



**VENTURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
March 28, 2021
MINUTES**

Call to Order

In accordance with Governor Newsom's executive orders of social distancing due to the COVID-19, the Regular Board of Education meeting was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, as a teleconference/video conference meeting where one or more members participated. The public had the opportunity to submit their public comment via the public comments email address or live via the Zoom platform. The public streaming of the special Board meeting was made available through a Zoom Webinar Link. Those in attendance were:

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

Adoption of Agenda

It was moved by Mr. Matt Almaraz, seconded by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve the agenda as presented.

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

REGULAR SESSION

At 7:30 p.m., Board President Velma Lomax called the Special Board Meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance.

Public Comments

The following individuals gave a public comment via e-mail or live via Zoom* regarding: concerns surrounding the proposed schedules; requesting that we return to full-time in- person instruction; allowing parents to re-choose their preferred learning model (Hybrid versus DL); thanking the Board and Administration for their hard work getting VUSD back to in-person learning; concerns about financial inequity in the VUSD/VUEA MOU; in favor of delaying the reopening of schools for safety reasons:

Tara Matheson	Krista Kessler	Sarah Kelly	Charity Juker (2)
Jessica Delfs	Connie White	Lauren Taluy	Tonia Bailey
Colton Imming	Darcy Duffy	Barbara Walker	Carrie Campbell
Aline Rodrigues	Sebastien Declerk*	Carol Peek*	Tonia Bailey*
Elsa Schmidt*	Dan Nelson*	Colton Imming*	

CONFERENCE - BUSINESS SERVICES

**8.a Ventura Unified School District and Ventura Unified Education Association
Memorandum Of Understanding (Action Requested)**

It was moved by Dr. Jerry Dannenberg, seconded by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez and passed on a roll call vote of 4 – 1 to approve as presented.

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

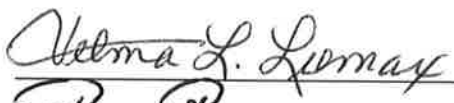
ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by Ms. Amy Callahan and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. to the next Regular Board Meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. on April 13, 2021.

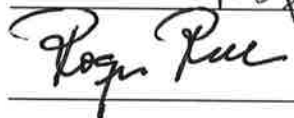
Ayes: Ms. Velma Lomax, Mr. Matt Almaraz, Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, Ms. Amy Callahan, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg

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

APPROVED



President



Secretary

From: Tara Matheson <taramatheson@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2021 9:49 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Schedule

Please explain the point of a block schedule? If the students are going back full time then just go back to the normal schedule. The 85 minute periods are way too long for MS students. We currently are doing them at my school and less and less kids are coming each day. They hate it. It's way too long. And we are also doing the every other week situation that you are considering for Friday's. Our absence rate is higher on that day. I'd also like to know how you are going to fit 35 in a class with 3 feet distance and clean the desks between classes. It seems like you are only making this change so quickly for the money. Safety is now a low priority. Your hybrid plan was great! It feels like you are scrambling like you did last spring with Edgenuity. Your program this year has been great... my kid's teachers are doing a fantastic job... this feels like you are rushing to the bank.

Have a great day!

[REDACTED]

From: Krista Kessler <kristamkessler@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 7:46 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Full Day

Dear Trustees,

I respectfully request that elementary return to full-day/full-time instruction for the remainder of the year.

Gratefully,
Krista Kessler

[REDACTED]

From: Sarah Kelly <ssharifk@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 8:04 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Open schools! Public comment

On behalf of every secondary parent I know in Ventura, which includes hundreds of parents, please get our kids Back to School and Full Time ASAP.

There are no more excuses! Teachers are vaccinated, numbers are low, and All other kids in the US are back or going back Now!

And we are tired of seeing teachers out “playing” and doing all kinds of activities during school hours. We all see it all the time. Even my teacher friends comment on it.

Please Start Considering the students and their education now —students and education have been the last priority for the past year —it’s time to get them and their education prioritized now!

Back to school, 5 days a week, full schedule. No excuses!

It’s embarrassing when I speak with my colleagues around the country whose students have been in school and thriving and I tell them we still haven’t gone back. They are appalled. This discriminate behavior is putting our Ventura students at a huge disadvantage vs others around the country. I’m really tired of it —for the first time ever I’m planning for private school for my two kids if this isn’t fixed ASAP. What a shame for Ventura.

Sarah Kelly

[REDACTED]

From: Charity Juker <charity.juker@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 9:01 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- School reopening

Our decision to send our kids back to in person learning was based on information that it is was going to be a hybrid model with a SEL Wednesday. If this changes, are you going to allow families to reconsider their initial choice?

Families should be allowed to make informed decisions and not have the in person learning model change after we already said yes to a hybrid model.

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

From: Charity Juker <charity.juker@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 9:09 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- In person instruction

There has to be a middle option between in person full time instruction and remote learning. This is too much too fast. And waiting until the last minute to change the hybrid model is not conducive to families needing to prepare their children.

This move to full time instruction is about money over health.

Stop making it about money.

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

From: Jessica D <jessicad6826@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 9:47 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Schools reopening

Hi,
I would like to have my question answer in tonight's meeting, because they have never touched this point:

Could you please explain, why are schools reopening full time before we all get our vaccines, reopening should proceed once at least all adults in a city, or county, have been vaccinated. Don't forget that kids will not be able to get vaccinated yet, and they can bring the virus home or from home to school, even if they wear masks at school and their temperature taken every day, and even if the majority think that they won't get sick? I don't think is necessary to get more cases, right before we, the rest, get the vaccines, when we can easily avoid it by waiting a couple of months more.

Thank you for your attention,

Jessica Delfs

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

[REDACTED]

From: C Martin <conniemartin200@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 12:42 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Special Education

I am hoping something specific is said regarding special education classes if they are to be treated any differently.

As always, Spec Ed parents can't tell what applies to their child and what doesn't because it's rarely talked about.

Thank you,

Connie White
Mother

[REDACTED]
Nicholas White 8th Grade
DATA

[REDACTED]

From: Lauren Taluy <lm.taluy@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 4:03 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Comment for Special Meeting

Hello,

I just wanted to write and thank Dr. Rice, the administration at VUSD and the board for doing the right thing for our students and deciding on an almost full time program. Our kids deserve this. I know it wasn't easy to negotiate for this, this late in the year and I truly appreciate you guys making it happen. It's taken a while, but our family is starting to regain trust in VUSD. Thank you again. My kids look forward to going to school everyday.

Sincerely,
Lauren Taluy

From: Tonia Bailey <ifly790@>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 4:11 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Written Comment

Dear School Board Member, May 28, 2021

I am writing to you today because of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that you will be voting on at your meeting tonight. In that MOU a stipend is proposed for Elementary In-Person members to be given six hundred dollars total (\$600) per full month worked in person for the work of Hybrid and In-Person education for the five (5) months they have been working in-person at school sites. Whereas Distance Learning (DL) members will be given a one-time stipend of six hundred dollars (\$600) total for the increased work of larger class sizes, increased parent communication, developing Canvas and other platforms, etc.

I write to you today for clarification. I have asked my union president as well as Dr. Rice and have yet to get an answer. Why are these two groups being compensated differently? Both groups are working extremely hard. Both groups have the same responsibility, to educate the students in our care the best that we can under these extenuating circumstances.

In the fall the district asked teachers if they would like to go back as a hybrid teacher or will they stay on as a Distance Learning teacher. If you chose DL you had to have a health condition that would put you in a higher risk factor. The district then surveyed parents giving them the option of returning their children to Hybrid or continuing DL. After all the numbers came in, the district needed more DL teachers than what had signed up for DL. Several teachers were asked to stay on as DL, I being one of those teachers.

Then in December, when new classes were created based on the parent surveys, DL class sizes increased substantially. I personally went from 24 students to 30. All the while, Hybrid class sizes were low. My two Hybrid coworkers had 16 - 22 students. Hybrid was split into A and B groups coming two days a week. DL teachers had all students coming onto Zoom everyday, 2-3 times per day. This reopening lasted one week and then COVID numbers went up and we all went to DL. Not wanting to shuffle the classes again, we kept the DL classes high and the Hybrid classes stayed low. From mid December until April 12, I will have had 28 (2 students moved out of the area) students on my roster while the other two first grade teachers will have had 17 and 23 students. That's anywhere from 20-40% more report cards to write, parent conferences to conduct, assessments to administer and don't get me started on how many more assignments to grade. My point with all of this is not "Woe is me". My point is we all work extremely hard, whether we are teaching hybrid or DL the workload is intense. One no more than the other, just different.

Now, our district along with our union has agreed upon an MOU that creates a divide, or better yet, an inequality between these two teaching positions. How can one say that one deserves more than the other and not see the inequity in this?

Let's consider Conejo Valley School District's handling of Hybrid vs DL instruction and compensation. On February 4, the school board agreed to an MOU as follows:
an educator teaching a hybrid class, which entails regularly working on campus, will get a \$275 stipend per month with the understanding that they will undergo COVID-19 testing every 30 days or as directed by the district. (\$25 to compensate for the required testing.)
And an educator teaching a remote learning class (DL) will get a \$250 stipend per month.
Clearly CVUSD values both of these roles equally, as it should.

Tonight you have an opportunity to stop this injustice by not approving this MOU. Show that you value both groups of teachers equally by demanding that the district and the union come back with a new proposal that compensates all teachers equally.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tonia Bailey

1st Grade Teacher

Citrus Glen Elementary School

[REDACTED]

From: Colton Imming <imming45@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 5:51 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Written Public Comment

Hello,

Below is my written public comment:

Dr Rice and the Board,

My name is Colton Imming and I am a representative of the Ventura Parent Association, which was formed to advocate as a voice for students and parents in our district. In line with that mission I'm speaking today because the parents of elementary students who originally enrolled in distance learning for this school year do not feel their voices are being heard.

I first want to make it clear, my comment is not about teacher or student safety. The direction from the state and the courts, supported by science, has stated that it is safe for teachers and students to return to full time in person learning.

That said – we strongly believe that the majority, if not the overwhelming majority, of elementary school parents on distance learning want to return to in person learning, *with their teacher*. Our conviction in this stems from a poll we conducted and from the sheer volume of parents we have listened to. The problem is that it was deemed, without formally polling the parents first, that students who choose to return from distance learning to full time in person learning will not get to keep their teacher. That is a wildly unfair starting point if the majority of these parents want their children to return to school. If the majority want to remain on distance learning then it makes sense for the teacher to remain on distance learning. The point is, why would such a far reaching declaration be made before knowing parent preferences? So much has changed since these parents elected distance learning in October, so please, poll these parents and give them a voice. It is the rational and equitable thing to do.

Thank You,

Colton Imming on behalf of the Parent Association

From: Darcy Duffy <darcypduffy@[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 6:21 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Thank you!

Dear Ventura Unified School District Board Members & Dr. Rice,

I didn't want the opportunity to pass to give a heartfelt thank you for your yes vote tonight to open our schools.

As a family we support the proposed agreement for our elementary school son. And as an educator I support the proposed agreement for our secondary students.

Thank you to all those involved in the negotiation process. I appreciate the proposed agreement being finished on Wednesday and promptly sent to the union members for a swift vote.

Thank you to the board for gathering on Sunday to review this agreement so students, parents and staff can begin to prepare for this next step. I am ready to handle what comes next and ready to support our students, parents and my colleagues with this as well.

Thank you again for your time, energy and dedication to our students!

Darcy Duffy

From: Barbara Walker <mamaskywalker@[REDACTED]> -
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 7:28 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Change in schedule

If the current return to school schedule changes there are so many students and families that will be negatively impacted. Many parents have already arranged transportation and work schedules around the current schedule. I anticipate there will be more DL if there is a change to the schedule. It concerns me that parents have had little to no say in what may transpire tonight. So many parents were talking about this potential change all weekend. I haven't spoken to one parent who was on board with the proposed changes.

From: Carrie Campbell <philcarrie805@ [REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 7:28 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- board email - written comment

Written public comment

To Dr. Rice and the Board,

Thank you for all of your hard work and endless hours working out plans over and over again for all of the students. We do appreciate all of you!

I would love for you to please investigate if schools are adhering to the new 3 ft spacing or if they are still using the 4 ft spacing rules. It was brought to our attention by few parents that their school told them they were not changing the 4 ft spacing.

Regarding distance learning - distance learning is the exception, in person learning is the standard. The judge explicitly said in her ruling that the "prevailing standard of education in California is in person learning" not distance learning.

We are advocating for all students and do believe distance learning should be an option, BUT parents would like to be officially asked if they want to come back. Some parents did not see the email that casually told parents to contact their schools if they wanted to come back. Parents also wanted to be asked if they wanted to come back if their teacher might change and if their teacher wouldn't change. For example, there is a parent that stated 18/19 kids out of 23 in their distance only class wanted to come back in person... that is a majority. If that DL teacher came back with the majority, then the remaining kids could be consolidated into another DL class.

It is stated that schools "shall" offer in person education to the fullest extent, BUT it says distance learning "may" be offered for reasons below.

43503. (a) (1) For the 2020–21 school year, a local educational agency that offers distance learning shall comply with the requirements of subdivision (b).

(2) Distance learning **may** be offered under either of the following circumstances:

(A) On a local educational agency or schoolwide level as a result of an order or guidance from a state public health officer or a local public health officer.

(B) For pupils who are medically fragile or would be put at risk by in-person instruction, or who are self-quarantining because of exposure to COVID-19.

Thank you for all that you do for the students in our district!

Best,
Carrie Campbell

From: Aline Rodrigues <alinelovesbees@ [REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 8:42 PM
To: Public Comment
Cc: Rodriguez, Sabrena; Almaraz, Matt; Dannenberg, Jerry; Lomax, Velma; Callahan, Amy
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- PUBLIC COMMENT 03/28 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING PLEASE READ

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear VUSD Trustees,

My name is Aline and I graduated from Foothill Technology High School in 2020. I am writing as a concerned community member, recent former student, and a friend of many current VUSD students to implore you to reconsider your plans to return to full in-person instruction so soon.

The plans for returning to in-person instruction are clearly heavily motivated by the financial incentive provided by Governor Newsom's "Safe Schools for All" plan and Assembly and Senate Bill 86. This is not inherently a bad thing. Quite the opposite, this would be a good thing if done right. However, the district's current plans to reopen are evidently not accessible to all. They are not prioritizing the needs of most impacted groups, and will be very damaging to many students and teachers. Even more, they are neglecting rightful community concerns regarding students and teachers' mental and physical (covid-19, immunocompromised, etc.) health, and, by extension, their families and all they come into contact with. A decision with such great implications ought to prioritize the health and perspectives of those most affected by the pandemic and district policy pertaining to it over potential state funding and selective public pressure.

REGARDING HEALTH:

Many students and teachers relay discomfort over the safety precautions that will be taken into practice upon returning to in-person instruction. Much of this discomfort arises from the newly changed mandate of 3ft. social-distancing, the lack of testing, and lack of herd immunity developed from so few in the Ventura community being vaccinated at this point.

The 3ft. social-distance policy in classrooms per the CDC recommendation followed several studies, most notably the most recent in Massachusetts public schools, that found COVID-19 exposure rates were similar whether the district required physical distancing of 3 or 6 feet. It is also important to note, however, that this was more of a relentment/ compromise as a result of significant public pressure for schools to reopen, rather than an independent decision the CDC would have come to without that pressure, because they believe the risk mitigation is good enough to do so. My concern here is less about low risk (though questions regarding risk are also a very valid concern held by many people and should be taken seriously), but rather that maintaining this new policy of 3ft. distancing to fit more kids in classrooms **will introduce new problems, such as students being closer to their peers, or teachers being closer to students**, that would technically be prohibited, but **will realistically happen, and heighten risk of exposure to COVID-19 and variants. These risks would not happen if schools remained in a distance-learning format.**

By April 1st, not all teachers will be fully vaccinated, nor is it currently mandatory for all teachers or site staff to be vaccinated. Very few, if any, students are currently vaccinated. While teachers and staff may for the most part be protected from exposure from each other, they are not protected from the many students they will come across day-to-day. This risk is even greater for middle and high school teachers, who will see multiple classes of students each day. Mandating that all teachers continue distance-teaching in addition to teaching in person is inhumane bandwidth-wise and given the risk implications. **It is very cruel to ask someone to have to choose between their livelihood and their health.** The district should not return to in-person instruction at all this

year. But at the very least, **teachers must be given a real choice and an accessible way to opt out of in-person teaching** if that is not something that they feel comfortable participating in. Teachers that are immunocompromised or have family members that should not feel like they are putting their life or the lives of those they love at risk due to district policy. Moreover, COVID-19 is a disease that is known to kill even the most healthy people in some cases. Even if someone cannot provide a doctor's note, and just do not feel safe returning for **any reason, it is cruel to force them to do so, or have them lose their source of income during a global pandemic if they don't**. Also, for the district to be pushing for older teachers to retire instead of quit (due to disagreement about reopening policy) is absurd and shameful.

Finally, the district has gone back and forth on their stance on mental health for ages. You claim that it is a priority to you when convenient, but that has not been reflected in the policy choice for returning to in-person instruction. Extent of screen-time is now being increased drastically for students remaining in distance format to a ludicrous amount. Emotional well-being for teachers and students in SEL Wednesdays is now being dismissed to add an extra day of in-person learning and 4-5 hours of screen-time for distance students. Acknowledgment of living and working (both professionally or academically) during a pandemic doesn't seem to matter to the district anymore either. And the district has still made no progress in making mental health resources or accommodations for students who experience mental illnesses (or even trauma from the current pandemic) known, accessible, or investing in culturally competent ones. Current students still relay not having the info that is emailed to their parents to them also, and are still unaware of the resources available to them either from the district or elsewhere. You just hired 2 new SAP counselors, and that's really great, but still many current students don't even know what a SAP counselor is, much less how to reach them. There is still no instagram or direct outreach to students via social media at all, especially not about mental health resources. Yes, there's a canvas, which is good that it exists, but many current students do not know that it exists, and the first thing a student in crisis is going to think about is never going to be "Oh, let me check my canvas module from 6 months ago for help". Students need and deserve more. Arguments have been made about increasing mental health by social interaction from in-person return, but that is only for returning groups, and even for students who do return, many questions remain about how much interaction there will actually be because of social distance and the specific cohorts, and people might not be in cohorts with people they would typically interact with anyway, defeating the purpose.

It is 2 months to the end of a difficult school year, when many students have just gotten used to a rhythm, and you are upending students and teachers lives, and not providing the adequate resources to adapt. This is unacceptable. This says (perhaps unintentionally) that everything you claimed to prioritize at the beginning of the year, doesn't actually matter to you. **Do not increase the screen-time for students remaining in distance-learning format. Do not get rid of SEL Wednesdays. Listen to students and teachers about their needs, and make mental health care accessible and known to students. It is the constant rush to reopen all year that has caused you to continue neglect these necessary concepts.**

REGARDING EQUITY:

Evidence suggests that the vast majority that are in favor of returning in-person are the white and affluent, and those have been the voices prioritized in conversation regarding return to in-person. When elementary reopened to in-person learning this past December, **to your own admission**, it was primarily white, affluent families returning, not families who belong to the most burdened groups. Under the terms of the legislation financially incentivizing returning to in-person instruction, the district must also bring back to school cohorts of students in all grades most harmed by the pandemic. These include "homeless and foster youth, English learners, chronically absent students and students without access to the internet and students with disabilities" (EdSource). You must center the voices of these groups in decision-making and where funds are allocated towards, which it seems has not been the case all year including now.

In addition to the aforementioned concerns about the changes you are making to distance learning, having a disparity between the students that are in person versus virtual will undoubtedly (unintentionally) cause teachers and yourselves to focus more heavily on the in-person learners than those online. In tandem to the inequities of race and socioeconomic status listed in the previous paragraph, this will surely exacerbate academic success rate and declining mental health for those populations.

Furthermore, for students who have been working during the pandemic to support their families, this shift in hours they will spend online will upend their schedules and availability that they've had all year, and places an undue burden on them and their families. This is another reason why it is crucial to maintain the schedule that has existed for students who chose to remain distance-learning for the remainder of the year.

REGARDING PRIORITIZATION OF ACTIVITIES:

Music and other performance arts forms deserve the same if not more attention and dedication from the district than sports have. Don't tell me that you haven't been listening to music to help you get through this pandemic while sports have been on hold. It is hypocritical to not provide them the support these hardworking students deserve for their efforts. If sports can practice, music students should get to rehearse and perform (safely). **Support your music and performing arts programs. Enough said.**

FINAL THOUGHTS:

I was a senior last year. I didn't get to have a senior prom or a graduation, a last concert, or any other senior activities. I didn't get to say goodbye to my teachers or classmates. I didn't know that when I drove away from campus March 13th, 2020 that it would be for the last time. I would never want to further inflict that upon this year's seniors, and every other student who has had to endure over a full-year of distance-learning. But the reality is, surveys taken from VUSD high schools show that only 60% of FTHS students would return in groups A and B, and that percentage drops down to around 50% for VHS and BHS. An Oxnard student put it best in this universal lesson regarding plans to return to in-person learning. "I think there's a big difference between wants and needs," said Casarez. "What we need is to better our situation with online learning." (VC Star).

It would do more harm than good to rush this reopening. I know all this information in this letter cannot be new to you. Please reconsider your decisions. For your stakeholders. It would be a severe mistake to return to in-person instruction now under the current plan.

Respectfully,
Aline