we're imparting to our students. Reading with comprehension, obviously, so that that is the key to every every educational avenue in life. So. But thank you for you really have a lot on your plate, all of you. And I hope that the the mood is anticipatory and hopeful in your department.

Rick Oser
It is.

Joan Gardner
Yeah.

Rick Oser
And I do have to shout out to Kathleen and her team because all of that domain data for each of the schools. And it wasn't just language arts, it was math. That was provided to principals in addition to all of the other data on their first day.

Joan Gardner
And that as that was Mrs. Sorensen. Yeah. Thank you.

Rick Oser
And so, as a principal for 17 years, I never had that. I had to find it myself. So it's great that in EUSD, this is the culture. Now, it's about really putting that data to work.

Joan Gardner
Well, thank you both.

Rick Oser
You're welcome.

Joan Gardner
Continued success. I look forward to good results.

Frank Huston
I also want to thank you guys for all the work you guys did. A lot of work, a lot of data. And we still have a ways to go. I mean, and I appreciate you putting that data in it also, because that kind of gives us a, a path in which we want to move towards. And as Joan also mentioned, having the 1819 school year really gives you a good idea of where we're at and where we need to go. And I really I'm looking forward over the next few years to see these numbers in the yellow and in the red dropping. I think that we're on the right. I think we're on the right path. And like you were saying before, providing the principals with this information, and now that we have i-ready, which basically nails down to each student how that each student is progressing throughout the year, I think that information is critical in moving forward, allowing the teachers to see which which students really need the tier three or the tier two assistance. And I'm really hoping that the and I'm sure it I'm sure it is the. Hold on one second. The universal access time, which we really were looking at as being an opportunity to really give that extra for those students, and I'm sure that the teachers are using that to really assist those kids that really need that help and giving that a little bit extra.

Frank Huston
Also, the program that's also doing that I'm very excited to see how that progresses, and I'm very thankful for all the teachers that are willing to do that. I mean, that that's extra. I mean, spending more time helping those students that are that need help in the ELOP program is is crucial. They see it, and my hat is tipped to all of the teachers that are doing that, and all the teachers that are currently out there working their tail off because we know they are. I mean, I wish the numbers were a little bit better, but we all know that this is a very slow moving ship, and those numbers are not going to just jump out at us. But there's hope there. There's a really good numbers that are reducing, and I'm really excited to see within the next 2 to 3 years, this is some really good movement in that, in that direction. So I really want to thank not only your team but everyone else that's doing all the work. I mean, it's really, really, really showing a good, good forward movement. So thank you.

Rick Oser
You're welcome.

Mark Olson
I'll be brief. I don't want to take up too much time, but I echo my colleagues comments. I'm glad to see our attendance is going in the right direction. Obviously, that's going to be a it appears that's going to be a slow slog, but at least it's going in the right direction. But it'd be nice to not just from a funding standpoint, but I think the more they're in school, the more those other numbers are going to take care of themselves as opposed to having to to continue to like, push it, though. So appreciate the emphasis on that. Glad to see that's going in the right direction. It'd be nice to, you know, I'm sure you'll continue to look for ways to make more gains than that, but appreciate everybody's efforts and all the information.

Zesty Harper
Thank you so much. I really enjoyed the presentation. On these nights when we get all of our CAASPP scores, I tried to make sure I go to a school before I attend this board meeting, because it helps refocus me on what's important and what's actually happening. Because when you look at these numbers, we are not where we want to be. No one's saying we want we are where we want to be. We are slowly trending in that direction, but I think it helps to put it in perspective and see it in action every day. And I saw that today I visited Rose school. Just being in the classrooms watching their lessons and what is happening in the classroom is, is really improving. I appreciate that you pulled those teachers to recognize them because I think that's important because no one is in this district for anything but our students. And they they we are a very special district. And our employees, our teachers are classified really exemplify that because they have such a heart for our students and for our community. I mean, we're here to provide that foundation so the teachers can be in the classroom doing what they need to do.

Zesty Harper
So I appreciate how you broke that down, what our plan going forward is because I think really looking and finding those root causes is really what's going to make that turn. And the example of, you know, 55, 60, 80% stretch growth, I mean, that is tremendous. To see with our student population. So thank you. I just wanted to keep encouraging your department and all the teachers and all of our supporting staff that makes that possible for this growth. But I really appreciate how you broke it down. And you were smart enough to let Kathleen run, and she she can really break it down and really get to the heart of what's going on. And, I mean, I think that's a tremendous gift we have in this district as as well. And Kathleen and to really see those numbers and what, what the data can lead us to because it's not the whole story, but it's a great guideline. And so I just wanted to thank you and thank Kathleen.

Doug Paulson
And I would also like to recognize that in our CAASPP scores, we have made growth over the past several years on a consistent basis. There's not a lot of districts that have done that consistently. And although we have not regained our pre-COVID numbers in all areas, we have regained them in several. And on the I-ready scores, which is just another measurement we've regained. We have exceeded our pre-COVID numbers in all except a couple of the areas, I believe. And so the fact that we are above our pre-COVID numbers on the I-ready measurement is really excellent. I just want to recognize that in order to get gains. Although I understand we're not where our teachers want us to be. I get that, but the incredible effort on the part of our classroom teachers, our paraeducators, everybody involved with our school, it takes a lot. And so I think we all just very much appreciate that. I know the community does. Thank you.

Rick Oser
You're welcome.

Doug Paulson
Anything else? All right. Thank you very much.

Rick Oser
Thank you.

Doug Paulson
We are not adjourned. But we've only got one thing that I actually asked to be separated out. And this is our educational services agreement with the YMCA of San Diego County. And this is with reference to the pool and upcoming swimming lessons available to all of our students. Could we get some more information about this, please.

Rick Oser
Yes, certainly. It's really exciting to be here to share the agreement with YMCA to provide aquatics activities for our students who are in the after school program. So we do have a a limit on the number of students who are able to go over based on the time being one factor, but also how many students can be in the water at once and there are some regulations. So we in front of you, you have an agreement with YMCA to begin to provide aquatics activities for students who are attending the YMCA, which YMCA is serving all of our elementary schools in the after school program. This is kind of a starting point. So they will be bussed. They'll check into the before and after school program at their school site. They will be transported over to the YMCA complex. There'll be enough time for two activities, one water based activity and then one non-water based activity. This way only so many students can be in the water at once, and then they'll be transported back to the school site for pickup by we're hoping to get them back to the school site by 5:15. So it's going to be really busy at those at those schools to get the students, you know, their, their supper check in supper. And then transportation transported, changed into their bathing suits. Although I know if I was a nine year old kid, I probably would come with my bathing suit on that day. Just kidding. We're not recommending that, but.

Andrew McGuire
But many will.

Rick Oser
But there the YMCA has been working really hard as well as the USD team to put together this opportunity for our students. And so we're really excited about it. And then as I mentioned, this is just a starting point because we also have spring break and intersession intersession spring break programs, as well as summer programs that will be able to get more kids into into the water for first water safety and then second swim lessons.

Doug Paulson
And so I'm just so excited about this because this really this agreement could really lead to a transformation of our community back toward being an aquatics city, which we have lost over the past several decades. So this is a great first step. I'm going to jump the gun on everybody and move approval and then ask for discussion.

Zesty Harper
I'll move. Approval.

Doug Paulson
No, I already did.

Zesty Harper
I'll second it.

Doug Paulson
Thank you.

Zesty Harper
Sorry.

Doug Paulson
Any discussion? All in favor? No? Two questions.

Rick Oser
The pool is heated.

Zesty Harper
Okay.

Zesty Harper
And then how? How are we picking the 80 students per site that get to go?

Rick Oser
So these will be we're going to start with third and fourth graders. Because we know that third grade students, that's kind of the critical age when we think of water related injuries or even in some cases, deaths. That's really the critical age. So we're going to start with third and fourth graders. And what will happen is the schools will be selected. There's a schedule where it's one school per week. And so they're not just going to have one day in the water, they're actually going to be transported over all five of the days. With Thursday being early release, they'll actually be more time for the water based activities as well as the non-water based.

Zesty Harper
So it might not be the same 80 students?

Rick Oser
It will be the same 80 students. And of course there will be additional permission slips and waivers that families will need to sign. And some families may opt out. And if a family opts out and they don't want their student to participate, then those students will continue with the regular after school programing.

Zesty Harper
Okay.

Doug Paulson
Anything else? All in favor? Motion passes 5 to 0. Thank you very much.

Doug Paulson
All right. Board member reports, Miss Gardner.

Joan Gardner
I have no report tonight.

Doug Paulson
Mr. Houston.

Frank Huston
No report.

Mark Olson
I yield my time to Zesty.

Zesty Harper
No, I just I went to Rose school today. I got to see the first day of their pods, which is where they're switching. Everyone in the school in multi grade levels into different classes. They did some team building activities. We also got to visit the preschool and the TK classrooms. So it was a it was a great visit. And again, it was great to see be back in the classroom. I always try to not go at the very beginning of the year while they're getting everything rolling. But it was again, great to be back on campus and, and see everyone at work. And then also, I know our next meeting is October 2nd, but that's also custodian day right on the second, October 2nd. So I wanted just to remind everyone to make sure you thank your custodian and your M&O workers on the October 7th, uh second, because without them, we could not be here at all. Thank you.

Doug Paulson
All right. Thank you very much. I again just want to thank everybody involved in getting us off to a strong start. I would refer people, I believe we had some date changes of our board meetings in the consent agenda tonight. So I would just refer people to that. And I want to make sure everybody knows that we have moved the meeting that was falling on back to, on parent conference night to another to another day. So schools and staff can attend the board meeting. Anybody else with a report?

Andrew McGuire
I just want to give one shout out to. We had a bit of a surprise at Felicita Elementary School yesterday morning. Where ABC News and a foundation that they, they have raising money and they came out and provided five free books in a backpack to all the third graders at Felicita in their library. So that's out there. I think they did, their the anchor, the morning anchor. I forget his name at the moment. Read to the students a couple of the books. And, and they did a little bit of a broadcast there. So some of our students got to be on TV. So thank you to ABC News.

Dr. Luis Ibarra
Yeah, we'll be sharing the clip from the news out in the Happy Friday family com and all the other avenues.

Doug Paulson
All right. The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 2nd, 2025 at 7 p.m. at the Escondido Union School District. Carilyn Gilbert Education Center, 2310 Aldergrove Avenue, Escondido, 92029. We are adjourned.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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