

05/03/2023

To whom it may concern:

The “Report on the Gateway Learning Series,” seems quite bogged down in Hype Culture and driven by an opinion leader selling a luxury belief. Or more plainly put, it appears weakly held together having been wrapped in ‘equity’ plastic and sealed with ChatGPT hype. It is encased in things that have their place, but why here in what should be a straightforward conversation.

ChatGPT is unreliable. Who would go to ChatGPT to inquire concerning learning settings for expelled students? I mean, why go to Chat GPT? Why not just have a chat with your teachers? Many of whom have 15, 20, and 30 years of experience with the county in education. How about the students? The County Board does this and has done so recently in fact. Why cannot SMCOE leaders?

Of course, it isn’t all bad. In the report, Slide 4, titled “The Civil Rights Road to Deeper Learning”, mentions that relationships and environments matter. Slide 5, titled “Building a Positive School Climate Through Restorative Practices”, considers other means of correction than only suspension. It is not surprising that such information concerning Gateway is highlighted as it is through Principal Shelly Johnson’s purposeful vision that such dramatic positive change has been created at Gateway. She has been able to transform Gateway Community High School into an environment of care where students feel safe and where their needs are met. Restorative practices are always in focus. So again, I’m glad to see that Gateway and its leadership is being given credit for such advances.

Unfortunately, the information on the subsequent slides, if viewed without the proper context, tells a skewed tale.

Look at the Scalability, Affordability, Disproportionality slide for instance, which claims that counselors and campus supervision are unable to be provided due to a lack of infrastructure. I was on campus this morning. There is a brand-new Bilingual Family Counselor, so she’ll be in the know on our families and their students. There were literally two therapists on campus. Both are there daily. Again, under Ms. Johnson’s leadership she has taken what used to be “supervised mental health interns provid[ing] one hour a week of individual or group counseling” to individual counseling for all students once a week and group counseling once a week – Oh, and drop-in’s are welcome 😊 (Mehl and Morantes).

Furthermore, the slide’s information indicates that there is no supervision able to be provided. First off, didn’t we hire an assistant principal, or have I imagined his presence all year? Second, why are people applying and interviewing for the open position that our Superintendent came to you all on June 15th, 2022 asking for 3 FTE’s for – the Youth Development & Safety Specialists? One can understand why she may have

forgotten. I mean, it has almost been a year, and I imagine one would want to forget asking for you all to agree to such after having just pink slipped so many teachers the spring of that year. One would want to forget.

As for the section on disproportionality, well, yet again I'm not sure where they've gotten their data from, but just a 5-minute trek through the demographics on the Aeries system for this year's listed students for Gateway and one can see that of the 24 students that have been listed within our Gateway system this year, 8 have listed white. And it cannot be said, "well, we are only counting who is currently enrolled" because saying they are 100% of color would still prove false. This is the second time demographic information presented to the Board about Gateway has been untrue. Why? Does the truth not fit into the pushed agenda?

Furthermore, the stats that are compiled are not surprising when we consider what Ms. Bonini spoke to at the June 15, 2022 Board meeting - staffing, or the lack thereof.

Bonini "expressed concern that there is inconsistency in what is being provided to students, in terms of the number of teachers and teachers moving from site to site." I see that credit recovery is mentioned in this 'report', and according to this report, a few students did not earn credits through credit recovery. First, it may be shocking to you, but not all students who choose to attend Gateway need credit recovery. I can think of three in this very moment who do not *need* credit recovery. Second, I also see that this 'learning series' is led by SUHSD Superintendent Leach and others. I believe the Superintendent is familiar with who was fundamental to our credit recovery program throughout Court and Community. Our numbers under Trevor Leach were solid and successful. Who could begrudge Mr. Leach when so many teachers were pink slipped year after year. Ms. Bonini predicted that such a reduction in key teachers and such inconsistency would have an effect.

That said, they have interviewed and hired a credit recovery teacher to share at all sites. She has some mighty big shoes to fill, but she is doing a great job reestablishing and building upon Mr. Leach's solid foundation.

As for the bar graphs, we do have a small ask. Could titles be placed on the axis? Oh, and did anyone mention to you that we changed from Promis to Aeries for our student information system? If they did, I hope they mentioned that it has not been smooth sailing. Did you know that attendance in Promis was taken daily and that attendance in Aeries is taken by period? There were many difficulties, especially since teachers were moving from site to site. All the differing courses per student, yet all students under one teacher at the same time, and of course, the teachers being at two and three school sites. We certainly threw Aeries and our own i.t. department a few curve balls this year. You'd think it wouldn't be an issue, but it was, and although it has gotten better, there are still inconsistencies. Without a proper and thorough review of the data for this year, it would be negligent to consider the data 100% reliable. And certainly, any comparison with previous years, well, I hope the differing factors were considered.

And be especially wary of the picture painted for slide 11, Gateway 2021-2022 Transition Data. I cannot say how they'll paint that but allow me to say this: According to the slide, at least, 7 students returned to Gateway HS. They sure did. Why? Some would say, "Oh, what choice did they have?" Well, the slide won't tell you, but if you inquired, a few students just might. It is because Gateway is THEIR choice. Theirs and their family's choice. It is a place where many may stay just a while, and others choose to stay longer. But, whatever ***their*** choice, we are here for them.

In sincerity,

Ms. Misty Seago
Citizen

05-03-2023

17th District PTA – 5th VP Education/Health

- Officers slated to serve on 17th District PTA board for 2023-2025 effective 7/1/23 include Juanita Flores who will be the incoming District President: she's currently the South San Francisco PTA Council president, former School Smarts facilitator, and is employed by the SSF Unified School District. Very excited as she is bilingual – was our 17th District Convention Chair and recruited board members from first-time San Mateo County delegates!
- PTA 126th Annual Convention took place April 21-23 in Sacramento. During three general meetings, delegates heard from the CA Teacher of the Year; listened to a powerful presentation by Diana Pastora Carson about growing up with her brother with Down Syndrome, his institutionalization and eventual progression to supported living on his terms due to family advocacy; saw student creations featured in a dedicated gallery space and honored for their Reflections Art submissions in Dance Choreography, Film Production; Literature; Music Composition; Photography; and Visual Arts. There were 48 workshops both position-specific and issue-related over five sessions.

Delegates approved four resolutions which provide authority for the State PTA to take positions on legislation impacting children and families. The resolutions were:

- 1) **Equitable Literacy for All Students** - advocating for universal reading and literacy screenings; additional academic supports; evidence-based, structured literacy instruction; support for a statewide taskforce to develop a comprehensive literacy plan;
- 2) **Inclusive Education for Students with Cognitive Disabilities** – promote awareness around access; provide training utilizing evidence-based practices; advocate for policy changes to end barriers; promote the principals of authentic family engagement as part of the administration of special education;
- 3) **Synthetic and Tobacco-Free Nicotine Products** – seek and support laws, regs, policies measure to prevent use of synthetic and tobacco-free nicotine for youth; protect youth from sales; protect youth against adverse health effects by demanding safety warnings and clear descriptions of the chemicals used in manufacture; remove marketing claims these items are “safe” and non-addictive; close regulatory loopholes;
- 4) **Aid to Survivors and Victims of Sexual Violence and their Families** – updates a current resolution by replacing outdated language; regarding education for parents; advocate for adequate services; promote awareness of community services available to survivors and their families; collaborate with school administration and community partners ensuring support services available as well as age-appropriate awareness and prevention programs.

Our current term will end June 30, 2023 and the district will support local leaders by holding virtual training on June 7th.

Thank you for allowing me to share in detail to illustrate how PTA remains at the forefront of advocacy, communications, leadership development, and family engagement and how we are excited to continue this work collaboratively in San Mateo County.