



# Memorandum

**TO:** MAYOR LICCARDO

**FROM:** Councilmember Sylvia Arenas

**SUBJECT: BUDGET DOCUMENT**

**DATE:** May 25, 2022

Approved

Date

5/25/2022

## RECOMMENDATION

That the following recommendation be enacted.

### Proposal

Program/Project Title: Transforming School Cultures Pilot Program

Amount of City Funding Required: \$150,000

This change is:

One-time       Ongoing

Cost Estimate Number (if applicable):

Proposal Description, including the reason for the need and anticipated outcomes (Please describe how the proposal will affect services for San José residents, community groups, businesses, etc.):

Our school communities are grappling with the challenges of returning to in-person learning. At the high school level – in particular – campuses are seeing an increase in truancy, violence, and suicide due to trauma, instability, and lack of connection. All students in San José, but especially those from marginalized communities, are in-need of an unprecedented level of support. The adults in the system are responding as best they can, yet capacity building support is needed for teachers and administrators to collaborate with students in re-building positive school climates that are trauma-informed, equitable, and culturally responsive.

East Side Union High School District has established Student Equity Councils at each of their high school campuses to help address the school climate issues that have risen after the return to in-person learning. Each Student Equity Council is comprised primarily of marginalized students, who are working together with administrators and teachers to create more welcoming and engaging school environments. Currently, their impact is stifled by a lack of staff capacity and limited funds.

I am requesting funds for a Transforming School Cultures Pilot Program, which enlists Californians for Justice (CFJ) in providing capacity building support to either the Silver Creek High School or

Evergreen Valley High School Student Equity Council. CFJ is a statewide grassroots organization working for racial justice by building the power of youth, communities of color, immigrants, low-income families, and LGBTQ communities. CFJ will provide an “Equity in Action” training series to the school and engage them in a shared community of learning.

The primary outcome of the “Equity in Action” training series is to support the school site in building and sustaining the school culture they envision by identifying and implementing strategies that maximize limited time and resources. CFJ will provide thought partnership, design, evaluation, and facilitation to achieve the following key objectives:

- Work together with teachers, administrators, with students of color at the center to advance a districtwide Equity Agenda
- Build a collective understanding of what it will take to create complex/lasting systems change in ESUHSD
- Pilot Relationship Centered Schools / Equity Transformation Cycle initiatives at either Silver Creek or Evergreen Valley High School

The Transforming School Cultures Pilot Program will set the foundation for a long-term system and culture shift within ESUHSD, helping ensure that all students can receive the support and resources they need inside and outside of the classroom to be successful. In addition to the capacity building support provided by CFJ, the Silver Creek/Evergreen Valley High School Student Equity Council will receive a grant of up to \$10,000 to implement a student-led initiative that aims to improve their school climate. Any remaining funds will further expand the pilot program and support student-led initiatives.

By seeing young people as experts on their educational experiences we can shift school culture, improve academic outcomes, and develop lifelong community and civic leaders. This starts by ensuring that every student, especially the voices and experiences of low-income students of color are heard, valued, and reflected in the continuous improvement of their schools.

### **Funding Source**

Essential Services Reserve:

Other (Please specify program/project/fund):

### **Department or Organization Contact**

Please list the contact information for the individual that certified cost estimates contained within your recommendation:

Name and Title: Najla Gomez Rodriguez, Capacity Building Director

Department or Organization: Californians for Justice

Phone Number: (510) 978-5909

Email: najla@caljustice.org