

Golden Spotlight:

In October, the High Desert Hawks were challenged to write a 300 to 400 word essay entitled “How Can I Be a Good American?” Conducted nationwide, this VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars)-sponsored youth essay competition gives students the opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. It was inspiring to see the High Desert students reflect on the qualities they can embody in their youth as representatives of what it means to be a good American. Four High Desert students took on the challenge and all four placed, which earned them scholarships from the local VFW Quartz Hill Post. The VFW Quartz Hill Post is in District 5. The 1st Place winner from each local Post moves on to the District Level and that 1st Place winner moves on to the State and National levels.

Local VFW Quartz Hill Post Scholarship Winners are:

- 1st Place - Francis Cabrera (who will be reading the award winning essay for us this evening)
- 2nd Place - Michaela Williams
- 3rd Place Tie – between Joaquin Mejia and Michael Williams

This is High Desert's second year participating in the contest and our second year taking home 1st and 2nd place. Last year's winner was Francis' older brother Agustin Cabrera. 2nd Place tie with a student from another school was Victoria Seymour.

Superintendent report for January 13, 2022:

This evening I will be covering the following strategic initiatives: Effective Instruction and Leadership, Community Engagement, and Utilization of Fiscal Capital.

Effective Instruction and Leadership:

Schools to Watch is a national network of over 400 schools in 17 states. California is the largest state participant. Schools that apply to become Schools to Watch in the fall, submit an application that is reviewed by experienced middle-grades experts in their state. If the application is approved, the school hosts a validation

visit. If the school meets the qualifications, the school becomes a California School to Watch in March and a National School to Watch.

The California Schools to Watch program is operated by:

California League of Schools

California Department of Education

On Monday, January 10th, Principal Van Ornum, myself and Mr. Scott Steele, State Director for League of Schools, met virtually to share highlights of the schools to watch redesignation application.

The District and High Desert is delighted to announce that, after a rigorous application process, High Desert was enthusiastically endorsed as a Re-designated California and National School to Watch. High Desert was originally Designated as a School to Watch in 2012. Proudly re-designated in 2015, 2018, and now in 2022.

Thank you to the Re-Designation Application Writing Team for all of their hard work in highlighting the programs, events, and academic opportunities that make High Desert a School to Watch. Thank you to Ms. Alford, Mrs. Rosenfeld, Mr. Pell-um (Pelham), and Mrs. Van Ornum. Congratulations!

Community Engagement:

The Lyons Club generously offered 5 vision certificates for up to five students here at our district. This vision certificate allows for a free eye exam and at least one pair of glasses. This is of course all at no-cost. Thus far, we had two students who took advantage of this generous opportunity. A big thank you to Ms. Sandra Beck from the Lyons Club. We value and appreciate the partnership.

Utilization of Fiscal Capital:

- Pursuant to Education Code (EC) Section 42131, the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools (County Superintendent) has completed their review of our district's 2021-22 First Interim report with a positive certification. Thank you to Mr. Mirza and his team for their diligence.

The District's 2021-22 First Interim Report reflects declining enrollment with projected funded average daily attendance of 979 for 2021-22, 881 for 2022-23, and 868 for 2023-24.

This rate of projected decline in enrollment represents a loss of revenue for the District in the current and future years. LACOE does recommend that the District continue to assess and adjust staffing needs and facilities planning for upcoming years based on the projected rate of decline in enrollment.

- Moving on, Gov. Gavin Newsom released his January Budget Proposal on Jan. 10, officially kicking off the 2022–23 budget season. Increased funding for declining enrollment, transitional kindergarten, and expanded learning highlight Governor's Budget. The following are highlights to the proposal:

Prop 98- State is experiencing a budget surplus of 16.1 billion would go to prop 98 funding.

5.33% COLA for LCFF funding and categorical programs outside LCFF including special ed, child nutrition, mandate block grant

To address declining enrollment, they are considering using ADA the greater of school districts current year, prior year, or the three-year average. meaning, this will start with the 2022-2023 fiscal year, by taking the following 3 previous years into account, starting with 2019-2020.

Commitment to universal TK- Governor proposes \$639.2 million to fund the expanded eligibility for TK children who turn 5 between Sept 2 and Feb 2.

Reserve Caps likely triggered in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

The Governor proposes an additional 3.4 billion in ongoing prop 98 general funds for ELO Grants Fund.

Early Literacy- To increase grade-level reading proficiency for children, the Governor proposes providing \$500 million in one-time Proposition 98 General Funds over five years to high-needs schools to hire literacy coaches and reading specialists to assist in the classroom and provide one-on-one and small group intervention. He also proposes providing \$200 million in one-time Proposition 98 General Funds to provide grants to LEAs to “expand multi-lingual school or classroom libraries.”

Special Education- The proposed budget provides an additional \$500 million in ongoing Proposition 98 General Funds for the special education funding formula.

The Governor proposes \$1.5 billion in one-time Proposition 98 General Funds over four years to provide additional funding to support the development of additional college and career pathways. Another \$500 million is proposed, also over four years, to support dual enrollment opportunities.

The Governor's budget proposes approximately \$2.3 billion in additional school facilities funding over two years for new construction and modernization.

Transportation funds for green buses has also been addressed.

The Governor proposes dedicating \$1.5 billion one-time Proposition 98 funds over three years to greening school bus fleets. Grants of at least \$500,000 would be available for LEAs, prioritizing those with high concentrations of low-income students, youth in foster care, and English learners, as well as small and rural LEAs. Each grant would be used to acquire an electric school bus, construct charging stations and support other transportation needs, including training.

Moving to School Nutrition,

The Governor's plan dedicates \$596 million Proposition 98 General Funds to provide universal access to subsidized school meals. The plan requires public schools to provide two free meals per day to any student who requests a meal, regardless of income eligibility, beginning in the 2022–23 school year. To maximize federal reimbursement for meals, schools that are eligible for the federal universal meals provision will be required to apply for the program by June 30, 2022. The state will cover remaining unreimbursed costs up to the combined state and federal free per-meal rate.

The budget also proposes \$450 million in one-time Proposition 98 General Funds over three years to upgrade school kitchens and \$3 million one-time Proposition 98 funds for the School Breakfast and Summer Meal Start-Up and Expansion Grant Program.

NO RELIEF FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYER PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS. The impact for districts would mean paying higher rates for the upcoming years.

Again, this is a proposal. As an LEA we look to the possibility of a May revise to the proposed budget.

This concludes my report for the evening, thank you.

COVID Report:

- I'd like to provide an up to date COVID report, data pulled from LACDPH. 43,582 new cases as reported to LACDPH as of January 10th as compared to 941 new cases for December 7th, as reported at our last board meeting. A significant surge since our last board meeting, approximately a month ago.

The testing positivity rate, a 7-day average for the week of January 3rd is at 22.64% as compared to the week of November 30th which came in at 1.24%. I'd like to stress that our district's positivity rate hovers near 29%.

Once again, I would like to remind our families, the importance of a self-check at home prior to students arriving on campus. Please look for symptoms such as a cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

In addition, virtual meetings have held between Dr. Duardo, LACOE superintendent and LACOE staff with school districts over this past few days. With that said LACOE is making a number of changes that they hope will make it easier to manage cases and outbreaks at schools while keeping students and staff safe. These are temporary measures to address the volume of cases due to the current surge.

At the end of January, LACOE will review the impact of these modifications and the trajectory of the surge to determine whether to extend the modified approach. The changes to exposure management in schools are outlined on the slides you see on the screen.

Case Management: Identification and Isolation of COVID-19 Cases

- From now through the end of January, schools should prioritize identification of COVID19 on campus and isolation of cases. This should take precedence over other COVID-19 measures.
- Schools should inform parents of infected children that they need to keep their children in isolation at home to prevent further spread on campus.

COVID-19 Exposure Management

Schools may not have the capacity to do contact tracing given the volume of cases at this time. Schools that are unable to determine who was exposed to an infected individual at school may simplify exposure management by notifying the entire relevant group (e.g., classroom, sports group, art group, etc.) of potential exposure and providing them with instructions. This can be done by an email blast or by a robocall.

There are two groups of exposed students that may remain in school if they have a school exposure: asymptomatic students that are fully vaccinated, and asymptomatic students eligible for modified quarantine because they only had mask-to-mask exposure with the positive case.

These students may remain at school during the 10-day quarantine period as long as they remain asymptomatic and wear a well-fitted mask at all times.

Schools are required to have sufficient testing capacity two weeks after re-opening from winter break to test students remaining on campus at least once during their quarantine period. Ideally, such students are tested twice (either antigen or PCR tests are acceptable): once after notification that they are a close contact and once again on or around Day 5.

Reporting COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

Until the end of January, isolation of cases and exposure management are the most important strategies for limiting spread. Reporting cases and close contacts is secondary.

Testing

- Schools with limited testing capacity should prioritize response testing of staff and students with symptoms or exposures over regular, weekly testing.
- In particular, prioritize testing to allow asymptomatic, exposed students and staff to remain in school.

Though response testing is the priority for school testing, schools may continue to conduct weekly asymptomatic, screening testing if they have enough testing capacity to do both.

In youth sports programs, weekly testing is still required for unvaccinated athletes of all ages, for students participating in indoor moderate or high-risk sports and for all unvaccinated athletes aged 12 years and older and staff participating in outdoor moderate or high-risk sports.

We will continue keeping our families up to date as new information comes through.

Thank you. This concludes my COVID report for this evening.