



# Ask Dr. Rodriguez



## Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Edition #1 2023-24 School Year – Week of August 14, 2023

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

### 1. What has been your biggest challenge so far this school year?

So far, my most significant challenge revolved around the urgent need to fill key management, teaching and support staff positions within Stockton Unified while simultaneously developing comprehensive systems and processes to support a smooth transition into the 2023-2024 school year. The time constraint of arriving on July 1st added an extra layer of complexity to this task. It required us to efficiently identify, recruit, and onboard qualified individuals for these crucial roles while also designing and implementing the necessary frameworks to ensure that operations and activities ran smoother as the new school year began. In addition, the challenge of swiftly assembling a capable team and establishing the foundations for a successful school year was time intensive. I am appreciative of the many staff members in the Superintendent's Office, Human Resources, Business Services, Educational Services and Transportation Departments who assisted with the transition.

### 2. You noted that you were going to be doing town halls. When and where are they going to happen?

The first town hall will occur on August 29, 2023 between 5:30-6:30pm at the School for Adults. Below is the flyer which contains all of the dates, times, locations and topics of upcoming town halls. I hope that students, parents, staff and community members will join me to discuss and provide feedback on these important areas of concern.

## Town Hall Meeting's

WITH  
*Dr. Michelle Rodriguez*  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Town Hall topics were identified based on feedback from the Listening Sessions.



**29**  
AUG. **TOPIC: STAFFING AND RETENTION**  
School for Adults - 1525 Pacific Ave.  
Tuesday 5:15 - 6:30 p.m.

**7**  
SEPT. **TOPIC: FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS**  
Primary Years Academy - 3830 Webster Ave.  
Tuesday 5:15 - 6:30 p.m.

**14**  
SEPT. **TOPIC: BROAD COURSE OF STUDY**  
Chavez HS - 2929 Windflower Lane  
Tuesday 5:15 - 6:30 p.m.

**18**  
SEPT. **TOPIC: PARENT/STUDENT & STAFF ENGAGEMENT**  
Hong Kingston- 6324 N. Alturas Ave  
Tuesday 5:15 - 6:30 p.m.

**3. There are staff members who would like to provide you with information in a confidential format. Do you collect personal information through the Let's Talk app?**

All students, staff, parents and community members can provide me with comments or questions through the "[Let's Talk](#)" app without having to provide any personal information. However, if I do not receive contact information then I cannot directly respond back.

**4. Will you be transparent in resolution practices and listen to complaints filed by employees? Will you open the door to discussing this process publicly?**

The heart of Board Policy 1312.3 on employee complaints is rooted in fostering a safe and positive working environment for our valued staff. The District not only upholds its responsibility to adhere to state and federal regulations governing educational programs but also places a strong emphasis on nurturing an atmosphere where our staff can thrive.

The expectation of the newly hired Director of Constituency Services is to support implementation of the uniform complaint procedures ("UCP") to promptly address and resolve various types of concerns and complaints. These encompass matters ranging from ensuring accommodations for pregnant and parenting pupils to tackling unlawful discrimination. Our commitment extends to supporting foster youth, homeless children, and other vulnerable students, ensuring they receive the care and educational opportunities they deserve.

In striving to maintain an environment of open communication and trust, we recognize the potential alternative dispute resolution ("ADR") offers in appropriate circumstances. Upholding the confidentiality of parties involved is of utmost importance, especially in cases related to retaliation or discrimination.

It is our earnest belief that by adhering to the principles outlined in this policy, we can not only uphold the rights of all individuals within our educational community but also create an inclusive and nurturing environment where both students and staff feel supported and can flourish. As the Superintendent, I am dedicated to working with our new team to provide necessary training, maintain comprehensive records, and ensure that our commitment to a safe and positive workplace is unwavering.

**5. How do I sign up my child for the afterschool program?**

Through SUSD's Expanded Learning Opportunities Programs (ELOP), we strive to create a nurturing and stimulating environment that fosters curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. By offering a diverse range of educational, recreational, and enrichment activities, we aim to inspire lifelong learning, promote personal development, and cultivate a sense of community. We are committed to equitable access, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds have the opportunity to participate and benefit from our programs. Together, we are building a brighter future by expanding horizons, unlocking potential, and fostering a love for learning. To sign up for the afterschool program, you can register through the following link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd8whjgyVzf4MfWbKbiSx4p3W1TuFJDjQE1HlWwe4QtydEtsg/viewform>.

**6. Who designates Special Education children to attend schools? Why aren't more Special Education students being placed at a school near their home?**

In general, it is the critical role of a child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Team to determine and identify the appropriate placement for a student. This placement is based on data and discussion determined after an IEP has been developed and agreed upon to have students placed in the Least Restrictive Environment. SUSD's goal is to keep our students as close as possible to their home school whenever possible.

Our district serves approximately 5,693 students with disabilities who are enrolled in our Specialized Educational Local Plan Area (SELPA), ages birth-22 years. Our district must ensure that all students have appropriate services provided in the Least Restrictive Environment, along with a continuum of services available for them to access. With this being said, data is collected for each individual student which assists us in determining the type of programs and services required that we would need to have in our district.

All Special Education programs are not needed or required at every school site, as the number of students and individual needs determine how many and what type of programs are necessary. We strategically place our specialized programs at designated locations throughout the geographic boundaries of our district. We worked intentionally to place programs in the North, South, Central, East and West of our district to provide as much access as possible closest to students' home schools. Again, this is prioritized yearly according to student need, based on the Least Restrictive Environment. It is always our priority to place each student at a program as close to their home and neighborhood school whenever possible.

**7. My laptop charger is not working anymore. What do I do?**

If a student has misplaced their laptop power adapter, they should contact their school site librarian or the personnel in charge of handing out Technology for the site. If a school site does not have enough adapters in stock, the Information Services Department would assist in getting adapters to the site.

**8. My question is for any employee who was hired for a position under ESSER funds what will happen to these individuals when the ESSER funds expire?**

One of our District priorities is to recruit and retain high quality staff. As such, we were able to identify various alternative funding sources for the ESSER funded including Nutrition Services Fund, Bond Fund, LCFF Supplemental and Concentration Funding, Title I, Learning Loss Funding and General Fund.

**9. I teach vocational classes for sped (primarily mod/severe). there were other vocational classes to help prepare students with hands on work experience, but they were eliminated. What is available for special education students now?**

In the last few years, we have experienced the retirement of many vocational ed teachers who taught vocational classes for Special Education students in food preparation and auto. To address this turnover, the CTE department has connected with the Special Education Department through Steven Bartles in the Young Adult Program (YAP). Our desire is to increase Special Education inclusive opportunities in a number of our existing CTE

pathways. We are determining how this support structure will look, and what an expansion of partnerships on joint projects will accomplish in supporting our students.

In addition, the World of Work Program (WOW) provides on-site vocational training at our comprehensive high schools and the Young Adult Program. Once students have completed the Job Awareness and Job Exploration modules, they are eligible for a paid work experience on or off campus, depending on the student's ability/skill level. Many of our Moderate/Severe students start with a paid sheltered work environment on campus and eventually graduate to off site work. WOW currently helps support two campus cafes (Chavez and Stagg), three coffee carts (YAP, Stagg, Edison), a student store (YAP), weekly car wash (YAP), two vocational training centers (Edison and Stagg), and a video production and graphic design program (YAP). These programs offer students a variety of hands-on vocational and life skill opportunities, for example: cooking, custodial, independent living skills, copy center, laundry, barista training, and specific vocational skills related to local business needs. One particular example is Eddie's pizza which donates pizza boxes to the program so the students can practice folding boxes prior to being hired.

All special education high school and YAP teachers are encouraged to develop new programs that will develop additional vocational skills. Teachers are required to submit a business proposal for any newly proposed vocational program. Teachers interested in developing a new program or classroom run business should contact Steve Bartles. Steve provides a sample business plan and supports them through the process. The approved classroom operated business is then funded through the Workability grant (CDE) California Department of Education and/or Transition Partnership Program Contract (TPP) with the Department of Rehabilitation.

**10. What is your opinion on the IB program itself, as you are very familiar, and your thoughts about its potential longevity in our community.**

Having extensively studied and observed the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, I find it to be a truly remarkable and comprehensive educational framework. It emphasizes holistic learning, critical thinking, and international mindedness, which are essential skills in today's interconnected world.

The IB program is a valuable educational pathway focused on inquiry-based learning and preparing students for academic success. Through its interdisciplinary approach, the IB program not only promotes a deeper understanding of subjects but also encourages students to become lifelong learners, well-rounded individuals and global citizens. The emphasis on creativity, action, and service fosters a sense of social responsibility and empathy and empowers students to become thoughtful, responsible, and compassionate humans - qualities that are invaluable for personal growth and contributing positively to society.

As for its potential longevity in our community, I am confident that the IB program will continue to thrive. Its emphasis on rigorous academics and global perspectives equips students with the skills and mindset needed to succeed in various fields and adapt to the

evolving demands of the modern world. Its strong foundation and adaptability ensure that it will have my support and a lasting and positive impact on our community for years to come.