

March 26, 2018

Jenni Klose, Board President
Santa Rosa City Schools
211 Ridgway Avenue
Santa Rosa, Ca 95401

VIA EMAIL: jen@kloselegal.com

RE: Santa Rosa City Schools Board Agenda – March 28, 2018 (Item F.1)

Dear Ms. Klose:

I wish to commend the Santa Rosa Board of Education for its consideration of aligning its graduation requirements with California's A-G college requirements (college prep courses) as the future standard for graduation. When looking at setting this higher standard you will raise achievement of all students by exposing them to a higher level of academic content. To me, this is an institutional equity issue. For those students of diversity, you are creating opportunity and opening the door for some to be the first generation to be eligible for college.

I hope you study the San Jose Unified and Santa Ana Unified School Districts and how they made the conversion. Both of these larger metropolitan districts have significantly increased their college eligibility rates. They had to make modifications and create flexibility, but they both increased the opportunity for their Latino students.

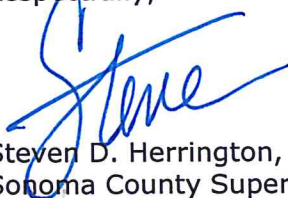
As a reminder, as part of adopting A-G requirements for graduation, the Board will have to adopt a policy that makes accommodations for special needs students as well as incorporate and submit the necessary state outlines for Career Pathway Classes that can qualify for cross-discipline eligibility under the university and state college system.

I also hope you will look at creating a district/community Schools of Hope academic coaching component for all secondary students to help meet these new requirements and the challenges it will bring.

For your information and consideration, the county schools have increased the number of students meeting the A-G requirements from 27% in 2010 to 36% as of 2016. Your efforts could greatly help increase these rates further, which is one of the state's measurement of a community's academic success and quality.

Good luck on the challenges ahead. For further reading, I included an article on Los Angeles Unified School District's efforts to implement A-G requirements and urge you to share with the full Board.

Respectfully,



Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D.
Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools

More LAUSD seniors are on track to graduate

LA School Report

Mike Szymanski | September 27, 2017

More high school seniors are on track to graduate so far this year than in any of the past dozen years, according to an LA Unified report released last week.

“We are seeing numbers higher than last year and the year before, and the expectations are increasing,” Chief Academic Officer Frances Gipson said. “We are using the data to get a clear sense of how to continue and get better and more rapid results.”

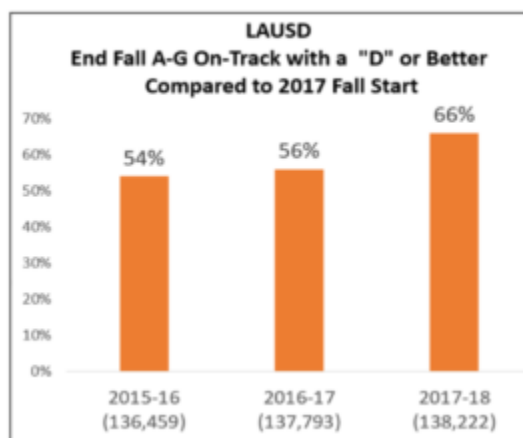
Gipson was reporting to the school board’s Committee of the Whole on how many students are getting either a C or D in a set of required classes called A-G courses. In order to be eligible for California’s public universities, students need a C or better in all of those courses. But they can still get an LA Unified diploma if they have D’s.

Gipson said during her presentation on “The ABC’s through A-G’s” that the district has always been striving to make sure students earn C’s or better so they will be college-ready.

More students are starting the school year on track to graduate, according to the report, with 66 percent (or 138,222 students) on track to graduate with a D or better, which is up from 54 percent two years ago. About 54 percent are on track to graduate with a C or better, compared to 43 percent two years ago.



Samantha Dorca graduated from Garfield High with the help of credit recovery classes and is now in college.



The percentage of students over time who have a D or better has gone from 29 percent in 2005 to 81 percent with the class of 2017.

For C grades or better, the percentage has risen from 18 percent to 57 percent over the same dozen years.

“We are thinking it should be a B or better,” Gipson said.

The district has been criticized for lowering graduation requirements to D grades, which has also resulted in grad rates rising from 62.4 percent for the 2009-10 class to the record-breaking estimated 80.2 percent for the 2016-17 class.

The A-G courses were started in 2005 after multi-racial citywide coalitions joined with LA Unified to ask for high school diplomas to align with college prep courses. College readiness is a focus of new school board members Kelly Gonez and Nick Melvoin, who asked the staff questions about the data presented.

Gonez asked what accounted for the increase and was told by staff it had to do with personal support for with each student, getting good first instruction, increased professional development for teachers, newly adopted standardized textbooks, and integration of technology into the classrooms.



Melvoin asked why the 70 percent of students who attend college through sophomore year falls to only 25 percent earning a degree after six years.

“Are we tracking why so many students do not finish college? Is it money?” asked Melvoin.

The district’s A-G director, Carol Alexander, said there is more need for data, and that students and counselors have said “it is clear that there is need for more support.”

Credit recovery classes, which help students who were failing to raise their grades, have helped boost graduation rates, and Gipson said the district is working with colleges and community groups to help students improve their grades.

One student speaking at the meeting, Samantha Dorca, said she was failing at Garfield High but got motivated in credit recovery classes and “I am now a proud 2017 graduate” and is in college. “During my credit recovery classes, they had me do daily check-ins,” Dorca said.

The district staff pointed out they had 2,400 more students take Advanced Placement classes and that 4,500 more students passed the AP exams than the year before.

