

**VENURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Declining Enrollment Committee**  
**June 13, 2022**  
**Minutes**

**Call to Order**

Ventura Unified School District held a teleconference meeting of the Declining Enrollment Committee on June 13, 2022. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chairperson James Forsythe.

**Roll Call**

Committee Members Present: Laura Nicholls, Kathleen Garcia, Claudia Caudill, Dan Nelson, Carol Peek, Lori Campbell, Heather Lacayo, Rosie Wilcox, Rebekah Acker, Mike Lazarus, Sabrena Rodriguez, Danielle Reyes, James Forsythe, Mike Owens

Absent: Todd Tyner, Mayra Vega-Manriquez, Cary Glenn, Mike Johnson, Velma Lomax, Stephanie Ortiz

VUSD Support Staff Present: Dr. Roger Rice, Dr. Rebecca Chandler, Marieanne Quiroz, Gina Wolowicz, Anna Campbell, Andrea Crouch, Maria Elizarras, Dr. Rene Rickard

**Call to Order**

Chairperson Forsythe called the meeting to order at 5:03pm and began with introductions and roll call. There were a few members having trouble connecting to the meeting, and Dr. Rice suggested moving on to item 5 on the agenda, a review of the last meeting, and waiting for those members to arrive in order to continue with the action item of approving the prior meeting minutes.

**Review of Meeting 4 – Dr. Rice, Superintendent**

A review of meeting 4 included: the impacts of declining enrollment, data provided to date, marketing strategies, and surveys approved by VUSD. The discussion of developing recommendations was also covered. Dr. Rice also reviewed the approach to developing recommendations – attracting and retaining students, and “right-sizing” – cutting costs and increasing efficiency.

**Approval of Minutes**

The Committee approved the minutes from the May 3, 2022 meeting by a vote of 12-0.

**Preliminary Survey Results**

Marieanne Quiroz shared the preliminary survey results, there were 2,786 responses received. Results shared: the current school the student attended, current student grade, if the student’s parent(s) planned to enroll them in VUSD for the 2022-23 school year, where those 176 who responded they were exiting the District planned to enroll, of the 34 who responded “Other” as their post-exit plans the most common responses provided were: family moving/leaving, student graduating, COVID-related, changing to homestead/homeschool, or changing to another school not listed. There were no questions about the date presented.

### **Developing a Set of Recommendations for the VUSD Board's Consideration**

The first approach was attracting/retaining more students, which included increasing school choice with School of Choice, intra-district transfers, and inter-district transfers. Compelling Programs such as: K-8 small learning communities (Sunset, Lemon Grove, ATLAS), Two-Way Immersion (Montalvo, Will Rogers, Ventura HS), AVID, FLEX Program, Career Technical Education (A-G CTE Courses, increased CTE pathways, Sa'Aliyas Ranch), and arts and music.

The second approach was increasing efficiency, which included: Strategic staffing reductions (certificated, classified, and management), Reducing or cutting costly programs (transportation, special programs, athletics), and considering the impacts of cuts to services in terms of VUSD's efforts to attract and retain students. In terms of efficiency, areas for consideration include: reduction in the number of school sites VUSD operates, adjusting boundaries to maximize staffing efficiency, energy costs, and strategic use of categorical funding.

Next, Dr. Chandler shared the information from the Capacity Reports created by the Facilities Department. The report is produced yearly and shows the capacity, the enrollment, the percentage of capacity utilized, and the school of choice spaces available for each school in the District. There were some questions about how the capacity numbers are calculated, which Dr. Chandler clarified.

### **Attracting and Retaining Students**

Chairperson Forsythe suggested the group focus on the first approach, attracting and retaining students, and save the second for another meeting. Dr. Rice clarified that the recommendations the Committee would present to the Board, would vary in specificity. Some recommendations could be more vague or conceptual, they did not have to be narrowly specific.

Chairperson Forsythe began brainstorming some Committee generated ideas for attracting/retaining students, the following were included:

- Expanding programs at the site level to provide enrichment and expanded daycare before and after school.
- Tracking school choice to account for shifting enrollment vs. growing the overall enrollment.
- Keeping robust school choice as a key component to maintaining enrollment.
- Lengthening the school day for kindergarten where it does not already exist.
- Maintaining strong partnerships with after school service providers and ensuring they are available throughout the district.
- Increased flexibility with skipping grades/student grade level advancement (reviewing the Board Policy/Admin Regs).
- Maximizing inter-district transfer opportunities – review policy and practice. Exploring opportunities for commuter parents who work in Ventura. Work to develop increased collaboration among district and VUSD schools to facilitate.
- Exploring the narratives in the community that detract from parents' desire to enroll students in VUSD.
- Investing in our facilities to ensure they are safe, attractive, and compelling for students. Exploring all possible funding sources for these efforts.
- Improve accessibility for non-classroom based options and improve the quality of the programs. These options should be both short and long term.
- Find ways to increase outreach to parents who are considering where to enroll their students by making sure that we market the diversity and quality of our programs.

- Be more intentional about district messaging around wanting to serve our community and its students.
- Advocate for more affordable housing with the City of Ventura. Work with developers, real estate agents, and HOAs to find ways to market to new families moving into newly developed and existing homes. Consider educational employee housing.
- Survey families to learn more about what services the city and/or the district can provide to families that would help families decide to stay in Ventura.
- Communicate with the city about potential fees/incentives that do not work towards increased affordability.

**Programs:**

- Exploring expansion and support for Two Way Immersion. Analyze programs to design more strategic enrollment plan – focus more on recruiting Spanish speakers into the programs.
- More fully develop the Flex Program so that it is more competitive with non-classroom bases charters.
- Update communications and marketing for our CTE programs.
- More fully develop and market AVID Pathways from TK-12
- Explore programs that work to challenge and engage higher achieving students (GATE, etc.)

**Other:**

- Explore, research why students are leaving to private and parochial schools – explore developing programs that address the desires and needs of this group of families who are prone to leaving these programs.
- Customer Service supported in action.
- Clearly communicate when mandates/rules are not within our control.
- Address issues associated with campus climate and culture to ensure parents and students feel safe and secure attending VUSD schools.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**Committee Comments/Requests**

Dr. Rice spoke about format of recommendations to the Board in the future, which would be a report that details the process used to develop the recommendations, along with a summary of the Committee's work. Specific recommendations in the domains suggested and/or in categories developed by the Board, as well as phrasing as recommendations, giving an example of the language, and developing a PowerPoint presentation to the Board.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7pm by Chairperson Forsythe.