April 30, 2019

Dear students, parents and guardians:

As you may be aware, the Long Beach Unified School District provides high school Secondary Specialized Programs (SSPs), including those that focus on arts, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), culinary arts, tourism, hospitality, law and more. Studies have found that SSPs can significantly help to prepare students for college and careers. These programs ignite students’ passion for learning around their interests through relevant connections to real world activities, and engage student learning through hands-on, collaborative projects. The SSPs prepare students for the demands of college and career by embedding the California State University and University of California’s A-G entrance requirements for college readiness and career themed coursework for career readiness.

Work-based learning experiences empower and inspire students to investigate and make experiential decisions about their life choices, postsecondary educational goals and career aspirations.

Some of these programs require academically rigorous entrance criteria and offer rewarding experiences for those students who meet those criteria. The school district is committed to providing equal opportunities to every student to be able to measure up to those high standards and reap the rewards of doing so.

Title VI is a federal law that provides:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

This law governs enrollment, admissions, academic programs, student treatment and services, counseling and guidance, discipline, classroom assignment, grading, recreation, physical education and athletics. The law also guarantees that when a student opposes an unlawful educational practice or policy, or makes charges, testifies or participates in any complaint under Title VI, the student must not receive any retaliation as a result.

The school district is constantly evaluating how to ensure equal opportunities and equal access to its programs. This memo lists a few of those ways that the district is approaching its constant efforts to bring equality to every student’s access to all of its SSPs. As a result, we are updating you about some of the approaches we are taking.

**Early Interventions.**

The time to get ready for specialized programs in high school begins long before the 9th grade. As a result, as early as 6th grade, the district analyzes student data to identify individuals who demonstrate potential for the most rigorous SSPs. The district will use this information to help students and families target their future successes.

Each 5th through 8th grade student will receive a customized “High School Readiness” report that summarizes these details and describes his or her steps toward SSPs and other programs. Parents and students will be able to see what needs to be done so that they can be engaged in the process. School and
district staff have been trained on how they can help families understand the report and prepare for high school. Communications will go out in English, Spanish and Khmer. The objective will be to encourage students and their families to prepare for high school early and to find a pathway that ties into their particular interests. All students, regardless of their race, color or national origin will be strongly encouraged and enabled to participate in these programs.

Middle schools will take the lead in working with their students, and you should see high school representatives reach out to middle school students as well, helping to give information about SSPs, spreading the word to help families deepen their knowledge of the high school programs that they can choose.

In addition, a comprehensive High School Choice packet will be sent home to every eighth grader in early October, and there will be multiple High School Choice Fairs and Summits where families can learn about every high school program. Site Nights will be organized by every high school between October and December of each year to showcase their offerings for future high school students. Middle and K-8 schools will host similar events. In addition, personal invitations will be made each year to qualified applicants who did not apply to SSPs. The culmination of all of these efforts is to reach every family to let them know that regardless of their background, each child has what it takes to qualify for these programs.

**Improving Eligibility**

So many students are on the cusp and with more effort and interventions can qualify themselves for these programs. The District is offering summer programs at several of the middle schools, and these programs are intended to accelerate the academic and social-emotional growth of students, helping them to develop the necessary skills to be successful in rigorous high school courses. Some of these activities will include:

- Hands-on robotics, coding and other STEM-related projects;
- Writing workshops;
- Long Beach Scholars classes in which students work in collaborative study groups and conduct extensive student research on SSPs, their courses of study, their requirements and their pathways to college and careers;
- Extended opportunities to work with educational applications, videos and other technologies;
- Unique offerings that focus on financial literacy, social responsibility and leadership.

Social-emotional support is an important component of preparing for high school and SSPs as well. Family Resource Centers are providing mental health and other important services to help students cope with life and learning. We encourage all students to take advantage of this support. As with all of the supports listed, each is free of charge to the student.

If you have questions about these efforts, please ask. We want every child to succeed and are here to help you to do exactly that.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Steinhauser
Superintendent of Schools