



Ventura Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

VENTURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
January 11, 2022
APPROVED 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 11, 2022, as a teleconference/video conference meeting where one or more members participated. The public had the opportunity to submit their public comment via the public comments email address or live via the Zoom platform. The public streaming of the Special Board meeting was made available through the Ventura Adult and Continuing Education, TDC Studios YouTube Channel. Those in attendance were:

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

Adoption of Agenda

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

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

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

Public Comments

The following people made a public comment via email or live via Zoom*:

- Nathan Strange with concerns regarding the rising COVID cases.
- Dan Nelson* thanked the district leadership, VUEA and VESPA Members, for their dedication and hard work as they move through the COVID pandemic.

REGULAR SESSION

At 4:00 p.m., Board President Matt Almaraz called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance.

CONFERENCE - SUPERINTENDENT

8.a COVID-19 Update

Superintendent Dr. Roger Rice shared that he recently learned about major changes regarding COVID-19 protocols beginning at the end of last week. Dr. Rice shared an agenda from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) dated January 6, 2022 which included updates from Cal-Osha, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Governor's Office. He reiterated to the public that Distance Learning is no longer an option, however parents can choose to put their student in an Independent Study (IS) program such as Homestead, El Camino or the FLEX program.

Mr. Eric Reynolds, Director of Risk Management, and Ms. Ann Marie Bidlingmaier, Coordinator of Health Services, discussed the CDC's newest changes to Isolation and Quarantine protocols and updated timelines. Mr. Reynolds noted that the updated guidelines have been sent out to all staff and families of VUSD via email and ParentSquare, and is updated on our School Safety Plan on the VUSD website. He also share that VUSD has received approximately 2,500 N95 masks and the goal is to have them delivered to the sites this week. Dr. Rice added that he heard from Ventura County Superintendent Dr. Morales earlier today that Ventura County is expecting a shipment of over two million N95 masks to be distributed throughout the county.

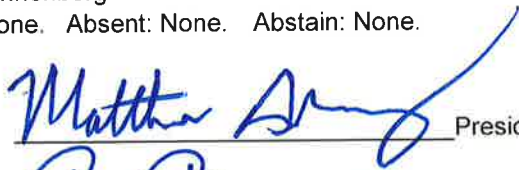
Dr. Greg Bayless, Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, and Ms. Gina Wolowicz, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, updated the Board on ways that students who are home on Isolation or quarantine can access their curriculum and assignments. The main source is via Canvas and See Saw for elementary students. Other ways include via email, Zoom meetings with their teachers, or Zooming directly into the classes. Dr. Bayless mentioned that they are also in the process of allowing teachers to give a temporary incomplete grade to help ease the burden on the student as we are nearing semester grades.

ADJOURNMENT

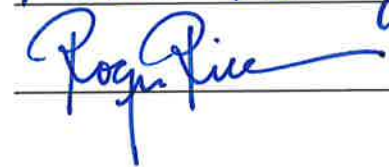
It was moved by Ms. Sabrena Rodriguez, seconded by and passed on a roll call vote of 5 – 0 to approve to adjourn the meeting at 5:04 p.m., to the next Regular Board meeting to be held on January 11, 2022.

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

APPROVED



President



Secretary

From: [Nathan Strange](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: -EXTERNAL SENDER- Concerns about rising covid cases
Date: Tuesday, January 11, 2022 2:43:11 PM

I am writing to the board to express concerns about the school system possibly becoming a major source for the spread of covid-19 through the community during the current surge.

Although the much more contagious omicron strain appears to be less severe than other covid variants, it is still a serious illness. With even the mild cases, people who contract COVID may miss a week or more of work, and for many people that means a loss of needed income. In addition, the health impacts of "long covid" are not well known and could result in some fraction of those who contract omicron dealing with lifelong degraded health. And even though the mortality rate of omicron is lower than other COVID variants, it's high infection rate will still likely result in a tragically large loss of life.

Any measures the school district takes to reduce the amount of transmission of COVID within the schools will not only help protect students, teachers, and staff -- it will also help protect the kids' families and the broader community as well. Something like a complete shutdown of the school, even for a couple of weeks, would likely have a strong positive impact in reducing the spread of the omicron variant. However, not only would such a shutdown be difficult within the constraints from state regulations and other sources, it would also negatively impact families in the district with food insecurity or without access to childcare.

A possible way forward to take positive action against the spread of the virus within these constraints, is to think in terms of community protection. If we can reduce the number of interactions students have with possibly infected people, we will reduce the spread of the virus directly proportional to the reduction in the average number of interactions.

Along these lines I'd like to propose an outline of a way forward:

- Take a two week pause in classes covering new material. Use the time to help student review, and use the pause to help students who are sick or miss school for other reasons from falling behind.
- Encourage families who can, to keep their students at home. Don't require these students to attend class remotely, just provide them with recommended review activities and an excused absence. Encourage them to stay home as a way to reduce the population at the schools so as to better protect the students who are not able to stay home.
- Take measures to protect kids at school, using the smaller student population to make this easier. Group the students who are unable to stay home into clusters and try to minimize the number of close interactions that they have with other students. Try to separate students who test negative for COVID from other students to minimize their risk.
- For these two weeks, emphasize student well-being over keeping to the syllabus. As the full wave of omicron hits, the level of death in the community may be very difficult on students. Keeping student morale up during this time will be very important.
- Use this two week pause to develop a strategy for the rest of the year. During this time options such as extending the school year could be considered.

The above is an outline of an approach intended to help generate ideas of a way to reduce the population of kids at school and to reduce the risk of exposure for those kids at school. The

rapid spread of the omicron variant presents a tremendous challenge, but it also prevents an opportunity. If we can reduce the spread now, we can bend the curve. This will not only reduce the peak of the infection curve, but will also help the wave to pass through the community more quickly.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Nathan Strange
(father with 3 kids in the district, middle school and high school)