



Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Edition #25 2023-24 School Year – Week of February 26, 2024
Questions are quoted as I received them directly from our community.

- 1. As a school counselor in the district, I was recently asked to join the anonymous Tip reporting team for Sandy Hook. This program has been long overdue for SUSD, and I'm glad to be a part of it. During the training, we were informed that we might receive calls after work hours. However, since I don't have a district phone and I'm not required to answer my cell phone outside of work hours, I'm concerned about what would happen if other counselors or healthcare workers also decide not to enter their personal cell numbers.**

You are not required to use your personal cell phone; however, you may select to do so. You can just use your work email to receive and manage the tips during the workday.

- 2. There have been many rumors coming from union that there are going to be massive layoffs either in March this year or the 24/25 school year. Can you validate or invalidate these rumors. As this would be very beneficial to all employees.**

There will be no layoffs for the 2024-2025 school year. I have made that commitment, and I am happy to confirm that there have been no layoffs. While it is true that some districts, like SUSD, may experience reductions in their workforce due to declining enrollment, it is important to emphasize that such measures are not necessary for us at this point to maintain our fiscal solvency. We remain committed to supporting our staff and ensuring stability within our organization.

- 3. When will resources be purchased with the Arts Block Grant funds that have already been approved to use for this year? I am hearing things will not be ordered until July 1st.**

Currently, we have been prioritizing purchases that are appropriate for the use of ESSER III funds due to the much earlier timeline for the utilization of these funds and completion of these projects. For example, almost two million dollars has been allocated for the arts including instruments/marching band uniforms, arts competitions, experiences, and transportation. In addition, we are currently placing orders suggested by the Arts Block Committee for the remainder of our Arts programs, such as iPads for visual arts teachers.

Since SUSD is migrating to Frontline-Escape purchasing system in the 2024-2025 school year from Business Plus, and annual end of the year deadlines, purchases must be placed by April 19, 2024. Because of the types of purchases that are necessary for Arts Education, the span of time between ordering and arrival may pose a challenge. We are working to try and prevent ordering problems like those that occurred last year. With the Arts Block Grant available until 2026, it will be our priority in the 2024-2026 school years regarding

investments in our Arts programs. Now that we have the needed additional funds to invest, it is critical that we judiciously develop a systemic plan of modernization and infrastructure.

- 4. I have a question regarding the lottery results. Online it says that lottery selection postings are available today from 9am-11am but not sure where they would be posted. I tried calling the enrollment office but keep getting disconnected.**

The lottery results list is housed at the Enrollment Center on Sutter Street. As it has student names, it is not posted here for public viewing, but parents may come up to the check in person who has the list to inform parent(s) there and then.

The enrollment center will be getting personal notification letters out to families via USPS mail by the March 8, 2024 published date.

- 5. I was wondering if there would/could be any upcoming before school program available at Commodore? As well as more space/workers to take in more kids for the after-school program? I really need help with before and after school care due to my work schedule. At the moment her school Commodore will not any more kids in because they said they don't have enough space due to being short staffed, so what are we supposed to do because at this point, she is going to have to miss school now because school does not have any help available! There are multiple other parents who are going through the same situation there as well. Is there anything that can be done or changed there as soon as possible by next school year?**

The Expanded Learning Opportunity Program (ELOP) site and district staff are working to expand morning options through SUSD K-8 schools. For Commodore Skills, the ELOP Department is working closely with the site administrator, Mr. Wheeler, on expansion. Commodore Skills is looking to start their "Breakfast Club" program after Spring Break, on Monday, March 25, 2024. Please have interested parents, connect with their site administrator, Mr. John Wheeler, for more information.

- 6. When will there be more information for the UOP Program for the 8th graders?**

The University of the Pacific Summer Residency Program was approved, and our secondary schools have already started with their initial selections. Each K-8 school site will be allocated 7 registrations for their current 8th-grade students. The process is similar to last year and the quicker your students are selected and pre-registered, the more likely they are to receive their first choice of the courses. Our K-8 deadline to complete registration is March 15, 2024. After March 15, 2024 we will reassess our numbers and roll any additional spots to our secondary waitlist.

- 7. Currently, the Mental Health Clinicians are able to get office supplies and fidget toys/sensory toys for students, by signing off on a small quantity amount per school site. These supplies are chosen by the Admin staff and not the Clinicians. Given the fact that the Clinicians are the ones who are serving the community at their specific school sites, will the Mental Health Clinicians be getting a yearly budget like the Counselors get for their school site's needs versus Admin ordering supplies that are not targeting the school site's population?**

The Mental Health and Behavior Support Services Department (MHBSS) has general office supplies, reinforcers and therapy supplies (fidgets/sensory items) "in stock" for all staff to use to support services with students.

In addition to “in stock” items, Mental Health Clinicians have been asked to submit “wish lists” for reference books, therapy supplies and reinforcers for students. MHBSS has been able to identify allowable funding to purchase these items.

Also, a needs assessment has been conducted where all Mental Health Clinicians were asked to contribute to a list of items and materials used when providing professional development for staff, and workshops for parents. The items requested were purchased and are “in stock” for all Mental Health Clinicians to access. These items, as well as therapy supplies, are replenished as quantities become low. Limits to the quantity any one person can take in one visit to the department office were put in place to ensure that all 39 Mental Health Clinicians have equitable access to the items they need. There is no limit to the number of visits a Mental Health Clinician can make.

Mental Health Clinicians can request specific items at any time through a departmental form. Department Administration reviews requests and places orders at the end of every month.

- 8. Why is it so difficult to schedule a bus for a field trip? We had to cancel our field trip because by the time we got a response from transportation the destination had no more dates available. We are trying a new destination, but the long delay in transportation getting back to the site means we will likely not go on a field trip this year at all.**

The Transportation Department fields approximately 100 field trip emails or more per day and they are answered in the order they are received. Due to the volume of requests, we know that the response time can be lengthy, therefore, we are currently working toward moving to an online reservation system that will be electronic and more efficient and effective in streamlining the process for reserving field trips in the future.

- 9. Why have student pictures not been updated for all students since 2020? I teach 6th grade and many of the student pictures are from when my students were in 2 or 3rd grade. This make is very difficult when printing seating charts for subs or when subs login to take attendance. This is also the first image we see when the new year starts and these pictures should be updated for all students. Some pictures are new or from 5th grade but this is not how it should be.**

Technology and Innovation staff update the pictures in Synergy yearly or as needed and work through the school site secretaries to obtain student photos from photography companies. Each photography company works differently on providing student photos to the site, which in turn, works with technology staff on uploading into Synergy. Please ask the site secretary or office staff to reach out and provide updated pictures to Technology and Innovation staff at 209-933-7090 or submit a helpdesk ticket.

- 10. What are the office hours at Sutter Street for the Kindergarten enrollment office?**

The Admissions and Family Services Department is open Monday through Friday from 8:00-3:30pm.