

VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF
June 23, 2023

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. Call To Order, Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and Moment of Reflection
The Regular Board Meeting of the Ventura County Board of Education, Agenda No. 23-10, was called to order by Arleigh Kidd, Board President, at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, June 23, 2023, in the Board Room of the VCOE Conference and Educational Services Center at 5100 Adolfo Road, Camarillo. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Mr. Kidd, followed by a moment of reflection.

2. Roll Call
Trustees Present
Rachel Ulrich, Area 1
Michael Teasdale, Area 2
Dr. Mark Lisagor, Area 3
Arleigh Kidd, Area 4
Dr. Ramon Flores, Area 5

VCOE Personnel Present:
Dr. César Morales, County Superintendent of Schools
Misty Key, Deputy Superintendent, Fiscal & Administrative Services
Lisa Salas Brown, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services
Emily Mostovoy-Luna, Associate Superintendent, SELPA
Teri Page, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Lisa Bork, Sr. Executive Assistant
Cathy Samuel, Executive Assistant
John Meza, Facilities

3. Approval of Agenda
Dr. Lisagor made a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Flores seconded the motion, and the motion passed 4:0. (Ms. Ulrich arrived after the agenda approval).

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

C. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION/ACTION

1. Public Hearing on Ventura County Office of Education Local Control Accountability Plan (VCOE LCAP)
In accordance with Education Code 52062, a public hearing to solicit the recommendations and comments of the public regarding the proposed VCOE LCAP is being held. School districts and County Offices of Education are required to develop, adopt, and annually update a three-year Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), using a template adopted by the California State Board of Education (SBE). The LCAP identifies how districts and County Offices of Education address the State's priorities and metrics, and

how expenditures are in accordance with statutes. The VCOE LCAP has been developed with the input from diverse groups of educational partners. Adoption of the VCOE LCAP is scheduled for June 26, 2023.

a. OPEN PUBLIC HEARING on the 2023-24 Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). 8:42 a.m.

Lisa Salas Brown introduced Christine Mahone, Director, County Program Support and Accountability. Ms. Mahone said VCOE is entering into the third year of our LCAP which was developed in 2021-22 to meet the identified needs of our students, particularly the Gateway and Providence school communities. The LCAP also addresses all 10 state priorities required. Our progress on these 10 state priorities is measured using state and local indicators and is reported out annually on the California Dashboard.

Ms. Mahone focused on the LCFF funds since this is what is aligned to the LCAP. Of the approximately \$33 million dollars projected in LCFF funds, about \$670,000 is generated based on enrollment of high needs students, youth in foster care, English Learners, and socio-economically disadvantaged students. These students are often referred to as unduplicated students.

There is \$2.2 million tied to actions and services in the LCAP of which \$960,000 is tied to the needs of students. In the 22-23 LCAP, VCOE budgeted about 793,000 but actually spent closer to \$980,000 on increasing services for our unduplicated students.

Engaging with our educational partners which includes students, parents/caregivers, and staff gives partners a voice. This is done through staff meetings, parent and student advisory committees and a survey. This data creates a plan and the priority areas are consistent with the previous year. The identified areas are academic support, safety, social-emotional/mental health and enrichment.

Mr. Kidd asked how caregivers are defined. Ms. Mahone said caregivers are a legal guardian or an educational rights holder.

Goal One is to provide all students equitable access to increase academic achievement. The one-year graduation rate for the class of 2022 was 100% at Gateway and 80% at Providence. This year, the graduation completion rate is also Gateway at 100% and Providence at 80%. This school year there was an increase in the A-G course completions at both sites – 55 at Gateway and 35 at Providence. Gateway students made great progress on CTE course completions this year, from 26 last year to 40 this year.

The English Learner population at Providence increased from 17% to 34%, Gateway is similar to last year. The EL student population has changed as more of the newly enrolled students are “newcomers.” A beginner ELD class has been successfully integrated into the master schedule to meet the needs of this student group.

Ms. Ulrich asked why more EL students are coming to our county. Dr. Morales said we are seeing vacancies in agriculture and farm work. The Mixtec population is increasing to

meet this need. VCOE is increasing outreach efforts to identify students to engage in the school system. If the numbers are going up, we need to increase our support services.

Dr. Flores asked if there is a system in place to track these students to college. Ms. Mostovoy-Luna said this is a component with compliance in SELPA for Students with Disabilities – she will share the process/information.

Although the state indicators like CAASPP and ELPAC scores are important, due to the unique needs of our court and community students and the challenges from the high mobility rates, other forms of assessments are critical to capture the students' progress while they are with us. This year the STAR Reading and Math assessment program was implemented. Students are taking this assessment three times a year to track growth.

Goal Two is to enhance school safety. New to the Gateway campus this year, were the student wellness spaces which have been integrated throughout the campus to provide a calming space for students to focus on self-care. These spaces also provide a private and confidential area for counselors or other staff to work with students individually or in groups.

Quarterly award assemblies are now held to celebrate student achievement. More field trips were implemented at the request of students, including college and university tours. At Providence, students were able to participate in presentations put on by local higher education partners.

Growth was made in the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) rate – which increased this year at both sites. This may be a bit confusing since the chronic absenteeism rate is still very high and an area where growth is needed. But for the ADA rate which is the average percentage of students present each day, over the course of the entire school year, this rate increased 5-7% from last year.

Increased safety updates at Gateway include additional cameras and a new key lock fob system to enhance security.

The chronic absenteeism rate is defined by a student missing 10% or more of school days. This is a high priority area and although much work is being done in this area, progress is slow and takes time. This work will continue next year, and growth is expected.

Another area for growth is the suspension rate at Gateway, which was reported as very high on the CA Dashboard (about 13%) and qualified Gateway for Comprehensive Support and Improvement or CSI. Due to this eligibility, a plan was created to address this need. This CSI plan is outlined within the LCAP and centers around the full implementation of a restorative justice program next school year.

Goal Three is to increase and maintain collaborative partnerships. This year the first ever college and career fair was held at Gateway and awards assemblies were held quarterly. Now that COVID restrictions have been lifted, Parent Connect weekly meetings have resumed at Providence. Efforts are being made to track participation so data can inform future actions.

Ms. Ulrich said this event being held during the day may be a factor for parents not attending due to transportation, work, childcare, etc. Mr. Teasdale said the effort being made is admirable. Dr. Lisagor said the graduation rate results tell him something is working.

The last two goals on the state priorities pertain to expelled youth and youth in the foster care system and are requirements only for county offices of education. There are two main areas in Goal Four, the transition for all students entering Gateway and the rehabilitative sessions that all students participate in at Gateway.

The Gateway team continues to be successful in ensuring a smooth transition in under 10 days for new students. There were over 2600 counseling sessions this last year, which is almost double from the previous year. High risk meetings were added to the LCAP this year to address certain expulsion cases involving high risk safety concerns. Collaboration with local districts in referrals is critical.

Seventy percent of youth in foster care are able to remain in their school of origin. Sixty-one students are receiving individual transportation. Eighty percent of 12th graders in Foster Care submitted their FAFSA or California Dreamers Act application. Students receive individual assistance at school to help them through the process.

Ms. Ulrich asked if our services include financial support after students turn 18 to help them with paperwork. Dr. Morales said we help with housing transition and work placement, so students can continue to access the system. We put students in contact with a lot of non-profits.

Ms. Ulrich asked at what age do Foster Youth age out of support services. Dr. Morales believes the age is 22, but he will confirm. (Update: *The child welfare system has a lot of complexities, but students in foster care have the opportunity to remain in foster care until the age of 21(it is a personal choice). However, there are limited services up until the age of 25 that some students may qualify for. Most students aging out of foster care are on their own once they turn 21.*)

Increased or improved services include behavioral and social-emotional supports, opportunities for parents/caregivers to engage in school communities, increased credit recovery opportunities, and amping up the college and career experiences for students. VCOE has incorporated targeted support for English Learners, including newly enrolled English Learners with instructional materials and intervention time.

Mr. Teasdale acknowledged the work behind this is exhausting. He was very impressed.

Public Hearing on the LCAP ended at 8:45 a.m.

2. Public Hearing on 2023-24 County Schools Service Fund Budget

This item is presented for information and discussion only. Adoption of the 2023-24 County Schools Service Fund Budget is scheduled for June 26, 2023.

- a. OPEN PUBLIC HEARING on the 2023-24 County Schools Service Fund Budget
Opened at 8:45 a.m.

Ms. Key said the Adopted Budget provides narrative, and not much has changed. VCOE is being conservative, and, should more revenue be added in the final budget, the budget will be updated.

VCOE received an increase in home to school transportation in the form of reimbursement in 2022-23 which was \$1.3 million. The numbers are steady in the 2023-24 budget. This is passthrough money; the benefit will be realized by the school districts. The increase in cost from First Student more than ate up any additional revenue.

One of the main changes in 23-24 is that of the expiring onetime funds associated with COVID. VCOE received approximately \$12 million since the onset of the Pandemic and we are close to having these funds spent.

There are many facilities projects underway. Due to the wet winter, many asphalt repairs need to be made. Roofs on all of our buildings suffered and we need to invest in repairing the roofs on most of our buildings.

Page 8 – Changes in Revenue. The 2022-23 total expenditures are \$148 million this year. The total projection in 2023-24 is \$144 million. This is a direct reflection of the one-time dollars being spent. The changes in salaries and benefits are attributed to the one-time off schedule for all employees of 4% in addition to the 4% ongoing provided.

Of note in the 2023-24 budget, we are no longer able to budget the \$1 million contribution to our reserves due to paying off the Certificate of Participation (COP) on the CESC building.

There is an increase in property insurance. VCOE is self-insured. Most of the districts and charter schools pool together to purchase property and liability insurance. Property insurance is up everywhere due to fires, mudslides, hurricanes, the Ukraine war, etc. Our own property insurance increased and our total insured values are also greater.

In all of our schools in the county in 2022-23 our total insured value was \$4 billion dollars. Because the cost of construction and inflation is high, we had to readjust our insurance values at a higher level. Some of our buildings are insured at \$350 per square foot. Some of the older buildings are insured at \$750 per square feet. We are now insured at a value of \$5.8 billion dollars for all of the education properties in Ventura County. One example is the gym that burned down in Santa Paula. The costs to rebuild is huge.

VCOE's total in 22-23 for our property and liability insurance was \$801,000. That number is now at \$997,000. We shouldn't see as significant of an increase in the coming years.

Dr. Lisagor asked if we have been fairly flat for a few years and we are just getting hit all at once. Ms. Key said prior to the Thomas Fire, our property insurance was at about \$3 million. We lost our coverage at that point. The market crashed after the Thomas and Woosley fires. We ended up paying almost \$6 million for coverage within two months time. Dr. Lisagor asked if there is any help coming from Sacramento. Ms. Key said the insurance commissioner is working to buy insurance through a shared plan through the

state. However, this may not necessarily be affordable. There is a similar story in liability insurance increasing as well. In general, settlements to molestation claims are increasing but not as much as property insurance.

Page 31 is the Special Reserve Fund. Fortunately, we have been dedicating \$1 million for the last 6-7 years to this fund. We now have approximately \$17 million projected in our Fund 17 reserve, which is almost three months of payroll. Payroll is \$6.5 million monthly. This is a comfortable level.

We also have the Postemployment Benefits Funds (Fund 20) projected at \$6.8 million. We use these dollars to pay for retiree health insurance. We do have access to this cash if needed.

Ms. Ulrich asked about the increase in costs due to STRS and PERS. Ms. Key said that PERS did go up by 2% and is projected to increase by 2% for future years. STRS is steady at 19.1%. What absorbed any increase is a combination of many aspects. Gateway and Providence eat up almost \$3 million dollars of our LCFE funds which far exceeds what the formula provides. We bring in about \$2.4 million on a formula driven basis, but the actual programs themselves cost more. Gateway and Providence bleed over into our unrestricted funds which means we can't use those dollars to pay for other services.

Ms. Ulrich said part of the rationale in paying off the building early was to have that money available to absorb. Ms. Key said the biggest savings in paying off the building early was saving \$3 million in interest. All costs have gone up and that \$1 million we were putting into reserves is now being absorbed.

Page 62 is Criteria and Standards. VCOE did not meet the criteria or standard deviation. The first one is the Average Daily Attendance (ADA). From a county office perspective, it is important for us to watch the countywide ADA as well as VCOE ADA.

The total countywide ADA is not meeting the criteria, the standard deviation which is a change in 1% for a county of our size. Our year change is greater than 1% which reflects the number of students leaving our county exceeds 1%. We don't expect that trend to change. There is also a direct correlation to VCOE programs and services, we continue to see a slight decline. An interesting sidenote is that Gateway started off the year with 60 enrolled students, towards the end of the school year, we had 92-93 students enrolled. Providence attendance is similar.

Ms. Ulrich asked how this relates to us being in a hold harmless status. Ms. Key stated that if Gateway and Providence enrollment increases, they used the funds we spent elsewhere. It is a balance, and Ms. Key watches it very closely. The priority needs to be on Gateway and Providence students as the attendance ebbs and flows.

Ms. Ulrich asked if VCOE is in declining enrollment, is the fact that we are in hold harmless status helpful? Ms. Key said it is helpful until it is spent on something else. Gateway and Providence have core programs and we will not diminish any of our services to these students. The expenditures are steady at this point. The revenue hasn't been matching expectations because attendance is down.

Ms. Key would like to thank the fiscal team for all of their work and coordinating with Christina Mahone and Student and Educational Services. It takes a village to put this information together.

Earlier this year we shared various audits and additional compliance. We had a Federal Program Monitoring review, and more compliance aspects continue to be added which makes fiscal work very complex and at a high volume. We are hiring more high-level people on the fiscal side.

Dr. Lisagor says we often hear concerns that school districts are too top heavy. It is becoming clear, as Ms. Key articulated the challenge and why we have to find so many high level people to keep things afloat.

Ms. Ulrich said schools have become everything now - public health, social services, safety and education. All the mandates require an administrator to oversee accountability.

Dr. Morales said we have to be vigilant when we go to Sacramento. When the LCAP started, he doesn't think the original vision included categoricals and all of the reporting requirements. VCOE is a very well managed financial institution. Districts who budget tight, don't have a buffer. In those districts they are going to have to make decisions to cut programs to keep the lights on. There is an 8.2% projected COLA next year. For the last two years COLA's have been passed to employees at a time when inflation has been so high. This may be the new normal.

Ms. Ulrich commented on the high housing and rent costs in Ventura County and how it affects our ability to attract staff and retain them.

The Public Hearing closed at 9:20 a.m.

3. Resolution 23-11 Recognizing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ) Pride Month. DISCUSSION / INFORMATION / ACTION (10 minutes)
Trustees may approve Resolution 23-11 in support of LGBTQ Pride Month.

Dr. Morales mentioned June is recognized as Pride month. This resolution if passed, establishes Pride Month being recognized by VCOE.

New language was added after the resolution was posted that states “*Now therefore let it be resolved that the Ventura County Board of Education does henceforth proclaim June as LGBTQIA+ Pride Month.*” This will be added above the sentence “Passed and Adopted.”

Dr. Flores said he asked for this item to be provided. His daughter is the first open gay Board member on the Oxnard Union High School District Board. He shared some data. As of May 2023, the Human Rights Commission has reported that there are over 520 anti-LGBTQ bills that have been introduced in state legislatures. There are 220 bills that target transgender and non-binary people and a record of 70 anti-LGBTQ laws have been enacted. From his perspective as a father of an openly gay trustee, one of seven in Ventura County, it is important for us as a governing body to say we are trying to create a safe place for you. We see you; we recognize you.

Dr. Morales said that often resolutions are a way to ensure and proclaim that a group of people is not invisible to the system of education. Rarely do we discuss corresponding actions where we support that group. This has been important especially in areas of our county where there has been hate and a high level of controversy. Several professional development opportunities have been presented. We have presented on LGBTQ+ subjects in the last three equity conferences. We have a page on the VCOE website dedicated to resources for LGBTQ+ educators and students. We posted about Pride Month and our support of LGBTQ+ students and employees on all VCOE social media platforms and we ran an article about Pride Month in the VCOE Newsletter.

We want VCOE to be a safe place. A silent giant at VCOE is our Librarian who works with Educational Services folks and libraries. Our libraries have been under attack. Ms. Nishiya has done a phenomenal job of providing links to books that have age-appropriate materials that are in alignment with the state.

We do this for the LGBTQ+ community. We do it for other communities that may be marginalized or invisible.

Ms. Ulrich said this is not lost on her or her fellow trustees. We service alternative education, and many LGBTQ+ students are in alternative education, a lot due to bullying, and self- medicating. There are a number of reasons they end up with us. It is important we acknowledge our support for this community.

Ms. Ulrich made a motion to pass Resolution #23-11 - Recognizing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ) Pride Month. Dr. Flores seconded the motion and it passed 5:0.

D. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Teasdale commented on work with CCBE and CSBA. AB906 is an effort by county superintendents and Boards to get \$80 million in court and community schools funding. Ms. Key helped in this effort and Dr. Morales went to Sacramento to testify. This money is for the at risk or at promise youth to provide services to help them become productive citizens.

Despite the victory, CCBE was maligned by CSBA for various reasons including lack of communication with the CSBA Legislative Committee. Mr. Teasdale is on the ByLaws Committee of the CSBA and is not in favor of a move by CSBA to block any section taking an advocacy role. CCBE and CSBA exist to serve its members.

Mr. Teasdale mentioned that Gina Cuclis, President of CCBE has resigned, John McPherson will be the new president.

E. FUTURE MEETINGS

Date: Monday, June 26, 2023 (*Adoption of Budget & LCAP*)
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, July 24, 2023
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, August 28, 2023
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

F. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kidd adjourned the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Date: 08/28/2023 
Arleigh Kidd, Board President

Date: 8-29-23 
Dr. César Morales, Ex Officio Secretary and
Executive Officer of the Board