



Board of Trustees:
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Lagunita Elementary School District

975 San Juan Grade Road, Salinas, California 93907

Daniel Stonebloom, Principal/Superintendent

RECEIVED

DEC 05 2019

Monterey County Office of the
Superintendent of Schools

Date: 12/5/2019
To: CCSDO Members, MCOE Staff
From: Daniel Stonebloom, Lagunita
RE: Petition for Territory Transfer

Honorable Trustees of the Monterey County Committee on School District Organization:

Thank you for your service. Thank you also for your time, expertise, and extraordinary effort in considering the petition to transfer territory between Lagunita ESD and North Monterey County USD.

I am writing today to share information in two distinct areas:

1. Sharing the School Board's and District Administration's positions on the petition, and proposed transfer
2. Correcting the record and sharing facts about Lagunita that may address some voiced concerns and give accurate information about the functioning of the Lagunita ESD

Position of the LESD Board and Administration

With respect to the school board, a Resolution (attached) was reviewed and passed unanimously at the Board Meeting of November 19th, 2019 to demonstrate the Board's full support of the petition. Board members past and present attended the public hearings and spoke about the reasons for their support, including the growth of the district, development on the fringes, community identity, additional voters, additional candidates for school board, and additional potential students living in-district.

Regarding the District Administration's position on this petition: As steward of the district I see key long-term needs that are relevant to the proposed territory transfer. They largely overlap with the concerns of the school board, but more directly they overlap with the stated reasons given by the citizen petitioners: supporting a development on the fringes of the district and which views itself as part of the Lagunita community, as well as the community's statutory right to request an update to district boundaries to reflect this community identity and address their concerns about safety and access.

Correcting the Record

Lagunita also wishes to address misstatements, misinformation, misrepresentation, and errors presented to the Committee in public comment. Serious charges have been leveled against Lagunita's policies, management, compliance, and classification, but especially Lagunita's motives for supporting this petition.

a. The Nature of the Petition

In order to prejudice the discussion, NMCUSD characterizes the Territory Transfer Petition as a “developer’s petition.” This is incorrect. It is undisputed that the petition was signed by the individual owners of eight of the thirteen parcels in the transfer area, some of whom have owned their homes for years.

This prejudicial characterization of the petition serves to mask the fact that the proposed transfer territory is part of a larger community of Hidden Canyon Ranch, the rest of which is already within the boundaries of LESD.

This also distinguishes the voters’ petition before you from the Armstrong Ranch petition. NMCUSD apparently regrets the mitigation agreement it negotiated with the developer in that circumstance, because the mitigation has yet to be paid. However, Armstrong Ranch and the voter’s petition currently before you are not similar. NMCUSD has been paid to date for all developer fees generated from the transfer territory. The homeowners have paid their share of debt service for NMCUSD bonds for years, and their property taxes have supported NMCUSD, also for years.

b. The Character of LESD

To briefly clarify, and at the risk of giving information that is already clear, Lagunita is not a private school, nor is it a Community School or a School of Choice. All of these affiliations were suggested but none are accurate. We do collaborate with MCOE as a Direct Service district, but primarily rely on MCOE for business office and payroll services. We have 103 registered voters in the district, not 300. Lagunita is in full compliance with respect to our Special Education program and our process for approving, denying, and maintaining Interdistrict Transfers. Our enrollment reports (attached) are shared with the School Board in open session.

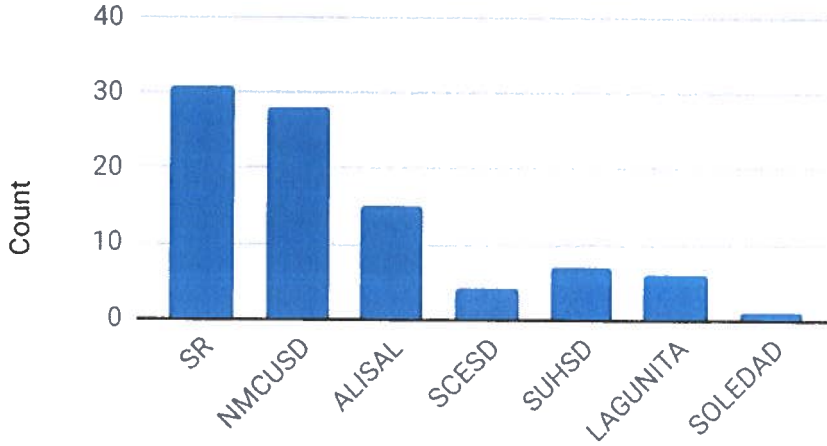
Enrollment process: Our enrollment is transparent and in full compliance. Contrary to accusations, Lagunita denies very few transfer requests, and it does not “Handpick” or “Cherry-pick” students to get a “round 100” for “convenience.” Lagunita approves transfer requests for new students in the order they are approved and received. In my three years with the district, we have fluctuated from 91 to 103 enrolled students. With our class size target of 12 per grade, our “capacity” is 106. Put quite simply, Lagunita does not deny students for unethical, arbitrary, or illegal purposes. Lagunita accepts students when there is space and when the students needs do not require us to add staff or programs that our small size, facility, and geographic footprint simply cannot accommodate. These decisions are transparently made according to adopted policy and subject to School Board oversight.

Demographics: I’d like to share the current demographics of students attending Lagunita on transfer from NMCUSD: 27 NMCUSD residents are attending Lagunita on IDTs. This is 29% of our school population. These students represent nineteen families and are roughly proportionally represented in each grade and classroom. They are disproportionately represented in our counseling caseload (2/3 are NMCUSD residents). 17 are white, 10 are not. Half of our English Learners, half of our students with 504 plans, and 15% of our students with IEPs are NMCUSD residents.

Overall, Lagunita is more heavily dependent on IDTs than was suggested to the Committee, so I want to correct the record in that respect as well. Santa Rita is the top district for transfer students followed by NMCUSD. We also have residents of Alisal, SCUSD, SUHSD (for students

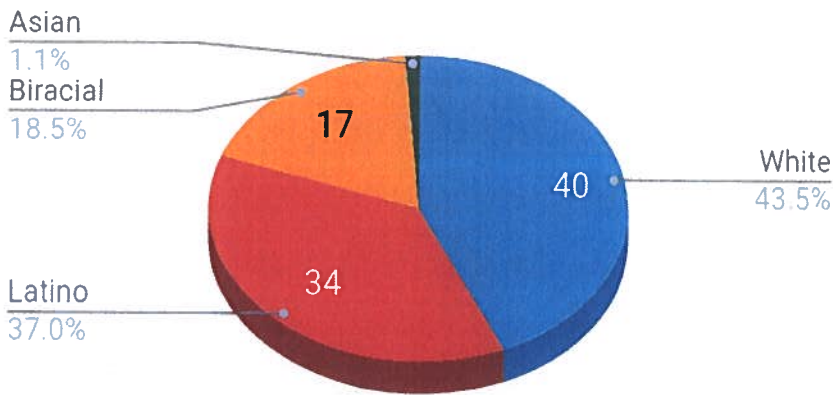
in grades 7 and 8), and one student attending from Soledad. Last year we had students from PVUSD as well as Aromas/San Juan.

District of Residence, 19-20



Lagunita's current total enrollment by race/ethnicity appears in the chart below. Our demographics have consistently trended toward increased diversity over the past decade, because our transfer requests have trended toward increased diversity. Race and ethnicity reporting has also shifted toward more accurate data and increased reporting, especially of multiracial identity. But any characterization of Lagunita as "exclusive," "segregated," or white is simply inaccurate as well as misleading and counter-productive.

Lagunita's Demographics 19-20



Lagunita is not a "segregated" school. Lagunita is a majority minority district, and this diversity allows for more authentic opportunities for learning from students with a varied race or ethnicity. A more thorough explanation of the "biracial" category represented above shows 5 African American students (of whom three are also Latino and two are also Asian), four who are Asian and White, one who is Asian and Latino, three who identify as Native American/Alaskan Native

and White, one who identifies as Latino and Native, one who is Latino, Native, and White, and one who is Latino and White.

In other words, Lagunita is well-positioned to educate all students about diversity, inclusion, acceptance, and respect. Lagunita is compliant and in fact proactive in this focus on equity. For example, we currently have only four English Language Learners, but we have ten students who were classified as either IFEP or RFEP (Initially tested and found to be English Proficient or Reclassified as English Proficient). Our current ELs are a subgroup we are working hard to serve, with LCAP goals devoted to improved outcomes. When I look at our roster and our classrooms, they are reflections of the communities we serve. Our numbers demonstrate this clearly—and so do our values.

Lagunita is not a white school in terms of school culture, either. Lagunita convenes an ELAC (English Language Advisory Council), even though our numbers do not require us to do so, in order to facilitate input from Spanish speaking parents. Nearly half of our students participated in an after-school Spanish Club last year. Having a bilingual Administrator means that all phone calls home are translated, and that parent surveys and our website are bilingual. Our parent club also posts messages in Spanish, and our School Site Council is 50/50, again reflecting our student population.

Special Education: Lagunita has a number of students with Special Education services that is in line with other schools and districts: approximately 13% of students have IEPs. Several people stated that Lagunita refuses to serve students with special needs, and these claims come from a widely circulated letter written by a parent who is a Salinas City Elementary resident and who is also a NMCUSD employee, a fact which was never disclosed. Without compromising confidentiality, I can only say that this family is now attending a SCESD program that Lagunita cannot provide, and that Lagunita consulted with Lozano Smith attorneys, MCOE Special Education and SELPA staff, and with SCESD to find the best program for the needs of this student's development and education. There are numerous misrepresentations and factual errors in the letter which was read into the record by NMCUSD Board members, and a great deal more context to how this outcome came about over the course of seven IEP meetings in four months with a very large team.

Lagunita is limited, however, in what services we can offer. We are limited by space, staff, and demand. On site, Lagunita's RSP services take place in a partitioned area of the Kindergarten classroom. Our Speech services happen in the Boardroom, which is also my office (and the main office, teacher work room, copy room, and break room). We have a Resource teacher just two days a week, and we contract with a private Speech and Language Pathologist to provide speech services. We do not and have not ever provided Occupational Therapy or Physical Therapy, have no nurse, and are unable to shift students from one classroom to another, as we have five classrooms and five teachers for nine grade levels. When district residents have needs we cannot serve, students are placed in Regional Programs via MCOE, or in some cases in Non-Public Schools. I sit on the SELPA Strategic Planning Committee precisely to advocate for improvements to our regional approach to Special Education services and to better coordinate to improve access and outcomes for students in my district and in the county as a whole.

Finally, the timing and motivation for this petition: It is my belief that the appropriate time to discuss this petition is precisely when no students would be affected. That is now. Another reason why now? Because the overwhelming majority of the residents support and signed the

petition. If the goal were to capture students or developer fees, the timing would not be now, as there are no students and most of the developer fees have already been paid. These lots have been on sale for twenty years. More than half have been built. NMCUSD has already collected developer fees, votes, bond revenue, and property tax for this development—but has not educated a single student from that area. The real estate listings should always be understood to be advertisements rather than actual indications of value. Current listings do show Lagunita as one of the “nearby schools,” and not “District of Residence” on their Zillow listings (which, by the way, are in no way written by the developer, as was suggested to be the case). This is based on proximity, simple distance, rather than some realtor’s misrepresentation or desire to impugn or praise one school or district over another.

It is apparent that speculation and projection are leading the coordinated campaign against this petition, and that the opposition has received a great deal of misinformation. Several comments attempted to bring to your attention issues that have zero impact on the request and nothing to do with Lagunita. We are in no position to offset revenue lost from the reassessed value of the Moss Landing Power Plant, for example, and Lagunita has nothing to do with the Armstrong Ranch transfer. The two are not comparable.

Inflated financial numbers inflame fears of cuts and layoffs. During both of the two public hearings and the Committee meeting in November, the comments opposed to this petition charged that Lagunita has “other reasons behind this,” “wants to become an exclusive school,” and furthermore, “shouldn’t even exist.” Whether stated for transparency or not, nearly every single opposing comment the committee has received on this matter has come from a NMCUSD employee or a NMCUSD Board member. These misleading statements have a concrete and damaging effect on a process intended to improve the lives of the citizens we serve and in providing for the education of the children of both districts.

Our very right to exist is now being questioned as a means of defeating this extremely small and quite reasonable request, submitted by citizens according to a clear process. NMCUSD and their counsel have levied charges of due process violations, conflict of interest, nefarious and self-serving motivation, institutionalized racism, and profiteering. But this is a citizen petition with near unanimous support: 8 of 13 voters, living on 8 of 13 parcels. I hope this letter has provided some information to reinforce the facts alongside the Feasibility Study performed and presented by Christy White and requested by the Commission. Lagunita is a model school with regard to governance, financial stewardship, and authentic diversity. The nine criteria are met.

I thank you for your attention and for your consideration of these facts.



Daniel Stonebloom, Principal/Superintendent
Lagunita Elementary School District

Attachments:

LESD Board Resolution #04 – 19/20

LESD Enrollment Reports 6.14.19 & 10.29.19

**RESOLUTION re: PETITION for TERRITORY TRANSFER
BETWEEN LAGUNITA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
and NORTH MONTEREY COUNTY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Resolution #04 - 2019/2020

Lagunita Elementary School District

WHEREAS, the Governing Board is aware of the petition filed with the Monterey County Office of Education (COE) and reviewed by the Monterey County Elections Department requesting a territory transfer of 13 parcels in the Hidden Canyon Ranch (HCR) area, which is currently divided between Lagunita ESD and North Monterey County USD;

WHEREAS, Public Hearings were held on September 17th in both districts by the County Committee on School District Organization; and the Committee called for a Feasibility Study which was presented on November 13th;

WHEREAS, the Feasibility Study concluded that all of the criteria of Education Code Section 35753 have been met by the territory transfer petition;

WHEREAS, the Feasibility Study concluded that, in addition to allowing the HCR area to achieve a cohesive community identity through the territory transfer process, additional compelling reasons for the transfer are to provide safer and shorter transportation routes to school for HCR residents, and allow Lagunita Board governance opportunities and school input to the entire HCR community;

WHEREAS, the feasibility study also concluded that the transfer would not cause quantifiable and verifiable financial losses to NMCUSD;

WHEREAS, the HCR community has identified itself with the Lagunita ESD through attendance and participation regardless of current boundary lines;

WHEREAS, the Governing Board recognizes that NMCUSD and Lagunita have historically cooperated in the service of the region’s children and families, and supporting the transfer would be consistent with that historical cooperation because a portion of the HCR community is already in the Lagunita District, the transfer would unite the remaining parcels of HCR in the Lagunita District, and the only transportation route from HRC to NMCUSD is through the Lagunita District territory;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Governing Board of the Lagunita Elementary School District does hereby formally support the petitioners in their requested transfer of territory in Hidden Canyon Ranch from North Monterey County USD to Lagunita ESD.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Governing Board of the Lagunita Elementary School District at the meeting held on November 19, 2019 by the following vote:

AYES: 3
NAYS: 0
ABSENT: 0

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was passed and adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Lagunita School District and has been entered into the minutes of said Board of Trustees.

ADOPTED: 11/19/19
Date

Richard Brown
Clerk of the Board

The Superintendent/Principal or designee shall keep an accounting of all requests for admittance and a record of their disposition, including, but not limited to, all of the following: (Education Code 48313)

- 1. The number of requests granted, denied, or withdrawn and, for denied requests, the reason for the denial

Five (5) requests denied: One for lack of program; Three for failure to abide by requirements of the Letter of Condition; One for consistency of enrollment

Six (6) requests withdrawn

- 2. The number of students transferred into and out of the district pursuant to this program

As of today, Eighty-Seven (87) transfers have been approved. Additional requests are anticipated and none are pending, although several have been submitted and not yet approved/received from districts of res

No (0) students requested transfers out of LESD

- 3. The race, ethnicity, gender, self-reported socioeconomic status, eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, and the district of residence for each student transferred into or out of the district pursuant to this program

White Denied: 1 Approved: ~49

Latino Denied: 3 Approved: ~36

Multiracial Denied: 1 Approved: ~2

Male Denied: 3 Approved: ~44

Female Denied: 2 Approved: ~43

Free/Reduced Denied: 1 Approved: unknown

District of Residence (denied): Santa Rita: 4 North Monterey County: 1

District of Residence (approved): Santa Rita: 29 North Monterey County: 30 Alisal: 16

Salinas UHSD: 7 Salinas City ESD: 4 PVUSD: 2

- 4. The number of students transferred into or out of the district pursuant to this program who are classified as English learners or students with disabilities

ELs Denied: 0 Approved: 3+

Students with Disabilities Denied: 1 Approved: 10

The Superintendent/Principal or designee shall keep an accounting of all requests for admittance and a record of their disposition, including, but not limited to, all of the following: (Education Code §48313)

1. The number of requests granted, denied, or withdrawn and, for denied requests, the reason for the denial

Three (3) additional withdrawn, as three students enrolled elsewhere over the summer after receiving approved transfer requests

One (1) additional withdrawn, as parent never followed up on request for meeting, information

Two (2) newly denied requests, for lack of space in the relevant classroom

2. The number of students transferred into and out of the district pursuant to this program

Our total enrollment is 92, with on-site enrollment of 91 as one student attends an out of county Non-Public School. There are six (6) district residents total.

3. The race, ethnicity, gender, self-reported socioeconomic status, eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, and the district of residence for each student transferred into or out of the district pursuant to this program

White Denied: unknown Approved: 34

Latino Denied: unknown Approved: 34

Multiracial Denied: unknown Approved: 17

Asian Denied: unknown Approved: 1

Male Denied: 3 Approved: 39

Female Denied: 0 Approved: 47

Free/Reduced Denied: unknown Approved: 15 (16.3%)

District of Residence (denied): Santa Rita: 2 (withdrawn): SR 1; PVUSD 2; NMCUSD 1
District of Residence (approved): Santa Rita: 31 North Monterey County: 28 Alisal: 15
Salinas UHSD: 7 Salinas City ESD: 4 Soledad: 1

4. The number of students transferred into or out of the district pursuant to this program who are classified as English learners or students with disabilities

ELs Denied: unknown Approved: 3 TBD: 2

Students with Disabilities Denied: 0 Approved: 10 Withdrawn: 1