

**VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF  
APRIL 19, 2024**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

1. Call To Order, Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and Moment of Reflection  
The Regular Board Meeting of the Ventura County Board of Education, Agenda No. 24-05, was called to order by Dr. Ramon Flores, Board Vice-President at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, April 19, 2024, in the Board Room of the VCOE Conference and Educational Services Center at 5100 Adolfo Road, Camarillo. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Dr. Flores, followed by a moment of reflection.
  
2. Roll Call  
Trustees Present  
Michael Teasdale, Area 2  
Arleigh Kidd, Area 4  
Dr. Ramon Flores, Area 5  
  
Absent:  
Rachel Ulrich, Area 1  
Dr. Mark Lisagor, Area 3  
  
VCOE Personnel Present:  
Dr. César Morales, County Superintendent of Schools  
Misty Key, Deputy Superintendent, Fiscal and Administrative Services  
Lisa Salas Brown, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services  
Dr. Consuelo Hernandez Williams, Associate Superintendent, Student Services  
Dr. Juan Santos, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources  
Lisa Bork, Sr. Executive Assistant  
Wanda Runcie, Executive Assistant  
John Meza, Facilities
  
3. Approval of Agenda  
Mr. Kidd made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Teasdale seconded the motion, and the motion passed 3:0.

**B. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**C. PRESIDENT’S AND BOARD MEMBERS’ REPORTS.**

1. Upcoming Events

ACCESS Open House .....	Apr. 24, 2024
Gateway Open House .....	Apr. 25, 2024
Battle of the Books .....	Apr. 24 & 29, 2024
Alternative Ed Student Summit (AM) & Counselor Summit (PM) .....	Apr. 30, 2024
Boswell Art Walk and Open House .....	May 2, 2024
All Staff Gathering .....	May 15, 2024
CEC Open House/Orientation .....	May 22, 2024

Impact II Awards .....	May 22, 2024
2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual DELAC/RPAC Community Education Forum .....	May 29, 2024
Las Colinas Open House .....	May 30, 2024
2024 Graduations/Promotions .....	June 4–14, 2024

2. Board Members’ Reports

Mr. Teasdale attended Coast2Coast in Washington DC which provided valuable insights into national-level educational policies including Special Education funding and teacher shortages.

Dr. Flores discussed his involvement with CSBA’s transition and the honor of being on the Lifetime Awards Committee.

Dr. Flores attended the VCSBA meeting on Monday, April 15, 2024. He enjoyed strengthening relationships with trustees around the county. The focus of the meeting was on communication strategies.

**D. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION/ACTION**

1. Budget Study Session – INFORMATION (60 minutes)

As part of the Annual Budget Study session, the following staff presented the various successes and challenges within their departments.

SELPA (Specialized Education Local Plan Area)

*Joanna Della Gatta, Executive Director, SELPA*

The Special Education unduplicated count has grown by 4.6% from last year. There are 20,701 students ages 0-22 now being served. With overall enrollment (grades TK+) at just over 134,000 and SPED numbers increasing, the special education rate is 14.7%

The SELPA and LEAs are focused on inclusive practices and meeting the needs of students with disabilities (SWD) in the least restrictive environment.

Pathways to Partnership (P2P), the alternative dispute prevention and resolution special education resource lead grant kicked off this school year, partnering with Tehama County to build capacity in this area throughout the State over the next five years. P2P provided over 50 trainings facilitated by content experts outside of and within the education system.

SELPA has completed a new Parent Guide to Special Education and revised and updated its website. SELPA’s Local Plan – Section B Governance and Structure has been updated this year per the CDE three-year revision cycle. There is currently a 30-day comment period and approval by the superintendent takes place at the end of May.

SELPA has provided unique workshops for parents and educators in many areas. As of this week, they have held 113 out of the 123 events scheduled with almost 3600 in attendance.

Mr. Teasdale is interested in P2P data; Ms. Della Gatta mentioned that they are still in the process of collecting information.

## Special Populations Programs

*Mike Winters – Director, Student Services*

The Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) is coordinated by Laura Welbourn and Dr. Cristina Acosta. The number of students receiving services is 312 in grades TK-12. Staff works with district liaisons and county agencies to provide support to students and caregivers. TEACH Scholars Night is May 30, 2024 (Training and Education for Achievement by Children).

Cathy Nye serves as the Homeless Youth Coordinator overseeing efforts to support students experiencing homelessness in Ventura County. The number of identified youth this year is 7,069. District Liaisons help to identify families enabling VCOE to provide them with necessary support and resources. This past fall, the Warm Coat Drive distributed 2,900 coats to students as well as providing backpacks.

Mr. Kidd noted the 7000 students identified and asked how that number had changed. Mr. Winters said the numbers have been going up, and include students who are doubled up in homes.

Mr. Teasdale's reaction to the homeless student numbers underscores the gravity of the situation regarding student homelessness, highlighting the need for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges these students face and the support services available to them. He inquired about the specific services provided.

Mr. Winters said as soon as students are identified, the McKinney-Vento legislation kicks in. Students are assisted with providing for their basic needs, educational support, mental health services, housing assistance, transportation assistance, and community resources.

Maria Ponce-Montanez is the Migrant Education Coordinator. The number of students identified from last year has increased by 40% totaling 1,765. Cynthia Salas joined the team in August 2023 and has assisted in this effort. Services to students include School Readiness, Saturday School, College Readiness, Summer School, and Case Management. Recently, 56 students participated in the Speech and Debate Tournament and were recognized by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors on April 9, 2024. All first-place winners are invited to the State tournament.

Mr. Teasdale inquired about the services provided for Migrant students. Mr. Winters responded stating that migrant students are the children of migrant farm workers in agriculture. Once they are identified, supplemental services are provided to help them be successful.

Jesse Juarez is the Coordinator of Student Services which provides support to continuation schools to assist students with mentorships, after-school programs, and Dual Enrollment courses with the community colleges.

## Student Programs and Competitions

*Christina Mahone, Director, County Program Support and Accountability*

Ms. Mahone highlighted the great work being done by VCOE schools and programs which serve approximately 620 students from preschool to post-secondary with all very specific and unique needs.

Students need to be present at school to thrive. All schools have attendance programs such as personal phone calls, home visits, attendance certificates, awards assemblies, and raffles. SARB teams meet with parents/guardians and students to put supports in place.

Teams are focusing on the bigger picture of student engagement and finding ways to increase and improve these opportunities on their campuses which will lead to increased positive outcomes for students in all aspects of their education including improved attendance.

Student engagement opportunities look different at each site depending on the student population but focus on opportunities outside of the core instructional program.

Professional Development opportunities are focused on the specific needs of the student population. VCOE schools are focused on meeting each student where they are and finding strategies to help them thrive.

Ms. Mahone also reported on the Student Competitions Program on behalf of Andrea Rubin and Jennifer Gorin.

Principal for a Day: Community members have the opportunity to have a glimpse at the daily experience of a VCOE principal. The hope is the community leader will promote the positive work being done in our schools.

Academic Decathlon: 170 students from 8 high schools in 5 districts competed in this year's event with 55 volunteers included. Historically, nine students were on a team with the categories of A, B, and C teams, and were able to host up to three teams per school. This year, students were allowed to participate on a single team. Very positive feedback was received regarding this change.

Mock Trial. There were 560 students from 21 high schools and 250 middle school students from 10 middle schools encompassing 18 school districts. There were 120 volunteers. Teams are given a fictional legal case to simulate at the Ventura County Government Hall of Justice. Teams compete against each other in prosecution and defense roles. This year, the number of middle school students participating tripled.

Science Fair: There were 650 students, 18 high schools and 8 middle schools from 12 districts participating in the Science Fair with 130 volunteers, the largest ever. Students create science projects and then demonstrate their work which is judged by volunteers with a passion for education, science, and students. The top 25 highest-scoring students will move on to the California Science and Engineering Fair. Benjamin Chung from Thousand Oaks High School has earned the honor of competing in the prestigious International Science and Engineering Fair on May 16, 2024.

Battle of the Books: This is a trivia-style game in which students in grades 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> answer questions about books they have read from a book list. This event has tripled in size from the premier event last year.

VCOE Teacher of the Year: This announcement will be made on Monday, April 22, 2024. The recipient will be eligible for the Ventura County Teacher of the Year announced at the end of May.

Impact II Teacher Awards: This event honors amazing teachers who have demonstrated innovation and creativity in their classrooms. Award recipients will bring students with them to talk about their experiences.

Visual and Performing Arts Showcase: Students throughout Ventura County in grades K-

12 will showcase their art. An evening reception will be held filled with student performances and food provided by one of Ventura County's high school culinary arts programs. This showcase will take place on November 7, 2024.

Mr. Kidd asked about absenteeism and the reasons students aren't attending school. Ms. Mahone said the absences are not just unexcused absences, but take into account legitimate reasons such as medical needs. Alternative Education Schools came to VCOE with attendance issues and we are working to break those attendance patterns.

Mr. Teasdale mentioned that Dual Enrollment is a great program. Ms. Mahone said it is a new area with introductory college courses. Right now students are taking a growth and development class, something to open the door to what a college course would look like. CTE courses include classes such as manufacturing, auto industry, digital media, and game design which are taught by industry teachers.

Dr. Flores said Board members would like to attend recognition events.

### Comprehensive Health and Prevention Programs

*Chris Ridge – Director, Comprehensive Health and Prevention Programs (CHPP)*

Chris Ridge told Board members the core values of CHPP are equity, leadership, results, and teamwork. CHPP has a team of nine to support schools and districts. Programs are grant-funded in partnership with the California Department of Education, the California Department of Health Care Services, Gold Coast Health Plan, the Mental Health Services Oversight Accountability Commission, the Sacramento County Office of Education, and Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH).

Jason Claros, who is the Coordinator of Tobacco and Substance Use Prevention Services acknowledged members of his team, Krista Roque, Candice Rizzie, and Matt Wilmot.

Their programs serve approximately 50,000 students in Ventura County through Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE), Anti-Vape Social Clubs, health fairs, and prevention conferences. They also provide a variety of new services, presentations, and youth development opportunities that include updated information young people need to know about vaping, cannabis, opioid safety, and fentanyl awareness. A new campaign /curriculum to fight the fentanyl crisis was launched last year called "Natural High." This program has received a 95% positive response rate.

Vaping is replacing cigarette use among young people and is now one of the largest health issues today in Ventura County. Since before COVID, there has been an overall reduction in the use of vaping products.

Over 100 staff members have been trained in specific, evidence-based intervention strategies for youth caught using vape products and other substances.

Suzanne Weist, Coordinator of CHPP said from August 2023 to January 2024 there have been around 31,000 Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) screenings. There were many referrals for community and school-based services. Numerous trainings for students, staff and families have been offered. The successes of this program include improved relationships between staff and students, a reduction in psychiatric hospitalizations, and successful partnerships.

In the survey taken at the end of the recent Youth Mental Health Conference, 97% of students agree they know where they can get help regarding mental health.

Wellness Centers are making a difference. Students access these centers because it is a safe space on campus. Many students have commented they wouldn't be here today without the wellness centers. In 2020 there were eight Wellness Centers in Ventura County. As of this date, there are now 46 including some recently added at the elementary level. Across all middle schools and high school centers, there were 72,000 visits so far this year. There have been over 3,300 referrals to school-based mental health services.

Four times this year, staff has presented with wellness peers at the state level. Twice a year, CHPP hosts peer training for middle school and high school students.

Mr. Kidd asked when students go to the centers are they referred out? Ms. Weist said some of the Wellness Centers have contracted professionals or in-house professionals like mental health clinicians and licensed social workers who provide short-term care. Should students need Tier II or Tier III level care or have higher needs, they get referred out.

Mr. Kidd inquired about the adults in the centers. Ms. Weist said there is a wellness center counselor, who has either a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential or an LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) license.

Mr. Teasdale asked if the centers help the teachers as well. Ms. Weist said the centers also host staff wellness, and if students become disruptive, teachers can send students to the Wellness Center allowing teachers to continue classroom instruction uninterrupted.

Mr. Ridge concluded the discussion by saying in addition to the previously mentioned programs, CHPP is currently leading two new initiatives. The first is CalHOPE which supports the development of social and emotional learning; 927 educators have been trained this school year. The second program is SBHIP (Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program) which is working to increase the capacity of districts to provide wellness and behavioral health supports.

CHPP oversees \$9.5 million in funding, most of which is allocated to districts to provide programs and services to students.

Ms. Key thanked the speakers for presenting the details of supporting staff and students throughout the county. Ms. Key introduced the Internal Business Office team led by Lisa Cline, Executive Director. The IBS staff works diligently behind the scenes to manage the budget and bring this data to the Board for review. Other staff are Alyssa Low, Director, Gloria Moya, Assistant Director, Nicole Salem, April Guerrero, and Deanna Escobar, Budget and Accounting Specialists.

She initiated the budget discussion by stating that the assumptions involve updating revenues, which may be subject to change. Presently, the state budget is facing downturns and economic instability that could affect the projections. A very conservative aspect of maintaining revenues is steady other than some of the declines that were anticipated due to grant changes. On the expenditure side, what is being proposed is the step or column changes for positions that are being maintained in 2024-25. Programs are being shifted due to the change in Special Education schools. In addition to the benefits related to positions, CalPERS rates continue to increase another 1%, the projection is 27.8% in 2024-25. The CalSTRS rate is expected to remain at 19.1%. Workers Compensation is flat. Since the details of health insurance are not known at this time, the same projection as last year is maintained.

The following budgets were reviewed:

### County Board of Education

The 2024-25 County Board of Education budget remains the same. There is a slight adjustment attributed to health insurance.

### Charter Schools

Marlo Hartsuyker supports all the charter schools in Ventura County. She has done a great job of bringing information to directors, who feel a great sense of support as they have access to VCOE staff and services. Fees are collected from all five VCOE charters as a source of revenue.

Student Competitions has been reporting to Ms. Hartsuyker, this department will now report to the Career Education Department so Ms. Hartsuyker can focus on charter schools. This will show a shift in the budget.

### Early Childhood Programs (ECP)

With the onset of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and expanded programs focusing on early education, the funds are adjusted slightly. The total is \$4.5 million in revenue in the 2023-24 school year. In 2024-25 a slight decrease in funding is anticipated due to grants ending.

ECP manages restrictive programs. All of these programs together make a large amount of work led by Alicia McFarland. She has been one of the leaders in the TK program in a statewide effort to support school start-ups.

### Differentiated Assistance

Differential Assistance (DA) funding is sent to county offices to support school districts in the county that are identified as eligible and need more services. Currently, there are 2.2 million in funds until the identified school districts are announced in December. The funding formula now includes a three-year average. The list of expenditures includes staff who perform the work, some related to professional development, and other services it takes to accomplish serving districts.

Mr. Teasdale asked if there are dedicated staff for this program. Ms. Key replied by saying there is a group of staff members led by Lisa Salas Brown which consists of James Koenig, Dr. Phoebe Moore, and Brett Taylor who support all things related to the LCAP. The DA program also requires connectedness to a fiscal team which is Danni Brook and the SBAS team. Students with Disabilities are included in DA work and the SELPA team is also involved in those instances.

### Facilities

David Fateh leads and does a wonderful job of maintaining our facilities. There is a dedicated amount of funding for routine maintenance if bond funds are accepted. VCOE adheres to that compliance going above and beyond what is required. HVAC systems, new carpeting, and roof repairs are updated with these dedicated funds.

Dr. Flores asked whose responsibility it is to update facilities when school sites are shared with districts. Ms. Key replied saying whoever owns the facilities is responsible, but if VCOE is a long-term tenant, then VCOE invests. If it is a roof, it is usually a partnership with the school district. It can also depend on how long VCOE occupies the building and how many classrooms are used. VCOE students on average, do more wear and tear than the general population of students, thus the cost of doing business is a little heavier with facility repairs.

Mr. Kidd noted it appears that we are spending down the balance by about 3.2 million. Is this due to a couple of large projects?

Ms. Key said there are a few big projects including major asphalt work at the entire airport campus, plus other campuses as well. The CESC and ASC buildings need to have a new slurry seal. A new HVAC system at ASC is needed as it can no longer be repaired.

#### Gateway and Providence

A dedicated amount of funding comes to the county office for students enrolled at court and community schools. The enrollment is watched pretty closely because the LCFF does come to VCOE. Having students attend school is an important part of their education and achievements. It also impacts the funding. There are 60-90 students served at the community school at this point during the year. An increase in enrollment happens later in the school year. Some staff work for both programs; the salary and benefits are reflected in both. Providence enrollment is low which makes it challenging for Probation to group students in a unit versus how teachers need students grouped from an education point of view. Revenue is steady and the staff will be maintained.

Mr. Teasdale inquired about the enrollment count at Providence. Ms. Key said it is in the high 40s and may go into the low 50s. Those students are served in school every day.

#### Scholarships and Donations

VCOE is fortunate to have folks who provide donations for our school sites and programs as well as the funds Board members contribute.

### **E. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mr. Teasdale expressed gratitude to those who presented at the meeting and acknowledged the positive impact they have on the community.

Mr. Kidd, who has experienced 30-plus years of school budget cycles, hopes VCOE's programs will stay in place.

Dr. Flores expressed gratitude toward the staff and the critical role they play in the lives of the students served by VCOE.

### **F. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

1. MATES Charter School Programmatic Audit - April 22, 2024

### **G. FUTURE MEETINGS**

Date: Monday, April 22, 2024  
Time: 6:00 p.m.  
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo  
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Friday, May 3, 2024  
Time: 8:00 a.m.  
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo  
Purpose: Budget Study Session



Date: Monday, May 20, 2024  
Time: 6:00 p.m.  
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo  
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

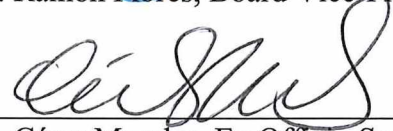
**H. ADJOURNMENT**

Dr. Flores adjourned the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Date: 5/3/2024

  
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Dr. Ramon Flores, Board Vice-President

Date: 5/3/24

  
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Dr. César Morales, Ex Officio Secretary and  
Executive Officer of the Board