

Fresno Unified middle school redesign shows positive impact

By Andrea Castillo

The first year of Fresno Unified's effort to remake middle schools has improved student attendance, expanded electives offerings and raised grades in those classes, district trustees were told Wednesday.

In the past year, over 2,000 more Fresno Unified middle schoolers attended at least 95% of school days, 27% more students enrolled in electives and 21% more earned at least a C grade in those classes.

District administrator Jennifer Carr provided the assessment during an update to Fresno Unified trustees on the district's middle school redesign. Primarily financed with \$4.4 million in Proposition 30 funds approved by voters in 2012, the redesign is expected to take three years to complete.

Last year, district leaders added language and art classes to 11 schools that lacked them. They also added teachers to those schools and redesigned their master schedules to increase opportunities for teacher collaboration during the school day. The findings Carr presented Wednesday were from the nearly 8,000 students at those 11 schools.

Board member Carol Mills said the redesign should be expanded to include schools with a middle school component, such as Hamilton Elementary, which is K-8.

"If we're seeing a positive impact, we shouldn't limit it to just a few of our schools," she said. "It should be at all of them."

In other action, trustees denied a claim filed by the family of a Jefferson Elementary School student who say she was sexually assaulted while standing in a line outside her classroom last March.

The claim, which seeks at least \$10,000, states that the girl was waiting to enter her classroom when a boy touched her genital area. The claim says the girl had been provided an aide after a sexual assault at King Elementary last year, but the district ended that service without consulting her caretaker.

Superintendent Michael Hanson recommended the claim be denied and the matter be referred to the district's risk management office.

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