



**VENTURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING  
January 26, 2021  
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, January 26, 2021, as a teleconference/video conference meeting where one or more members participated. The public had the opportunity to submit their public comment via the public comments email address or live via the Zoom platform. The public streaming of the special Board meeting was made available through the Ventura Adult and Continuing Education, TDC Studios YouTube Channel. Those in attendance were:

Board President	Ms. Velma Lomax
Board Vice President	Mr. Matt Almaraz
Board Member	Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez
Board Member	Ms. Amy Callahan
Board Member	Dr. Jerry Dannenberg
Superintendent	Dr. Roger Rice
Asst. Supt. /Certificated HR	Dr. Jeff Davis
Asst. Supt. /Bus. Services	Ms. Rebecca Chandler
General Counsel	Mr. Anthony Ramos

**Adoption of Agenda**

It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Ms. Amy Callahan and passed on a roll call vote of 3 – 0 to approve as presented.

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

**Public Comment on Closed Session Items**

None.

**Motion to go to Closed Session**

It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Ms. Amy Callahan and passed on a roll call vote of 3 – 0 to approve to go to closed session at 5:32 p.m.

Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan

Noes: None. Absent: Mr. Matt Almaraz, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg. Abstain: None.

**REGULAR SESSION - Ron Halt Classroom - 7:00 p.m.**

At 7:02 p.m., Board President Velma Lomax called the Regular Meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance.

**Report of Actions Taken in Closed Session**

None.

**Superintendent's Report**

**11.a Good News**

Superintendent Dr. Roger Rice, shared that two Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) Principals will be retiring this year, Ms. Marlene McMullen and Mr. Jim Sather. Dr. Rice and the Board thanked both of them for the dedication to public education.

- Ms. McMullen, Principal of Lincoln Elementary School, has served with excellence for 38 years in public education, with 33 of those years dedicated to VUSD. Ms. McMullen taught at E.P. Foster, DeAnza, and Junipero Serra and was principal of Loma Vista Elementary and Lincoln Elementary.
- Mr. Jim Sather, Principal of Pierpont Elementary School, has served with excellence for 33 years in public education, all of them with VUSD. Mr. Sather taught at Montalvo Elementary School and Anacapa Middle School, before becoming an Assistant Principal of Anacapa, and then Principal of Elmhurst, Saticoy, Junipero Serra and Pierpont.

Student Board Member Ms. Violet Delgado representing Buena High School, Ms. Frances Kaiser representing Ventura High School, and Ms. Christine Davis representing VACE, gave updates on exciting things happening at their schools.

**Correspondence**

None.

**Public Comments:**

The following individuals gave a public comment via e-mail or live via Zoom regarding the reopening of schools (in favor of returning to in-person learning as scheduled and in favor of remaining on Distance Learning only), requesting additional small group supports and tutoring, concerns with student D & F rates and questions regarding the governor's plan and funding.

Kelly Travis-via e-mail	Joan Bennett-via e-mail	Mark Larson-via e-mail
Joel Bennett-via e-mail	Diana Hightland-via e-mail	Kym Votruba-via e-mail
Aleta Marquez-via e-mail	Mary Carlsen-via e-mail	Chris C.-via e-mail
Lorell Guzman-via e-mail	Lauren Taluy-via e-mail	Krista Kessler-via e-mail
Timur Taluy-via e-mail	Marisa Burrier-via e-mail	Cynthia Burrier-via e-mail
Su-Lin Rubalcava-via e-mail	Meredith Ikeda-via e-mail	Tommy Plezakowski-via e-mail
Trisha Williamson-via e-mail	Erin Szakos-via e-mail	Rhyan Burrows-via e-mail
Melyssa Noren-via e-mail	Anne Nielson-via e-mail	Paige Mansfield-via e-mail



Johnny Kubelka-via e-mail	Anna Nielson-via e-mail	Mary Carlsen-via e-mail
Melyssa Noren-Audio via e-mail	Bonnie Galindo-via e-mail	Natalie Oman-via e-mail
Brooke Martinez-via e-mail	Elizabeth Walker Martinez-via e-mail	Erin Slack-via e-mail
Annette Walters-via e-mail	Melissa Ruiz-via e-mail	Loren Haar-via e-mail
Mark Martinez-via e-mail	Jamie Amburgey-via e-mail	camechanick-via e-mail
James Hrabak-via e-mail	Megan Andreasen-via e-mail	Andrew Skeath-via e-mail
Diane Moreno-via e-mail	Megan Andreasen-Audio via e-mail	Eric Andreasen-via e-mail
Louise Lampara-via e-mail	Ann Nielson-Audio-via e-mail	Matilda Dracula-via e-mail
Nathan Slack-via e-mail	Tobie Mitchell-via e-mail	Ally Littel-via e-mail
Lisa Clement-Audio via e-mail	Spencer Noren-Video via e-mail	Angela Godwin-via e-mail
Lauren Taluy-via Zoom	Timur Taluy-via Zoom	Ashley Pope-via Zoom
Johnny Kubelca-via Zoom	Melyssa Noren-via Zoom	Jenna White-via Zoom
Megan Andreaseen-via Zoom	Lauren Haar-via Zoom	Spencer Noren-via Zoom

#### CONFERENCE - SUPERINTENDENT

##### 14.a Reopening of Schools Update (Action Requested)

Dr. Roger Rice, Superintendent, gave an update on the reopening of schools.

Dr. Rice shared the most recent data released by the California Department of Public Health, for the week ending January 16, 2021. The recent COVID surge that Ventura County experienced peaked a few weeks ago as evidenced by case rates and positivity rates dropping significantly quicker than anticipated. Dr. Rice shared a timeline projection for Ventura to return to the orange tier as early as April 6, which would allow us to re-open our secondary schools as planned on April 12, 2021. Dr. Rice shared that as of January 25, 2021, Governor Newsom had lifted the regional stay-at-home order.

Dr. Rice shared information pertaining to the Governor's proposed "California's Safe Schools Plan for All." Within this plan, VUSD can re-open our hybrid in-person learning for elementary, in the current purple tier, without the need for mandated testing because our elementary school sites had previously been open during this school year. We cannot re-open our secondary sites, in the current purple tier, by law. If we decide to open in the red tier, that would require VUSD test all staff and students every two weeks which would be financially and logistically difficult for the District to do as the funding from the Governor is insufficient. If we decide to re-open secondary schools in the orange tier, we would be able to continue with our current testing plan.

Dr. Rice shared information regarding the COVID surge impact on VUSD. As of today, VUSD's pool of substitutes teachers willing to teach in-person has increased, adding 15 new substitutes to the pool. Recruitment of custodians has been very successful with more than 20 interviews occurring this week to fill both substitute and permanent positions. In agreement with Ventura Education Support Professionals Association (VESPA), the timeline to post positions has also been reduced from 10 days to 5 days for internal postings allowing faster response times to vacancies during this pandemic. Lastly, Dr. Rice shared VUSD COVID data showing that to date, 29 sites have had at least one case of COVID and 123 cumulative cases among employees.

Dr. Rice shared information pertaining to the vaccine and VUSD employees. Currently, Ventura County is allowing all school nurses, health techs, school psychologists, and occupational therapists to receive their vaccines. VUSD has been told that teachers and staff will be able to receive their vaccine in the next tier, estimated to be in late February or early March. As of January 19, 2021, Ventura County has vaccinated 31,553 individuals.

Dr. Rice recommended to the Board that we proceed as planned with returning to Hybrid in-person learning on February 1, 2021 for our elementary schools and to reopen secondary as planned on April 12, 2021.

It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Ms. Amy Callahan and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve to approve for Elementary School to re-open on February 1, 2021 as planned and to keep the date of April 12, 2021 as the re-opening date for our secondary schools.

Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

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

#### **CONFERENCE - EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

**15.a Consideration for Review of School Accountability Report Cards for the 2019-20 School Year Public Announcement**

Ms. Gina Wolowicz, Director of Curriculum and Instruction (K-5), presented items 15a - 15c as a group, as they are annual routine procedural items. The SPSA and Safety Plans require approval and will be brought back to our next Regular Board meeting. The SARC does not require approval as it is a representation of factual information. The SPSA and the SARC are public documents and are posted on our websites each year.

**15.b Consideration for Review of K-12 School Plans for Student Achievement (SPSA) for the 2020-21 School Year**

**15.c Consideration for Review of K-12 Schools and Adult Education Comprehensive Safety Plans for the 2020-21 School Year**

**15.d Consideration of New and Revised Career Technical Education (CTE) Courses**

Mr. Joe Bova, Principal on Special Assignment, submitted seven CTE courses for the Board's consideration (new and revised). This agenda item will be brought back at a future Board meeting as an action item.

#### **CONFERENCE - HUMAN RESOURCES - Certificated**

**16.a Frontline/ESCAPE Absence Management System**

Dr. Jeff Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, shared information regarding Frontline Absence Management System, that VUSD will be piloting beginning March 1, 2021, replacing SmartFind Express. Frontline includes a substitute calling system and will eventually replace paper timecards by tracking employee's leaves and attendance. Frontline tutorials are available on the VUSD HR website and links to the tutorials were sent in an e-mail to all staff.

**16.b "Sunshine" of Initial Contract Proposals from Ventura Unified Education Association (VUEA) to Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) for Collective Bargaining**

Dr. Jeff Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, presented VUEA's initial contract proposals to VUSD for collective bargaining, pursuant to Government Code 3547-3547.5. This item will be brought back to a future Board meeting as an action item.

**16.c "Sunshine" of Initial Contract Proposals from Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) to Ventura Unified Education Association (VUEA) for Collective Bargaining**

Dr. Jeff Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, presented VUSD's initial contract



proposals to VUEA for collective bargaining, pursuant to Government Code 3547-3547.5. This item will be brought back to a future Board meeting as an action item.

#### **CONFERENCE - HUMAN RESOURCES - Classified**

- 17.a **"Sunshine" of Initial Contract Proposals from Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) to Ventura Education Support Professionals Association (VESPA) for Collective Bargaining**  
Dr. Jeff Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, presented VUSD's initial contract proposals to VESPA for collective bargaining, pursuant to Government Code 3547-3547.5. This item will be brought back to a future Board meeting as an action item.

- 17.b **"Sunshine" of Initial Contract Proposals from Ventura Education Support Professionals Association (VESPA) to Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) for Collective Bargaining**  
Dr. Jeff Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, presented VESPA's initial contract proposals to VUSD for collective bargaining, pursuant to Government Code 3547-3547.5. This item will be brought back to a future Board meeting as an action item.

17.c **Personnel Commission 2019-2020 Annual Report**

Ms. Andrea Crouch, Director of Classified Human Resources, presented on the approved 2019-2020 Personnel Commission Annual Report; the full report can be located on the VUSD website. Ms. Crouch shared information about the three Personnel Commissioners:

- Board of Education's Appointee:
  - Mr. Rich Kirby, who was appointed in 2014 served until December 2019. Mr. Kirby retired from VUSD in 2012 after 38 years of service to VUSD as a teacher, counselor, assistant principal, and Assistant Superintendent.
  - Ms. Anne Campbell was appointed in December 2020 and will serve a three-year term until December 2023. Ms. Campbell retired from VUSD with more than 24 years of experience as a teacher, a career and guidance technician, and a work experience/education instructor.
- Classified Employee's Appointee:
  - Ms. Kathy Stallings was appointed in December 2019 and will serve a three-year term until December of 2022. Ms. Stallings recently retired after 33 years of service for VUSD in various classified positions.
- Joint Appointee:
  - Mr. John Walker was appointed in June 2020, to finish out Mr. Lacey's term through December 2021. Mr. Walker served on the VUSD Board of Education for 29 years.

Ms. Crouch acknowledged classified staff who were honored for their years of service and who were able to retire after years of faithfully serving our community.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- 18.a **Administrative Recommendation for Student Re-Admission from Expulsion/Suspended Order**  
It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Dr. Jerry Dannenberg and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve for administrative recommendation for student re-admission from expulsion/suspended order for student #20/20.

Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

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

- 18.b **Allovue, Inc. Software**

It was moved by Mr. Matt Almaraz, seconded by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve the purchase of Allovue for a contract of three years.

Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

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

**18.c Facilitron Software**

It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Dr. Jerry Dannenberg and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve the contract with Facilitron for one year and to purchase their software program.

Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

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

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**CONSENT - HUMAN RESOURCES - Certificated**

It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Ms. Amy Callahan and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve consent item #'s 19-21 as presented.

Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

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

- 19.a Ratification of Administration's Approval for Leave of Absence for Certificated Personnel for the 2020-21 School Year
- 19.b Ratification of Administration's Approval of Miscellaneous & Part-Time Certificated Assignments for the 2020-21 School Year
- 19.c Ratification of Administration's Approval of Employment and Reemployment of Substitute Teachers for the 2020-21 School Year
- 19.d Ratification of Administration's Approval of Employment and Reemployment of Certificated Personnel for the 2020-21 School Year
- 19.e Ratification of Administration's Approval of Retirements and Release for Certificated Personnel for the 2020-21 School Year

**CONSENT - HUMAN RESOURCES - Classified**

- 20.a Classified Position Changes

**CONSENT - BUSINESS SERVICES**

- 21.a School on Wheels, Inc. Memorandum of Understanding 2020-21
- 21.b Santa Barbara Community College District K-12 Strong Workforce Program 2021-23
- 21.c Gifts to School District
- 21.d Ratification of Purchase Orders (December 18, 2020 to January 12, 2021)



## **BOARD REPORTS**

Trustee Dannenberg shared that he attended the Parcel Tax Oversight Committee meeting where Mr. John Walker was elected as the new Chair, and Ms. Danny Brook as the new Vice-Chair. The committee will be working on a report showing how the Parcel Tax money has been spent over the past year. Dr. Dannenberg also took part in the East Community Council Meeting where they discussed completing Kimball Park and the need for better services such as a grocery store for the East end of Ventura.

Trustee Callahan shared that she participated in the VCSBA Orientation along with other Board members. Ms. Callahan also participated in an interview with Cause Action Now on January 25.

Trustee Rodriguez shared that she attended the Ventura High School Counseling Advisory meeting and appreciated all the hard work that the counseling department is doing during this time to reach out to students and their families. Ms. Rodriguez attended the Ethnic and Social Justice Steering Committee meeting where they discussed internal issues such as bringing in new members to the committee, what the renewed mission is, and looking ahead as this will now be a graduation requirement for all students beginning in the fall of 2021. Ms. Rodriguez was also interviewed by Cause Action Now. Ms. Rodriguez will be attending her first CSBA Board of Director's meeting next weekend. Lastly, Ms. Rodriguez share that she has been appointed by Ventura City Council, to the General Council Advisory Committee for the next three years.

Trustee Almaraz shared that he attended several of the School Information Night breakout sessions and was excited about the amazing things that Lemon Grove School presented, in particular the Learning Lab. Mr. Almaraz also took part in the Elmhurst Advisory Council meeting and the DELAC Committee meeting.

Trustee Lomax shared that she also attended the School Information night and enjoyed the breakout session for Poinsettia. Ms. Lomax also attended the Ventura County CTE Overview meeting where they brought up "Youth Truths," a way for students to communicate with the Superintendent and get involved in student government. Ms. Lomax would like this to be brought back for a further Board discussion at another time.

## **COMING EVENTS**

Dr. Rice shared the following upcoming events:

- School Information Night for Foothill Technology HS on January 27 at 6:00 p.m.
- New Beginnings Workshop-Special Board Meeting on January 28 at 9:00 a.m.
- Special Education District Advisory Committee Meeting January 29 at 9:00 a.m.
- School of Choice Applications-Last day to submit is January 29 at 4:00 p.m.
- Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting February 2 at 2:00 p.m.
- LCAP Advisory Meeting February 3 at 8:30 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.
- VUSD Mental Health Partnership Committee Meeting February 9 at 1:00 p.m.
- Ethnic & Social Justice Studies Committee Meeting February 1 at 4:00 p.m.

## **FUTURE BOARD ITEMS**

- Board Policies Update
- Learning Continuity Plan
- East Ventura K-8
- Mental Health Supports for Students

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

Trustee Callahan thanked VUSD staff for their hard work and time that they have put in regarding decisions that were made tonight. Ms. Callahan stated she is honored to be a Trustee for VUSD and to be a part of this amazing community.

Trustee Rodriguez acknowledged that the decisions that were made tonight by the Board are not taken lightly. She took a moment to acknowledge how this decision impacts staff members. Ms. Rodriguez took a moment to congratulate VUSD parent, City Council Member and recently appointed District Attorney for the County of Ventura, Mr. Eric Nasarenko.

Trustee Almaraz also congratulated Eric Nasarenko to his appointment as District Attorney. Mr. Almaraz also acknowledged how tonight's decision impacts staff. Lastly, Mr. Almaraz wanted to honor Ms. Virginia Mendoza O'Neil, one of the founding members of the Ventura Education Partnership (VEP) and a close family friend, who recently passed away.

Trustee Lomax also acknowledged Ms. Virginia Mendoza O'Neil and her hard work in establishing VEP, which is going strong 30 years later. Lastly, Ms. Lomax thanked Dr. Rice and Staff for their hard work and acknowledged that VUSD is a fabulous District and will continue to make the best decisions for our students.

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

None.

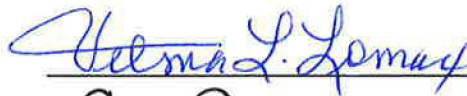
#### **ADJOURNMENT**


At 10:33 p.m., It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Ms. Amy Callahan and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve that the Board adjourn the meeting to the next regular meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. on February 9, 2021

Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

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

APPROVED

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

[REDACTED]

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**From:** K <kellydee59 [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 4:31 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Question/ comment for tonight's board mtg

Hi,  
Thank you for taking comments.

I'm worried if the decision is made that every child has a covid test weekly, that my daughter; who had a traumatic covid test experience months ago, will refuse.

Therefore, I would have to go back all distance learning, correct?

Thank you  
Kelly Travis

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Joan Bennett <joanlbennett@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 4:39 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Board meeting public comment

VUSD,

Please reopen our elementary schools for in-person as soon as possible. Yes, teachers are **essential**, and for young children, it is **essential** that they learn in person. Sitting on screens for hours each day is not developmentally appropriate for these kids.

Every other essential profession in the top vaccine tiers are currently working in person, including the field of childcare where preschool and daycare teachers are unable to social distance from their students - and they have been doing their job throughout the pandemic.

VUSD elementary schools have shown they can operate safely, and we trust they will continue to do so in the coming months. Please reopen our elementary schools.

Thank you,

A parent of two Loma Vista Elementary students



**From:** Larson, Mark  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 4:45 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** Public Comments for Board Minutes

January 25, 2021

Dear Board President and Board Members,

Hello and good afternoon. I teach at Lincoln Elementary School. I teach hybrid and remotely.

It was wonderful to work with students in person before winter break. Our principal and office staff worked so well together to get Lincoln up and running. It was a Herculean task and they made it work. The children who attended seemed to enjoy the experience even with all the precautions in place. Thankfully there were few complicating issues to deal with. The value of in person instruction is powerful. It is why I teach.

But there remain some fundamental issues of in person teaching for which an abundance of problems exist. Here are a few issues from my limited perspective.

Several families that chose in person learning have chosen to keep their children home. They are not comfortable with the current Covid situation. So their children stay home and receive less access to learning than before. In essence some families have abandoned this school year. I hope they will come back in the future.

The hard work of norming a classroom, creating classroom culture, supplying students and establishing routines remotely have been uprooted. Half of my students now attend other classrooms. We start again. Pivot again. This marathon of flexibility is not the best practice in the sphere of elementary education. Like my colleagues we do our best to welcome students and establish the classroom despite the changes.

The virus has changed and become more successful at being virulent, but human behaviors have not changed making transmission more rapid. There are numerous views and beliefs, even on a single campus, on how to conduct ourselves during this pandemic. The bias of these views is based on misinformation and disinformation. (The very central idea of "education" is to replace bias with truth and understanding!) Some of these views have damaged our community and sickened others.

With this tangle of conflicting views, what is the best path forward? You have an awesome responsibility as board members to decide for our public school community. So many considerations to weigh and value. But a vaccine is on the way, and may be the game changer we need.

Be strong, stay connected safely, be supportive, protect lives at all ages, find resilience and maintain it so we can come together in the future proud of our work as educators during a pandemic. Please consider remote learning. It can fill the short term so we can reach the long term with fewer negative impacts.

Thank you for your time,

Mark Larson

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Joel C Bennett <joelcbennett@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 4:52 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Board Meeting Comments

VUSD-

Please reopen elementary schools. As an essential service, funded by taxpayer dollars, it is your obligation to do so. We have NFL football, health care, preschools, etc all open (and safely so!). Why are we making a special exception to shut down critical essential schooling?

While there is a modicum of risk to having in-person school, it does not outweigh the critical known harm it is doing to students to keep it shut down.

Thank you,  
A concerned parent

January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### Board Meeting Live Public Comment

Good Evening, my name is Diana Hightland and I have a 2<sup>nd</sup> Grader TWI student at Montalvo and a 7<sup>th</sup> Grader not TWI at Anacapa. I have grown up in Ojai my entire childhood and most of my adult life. My parents are both Ventura Unified School District Retired Employees, my dad Keith Manion worked at the maintenance facilities and my mother Kathleen Manion was a Special Ed Speech Therapist. The love of this school district in my family growing up and is now as a parent with kids attending it.

I have been nothing but in love with our school Montalvo Elementary and am so proud to be a part of the amazing TWI program. My 2<sup>nd</sup> grader has loved every single teacher, staff member, and her favorite the lunch ladies. Entering this program in Kinder we knew it was going to take a lot of parent support and involvement. Come March 2020 we never knew how much involvement when the pandemic hit.

My husband and I work full time. My husband is considered essential in the Agriculture Department and I myself in accounting in the Auto Industry. There has not been one day that has stopped for us work wise. I feel awful complaining at all because we are so fortunate to have our jobs, a home, internet, food, our health, and I have some flexibility to come and go during the day.


I understand the health/safety concerns for the staff members at our school and that it cannot sustain being open, or the new guidelines may not be feasible. I want to know how the district expects us to sustain being at home distance learning? My 7<sup>th</sup> grader has been getting straight A's, so she is not as much of a concern. My focus is on my 2<sup>nd</sup> grader in the TWI program which is designed for in person learning. I refuse to let this year just be a lost cause and doing the bare minimum is not an option. I have gotten her a tutor ever since the summertime. I enrolled her in an amazing program called Ventura Wild, and the class she attended is Ninos Y Naturaleza for last Fall and currently this winter session, where they are encouraged to speak Spanish while exploring outside nature. I am paying out for all these things since we are not in school, but I am not making more money. The level of emotional and mental exhaustion on us parents with the weight of our children's academics is not sustaining either.

It would be appreciated if our school PTA would help financially supplement approved needs like tutoring, activities, that are helping our kids be emotionally, academically balanced and to continue thriving in this TWI program. I know that everyone is struggling, but the TWI program is very special. I can only speak for myself, but I feel like I have to have more involvement, more effort, and more patience because it is a program that was not made for me to teach my child at home. With my High School Spanish, it takes me google translating for myself her Language Arts for example, then having her read it in Spanish, then we talk about it in English, and we figure out how to write it in Spanish. Our Math same thing, not only do I have to figure out what it is saying in Spanish, help her learn it with Spanish words that I do not know myself. Our teacher is amazing, she is pushing us, she is supporting us, she is caring, but there is only so much time she can give. If we do not finish the section, I am expected to help my child continue where they left off. To think in an hour my child will understand via zoom and be able to do assignments on her own is just not going to happen. So again, it takes more time from us parents.

I hear the school districts stance, you cannot sustain being open, but I need to be heard as well, I cannot sustain distance learning at home for much longer.

Thank you so much for your time, Diana Hightland.





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**From:** Votruba, Kymberlee (Kym)  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 6:25 PM  
**To:** Rice, Roger; Public Comment  
**Subject:** Thoughts on Returning to Hybrid

Dear Dr. Rice and Members of the VUSD School Board,

First, let me express my sincere gratitude for the countless hours of extra work you have put in over this past year. I recognize the complexity that each new situation has offered, and I've been extremely proud to work for a district that has consistently shown sensitivity to each issue and has truly responded in what they feel is in the best interests of both students and staff.

I know that you, as a team, will continue to be thoughtful about all decisions that affect our community, so I want to share my thoughts about our current plan to reopen elementary schools on February 1st.

I miss my students like crazy, and I am one of the first to admit that online education has not been as successful for most of our students as in-person education. It breaks my heart, but I am confident that our students are resilient and will emerge from this challenge with a renewed appreciation for learning. I am looking forward to the day when I can safely give a student a hug for a job well-done or to offer support on a rough day.

With that being said, I am truly scared to return to my classroom next week. In just this past week, I have learned about the Covid-positive test results of one of my students and a staff member at my site... two individuals who I would have been exposed to, one for hours a day in close-proximity, if we had returned to school. Testing would not have been enough to prevent either of these exposures or the exposures of the rest of my students and their families.

Like many Ventura County citizens, I have worked very hard to avoid the spread. I order my groceries online, use curbside pick-up, avoid gathering, and have kept my 16-year old from seeing her friends. The idea that the sacrifices my family has made could have been for not really upsets me.

It was my understanding that we kept students on distance learning for so long because it was about safety. The idea that we would send students and staff back when the numbers are the worst that they've ever been leads me to believe that it may not have ever been solely about safety.

Finally, I originally agreed to return to campus when we were in the red tier because I believed that the trade-off between the risks at that point and the benefits for our students was worth it at the time. That is no longer the case. I dread being forced to make the choice between the health of my family and the roof over my head.

There is no doubt that our challenges this year have been dynamic and have required flexibility from us. I believe that we must not give up this willingness to adjust, even when it's uncomfortable and may invite criticism from some. Our flexibility is what has gotten us this far. Thankfully, the end is finally in sight. Let's hold off a little longer until we can all return to our students safely.

Please reconsider your decision to reopen elementary schools on February 1st.

Thank you,

Kym Votruba

5th Grade Teacher, Sunset School K-8

**From:** Aleta Marquez <gogirlnom[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 6:47 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Thank you

Thank you for continuing to let our athletes still participate in conditioning. My son is a Senior he does more hours of school work online that he has ever done before in his schooling life. He is stressed and exhausted but the highlight of his day is the 2 hrs he gets to participate with his team and coaches on the football field. I will tell you the coaches and kids are hanging onto the same thread in hopes of something positive from our Governor tomorrow. Cougar Pride once a Cougar always a Cougar ❤️🙏🏾

Aleta Marquez

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Chris C <ccattanach97@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 7:55 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Board Comments-Reopening of Elementary Schools

Dear Members of the Board and Dr. Rice,

I am a fourth grade teacher for VUSD. Please DO NOT reopen schools until elementary teachers have the opportunity to get vaccinated. First, the numbers DON'T justify reopening right now and with a possible solution right around the corner, it only makes sense to hold off a little longer. Also, there are now new variants of COVID and we are starting to see more cases of those new variants.

What happens if the governor decides to make every teacher and student get tested weekly? The amount of time teachers will spend standing in line just to get tested will probably be as much as they spend on planning. Of course, the district could get take home tests for elementary teachers and small group teachers or have onsite testing, but my guess is that WON'T happen. More concerning, is how does the district plan on monitoring if the students are tested?

I am aware of Governor Newsom's recent directive to lift the regional stay at home order however, his decision to do so doesn't align with County provided metrics. Again, what is beneficiary to one group/individual doesn't mean it is beneficial to others. Please wait to reopen schools until things are safer for the staff and students.



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lorell Guzman <princessrellie33@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 8:00 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Opening school

As a concerned parent of a 1st grader I am not comfortable sending my daughter back while this pandemic is still out of control. I feel the teachers should get the vaccine and then we can send our children back to school. My daughter has asthma and I am not comfortable sending her back. I hope the board makes the right decision and keeps our kids on Distance Learning until the teachers get their vaccine.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lauren Taluy <lm.taluy@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 8:15 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Request for Live Audio Public Comment 1/26/2021

Hello,

I would like to request to speak live at tomorrow night's board meeting. I would like this public comment added if there are technical difficulties that make speaking live impossible.

Dear Members of the Board and Dr. Rice,

I am writing for a straightforward reason. To ask you to stick to your plan and open schools on February 1st. I am concerned that people do not realize that this start date is even at stake, as your district wide emails have assured us all that the plan is February 1st. I hope that is the case. Our President, Governor and local health experts all say that school is safe and extremely important for kids. Our Stay at Home order was lifted and case numbers are moving the right direction. Stick to the plan. Open February 1st. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lauren Taluy

Parent of a kindergartener and second grader at Pierpont Elementary

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Krista Kessler <kristamkessler@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 8:33 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Please Fully Open Elementaries

Dear Board,

I'm a single parent working long hours as an attorney and have a second & fourth grader at Elmhurst. While I work, the kids go to childcare at the Y. Although I love the Y as they have been an indescribable help, they are not teachers and my kids are increasingly bored & unhappy there. Please open the schools. So many of us need them open, the kids are really suffering here. They need live instruction, now. Please. Thank you.

Kindly,  
Krista Kessler

**Dahm, Amy**

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**From:** Timur Taluy <timu[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 8:45 PM  
**To:** Public Comment; Callahan, Amy; Rice, Roger; Rodriguez, Sabrena; Almaraz, Matt; Dannenberg, Jerry; Lomax, Velma  
**Subject:** Re: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Fwd: Keep our kids safe; Keep our kids in school

Thank you for allowing audio public comment at your meeting tomorrow. I request the opportunity to speak at your meeting.

Thank you for all your messages via e-mail and the parent square to the public of your intent to bring back choice for our children and families and allowing them to choose to go to school in person albeit a few hours or via distance learning.

As a parent of a kindergarten student and a second grader, you need to open school for them, they and their classmates are losing so much not being in a classroom.

I understand that Trustees are receiving more comments from parties that do not want to offer this choice in our community than those that do want the choice. This is because people that want choice for our communities believe that it is decided that we will be able to choose to send our children to school next week. Your constituents believe they will have the choice to send their children to school next week.

If you are sending incorrect information to the public and you have not yet decided that allowing families to choose to send their children back to school please vote to allow families to choose to send their children to school. This is the expectation of your voters.

Remember,

- Children in school protect teachers' and administrator salaries.
- Children in school protects jobs in our community and
- Children in school promotes gender equality

If you do not offer choice in our community, enrollment will continue to drop, the district will receive fewer dollars and have to cut administrators pay and cut teachers pay. If you do not offer choice our community will continue to suffer, mental health issues will continue to fester, and each of you will be responsible for the harm to our children because they are not at school where teachers, and staff are trained to identify child abuse or other issues.

If you do not offer choice in our community you will fall short of the expectations of the voters.

Regards,

Timur Taluy  
Chief Executive Officer

On Tue, Jan 12, 2021 at 9:34 AM Timur Taluy <[timur@fileyourtaxes.com](mailto:timur@fileyourtaxes.com)> wrote:  
Members of the Board & Superintendent Rice-



Denying public comment at your meeting is a violation of the Brown Act.

I want to implore you to understand that my goal is to support the deliberations of our elected Board, not to be disruptive. My goal is to exercise my rights in a productive and constructive way. I understand you have a lot of work to do and a lot of other considerations, but in-person testimony is critical to that process.

The other jurisdictions in which I reside like the City of Ventura and County of Ventura have found options to afford public testimony live. Perhaps you can use their model tonight to follow the intent of the Brown Act otherwise it has the unintended consequence of projecting an incorrect image that you are finding ways to stifle the public.

I respectfully reiterate my request for access to speak today in front of the Board to exercise my rights as an American Citizen and as a California Resident.

For your reference, I have curated certain sections of the Brown Act and the Governor's executive order that suspends certain aspects of the Brown Act:

Section 54953 reads

(a) All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency shall be open and public, and **all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting**

It continues to read:

(3) If the legislative body of a local agency elects to use teleconferencing, it shall post agendas at all teleconference locations and conduct teleconference meetings in a manner that **protects the statutory and constitutional rights of the parties or the public appearing before the legislative body of a local agency**. Each teleconference location shall be identified in the notice and agenda of the meeting or proceeding, and each teleconference location shall be accessible to the public. During the teleconference, at least a quorum of the members of the legislative body shall participate from locations within the boundaries of the territory over which the local agency exercises jurisdiction, except as provided in subdivision (d). The agenda shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the legislative body directly pursuant to Section 54954.3 at each teleconference location.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "teleconference" means a meeting of a legislative body, the members of which are in different locations, connected by electronic means, through either audio or video, or both. **Nothing in this section shall prohibit a local agency from providing the public with additional teleconference locations.**

Section 54954.3:

(a) Every agenda for regular meetings shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to **directly address the legislative body on any item of interest to the public**, before or during the legislative body's consideration of the item, that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body

As you know attendance at a meeting is not simply viewing a meeting. 54954.3 (b) (1) specifically references "public testimony on particular issues and for each individual **speaker**" It is the right of the public to speak at your meetings.

Further Governor Newsom's order N-29-20 3 (iii) which amended N-25-20 11 continues to compel you to allow "members of the public to address the body **at each teleconference**". ( <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.12.20-EO-N-25-20-COVID-19.pdf> ). Note that both versions of the Governor's order compel you to allow this public to address the body.

Regards,

Timur Taluy

On Tue, Jan 12, 2021 at 8:28 AM Public Comment <[public.comment@venturausd.org](mailto:public.comment@venturausd.org)> wrote:

Good morning Mr. Taluy,

Thank you for submitting your public comment for tonight's Board meeting. Unfortunately at this time, public comments are only accepted via e-mail due to COVID-19 and the recent Stay at Home Order issued December 5, 2020. I have included additional information that is posted in our agenda below. Please know that the Board reads every public comment and will summarize the information during the meeting.

Amy

#### PUBLIC ACCESS/COMMENTS

**PLEASE BE ADVISED: As a result of the recent Regional Stay at Home Order issued, in-person public comment will not be available until further notice. Public comment is a below.**

In accordance with Governor Newsom's Executive Orders N-29-20 regarding COVID-19, members continue to have the right to observe the public meeting via <http://bit.ly/TDCStudios> and submitting at [public.comment@venturausd.org](mailto:public.comment@venturausd.org). Public comment and Public Comment on Closed accepted starting 24 hours prior to the Board meetings Opening Procedure and ending a half hour before the Opening Procedure. All public comment received via the designated email address, referred to the Board of Education via e-mail at the time of public comment or at the time of the agenda item as requested by the speaker. A summary of public comment received will be given either during the public comment period, or just prior to discussing the item, if the comment is for action. The public comment will also be made part of the minutes of the Board meeting. No comment will be read in its entirety during the meeting.

Any writings or documents that are public records and are provided to the majority of Board members during a meeting regarding an open session item on the agenda are available via the <https://www.venturausd.org/board/SuperintendentBoard/BoardofEducation/2019-20AgendasInformation.aspx>

Amy Dahm

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Ventura Unified School District



255 W. Stanley Ave.

Ventura, California 93001

(805) 641-5000 x 1014

Venturausd.org



**From:** Timur Taluy <[timur.██████████@venturausd.org](mailto:timur.██████████@venturausd.org)>

**Sent:** Monday, January 11, 2021 5:35 PM

**To:** Public Comment <[public.comment@venturausd.org](mailto:public.comment@venturausd.org)>; Callahan, Amy <[Amy.Callahan@venturausd.org](mailto:Amy.Callahan@venturausd.org)>; Rice, Roger <[Roger.Rice@venturausd.org](mailto:Roger.Rice@venturausd.org)>; Rodriguez, Sabrena <[Sabrena.Rodriguez@venturausd.org](mailto:Sabrena.Rodriguez@venturausd.org)>; Almaraz, Matt <[Matt.Almaraz@venturausd.org](mailto:Matt.Almaraz@venturausd.org)>; Dannenberg, Jerry <[Jerry.Dannenberg@venturausd.org](mailto:Jerry.Dannenberg@venturausd.org)>; Lomax, Velma <[Velma.Lomax@venturausd.org](mailto:Velma.Lomax@venturausd.org)>

**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Fwd: Keep our kids safe; Keep our kids in school

Hello

I have continued concerns on this issue and request the ability to speak via zoom at the 12 January meeting. Can you confirm receipt of the message with instructions to provide public comment.

President Rodriguez, Members of the Board, & Superintendent Rice,

**Your decisions affect the safety of our children. School is the safest place for children.** Making a decision to **give parents the choice** to keep our children in school and increase those hours is the **only** right decision for our community. Staffing issues can be resolved with organizational realignment and emergency hiring in the job pool of so many who have lost their jobs.

CNN has reported that mental health is going to be the biggest effect of the pandemic in 2021 (1), school provides a safe place and access to counseling.

**School is the safest place for children.**

The Wall Street Journal reported an "increase, or at least a steady flow, of severe child abuse and neglect—infants beaten and killed, and children admitted for drug ingestion or falling out of windows" because "there has been a dramatic drop in child-abuse reports as teachers, day-care workers and others who are required by state law to notice and flag abuse are no longer routinely around children." (2)

**School is the safest place for children.**

Dr Fauci said "If you look at the data, the spread among children and from children is not really very big at all, not like one would have suspected," and "Close the bars and keep the schools open," on ABC (3). Our Governor closed the bars, now do your part and open the schools.

**School is the safest place for children.**

Our society relies on school not only for education, but among other things to keep our children safe and fed. If you elect to close our schools you are turning your back on the mental health and safety of children in our community.

I understand that there is pressure to close schools due to concerns of certain constituent groups. Dr Rice has reported in a previous board meeting that enrollment is down. **Enrollment is down because parents want their kids in school.** Parents have taken their kids to private schools, hired teachers, and created learning pods, all taking kids out of your classrooms and money out of your pocket.

**How will the teachers react when you lay teachers off** because of reduced enrollment? How will the other constituent groups that rely on your funding react when you have to decrease their expense by 30% layoffs or budget cuts that reflect a 30% decrease in enrollment.

**You have a responsibility today and in the future to offer choice**, otherwise you risk children's safety, the jobs of our beloved teachers and staff, financial stability of our community, and your future in public service. Not to mention the **collateral damage** the Brookings Institute points out **to parents jobs and gender equality** (4).



In the most recent election Supervisor Moran, our Board Vice President was unequivocally removed by voter referendum. Not because she is a bad supervisor, she is one of our best, recognized by you electing her to the Vice President role. She was **forcefully removed by voters because you neglected our schools and our children and put our community at risk by not having a plan** like our neighbor Moorpark did **and for not opening schools** earlier than you did.

If you do not put our children, our teachers, and our communities first, the voters will continue to vote, and you too will fall the same fate of Supervisor Moran.

I hope your predisposed choice is to open schools and this public comment is simply support for your well thought out decision, but if not, I hope you will consider the consequences to supporting our children.

(1) <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/04/health/mental-health-during-covid-19-2021-stress-wellness/index.html>

(2) <https://www.wsj.com/articles/child-abuse-reports-are-falling-and-thats-bad-news-for-children-11591263001>

(3) <https://www.businessinsider.com/anthony-fauci-close-bars-school-instruction-coronavirus-infections-health-2020-11>

(4) <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/>

Regards,

Timur Taluy

Founder & CEO FileYourTaxes.com

Auditor Pierpont Elementary PTA  
Father of three children 7 and under.

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#### Circular 230 Disclosure

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**From:** marisakellyb <marisakellyb@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 9:22 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- public comment

Dear School Board,

I'm writing in support of reopening hybrid learning February 1st. Our stay home orders have been lifted, our safety and routines have been practiced (and work!). We did a GREAT job in December, and we should be giving elementary kids an opportunity for in-person learning. As a 5th grade teacher for the District, and the mother of a 4th grader at Juanamaria, I see the benefits of getting students into classrooms for instruction. We can do this, and do this safely. I have been having small groups come to my classroom since November, and while there HAVE been some students in my class that have been COVID positive, it was not spread to anyone else at school. Please look at the data, which shows we can have students in classrooms safely, and let us bring students back to campus on February 1st.

Thank you for your time,

Marisa Burrier

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S8 Active, an AT&T 5G Evolution capable smartphone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Cindy Burrier <cburrier@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 9:47 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Students back in school

I am hoping that the school board me vote in favor of having students back in school on a hybrid schedule beginning February 1. I was encouraged today when our governor lifted the stay at home orders and I hope that the board will take that into consideration as an indication our state is moving in the correct direction.

For the single week that students got to go to school at the beginning of December, we noticed a tremendous enthusiasm from our Grandson-a 4th grader at Juanamaria Elementary. I think most parents and teachers realize that children are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to be back in the classroom.

I know that the school board members and teachers understand the importance of the structure that a classroom provides.

We are extremely hopeful that hybrid opportunities are once again introduced for the families and students in Ventura next week!

Cynthia Burrier

Sent from my iPhone



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sulin Rubalcava <sulindrubalcava@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:15 AM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Fwd: Special Education - Small Group - Additional Support

Dear VUSD Board Members,

We are all definitely experiencing interesting times with COVID-19.

I understand and realize there are a lot of moving parts, work, and efforts in place to open the schools during this pandemic and I truly appreciate the efforts.

This back and forth and last minute decisions are making it extremely difficult for students, teachers, and parents. We need to make a choice and stand by it as much as possible. Having another conversation the same week it was already decided the schools would open February 1st is a back and forth pattern that continues to create mistrust in VUSD as well as last minute notices such as extending closure after the holidays - it was announced both to staff and families the last day of school before winter break. This last minute decision put teachers in a very difficult situation. We need to stop this and think further ahead on the impact of VUSD roller coaster ride of making decisions.

A board member, mentioned in a Facebook post that parents haven't emailed her with their concerns for this weeks meeting as much educators have. Parents are getting tired of VUSD last minute decisions which is also difficult for the students and all.

With Ventura County now being in purple tier and private schools are open and have been open for a while, it's time for VUSD to stand by the hybrid model and let the students back to in person teaching. We need stop bringing up the challenges on why we can't open and discuss what can we do to remain open as some other public schools in our local areas have.

A further, item I want to express is how can we better support our students with special education and IEPs in person. I find it heartbreaking that we are currently providing service to these students during the 3 hour compressed time during the hybrid model. If I recall correctly, during a board meeting in August or September, it was approved by the board to start small groups for special education needs, so why aren't we entertaining small group services for kids with IEPs and 504s outside the standard 8 am to 11 am school time? Can we entertain providing in person services for these students? The students with special needs are falling far behind as time passes by and are the students that need the additional learning hours beyond the 3 hour time frame. I'm hoping we can consider a schedule for these students from 8 am to 11 am and stay after from 11 am to 12 pm to work with their Special Education Educator in person in a small group.

As a parent with a student with an IEP, I continue to feel that everything my child receives I have to strongly advocate for her which is no fun at all. I've been on the Special Education Advocacy committee since the inception and I'm still waiting to hear what the plan is in detail to best support these kids with the social distancing in mind.

Thank you for your time and I hope special education continues to be part of the district's conversations on a daily basis.

I look forward to a reply and I hope Special Education becomes a pivotal conversation and that we VUSD will make and stand by a decision..

Thank you for your time and the energy devoted to guiding VUSD.

**Su-Lin Rubalcava**

Marketing [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/sulinrubalcava>

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Meredith Murray <mermurray6@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 6:49 AM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Safe Schools for All question

I was wondering if every district in California is required to apply for the Safe Schools for All plan. I couldn't find a lot of details so I was curious if not applying was an option for VUSD since we already had the waiver. I know the idea of giving up money when it's scarce already is not appealing, but I am just wondering how much money this plan would consume rather than bypass it all together.

Thanks for your time!

Meredith Ikeda

Juanamaria parent

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tommy Plezakowski <TPleaze@ [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 6:54 AM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Comments

Schools need to be open for in person learning for the parents who elect that option. As a critical public service, it is imperative that schools, like so many other businesses, continue to operate. Why can Starbucks be open and serving customers, yet the school remain closed?

Tony (a parent)



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Williamson, Trisha  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 7:50 AM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Cc:** Ruiz, Robert  
**Subject:** Concerns from a teacher

**I would like to submit this email I sent to the Board and Dr. Rice as a public comment. Thank you.**

Dear Dr. Rice and the VUSD School Board,

I feel the time has finally come for me to express my concerns regarding the current state of our teaching conditions. I must share that this is the first time in my 32 years with the district that I have felt the need to do so, and only because for the first time I feel that VUSD does not have my health and safety in its best interest.

Since returning in our "COVID Safety Week" model January 4, I have felt safer and have had more interaction with my fifth grade students on a daily basis. During these last two weeks, I am able to teach full daily Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science lessons without the constraints of social distancing, mask monitoring, and flipping back and forth from in-person mornings to Zoom afternoons.

My main purpose for writing to you is to ask you to reconsider returning to our hybrid schedule until after hybrid teachers and staff are vaccinated. I have several reasons for asking you for this consideration:

- \* As I am writing this email, Eric Reynolds has sent at least the third, perhaps fourth email notifying our staff of another positive COVID case on our campus. I have taken three tests and have been blessed with three negatives. But I feel that each test is a throw of the dice and one of these days I may not be so blessed.
- \* And related to the previous point, I would like solid reassurance that there are sufficient qualified substitutes should anyone, including myself, be in need of an absence.
- \* On a personal note, having unexpectedly losing my husband to cancer in 2019 and my father to COPD in 2020, I would like to avoid further loss in our family, maintaining my health and not further impact my adult son.
- \* There is a foreseeable time when we will be vaccinated and our current distance learning schedule is working well. I have nearly 100% attendance daily.
- \* Our positivity rate is still very high in Ventura County and with future gatherings such as three day weekends, Super Bowl, and Valentine's Day, we could continue to see high rates and low ICU capacity.
- \* Consistency is essential for elementary students. This changing back and forth is difficult for parents, teachers, and students. I would rather extend the current schedule, wait for vaccines and a lower positivity, returning later to the hybrid model; knowing we will have a higher chance of sustaining the hybrid schedule until June.

I truly look forward to the day when we can safely resume "normal" school. I hope to continue to serve my students and colleagues at Portola for many more years to come, perhaps using this experience as a teaching tool for my science and health lessons. I ask that you please take my concerns into consideration and I thank you for your time and understanding.

Sincerely,

**Trisha Williamson, Grade 5 Teacher**

Portola Elementary School

6700 Eagle Street

Ventura, California 93003



For the future of every student



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Erin S <sappho42 [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 9:39 AM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- School re-opening

Good evening. I am writing you all in hopes that you will listen. Listen to us parents who desperately need schools to open. Listen to the kids that cannot thrive in this environment of separation from their teachers and friends and therapists. Listen to those of us who are making it work daily, but barely.

I am a mom of 4. Two of my children attend a private school and have been in school since October. 2 covid cases have occurred since then, both staff members, not students. These 2 of my children are THRIVING. My youngest two have Down syndrome. Because of their extra chromosome, they are better suited at public schools, where teachers and paras and therapists are trained to work my kids like mine. My youngest two have been home since March. They got to go to school for 4 days in December and honestly, those were their happiest days.....since before covid. Some things you should know. Zooms don't work for kids like mine. It is a checkmark that we attend to daily, but it is not an education. And to pretend it is for many children is deplorable. Zoom therapies are the same. For 10 months I have "made it work." Many tears were shed from everyone under my roof, and both of my kiddos have regressed. Academically. Emotionally. Socially. And behaviorally. There is talk that we can catch those kids up.....no, you can't. Not my kids. I am tired of having to do someone else's job daily. I am tired of no hope from you all. Many school districts have opened and have made it work. Many school districts are trying. It feels like you are not trying. It feels like you don't care about our children. It feels very one sided. It feels like you have already made your decision every time you have a board meeting without taking into accounts everyone's feelings, not just those who are the loudest. Schools are about children. Our children's education. Our future. And you have denied that for 10 months. It is time to open our schools.

Notice I am not saying that everyone should go to school, but we should have a choice. If I had medically fragile children, (and I do not consider my youngest medically fragile at all, even with Down syndrome), then they would stay home. But I would not expect others to stay home. Each family should be making this choice based on their own family circumstances. You are single-handedly taking away our ability to choose what is right for our kids. Those who choose to stay home, awesome. But my children NEED school. And I know that they are not alone.

Please open our schools.

Erin Szakos

aka Tanner and Wayfair's mom

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Rhyan Burrows <rhyan.burrows@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:17 AM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Open the schools - public comment for tonight's meeting

To whom it may concern:

Last year when the district put a plan together to allow elementary students to return to school under a hybrid model, it felt as if we were finally seeing our voices heard only to have this be thrown out the window for the first month of the new year.

How is it that all of the private schools in this county have been able to open and stay open for the most part?

Keeping the schools closed is going to continue to drive enrollment down, I know several parents who have transferred to a private school and are on the waiting list, our family being one of them. If you continue to keep the schools closed, you will lose more students and in turn you will need to lay off teachers.

Open the schools. The children need to be at school, running with their friends, speaking to teachers in person, not on a computer screen.

Regards,  
Rhyan Burrows  
Mother of 2nd Grader in the VUSD



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Melyssa Noren <m.noren@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 11:39 AM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Cc:** Rice, Roger; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Dannenberg, Jerry; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Return to Hybrid

Dear VUSD Board,

I would like to speak on behalf of the VUSD elementary students hoping to return to hybrid learning next week. I would first like to say that I feel it is critical that the board is listening to the **parents that have selected hybrid** as an option when considering comments. Families that are not ready to be back to in-person school have already been given that option, and I do not feel they should be weighing in at this point.

I would like to point to the following reasons and solutions for why we must return to Hybrid immediately:

1. The mental health of our youth is suffering! I of course care for the safety of our teachers and staff, but also the safety of my children. With no known cases of spread in the time we were previously open (and little evidence that it is a wide spread problem in districts that have been open for much longer than ours) I'd like to point to this article about increased suicide as an opposite perspective on life and death and the risks we are taking: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/24/us/politics/student-suicides-nevada-coronavirus.html?smid=fb-share&fbclid=IwAR1wrqy-9Fa6NDP0w86qc2AoA7B5H2WogPeBMYW6VBUyqirUSEu8kLx7E14>.
2. We saw that the current hybrid setup was working well, and especially now that our Governor has returned us to the Purple Tier, it seems we are back where we were in early December and should be able to reopen.
3. I am making the assumption that all employment issues have been handled. Both my husband and I applied for part time positions that we are very qualified for, and neither of us were offered an interview. I can only assume this is because these positions have already been filled.
4. I am unable to speak tonight, as I will be spending the evening working, since I spend my days helping with school. This is not sustainable. My relationship as a mom has become strained as I try to be a teacher as well. My kids both thrive on having a diverse group of positive adults in their life and they NEED their teachers to be there for them. The kids I saw in their two weeks on campus were night and day different behaviorally at home, and were so much more motivated to learn!

It is hard for me to even write this email at this point. You've heard our reasons, you know our passion. I hate hearing that "you better email because the board hasn't heard from very many people about re-opening".... as if we suddenly feel differently. Rather, it feels hopeless, and in the words of my fifth grader "I don't really care anymore, it's not like they are going to actually open." I am losing my desire to fight. My kids are losing their desire to learn. It's been almost one year of uncertainty, constant change, and the expectation that "kids are resilient" - I'm here to say my kids are losing that resilience. Too much is being asked of them. They have given up everything. It's time to put the youth first.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Melyssa Noren  
Juanamaria mom to a 3rd and 5th grader

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Anne <acnielsen12@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:53 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Petition for schools to open

To VUSD,

We submitted this petition months ago but want to resubmit now. You can see we have 1,000 parents from VUSD that support in person learning as the ultimate and best situation for our children. We beg of you to open the schools. We beg of you to let them learn, play and grow like children should. We see the horrific effects of the time behind the screen. Keep an option open for those who want to distance learn but let those who want to return to school go. We have middle schoolers and high schoolers wanting to cause physical harm to themselves at an alarming rate. They need school desperately. We are desperate for our kids to have normalcy again. We have resorted to begging. What can we do to get our kids in school?

<http://chnng.it/WbF6KszG>

Signed, Anne Nielsen and 1,000 other VUSD PARENTS

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Paige Mansfield <pc\_mansfield@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:58 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopen our schools please!!

Hello to all reading!

I am a local Ventura mother of four children and I felt writing you with a plea to reopen our schools was the least I could do for not only my own children but the community as a whole.

This has been a difficult time for everyone and I know schools have had a hard time trying to meet government guidelines and satisfy families, which is no easy feat. But as other districts surrounding us have been opening just a few miles from us here in VUSD I'm growing increasingly frustrated. My children are suffering greatly and I truly do not know what to do. Having 3 kids in private school would be a huge financial strain on our family but it feels like the only option at this point. If something doesn't change soon we will most definitely pull our kids from the school district and go private. The emotional and social effects on my children are become too much to bare. As a mother I beg you to please do everything in your power to get our kids back in school. It's where they belong and we need them there, plain & simple. I hope and pray with all my heart that you consider a desperate moms plea.

Thank you deeply,  
Paige Mansfield

Sent from my iPhone

**Dahm, Amy**

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**From:** JNO Sound <jnosound [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:59 PM  
**To:** Dannenberg, Jerry; Lomax, Velma; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena; Callahan, Amy; Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Comment for Meeting 1/26/21

Keep It Simple.

President Biden says to reopen schools.

Governor Newsom says to reopen schools.

Dr. Fauci says to reopen schools.

Dr. Levin says to reopen schools.

Follow the guidance of political and public health officials alike and reopen our schools.

Thank You,

Johnny Kubelka  
[REDACTED]



**Dahm, Amy**

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**From:** Anne <acnielsen12[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:03 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Why we left the district

We left the district to join private school. We heard VUSD is confused why enrollment is down. Enrollment is down because parents want in person learning.

Thank you,  
Anne Nielsen

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Mary Carlsen <mary.carlsen79 [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:27 PM  
**To:** Public Comment; Rice, Roger; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Dannenberg, Jerry; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Re-opening of schools

Dear VUSD Board Members,

I'm emailing you from home after a long morning of assisting with online zoom learning for both my boys ( kindergarten and fifth grade). Both my boys desperately miss being in the classroom and our family has suffered immensely under the strain and stress of trying to educate only over the computer.

Please re-open the hybrid schedule. My once thriving 6 year old struggles to complete is work and doesn't have much social interaction. My 10 year old is desperate to see his friends and participate in face to face class time with is teacher. They are both falling behind. We are all desperate for some consistent class time!

Thank you,

Mary Carlsen, Mama  
Jacob Carlsen, age 10  
Samuel Carlsen, age 6  
Juanamaria Elementary

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** MB Galindo <galindobills528@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:00 PM  
**To:** Public Comment; Rice, Roger; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Dannenberg, Jerry; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Board meeting 1/26/21, reopening of schools

VUSD Board of Education Supervisors and all other concerned parties:

Essential businesses have been open for in person services and essential workers have been providing truly essential services and keeping those essential businesses running during this entire pandemic. As distance learning continues to fail students academically, socially and emotionally and the distance learning system as a sustainable learning model collapses due to winds, connectivity disruptions, IT issues, and inability to successfully meet education grade standards and practices, it is absolutely dumbfounding to me that this model continues to garner support and is able to claim that it is performing its function in a remote setting. In any other industry, this project would have been dumped and a model with proven success would have been put in its place until another viable option presented itself. For the entire 2020/21 school year, education and its employees seem exempt from best practices and performance standards and have self-proclaimed essential status while simultaneously demanding working conditions that are that of non-essential industries.

With the tier system restored the regional stay at home order dissolved, and previously closed non-essential industries reopening as of Monday, Jan 24t, I implore the board to vote in favor of reopening as scheduled on February 1st. Education is essential, teachers are essential employees, and the remote model has not been successful in meeting grade level education standards and practices. Students once ahead, have stalled out and will have to rely on their advancement they had prior to March 2020 to carry them into their next grade at grade level or barely grade level; children who were behind continue to be delayed at either the same rate or worse; IEP services have been grossly neglected and lost in the shuffle. With D and F rates on the rise and more kids failing to meet grade level standards, there is no justification in keeping campuses closed. Per the "critical infrastructure" definition, K-12 is permitted to be open and needs to do so.

Sincerely,  
Bonnie Galindo, Montalvo parent of 1st and 4th grader  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Natalie Oman <natalieoman@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:05 PM  
**To:** Dannenberg, Jerry; Lomax, Velma; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena; Callahan, Amy;  
Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Comments for Board Meeting 1/26/21

To Ventura School Board to be submitted as part of the public comments for board meeting 1/26/21

**President Biden says to reopen schools.**

**Governor Newsom says to reopen schools.**

**Dr. Fauci says to reopen schools.**

**Dr. Levin says to reopen schools.**

Drop off in enrollment for public schools in California is catastrophic.

"California's K-12 public-school enrollment has precipitously declined during the pandemic, dropping by a record 155,000 students, according to new state projections.

That drop-off is about five times greater than California's annual rate of enrollment decline in recent years."

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.ocregister.com/2021/01/26/california-public-schools-suffer-record-enrollment-drop/amp/>

The risk to student's mental health is grave. An ER nurse here in **Ventura** told me they are seeing a sharp rise in attempted suicides among the youth of this community with no prior history or family history.

In Las Vegas, they have pushed to reopen schools because of a sharp rise in student suicides.

"Jara told the Times that the youngest student to died was nine years old. Another student left a note that said they nothing to look forward to. "

"After their sixth suicide in July, the district got the GoGuardian Beacon alert system which scans student writings on district-issued iPads for suicide risk. They got more than 3,000 alerts in the next few months. "

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.businessinsider.com/rising-student-suicides-prompt-country-largest-district-to-reopen-2021-1%3famp>

**Distance Learning is not working.** Screen time is detrimental to our children leading to shorter attention spans, greater risk of obesity, decrease in social/emotional skills, decrease in problem solving skills, and decrease in motor skills. "What's clear is that distance-learning isn't just a waste of time, it is actually doing harm to children. And worst of all, it is those we have entrusted with their safety that are putting it in jeopardy."

<https://nypost.com/2020/09/16/remote-learning-is-a-disaster-and-terrible-for-children/>

**And finally "Three studies highlight low COVID risk of in-person school"**

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/three-studies-highlight-low-covid-risk-person-school>

Thank you,

Natalie Oman

Parent of Kindergartener and 2nd Grader



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Brooke Martinez <brookemartinez@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:06 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public comment

Dear Ventura Unified School Board,

I urge you to vote to re-open the elementary hybrid program next Monday, February 1. In-person education with safety precautions has been shown to be safe and not the source of spreading the virus both locally in Ventura county and across the state and country. There are many benefits to in-person learning and I ask you to provide in-person classes for local students and families who want and need it.

Thank you,  
Brooke Martinez

**From:** WalkerMartinez, Elizabeth  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:12 PM  
**To:** Public Comment; Rice, Roger; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Dannenberg, Jerry; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena  
**Subject:** Return to School 2/1/21

January 26, 2021

Dear Ventura Unified School District School Board and Dr. Rice,

I am writing you to share my opinion that students should return to school, as planned on February 1, 2020. I firmly believe that kids and staff are safe at school. The two weeks in December proved that we can do it.

I am a fifth grade teacher at E.P. Foster Elementary School. I personally witnessed how happy kids were to be back in school. Something as simple as writing an essay on paper instead of a computer brought them joy. They were excited to take home real books and not have to try to read on the computer. In fact, they didn't want any assignments on the computer, just paper. Who would have thought they'd be so happy?

We are reaching almost a year of our students being out. I can see the gaps in their learning as I continue to push forward with the grade level curriculum. It isn't fair to these kids to be giving them District Benchmarks and possibly State Tests, when they haven't been able to master skills due to breaks in their education due to the sudden stops last year and the on again, off again Hybrid/DL learning of this school year. I have been offering small groups for my ELD students, which has been wonderful, but we need to get all kids back on track with in-person instruction.

On the other side of the discussion, our teachers union has been pushing the "one size fits all" option for education. They want everyone to be on DL. But we all know that "one size does not fit all". In fact, VUSD gave families choice and teachers options. Families have made choices and we need to honor the families who chose Hybrid. The teachers' union groups all teachers together when they collect and share data with the board. I question the data that they share. For example, very recently I received an email that said 100 teachers want to come back and 700 want to stay on DL. This example led me to believe that 800 teachers responded to the survey. I questioned this more and was told that 131 teachers (at the time) actually replied and the union used the percentages from those responses to formulate an overall response from all teachers. Well, that's just wrong. That is not reliable facts, some might say alternative facts. In the past, I've also asked for Hybrid only teachers to be surveyed, but I still haven't seen the transparency with the Union. Their agenda is not the agenda of all teachers. They seek out people to write letters who have concerns but not those who support returning to school. I'm glad I have this forum to share my support for returning on February 1, 2021.

Through all of this, I really appreciate the effort put forth by the school board in really looking the current issue relying on facts and not emotion. Our students are falling behind with minority and economically disadvantaged students falling the most. Please make a decision to return on February 1st like originally planned. I have included some responses (see below) from my students about their thoughts on in-person vs online learning. Thanks again.

Elizabeth Walker Martinez  
Grade 5, E.P. Foster Elementary

I asked my students to share their thoughts using an online video platform called Flipgrid. In honor of their privacy, I haven't share their videos but I will share short snippets from their responses.

Prompt:

*If you had the opportunity to share your opinion with the people who decide whether we stay online or return to in person school, what would you say to them?*

*Why do you want to return to in person school?*

*What did you like about being in person?*

*What actions do you take to be safe at school?*

*What do you like about in person school vs. Online school?*

Responses:

It's good to be in person because my teacher can help me and I can see my friends. I follow social distancing rules like washing my hands and wearing a mask. Being on distance learning is very distracting. My brother and the TV are very distracting at home.

I'm annoyed that we have to go to the school to pick up our supplies. Why can't we just come to school? I like to see my friends in person and not just on the computer.

Regular is better than online school because you get to play outside and get fresh air. Online school just gets boring. You sit all day and stare at the screen and you get head aches and dizzy.

We should go back to school because we care about our friends and we will wear our masks so we don't spread germs.

Online school hurts my eyes. With in-person school, I get to be in the classroom and learn without staring at a screen. In-person I get papers to write on. It's just better.

I like in person school because I get to see my friends and my teacher. I know I see them online but it's not the same. I do find masks a bit distracting though.

If I go to school I can meet my friends and teacher in person.

In person school is easier because WiFi is a problem at home, you get bumped out, but in person you don't have to worry about it. It's also easier to ask the teacher for help because they are right there. It's also nice to go outside and get fresh air. At home, sometimes you just sit and eat things like chips.

If I was given the choice between online and in person, I would still choice in person because I get to see my friends. We can even have fun six feet apart and we wear our masks. Although, it was different at first, we got used to it and I finally felt like we were moving forward and getting a handle on Covid.

I do like in-person school, because I get to see my friends but I do worry about my grandparents who I live with. I think we do need to take it seriously and wash our hands and wear our masks.

**Elizabeth Walker Martinez, Grade 5 Teacher, E.P. Foster STEM Academy**

Ventura Unified School District

20 Pleasant Pl.

Ventura, California 93001

venturausd.org





[REDACTED]

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**From:** Erin Slack <erinne4[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:32 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Cc:** Rice, Roger; Rodriguez, Sabrena; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Almaraz, Matt; Dannenberg, Jerry  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Open February 1st As Planned - Do Not Delay

Hello!

I hope that the school board does not even consider delaying the reopening for elementary school children that is planned for February 1st. Here is a short list of reasons that the reopening should proceed as planned:

- It is the right thing to do for our children; those most vulnerable to educational inequities are being disproportionately impacted by these closures. This morning, I listened in on my son's zoom as I was working from home while his teacher went through how many missing assignments each first grader had in her class. There were only 4 children in the entire class that had completed all of their assignments.
- The case rate and positivity rate for Ventura County and the City of Ventura are currently decreasing and have been since the post holiday peak the first week in January. This is part of the reason that the Stay at Home Order was lifted yesterday because projections for the next month are very favorable for all of California.
- Transmission in the school environment is low-risk; this has been documented by many studies throughout the world and holds up in Ventura County as well. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Safe-Schools-for-All-Plan-Science.aspx>
- School districts do not have to adhere to the weekly testing requirements under the Safe Schools for All program unless they accept the funding. Most school districts have indicated that the funding would only pay for a month's worth of tests. The testing requirement should not hinder the district from opening because there is no reason to take the funding. Since VUSD was already open, they simply need to post a COVID safety plan by February 1st. VUSD already has all of the components of the safety plan in place.

Finally, you are losing the trust of the parents and students at VUSD. VUSD should have opened in October while we were in the red tier. Every time the opportunity for in-person instruction is delayed, children are missing out. This morning, my son said that he was glad that he was finally going to get back to school next week. I told him that I was hopeful but there was a school board meeting tonight so it could be delayed again. He said, "The school board should stop saying that they are going to do something and not follow through..it's not very nice."

I tend to agree with him. As parents, we trust that you are going to make decisions in the best interest of our children. I hope that you will do so tonight by continuing with the reopening process for elementary on February 1st as planned.

Erin Slack  
Montalvo Parent - 1st Grade



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Annette Walters <annette@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:46 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopen schools, please

Dear Dr. Rice and Board members,

First, thank you very much for allowing public comments to be made live. I unfortunately have another meeting scheduled for the exact same time as the VUSD meeting tonight, so email is my preferred option for this meeting.

I know that reopening school is up for an action item tonight. I would like to again express my full support of reopening schools AS PLANNED. I understood the extra week right after the Winter Break, but I cannot support any further time in strictly distance learning mode. I want my second grader back in school at Juanamaria for his hybrid program, and I want every effort to be made to get my sixth grader to Balboa in a hybrid program. You offered a hybrid for a reason. I picked hybrid because I know that my children are not learning as much in Distance Learning only and it is not good for any part of their development. And I am sure that statement will be met with: "We all know children learn best IN the classroom..." If that is your opinion, stop talking about it and start doing whatever it takes to make it happen. Actions speak louder than words and I do not feel like your words and actions are on the same level. Without comparing you to other districts, I am calling on VUSD to be leaders in getting our students back on campus.

Thank you for your time,

Annette Walters  
Director, Sonshine Preschool  
8180 Telephone Road, Ventura  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Melissa J Ruiz <ruizm[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:48 PM  
**To:** Public Comment; Lomax, Velma; Rodriguez, Sabrena; Callahan, Amy; Almaraz, Matt; Rice, Roger  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Feb 1st

To the VUSD board members and Dr. Rice,

I am the mother of 2 elementary school children at Will Rogers and a child in the Early Intervention program as well as a pediatrician in our community.

I continue to see the increasing disparities in education affecting so many of my patients. I know you have all been working tirelessly to get schools back in person and hope that we have the staffing to go back as planned.

I believe VUSD has done an excellent job making sure our children and staff are safe and that we are able to go back to school safely on February 1st with all those plans in place.

With outdoor restaurants/gyms, etc reopening I would echo my previous sentiments that in-person school is the essential business of childhood.

Thank you for all your work on this matter.  
Melissa Ruiz, MD



**Melissa J Ruiz MD, MPH, FAAP**

Pediatric Diagnostic Center  
Sun Moon & Stars Corporation  
300 Hillmont Ave. Bldg 340, Suite 302  
Ventura CA 93003  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** LOREN HAAR <lahaar@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:55 PM  
**To:** Public Comment; Rice, Roger; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Dannenberg, Jerry; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Audio version of my comments -- Letter from VUSD parent  
**Attachments:** audioletter toVUSD board.m4a

My husband and I still support the complete and immediate reopening of schools. In particular, we feel students with special needs and our youngest students should be back in school.

The medical community now has a better understanding of the virus, vaccines are being administered, and many, many schools have successfully opened and maintained safe instruction, so we feel the time has come to resume—with prevention protocols in place of course.

Questions:

1. Why can't kids in "Resource" attend school in person for that portion of their education? My daughter's Resource teacher Zoom's with the students FROM HER CLASSROOM — she is actually there, on campus, zooming with them. These are the few students she "pulls" from the GE class to teach Math and Language Arts. Surely there is enough room in the classroom to safely distance! This portion of my daughter's day should be in-person— especially since the teacher is already on campus to teach it. I see no reason why they have not been doing this as a small group all along. I have heard that it is up to the Resource teacher whether or not they want to teach in person. If that is the case, I would like to know why the teacher's preference controls the way in which our special ed students are supported.
2. What is the difference between guidelines and mandates? I think the board is getting hung up on guidelines. You should do your best to meet them, but if you can't meet them entirely, and other things are in place, you CAN still move forward. It's okay to do your best and occasionally not succeed. This is not an ideal situation. Of course we don't want a huge outbreak of Covid 19, but we also don't want the entire school year wasted in this back and forth, should we/shouldn't we indecisiveness and paralyzation under the guise of following the guidelines. It's time to open and let those who can't or won't do in-person stay in distance learning. It's time.
3. If you are thinking of postponing re-opening yet again, will you please consider ending the school year early? Those who are not thriving in distance learning are wasting their time, and the teachers' time. A new solution is necessary.
4. Many parents are talking about holding their children back rather than put them into the next grade, especially if these closures continue past Feb. 1st. Some are saying that their teachers are saying that holding kids back will not be allowed. If there is a definitive policy on this, could you please share it with parents.

Thank you —  
Loren and Christoph Haar  
Loma Vista



[REDACTED]

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**From:** LOREN HAAR <lahaar@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 2:48 PM  
**To:** Public Comment; Rice, Roger; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Dannenberg, Jerry; Almaraz, Matt; Rodriguez, Sabrena  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Letter from VUSD parent

My husband and I still support the complete and immediate reopening of schools. In particular, we feel students with special needs and our youngest students should be back in school.

The medical community now has a better understanding of the virus, vaccines are being administered, and many, many schools have successfully opened and maintained safe instruction, so we feel the time has come to resume—with prevention protocols in place of course.

Questions:

1. Why can't kids in "Resource" attend school in person for that portion of their education? My daughter's Resource teacher Zoom's with the students FROM HER CLASSROOM — she is actually there, on campus, zooming with them. These are the few students she "pulls" from the GE class to teach Math and Language Arts. Surely there is enough room in the classroom to safely distance! This portion of my daughter's day should be in-person— especially since the teacher is already on campus to teach it. I see no reason why they have not been doing this as a small group all along. I have heard that it is up to the Resource teacher whether or not they want to teach in person. If that is the case, I would like to know why the teacher's preference controls the way in which our special ed students are supported.
2. What is the difference between guidelines and mandates? I think the board is getting hung up on guidelines. You should do your best to meet them, but if you can't meet them entirely, and other things are in place, you CAN still move forward. It's okay to do your best and occasionally not succeed. This is not an ideal situation. Of course we don't want a huge outbreak of Covid 19, but we also don't want the entire school year wasted in this back and forth, should we/shouldn't we indecisiveness and paralyzation under the guise of following the guidelines. It's time to open and let those who can't or won't do in-person stay in distance learning. It's time.
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4. Many parents are talking about holding their children back rather than put them into the next grade, especially if these closures continue past Feb. 1st. Some are saying that their teachers are saying that holding kids back will not be allowed. If there is a definitive policy on this, could you please share it with parents.

Thank you —  
Loren and Christoph Haar  
Loma Vista



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Mark Martinez <nuclearfish@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:00 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Cc:** Rodriguez, Sabrena; Rice, Roger; Almaraz, Matt; Dannenberg, Jerry; Lomax, Velma; Callahan, Amy  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopening Elementary Schools

As a parent of 2 elementary school students, I have seen the negative impacts distance learning have had on my kids and their friends. We have had friends kids who have been suicidal, struggling with schoolwork, and needing therapy. Not only does in-person schooling benefit the child but also the family. Cases of spread have not been tied to schooling and there are more precautions that are taken with consistent education than parents having to juggle kids from place to place. I would strongly urge the board to reopen elementary schools back full time, in person education.

Mark Martinez

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jamie Amburgey <jamie.afreeman@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:01 PM  
**To:** Rodriguez, Sabrena; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Almaraz, Matt; Dannenberg, Jerry; Rice, Roger; Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- School reopening

Please stick to your plan and reopen schools Feb 1. There is absolutely no research to support the district's negligence of educating the children in our community. Teacher's are essential workers and need to go to work and teach the kids face to face. Kids are not getting sick with COVID nor is there any substantial data indicating they are spreading it. You are hurting our children in all areas of their development by keeping them on distance learning.

Sincerely,

Dr Jamie Amburgey PT, DPT

[REDACTED]

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**From:** camechanick [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:08 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- School hours

I am very concerned about lack of quality school learning hours for my two youngest children who attend elementary school distance learning within VUSD. Their peers who attend school in other districts in and outside of California attend almost a normal school day. They start later between 8:45 or 9:00am but go until 2:30 or 3:00pm. My children attend via zoom for a total of two hours daily and half of that is social-emotional. So basically an hour of learning daily and the remainder is self taught online or workbooks or provided worksheets. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** James Hrabak <james.hrabak@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:18 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Cc:** Renee Hrabak  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Re-opening school

Greetings Ventura School Board,

Having two high schoolers going crazy at home, I urge you to keep focused on re-opening in room schooling February 1.  
Thank you,  
James and Renee Hrabak

Sent from my iPhone



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Megan Andreasen <meganandreasen@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:24 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Children deserve to learn in person at school

Dear Ventura USD,

My husband and I are Ventura locals and really enjoyed growing up here and attending school. My husband and I have 3 girls, two of which attend Citrus Glen Elementary. We desperately want our children back in school. They miss their friends, teachers and the opportunity to learn in person from a teacher. Zoom is not the same and children deserve to learn in person, in a classroom.

My preschooler can go to school but our 6 and 8 year olds cannot? That makes no sense to me.

I become frustrated hearing from family and friends in Texas and Arizona that have had their kids in school for the last 4 months, all day till 3pm. My husband and I have seriously considered moving out of state to get our children back in school.

Hope this can be resolved,

Megan

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Skeath, Andrew <Andrew.Skeath@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:25 PM  
**To:** Rodriguez, Sabrena; Callahan, Amy; Lomax, Velma; Almaraz, Matt; Dannenberg, Jerry; Public Comment; Rice, Roger  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopening of the schools - Feb 1st

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

To whom it may concern,

Please take this email as my unquestionable support in favor of reopening the schools for in person learning as had originally been planned for Feb 1st.

My son attends Montalvo Elementary School.

Very best wishes,

Andrew

Andrew Skeath  
Sales Representative  
Stryker  
Neurosurgical

[REDACTED]  
andrew.skeath@[REDACTED]

nse.stryker.com

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** diane moreno <diane.moreno@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:34 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- D's & F's Overrepresentation

Hello school board members, thank you for taking the time to answer and/or listen to comments from the public.

At the last school board meeting it was shared that Latino students are overrepresenting the D's and F's in the district, at an alarming rate. How will this be addressed and what is being done to help this student population, and their families? What can we, the public, do to help this situation and close this academic gap? Collectively we can only benefit from doing so. Thank you for your time.

-Diane Moreno VUSD parent

**Dahm, Amy**

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**From:** Eric Andreassen <andreaseneric [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:43 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Children deserve to learn in person at school

Dear Ventura USD,

My wife and I are Ventura locals and really enjoyed growing up here and attending school. We have 3 girls, two of which attend Citrus Glen Elementary. We desperately want our children back in school. They miss their friends, teachers and the opportunity to learn in person from a teacher. Zoom is not the same and children deserve to learn in person, in a classroom.

My preschooler can go to school but our 6 and 8 year olds cannot? That makes no sense to me.

I have become frustrated hearing from family and friends in Texas and Arizona that have had their kids in school for the last 4 months, all day [till 3pm](#). My wife and I have seriously considered moving out of state to get our children back in school.

Hope this can be resolved,

Eric Andreassen



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Louise Lampara <llampara@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 3:54 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Comments on Agenda Item 14(a) BOE meeting 1\_26\_2021

Members of the Board –

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this item. I would like to call the Board's attention to two issues.

The first is regarding the Brown Act. The description of this agenda item gives the public no indication or information regarding the proposed Board action on this item. The "Suggested Action" provided by Staff in the agenda item report merely states: "Staff will present an update on the reopening of schools." Neither the agenda item description, nor the "Suggested Action" disclose that the purpose of this item is for the Board to cast a vote to decide whether to reopen schools.

The California Appellate Court has ruled that "the brief description of an item that the [Board] will consider or deliberate cannot be ambiguous or misstate the item under discussion...[an] agenda description must not be misleading."

In *Moreno v. City of King* (2005), the Appellate Court considered whether the description under section 54954.2, subdivision (a) was sufficient. In *Moreno*, the court held that the municipality's description of the agenda as "Public Employee (employment contract)" provided "no clue" that a decision or vote would be made (Id. at pp. 26-27.) Without a clear description and disclosure of the type of action that was under consideration, the Court ruled that the vague description provided violated the Brown Act.

Unfortunately, your agenda item description and associated information is written in such a manner to mislead the public into believing this is a "Receive and File" of a status update. As the agenda item description and the associated agenda item report does not clearly disclose to the public that a decision or vote regarding reopening of schools will be made at this meeting, I strongly urge you to continue this item to a later date, and re-notice the agenda and the item description in full compliance with the Brown Act.

I trust the members of this Board will wish to ensure that the public is both fully engaged and encouraged to participate in the public comment process, and I urge you to act with integrity in this manner.

Second, I encourage the Board to consider the most recent science and data related to the reopening of schools.

Specifically, a January 2021 peer-reviewed study from the American Academy of Pediatrics finds that that transmission of COVID-19 in schools is "extremely rare." (source:

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090.full.pdf>)

Also, on January 13, 2021, the CDC released a report finding that Covid-19 cases among younger children remained low in schools that restarted for in-person learning (source:

[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7003e1.htm?s\\_cid=mm7003e1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7003e1.htm?s_cid=mm7003e1_w))

Lastly, over 30 UCSF medical doctors – from infection disease experts to adolescent health specialists - have called for schools in California to reopen (source: <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2021/01/13/covid-learning-bay-area-doctors-sign-letter-calling-for-california-schools-to-reopen-feb-1/>).

Please consider the most recent available science and information from our medical professionals.

Thank you,

Louise Lampara

**From:** Dracula, Matilda  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:04 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** Concerns Regarding New Strains

Hello, Dr. Rice and members of the board,

I am still very concerned about the plan to reopen on February 1st, especially given the new COVID strains present in Southern California. There are now two new strains confirmed to be in this region, both of which appear to be more contagious than the previous strain we had been dealing with, especially indoors. Advice from experts is evolving quickly: now, many people are recommending wearing double masks, as well as avoiding prolonged indoor exposure altogether. Initial data also suggests that at least one of the new strains may be able to infect more children. Until we better understand how to protect the kids, families, and educators in our community, and until COVID is better contained in the county in general, we should continue with distance learning.

Thank you for your time,

Matilda Dracula  
*[she/her]*  
Sheridan Way Elementary, Ventura USD  
3rd Grade



**From:** Nathan Slack <nslack.15 [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:04 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopening of Schools

Dear Ventura Unified School District Board Members

I am writing in support of reopening of schools. While I am sympathetic to the struggles that exist with reopening, I implore you as board members to prioritize our children's education and vote to reopen the schools. As a parent I would have been supportive of reopening even in the event that the stay well at home order had not been lifted, but it has and we are now back in the purple tier which opens the door for in-person learning. There are few things in my humble opinion as essential as in person student education. I think if we take a look at student grades it is clear that remote learning is not in the best interest of our students. There are few things during this trying time that can reassert a sense of normalcy to our children, who at this time are suffering from high rates of anxiety and depression as getting back into the routine of learning in person and being able to develop their social skills amongst their peers.

There simply is no substitute to in person learning, and I hope the board will do the right thing and vote to reopen schools.



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tobie <tobiemitchel[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:07 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Please reopen schools on 2/1

Dear School Board President Lomax, Board Members and Dr. Rice:

Please proceed with returning to hybrid learning on 2/1/21. Kids need to be back in school.

If you haven't already, please read this article from the NYT. The situation is becoming dire for children's mental well being.

"Surge of Student Suicides Pushes Las Vegas Schools to Reopen - The New York Times"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/24/us/politics/student-suicides-nevada-coronavirus.html?0p19G=2103>

Thank you,  
Tobie Mitchell  
VUSD Elementary School Parent

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Spencer Noren <spencer [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:28 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- From the kids

Please be reminded our students desperately want to be in school.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B00n38RrJLLIFYb-tNwqhKUD9U99E1s/view?usp=drivesdk>

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Godwin, Angela <Angela.Godwin@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:30 PM  
**To:** Public Comment  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Return to Hybrid Learning Needed

**From:** Godwin, Angela <[Angela.Godwin@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:Angela.Godwin@[REDACTED])>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2021 11:31 AM  
**To:** Public Comment <[public.comment@venturausd.org](mailto:public.comment@venturausd.org)>  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Return to Hybrid Learning Needed  
**Importance:** High

Dear Ventura Board of Education:

I am very strongly urging the district to return to the Hybrid Learning model used for two weeks in December 2020. The COVID-19 precautions were well planed and safety precautions observed. As an essential worker, my son is at Las Posas Children Center all day. They have been safely open since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

My foster son, age 6, has an IEP that is not being met with distance learning. He needs in person learning. The districts hybrid model was a giant step toward this goal. This unpresented pandemic has been difficult for everyone, but especially for children. California students, especially those with special needs, are falling behind more then necessary.

Please return on February 1<sup>st</sup> to the Hybrid education model.

*Angela J. Godwin*

[REDACTED]  
[angela.godwin@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:angela.godwin@[REDACTED])

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Public Comment  
**To:** Ally Littell  
**Subject:** RE: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Comment for 1/26 Board Meeting

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**From:** Ally Littell <marshall\_ally@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:16 PM  
**To:** Public Comment <public.comment@venturausd.org>  
**Subject:** -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Comment for 1/26 Board Meeting

Hello and Happy Tuesday,

First, I just want to give you all a sincere thank you for the amazing amount of hard work that you all have put in over the past 10 + months. As you all work tirelessly to get our students back onto campus for this school year, I just had one comment to share.

With the secondary schools aiming to reopen on April 12th, would there be any consideration given to bumping the Spring Break week any early into the calendar. I realize that school schedules are set a year or more in advance but I'm curious if there would be value in moving the Spring Break week into late March. Seeing spikes in cases post school breaks, would it be a more cautionary path to give an extra week or two of distance learning time before the proposed opening date of April 12th?

I appreciate your time and wish you all the best as you make challenging decisions today and in the days ahead.

Sincerely,  
Ally Littell  
(Blanche Reynolds Parent)