VENTURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
January 5, 2021
MINUTES

Call to Order

In accordance with Governor Newsom's executive orders of social distancing due to the COVID-19, the Special Board of Education meeting was held on Tuesday, January 5, 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. The public streaming of the special Board meeting was made available through the Ventura Adult and Continuation, TDC Studios YouTube Channel. 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. /Business Services	Ms. Rebecca Chandler
General Counsel	Mr. Anthony Ramos

Adoption of Agenda

It was moved by Dr. Jerry Dannenberg, seconded by Mr. Matt Almaraz and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve 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 - Ron Halt Classroom

At 4:03 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 regarding the reopening of schools (in favor of returning to in-person learning and in favor of remaining on distance learning only), the need for additional in-person special education classes/small groups for all grade levels and to inquire about Cheers for Children.

Linda Duval	Ashley Pope	Anne Garo	Aleta Marquez
Su-Lin Rubalcava	Lauren Taluy	Melissa Ruiz	Aleta Marquez
Pat Stepler	Shauna Feingold	Kacie Edinger	Susie Vanderkooij
Bonnie Galindo	Vhs94	Sunshine & Dustin Cheek	Dustin & Katie Duran
Stephen Cavola	Lori Prehn	Colette Lipscomb	Kristen Hammer
Lorell Guzman	Austin Novstrup	Jennifer Nixon	Edward & Tobie Mitchell
Loretta Barbar	Alena Chauhan	Kacie Edinger	Matilda Dracula
Kevin Downey	Karen Rodrigues	Michelle Templin	Marisa Burrier

Christoph & Lauren Haar	Alison Paulson	Celia Churchhill	Jeana Van
Danielle Boshoff	Nicolembarks	Annette Walters	Mary Trapp
Erin Slack	Kimberly Wilkins	Melyssa & Spencer Noren	Dillon Koehn
Laura Powers	Karen Sher	Spencer Noren	Erika Bohl
Timur Taluy	Laura Achee		

CONFERENCE - SUPERINTENDENT

8.a **Reopening of School Update**

Superintendent, Dr. Roger Rice, gave an update on the reopening of elementary and secondary schools. Dr. Rice emphasized that the health and safety of all staff and students is the number one priority and shared the following recent developments:

1. Current COVID pandemic spike and its impacts locally:
    - Dr. Rice reviewed the Blueprint Matrix for Ventura County showing the case rate of 39.8 and positivity rate of 12.4% for the week ending December 19, 2020. In order to move back to the red tier, we need to decrease our rate of positivity to under 8% and maintain that for two weeks. Board Member Sabrena Rodriguez shared that during the meeting, new data was released showing that Ventura County has an increased case rate of 58.9 and an increased rate of positivity of 13.5% for the week ending December 26, 2020.

2. Operational capacity to sustain hybrid learning:
    - The pool of substitute teachers willing to teach in-person is inadequate.
    - Absences in support positions has stretched site operations thin.
    - Nutrition Services are currently without 25% of its workforce.

3. Governor's newly proposed "California Safe Schools Plan for All" has four parts:
    - Funding, which includes two billion dollars for the safe reopening of schools beginning in February; approximately $450 per student to a districts offering in-person instruction.
    - Safety and Mitigation, which includes frequent COVID-19 testing, required PPE, contact tracing and prioritizing vaccines for school personnel.
    - Oversight and Assistance, which includes a state multi-agency team that will provide hands-on support to help schools develop and implement their COVID-19 safety plans.
    - Transparency and Accountability, which incudes a statewide COVID-19 dashboard and a web based hotline.

Dr. Rice shared challenges that are facing local school districts:

- New testing requirements may not be feasible given the local capacity.
- Testing costs will be expensive and we are unsure if we will have the funding to support the cost.
- New testing invokes parental choice issues and collective bargaining issues.

Moving forward, Dr. Rice suggested to the Board that we maintain the current safety week Distance Learning only model for elementary school until February 1, 2021. This will allow us to get through the Pandemic surge including rebuilding Human Resources and Operation capacity and to learn more about the Governor's plan as it relates to testing and other regulation.

Dr. Rice shared information pertaining to the reopening of secondary schools. Currently, the state does not allow for waivers for secondary schools. Ventura County therefore must be in the red tier for two weeks before being allowed to reopen. Based on recent data, Dr. Rice shared a projected timeline for Ventura County to return to the red tier sometime around late March to early April 2021.

Dr. Rice suggested to the Board that we adjust the target reopening date of secondary school from January 26, 2021 to April 12, 2021. He added that, as always, VUSD will continue to monitor progress and changes, including the Governor's plan for re-opening.

Dr. Rice also suggested that we use Federal Stimulus dollars to expand small groups services with priorities to special education, English learners, homeless and foster students, academically struggling students and enrichment activities; to significantly expand summer school to address learning loss; and to expand tutorial options.

The Board of Education agreed that we should continue with Distance Learning only for elementary schools with a return to Hybrid learning on February 1, 2021. The Board also asked that we focus on increasing the amount of small groups we are offering making sure to target our high needs students and that we work to fulfill our Human Resource needs.

FUTURE BOARD ITEMS
None.

BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS - (No official action will be taken)
Trustee Rodriguez thanked Dr. Rice for calling this special board meeting so quickly in order to share information with families.

Trustee Almaraz thanked the principals for their hard work. He also addressed the public to keep the public comments coming and that they are shared with staff members.

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 7:30 p.m. to the next Regular Board Meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. on January 12, 2021.

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

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

APPROVED

Velma L. Lomax President

Roger Rice Secretary

[redacted]

From: Linda Duval [redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 5:55 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Re opening schools

Dear Dr. Rice and Board members

My name is Linda T. Duval and I am a retired ASB Secretary from Cabrillo Middle School.
I am writing to you in response to bringing the elementary students back to school January 11, 2021. I will make this very short and simple PLEASE DONT. I can not handle to loose another friend or my friends lose family members or loved ones. While I am 100% for educating our children and having them in school but not at the cost of this nasty COVID going around. Our health, our families, or friends deserve to live and not take the chance of being exposed to COVID. I know you have taken every precaution to keep them all safe but you can't. It is impossible and to put my daughter, my daughter n law, and friends in danger is inexcusable. We can't see each other or they can't see their grandmother etc because they have the added risk of being exposed and bringing it home and passing it on to their families and children.

Thank you for taking the time to read my request Sincerely, Linda T. Duval

Sent from my iPad

[redacted]

From: Ashley Pope [redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 6:06 PM
To: Public Comment
Cc: Rice, Roger
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public comment

Dear Board of Directors & Superintendant Rice,

Even with your direction months ago, there are several middle and high school special education students who have not had the opportunity to join a small cohort. The Special Education District Advisory Committee has expressed our firm belief and experience that IN PERSON special education is essential. Learning loss is real and the pressure on our kids is mounting. If you are considering closing K-5 in person, please consider leaving special education services in place, or even expanding them.

Please make sure that every SPED child in VUSD has access to small group instruction. It could be the difference between their lifelong ability to reach their fullest potential, or not.

Ashley Pope
Elmhurst SEDAC Representative

Sent via BlackBerry Hub+ Inbox for Android

[redacted]

From: Garo, Anne
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 7:02 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Reopening board meeting comment

Board Members and District,

In hearing the news we were having another board meeting to discuss reopening...it infuriates me!!! As a VUSD Elementary teacher and parent of a middle and high schooler, I am incredibly disappointed in our district. What was the purpose of getting a waiver if we aren't going to stay open in hybrid? What is there to discuss? We knew cases would increase during the holidays and winter months.

I think I will actually lose my mind if the district/board makes a decision tomorrow to shut Hybrid Elementary down for the rest of the school year and to not even open MS/HS for the rest of the school year! Kids need to be on campus and in school. Quit messing around with the parent's ability to work, secure daycare, and mental health of our students!

Furthermore, poor planning on the districts part but telling staff and families at 4:30 on Dec 18th that we were having a "covid safety" week this week...thanks for the last minute notice. Half of my hybrid students didn't have any of their language arts or math materials because I had expected to see them today.
OPEN UP ALL OF OUR SCHOOLS!!!!!!

Anne Garo
Montalvo Teacher and mom

Sent from Anne's iPhone

[redacted]

From: Aleta Marquez <gogirlnc[redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 7:30 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- HS # of kids on Hybrid

Hello everyone! I was wondering is there a set number of students that need to comeback to hybrid to make it worthwhile or even feasible for it to work. My son is a Senior he has elected to come back but he has realized that a majority of his friends are planning on staying on DL. He still is willing to come back but do you have a good idea of what percentage of kids want to comeback? Thank you for your transparency it is much appreciated! Aleta #87's mom ☺

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Sulin Rubalcava [redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 8:51 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Special Education - Small Group - Additional Support

Dear VUSD Board Members,

We are all definitely experiencing interesting times with COVID-19.

I understand and realize there are a lot of moving parts, work, and efforts in place to open the schools during this pandemic and I truly appreciate the efforts.

An item I want to express is how can we better support our students with special education and IEPs in person. I find it heartbreaking that we are currently providing service to these students during the 3 hour compressed time during the hybrid model. If I recall correctly, during a board meeting in August or September, it was approved by the board to start small groups for special education needs, so why aren't we entertaining small group services for kids with IEPs and 504s outside the standard 8 am to 11 am school time? Can we entertain providing in person services for these students? The students with special needs are falling far behind as time passes by and are the students that need the additional learning hours beyond the 3 hour time frame. I'm hoping we can consider a schedule for these students from 8 am to 11 am and stay after from 11 am to 12 pm to work with their Special Education Educator in person in a small group.

As a parent with a student with an IEP, I continue to feel that everything my child receives I have to strongly advocate for her which is no fun at all. I've been on the Special Education Advocacy committee since the inception and I'm still waiting to hear what the plan is in detail to best support these kids with the social distancing in mind.

Thank you for your time and I hope special education continues to be part of the district's conversations on a daily basis.

I look forward to a reply and I hope Special Education becomes a pivotal conversation.

Su-Lin Rubalcava
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Lauren Taluy [redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 9:05 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- January 5th Special Meeting

Dear Members of the Board,

I wanted to start by saying that I appreciate how hard the staff and teachers at our schools have worked to get our students back on campus. The happiness that being in the classroom has brought my two children is immeasurable. When it was announced that we would be having a Covid Safety Week, it was frustrating at first as we were eager to have the kids reunited with their teachers, however, it was an understandable precaution after the holidays. When this meeting was announced I couldn't help but worry that this wasn't a good sign. I am well aware that numbers in our community are high, however, the governor, Dr. Fauci, Dr. Levin and countless other professionals have analyzed the data and found that covid-19 is not spreading in our schools. The mental health issues and educational gaps our children are facing, however, are glaring and only getting worse. I truly hope today's meeting is about keeping our schools open for the hybrid program so that our children can have a small sliver of normalcy. They have given up everything already. Please don't take away in person school right when it was given back to them. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Lauren Taluy
Parent of a kindergardener and second grader at Pierpont Elementary

[redacted]

From: Melissa J Ruiz [redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 9:35 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Hybrid schedule

As a mother of two Elementary School students at Will Rogers and a pediatrician in our community, I support children going back to the hybrid schedule.

I believe the district has done an excellent job in ensuring safe schools. Our county is doing very well in terms of our testing capacity, especially compared to surrounding counties.

As long as the district has the staffing to reopen schools safely, I support the district doing so.

School is the essential business of childhood.

Thank you all for all the work that you've put into this.

Melissa Ruiz, MD

[redacted]

From: Aleta Marquez [redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 9:31 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Cheers for children

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Cheers for children 🎄How did that go? Did you do gift cards? Didn't see anything about that. Thanks Aleta

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Pat Stepler [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 8:37 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopening Schools

School Board and District Staff,

My child is a 1st grader at Poinsettia, and began the hybrid program in Dec. I was initially hesitant with the change, but the school was organized and followed all safety protocols. My child LOVED being back on campus. She LOVED the interaction with the other students, she LOVED the in-person time with her teacher. She was excited to go to school and learn again.
Here are my concerns:

1. To let a 6 year old experience this option, and then to take it away is devastating to her socially and emotionally. Children this young do not understand all of these changes, and it is cruel to prepare them one way and then take it away with minimal notice or preparation.
2. As working parents in essential jobs, the constant change in the school hours is harmful to our jobs. As parents we are having to adapt our work meeting and hours on a weekly to bi-weekly basis to meet the school schedule.

The district email on Dec. 18th stated that being on campus was safe for students. Please return them to the hybrid model as soon as possible for the benefit students.

Get Outlook for iOS

[redacted]

From: Feingold, Shauna
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 8:48 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Returning to in person learning

Please remain in distance learning till the end of the school year. It is counterproductive and confusing for our children and students to continue to alter and disrupt their schedules. We should allow our teachers to focus on distance learning. While we continue to change our platforms it is detrimental to the stability and the progress of our student's learning. Oscillating between distance and hybrid takes time from our teachers that could be spent on teaching our students.

Shauna Feingold
Montalvo Elementary School Health Technician

Ventura Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

[redacted]

From: Kacie Edinger [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 9:24 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- hybrid schooling must continue

All schooling must continue for the elementaries, it is so important for the development of their minds and social skills. All teachers that are worried about school continuing need to retire. You would not expect a grocery not to open, this is the same case. You are putting young students in jeopardy who do not have the perfect home life to go home to, schools must reopen and the hybrid must continue, shame on you for trying to take this away from parents and student! Just shameful!

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Vanderkooij, Susie
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 9:30 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Special Education Students

Thank you Board members for being here, and for being such a support to all of us in the VUSD community. My 16 year old Autistic son is struggling with DL, he has increased aggressive behaviors, and there is a feeling of unrest in our home. I have a 12 year old daughter to think about and she doesn't even want to be in the house any longer....The constant changing tides of school re-opening and not re-opening is taking a huge negative toll on us all. His desperate need to be physically among his peers is heart breaking....We are suffering. I know you are already doing all you can to open up even small groups for Special ed, I only ask you continue this path and consider how much we (special ed families) as a community have to lose. At times I fear he will just take off, and run away. Other times I am so proud of his ability to cope and re-focus his version of the future.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment....

Susie VanderKooij , ParaEducator
Ventura Unified School District

Elmhurst Elementary School
[redacted]

For the future of every student

Ventura Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

[redacted]

From: MB Galindo [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 9:53 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- VUSD Board meeting 12/5/2021 - Reopening of schools

From March 2020 through June 2020, we adapted our lives and made education standard compromises for the greater good as we waited to learn about the novel coronavirus that had made its way from the animal kingdom to humans. We did our part.

August 2020 we accepted that we needed to wait for the state and county to give our schools the green light to open knowing it was out of VUSD hands and ushered in a distance learning format.

September 2020 the distance learning format was not adapted for TWI. As the program went on we were met with failures to meet learning delays and difficulties for my daughter. Neither child progressed academically as their Spanish language acquisition regressed rapidly. My children began to drown socially and emotionally as academics became a losing battle - my own lifesavers thrown to them to keep them afloat as they watched their mom succumb to mental health struggles and job failures.

October 2020 & November 2020 we got the okay to open only to find out VUSD had done nothing to properly staff and assign classrooms per family preference based on when hybrid got the green light. Preparation for not only the campus but class assignments and staff should have been done as soon as the hybrid program was approved. VUSD families met our leaders at the base of the mountain ready to climb only to be told by those leaders the climb was canceled because they failed to staff it.

December 2020 after more delay, we finally open to hybrid and there was light in my children's eyes again...hope even that distance learning saga was over and they would get some normalcy back after all these months. Both were excited about about school for the first time since March. They were happy. We had forgotten what it was like to be happy about school and enjoy school.

Here we are in January 2021 and I am terrified over what this meeting holds - my daughter needs support services for reading and speech delays that she is not getting; my son's speech delay returning because he is not getting support services; my daughter dropped to the ground and cried out in devastation yesterday when I told her she didn't get to go to school on Thursday and all I could do is hold her as she cried; my gentle son became angry and aggressive when he was told he wouldn't get to go to school this week. They continue to be stalled out academically and their Spanish language acquisition is not developing. My kids need to be back in school.

With much fear and trepidation,
Bonnie Galindo, Montalvo TWI parent of a 1st and 4th grader.
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: vhsc94 [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:01 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopening Schools

With numbers and deaths way up I dont feel its safe to open schools right now! We need to keep the kids and staff safe , and not bring covid home to families! We should stay home for the month of January! We need numbers to go down before considering going back on campus! Please make the right choice to keep everyone safe!

Thank you!

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device

[redacted]

From: Sunshine Cox [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:01 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- returning to campus for VUSD

Good morning and happy New Year,

Please note that while I am aware of the difficulties facing our community in learning to move forward with COVID-19 as it isn't going anywhere, I am also incredibly aware of the mental and educational setbacks our students are suffering at being withheld from properly attending school and unable to compete in high school athletics.

Parents who are worried about sending their kids back to school on campus should be allowed to opt for distance learning. Those of us who wish to send their children to learn properly on campus with their teachers available for real time help ought to be able to opt in instead of being overruled against our will.

Our students, particularly our student athletes and seniors, are being done a grave disservice by VUSD, CIF and the state of CA by trying to lock these students up at home. We are all finding ways around the lockdowns by forming pandemic pods, paying for private tutors (our son has never needed tutoring previously but needs help this year so as not to fall far behind with what is passing for "education" in the distance learning model), signing our student athletes up for club and travel sports so they can remain competitive in their fields of athletics, and more. If you want them to stay home, give them something to stay home for otherwise they, and us parents, will continue to seek out ways to round out their education and athletics. They cannot remain competitive for college if they're the only students in the country unable to play on a level playing field.

Our son is a sophomore at VHS. He was previously an A/B student and active in cheer and dance. Since March 13th, when our children had their education and athletics stolen from them, he has mostly As and Bs but we have had to hire 2 private tutors so he doesn't fall behind in math and physics. He had a job where he could practice Spanish with the staff but that has also been taken from him as restaurants are being unfairly targeted in the latest round of closures. He has said to us on more than one occasion, "I'm not really learning anything. I am just trying to keep up, get good grades and mark attendance. Don't ask me what I'm retaining because I'm not. I am just passing time until they are done jerking us around."

Enough is enough. We have been doing this distance "learning" for nearly a full year. The district and it's staff work for the taxpayers. It is time you all remember that YOU work for US, not the other way around. If teachers are so afraid to return to the classroom, why are they dining out? Why are they traveling to other states for fun? Why are they at the grocery store instead of hiding in their homes having necessities delivered? Why are they attending protests in large groups?

VUSD sends out so many surveys, VUSD emails so many messages in the guise of being concerned, but it all feels like lip service. You aren't giving any real consideration to anyone who doesn't toe the line of the propaganda that is being pushed. It does not matter how many surveys you send out, you aren't listening to all of us. You are only listening to those who are feeding into the hysteria and fear. Today's meeting is just to say, "Oh, we tried to bring everyone back to campus but...(insert multitude of excuses here)."

Some of us know you are just playing along to try to placate the masses so they keep supporting your needless fundraisers and vote for your bonds that aren't actually funding anything useful since all of our kids are at home. Our son said, "Maybe you should invoice the school district for the tutoring you wouldn't have to pay for if they would just let us come back to school." A fifteen-year old is aware of your ineptitude and it is becoming increasingly difficult to lie to him and tell him that his school is just looking our for his best interests. If you were interested in the best interests of all of your students, you would give them a choice between the distance and in-person models.

Best regards,

Sunshine & Dustin Cheek
Parents of a VHS sophomore

[redacted]

From: Stephen Cavola [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:09 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- COVID

We are parents of two children that attend VUSD at Montalvo Elementary, and whom chose the hybrid learning model when offered while Ventura County was in the red tier. At this time we are asking that VUSD return to distance learning full time until the virus is under control. During the two week period that VUSD was open in December it was proven that kids that were exposed to COVID were going to be sent to school, and staff that has been exposed to COVID were going to go to work. All precautions that are in place to prevent this was not going to work. The basic truth is there is not enough funding to do the job safely, thus the only alternative is distance learning. At this time we need to think of the safety of our students, teachers, staff and all their families.

Sincerely,
The Cavola Family

[redacted]

From: Lori Prehn [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:14 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Special Board of Education Meeting 1/5/21 - Reopening of Schools

Please do not rush to reopen schools. Take a data-driven thoughtful approach to open schools. Yes, I want my kids to go back to school. But the safety and health of the community is a top priority.
Lori Prehn

[redacted]

From: Lipscomb, Colette
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:21 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: public comment submission

Public comment submission from VUSD Elementary Teacher:

I teach very young children in VUSD and I love my job. But I do fear for my safety and the safety of the children and families I serve. Young children do not have the higher level thinking skills required to understand and consistently practice social distancing in the classroom. With the very high transmission rates in Ventura County, the probability that my students and I will become infected has greatly increased. I am asking VUSD to stay on DL until Ventura County is in the red tier.

Colette Lipscomb, TK Teacher, M. Ed. Educational Psychology/Counseling
Ventura Unified School District

Loma Vista Elementary School
[redacted]

For the future of every student

[redacted]

From: Kristen Swarts [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:21 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Jan 5th meeting

To whom it may concern:

I'd like to express my concern with the reopening of schools and going back to hybrid learning at this time.

Our community hospitals are being inundated with patients, of all ages, dealing with covid. Community spread is the main cause, because our community members are not doing what is needed to be done to keep themselves and others safe. Our ICUs are at capacity, hospitals are triaging patients and starting to ration care to those that appear they are able to save. The hospital system will break if our community doesn't do something.

Do I want my daughter to return to school? Of course. But, do I want it to be at the expense of others health? No. The people in our community have proven, for almost a year now, that they cannot do what needs to be done to have our kids in school safely. They don't want to follow simple instructions that allow our kids the opportunity to go back to school, and not worry if they will get sick or will bring covid back home to their parents and loved ones.

Although I feel like the safety precautions you have implemented are good, gathering with those that are not following the state/county recommended guidelines is something that I would prefer not happen at this time. (Not to mention with the development of this new, more contagious, strain of covid that is out there.)

I hope you take the health of our greater community and hospital systems into account as you make your decision, and discuss tonight.

Sincerely,
Kristen Hammer

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[redacted]

From: Lorell Guzman [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:25 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Schools opening

Hello as a very concerned parent, I am not okay with sending my child back to school with all the Covid cases rising and then to top it off there is a new stain of the virus that is more contagious and effecting children more. My child is enrolled in the hybrid model and I am not comfortable sending her back to school in these conditions. I understand that the schools are taking precautions but there have already been positive cases at my child's school. I feel the cases are going to get worse because of people traveling for the holidays. So I would hope that the school board takes all this into consideration and they keep the kids and staff safe and keep the kids on Distance Learning.

[redacted]

From: Austin Novstrup [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:36 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public Comment - Board of Education Special Meeting January 5th, 2020

Members of the Board of Education,

I am writing to express my discontent and grave concern regarding the actions of this board and district staff over the last month. While I appreciate the difficulty and complexity of continuing to educate the children of our community during the current public health crisis. The mission of the district is to educate but the mission cannot come before the health and safety of the students, teachers, staff, parents and community.

In the past two months the conditions in our region, county and within this district have devolved dramatically. I truly cannot understand how the district could have assessed the conditions this fall and determined that it was not safe to return to the classroom and perform the same assessment of the conditions last month and come to an alternate determination. The county is reporting nearly a thousand new cases and 10 new deaths daily. Why risk contributing this already dire situation?

The safety measures put in place mitigate risk but do not eliminate it. Within a week of opening our local school, Sunset Elementary a positive case was reported on campus. Disturbingly a notice was issued to everyone affiliated with the school that the case had been reported but given the definition of close contact no further notifications would be made even to students who sat in the same classroom as the student. How could the district possibly know if the safety measures are working if testing isn't performed within cohort after potential exposure?

The hybrid format barely increases the hours of education provided to students. The roll-out in December essentially negated an entire for week of education for my daughter who elected to remain in the distance learning format. In addition, quarantine protocols reduce teacher availability reducing the quality of the education provided in the classroom.

We all want this crisis to end. We all want kids to go back to school. But what we want to do and what we need to do are very different things. Please, reconsider this course of action. Objectively weigh the risks and the benefits. The days immediately before us are dark but your decision can prevent suffering and death or cause it.

Sincerely,
Austin Novstrup

[redacted]

From: Jennifer Nixon [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 10:54 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- In person

Hi,

Strongly feel to start in person again with the same safety measures used in previous weeks

I've never seen my child more happy than to be in school in a classroom , in person, with classmates

This is just the better option in my humble opinion for our children with along with those that feel the same way.

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Tobie [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 11:04 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- School Reopening Public Comments

Dear Dr. Rice & VUSD Board Members:

We are grateful VUSD applied for the K-5 waiver and got the hybrid students back into the classroom in December. With only four in-person sessions, we noticed marked improvement in mood, effort, and interest in school in our children.

Given the holiday season, spread of community infection and other factors, we understand the reasons for implementing the Covid safety week. Thank you for doing that. In your discussion of school reopening tonight, please make EVERY effort to resume in-person hybrid instruction on January 11th. Please do not extend district-wide distance learning. Declining grades, poor attendance and unreturned homework assignments are evidence that this model is unsustainable and could have lasting impacts on all students.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Edward & Tobie Mitchell
Parents of K & 2nd grade VUSD hybrid students

[redacted]

From: Loretta Barbar [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 11:25 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- today's board meeting and opening of schools

It is such an unfortunate situation we are all in, but there must be better solutions for keeping our students engaged, learning, and excited about school.

I have a high school senior at Buena so to say we are upset about her last year is an understatement. One of the most unfortunate parts is the lack of school sports as this keeps many students engaged and wanting to work hard in school in order to participate. Plus, the physical exercise and conditioning is vital to their well being. To take all of that away, especially when it is their final year in high school, is devastating. I know it isn't easy to come up with a solution for this to keep everyone safe, but it would be nice to find some way to provide the physical outlet and teamwork that comes along with it. We all know that sports offers so many life lessons besides just wins and losses.

Additionally, why is it that VUSD has the model of only being on zoom such a limited amount of time each week when other districts are doing things differently? I have heard students in Camarillo are in class via zoom very similarly to what they would be in class if in person, and a friend has a middle school student in Conejo district that is in a cohort that attends school 4 days per week, 3 hours per day. I spoke to an AP teacher in Thousand Oaks who mentioned 4 days per week zoom for 75 minutes, 2 classes were lecture style and 2 days were putting students in groups and keeping them engaged and working together in breakouts to keep their testing scores as high as when in person. The private schools like Assumption and Missionary seem to have success with having in person class 5 days per week.

I think our high school students who were in class for about an hour 5 days per week plus a BARK class, who are now on zoom only 2 hours per week per class are suffering.

I hope in the coming weeks there can be a better solution for engaging our high school students as they finish their career, and try to be prepared for college.

Your friend in real estate,

Loretta Barbar
Real Estate Agent
RESOURCE REAL ESTATE
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Alena Sergejev [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 11:29 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Opening school for hybrid

I feel strongly that the schools can do a good job of distancing and staying safe In The hybrid mode. I feel strongly that schools should reopen for hybrid.
Alena chauhan

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Kacie Edinger [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 12:00 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- School is an essential business

Hybrid school is as essential as target, they do not get the excuse to work virtually. It puts children at risk because of baseless fear from adults. Those adults need to teach only the students that have parents that can stay at home. Those parents are the most fear mongering. Most parents can not afford to work from home or get the option in California, the country's most unaffordable state. this is already a stretch to ask parents to zoom at all.

This is unacceptable. Do better.

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Dracula, Matilda
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 12:12 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Public Comment for Special Board Meeting on 1/5/2021

Hello, members of the board,

In deciding whether it is safe to open schools, I would like to make sure the following information is shared and on record:

1. A new strain of COVID has been identified in SoCal. It may be up to 70% more contagious than the previous strain, and it may also infect children at a higher rate. What had previously worked for risk mitigation with COVID may very well not be effective with this new strain.

2. According to a study by the NASUWT, a Teachers' Union in the UK, infection rates of teachers were over 300% higher than average, even with safety measures in place.

3. As long as we are in purple, high community spread not only endangers kids, families, and staff; it also ensures that we will not have enough substitutes to support when teachers and staff are sick, caring for loved ones, or quarantined. Our hospitals and ICUs are full. VUSD needs to respect and protect the health care workers and the community we serve by doing everything we can to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including remaining closed while we are in the purple tier.

Thanks for your time,

Matilda Dracula
[she/her]
Sheridan Way Elementary, Ventura USD
3rd Grade

Ventura Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

[redacted]

From: Downey, Kevin
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 12:25 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Public Comment for 1/5/21 Special Board Meeting @ 4pm

Dear VUSD Board,

I humbly request that you read this email during today's special board meeting, since we are not being allowed to come and speak for 3 minutes like usual. It takes me about 2 minutes to read, but I have bolded the main ideas if you must summarize instead of reading them in their entirety.

Good evening,

As a high school teacher for VUSD, **I am writing to appeal to the board's commitment to provide safe, healthy, and high performing schools for our students.** While I miss interacting with my students the way I used to and can't wait to teach in-person again, **opening in a hybrid setting is not safe or healthy for our students and staff at this time, especially with the number of cases going up, with the new strain that is starting to spread, and with the vaccines not yet available.**

I hope parents understand that **opening secondary schools is much more complicated and potentially dangerous than opening elementary classrooms**, since we cannot contain a small number of students into one cohort throughout the day. **Teachers will need to continue teaching the way we have in distance learning, since part of the class will still be logging in with Zoom, so the instruction will not be that different (UNLESS, the kids logging in on Zoom are "left behind" and lose an hour of live instruction with their teachers).**

There is also no requirement to clean desks in between periods, and students will not get to see their teacher's faces anymore. **Teachers will need to wear masks, which not only obstructs the clarity of the teacher's speech in the room and in the zoom, but also blocks the teacher's facial expressions.** As teachers continue to develop, refine, and improve the way we teach in our current distance learning model, **shifting to a hybrid environment will not improve the quality of our teaching; in some ways, it will minimize the access that students have to their teachers,** and I don't know how that is going to help our students.

Since VUSD cares about our students and staff, **I implore you to maintain your commitment to safe, healthy, and high performing schools for our students by waiting until the vaccine is widely available before we open up secondary schools.**

Thank you for your time, for your leadership, and for all that you have done and continue to do in these trying times.

For the future of EVERY student.

Sincerely,

Kevin Downey
Social Science/English/Choir Teacher
[redacted]

Buena High School
[redacted]

For the future of every student

Ventura Unified SCHOOL DISTRICT | BUENA HIGH SCHOOL

[redacted]

From: Rodrigues, Karen
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 12:32 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Public comments regarding the reopening of schools during COVID 19

Dear VUSD Board of Education,

I understand that you have a special meeting today. I will keep my points short because you have much on your plate.

- Please keep us all safe. We have no business in classrooms when numbers are increasing.
- Please understand the burden of the switching back and forth. It places undue stress on students and teachers alike.
- Returning to classrooms will not fix what is problematic. It will only create different problems.
- Most teachers & students are finally becoming accustomed to the distance learning.
- Please feel free to email me if you have questions about this concern.
- Vaccines are close at hand.
- LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE MODIFICATIONS THAT ARE NOT BLACK AND WHITE.

The burden and pressure from both sides is heavy. I implore you to keep safety first in your decision.

Sincerely,

Karen Rodrigues

Karen Rodrigues, Theater Director
Buena High School

[redacted]

For the future of every student

[redacted]

From: Michelle Templin [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 12:34 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- School closure

My personal opinion is strong for the schools to not open until people are vaccinated. It's unfair to put staff and children at risk when there is already other education options. It doesn't make sense to me to conduct in person learning when there is such a risk. This virus won't last forever and life will go on. Let's protect our loved ones and play it safe now to avoid future loss. Kids are resilient and they can and will get through this if we could all do our part and be safe at home.

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Marisa Burrier [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 12:49 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- hybrid learning

Good afternoon! I'm an elementary school teacher in the District and wanted to advocate for our students returning to hybrid learning next Monday, the 11th. (I know you briefly read public comments, so I have written my letter to make that easier for you.)

I have personally had a COVID positive student in my classroom (parent notified me), and neither I, nor my students got it. We are doing a stellar job of social distancing and mask wearing, and guess what? It works!

Our students thrived during the short 2 weeks (4 days) together. I had students who turned in little or no assignments during distance learning, finally got work done and participated and engaged in learning. We have established a great routine and are ready to continue our education journey!

We all know that most students learn best when learning in person, in a small group, which is exactly what hybrid allows. Yes, our students are behind and hybrid learning is a chance to start getting back on track and making up the gaps we all see.

Finally, yes, our COVID numbers have increased, but we all know that is NOT because of schools. Closing our campuses will not reduce the increased numbers we have seen, it won't keep people from gathering without masks and not following social distancing protocols. We have proved our system at school works, and it's safe.

PLEASE allow hybrid learning to continue. Our students need this opportunity.

Marisa Burrier

[redacted]

From: LOREN HAAR [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 1:01 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Board meeting tonight

My husband and I support the complete and immediate reopening of schools.

With the better understanding of the virus the medical community now has and the vaccines already being administered, we feel the time has come to resume—with prevention protocols in place of course.
Christoph and Loren Haar

[redacted]

From: vhsc94 [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 1:04 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopening Schools!

Please keep all schools online only for the month of January! Re-evaluate when the numbers are better and deaths are down! We can't be contributing to more spread in our community!!!

Thank you!
Alison Paulson

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device

[redacted]

From: Celia K. C. Churchill [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 1:19 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public comment for board meeting 1/5/21

As a VUSD parent and community member, I am disappointed in the decision-making processes of VUSD and the board regarding hybrid learning.

The board promised in the fall that they would not consider opening in person until January, two weeks after holiday gatherings were over. Even then, there was no guarantee. Decisions were supposed to be based on the case numbers and available treatments. As we try to teach our kids, logic and critical thinking were supposed to inform our choices.

Instead, VUSD submitted a waiver application at the last possible moment of red tier, when everyone knew we were going back into purple tier. How could this application have possibly been made in good faith, knowing that case numbers were rising?

Today, the case numbers and ICU bed load are worse than they were in the summer, when the board decided to do distance learning only. The vaccine is still months away. Please, explain the logic of resuming hybrid learning now. It doesn't make sense for our community at this time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Celia Churchill

--

Celia K. C. Churchill, Ph.D.

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 1:28 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Schools stay open!

My name is Jeana Van and I have 2 kids in VUSD at Juanamaria. Please keep the hybrid learning option open. The kids need it! If extending the closure is because of lack of resources, I would gladly take the test to be able to sub and help out where I can and I am sure others would too.

Jeana Van

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Danielle Boshoff [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 1:30 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Re open schools

>
> VUSD , I have a 4th grader at Juanamaria . She thrived the 4 half days she got to return to campus before the break . She loved it and was so happy . I strongly feel that the kids are safe on campus and need to be in person . Please re open . Our kids need it so badly . Their mental health is important and their learning .
> Thank you , Juanamaria parent
>
> Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: nicolembarks[redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 1:40 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Bird meeting comment

I am a mother with 2 boys in elementary. We are doing the "hybrid" learning right now and I am extremely pleased with how it's going. My 4th grader is not thriving doing zoom schooling. He struggled with Math and it's extremely hard to teach things like that over a zoom call when they can't check what you are doing wrong. With only 2 weeks of them in school that we had in December, he walked out of school, mask on, and said "that was the best day ever!"
Children are starved for any kind of socialization, even if it means being 6ft apart and barely any recess. It's speaks volumes for a kid who wasn't a huge school fan to think school is amazingly fun, especially because we all know it in deed is anything but fun right now with all these restrictions and new rules.
I know our numbers for this virus are very scary in our county, but I feel so safe with them at school, safer than a public playground or at the mall!

Please don't take this away from the kids that need in school learning.

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Annette Walters [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:02 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Reopening of schools

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Dr. Rice and Members of the Board,

Since I am not sure what exactly is going to be discussed at this special board meeting, I am having a hard time with where to start with my public comment.

I am a mother of two VUSD students, one in 2nd grade at Juanamaria and one in 6th grade at Balboa. What I want you to know is that the 4 days that my 2nd grader had of in person learning filled him up more than I could have possibly imagined! He was excited. He was happy to be back even if it was different. He talked a ton about all the fun things they were doing in class and what fun, creative activities that the staff were working to provide while they were outside. He was a different kid. I promise I am not trying to be dramatic about this. There was a very noticeable difference about him.

Now, on the flip side, my 6th grader is constantly frustrated, has a bad attitude (and yes, I imagine lots of middle schoolers naturally have bad attitudes), wants to quit trying at school and often tells me he can't do any better until he is back in school. I know the logistics for getting secondary back in person will be hard. I know we also don't have permission for secondary to be back in person yet. But I can tell you that my 6th grader isn't having a great time of things. Middle school is hard. Middle school via Zoom is even harder.

I guess I am telling you both sides of my experience right now to implore you to do everything possible to keep our elementary students in Hybrid learning and please do everything in your power to get secondary back! The difference between my child who has had some in person learning and my child who hasn't has just reaffirmed my belief that all students need to be back in classrooms as soon as possible. For their educational success and, more importantly, for their social/emotional well being.

Kindest regards,

Annette Walters
Director, Sonshine Preschool
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Trapp, Mary
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:09 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Re-oping

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

I have been teaching for many (30+) years. This is the first time I have ever worried about my health or safety by coming to school. I love my job and miss the kids terribly. However, with the way the numbers are going, and seeing what is happening at our hospitals, I do not feel safe returning to the classroom to teach in person. My daughter is a nurse on the Covid floor here at CMH and lives at home. I worry about the safety of families I work with . Going back on Monday does not seem like the responsible thing to do at this time. I am asking that we delay reopening until we are in the red tier. Thank you.
Mary Trapp

[redacted]

From: Erin Slack [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:16 PM
To: Public Comment
Cc: Rice, Roger
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Resume Hybrid Instruction on January 11th as Planned

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Dr. Rice & VUSD Board Members:

My son was overjoyed when I told him that VUSD had obtained a waiver to return to in-person instruction. Even though he only received 4 days of in-person instruction in December, I could tell that his love for learning was beginning to return. I completely understand the COVID safety week but he was crushed when I told him that he would have to do one more week of completely online learning.

I urge you to continue as planned with the hybrid instruction beginning again on January 11th. The CDC Director has emphasized that we should be utilizing data to make decisions about in-person instruction and that K-12 schools can and should be operating in-person because of the low risk of transmission in the school environment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uV5vCDyo4YU&feature=emb_logo

Governor Newsom has also recently released a new plan and funding to encourage more schools to return to in-person instruction.

https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/12/30/governor-newsom-unveils-californias-safe-schools-for-all-plan/

CDPH has consistently said that schools that have already opened can remain open, no matter what the case rate is. Our schools have done a tremendous job of preventing outbreaks on their campuses, as a result of the prevention and mitigation measures they have put in place. To provide some insight, Ventura County Public Health identified a total of 525 COVID cases among school staff and students during the month of December (we also track students and staff who are not participating in in-person instruction). However, of those, only 18 were a result of on-campus exposures, in other words, most cases are a result of community transmission.

The risk of transmission in the school environment is low and the benefit is substantial. Please make the right decision and continue plans for re-opening for in-person instruction next week.

Thank you.

Erin Slack
Parent of a 1st Grader at Montalvo

[redacted]

From: Kimberly Wilkins [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:25 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- School reopening

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Reopening schools in any capacity at this time seems like an invitation to the families of our students that it's ok to return to normal activities. That is hard to justify when Covid numbers are rapidly increasing and there is a new, more contagious strain added to the mix.

[redacted]

From: Melyssa Noren [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:26 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Voice of Ventura's Youth

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Today we asked the elementary students of Ventura their thoughts on returning to school. We know you have heard from all of us parents, but now it's time to hear from them!!

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B00n38RrJLLIFYb-tNwqhKUD9U99E1s_/view?usp=drivesdk

Thank you,
Melyssa and Spencer Noren

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Dillon Koehn [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:29 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Going back to school

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

While, like most every kid, I hate online school more than in person(and I can say this confidently for not only me but also speaking for others), you must still look at the facts first. Currently in Southern California there is 0% of space left in ICU, we are at the absolute maximum and maybe even pushing it. We are not handling the virus well and it is still dangerous. This is coupled onto the fact that children are super spreaders and are even more super spreaders potentially due to their(no offense) stupidity in handling the virus and likely improper conduct considering it. The risk of going back to school for a well informed and behaved child who has a good immune system is still high, for children who aren't well informed or equipped, for children that would not follow proper conduct, or for children such as myself who have an abhorrent immune system, the risk is one that should not be taken for the safety of the school, of the children, of those who interact with them, and for the country as a whole

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Dillon Koehn [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:29 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: Going back to school

While, like most every kid, I hate online school more than in person(and I can say this confidently for not only me but also speaking for others), you must still look at the facts first. Currently in Southern California there is 0% of space left in ICU, we are at the absolute maximum and maybe even pushing it. We are not handling the virus well and it is still dangerous. This is coupled onto the fact that children are super spreaders and are even more super spreaders potentially due to their(no offense) stupidity in handling the virus and likely improper conduct considering it. The risk of going back to school for a well informed and behaved child who has a good immune system is still high, for children who aren't well informed or equipped, for children that would not follow proper conduct, or for children such as myself who have an abhorrent immune system, the risk is one that should not be taken for the safety of the school, of the children, of those who interact with them, and for the country as a whole

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Laura Powers [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:30 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Return to school

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hello,
I have a 7th grader at Anacapa and a freshman at Ventura High. I would be supportive of returning to in person learning. Although I am one to be extremely cautious with safety right now I feel like the schools will do a good job of keeping the kids safe.
Thanks,
Laura Powers

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Karen Sher [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:32 PM
To: Public Comment
Cc: sabrena@sbcglobal.net; Rice, Roger
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Public comment

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear VUSD Board Members and Superintendent Rice,

I am currently listening to the VC Supervisors special meeting regarding COVID. I'm sure you're listening too, but if not, there are only two ICU beds left in the entire county. They are struggling with staffing. Running low on oxygen. Patients waiting in ERs for hours at a time. Not enough ambulances. Crisis mode is impending. VC Public health say it's a very scary situation.

There are no good choices, but the safest choice for students, faculty, staff and the community is to keep campuses closed and distance learning in place.

OUHSD will be in Distance Learning through at least April.

Thank you for all you do!

In unity,
Karen Sher
OUHSD Trustee

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This is a staff email account managed by Oxnard Union High School District.
This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed.
If you have received this email in error please notify the sender.

[redacted]

From: Spencer Noren [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:37 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Comment

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

I would like to make a public comment at today's 4:00 meeting.

Spencer Noren

Sent from my iPhone

[redacted]

From: Erika Bohl [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:49 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Re-opening of school - special board meeting on Jan 5

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

To whom it may concern,

Let me begin by expressing deep gratitude for the hard work and agility of our educators, staff, subs, and all of you who make Ventura unified public schools go round. THANK YOU.

I'm writing to voice support for extending distance learning until Ventura meets criteria agreed upon in consult with our local public health officials for two reasons.

(1) We are in the middle of a dangerous surge, and with the end of these abnormal times within sight (thank you, scientists, for efficacious vaccines), we must do everything in our power to save every life we can. (This extends beyond education, of course, but let's stay on topic...)

(2) With the deep entrenchment of COVID-19 in our community, prolonging distance learning is the best way to minimize disruption to our children's lives. As increasing numbers of educators and staff are required to quarantine/isolate due to exposure, symptoms, or a positive test, the resources available to fill the gaps left by those educators and staff will be depleted (if they aren't already). In these certain and unpredictable times, let's give our children something certain and predictable: a distance learning schedule with their regular teacher.

We won't be distance learning forever, but let's do it now so we can get through this surge as safely as possible. We can do this, Ventura!

Thanks for considering,
Erika Bohl
(mom of a kinder and 3rd grader at Will Rogers)

[redacted]

From: Timur Taluy [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 3:07 PM
To: Rice, Roger; Rodriguez, Sabrena; Moran, Jackie; Almaraz, Matt; Dannenberg, Jerry; Lomax, Velma; Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Keep our kids safe; Keep our kids in school

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

President Rodriguez, Vice President Moran, Members of the Board, & Superintendent Rice,

I understand that you are having a meeting and not allowing public comment, so please take this e-mail as public comment and read it aloud in your meeting in accordance with the laws and your procedure.

Your decisions affect the safety of our children. School is the safest place for children. Making a decision to **give parents the choice** to keep our children in school and increase those hours is the ***only*** right decision for our community. Staffing issues can be resolved with organizational realignment and emergency hiring in the job pool of so many who have lost their jobs.

CNN has reported that mental health is going to be the biggest effect of the pandemic in 2021 (1), school provides a safe place and access to counseling.

School is the safest place for children.

The Wall Street Journal reported an "increase, or at least a steady flow, of severe child abuse and neglect—infants beaten and killed, and children admitted for drug ingestion or falling out of windows" becasue "there has been a dramatic drop in child-abuse reports as teachers, day-care workers and others who are required by state law to notice and flag abuse are no longer routinely around children." (2)

School is the safest place for children.

Dr Fauci said "If you look at the data, the spread among children and from children is not really very big at all, not like one would have suspected," and "Close the bars and keep the schools open," on ABC (3). Our Governor closed the bars, now do your part and open the schools.

School is the safest place for children.

Our society relies on school not only for education, but among other things to keep our children safe and fed. If you elect to close our schools you are turning your back on the mental health and safety of children in our community.

I understand that there is pressure to close schools due to concerns of certain constituent groups. Dr Rice has reported in a previous board meeting that enrollment is down. **Enrollment is down because parents want their kids in school.** Parents have taken their kids to private schools, hired teachers, and created learning pods, all taking kids out of your classrooms and money out of your pocket.

How will the teachers react when you lay teachers off because of reduced enrollment? How will the other constituent groups that rely on your funding react when you have to decrease their expense by 30% layoffs or budget cuts that reflect a 30% decrease in enrollment.

You have a responsibility today and in the future **to offer choice**, otherwise you risk children's safety, the jobs of our beloved teachers and staff, financial stability of our community, and your future in public service. Not to mention the **collateral damage** the Brookings Institute points out **to parents jobs and gender equality** (4).

In the most recent election Supervisor Moran, our Board Vice President was unequivocally removed by voter referendum. Not because she is a bad supervisor, she is one of our best, recognized by you electing her to the Vice President role. She was **forcefully removed by voters because you neglected our schools and our children and put our community at risk by not having a plan** like our neighbor Moorpark did **and for not opening schools** earlier than you did.

If you do not put our children, our teachers, and our communities first, the voters will continue to vote, and you too will fall the same fate of Supervisor Moran.

I hope your predisposed choice is to open schools and this public comment is simply support for your well thought out decision, but if not, I hope you will consider the consequences to supporting our children.

(1) https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/04/health/mental-health-during-covid-19-2021-stress-wellness/index.html
(2) https://www.wsj.com/articles/child-abuse-reports-are-falling-and-thats-bad-news-for-children-11591263001
(3) https://www.businessinsider.com/anthony-fauci-close-bars-school-instruction-coronavirus-infections-health-2020-11

(4) https://www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/

Regards,

Timur Taluy
Founder & CEO FileYourTaxes.com
Auditor Pierpont Elementary PTA
Father of three children 7 and under.

FileYourTaxes.com

File Your Taxes Online
Fast, Easy, Secure

Circular 230 Disclosure
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[redacted]

From: Laura Achee [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 3:22 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Comment for Special Board Meeting

Hi,
I want to share the feelings of my family and specifically those of my 4th grade child. We have experienced extreme behavioral issues since school moved to distance learning. I was forced to take leave from work in June and the issues continued to escalate even with therapy and a tutor. We have experienced extreme outbursts and property destruction from a child that has always been an engaged and thoughtful communicator.

The decision to open schools in December made a significant difference in the mental health of my child and family life. My child was happy and excited to be back in school. Where we had struggled to get her to complete a single assignment, she was now happy and willing to do homework and attend zoom sessions.

Even during the winter break my child was once again withdrawn and exhibiting behavioral problems. Today was a particularly difficult day with her refusing to attend class or engage with us. She desperately needs adult interaction with people outside our home and in person learning to excite her love of learning again. I beg you please open schools next week.

Thank you,
Laura Achee

[redacted]

From: Dustin & Katie Duran [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 3:26 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Return to Hybrid

Good afternoon,
I am a parent of 2 elementary VUSD children and my husband and I are both teachers in Oxnard/Port Hueneme
.
I have been deeply saddened by VUSDs handling of return to Hybrid learning. I want more than anything to return to teaching in person myself and my children to have some normalcy in their education. But that is not yet realistic or safe! I have been absolutely blown away that you have even considered putting my friends, teachers, staff, families and children at risk to push this reopening before it was safe! I NEVER agreed to reopening on a "waiver" under purple tier!!!! I barley accepted a return in the red tier in the middle of family holidays. I want the option for in person learning for my children (and so I don't want distance all year), I just want it when it is safer!
As a local teacher, VUSD alumni & parent, I am fully aware that teachers have indeed tested COVID positive and it is not showing up on the dashboard. This is increasingly irresponsible and negligent. Especially as Dr. Rice makes statements like "this is the safest place to be in this pandemic". Parents are exhausted, overwhelmed and desperate and I feel the District and board are taking advantage of this to push in person learning even when it's not safe to do so!
Beyond any of that it is our responsibility as a community to help keep everyone safe and numbers lower for the sake of our hospitals. We all want to be back to normal, but the responsible, safe and community conscious decision, no matter how hard that may be, is to keep our schools closed to in person until it is clearly safe to open.
As a teacher and parent I know that consistency is SO important! Right now the reality is if we open prematurely we will like have to close all or part of classrooms at any given time in this climate. So let's not seesaw our kids around and just keep at least one thing for them and their teachers, a consistent program.
Thanks you for your time and consideration. I do hope you are actually listening.
Dustin & Katie Duran

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From: Lola Camus
To: Public Comment
Subject: Covid Back to School
Date: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 2:29:31 PM

Honestly, I stand with a few other kids in saying I don't wanna go back to school. If there is ANY danger factor at all I don't feel entirely safe there with kids who are not all my friends and who I may not particularly trust. We are fine at home, let the parents complain this is my opinion and I stand by it. Covid-19 is still ongoing and dangerous. Even if we all wear masks things happen, one kid puts their mask down as a joke and then we are all sick. Please consider the students opinions in going back. We have to go, the parents do not. Their opinion should count but not as much as ours.