

## Setting the Record Straight

Over the past several weeks, the Sweetwater Union High School District has been working through a very challenging situation with our budget. As you are aware, the district identified a shortfall in our budget for the 2018-2019 school year and immediately self-reported it to the San Diego County Office of Education. The district immediately began to fully deconstruct our budget and build it back up in a way that was accurate and truly reflective of our financial position.

With help from our employee labor groups, educational partners and community stakeholders, we were able to identify ways to balance our budget and do so in a way that was the least impactful to students and our classrooms as possible.

The purpose of this communication is to answer some commonly asked questions and to provide you with information that is honest, accurate, and provides as much clarity as possible.

As we continue through this process, we hope you will work with us to identify ways that we can better and more efficiently serve our students, while also being responsible stewards of our finances. Thank you

---

### How did we get here and who is responsible?

It is important to acknowledge that there were mistakes made across our system that contributed to this current budget situation. The systems approach to addressing organizational setbacks accepts mistakes will happen, mistakes usually triggered by factors built into the system.

- Organizations usually have a series of measures in place to prevent errors – e.g. alarms, procedures, checklists, trained staff, etc. Each of these measures can be looked upon as a “defensive layer” against error. What we’ve learned about our current systems is that we did not have tight internal controls or warning systems in place. Stronger internal controls, in addition to these alerts, are needed around payroll and staffing, site and department budgets, as well as the implementation of checks & balances at every level of the organization. The lack of these tight internal controls and warning systems resulted in unbudgeted **increases in expenditures** at the site and district levels.
- On top of this, we factor in the “perfect storm” that characterized the 2017-18 fiscal year: declining enrollment, declining average daily attendance (ADA), and declining percentage of unduplicated student groups (Foster Youth/Homeless, Low Income, English Learners) – all revenue sources. This resulted in a **decrease in revenues**.
- An increase in expenditures and a decrease in revenues = a budget shortfall.

**Will academic interventions (such as tutoring, credit recovery, etc.) still be offered at school sites?**

Yes. At several schools that receive Title I funds (funding from the federal government for lower socioeconomic status students), there should be no change to the academic intervention programs being offered. At some schools that do not receive Title I dollars you may see some shifts in how interventions are offered, but the intent is still to provide students with the support that they need.

It is important to note that school sites across the district are able to adjust their programs as they see most appropriate to meet student needs. Therefore, the programs that one school might offer do not necessarily mirror what another school offers. If you have questions about this, please do not hesitate to contact your site principal.

**Will Summer School be offered in 2019?**

Yes. Over the past several years we have made an effort to provide summer school at as many sites as possible. Although the plan has not been finalized yet, summer school will be offered at several schools throughout the district. This is a model that has been used in years past in Sweetwater and will enable us to ensure cost savings at campuses that are not being used. When a final plan is developed, it will be shared with the community.

**Will activities such as prom, grad night and others be cancelled?**

No. Funding for these events comes from separate revenue sources and are not being affected by the budget situation.

**Are any athletic programs being eliminated?**

No. We are very proud of the athletic traditions in Sweetwater Schools and will continue to support our student athletes across all competitive sports.

**Is transportation being eliminated?**

No. The district is looking at ways to be more efficient in how we offer transportation and working with school sites on how to minimize costs and resources while still taking advantage of the current fleet we have.

**Will all schools and district offices be closed during Thanksgiving and the Winter Break?**

The week of Thanksgiving (Nov. 19-23) and Winter Break (Dec. 24 – Jan. 15) are non-instruction days. This will also be a time when some staff will be taking furlough days (pending negotiation). We are working on a plan to minimize use of resources and to create energy savings, this may include several sites and district offices to be closed during this time. For detailed information on a school site or district department, please call ahead of time for their hours of operation. A district directory can be [found here](#) and school site information can be [found here](#).

## **Has District Office staff increased in the past few years?**

Staff across the district has increased over the past few years, including both school sites and district office staff. In the 2014-15 school year Sweetwater Union High School District employed 3,970 staff members, while in 2018-19 the district employs 4,367 staff. This includes increases at all levels of employee units – certificated, classified and management.

These increases were possible due to an increased stream of revenue from the State of California to all school districts, including Sweetwater under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and one-time monies that were made available. In the 2014-15 school year our general fund unrestricted budget was \$313,069,683.53 and in 2018-19 our funding is \$384,590,166.88.

Along with increased revenue from the state, came several requirements based on the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) where funding is directly correlated to services offered by the district. The Sweetwater District's LCAP goals can be found [here](#).

As part of the LCAP goals, funding and staffing was increased across several areas based on school site needs and the LCAP goals. This included areas such as mental health services, homeless and foster students and several other categories. Funding for these programs are both general fund as well as specific funding sources such as Federal, State, and County dollars allocated for specific uses.

### **Induction**

Induction (new teacher support) was reinstated in Sweetwater in 2016. The district funded Induction for 2016-2018 using one-time funds, the Educator Effectiveness Entitlement, which were given to all districts by the state. Our Board approved our plan for the use of the \$2.9 Million dollars we received from the entitlement in late 2015. Induction provides 1:1 mentoring and programmatic support for teachers clearing their credential through a California Teaching Credential Commission (CTC)-approved program, as required by state law.

During the 2016-17 school year Induction supported 275 new teachers and interns. During the 2017-18 school year Induction supported 230 new teachers and interns. This year Induction is being funded out of General Fund (10%) and Federal Title II (90%) dollars. Induction is supporting 170 new teachers and interns. The focus of both the Educator Effectiveness Entitlement and Title II funds centers around new teacher and administrator induction and support.

### **School Leadership Teams (SLT)**

The School Leadership Teams (SLTs) were reinstated at the request of staff across the district. This structure is the only district-wide opportunity to address our instructional focus which is *Effective first instruction that leads to student engagement and mastery through the lens of equity and culture*. SLTs are composed of the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) that includes teachers, counselors, and administrators. In addition to the FAC members, SLTs also include the

CIS, curriculum specialists, and a classified member. The substitutes for SLTs are funded out of Title II dollars. These are funds that specifically support ongoing professional development opportunities. Classified staff is funded under the LCAP.

The purpose of the SLT is to create a site-based leadership team that empowers schools to focus on the important aspects of instruction, school culture and climate, and academic achievement.