

ALBANY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Board of Education Meeting Highlights 1/9/2018

The spotlight was on student groups at Albany High. The group Speak was formed last spring to go out to Albany fifth grade classes to talk, older student to younger student, about racism and discrimination. Speak presented to eleven classes last year, and has visited every fifth grade classroom this year. They are planning a remarkably comprehensive set of four lessons, one per quarter, opening with the history of racism and discrimination. A lesson on privilege will start next week. Digital citizenship and a call for ideas for action at the elementary school sites will finish the series. The Albany High student group STAND focuses its efforts at the high school itself. They have reached 900 students with a discussion about sexism and racism, also touching 40 teachers and administrators. STAND hosted an immigrants' rights rally and are preparing a series of parent education presentations. To see these very impressive students discussing their work, watch the board meeting video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBC_i-z-eBM (minutes 4-14).

There was news on the (in)adequacy of school funding issue. The California School Board Association announced earlier this week an aspirational plan for California to fund our schools at the average level in the nation by 2020, and to the average of the top ten states in the nation by 2025. It is not widely known that California currently ranks 41st in the nation on per pupil spending. Albany is a member of the California School Funding Coalition, who is working with Assemblymember Muratsuchi to introduce legislation in the current session to address the need for more funding. Superintendent Williams encouraged all voters to stay aware of these issues and actively support full and fair funding.

The Board accepted the elementary School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs) and discussed the secondary school SARCs. Currently, the best place to view these documents are in the Board Agenda packet, as they are not online yet. This new webpage, http://www.ausdk12.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=97076&type=d&pREC_ID=1350696 collects the agenda, highlights, video, and minutes for each Board meeting and is worth bookmarking.

Grading policies at Albany High were discussed, and, as grades affect graduation, graduation requirements came into the discussion. With new guidelines from the state on career and college readiness, AUSD needs to ensure that all pathways to readiness are available to students. Teachers spoke on traditional grading and newer, standards-based grading (which is what is used at our elementary schools). The Board encouraged the school site to continue discussions.

The district's 9% reserve level was the final item of discussion. The reserve does not replenish itself, it is one-time money that will be gone when it is spent. Clarity emerged that the sooner the district makes the budget cuts that match income to expenses, the more reserve will be left. In 2015, the Board decided that a reserve equal to about one month's salary and benefit expense (9%) was the minimally prudent reserve. No action was taken on this item, but board and community members spoke to the need to move forward on the planning process for determining cuts. As a reminder, next year will proceed without school site staff reductions, due to savings generated by staff reductions at the district office, non-staff reductions at school sites, and reallocating funds internally.

These measures have bought us additional planning time to address the significant ongoing deficit. In the 2019-20 school year, we will have to either reduce staff, or have found a stable source of new revenue, or use a combination of the two to balance the budget.

These are my personal notes, any mistakes are my own. Trustee Kim Trutane