

**VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF
January 25, 2021**

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and Moment of Reflection
The Regular Meeting of the Ventura County Board of Education, Agenda 21-02, was called to order by Michael Teasdale, Board President, at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, January 25, 2021, via ZOOM Webinar. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Mr. Teasdale and followed by a moment of reflection.
2. Roll Call
Trustees Present:
Michael Teasdale, Area 2
Rachel Ulrich, Area 1
Dr. Mark Lisagor, Area 3
Rob Collins, Area 4
Dr. Ramon Flores, Area 5

VCOE Personnel Present:
Stanley C. Mantooth, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools and Ex-Officio Secretary and Executive Officer of the Board
Dr. Cesar Morales, Deputy Superintendent, Student Services
Dr. Antonio Castro, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services
Misty Key, Associate Superintendent, Fiscal & Administrative Services
Emily Mostovoy-Luna, Assistant Superintendent, SELPA
Dr. Julie Judd, Executive Director, Technology Services
Marlo Hartsuyker, Director, Charter Schools
Nancy Akkerman, Senior Executive Assistant
3. Approval of Agenda
Mr. Collins moved that agenda be approved. Dr. Lisagor seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0).

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following member of the public addressed the Board:

1. Sandy Waterbury

C. HEARINGS

None.

D. CLOSED SESSION

None.

E. PRELIMINARY

1. Approval of Minutes of Annual Organizational Meeting of December 14, 2020.
2. Approval of Minutes of Special Board Meeting of January 7, 2021.

Dr. Lisagor moved the Minutes of the Annual Organizational Meeting of December 14, 2020 and the Special Board Meeting of January 7, 2021 be approved. Ms. Ulrich seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0).

F. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Electronic correspondence addressed to all Board members was received from:
Ashley Beatty
Mariaelena Cavola
Sallie Covarrubias
Joseph Duran
Alex Meza
Victoria Murphy
Dianna Panfill (response from Board President included)
Marta Papic
Adam Underberger
Local 4434 (response from Board President included)

G. PRESIDENT'S AND BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

1. Mr. Teasdale noted the upcoming events. Mr. Mantooth invited all Board members to take part in the All Staff Gathering on January 29th at 1:00 p.m.
2. Dr. Lisagor expressed his congratulations to Mr. Mantooth on his retirement and his appreciation for the 12 years they have served together.
3. Dr. Flores noted that he was in attendance in 2008 when the interviews for a new County Superintendent were taking place, and he remembers thinking that his selection would be Mr. Mantooth. It has been a pleasure to work with him.
4. Ms. Ulrich thanked Mr. Mantooth for his years of service and asked that he consider being on the Community Panel for the next County Superintendent. (Mr. Mantooth respectfully declined).
5. Mr. Collins expressed his congratulations to Mr. Mantooth.
6. Mr. Teasdale presented a recognition gift to Mr. Mantooth on behalf of the Board.
7. Mr. Mantooth thanked the Board for their words; and stated that he is looking forward to serving as a colleague on the Ventura County Community College District Board.

H. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Mantooth reported on the following activities of the office:

1. Mr. Mantooth noted that he has attended over 100 Board meetings these past 12 years and this will be his last one. He expressed his appreciation for the Board and their shared work and dedication in their commitment to quality education for all students.

I. LEGISLATIVE REPORT

None.

J. CONSENT/ACTION ITEMS

1. Temporary County Certificates
2. Disposal of Property
3. Williams Quarterly Report to County Board of Education
4. School Accountability Report Cards

Ms. Ulrich moved Consent Items 1-4 be approved. Mr. Collins seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0).

Dr. Lisagor noted that he appreciated the information contained in the SARCs. He expressed his thanks to staff.

K. PRESENTATIONS

None.

L. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION/ACTION

1. 2019-20 Audit Report
Royce Townsend of Eide Bailly, presented the 2019-20 Audit Report for the Ventura County Office of Education. The audit report provides information based on a sampling of audited financial statements which include internal controls and compliance with Federal and State awards. The audit is intended to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free of material misstatements. The highest opinion auditors can provide is an "unmodified opinion." The Ventura County Office of Education received an "unmodified opinion." This year the audit was done remotely.

Page 90 of the Audit Report (pdf page 96) includes the summary of audit report. The auditor's opinion was unmodified; there was one material weakness and no significant deficiencies identified. Under Federal awards, two major Federal programs were tested and there were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified. Under State awards, the auditor's opinion was unmodified for all programs except attendance. No recommendations noted.

Page 75 of the Audit Report (pdf page 80) identify major trends which provide a picture of where the County Office has been and where it is going. It includes

three years of information – the past year, the present year and the next year. The County has incurred operating deficits in two of the past three years and there is projected deficit spending in 20-21. The available reserves have decreased 63% in the past two years.

Dr. Flores noted that he understands the need for a new set of eyes to provide the audit; how often does the office find a new auditing firm?

Ms. Key noted that every three years the Office consider new auditors or utilizes different partners within the same firm. That was the case with the firm of Eide Bailly. A completely different staff reviewed the VCOE documents this year.

Ms. Key reviewed finding from this audit. One was an issue with working remotely; staff coming in and out of the office and not having everyone here at once. The Office has identified critical processes and staff have worked through the COVID protocols and the Office can complete ongoing processes. Ms. Key noted that we are thankful that the auditors found areas that we needed to be addressed. Internal controls are important. Ms. Key also noted the deficit spending which has been discussed thoroughly with the Board.

Ms. Ulrich clarified that the Board is aware that the Office is intentionally deficit spending; but asked what led to 63% reduction in reserves.

Ms. Key explained that the County Office of Education budget is complex and many services are paid for by our customers. COVID has definitely affected the fee for service revenues and the Office is not bringing in the contracted services from the districts. Also, the County is in declining enrollment.

Mr. Collins asked if there is a group that audits the auditors?

Mr. Townsend noted that their firm is audited every three years by the American Institute of Public Accountants. In addition, they are subject to review by state agencies and other oversight agencies.

Ms. Ulrich moved the Board accept the 2019-20 Audit Report for the Ventura County Office of Education. Mr. Collins seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0).

2. Acknowledgement of Receipt and Adoption of Timeline for Review of Renewal of the Ventura Charter School (VCS) Petition

Mr. Mantooth noted that this is the first step in the renewal process for Ventura Charter School. Dr. Morales noted that if Board members would like a hard copy of the renewal petition, to please notify the office.

AB1505 has modified the Charter Renewal timeline. In the past, the renewal petition was deemed received on the date that the Board accepts it during a Board meeting. In the new law, the charter petition is received when it is received by the Office – in this case, January 11, 2021. The Board has 90 days to complete the review process. The Board will need to take action no later than April 10, 2021.

Ms. Hartsuyker welcomed Mary Galvin and Lisa Hildebrand, representatives of the Ventura Charter School (VCS). Mrs. Galvin noted that VCS is in their 15th year of operation. AB1505 created a three year tier for charter school renewal and VCS is in the highest tier. Lisa Hildebrand noted VCS' recent partnership with EL Network. This partnership brings leadership support in mastery of skills, culture of character and high quality work. VCS continues to work to close the achievement gap for all students.

Ms. Ulrich congratulated VCS on making it through the past year of COVID.

Ms. Ulrich moved the Board acknowledge receipt of the Renewal Request of Ventura Charter School and adopt the proposed timeline. Mr. Collins seconded the motion and the motion carried upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0),

3. Annual Programmatic Audit Presentation by River Oaks Academy Charter School
Marlo Hartsuyker reported that Charter Schools come to the Board annually to present on their program progress and challenges. This year, Charter Schools have been asked to present on how they are engaging students during the pandemic, as well as how they are addressing learning loss.

Claudia Weintraub, Executive Director, River Oaks Academy Charter School (ROA) presented information required in the annual programmatic audit noting that ROA was renewed in February 2020 and the pandemic began in March. ROA was in the midst of the buildout of the new resource center in Oxnard. Due to the pandemic, learning has transitioned to virtual learning. Teachers meet with parents weekly. Technology needs were met. In August 2020, legislative enrollment caps were implemented. Sadly, this was at the same time as ROA was receiving multiple parent requests for charter school enrollment. The cap resulted in 331 students being placed on the waiting list.

Student ethnicity and demographics were reviewed. 14.4% of students are Hispanic and 28% socio-economically low income. 13.7% of students qualify for Special Education. Special education percentage increased this year.

Staff makeup was reviewed. 21 teachers fully credentialed; 4 are bilingual / multi-lingual; 1 part time high school counselor; Math and Science Committees; 3 administrative staff, 1 teacher, and a special education team.

ROA offers a personalized learning program and it was easy to transition to virtual learning. All tutoring and support is now offered virtually. Reopening plan was designed with stakeholder input and reviewed by VCPH and VCOE. Onsite academic support started in October for pupils with unique needs, including low income, foster youth and English Language Learners. Small group classes are also offered at the park.

Plans for Spring 2021 Semester include virtual workshops and classes, weekly park day activities, small group classes on campus if allowed, study hall twice a week, weekly science labs/math classes and additional weekly academic tutoring.

COVID protocols include daily sanitizing of facilities as staff is working on site. A face coverings policy has been adopted, staff have received training via Charter Safe, weekly staff meetings are held; in house technology support for staff and students is provided as well as accommodations based on personal circumstances (work from home, adjusted hours due to childcare); and reopening task force meetings are held.

Teachers are in weekly contact with students. Learning loss will be addressed through additional personalized learning, outreach to parents and families, weekly family connections via Parent Connect opportunities, and additional supports have been added for those students who are at risk of learning loss. Currently considering a summer school program for high school students.

Continual improvement to the Math program. Team-teaching is utilized allowing one teacher to provide the lesson plan while the second teacher answers individual questions. Continue to reach out to parents. One on one tutoring is provided. Other efforts include participation in VCOE's Network of Improvement Community and Math Leadership Network, beginning a Math and Special Education collaboration. Continue to assess Grades 11-12 students three times per year so academic support can be provided. MobyMax and i-Ready results were provided in Math and ELA. High school students also take the i-Ready assessments. The results allow teachers to provide tailored academic support.

SAT and PSAT are offered at River Oaks. One student scored in the highest 1%. Results were reviewed. Graduates destinations were also noted. Of the 22 graduates, UC/CSU/4 year college (3); Community College (12); Workforce and Other (3 each).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Program began last year as the need for student social-emotional support was identified. The SEL program offers family support through a monthly Parent Speaker Series including from Chaos to Calm; the intentional parent; how to Grinch-proof Holidays, etc. Parent connect workshops are provided weekly for Elementary, Middle and High School parents. Monthly information is provided on socio-emotional health, and a virtual wellness center. An onsite wellness center was also opened. Student support includes weekly check ins and academic tutoring at the Elementary, Middle and High School levels. This weekly time for students to connect with their peers. Teachers continue to provide weekly check in and academic tutoring. Staff support is also provided. Lunch bunch meetings are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Westlake and Oxnard. Weekly teacher talk led by a local therapist provides an opportunity for teachers to collaborate. Individual therapy is also provided for anyone who needs it during this time.

ROA continues to collaborate with various agencies, other charter schools, the Ventura County Office of Education, and school districts throughout the County.

Mr. Collins mentioned the growth in Hispanic enrollment and asked if this is largely due to the opening of the Oxnard facility. ROA still has a lower percentage of Hispanic enrollment in Westlake but the combined percentage has increased.

Dr. Flores clarified that there is a facility in Oxnard which is open. In addition, there will be a facility in Oxnard on Lombard Street. Is there an intention to have only the one facility in Oxnard? Yes, the intention is to have only one location. ROA outgrew the first facility in Oxnard.

Dr. Flores asked if parent meetings are held in Spanish. They are not, because there has been no request for this. However, there is translation available at all meetings. Technology needs are also addressed in both English and Spanish. Devices can be brought directly to the site for assistance and repair in English and Spanish.

Dr. Flores asked how many devices or hotspots were provided in Oxnard vs. Westlake. What is the percentage of students that needed technology support? This information will be emailed to Dr. Flores.

Dr. Lisagor asked about SB820 enrollment cap and ROA currently serving 10% more students than there is funding for. Will this be addressed in the next fiscal year?

Ms. Weintraub responded that SB820 was a very late bill that was written well into the enrollment process. Those families that were enrolled were kept on the roster even though the enrollment cap was based on P-20 in March. Having all virtual classes did allow for some cost savings. This enrollment cap is very upsetting because of the many families that could not enroll. It is ROAs understanding that there is no correction in the new budget. The cap will be maintained. ROA plans to move forward with the summer school program. Lots of advocacy with local legislators asking for full funding.

Ms. Ulrich thanked ROA for their presentation. She expressed her frustration that a school that was already providing virtual education was given a cap. She hopes that this will not continue.

Mr. Teasdale questioned the ELA scores shown on slide 13.

Ms. Weintraub explained that overall 47.5% of students increased their ELA scores; 29.7% experienced no change and 22.9% showed a decrease. Math had a 50% increase; 31.4% no change; and 18% decrease.

Learning loss experiences were minimal. Teachers are closely involved with their students every week so can quickly assess if students are falling behind and immediate supports can be provided – daily tutoring. There does not seem to be a specific group that is experiencing loss.

Mr. Teasdale called for a 10 minute break at 7:30 p.m.

4. Process to be Used to Appoint a County Superintendent of Schools; Presentation by Leadership Associates regarding the Scope of Services

Mr. Teasdale noted that Stan Mantooth, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools since 2008, will be retiring effective February 2, 2021. On January 7, 2021, the Board took action to approve a contract with Leadership Associates for Superintendent Search services.

Dr. Lisagor introduced Representatives from Leadership Associates including: Dr. Sally Frazier, Dr. David Verdugo; Rich Fisher; and Becky Banning, Administrative Support.

Dr. Frazier led the discussion. Leadership Associates is proposing that two panels of stakeholders be convened to provide information on the desired characteristics of a County Superintendent directly to LA representatives to. They further proposed an online survey be posted from January 28 – February 28. The information gathered from the panelists and the surveys will be used to formulate interview questions and to create a position description and interview questions. LA will provide an executive summary of the survey results and stakeholder input. This would be the first phase of the search process.

The Board Subcommittee has identified a large group of community stakeholders who will be asked to respond to the survey. In addition, the Subcommittee has identified 14 individual representing parents, teachers, bargaining units, non-union employees, members of the business communities, non-profits, representatives from underrepresented groups in the County, and other educational agencies to engage in the actual panels that are proposed.

Mr. Teasdale noted that he has received requests from both unions to take part in the process. If the Board has any suggestions for other stakeholders, please submit their names to the Subcommittee so they can be added.

Ms. Ulrich asked if the teachers and staff have reached out with representation or how will that play out. No one has specifically reached out to us at this point. The various stakeholders have been identified.

The search firm will create the text and email that will go out with the survey and ask that it be shared. The survey will also be published on the VCOE website.

The goal is to ensure that voices throughout the county will be heard.

Mr. Teasdale noted his belief that the focus group constituents selected will provide appropriate information and that he does not feel a newspaper solicitation will provide meaningful data.

Dr. Flores questioned that stakeholder input and survey input will be used to create a profile of an ideal candidate. At the same time this information will be used to develop questions and to determine a manageable number of candidates. Will there be more weight put on one stream of information than the other?

Dr. Lisagor noted that the Subcommittee may see certain attributes that rise to the top, and there may be a decision based on the strengths of the attributes.

Mr. Teasdale noted that if the data indicates 3-4 attributes that are strongly requested this may be weighted. Dr. Frazier noted that there may be characteristics or skills that are identified by multiple groups. Dr. Flores noted that the demographics and enrollment are all across the spectrum. Depending on what stakeholder responds, we may hear different input but he agrees that attributes will be identified.

Ms. Ulrich asked if Board members should take the survey?

Dr. Frazier would also like to hear from the Board directly as to what characteristics they want to identify. Board members can choose to take the survey if they would like. It is their choice. Dr. Lisagor noted that it is the Subcommittee's intention to interview the Board tonight to see what attributes they are hoping to find.

Dr. Frazier noted that the only formal action needed is the adoption of the timeline. The online survey would be available from January 28 – February 8. The position will be posted on February 1 and February 8 with the application deadline being February 22nd. Once panelists and stakeholders have been confirmed, stakeholder meetings would be held by mid-February. A Special Meeting would be held on March 22nd.

Dr. Lisagor noted that the Subcommittee is still awaiting final determination on whether or not the Board can meet in Closed Session review all applications. If the Board can meet in Closed Session, an additional meeting on March 22nd would be needed. If the Board cannot meet in Closed Session, the Board will meet on March 15th to determine the candidates to interview.

Open vs Closed Session. Many of the candidates will likely have current employment. It would be best if the Board could keep the list of candidates as confidential as possible until the Board determines a final group of candidates. If the Board cannot meet in Closed Session, then the Subcommittee would propose that the Subcommittee winnow the list of candidates. If the Board can meet in Closed Session, then the full Board would do this work. This is the reason for the request for whether or not this part of the process can occur in Closed Session.

Whether the work is done on March 15th or March 22nd, this portion of the meeting will require two hours. During this meeting, the Board will also finalize the interview questions.

Ms. Ulrich moved the Board adopt the proposed timeline with a possible Special Meeting on March 22nd; a full day Special Meeting on March 29th for interviews; and the Subcommittee would have the responsibility to winnow the list of candidates if a Closed Session is not allowed for this purpose. Dr. Flores seconded the motion.

Mr. Teasdale clarified that the timeline also includes candidate interviews for a full day on March 29th. All Board members will need to participate. All Board members indicated that they were available for a full day on March 29th.

Mr. Teasdale called for the vote on the motion to adopt the proposed timeline with a possible Special Meeting on March 22nd; a full day Special Meeting on March 29th for interviews; and the Subcommittee would have the responsibility to winnow the list of candidates if a Closed Session is not allowed for this purpose. The motion passed upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0).

Desired Qualities, Characteristics and Experience of a County Superintendent;
Individual Board members identified Desired Qualities, Characteristics and Experience of a County Superintendent

Ms. Ulrich:

- Be able to hire well and build teams
 - Someone who does not micromanage but hires leaders and allows them to lead
 - Open Culture
 - Understands the unique characteristics of Ventura County
- Ms. Ulrich is open minded on the question of experience. Will view on a case by case basis.

Mr. Collins:

- Someone who can hit the ground running without a huge learning curve
- Someone who knows the school districts and VCOE staff
- Has broad experience and is willing to communicate and meet with all stakeholders
- Someone who works well with other people
- Mr. Collins asked if candidates will be informed that they will have to stand for election in January 2022? Yes, they will.

Dr. Flores:

Indicated his agreement with the above mentioned characteristics and experience and added the following:

- Needs to have strong leadership qualities and proof of their leadership style.
- Very well versed in budget.
- Ability to provide the Board with guidance and information that is understandable and actionable.

- Strategic planner and thinker but not a micromanager.
- Electability. This person does not serve at the whim of the Board. Can this individual run a campaign; do they have broad based support.
- Understanding of CCSESA, ACSA, CCBE and CSBA and how these organizations are intertwined.
- What influence does the candidate have with our local legislators? Can they articulate our positions at the State and local level.

Dr. Lisagor:

- Candidate should demonstrate a style of leadership that has worked well. Internally we have teachers, counselors, administrative staff, people at all levels. Stan treats everyone with equally and knows that each is equally valuable.
- Understanding of shared governance. This is an area that Stan has mastered.
- Focus on diversity and inclusion – wants someone who sees this as a high priority. Stan has had an ability to convene the 20 superintendents almost weekly in a way that presents our office as a support for their needs. That personality style is shared governance. Sees the partnership with our Board in a shared way in the decision making process.
- Very strong on the business end. Need to be well grounded on county office budgets.
- Someone with experience at all levels and someone who can be an advocate.

Dr. Lisagor moved the Board meeting be extended to 10:00 p.m.

Mr. Collins seconded the motion, and it passed upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0).

Mr. Teasdale:

Indicated his agreement with the above mentioned characteristics and experience and added the following:

- Ability to build productive relationships with other agencies, employees.
- Visionary service leader who combines the attributes of service provider while being innovative and visionary on how they can improve services.
- Excellent communication skills and an attitude of partnership with the Board.
- Ability to set goals and delegate to his team.
- Experience in education and the outside business sector.

VCOE Strengths and Challenges

Individual Board members identified VCOE Strengths and Challenges

Mr. Collins:

- COVID. He would like someone who has the wide experience that can meet the challenges that come our way. Someone who knows our districts and their characteristics. To know the community is a big strength.

Dr. Flores:

- The strength of VCOE is the staff. There is so much amazing capacity and he is always impressed by the passion they have for their students.
- Challenges are the budget; LCFF and Hold Harmless; Declining Enrollment
Special Education funding is tied to enrollment and that makes it very difficult. Being able to work with county, state and federal decision makers and articulate our concerns.

Ms. Ulrich:

- Strengths are the leadership staff and dedicated teachers. VCOE has been innovative in the past 10 years with programs and services, charter petitions and rubrics. The innovation and leadership have been great amongst County Boards at the State level.
- Challenges are the budget; STRS/PERS; COVID; Declining Enrollment and school districts not choosing our services as they have in the past. Learning losses and gaps as a result of COVID especially since our student populations are the hardest hit with learning losses – homeless; migrant; special education.

Dr. Lisagor:

Dr. Lisagor noted that he has no additional input.

Mr. Teasdale:

Mr. Teasdale supported the input from his fellow Board members.

- Weaknesses are how can the County continue to create a compelling suite of programs for districts that support their needs and then determine who does what with the resources. What services and programs centered at the county can best serve the local school districts.

Dr. Frazier thanked the Board for their input and leadership.

Mr. Teasdale noted that as the successful candidate will need to stand for re-election, will Leadership Associates need to seek out candidates for the position? Leadership Associates responded that this position will be very attractive however, local knowledge will be a plus because the election is only 18 months away. They anticipate 10-12 candidates; not 20. The biggest issue may be that the candidate would have to move to the area and then run for re-election. A candidate could leave their position and then face the possibility of losing their job 18 months later. A candidate who has been a district superintendent will find this to be a totally different experience. Just having the interview in public can be very daunting.

5. Review of Governor's Budget Proposals

Ms. Key presented information on the Governor's Budget Proposals. The Governor's proposed budget includes a COLA of 3.84% applied to just the LCFF formulas, not the categorical funding. In 20-21 there was not a COLA. She hopes that during the legislative process that categorical programs will also be funded. The Governor has also proposed a school reopening plan which includes \$2 billion in funding. There are many details, some of which are problematic. There is a very rushed timeline with districts only having a few weeks to develop a plan. The Governor's budget proposal also addresses cash deferrals, proposing that they be paid down and only have the June to July deferral continue. This is just the Governor's budget proposal for the year 2021-22; the Legislative proposals have not yet been given but there are lots of discussions going on. An area of advocacy could be for the COLA to be applied to special education funding.

Dr. Lisagor asked if there is a sense of how the County budget will come out in terms of the deficit. Is it safe to assume that with the increased budget, the County Office will be in better financial shape in 2021-22. Ms. Key noted that this is not likely unless the COLA is applied across the Board for categorical programs.

Dr. Flores asked if we anticipate any relief from federal funds. Ms. Key responded that this may be an area where the County Office would receive one time funds. Previous federal allocations have allowed VCOE to address the many technology needs that were caused by the pandemic. These one time funds do not solve our deficit spending but they are very much appreciated.

Mr. Teasdale asked about career education funding. Ms. Key noted that the grants have remained the same, but many more LEAs are applying for them, so the amounts of the grants are reduced. Mr. Teasdale clarified that it is key that the COLA funds be applied to categoricals.

This item was presented for information only.

6. Report on School Re-Opening

Eric Gutiespi provided Public Comments on this item.

Mr. Mantooth noted that with the start of the COVID pandemic, in March, 2020, VCOE immediately suspended school operations. The populations VCOE serves are the most at-risk students which poses quite a dilemma. Staff has worked to maintain the connections with students and parents but these students benefit from teacher to student contact. As we moved into the Fall of this year, we were again hopeful to open classes in a cohort model of 16 people or less in a classroom. VCOE worked with labor groups, but at Thanksgiving, Ventura County experienced a surge and re-opening was delayed. At the first of this year, VCOE reengaged in those discussions; hoping to open in January. But another surge took place.

In addition to the complicated issues, there is the role of the Board in the decision. Mr. Mantooth noted that in an effort to buffer the Board due to the statutory guidelines which relegates the employees and operations of schools to the County Superintendent alone; the details of the negotiations and conversations were not discussed. This resulted in the teacher input provided at the last meeting without much parent input.

VCOE is not willing to risk a single individual, even though findings show that schools have a very low case rate. The reopening of VCOE programs is on hold, hoping for a lowering of the numbers, or a vaccine.

Staff presented information on the successes and challenges of distance learning on our student population, as well as input received from parents and teachers. Dr. Morales noted that it has been a challenge to meet the needs of students and teachers. Our student population does present heightened challenges. Holly Minear, Executive Director, Special Education, reviewed a powerpoint presentation on the reopening of schools.

VCOE Special Education and Alternative Education programs include Odyssey, Triton, Phoenix, Court and Community Schools. Students are aged 3-22. VCOE is dedicated to continuous improvement as educators. VCOE has been providing distance learning since March, 2020. At Gateway and Providence, some successes have been experienced. Staff works tirelessly with a group of students who historically have many challenges. We have increased methods of communication by Zoom, visiting students at home; however, community referrals have increased.

Some of the challenges are decrease in engagement and attendance from 75%-80% attendance to 60-65%. The students have fewer social interactions with peers and staff members. Students have been detained or arrested during the school day. Without our staff in the facility, probation officers are being asked to provide daily zoom participation. This is not something they are trained for. In addition, referrals have decreased and enrollment has dropped to 84 at Gateway and 55 at Providence.

The Odyssey program was opened for five students who have behavioral/social emotional needs. This small environment would benefit by being back to in person learning.

Phoenix School is currently connecting with students through social-emotional learning. The students and teachers are enjoying the materials. Students can do their lessons apart or together. Students attendance is tracked and weekly raffles are held based on participation. Lunch bunch socialization is provided.

One of the unintended consequences of distance learning has been that 18 psychiatric hospitalizations have occurred.

Triton Academy serve students in grades 3-12 on the Autism Spectrum. Students can earn a certificate of achievement or diplomas. Successes during pandemic have been the continuation of the student of the month assemblies, virtual tours of the new building have been provided; speech and social skills groups have continued; students' technology skills have improved; increased focus on social-emotional learning which has led to increased behaviorist and ERSSES connections with students and parents, and weekly reinforcements (stickers, favorite food items,).

The challenges include a decrease in attendance, participation and task completion. Some students have become emotionally dysregulated over disappointment of not coming to schools; students are routine-based and this has been very hard; increased residential assessments; increased maladaptive behaviors in the home have been reported by parents (we have increased training for parents); loss of in-person social interaction which is really needed for students with autism to move forward. We try to provide this via Zoom but it isn't the same.

Preschool & Programs for Moderate-Significant Disabilities. Successes include that referrals continue, hands-on packets are sent to students weekly and collaboration with parents to understand what to do with the materials; hands on sensory strategies; home visits and wellness checks to support families; office hours to discuss and review goals with parents; collaborations between specialists.

Challenges include a 50% drop in referrals; parent and student fatigue over Zoom; loss of engagement with students; decrease in parental involvement and attendance; students not meeting annual goals and benchmarks; increase in maladjustment behaviors; loss of consistency and routine; and siblings or other children in the home make the challenges even more severe. It is very challenging for parents to mimic the consistency and routines of school at home.

Post Secondary Programs serve 18-22 year old students. Our programs place emphasis on vocational learning, independent learning. The pandemic has been challenging. Teachers have dived deeper into our curriculum; curriculum additions were added including social skills curriculum (attentive listening, self-management, interactive career modeling). This is offered in a digital format.

Distance learning opportunities include the addition of a calendar that includes exercise. The calendar follows the same schedule as in person learning. Morning begins with some motor exercise, daily activities that prepare them for the day ahead, join the class for an actual classroom, break into small groups, break, and then repeated. End of the day includes asynchronous activities.

Challenges include the loss of community-based instructions. Job Site / Vocational training has been significantly impacted. Small businesses that used to provide opportunities have simply closed; functional academics and socialization have decreased.

For each IEP meeting there is now a page that is devoted to distance learning. Nearly all the parents have expressed appreciation for the teachers and paraeducators.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we sent home electronic devices and provided training on how to use them. Virtual health and home visits are provided. Work has been done with various agencies to support students. Behavior support is provided for families with the help of behavioralists; website has been enhanced to add resources for parents and students; weekly updates; and distance learning resources.

Support for English Learners includes Spanish led workshops and bilingual paraeducators. Professional development has been provided for staff as they learn the new online tools.

Transportation switched totally from transporting students to transporting materials.

Technology has focused on providing hardware for students and staff; deployed approximately 500 hotspots; 684 chromebooks with 200 on backorder. Staff has received laptops, speakers, cameras, zoom licensing accounts for every VCOE employee; and a hot-swap for chromebooks that have failed has been developed. Professional development on distance learning has been provided. Office hours are provided for everyone. In preparation to open schools, we have provided 3 monitors so teachers can deliver instruction to hybrid environments. A demo video was created. Chromebook carts will provide charging capabilities for the entire classroom.

Facilities have been adapted for safety when students return. PPE have been purchased and provided to all sites; plexiglass has been installed at public counters, plexiglass on wheels that can be moved from classroom to classroom was designed; hand sanitizer and disinfectant has been distributed to sites and districts; custodial procedures and air filterization have been updated.

Mr. Collins noted that our students and schools are unique but at-risk students has a new meaning. Students are currently at risk because they are not in school. He has received communications from teachers who indicate that our students won't wear masks. He asked that the Board be involved in the decision of whether or not students return.

Dr. Lisagor shared that the presentation showed the silver lining that educators are rethinking the way things have always been done. The question of when and how schools reopen is not a one size fits all decision at VCOE. Possibly Gateway could open but it might be harder at other school sites. He is empathetic to staff and teachers. The decision will have to be customized to the various programs.

Ms. Ulrich thanked the presenters and she looks forward to when students and teachers can return to the classroom.

Dr. Flores apologized to staff that the meeting had to be rushed. He sees the passion and dedication of our staff and he knows that whenever our world reopens, VCOE staff will rise to the occasion. He hopes that there will be takeaways from distance learning.

Mr. Teasdale congratulated the teachers and administrators for the efforts they are making. As we look forward towards a phased re-opening; he wonders how we can safely reopen for the different populations. He requested a follow-up agenda item on “How do we Re-Open Schools Safely?” which could include information on the vaccine environment; safety measures put in place to move forward.

M. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

1. Dr. Flores thanked Mr. Mantooth for his dedicated service to the students of Ventura County and congratulated him on his retirement.
2. Ms. Ulrich thanked Mr. Mantooth for his service. Ms. Ulrich requested that the Board have less ambitious meeting agendas and suggested that the Board have more meetings of shorter duration, possibly tabling some of the requested agenda items until after COVID and the superintendent search are completed.
3. Dr. Lisagor noted that these are challenging times with many issues to address. He again thanked Dr. Morales, Mr. Mantooth and all the staff for providing information covered during this meeting; and wished Mr. Mantooth a fond farewell.
4. Mr. Collins suggested that the Board consider recent retirees to fill the position of County Superintendent. He commented that this was an excellent meeting and that he appreciated the staff reports.
5. Mr. Teasdale noted that he has heard the Board’s feedback in consideration of all the issues at hand and future agendas. He too extended his appreciation and best wishes to Mr. Mantooth.

N. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Report on Plans to Re-Open VCOE Schools Safely – *February 22, 2021.*
2. Career Education Program Update – *Mr. Teasdale*
3. Revisit Mission Statement, Goals and Objectives – *Dr. Lisagor*
4. Appointment of County Superintendent of Schools – Ongoing

5. Charter School Programmatic Audit and Renewals:
Ventura Charter School – February / March, 2021
6. Charter School Annual Programmatic Audits:
Bridges Charter School – March 15, 2021
MATES – April 26, 2021
Vista Real Charter High School – May 24, 2021

O. FUTURE MEETINGS

Date: Monday, February 22, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, March 15, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, March 22, 2021 (*Superintendent Search*)
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: ***Special Meeting of the Board***

Date: Monday, March 29, 2021 (*Superintendent Search*)
Time: All Day
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: ***Special Meeting of the Board***


Date: Friday, April 16, 2021 (*Budget Study Session*)
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, April 26, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

P. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Teasdale adjourned the meeting at 10:09 p.m.

February 22, 2021
Date



Michael Teasdale, Board President

February 22, 2021
Date



Dr. Cesar Morales
Deputy Superintendent

*Board meetings are recorded by audio tape pursuant to Government Code Section 54953.5(b).
Copies of these audio tapes are available by request to this office at (805) 383-1900.*