

ENCINITAS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROPOSED ENRICHMENT TEACHER PROGRAM

JUNE, 2016

1. Why teach yoga and World Ready Traits and Skills?

The Enrichment Teacher Program proposal is a way to continue to provide the existing program that our students currently receive. The yoga portion of this program supports part of our District PE program needs. It also provides our students with tools to help with reducing stress and attaining greater focus. The World Ready Traits and Skills component of the program also supports our District's emphasis on balanced student social – emotional learning.

EUSD students have been very successful in all academic areas. The current blend of district and site provided programs contribute to that success. In addition, the proposed Enrichment Teacher Program continues to support the enrichment wheel at all schools which also provides time for in-depth grade level teacher collaboration time.

2. Has the District Health and Wellness Program been well received by stakeholders up to this point?

The Health and Wellness Program has been well supported by students, staff, and parents up until this time. As recently as last month, the District parent survey had over 500 responses on the survey question, "Do you value the yoga program?" 83% of the respondents answered yes. Similar surveys and focus groups of students and staff have also yielded results that show all stakeholder groups have valued this program.

3. Does yoga work?

There has been much discussion around the preliminary results from one study on our yoga program that showed some positive results, some results trending positive, some results that showed no improvements, and some results that were inconclusive. This is typical for most educational research particularly when districts are also implementing new technology, new teaching methodologies, and new teaching materials. That does not, however, diminish the research basis behind the effectiveness of yoga. A recent review of the literature on yoga effectiveness turned up over 1000 studies. [A sample of some of these are listed here.](#) Some of these studies included yoga's impact on youth but few included school programs since they are so rare. The generalized findings from these studies suggests that yoga and/or teaching mindfulness has:

- beneficial effects on cognition (improved attention, processing speed, executive functioning, and memory)
- decreased anger, depression, and fatigue
- improved resilience, mood, and self-regulation
- relieving stress and reducing BMI
- reduced feelings of helplessness and aggression
- improved brain neurotransmitter levels (i.e., increased GABA was associated with improved mood and anxiety levels)
- possible increased scholastic aptitude

These findings are the reason why yoga is used by approximately 10% of all Americans and millions of people around the world for regular physical and mental health. Our military, our hospitals, our rehabilitations clinics, professional athletes, and gyms all use yoga for these reasons.

4. What is the role of Sonima in this discussion?

Sonima has funded the EUSD Health and Wellness Program for 4 years. During this time, the superintendent served in an unpaid role on the Sonima Advisory Board. The only duty of this role was to make an annual report to the Sonima Board about the EUSD Health and Wellness Program. Sonima has never received money from the District, they have only given dollars to EUSD. They made a decision in May to no longer fund the EUSD Health and Wellness Program. Based upon that decision, our District is discussing the option of continuing a lower cost version of the program next year. Sonima is no longer involved in the District Health and Wellness Program and has no role in this current conversation.

5. What is the role of Sonima research on this discussion?

As many Foundations do, along with providing money for the EUSD Health and Wellness Program, Sonima also contracted with the University of San Diego for an evaluation study of the program. This study was conducted by trained, professional researchers. The audience of the study was the Sonima Foundation and their donors, not EUSD. As noted above, we knew that with the adoption of new state standards, the implementation of new technology, the use of new digital curriculum, and an increase in teacher training around all of these elements, that finding causal connections between any single treatment and any single student outcome would be difficult. As the answer to question 3 shows, the results from this study demonstrated this.

The District did look at district data however to see if there were any correlational trends that could be seen. In the four years since the District has implemented the Health and Wellness Program: 1) Student academic indicators have increased (there is limited state data on this since the state testing system has changed); 2) Student attendance data has remained at record high levels; 3) Student suspensions have dropped every year for 4 years; 4) The majority of stakeholder feedback has been positive from staff, students, and parents about the program.

6. What is role of the University of San Diego or other universities on this discussion?

No institutions of higher education have a role in the current discussion around the District Health and Wellness Program or Teacher Enrichment Program. As a leader in many areas of education in the San Diego region, EUSD and its staff have worked closely with USD on health and wellness, mobile learning, educational innovation, and teacher training. EUSD also has close working relationships with UCSD, National University, and Cal State University, San Marcos in areas related to STEM teaching, teacher training, and next generation science standards. EUSD is proud of its close relationships to the numerous outstanding institutions of higher learning in our region and continues to work to expand these partnerships.

7. Why not use this money to eliminate combos or reduce class size?

The short answer is that to accomplish these two goals would require much more money than what we are proposing. The longer answer would include the points that there is no research that combination classes are detrimental to student learning. As we move forward with more personalized learning and less whole class instruction, this issue becomes even less important. On the issue of class size, EUSD has already met the state mandate for 24-1 students in primary classrooms. We already have smaller class sizes than many other San Diego County Districts. Certainly, smaller class size would be desirable for upper and lower elementary grades. The cost for this change would be prohibitive and the District would have to add more classrooms and schools or eliminate existing enrichment classrooms to provide room for the increased number of classrooms that would be needed to accomplish this.

8. Why not spend this money hiring hourly teachers to teach core academic subjects such as science?

First, we need to be clear that the District does currently spend millions of dollars to hire highly qualified teachers to teach our core academic subjects and we then spend additional dollars training them to effectively teach these subjects. Our teachers also work to integrate science, social studies, math, and English Language Arts into integrated units of study. When our sites hire additional hourly teachers for subjects such as science, these teachers are augmenting the core academic subjects that our classroom teachers are teaching. It would not be educationally appropriate to assign primary teaching responsibility to less trained and less qualified teachers working in stand-alone programs.

9. Why not fund other enrichment programs with this funding?

Our schools have worked hard to find a balance of enrichment programming that is currently provided partially by the District and partially by parent fundraising and site dollars. This proposal continues to provide the same balance of enrichment programming that is currently offered.

10. Why not take over the EEF/PTA role in fundraising?

Our schools currently provide an amazing option of programs to address all core and enrichment education. These options are possible because the District and our parents work together to provide this funding. If the District were to change this partnership in a pilot program, it would be difficult to reinstate the programs later if this funding were not continued. That is why the District is proposing to keep our current partnership model in place and augment what sites are now paying enrichment teachers. If this pilot does not work, we can then revert back to current conditions and programs while only losing the health and wellness portion of the enrichment plan.

11. Was the Enrichment Teacher Program going to be funded from a Textbook Account?

The short answer to this is, “No, the Enrichment Teacher Program is not being funded from a textbook account.” Our budget which was first previewed at the June 7th Board Meeting has not changed. That budget shows that we are expending \$0 in the textbook account. We do not receive specific funds for textbooks and we are not planning on spending any money on textbooks next year. We do spend hundreds of thousands of dollars per year on other instructional materials. These monies are found in other accounts in our budget. This has not changed since the budget was adopted. The Enrichment Teacher Program dollars are currently placed in our consultant expenditures account. Last year, the health and wellness teachers were contracted through an outside agency and this is the account we use to pay outside agencies. We have simply left the money in the same account as last year. School districts do not have static accounts. Over the course of the year, millions of dollars will move from account to account based upon expenditures and needs. This is a common practice.

12. Has the District been transparent in proposing this program?

The District has been very transparent about the cost of the Enrichment Teacher Program. It has been brought to light by District staff as soon as it became known that Sonima would not be funding the program next year. The budgeting issue related to this program has appeared on numerous documents and has been shared during Board Meetings. To claim that the District is somehow trying to hide the cost of this program is either misinformed or disingenuous.

13. Could the health and wellness enrichment teachers teach other content as well?

It has been suggested that the health and wellness enrichment teachers could modify their program to provide other types of enrichment programming including more traditional PE programming during their second lesson with students during the week. This is possible but program design decisions such as these need to be made based upon clear program objectives. This will be reviewed next year and potentially each site could have some modifications in the program based upon the individual needs of the site.