

**Staff and Community Input Into
CUSD Board Adopted Goals for 2014-2015**

CUSD 2014-2015 Goals

Goal 1: To provide all students with the opportunity to attain increasing levels of individual achievement that prepare them for success in the global economy

Suggestions for 2014-2015 District Implementation:

- I appreciate your request and willingness to gather input for both our schools and yourself. I believe this process holds promise for gratifying and significant outcomes. Please know that my perspective is shaped by two key factors: current teaching assignment at Fair View and experience teaching in both large (San Diego City Schools) and small (Corning) districts. Please provide our site with a functioning computer lab for FV (not just After School/special classes) OR, perhaps better, 2-3 mobile mini-labs? My students miss numerous opportunities because they need this resource.
- Additional collaborative opportunities for grade level meetings to occur, that reduce the competitive climate in our district. With common core and NGSS being implemented, this is great time to encourage a reduction of “I or we have these great lessons that you don’t” and encourage more common lessons. This would be done, not for the purpose of scripted learning, but really encourage best practices to be shared for the benefit of all students.
- I read recently that high school students that start school later in the (*morning*) perform better in their tests and the dropout rate is lower – just a thought.
- The role of the district leadership and school board is to keep abreast of current educational policy recommendations that are based on research and have proven to be successful; then set a plan to implement these policies at a local level. We cannot be complacent with business-as-usual even though institutions and people are inherently resistant to change. *All students are college and career ready* sounds great, but what does that mean at CUSD? Look at what is working in California, throughout the US and abroad. I suggest looking at the Pathways to Prosperity study coming out of Harvard (Symonds, Ferguson & Schwartz, 2011). We must continually strive to do right by our kids.
- Encourage grade levels, departments to collaborate and constantly assess and self-reflect on what they are doing in the classroom to increase rigor and to ensure that students are participating in authentic intellectual work which will move their learning forward. This could look like making sure all teachers know that there are funds available for “professional development”. I think most teachers want to constantly improve. The problem is there is little time for it. What if we created the kind of space where a group of teachers, or a teacher could approach a principal or administrator and ask: “I could use half a day to revamp my unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird* and align it to common core, and up the game.” Yes. We must educate kids. But the “teacher education and growth” also needs to be addressed and supported wholeheartedly. Even summer work where teachers can be compensated for their time is very powerful. Jim Hanlon has been very supportive of our English Camp at Chico High and when we meet as a department as a whole, reflect on the year, read research together, and plan, it brings us together philosophically as a group. We also put a bit of

“professional” peer pressure on each other to up our games instructionally. This is a good kind of pressure. It keeps us on our toes and keeps us from becoming complacent about our practices.

- We need equal and adequate access to technology at ALL sites.
- Implement adaptive math curriculum for both junior high and high school students who are far below and/or at risk. Differentiated instruction will provide greater opportunities for these students to accelerate towards grade level proficiency. This segment of students comprises a large swath of students within the district. Math curriculum should also facilitate parent involvement and buy in.

Things That Are Working Well and Should Be Continued:

- Access to technology for staff and students at BJHS, MJHS, CJHS, CHS & PVHS.
- Teacher driven PLCs and staff meetings focused on sharing best practices.
- After school programs, CTE, PLCs, professional development for teachers.
- I feel supported and I feel like the district cares about the students in its schools. There is a lot of professional development available, and I appreciate that.
- I appreciate the variety of parent education classes that have been provided over the past few years. As a parent of a teenager it is nice to have topics addressed that are part of raising and educating a teen.
- Great school culture at Chico Junior High.

Suggestions for Focus for Superintendent:

- Make access to technology a priority for FVHS students & teachers. In three plus years, I have not been able to have my LCD projector (personally purchased) mounted. I was told that it cost too much which seemed odd given that this is common at other sites. Please persuade the school board that our students deserve the same access to technology as students at BJHS, MJHS, CJHS, CHS, & PVHS.
- Additional time spent getting out to schools and into classrooms to observe student interactions.
- Please get us our truancy officer back to help deal with our chronic absent students. As an elementary attendance clerk that would be helpful!
- Be more visionary and advocate for our kids.
- Asking grade levels, departments: “What do you need? How can we support your growth as a teacher? How can we use resources to make you better in the classroom?”

Kelly, here’s another thought: For the August 14th 1st day back, what if you told teachers: We think the best use of your time is to work in your classrooms and prepare for the first day of school. We want to give you teachers the space to meet

with your colleagues on what is important right now. We trust that you will get good work done.” Putting that kind of trust out there I think will help to change the mindset of many teachers. It will change the mindset to something like, “Wow. The District trusts me to get some quality work done, without it being controlled.”

- Stay up on trends that we face as a rural community with migrant workers; especially with two potential immigration-based bills coming up in the next election.
- **Digital literacy:** We need to provide students with the digital tools that they need. We are very far behind many districts surrounding us, and yet we are next to a University. After attending the Northern California Writing Project this summer I learned that many districts have Ipads for all their students. I learned so many ideas/strategies that I would like to incorporate into my 6th grade classroom but without the digital resources I will not be able to effectively implement them. Frustrating. There were two students who were teaching at the University finishing their masters and they enlightened us to how archaic our teaching tools are and what is happening with students in the University and how they use technology. Our students need digital literacy to compete globally. I need a device for every one of my 33 students. How effective would the district office be if you had to share computers down there, or the tools were ancient, (Like in our schools), or you could not access the internet?

The sixth grade environmental school is such a growing experience for our students. Is there a way to write a grant or come up with a way to make money like what is done for the sports programs so that all schools can work together to send our students to “camp”? Raising money each year is soooo hard. It takes away from teaching time and puts a huge burden on our backs. I would love to see our district come up with a way to ease the funding scramble each year.

- Create online learning options to compete with charter schools who are steadily drawing substantial number of students away from our schools.

Goal 2: To provide a safe, supportive, healthy, and engaging environment for learning to take place

Suggestions for 2014-2015 Implementation:

- Our classrooms & grounds are simply awful at FVHS. My students roar laughing when we close the curtain for *Code Red* drills; it is shredded. Too often we lack adequate desks.
- Additional support staff during lunch time at the middle schools, release time for teachers to observe other teachers and strong encouragement to do that. Funding for books in common to be read by site staff and discussed, and books in common, such as anti-bullying books, to be read during SSR time and discussed. So, additional funding for literature for both staff and students.
- Continue with campus improvement and beautification. Chico High looks great but is not very clean. Pleasant Valley and Fair View need a makeover, and I’m sure there are many more. Environment matters, it sends a message to students and staff: “you matter” or “you don’t matter”.
- This one to me is about the individual teacher in the classroom and keeping teachers happy and positive about their working conditions is one way to support this goal. I

know the last few years have been tough on the elementary folks with all the assessments (especially at the Kindergarten level) and all of these 1 on 1 assessments might actually disengage the student as well as discourage the teacher. I don't feel this pressure of assessment at the Secondary Level. I feel like our administrators trust us to do good work and we therefore are not bogged down by district assessments. Thank goodness.

Another thought. Our evaluations article in the contract is a joke. I know CTA has worked up new concepts and language for this article. This could be a means to keep teachers on their toes professionally and not allow them to become complacent in their practices, and to understand that "thinking" you are really good at what you do, does not necessarily mean it's true. If we can work with the "peer round" concept and get honest/quality feedback from respected colleagues, we can foster the idea of being more reflective in our practices and constantly attempting to improve our instructional practices.

- Pay attention to trends that we are seeing in alt. ed.: Major increase in students with emotional trauma and mental disorders. Think about campus safety in a more meaningful/real way. I would love to see CROs back on every high school campus. I know my site felt the loss this last year. Gang activity needs to be dealt with more severely. Be prepared to deal with an increasing number of LGBTQ students.
- I would think that having a plan and then visiting school sites on a regular basis would help in making our schools have this type of environment. Supporting new principals even if they don't seem to want help. Help them anyway. Talk with teachers to ensure that what the district's vision is, is actually taking place.

You need to provide Vice Principals to schools over 500 students. You cannot ask a principal to be effective without some help. Our elementary schools have as many students as our Junior Highs and they have VP's. At the elementary level you have so many children of all ages and stages of development that having another person to help with behavior and to take on other duties would be so beneficial. Not sure why VP's are non-existent in our elementary schools. I had a student bring pot to school, one got arrested in front of the school for assault, and another student was stealing iphones from student backpacks. Our elementary principals need help!

- Provide alternative learning options tailored to individual student/family needs other than classrooms with 30-40 students. I know this makes good economic sense for the district, but high student-to-teacher ratios also continues to provide powerful incentives for student/families to seek alternative learning options outside the district. Expand alternative learning options for students within the district.

Things That Are Working Well and Should Be Continued:

- The new buildings & improvements at other sites are a source of pride. They demonstrate a commitment to the belief that our students deserve the best we can deliver.
- SSR/study skills is great and needs to be acknowledged. The newsletters highlighting great things done in CUSD is wonderful to read. Perhaps encourage each site to contribute some successes that otherwise might not be noticed.
- Collaboration with local industry partners and student involvement in landscaping and campus building projects. Continue to work with local churches and service

organizations.

- Keep giving ALL teachers the space to work with students and not be overwhelmed with assessments and complicated report cards.
- The drills we have in place for fires work, but I don't think the code red drill is very realistic.
- Instructions and trainings on CODE Red. We have the Carrot Ladies that come and teach about healthy snacks, which is a great partnership to continue. I like the new bolts that have been added to our doors.
- Implementation of all possible learning technology should be continued and expanded.

Suggestions for Focus for Superintendent:

- I do not feel I have adequate information regarding funds or funding sources to make suggestions.
- Continue newsletter with all of the great things done in CUSD by various staff, students, classrooms and special programs.
- Visit all school sites quarterly.
- Foster “non-evaluative” peer rounds where colleagues can observe each other, offer feedback and suggestions, and be supportive of our growth in the classroom as effective educators. There is an element of “vulnerability” here. That is, many teachers are nervous about being observed by a colleague, and I was at first too. But I got over it quickly after John Klein would ask me good questions about “why” I was doing what I was doing. I then realized that many of my instructional practices needed re-vamping. This was a defining moment in my career, and I am thankful for it. I guess it's a question of slowly and gently pulling/pushing colleagues into this concept to realize the benefits greatly outweigh the initial nervousness and anxiety.
- Get out and talk to students more face-to-face. See if they feel safe. What are they noticing? Get their input.
- Schools need to look nice and clean. We need them to be clean. Weeds pulled, grass green, and fields worked to get rid of pot holes that are dangerous. Cutting cement to put bark in play areas and then leaving it to spill out continually onto the playground looks deplorable. (Each day on yard duty I see it and I think, who did this. Do they not care how our school looks?) We must present a clean and inviting area so that our students feel welcome and so we can better encourage them to take pride in their environment. If the district does not take pride, how can the students be expected to take pride.

Little Chico Creek has a very tough cafeteria that is not inviting – one of our parent volunteers is very abrasive and has been known to yell at the students. Not good. Nothing has been done and I would love to see it be made a more inviting place. Most days students sit out on the cement to eat lunch so the tables do not have to be put down. The students at the last lunch have a hard time finding a clean place to sit.

- Have as many eyes and ears tuned into student movement before and after school.

Goal 3: To build effective partnerships with our constituents

Suggestions for 2014-2015 Implementation:

- Encourage participation more forcefully, what organization, company, or adult has skills that could be utilized without stepping on contractual agreements or job descriptions.
- Identify all stakeholders and set up systems for meaningful collaboration.
- Sending thank you letters to people who donate \$\$ to our classrooms. My husband donates to my classroom through his United Way contributions and PG&E matches the funds. The last time he ever received a thank you was when Carolyn Adkisson was our principal. His money has purchased field trips for all the 6th graders. White board markers for all 6th graders, not just my students etc. And a lot of extra school supplies for students who cannot afford them. Yet, he has never had anyone from the district acknowledge his donation. I left last year with over \$1,500.00 in my account to use this 14-15 school year. There may be other donors who have not been acknowledged as well. Maybe a policy could be made. People tend to want to continue to contribute when they feel appreciated. I thank him, but I think if the district took time to thank him and others it would go a long way.
- Provide differentiated technology learning options for both struggling students and advanced students.

Things That Are Working Well and Should Be Continued:

- Wow! At FVHS there is tremendous support due to a strong commitment to connecting our students with community & business partners. Much credit goes to Dave, Vig also, our staff, & our wonderful townsfolk. I would add that FVHS culture includes listening to all stakeholders.
- The LOVE Chico project had really benefited CJHS. I hope we are adequately acknowledging the participants.
- PTA, service organizations, advisory committees, industry involvement in work-based learning.
- Continue ongoing robust communication between staff, administration and parents.

Suggestions for Focus for Superintendent:

- Promote, at the service groups you talk to, the great opportunities individuals and companies could provide to assist schools, classrooms and programs.
- More interaction with Butte College and BCOE, more regional focus instead of just Chico focus. Be more approachable.

- With the sixth graders being moved I know many parents who are feeling that their voices are not being heard. Some feel that they are not given all the information they need. (just what I have heard from parents) Many do not want their students to be with 8th graders. Work on communication with the parents who students will be affected to make it a positive transition.
- Expand learning technology options that are producing positive measureable learning outcomes.

Goal 4: To monitor and adjust our district budget to ensure solvency, local control of our schools, and optimum benefit from the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

Suggestions for 2014-2015 Implementation:

- Would it be possible to add to our site budget (FVHS) given that our students are a microcosm of the most needy in our community?
- Follow through with stakeholder suggestions. Focus on early grades and prevention, offer alternatives to traditional education, be in tune with a changing economy. Use funds efficiently, avoid waste and redundancy. Tighten the belt for special education, avoid encroachment on gen ed.
- This is the tough one and frustrating for everyone involved. I hate the politics of negotiations and our constant battling. I was chatting with a particular board member and I was asked: "Why is morale so low?" I responded with many teachers just feel they are not being taken care of by the district. This involves money and it involves working conditions. Teachers feel more and more gets piled on them, instructional time gets sacrificed for district assessments, and there have been no increases in compensation for several years.

It is difficult for teachers to hear of all the new LCFF moneys coming in and only a small portion of it is being invested in the 670ish people who educate over 11,000 students for 180 days per year. I understand that CUSD must keep its budget solvent. When it comes down to it though, the individual teacher's effectiveness is what moves students along in their learning.

I will always come back to the idea of investment. Investing in teachers' compensation and investing in their professional growth can change that morale problem. It will shift the feeling of "power over" to the concept of "power with". If we can share power "with" each other (CUSD and CUTA), rather than attempt to exert "power over" each other, our mindsets can change about our relationship with each other. CUTA needs to work on this too, because it seems we want to exert power over CUSD as well. I think Kevin Moretti and I are working to change that. It's a slow process, but he and I will not give up on it.

- Hold off major curriculum purchases that entails a long term commitment until more choices and accompanying student achievement data is available.

Things That Are Working Well and Should Be Continued:

- This year our site (FVHS) will have more staff & this is commendable & much appreciated.

- LCAP transparency, open dialogue with CUTA and the Chico community, use the media to inform.
- I honestly feel like my site (FVHS) gets the raw end of the deal, so I don't have much input.
- Expand and propagate positive school culture.

Suggestions for Focus for Superintendent:

- I recall a few years ago @ DAC you related how easily you understood the realities facing Kindergarten teachers when dealing with 30+ kindergartners. Might you visit our site (FVHS) with an eye to what it's like for our students & staff.
- Make sure administrative and district employees are setting high example of good work ethic. Be more approachable
- Invest in us. Empower us. Get out into classrooms as much as you can to see the work that is going on. Listen to us. We want what is good and right for our students. But we also want what is good and right for ourselves as well. It is our human nature to look out for ourselves. We have to.
- Just be realistic and be equitable. Think of students needs above all else.
- Heating and air – every year it is the same – doors are opened to cool the rooms off because the heater has been turned on and we have a warm spell. That is such a waste of money. Maybe during those typical fall warm spells the heater could be turned off to save money. With 34 kids it is sweltering. Fans for rooms would be nice to circulate air. Most of us bring them from home.
- Invest not only in technology learning options, but in technology infrastructure and support.

Other Comments: Please feel free to address anything which you feel it is important that I be made aware. Your honesty is appreciated.

- Be visible @ school sites. When I began teaching in Red Bluff the superintendent regularly popped into classrooms unannounced. The result was amazing!
- Thank you, Kelly, for your willingness to reach out to teachers in search of ways that the CUSD can improve its dedication to the children of Chico. In response to your request for input and ideas, I have one burning concern that I feel needs desperate attention. It falls directly under the first three goals you list in your email. It is regarding the kindergarten assessments. Your kindergarten teachers have just been informed that we are to administer 15 one-on-one baseline assessments to each of our kinders within the first month of school. While this is an improvement of sorts from the expectations of last year (17 assessments in 2 weeks), many of your K teachers are left scratching their heads wondering why this is necessary. As a teacher with a BA in Child Development, and after numerous conversations with my CD peers and fellow K teachers here and in other districts, it is clear that there is no reasonable rationale to support inflicting this many assessments upon 5 year old children at the beginning of the school year when the priority should be all

about getting them to like and feel comfortable at school. Furthermore, I know of not a single parent who approves of the district's need to gather this kind of data at the very beginning of the school year. Your third district goal states the desire "to build effective partnerships with our constituents." Like you, I don't want to give families reasons to flee the public school system, but I truly believe that treating kindergarteners like this is exactly the kind of thing that drives families away! I am in no way shirking my need to assess my kinders, but I believe we are being asked to assess too much too soon. There are certainly five or so assessments that are absolutely necessary as we begin the academic year, but 15 assessments inflicted so early is simply not good for children at this age! Simply put, it is a devastating misuse of our valuable time. The reservations the overwhelming majority of your kindergarten teachers have expressed about these baseline assessments continue to fall on deaf ears. I now reach out to you directly in hopes you might intervene on the behalf of our students and their families to change the currently policy of baseline assessments for kindergarteners.

- I love being in CUSD and being at CJHS. I feel our staff is well supported by our administration and we provide excellent services to our students.
- I just wanted to share my concern with you about our need for a Probation Officer. I understand, and certainly agree, to the increased focus on attendance from the very top (Mr. Torlakson). Here at Neal Dow we are very blessed in that we have very few serious attendance problems. However, when we did have a concern, up until last year, all it took was a call to P.O. Jeanne Anselmo. I can't praise Jeanne enough for the job she did. She was always quick to respond and had a heart for her job. When she showed up at a family's door inquiring about why their son/daughter was not attending school, it made a huge impact. In fact, 99% of the time the problem ended immediately. She made a difference that our attendance letters simply could not. It can be frustrating to those of us who care about attendance and our students to simply go through the entire SARB process and to see no result at the end. Thank you for asking for our ideas and thoughts and for taking this into consideration.
- Hi Kelly...There are so many seasons that there isn't one spare minute (start/end of school, grade time, etc.). Would you be interested in sending this out each month asking for input. Right now, I just want to figure out how 39 desks will fit in here? I really like how you elicit conversation and input from the teachers.
- I have a few areas which may be helpful to our SH programs.
 - Continue to support school to work transition/ Workability, and provide support to ROP.
 - I would like to see Chico Unified take over our Diversified Occupations program which would allow us to move forward with a five day a week program instead of the four day a week program from last year.
 - Consider Jessee Brimm for a replacement to Connie Ewen. He is an outstanding young multi-talented teacher.
- Thanks for asking!
- Dear Kelly, I really think the Investment idea is a way to keep students in the district. If CUSD can inform its community into the professional growth that it is investing in for teachers to improve instruction, the community will see the great work that and solid learning which can happen. If the community sees that CUSD

is committed to student learning AND “teacher” learning, it could continue to improve the reputation of schools in Chico.

And of course, I always feel that investing in our salaries in benefits can work to empower teachers into the mindset of, “Ok, CUSD cares about me and is working to improving my compensation and working conditions.” This will foster the “power with” idea, rather than the “power over” each other that we both currently exhibit. Thanks for reading this.

- You're doing a great job. Not many people could handle what you take on every day. I feel safe working under your leadership. I am new to this whole thing, but it's obvious that people trust you.
- One more idea: meet with Dr. Maris Thompson from Chico State. Maris is in charge of the secondary MASCOT Co-teach student teacher program. It is incredibly innovative for both teachers in the room. This is my third year doing it. Others in CUSD are working as Co-teachers. These students are from the top 10% of their class, and their hire rate so far is 100%. (My first co-teacher, Wynona Parry, works at Bidwell.) I wish more secondary teachers had access to this program, to information about it, and were willing to step out and take a risk. mrthompson@csuchico.edu. I am totally jazzed for our two day training next week and to getting to know my Resident Teacher on a much more personal and professional level. (She is Resident, I am Mentor.) Kelly, the kids don't know that CUSD is not paying both of us!
- Smaller student to teacher ratios and differentiated, technology based instructional options needs to be made a priority.