July 17, 2023

Dear Fresno Unified families,

We hope your summer is safe, fun and relaxing, and that you are spending quality time with your children.

We want to provide answers to key questions about the coming school year and all the work being done in the district to ensure every student has a safe classroom ready for learning with talented educators ready to teach.

We continue to provide support services and community resources. Summer learning activities are in full swing. Our leadership teams have prepared this question-and-answer document to make clear what you can expect from Fresno Unified and what’s happening. We want to remind you that existing students do not need to register again, and new families are welcome to use the online registration. It remains open for new Preschool-12th grade students.

Let’s get to the frequently asked questions.

**Q: When does school begin?**

A: The first day of school is Monday, August 14th. Your child will be greeted with a renewed commitment to their health, happiness and success. Our Board has approved a $2.3 billion operating budget that makes significant investments in teachers and your students. All households with Fresno Unified students should set up ParentSquare as a safe and secure platform for all school-to-home communication. If you do not yet have ParentSquare, email us at communications@fresnounified.org and we will send you an invite link good for 24 hours. Training and tutorials are available [here](#).

**Q: What’s new at school? What can we expect?**

A: The biggest difference is the investment Fresno Unified is making in your children and the folks who teach them, get them to school on time, and make sure they are learning at a high level. Among many other investments, this $2.3 billion budget has 80% set aside for employee salary and benefits, which will ultimately benefit our students. In more clear numbers, the budget allocates more than $555 million to cover teacher salaries. We have also invested $13 million in the budget to help reduce class sizes in key areas. We’re ready to make this our best year yet.

**Q: I’ve read reports that Fresno Unified students are falling behind. Is this true?**
A: School closures and disrupted schedules are not good for anyone, and it’s especially difficult for families and children. We all know this because we just lived through it during COVID. We cannot go back. Our leadership team at Fresno Unified is eager to work collaboratively with teachers to ensure students are learning and performing at the highest levels. A key area of focus is on literacy. Only about one third of students in Fresno Unified read at or above the state standard, and we’re not alone as the pandemic erased two decades of progress in math and reading across the country. The coming year will be crucial in making renewed progress.

We know how to build on past progress. Prior to the pandemic, our children made incremental and steady progress in reading and math throughout the district and Fresno Unified’s new budget prioritizes students and teachers working together. We need our schools open. We need our schedules in place. We need our children to learn.

Q: Will teachers strike? What is the current situation?

A: Here's where we are today with the Fresno Teachers Association. We submitted an offer that would raise average teacher salaries to $106,000. We are eager to engage with teachers about how to manage inflation (especially around healthcare costs) while prioritizing students and seeing improved academic achievement from students.

We know that inflation is being felt by all members of our community, but it should not complicate what your students need for their academic growth. That is why the budget that the trustees passed is so important. It provides the resources, support and care our students deserve. The budget may just seem like a “plan,” but this investment will yield results. We expect to see improved academic achievement from all students, and we will make sure they are healthy and well, especially after the setbacks and problems from COVID lockdowns. We are focused on making sure everyone is ready—teachers and students—for the first day of school on August 14th.

Just as we at Fresno Unified approved a budget, the State of California and Governor Newsom also approved a spending plan. It fully funded the Cost-of-Living Adjustment and provided crucial dollars on a per-student basis to Fresno Unified. We are working hard to restore learning recovery and to return to academic progress after COVID.

Q: What can I do to help make sure there isn’t a “summer slide” where my child loses too much ground over the break?

A: We encourage you to take a few minutes to read to your child each day, talk to them, tell them stories, and listen to theirs, dance, sing and play. Also, Fresno Unified is an i-Ready district (visit the site here: https://ea.fresnounified.org/iready/). I-Ready is an online program for reading and math that will help your children stay sharp by personalizing their learning and monitoring their current level and understanding. We encourage you to sit with your student and log-in to i-Ready today. Students can use the same log-in they used during the last school year. If you have any technical problems, please call our FLATS center at (559) 457-3939.
We know we can’t possibly answer all your questions, but we’re here. If you have a question, send an email to communications@fresnounified.org.

Enjoy your summer! We’ll see you August 14th!

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert G. Nelson
Superintendent