

VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF
April 16, 2021
(Board Budget Study Session)

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 21-06, was called to order by Mike Teasdale, Board President, at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, April 16, 2021, in the Board Room of the VCOE Conference & Educational Services Center, 5100 Adolfo Road, Camarillo. 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 - *Absent*
Dr. Mark Lisagor, Area 3
Rob Collins, Area 4
Dr. Ramon Flores, Area 5

VCOE Personnel Present:
Dr. César Morales, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools and
Ex-Officio Secretary and Executive Officer of the Board
Misty Key, Deputy Superintendent, Fiscal & Administrative Services
Dr. Consuelo Williams, Associate Superintendent, Student Services
Emily Mostovoy-Luna, Associate Superintendent, SELPA, CHPP and Hearing
Dr. Nancy Carroll, Interim Associate Superintendent, Educational Services
Marlo Hartsuyker, Director, Charter Schools
Brett Taylor, Director, Alternative Education
Nancy Akkerman, Senior Executive Assistant
Brian Meza, Conference Facilities Technician
3. Approval of Agenda
Dr. Flores moved that agenda be approved. Dr. Lisagor seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous vote (4:0). Ms. Ulrich was absent.

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

C. HEARINGS

None.

D. CLOSED SESSION

None.

E. PRELIMINARY

1. Approval of Minutes of Regular Board Meeting of March 15, 2021.
Dr. Lisagor moved the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of March 15, 2021 be approved. Mr. Collins seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous vote (4:0).
2. Approval of Minutes of Special Board Meeting of March 29, 2021.
Mr. Collins moved the Minutes of the Special Meeting of March 29, 2021 be approved. Dr. Lisagor seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous vote (4:0).

F. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

G. PRESIDENT’S AND BOARD MEMBERS’ REPORTS

None.

H. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Dr. Morales reported on the following activities of the office:

1. There is a lot of enthusiasm regarding the reopening of schools. One hundred percent of schools will have a hybrid format of teacher-to-student learning by April 26th. This marks a transition to normalcy. The health metrics in Ventura County are extremely favorable. Hope to return to full in-class student instruction at all grade levels. Current collaboration efforts will focus on strengthening the childcare system that needs to be restored.

I. LEGISLATIVE REPORT

None.

J. CONSENT/ACTION ITEMS

None.

K. PRESENTATIONS

None.

L. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION/ACTION

1. Budget Study Session
Ms. Key acknowledged the budget team of Lisa Cline, Cynthia Bridges, Sonia Magana and Stephanie Bellisario for their work on the budget. The budgets to be reviewed today include:

Board of Education, Career Education, Charter Schools, Comprehensive Health and Prevention Programs, Community School – Gateway, Court Schools – Providence, Educator Support & Effectiveness, and Student Competitions

VCOE staff members presented information on the various services provided and successes and challenges within their respective programs:

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION (Gateway, Providence, Odyssey Schools)

Brett Taylor, Director, Alternative Education

The largest Alternative Education program is Gateway which is currently serving 76 students. This year the enrollment has experienced the biggest change ever with only 9 referrals and 1 expulsion. Last year, Gateway received 168 referrals and 119 expulsions. The pandemic has obviously played a huge roll. Anticipate that the Gateway numbers will rise as students return. Gateway students are served by 9 teachers, 11 paraeducators and multiple staff and specialists including a school psychologist, behavioralist, nurse.

Facility upgrades have occurred at Gateway. Gateway middle school was recently moved to the CEC campus. New technology and mobile docking stations and chromebooks are available. Gateway looks forward to celebrating the graduation of 12 students. Next year Gateway will offer A-G courses.

Providence School is currently serving 55 detained students with 6 teachers, 2 paraeducators and 6 support staff. The program has new technology in all classrooms with newline white boards, 2 of which are on mobile carts in case relocation is needed. Chromebook carts have been added. Wall wraps will be added next year, like those used at any high school. Eight graduations were held this year.

Odyssey School is currently serving 7 students with two teachers, 2 behavioral technicians, and 1 psychologist. Odyssey is located in the old Gateway campus. New technology has been added throughout the facility. The first year has been rewarding and we look forward to this program growing.

Dr. Lisagor asked if there is an issue with retaining teachers and paraeducators during this time of extreme decline in enrollment. Mr. Taylor noted that there were 3 teacher layoffs in Probation and Gateway Schools. This will likely continue as the statewide trend continues to be to reduce the number of retained students.

Dr. Lisagor asked about the role of the nurse at Providence. Mr. Taylor explained that the nurse provides information on how to operate safely based on the pandemic options.

Dr. Flores asked if the temporary buildings that were used for Triton could be used for Gateway. Ms. Key responded that the portables had to be returned as the funding for them was specific to Triton School. The Office has begun the planning process for construction of new facility at Gateway.

Mr. Teasdale asked what the impact of the pandemic has been on the start of the Odyssey program. Mr. Taylor explained that the number of students enrolled was very manageable and students were engaged online and through home visits. Odyssey was a desired and requested program and it has shown to be a good program that will continue to grow.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Marlo Hartsuyker, Director, Charter School Support

Ms. Hartsuyker reported on the VCOE Charter School program. The first charter in Ventura County was in the Mesa School Districts. Currently there are 12 charter schools serving over 3,000 students. Seven of the charters are authorized by local school districts and five by this Board. Six of the charter are classroom based and 6 are independent study

AB1505 overhauled the Charter School Law. The CDE is now required to identify the performance category of each charter school based on the dashboard. Ventura County charter schools include four high performing charter schools, six middle performing and one new charter school that has not yet received a performance rating. One charter school uses alternative scoring. Charter Schools authorized by the Board of Education are guided by the MOU and provide an annual programmatic report.

Ms. Hartsuyker noted that she attends all charter school board meetings and reviewed budget information on an ongoing basis. Annual credential monitoring is performed. New charter school petitions are reviewed by a comprehensive number of VCOE departments, each providing valuable information.

Support provided to charter schools include monthly collaboration meetings with charter school directors. Professional development and training are provided – recent topics being on Special Education procedures and IEPs. Trainings this year will focus on identifying services needed for English Language Learners and improved services for ELL students. Board governance training on the Brown Act, Public Records Act and fiduciary duties are also provided.

Dr. Flores noted that one of the strengths of VCOE is the charter schools and the VCOE Charter School Support department is one of the reasons Ventura County Charter schools are high performing. This department is an example for the State.

Mr. Teasdale noted that a common theme of concern regarding the charter schools is the lack of diversity. Are the charter schools collaborating to determine tools to increase ethnic diversity, or increase the robustness of the ELL program. Ms. Hartsuyker noted that even if only one ELL student is attending a charter school, that charter needs to provide the best possible program for that student. Next year's training will focus on improving ELL programs as well as determining what are the barriers to ethnic enrollment. Are there new methods charter schools can try?

Mr. Teasdale suggested that charter schools go directly to the community and ask why they are not attending. Ms. Hartsuyker noted that there are efforts to develop a door to door, more personal level of inquiry. There is always an anxiety level with starting a new school and charter schools will work to determine how they can create a welcoming environment for parents and students. Enrollment in the charter schools can also be hampered or supported by the how successful the home district is in developing a positive environment for their ELL students.

STUDENT PROGRAMS

Dr. Consuelo Williams, Associate Superintendent, Student Programs

Dr. Williams reported on various programs within Student Programs including Foster Youth, Teen Parents, Homeless Youth, Student Competitions and Migrant Youth and Support and Accountability.

Foster Youth provides trainings for foster youth parents and dealing with adverse childhood circumstances. The California Foster Youth campaign works to increase the number of foster youth that matriculate from high school to college and to assist with access to financial assistance. Currently Ventura County serves 440 foster youth, 12 of which are enrolled in VCOE programs.

The Teen Parent program consists of 65 teen parents and 25 children. The program provides support services, school supplies, referrals to community organizations, and works to eliminate obstacles or barriers to continuing education that students are experiencing. Trainings on baby care and health care are provided and childcare is provided, all to encourage and support students in their efforts to complete school and attend college.

The Homeless Youth program supports the 6,444 homeless children in Ventura County, 28 of which are enrolled in VCOE programs. Staff attend multiple agency meetings to coordinate services. The program recently distributed 800 backpacks to LEA's homeless students that were returning to school.

Migrant Education programs support 2,000 migrant students, six of whom are enrolled in VCOE programs. A highlight of the Migrant Education program is the Annual Speech and Debate competition.

Student Competitions host the Academic Decathlon, Mock Trial, Science Fair, and coordinate the Teacher of the Year program and Impact II awards. This year the student competitions were hosted virtually. Currently working with the Naval Base Ventura County on the Science Fair. Impact II awards and Teacher of the Year program are in progress.

The Student Services program is committed to supporting all “at-promise” students, including our Spanish speaking parents. During May and June, they will provide opportunities for parents to participate in the LCAP. They are also pursuing the Extended Opportunities Grant. Finally, they are coordinating the First Annual Equity Conference in conjunction with the Social Justice Task Force. The Equity Conference will be held virtually on May 24, 2021, 2:00 p.m.

Dr. Flores noted that “at-promise” is a fantastic student phrase. In regards to services for Homeless youth; he serves on a commission that is working to provide school supplies to at-risk students and may have funds to share. Dr. Flores noted that the Navy utilizes partnership agreements and recommended that the Office continue to work within the agreements it has. The Navy is a great partner for STEM work.

Mr. Teasdale was stuck by the fact that there are 6,000 homeless students in Ventura county and asked if the local school districts are supporting them? Dr. Williams noted that each district has a liaison that works with the VCOE Homeless Youth office to ensure that these students are receiving social-emotional supports and all resources that could block their access to education.

Dr. Flores asked if our office provides support to Foster Students as they transition to adulthood. Dr. Williams noted that Laura Wellbourn, Homeless Coordinator, stays in close connection with the students post-graduation to determine if they need any assistance.

Dr. Lisagor noted the silver lining of the pandemic is that it highlighted the digital divide. Funding is being received for the infrastructure and the public is being made aware that broadband needs to be addressed just like any other utility.

Budget Study Session

Ms. Key distributed a copy of the Vision, Mission and Goals of VCOE. The existing vision is to provide quality services and support for life-long learning opportunities so all people will benefit. The Office supported all LEAs with the vaccine efforts and all other aspects of the pandemic for all schools in Ventura County – not just VCOE schools – public and private. The Office has worked to ensure that all districts have maintained fiscal solvency and has supported efforts to meet the unique needs of students as we exit the pandemic.

Our goal is to work closely with all districts and charter to determine their needs and how the Office can meet those needs. Dr. Morales has determined a strategic plan to identify new objectives. Over the next 30 days he will meet with every superintendent and charter school director to have a one-on-one discussion on how the Office can respond to the specific needs of their district. Senior Management staff will also talk with their counterparts in the districts - CBOS, Special Education Directors, Student Service liaison for every district.

Specialized outreach to small school district superintendents which have unique needs will also occur. Dr. Morales will also have one-on-one dialogue with Board members.

March 13, 2020 began the pandemic and education and the County Office have navigated uncharted territory. Progress has been made. We know more about the pandemic now and how to operate in it safely. Normalcy is beginning to return but and when school district reopen their doors the normal will be different.

The pandemic caused a lot of innovation to occur. Within two weeks of school closing, our team and school district teams, transformed daily classroom instruction into virtual instruction. Some districts had to purchase technology and others had it in place. Within 2 weeks, 70,000 devices and 30,000 hotspots were purchased. Additional work was performed in Wheeler Canyon for the 12 households that did not have communications. All agencies, including private agencies, assisted. Everyone came together for the sake of students. We want to harness the innovation that occurred. We are communicating with our parents and staff at record pace. Parents are now extremely involved. Can we continue to have some meetings virtually so all parents can participate? The development of the LCAP still requires parental input and now we are receiving record participation. The community and districts are dealing with an influx of funds.

Dr. Morales and senior staff will be working hard and quickly to meet with local districts to determine needs. VCOE's commitment is to all students and we will get it done. New goals will be responsive and goal driven.

Assumptions for the budget include a 3.84 COLA for the Special Education program only, as VCOE is still in LCFF's Hold Harmless state. Salary adjustments include reduction of staffing. STRS rate has decreased slightly but PERS has increased 2% at a cost of \$120,000. The unemployment rate has increased from .05% to 1.23% starting July 1. This was an unanticipated increase of \$450,000.

Career Education

Grant funds received by the Office are shrinking annually as the funds are now spread through all districts. The Office has lost approximately \$2 million beginning in July. Appropriate adjustments are being implemented. Some of the grant funds have gone to the districts which then purchase the services from us.

Comprehensive Health and Prevention Programs

Hearing Conservation is not included in LCFF funding. The loss of revenue in hearing conservation is due to the fact that services cannot be offered in person at this time.

County Board of Education

The budget has not changed much. The \$188,000 in services includes conference

center room rental fees, board travel and BoardDocs. All departments are charged for room usage. This is how the Office accounts for the conference facilities and staff. The cost of in-person meetings will increase the budget expenditures next year.

Educator Support and Effectiveness

The program has experienced a slight decrease based on reduced enrollment in the teacher induction program during the pandemic.

Gateway Community School and Providence Court School

Gateway should experience an increase in enrollment next year which will allow for a clearer idea of the budget. The current budget is based on enrollment at P-1 (October 2020). As soon as a student enrolls, the Office begins receiving funding. Providence has also experienced a decrease in enrollment

Student Competitions

Very little change to this budget. Looking forward to in-person competitions next year.

Scholarships and Donations

These funds are specific to the scholarships received. Dr. Lisagor asked if there are any endowed funds in the scholarship budget? Dr. Weis contributes annually as scholarships are awarded to Triton and Phoenix Schools. Mr. Mantooth has begun a program as well which he will replenish as scholarships are awarded.

Dr. Lisagor indicated his appreciation for the budget summaries.

Mr. Teasdale asked how the Office determines which services are to be reduced. Ms. Key noted that there are a variety of restricted programs operated by the Office. Reductions are made to the programs that experiences a funding loss. If the funding in Career Education is reduced, the reductions are applied in that area.

Reductions in services in the \$20 million unrestricted budget are harder as these reductions are primarily based in the fee for service areas. The Office tried to identify where the revenues were reduced and also determine what services will be needed by the districts in the future. The decisions are difficult, but the Office tries to meet the needs of the districts.

Decisions on CEC courses are based on student enrollment, industry needs and connections to career pathways. The Offices tries not to offer courses that our districts are able to offer, but instead to offer courses that are complementary to what is offered. Annual meetings are held with district counselors to determine what courses are needed and have the most student interest. We want to empower districts to offer courses locally as they are more accessible to the students and at the same time leverage the amazing career education site – welding, megatronics – and our partnerships with the Navy. These efficiencies are needed as grant funding is reduced.

2. Setting of Superintendent's Salary

Dr. Lisagor reported that the Board Subcommittee was asked to look into the salary of the Superintendent. He reminded the Board that they set the salary for the Office, not the person. The County Superintendent of Schools is an elected official and therefore is not evaluated by the Board and the salary is not tied to any type of evaluation.

The Office provided salary comparison data, including salaries of other County Superintendents and other countywide elected officials. Dr. Lisagor also reviewed the salaries of the Chancellor of the Community College District and reported that it was \$275,000 in 2019. He also noted that the salaries for some county offices – sheriff, public defender – can include significant benefits that increase their salary to \$500,000 annually. After reviewing the provided comparison data, the Board Subcommittee is recommending a salary of \$280,000.

Mr. Teasdale reported that he had spoken with Dr. Morales who indicated that he prefers salary rather than benefits. Mr. Teasdale requested Board discussion.

Mr. Collins asked if the Superintendent's salary is increased along with employee raises. Ms. Key noted that the Board sets the salary of the Superintendent's salary and it is not connected to the employee increase. Health insurance is provided to all employees and the cost is high. There were multiple years where Mr. Mantooth asked that the Board not to increase the salary. The current salary was set in 2018. The current salary is less than the average for County Superintendents and Ventura County elected and appointed officials. Mr. Collins suggested that the current salary remain in place due to the current budget issues.

Dr. Lisagor noted that the current salary is way behind that of other Ventura County electeds and Dr. Morales was paid more as a district superintendent. The job of the County Superintendent does not change in tough budget times. He suggested keeping the salary at least comparable to other county elected officials.

Mr. Teasdale noted that there are high expectations of the County Superintendent. He is expected to be bridge builder and the voice of education in Ventura County. It is a difficult job considering that the Superintendent also has to be reelected every four years. This is a unique challenge in this office. Having education salaries below that of other elected officials doesn't tell the story of the importance of education.

Dr. Flores noted that the position is separate from the person. Dr. Flores noted that the person has only been in the position for two months. He prefers median comparisons rather than average comparison. The median salary is \$280,000. His only concern is the long-term effects of moving a salary up in a time of retirement for PERS and STRS. He is comfortable with the \$280,000. He also would not have a problem with setting the salary slightly lower and then have a year to evaluate work. He does have difficulty in separating the two issues.

Mr. Teasdale noted that he too links salary with performance; however, it is the voters who make the decision on the Superintendent's performance.

Dr. Lisagor moved the Superintendent's salary be set at \$280,000. Dr. Flores seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous vote (4:0).

M. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

1. Dr. Flores noted that he will be attending the VCSBA Dinner and looks forward to the discussion on Learning Loss Mitigation.
2. Mr. Collins asked about the May Revise. Ms. Key noted that everything is looking good from the state revenue perspective. Discussions seem to be centered on one-time funds for specific purposes. No commitment to on-going funding. The Office should be receiving additional revenue.
3. Dr. Lisagor noted that he and Mr. Teasdale will attend the final session on Masters in Governance for County Board members. The program will be repeated in the Fall and he encouraged other Board members to attend.

Dr. Lisagor suggested the Board continue to offer some form of hybrid meetings to Board members and the public can have the option to participate remotely if necessary.

Dr. Lisagor reported that there is a Broadband Consortium starting in Ventura County to address the digital divide. They have suggested that the way to identify who continues to need services is through the schools. He is hoping that Dr. Judd and Dr. Morales will be involved in this effort.

Dr. Lisagor plans to attend the school board dinner meeting. He suggested that the lecture portion be recorded and posted after the fact.

4. Mr. Teasdale noted that the Masters in Governance for County Board members has been extremely valuable. He supported Dr. Lisagor's request for synchronous meetings as well.

Mr. Teasdale reported that he has had numerous conversations with Dr. Morales on the possibility of a 3-4 hour Board retreat to discuss the needs analysis that will come from the meetings with local school districts. This retreat will likely be held at a Special Board meeting in June.

N. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Charter School Annual Programmatic Audits:
MATES – *April 26, 2021*
Vista Real Charter High School – *May 24, 2021*

2. Discussion of Goals and Objectives in conjunction with Development of Yearly Plan for Agenda items – *June / July*
3. Board Retreat to Discuss District Needs – *June*

O. FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Date: Friday, May 7, 2021 (*Budget Study Session*)
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, May 24, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

P. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Teasdale adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

Following the Board meeting, at 10:00 a.m., the Board attended the swearing-in ceremony of Dr. César Morales as Ventura County Superintendent of Schools. Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin administered the Oath of Office.

Students, parents, staff and members of the public were invited to watch the swearing-in which was streamed live at: www.vcoe.org/swearing-in.

Approved by Board Action on 04/26/21.

*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.*