

MORGAN HILL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

June 9, 2014

Dear MHUSD Employees,

I am so proud of all that you have done this year. Your work for our students has been way above and beyond what I have experienced in any other District and in any other year. After 30 years in education, I know that I never had a year that was more challenging. I am sure many of you feel the same way. Your continued drive to do what is right for our students and working so hard to reach each child is evident in academic growth and the flourishing environment at all our sites. In my role, I have heard heartwarming stories from parents, classified staff, teachers, administrators, community members, elected officials, and business owners about how people have come together in this community for the purpose of supporting students. We entered this year faced with incredible challenges and together we met each one head on. A few of the challenges we faced on the front of our minds are:

COMMON CORE

As sweeping a change as Common Core is, instructional staff began preparation a couple of years ago by diving into the new standards. Instead of ignoring or rejecting the inevitability of the change, staff viewed, albeit cautiously, Common Core as an opportunity to create or hone instructional methods and define curriculum. It is not easy and it will take a good amount of time to adjust to the new standards. I recognize that we are not done adjusting yet, but I also know that Morgan Hill will continue to be an implementation-lead District with staff input and advice. We will find tremendous success and growth as Norma Martinez Palmer, Arlene Machado, the Ed. Services staff, site leadership, and our new Teachers on Special Assignment. Debbie Grove, Gemma Abels, and Mary Alice Callahan continue to find ways to support our instructional staff. We commit to working together while providing more tools and training. I thank all staff for flexibility, persistence, and positive drive to implement Common Core.

CHARTER INTRUSION

Corporate charter schools attacked our community heavily this year. These exploiting businesses used scare tactics aiming to fuel private interests and profiting by drawing public funds. The two charters which petitioned Morgan Hill canvassed neighborhoods handing out misinformation and told community members that if their children stayed in Morgan Hill Schools, they will not go to college. Their claims are false. The petitioners' history of culling and segregating students into their substandard and non-compliant schools may be welcomed in other communities but not acceptable for Morgan Hill. Although some innovative charter schools serve unique groups of students through unique methods of instructional delivery, the petitions that came to the District in the past year have no real proven success. Their design places students en masse on computers without certificated instructor direction, save money on staff, and use money that should stay in the community to expand in other communities, cities, and states. With the inequity of charter laws, entrepreneurs continue to assault public education throughout the United States with a scheme drawing our public funds for their private interests, ultimately harming our most needy children. California currently ranks 49th of 50 states in funding per pupil and we need every dollar to serve our students. We can expect more charter attacks soon in Morgan Hill. Our educational community made it clear that every student deserves better than to be used as a source for the not-so-hidden agenda of profiteering, organized labor busting, and a mock voucher program.

FOCUS ACADEMIES

Our staff and school communities have also welcomed the challenge of four new research-proven innovation and localized themed programs we call “Focus Academies.” We thank the Jackson Academy of Math and Music for pioneering the model for the school wide themed approach last year and this year. The San Martin Gwinn adopted the District generated the highly successful program called Dual Immersion Multicultural Education (DIME). All staff members involved are commended for the work toward such successful establishment of these programs. Staff and community members, again at San Martin Gwinn, dedicated more long hours this year in researching, planning, and building the exciting new Environmental Science Academy with Project-Based Learning and STEM. Their new video about the Academy is now on the District’s website www.mhusd.org, Facebook page, and YouTube. P.A. Walsh staff has done an amazing job of preparing for the new STEAM Program. You can read a bit about the theories of STEAM in the Wall Street Journal: [STEAM Article](#)

LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA AND THE LCAP

This year we were challenged with implementing a new State budgeting process called the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) which allowed us to determine our local needs for which to apply the funds received from the legislature. As a District and a community we embraced the opportunity as it not only allowed us to use the funds based on input from our parents, staff, and community, but the formula provided our district with some additional equity funds which we are using wisely. The Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) now includes goals with direction to meet the needs of all students: [Local Control Accountability Plan - June 5, 2014](#).

There are several changes that will occur in accordance with the new spending formula and plan, not the least of which is to improve compensation for all employees. We believe that the great work should be well paid. I commend the salary compensation committees and negotiations teams for working together in preparing options that will bring competitive salaries and wages to the dedicated faculty and staff of Morgan Hill Unified.

Although the research on the academic effects of smaller class size is mixed, it is clear that our youngest students can benefit from the most individualized adult attention in their development. The Governing Board approved the plan to reduce the Transitional Kindergarten through First Grade classes to 24 students for each teacher. This action adds an additional 9.5 full-time equivalent teachers to our District staff. In the secondary schools, 10 teachers are added to the staffing to help with equity goals in the master schedules.

The Board also supported adding hours for our outreach staff formerly known as “Bilingual Liaisons.” This position is now called “Community Liaison” and each school is funded for a minimum of an additional 2 hours of time daily. Each community liaison must still be bilingual in Spanish.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Parents are our most important community partners in support of the students. We will continue to appreciate and recognize the parents of our students for their volunteerism and support in the schools. Building relations is the only way to create great success.

Dozens of returning and new non-profit and business organizations in Morgan Hill partnered with the District this year to assist our students through support programs, including counseling and mentoring services. Some of our partners are: Rotary of Morgan Hill, Chamber of Commerce, South Valley Realtor Group, United Way, Lion’s Club, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Community Christian, YMCA, Community Solutions, Santa Clara County Health

Initiative, Discovery Counseling, Advent Counseling, Learning and Loving Center, Future Farmers of America, South County Strengthening Families and Children Project, One Yard, New Teacher Center, District and Career Technical Education, Joyful Sounds, Camp Everytown, Association of Two-way Dual Immersion Education, Buck Institute, Healthier Kids Foundation, Kiwanis, Christian Counseling Center, Public Education and Business Coalition, and the Parent Institute for Quality Education. In addition, our local government, local Institutes of Higher Education, and our neighboring cities have supported the students through many programs and actions.

An inaugural United Way “READ-IN” event occurred this year around Dr. Seuss’s Birthday. Its success demonstrated outside support of our children as volunteers and contributors came into over 100 primary classrooms at our elementary schools to show their love of reading by telling about themselves and reading a donated book. The sites and Home School Clubs really stepped up beyond expectations for this event.

The Federation leaders, Trustee Claudia Rossi, and community member Mario Banuelos have led unprecedented outreach with the Latino Community. Many events, including information meetings at the El Toro Youth Center, Saint Catherine’s Church, ELAC meetings, Mushroom Mardi Gras, and the Community Conference have spurred an engagement between MHUSD staff and our parents.

LIVE OAK CINCO de MAYO PROTESTS

The school staff and students at Live Oak showed the city and the media viewers around the country that Morgan Hill is a unified community with a focus on education, acceptance, and respect. The potential effects of planned protests on both sides of the Ninth Circuit Court decision gave us the opportunity to build relations inside the district and with community leaders. Safety was primary concern. Diplomacy was first defense to diffuse the volatility of protester intent. Cooperative and collaborative planning with Morgan Hill leaders prepared the school and district for any contingency. The Live Oak students sent a message about what their school and the media had no choice but to convey that message to all: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eV36dgAooY0>

other info:

<http://blog.sfgate.com/stew/2014/05/05/morgan-hill-high-school-preps-for-cinco-de-mayo-protests/>

<http://time.com/88698/cinco-de-mayo-morgan-hill-california-protests/>

This challenge also prompted the District’s new Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/morganhillunifiedschooldistrict>

and YouTube site:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/mhusdk12>

NEW, RENEWED, AND UPGRADED FACILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY

Because of the exceptional fiscal accounting and past money management for prior District bonds, the first phase (55 million of 198 million) bonds was such a great investment, the sales went quickly and with great consumer confidence. The work that has happened at the sites through the community supported Measure G funds is somewhat invisible so far, although since much of the early funds are invested in technology infrastructure.

The school that is a support program for both of our comprehensive high schools, Central High, was renewed in a renovated facility which is now called the "Loritta Bonfante Johnson Education Center." Our facilities staff took on the seemingly insurmountable challenge of opening the Education Center by the first day of school and made it happen. Anessa Espinosa developed key relationships, had high expectations, and found high levels of performance from the architect, program manager, contractors, subcontractors, and her own crew. Everyone came through and we had a dedication event for the center where the entire community came to celebrate and give support.

Every school will undergo a remodel or renovation in some way. Some schools' modifications are aligned with the focus academies and many are now receiving long needed upgrades for roofing and fire alarm and bells. All schools have received or will receive upgrades in network systems. One-to-one devices will be in the form of Chromebooks for students in 2nd grade through over the next few years high school, and tablets for Transitional Kindergarten through 1st. The Governing board sought input on the redevelopment of Britton Middle School and will rebuilding rather than remodeling the school.

SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEMS

A School Information System (SIS) is a software system that runs enrollment registration, attendance, class schedules, student discipline, grades, report cards transcripts, assessment data and reporting, state reports, textbook management, and parent and student portals. The outdated District School Information System is called e-School and it has been inefficient and limited for our needs. With the support of a selection committee comprised of teachers, front office staff, administrators, parents, and technicians, we are in the midst of selecting a new SIS system to meet our changing needs while creating tools and processes so we can all do our jobs more efficiently and create accurate reports. We plan on using e-School during the 2014-15 school year but also adopting and implementing a new system to dry-run concurrently during the last half of the year. We have included funds for training all users in the new selected system.

Teacher-Parent communication is critical for student success. We value the parent as a partner in their child's education and every teacher must use the current parent e-School portal to convey student progress to parents starting 2014. The Team selecting the new SIS program is making certain that the new system has a parent portal feature that is easy to use for both the teacher and the parent. Each site that does not currently have standards for communication with parents through the e-school parent portal will create them in the Fall. When we transfer over to the new system, parents will be trained how to access the new portal to assist in student progress.

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

This year, we established a tradition of recognizing each school's nominee for the County's Teacher of the Year Program before the Board of Trustees. The dedication and commitment of Morgan Hill teachers is exemplified by those who receive this award. The District's Teacher of the Year is Britton's Vincent Gutierrez who will also be recognized by the County Office of Education next Fall.

Many schools were recognized for their outstanding programs, including P.A. Walsh, whose staff created the most Caring Elementary School in Santa Clara County. The District also received this year's Pioneers and Purpose Award from the Silicon Valley Education Foundation

as one of the lead districts in the bay area with creating access avenues for every student to take A-G college prep classes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1uhAdlkwql&sns=fb>

MHUSD's graduation rates for the class of 2013 were recently published by the state and our high schools were among the highest of all bay area high schools, including charter high schools. Our schools rates were much higher than those schools in the county and state while our dropout rates were among the lowest. <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/CohortRates/CRSchoolList.aspx?Agg=D&Topic=Graduates&TheYear=2012-13&cds=4369583000000&RC=District&SubGroup=Ethnic/Racial>

The most important recognition awards though, go to the individual students who have achieved. Much deserved credit goes to the dedicated staff, parents, and the community, but most credit goes to our students. I have heard reports that individual student achievements in both athletic and academic performance unprecedented. For those who are visible, and also the unsung daily staff and student heroes, congratulations on an amazing year.

WELCOME BACK

Our employee group leaders continue to be key in the collaborative effort to move the District to great achievements. I thank Danielle Nunes, Theresa Sage, and Patrick Buchser for their exemplary and collaborative leadership while we faced all the challenges this past year, and new opportunities next year, together. A personal thank you to Gemma Abels who was instrumental in so much success this year including: common core implementation, Cinco de Mayo issues diffusion, negotiations, community outreach, and the critical analysis of charter petitions. Our high level of success is due to working arm-in-arm as one unified district.

All our staff will receive a letter during the summer which will include detailed information about August 11, 2014, where we will have all staff welcomed at a District-wide meeting at one of our schools. August 11th is also one of the two new additional professional development days for teachers. Although this day is still in planning stages, please put the following on your calendar:

WHAT:	Welcome Back Meeting	
WHAT DAY:	August 11, 2014	
TIME:	7:30 - 8:00 am	Coffee and Connection
	8:00 - 10:00	Introductions / A Look Back / A Look Ahead
	10:00 - 12:00	First PD Session
	12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
	1:00 - 3:00	Second PD Session

Julie Zintsmaster is the backbone of the Superintendency and Board and responsible for so much that District can claim as success. She was also a driving force behind Measure G passing, a fitting tribute to her legacy. Many of you do not know that she is retiring this year. She will be half-time starting in July, 2014, and then going into full retirement on January 1, 2015. Our greatest challenge will be to download her knowledge and skill into ourselves so that we can continue toward great success.

We all need to thank a high functioning caring School Board. Having dedicated and supportive elected officials is becoming more uncommon in public education. Our Board exemplifies great local government work and has truly worked in the interest of our students while representing the community well.

Finally, I recognize the incredible work of our three Assistant Superintendents: Dr. Norma Martinez Palmer, Kirsten Perez, and Fawn Myers. A team that works with such dedication and commitment to children as this team does is a rare find. The additional fact that each senior cabinet member is recently new to their position is a testimony to how fortunate Morgan Hill is to have leaders of this caliber to take us into a bright future.

I am grateful for the honor to serve the students, staff, and community of Morgan Hill as Superintendent. Thank you for all you do.

Steve Betando
Superintendent
