



**VENTURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING
September 8, 2020
MINUTES**

Call to Order

In accordance with Governor Newsom's executive orders of social distancing due to the COVID-19, the regular Board of Education meeting was held on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, as a teleconference/video conference meeting where one or more members participated. The public had the opportunity to submit their public comment and public comment on closed session via the public comments email address. The public streaming of the Board meeting was made available through the Ventura Adult and Continuing Education, TDC Studios YouTube Channel.

Board President	Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez
Board Vice President	Ms. Jackie Moran
Board Member	Ms. Velma Lomax
Board Member	Mr. Matt Almaraz
Board Member	Dr. Jerry Dannenberg
Superintendent	Dr. Roger Rice
Asst. Supt. /Certificated HR	Dr. Jeff Davis
General Counsel	Mr. Anthony Ramos

Adoption of Agenda

It was moved by Ms. Jackie Moran, seconded by Mr. Matt Almaraz and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve the agenda as presented.

Ayes: Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg,
Ms. Jackie Moran
Noes: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

Public Comment on Closed Session Items -None

Motion to go to Closed Session

It was moved by Ms. Velma Lomax, seconded by Ms. Jackie Moran and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve go to Closed Session at 5:36.

Ayes: Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Jackie Moran, Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz,
Dr. Jerry Dannenberg
Noes: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

AT 7:13 p.m. Board President Rodriguez called the regular meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance.

Report of Actions Taken in Closed Session

It was moved by Ms. Velma Lomax, seconded by Ms. Jackie Moran and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve to accept the recommendation of Dr. Rice to appoint Ms. Rebecca Chandler as the new Assistant Superintendent of Business Services.

Ayes: Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Jackie Moran, Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz,
Dr. Jerry Dannenberg
Noes: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

Superintendent's Report

11.a Good News

Dr. Rice shared that everyone was excited to welcome Ms. Chandler into her new role as the Assistant Superintendent of Business Services.

Dr. Rice reported that the Board previously approved the staff's recommendation to engage in the refinance/refunding of the \$12 million in General Obligations Bonds. At the time of approval, the estimated savings to the taxpayers was over \$750K, and currently, with the 1.6% interest rate, the savings to taxpayers will be over \$1 million.

Student Board Members Violet Delgado, Buena High School, and Frances Kayser, Ventura High School, shared school highlights and plans for activities.

11.b District Update

Dr. Rice thanked the school sites' staff for their hard work and creativity in putting together their virtual Back to School Nights and he expressed how he enjoyed seeing the happy students with their families via Zoom.

Dr. Rice reported that the district is working to continue to grow our programs and look to the future. Last week he visited Blanche Reynolds School with Ms. Donna Rose, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Business Services; Mr. Bill Elsenbaumer, Director of Facilities; Mr. Hector Guerrero, Director of Ed Options and Principal at El Camino High School; Blanche Reynolds Principal, Susan Martinez; and Ms. Gina Wolowicz, Director, Curriculum & Instruction TK-5, to plan out the transition to a K-8 program for the next school year.

Dr. Rice shared that he visited Pacific High School to look at the future of their two exciting programs Agricultural Pathway and Farm and the Middle School Opportunity Program.

Dr. Rice reported that we just finished week three of Distance Learning and that it is going much better than in the spring. Even though, we continue to be faced with serious challenges such as: making sure that special education students are receiving the services they need; that the platform programs Canvas and Seesaw are either too challenging or too easy and the teachers adjusting the level of rigor and adding enrichment when needed; being faced with technical challenges such as the Cyber Attack that the District faced last week; and the frustration that parents have expressed in wanting their students to return to in-person learning. Also, we have the challenge of orientating two new Assistant Superintendents, Business Services and Educational Services.

Dr. Rice shared that since August 6th PE and small cohort athletic groups have been allowed to work together under a rigorous set of standards. The targeted date for a limited number of fall sports is September 22nd.

Dr. Rice noted that the state put out guidance on small cohorts that are presently allowed to provide special support services to students. Updates are given almost daily from VCOE and the Public Health Department and the need is to now meet with our staff, Board, and bargaining teams to determine which program would be potential candidates.

Dr. Rice reported that he met with leaders of CAUSE and Justice in the Classroom last week on the same day and separate meetings regarding their interest in our efforts to promote Social Justice, eliminating racial disparities in programs and student discipline, and SRO's programs.

Dr. Rice shared that there will be a Special Board meeting tomorrow at VACE at 9 a.m. to interview candidates for the Personnel Commission vacancy. That planning is underway for a 7-11 Committee meeting within the next two weeks to bring to the Board the final report of the 7-11 Committee to the next Board meeting on September 22, 2020.

Correspondence

Ms. Rodriguez received a letter from the Special Education Committee teachers and support professionals. This letter was also submitted via public comments and it will be made part of the public record.

Ms. Moran received a letter regarding providing blue light glasses to students. This letter was also submitted via public comments and it will be made part of the public record.

Public Comments - The following individuals commented via email:

Aleta Marquez regarding providing blue light glasses for students

Annette Walters regarding waiver to return to in-school instruction

Lauren Taluy regarding waiver to return to in-school instruction

Marianne Szijj regarding Special Education comments on how to do assessments

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

- 14.a Public Hearing Regarding the Presentation of Ventura Unified School District's 2020-2021 Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan

Dr. Rene Rickard, Interim Director, Multilingual and Multicultural Education, gave a public hearing regarding the Presentation of Ventura Unified School District's 2020-21 Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan that will replace the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). No public comments were submitted.

- 14.b Notice of Public Hearing Regarding Sufficiency of Textbooks or Instructional Materials or both for the 2020-21 School Year

Ms. Rodriguez announced a Notice of Public Hearing, to be held on September 22, 2020, at 7:30 p.m. Regarding Sufficiency of Textbooks or Instructional Materials or both for the 2020-21 School Year.

CONFERENCE - SUPERINTENDENT

- Public Comment Process and Protocol

A consensus was made by the Board that in addition to the public emailing their public comment that there be another option to provide a venue for those wishing to come and speak in person. They will be limited in time and will do so safely. Ms. Rodriguez has asked staff for a draft for the next Board meeting.

CONFERENCE - EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

- 16.a Reopening of Schools Update

Mr. Marcus Konantz, Executive Director, Special Education, presented to the Board an update on Special Education and Attendance.

Ms. Cynthia Frutos, Director, Student Support Services, presented to the Board an update on Attendance and Engagement.

Ms. Gina Wolowicz, Director, Curriculum and Instruction TK-5, presented to the Board an update on Childcare.

- 16.b Presentation of Ventura Unified School District's 2020-2021 Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan

Dr. Rene Rickard, Interim Director, Multilingual and Multicultural Education, presented to the Board the Ventura Unified School District's 2020-21 Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan.

CONFERENCE - BUSINESS SERVICES

- 17.a 2019-20 Unaudited Actual Financial Report (Action Requested)

It was moved by Dr. Jerry Dannenberg, seconded by Mr. Matt Almaraz and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve the 2019-20 Unaudited Actual Financial Report.

Ayes: Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Jackie Moran, Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

Noes: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

ACTION ITEMS

- 18.a Approval of Tyler Technologies Software Service Agreement 2020-23

It was moved by Mr. Matt Almaraz, seconded by Ms. Jackie Moran and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve the Tyler Technologies Software Service Agreement 2020-23.

Ayes: Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Jackie Moran, Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

Noes: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

CONSENT CALENDAR

It was moved by Ms. Jackie Moran, seconded by Dr. Jerry Dannenberg and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve consent items 19-22 as presented.

Ayes: Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Jackie Moran, Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

Noes: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

CONSENT - EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

- 19.a Consideration for Adoption of a Textbook - The Practice of Statistics 6th Edition
- 19.b Consideration of Poinsettia Elementary School Tile Project

CONSENT - HUMAN RESOURCES - Certificated

- 20.a Ratification of Administration's Approval of Employment and Reemployment of Certificated Personnel for the 2020-21 School Year
- 20.b Ratification of Administration's Approval of Employment and Reemployment of Substitute Teachers for the 2020-21 School Year
- 20.c Ratification of Administration's Approval for Leave of Absence for Certificated Personnel for the 2020-21 School Year
- 20.d Ratification of Administration's Approval of Resignations & Retirements for Certificated Personnel for the 2020-21 School Year
- 20.e Ratification of Administration's Approval of Miscellaneous & Part-Time Certificated Assignments for the 2020-21 School Year
- 20.f Ratification of Administration's Approval of Assignments Through Various Education Codes
- 20.g Approval of Variable Term Waiver for Speech-Language Credential
- 20.h Approval of Variable Term Waiver for CBEST Test & CLAD Authorization

CONSENT - HUMAN RESOURCES - Classified

- 21.a Classified Personnel Changes
- 21.b Classified Position Changes

CONSENT - BUSINESS SERVICES

- 22.a Ratification of Change Order #2, C6-21 Blanche Reynolds Plumbing and Infrastructure
- 22.b Notice of Completion for C6-21 Blanche Reynolds Plumbing and Infrastructure
- 22.c Resolution #20-23, Adoption of the GANN Limit
- 22.d Gifts to School District
- 22.e Checks for August 2020
- 22.f Ratification of Purchase Orders (August 12, 2020 to August 26, 2020)

BOARD REPORTS

The Board of Education reported on the following:

Trustee Dannenberg: Attended the LCAP Committee meeting and the Back to School Nights via Zoom.

Trustee Alamaraz: Attended Back to School Nights, PAC meeting, and the Mental Health Committee meeting. He reported that he will be attending the "The Living Work Youth Summit for Mental Health", for students 12 and over, that will be taking place on September 15 and he also took part in the Phase 1 Return to Athletics Committee.

Trustee Lomax: Also attended the Mental Health Committee meeting and the Back to School Nights via Zoom.

Trustee Moran: Attended the LCAP Committee meeting, City Liaison Committee meeting, she spoke with the CEO of CSBA, and attended the Back to School Nights.

Trustee Rodriguez: Also attended the PAC meeting and City Liason meeting. Ms. Rodriguez, Ms. Moran, and Dr. Rice attended the College Area Council Community meeting. Additionally, she met with VHS CAUSE student members to talk about school issues.

COMING EVENTS

- **Back to School Nights**
 - September 9 Anacapa and Balboa Middle Schools
 - September 10 Data and Cabrillo Middle Schools
 - September 14 Montalvo Elementary
 - September 15 E.P. Foster, Sunset, and Pierpont - Elementary
 - September 16 Mound, Elmhurst, Sheridan Way - Elementary
 - September 17 Junipero Serra, Blanche Reynolds, Citrus Glen - Elementary
 - September 22 Ventura High School
 - September 23 Buena High School and El Camino High School
 - September 24 Pacific High School and Foothill Technology High School
- September 9 Interviews for the Personnel Commission vacancy
- September 25 Ethnic and Social Justice Studies Meeting

FUTURE BOARD ITEMS

- 7-11 Committee
- Voter Registration for students
- Special Education and Mental Health Services Update

BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS - (No official action will be taken)

Trustee Almaraz expressed his appreciation for Dr. Cortes's hard work and wishes her the best.

Trustee Lomax echoed Trustee Almaraz and wanted everyone to understand that Dr. Cortes is resigning from her position and not VUSD to tend to personal matters.

Board Vice President Moran echoed the sentiments and mentioned that Dr. Cortes and staff have worked hard to put models into place and wish her well.

Board President Rodriguez extended her gratitude to Dr. Cortes for all her work and thanked all staff for pushing through all the challenges the district has faced since the first day of school.

Dr. Rice resonated with what everyone said, wishes her the best, and supports her. He also thanked the leadership of our bargaining unit, Carol Peek and Dan Nelson, for all they do in helping us to make things work for their members. Dr. Rice shared his appreciation for the added value that our classified staff has added to our school district operation.


ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Mr. Matt Almaraz, seconded by Ms. Jackie Moran and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve to adjourn the meeting to the next regular meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m., September 22, 2020.

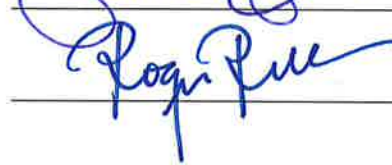
Ayes: Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Jackie Moran, Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz,
Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

Noes: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

APPROVED



President



Secretary

Ventura Unified School District Board of Education
255 W Stanley Ave # 100,
Ventura, CA 93001

September 8, 2020

Dear School Board Members,

I am writing on behalf of myself and many VUSD Speech-Language Pathologist (SLPs) who do not feel at liberty to air their concerns and grievances publicly. I have been with VUSD almost 20 years and always worked collaboratively with my Special Education Department (SPED) colleagues and administrators to provide the most program-efficient, cost-effective and family-centered services possible. Unfortunately, under the current administration decisions and direction are increasingly happening at a level and by people that don't have a clear understanding of what we do day-to-day. They're being made without input from staff who are the people that will be trying to implement these directives, and putting themselves and potentially VUSD families, at unnecessary risk.

Challenges:

Although general and special education instructional minutes have been adjusted, SLPs were told that the default for related services is to provide synchronous therapy as written in the IEP. Much of this therapy must be scheduled outside of live general and special education instructional time, which makes it very difficult for SLPs to meet all IEP minutes. SLPs do not have substitutes available for any missed sessions, so a sick day is not an option without falling short of mandated IEP minutes. SLPs were told that the digital resources we have requested to help us transition to remote learning have been funded, but are held up due to HIPPA compliance issues. As a result, SLPs are left scrambling to create and/or purchase virtual therapy resources on their own. In addition, the expectations for documentation have become so excessive that it interferes with our ability to provide the actual services.

Triennials and initial assessments that were not able to be completed or were deferred during the shelter-in-place order have added to a backlog of assessments across all schools. Inadequate SLP staffing and reliance on non-credentialed staff is significantly impacting our ability to serve families and meet our timelines. We had 14 new SLPs last school year and 15 new SLPs this school year, who require a significant amount of mandated supervision from a limited pool of licensed and credentialed SLPs. The additional oversight requirements further strain resources. Not following proper supervision requirements puts our licenses at risk.

SLPs across the district have been directed to start in-person SPED assessments this week even though Ventura county is not yet in a green zone and adequate PPE and testing accommodations are not yet available at many school sites (see photos attached). Early Intervention Center staff have been instructed to give prior written notice (PWN) denying assessments to families seeking services, IF they are not willing to bring their child in person. This opens VUSD to potential litigation for unnecessary delays and/or denials of service. Since the school year started, two tenured SLPs have gone on medical leave and there are roughly four more who may take a medical/personal leave of absence if in-person SPED assessments are mandated. This would

throw SPED into more of a crisis than we are already in. To further complicate our challenges, VUSD has difficulty recruiting experienced SLPs because of higher salaries offered by some of our surrounding districts.

Proposed Short-Term Solutions:

- 1) Adjust required minutes of service for related service providers in relation to the degree that teachers' direct instructional minutes have been reduced. We need flexibility to offer a hybrid of asynchronous and synchronous services to meet IEP minutes.
- 2) Additional SLP staffing (contract SLPs or part-time SLPs picking up more hours) is temporarily needed to reduce the backlog of assessments that were not done/deferred during the shelter-in-place.
- 3) Human Resources and the SPED administration to allow flexibility and exemptions from in-person assessments for staff and students who are high-risk or are caring for others at high-risk. SLPs need the professional autonomy to serve families remotely, using evidence- and performance-based measures that will meet California Education Code/Standards.
- 4) Provide adequate PPE to increase the safety of staff and families across VUSD campuses before students and families are allowed on campus. The #1 goal should be protecting staff and the community we serve.
- 5) Once appropriate PPE is in place, consider identifying SPED assessment teams who are comfortable and willing to have in-person contact and allow remote-service options (i.e. Zoom) for others.
- 6) Support SLPs by expediting provision of digital resources that are already funded, but have been held up in red-tape.

Proposed Long-term Solutions:

- 1) SPED needs their own MOU, separate from Gen. Ed, that is voted on by those it impacts.
- 2) Reduce documentation time and redundant paperwork (ex. Star + SIRAS logs)
- 3) Create an exception to allow for more than 5-years previous credit to increase VUSD's ability to recruit experienced SLPs (move to short-term solution as quickly as possible) due to current shortage or licensed/credentialed SLPs.

My aim is not just to point out all the shortcomings of VUSD leadership during this unprecedented crisis and the unnecessary risks premature implementation of in-person SPED assessment mandates will cause. My colleagues and I have tried to be proactive in terms of finding information and guidelines to cope with this unprecedented situation and effective solutions, but we hit a brick wall every time. I can't even get a response from SPED administrators and union negotiations have not resolved any of the above problems thus far. After so many years of service to VUSD, it is really disheartening.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions or insight you may have.

Respectfully,
Marianne Szijj, MS CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist
Early Intervention Center - ATLAS
Ventura Unified School District





Hallway-like entrance with a narrow plexiglass “PPE” leaving wide gaps on both sides of the front desk at ATLAS EIC. This is a high-traffic office with daily visits from families, housing more than 20 SPED employees and utilized by at least 10 more for copying, mail and laminating. The EIC office manager was out on medical leave with cancer during the initial closure and is now working with inadequate PPE, while recovering from chemo-therapy.



Therapy/testing space utilized by SPED staff at the EIC ATLAS - also a storage room with inadequate space and ventilation.

[REDACTED]

From: Aleta Marquez [REDACTED]@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 10:50 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Blue light glasses

Hello I was wondering if we have cares act money that could be allocated for blue light glasses for students and staff? Or maybe a coupon for a discount? Myself and 4 that families that I personally know have purchased them at target at \$20 each. My son that really never has headaches started having them 3 days after the start of distant learning on the 31st. He has been using the glasses and it has help. The screen time for 1 day was over 10 hrs (high school)Just a FYI I'm sure other families are having the same problem.

Thanks Aleta Marquez

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

From: Annette Walters <[REDACTED]@[REDACTED]ventura.org>
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 4:15 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Waiver

Dear Ventura Unified Board Members,

I'd like to start by saying I am incredibly thankful for the hard work that the district and the teachers are doing for us during this complicated time. I know this isn't an easy time to do anything, let alone make decisions about educating children.

I have sent emails before to some of you on the board making it known that I believe in person learning for my children is critical for their educational future. And the district was seemingly seconds away from making the decision to go to in person learning on a hybrid schedule until Newsom's decision was made for us as a state. Obviously he took any opportunity from Ventura Unified to make a decision on our own and until recently, Dr. Levin had not been willing to sign waivers for schools in our county. But it seems that things are improving from Dr. Levin's perspective and he is now signing off on waivers. Many private schools in our area are now re-opening for in person instruction. Dr. Levin clearly feels that in person learning is critical and can be done in a safe manner. Now I am not naive to the fact that this will not be an easy task for our district, but we already have a plan in place. You worked so hard on that plan! You seemed to feel confident in that plan, so let's move forward with the plan!

I could go on about my frustrations with distance learning, but I won't. I could go on about why all children need and deserve better than distance learning, but I've already expressed that to you before. I know you've heard my frustrations and you understand, but I humbly ask you to stop saying you understand and to start moving forward in doing what is critical for all the students in your districts. Please don't pass this off as another parent just being frustrated, take this from another educator who is running a preschool and seeing children in person every day because we know it is what serves them best. Am I doing it on a much smaller scale? Yes, and I know that. But I also know it's my responsibility to make sure my students are getting the education they deserve.

Kindly,
Annette Walters

--
Annette Walters
[REDACTED], Ventura

[REDACTED]

From: Lauren Taluy <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 4:39 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public comment

Dear Members of the Board,

Dr. Rice Will be familiar with my name as we have emailed back and forth several times and he surely knows that I am writing today to advocate for getting our children back in the classroom as soon as possible. When decisions were being made about how our children could go back to school and which hybrid model you would choose, I really thought you were all wanting to do what was best for our kids and were truly disappointed that in- classroom learning at any level was not an option due to the State's rules. Well here we are months later and it is an option. There is an option for the district to file a waiver for K through 6 to be back in the classroom, but so far the district has shown no interest in applying for it. I am truly disappointed in that fact.

I have also emailed with Dr. Levin who has expressed to me that he has been advocating to you for getting young students back on campus. We should be looking to our public county health officer for guidance, and he is saying that what is healthiest for young kids is to be back in class, so why are you not listening?

Distance learning is a complete failure. My children's teachers are amazing, however this is just not how young children are meant to learn. We know a lot of families at different schools throughout the district, and I have yet to hear from one of them that this is going well. Between technology issues, kids not being motivated to learn by sitting at a computer and the impossible logistics of teaching multiple children from home while caring for younger ones, working jobs and managing a household, this has been a real struggle and we're only 3 weeks in. Please do what is best for our children and get kids back on campus by applying for the waiver as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Lauren Taluy

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Marianne Szijj <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 4:11 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- VUSD Special Education concerns
Attachments: School Board Letter MSzijj SLP 9-8-2020.docx

Good evening,
Please see the letter attached for public comments.

Thank you

--
Marianne Szijj MS CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist
[REDACTED]