PRESIDENT’S CORNER

Ventura County’s Trial by Fire

Happy New Year everyone! I know many of us are looking forward to a fresh start in 2018 following the tumultuous end of 2017.

We all know Ventura County is a special place, but it’s our people who make it the best place on earth. People like the first responders who braved the devastating Thomas Fire, risking their lives to save ours. And the volunteers who came out in droves to help their neighbors with their properties and pets and to provide a shoulder to lean on.

Our school leaders and staff didn’t skip a beat responding to this unprecedented crisis. I am fortunate to be a Santa Paula Unified School District board member and to have experienced first-hand the leadership provided by our superintendent, Dr. Robert Fraisse. He was on the scene of the fire the night it started, assessing the situation and mobilizing our staff into action. Although he is our interim superintendent, he acted as if he had been in the community for years. He relied on his peer, Dr. Trudy Arriaga, and our district’s amazing leadership team to find solutions to an emergency none of us had experienced before. I am sure your districts have their own heroes, including board members, principals, executive cabinets, maintenance crews and unions. Together, with support from the Ventura County Office of Education, we worked as a team to make the right decisions for our teachers and students.

“Lessons Learned: Debriefing the Thomas Fire” is the timely topic of the February 5 VCSBA dinner meeting. Ojai USD Superintendent Andy Cantwell, Ventura USD Superintendent Dave Creswell and Ventura College Interim President Dave Keebler will share their experiences responding to the fire. They will be joined by a representative from the Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services. We are honored to have them as our guest speakers as we reflect on what worked well and what can be better in the future.

And you won’t want to miss our breakfast meeting on Saturday, March 17. VCSBA’s VP for Legislation Dr. Chuck Weis and Dr. Antonio Castro, Associate Superintendent for Student Services at the Ventura County Office of Education will be our featured presenters to discuss how school districts are identified for differentiated assistance. Find out how to determine if the programs funded in our LCAPs are making a difference, how to best use the data collected by your district and what kinds of conversations to be having with your stakeholders.

Here’s to a safe and productive 2018!

Christina Urias, VCSBA President
Santa Paula Unified School District
Protecting Young Minds When Marijuana is Legal

Stan Mantooth
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Robert Levin
Ventura County Public Health Officer

On January 1, marijuana — a substance that affects youth differently than adults — became legal for retail sale in California. Although the federal government still classifies cannabis as illegal, California voters have elected to legalize it for adults age 21 and older.

We write not to debate legalization, or to comment on cannabis use by adults, but to inform you about the way cannabis affects the minds of young people. The science is simple: Cannabis use during adolescence can negatively impact the still-developing teenage brain. It can also lead to addiction.

Recent research published in the New England Journal of Medicine has shown that using cannabis during the adolescent years can negatively — and sometimes permanently — affect the developing adolescent brain. While our state laws are changing, school policies remain the same: All public schools (including charters) that receive federal funding cannot permit the possession or use of cannabis in any form on school property by students, staff or visitors.

This policy remains in alignment with those that already address the use of alcohol, tobacco and vaping devices. While these products are also legal for adults 21 and over, they are never allowed on any school campus.

If a student is found on school property with any of these items, he or she will be offered resources to give them an opportunity to discontinue their substance use, but in many cases, the student could also face suspension or expulsion. This also applies to all forms of cannabis, such as common dried marijuana leaves and more contemporary products like highly concentrated cannabis oils and edible items.

If you are not yet aware of how, why or to what extent these forms of cannabis adversely affect teenagers, consider reviewing the health and awareness-focused resources at How High Ventura County (howhighventuracounty.org), MJ Fact Check (mjfactcheck.org) or the National Institute on Drug Abuse (drugabuse.gov).

There are many positive benefits to maintaining a proactive dialogue with your teen about the potential harm of cannabis. Children whose parents disapprove of cannabis use are less likely to use it. In a survey of current use of cannabis by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, youth who perceived strong parental disapproval of cannabis used it strikingly less often than those who did not perceive disapproval (a 4.8 percent use rate vs. 31.3 percent).

Cannabis is the No. 1 reason youth enter drug treatment programs in Ventura County. According to local drug treatment admission data, 88 percent of participating youth cited cannabis as their drug of choice. If you are concerned about someone’s cannabis use, you can contact your school counselor for resources, or find treatment providers by contacting 2-1-1 Ventura County (dial 211 or 800-339-9597, or visit 211ventura.org).
Protecting Young Minds When Marijuana is Legal
(continued from page 2)

As adults and members of our communities, we must remember that part of our responsibility to youth is positive role modeling of the behaviors we expect of them. Just as with adult use of tobacco and alcohol, excessive or harmful use of cannabis, including decisions involving driving under the influence, will be observed by young people and perceived as “acceptable behaviors.”

As a community, we must prioritize the health and safety of our young people and clearly communicate the risks of cannabis use, just as we do with tobacco and alcohol.

We seek your support and assistance in helping to protect the well-being of our children as we navigate into a new future and face ever-evolving challenges in our community.

CSBA Gubernatorial Debate: Who Won and Who Lost?

If you attended the California School Board Association (CSBA) Annual Education Conference and didn’t stay for the third General Session on Saturday, December 2nd, you really missed an opportunity to differentiate between the six leading candidates for Governor of California.

Don’t feel bad though, as you weren’t alone, with only about one-third of the conference attendees staying for the Saturday session. Luckily, you read the VCSBA Newsletter and will get filled in.

CSBA’s Executive Director Vern Billy admirably moderated the question and answer style debate, providing equal time for each candidate to express their position and opinion on the educational issues of the year. As you may know, at the time of the conference in early December, Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom was leading the polls followed closely by former L.A. Mayor and Speaker of the Assembly Antonio Villaraigosa, followed by State Treasurer John Chiang, then former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin, and the others followed further behind. The field was rounded out with Assemblymember Travis Allen, and businessman John Cox.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD HONOREES

Please join us on February 5th as we honor the following School Board Members for their years of dedicated service to public education.

Mary Haffner, Ventura 12 years
Dean Kunicki, VCOE 12 years
Scott Swensen, Hueneme 16 years
Charles Alvarez, Briggs 20 years
Deann Hobson, Santa Clara 24 years
Velma Lomax, Ventura 24 years
John Walker, Ventura 28 years

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Mr. Billy's questions elicited a significant amount of agreement on the value of public education, the importance of local control of schools by school boards, and the need to improve the state's poor ranking on student performance measures. The agreement dissolved when it came to how to turn around these poor performances. The Republican candidates on the platform favored for-profit charter schools while Democratic candidates expressed firm belief that profit motive had no place in public education. Interestingly, no one stated that local school boards could do it with adequate funding.

Candidate Newsom stated that schools do not respond to competition as businesses do and Chiang said that for-profit schools should not exist. Villaraigosa also opposed for-profit charters but added that tolerance for failing public schools is not acceptable. He added that he would shut down failing schools. Eastin drew the loudest applause after stating that charter schools cannot be fairly compared to other public schools because they cherry-pick the best and brightest while rejecting the kids who have special needs. She also stated that many charter schools were sending low performing students home before the test.

Candidates Allen and Cox supported the business competition model for public schools. Allen stated that schools are not meeting standards and results are what matters. Cox stated that the business model should not matter as long as companies are operating with integrity. He added that the for-profit sector does a pretty good job in a lot of areas.

Who won and who lost the debate? The real winners were the CSBA members in attendance and public education. California is also a winner because the candidates for Governor are talking about public education. However, judging purely by my internal applause meter, Delaine Eastin won the popular vote in the room. She delivered the same inspiring type of speech that she was famous for during her eight years as State Superintendent. Interestingly, the polls have changed recently for Delaine Eastin in the form of a significant increase. Is it possible that her new found popularity is the result of an outstanding showing at the CSBA AEC conference?

Dr. Charles Weis, VCSBA VP, Legislation
Hueneme School District

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**APRIL 30 DINNER MEETING**

**Public Information and Social Media**

For our final dinner meeting of the school year on April 30, we will be focusing on “Public Information and Social Media.” We will hear from local school communications professionals about how your district can share good news with the widest possible audience and the most effective ways to communicate about crises and controversies.

Don’t forget that these meetings are for you to grow as board members. The Ventura County School Boards Association wants you to attend with your superintendents, assistant superintendents and any other interested parties.

Please join us so we can continue educating ourselves and do the best job possible of informing our communities about these important issues affecting education.
CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

**VCSBA Nominating Committee**

Attention all school board members! VCSBA is looking for volunteers to serve on its Nominating Committee for the 2018-19 school year. The Nominating Committee will solicit candidates for the VCSBA President, Secretary, Treasurer, VP Programs and VP Legislation.

The Nominating Committee will meet immediately following the February 5th dinner meeting (at 8:30 p.m.). The remaining work of the committee can be done via phone and email as members look for candidates. The Nominating Committee will announce the candidates for VCSBA Executive Board at the April 30, 2018 dinner meeting.

Please consider becoming a member of the Nominating Committee; we need your participation. If you have questions, please contact any of the Executive Board members listed below. Thank you!

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