

MORENO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES OF THE STUDY SESSION OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF JULY 28, 2009

The minutes of the Study Session of July 28, 2009, are being submitted to the Board of Education for approval at its Regular Board Meeting of September 1, 2009. The minutes are a complete and factual record of action taken by the Board of Education at its Study Session of July 28, 2009.

THESE PROCEEDINGS WERE AUDIO TAPED PURSUANT TO GOV. CODE § 54953.5

CALL TO ORDER: The Board of Education opened the meeting at 5:35 p.m. to convene into a Study Session to discuss the Board of Education's Priorities.

ROLL CALL: Aye – Ashe Aye – Baca Aye – Holguin Aye – Sayre Aye – Vackar

Administration Present

Rowena Lagrosa, Superintendent
Robert Crank, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services
Barbara Davis, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services
Betsy Sample, Director, English Language Learners' Program
Francine Story, Director, Budget and Finance
Estuardo Santillan, Business Manager
Debbie Fay, Principal, Mountain View
Chris Schiermeyer Principal, Landmark
Nancy Ross, Principal, Palm
Cheryl Smith, Principal, Sunnymeadows
Melissa Bazanos, Principal, Edgemont
Sheryl Sanford, Administrative Assistant

Visitors

Paula Pelton	Maureen King	Janet MacMillan
Debra Craig	Lisa Broomfield	Debi Rozeski
Graciela Ramos	Patty Rucker	

STUDY SESSION

- Board of Education's Priorities

Board President Vackar stated that the last time priorities were reviewed was the summer of 2006. This evening, the goals were going to be revisited for the upcoming instructional year.

Superintendent Lagrosa reviewed the procedure used to develop the operating guidelines, core values, mission statement, and goals.

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SUPERINTENDENT
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Goals:

- Raise the achievement for all students
- Develop and implement strategies to close achievement gap
- Use assessment data on an ongoing basis to measure learning
- Develop and implement strategies to improve student attendance
- Develop and implement a public relations plan to improve internal and external communication actions and communicate clearly
- Respect and recognize the role of all District employees
- Continue stable, effective, and efficient business/support services
- Achieve accountability at all levels
- Ensure that all staff development is aligned to student improvement
- Ensure that all educational facilities are maintained in order to provide a safe learning and teaching environment for students and staff
- Respect and value human rights and the community's diversity
- Parent Engagement: The District will work to ensure that parents are engaged in their child's education through partnerships established within each school community.

President Vackar asked for a status on where the Superintendent believes the goals are after three years.

Superintendent Lagrosa stated:

- Based upon the data, we are closing the achievement gap in some of our subgroups. Results for the 2008-09 school year will be received shortly.
- We are closing the gap for our English Learners but not yet with our students with disabilities or our African American subgroups.
- API has increased over the past three years. The students moving into proficiency and advanced has increased but we are not yet meeting our AYP as a District.
- Based upon the strategies we have implemented to improve student attendance, we have seen an increase in attendance over the last three years.
- A safe learning environment is shown by our expulsion and suspension rates that have decreased over the last three years.
- We work to ensure that our staff development is aligned to student improvement and our core instructional programs.
- We have worked to ensure that we monitor our expenditures and have effective business services in place to ensure position control and expenditures that are allowed by the individual funding source.

Superintendent Lagrosa stated that the Board wanted to discuss the priorities related to the path that the District has taken and where the Board would like to see us move. In light of the current fiscal situation, we have assured that our core instructional program will be the basis for all of our work in terms of our staff development and instructional programs. Mrs. Lagrosa referred to the packet that was presented at the July 13th Study Session. It contained our goals, some of the data she just referred to, the core instructional program identified by CAMM, and instructional priorities that were presented to the Board during the last school year.

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There was extensive Board discussion. A concern was raised regarding the inconsistent application of the rules. Things are being done that are out of step with Board Policy. A Board member stated that he may not understand everything about education but does know program, policy, and procedure. There has been willful disregard for the position the Board has presented. The Board places trust in staff based on Board policy, but it seems to fly out the window. Inconsistency starts with the Board with split votes, but members have been mindful and respectful of each other. We all need to go back to what the policy is and know that this is where the Board is putting its' focus.

Another concern was long range planning. A Board member stated that if something is needed, put it on the agenda. Don't wait until the last minute to get things accomplished. Better structure is needed to tell us where we are going and what we are doing for the next two or three years. He said that there are planners and seekers. Seekers are looking for modifications to the plan. The plan isn't good any more because you have the new concept that is always seeking for alternatives, solutions, and fixes. He doesn't have a problem with that. His problem is that nobody is seeking and nobody is planning. We all need to plan for the next fiscal year. It was suggested that the District look at developing a strategic plan. Having a strategic plan will help us throughout the years. We can go back and check the plan and make adjustments as needed. A five year Strategic Plan is needed.

A question was raised regarding whether or not the Board was micromanaging. Micromanaging is a direct result of lack of trust. A lot of money has been spent on some unique, innovative changes but what did we learn from them? Did anyone qualify it? Did an administrator go over and look at it for future reference?

A presentation was requested that included comparisons and numbers to see if the goals are being met. Are we closing the achievement gap? What is being done? What has worked and what hasn't worked? Do we need to change the goal to make it more specific? More information is needed to see what are we doing differently now. What was the outcome of the programs that were used at the schools to raise the achievement gap? Should we implement them district wide?

It was suggested that everyone get together to look at and analyze our goals, but we need the data to see where we are and what we have done that includes input from the schools. We need to monitor our successes and failures. What have we done since 2006? Are there different policies and procedures?

It was suggested that a Study Session be held on a Saturday to see where we are, what progress has been made, and what we need to do to continue to reach the goals. An analysis of what has happened over the past few years is needed. New goals should be set that comply with the requirements. As changes take place, the requirements must change.

A Board member thinks we have too many goals and they should be narrowed down. We then need to get the message out. It was suggested that we bring in a consultant to review the original goals, where we are at, how well we are doing, what worked, and what didn't work. The areas for goals should be student achievement, dropouts, and financial oversight. The community and employees need to know what programs are still available and what type of options they have.

It was suggested that the goals be framed. They must include direction and be measured, not just written out even if it means creating new policy or forms that must be submitted to the Board. It would bring a sense of fairness and keep the Board in the loop. There needs to be uniformity in the process.

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A question was raised as to whether or not the Superintendent's goals were aligned with the District's goals.

There was another request for statistics. A copy of the July 13th PowerPoint was distributed that included much of the requested data.

A presentation was requested regarding suspension and expulsion rates that are decreasing. Number comparisons are needed by gender and race. What have we done to help the decrease?

A question was raised about why the Board was at the meeting and what they are supposed to do. Mrs. Lagrosa stated that she was informed by the Board that this would be a discussion that would emanate from the Board in terms of its' priorities. She had previously asked what more the Board would like to have and was told that this would be a discussion led by the Board. She stated that she has made note of the information that had been requested and would be able to provide it in greater detail.

A concern was raised about the dropout rate. Data was requested by ethnicity. Are the programs working? How does it influence the budget? What is needed at the sites? How the impact of it is going affect the sites? How is the dropout rate being measured? Are we using resources in the community to help with this? Are we reporting this correctly? Do we need training? The decisions the Board makes affects the sites.

Good things are happening in the District. It was suggested that we work closely with the press to publish good things about our District. A Board member stated that we need to have a good relationship with our associations, the community, and all stakeholders.

The budget is still a concern. It was suggested that the Board members receive a monthly financial report. Receiving a report once per year is not enough to stay on top of the changing budget. It was also stated that position control is very important. We need the right amount of people in the right places.

It was stated that we need to really stretch our dollars. The sites are really feeling it, some more than others because they do not receive any additional resources.

It was stated that we need a three year budget plan. We may be fine next year, but what will the third year look like if we burn through the stimulus money? Will there need to be additional layoffs?

A question was raised about some of the programs that we are funding and whether or not they are worth the money. We need more structure and accountability. Dr. Davis described the Adult Education program and how the money was used strategically to improve the program and send it in a new direction. It was stated that the hiring process for Adult Ed needs to be transparent. A Board member requested clarification on how the Adult Ed teachers are funded. Mr. Crank stated that, last year, the teachers were paid through the General Fund. This year, their hours were decreased to pay for a counselor. Mrs. MacMillan stated that teachers are funded out of federal dollars. She stated that there was a decrease in the number of sessions offered, but it wasn't trading teacher time for a counselor. A Board member stated that this was the first time he had heard that we have federal grant money for Adult Ed. Dr. Davis explained that the funds were disclosed on a double wide page of categoricals that addressed the funding for Adult Ed. A Board member asked if some of this money could have been used to balance the budget. He asked if the \$500,000 could have been used for general fund projects like preserving some of the counseling programs that were cut. Dr. Davis explained that there are specific expenditures that are required under the federal funds. Mrs. MacMillan gave an overview regarding how the process was used to determine the Adult Ed budget.

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A Board member asked where the money came from that preserved positions that were going to be eliminated. Mr. Crank stated that the money came from other funding sources such as Title I, EIA, etc. Ms. Vackar explained that school plans were revised to use their money differently. Mrs. Lagrosa explained that some of the costs were moved over to EIA which is Tier I and the schools used their discretion, based on their priorities, to use this funding as opposed to the SLIBG funding.

A question was raised about the way the budget is being managed. If expenditures are good, put them on an agenda and bring them forward. Maybe we need to change the way we approve things. We have good goals and a good sense of direction. We need better business practices. Mrs. Lagrosa explained that when items come to her attention or to Cabinet's attention, if they aren't aligned with appropriate practice or the core program, they put an immediate stop to them. Staff that made that decision are reminded of the appropriate practice and dealt with appropriately. A Board member stated that we must be consistent, fair, and equitable. We need to work by the book and if you don't like it, change it.

A Board member stated that our next step should be that we need a budget that is well explained and well planned so that everyone knows what is driving the budget.

A Board member stated that the Superintendent and Cabinet need to be on the same page. They will set the direction for the entire District. He recommended that the Superintendent be the leader and should keep the team together. Inappropriate conduct should be reported to the Superintendent. If nothing is done, it should be reported to the Board.

Mrs. Lagrosa stated that to present the District's goals that were established, we need to focus on the following areas: What has been our progress toward achieving the goals? What does the data tell us regarding our progress? What do we need to continue doing? What would we like to do differently? If we choose to use our goals, as a starting point for our strategic planning, we should present to the Board and the public the steps that we have taken over the past years to achieve these goals. A Board member is not convinced that we need outside help because we have extraordinary staff that can handle the strategic planning.

A question was raised about when we will start collapsing classes. When will these tough decisions be made? Dr. Davis stated that we will probably have to add classes because we staffed everything tightly. These are also hard decisions because students will still need to be moved. We staffed conservatively and will not add until we actually see the students enrolled.

Mrs. MacMillan stated that the goals need to be clearly tied to the budget. Classes need to be essential, core, and basic no matter how they are funded because the budget will probably be worse next year. Mrs. Lagrosa stated that CAMM has identified what is core at the elementary, middle, and high school level. They are already working on reduction ideas. A Board member stated that sites must be clean, safe, staffed correctly, and jobs must be preserved. If we truly get to the core level, he will commit to depleting every resource that we have to maintain that level of service and staff. Dr. Davis stated that the frills are gone. Schools have what they need to offer classes and nothing else. High schools have athletics and electives. We must decide if arts and athletics are luxury or core because it keeps students engaged and in school which decreases the dropout level and increases the graduation rate. Dr. Davis stated that options for saving money would come from looking at the class sizes, stopping CAHSEE classes, eliminating Adult Education, eliminating the Cal Safe program, eliminating training teachers on new curriculum, the number of school days could be cut, and cutting transportation.

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A Board member asked how we measure the program? Dr. Davis stated that we have to agree on what data gives us the information we need. Does the data presented give you information you need or do you need some other information? Do the number of suspensions, as they decrease, give you the information? Do the number of dropouts give you the information? Does the rising or lowering API give you the information? The critical piece is, how did we get there? If it isn't working, what are we going to do differently?

A Board member stated that he wants an open, honest dialog when we make decisions. Everyone should be treated equitably and fairly. He wants good governance.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Board of Education, the Study Session was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON CLOSED SESSION AGENDA

There were no public comments on the Closed Session agenda.

CONVENE
INTO CLOSED
SESSION:

The Board of Education convened into Closed Session to discuss Public Employee Employment/Appointment, Conference with Legal Counsel – Existing Litigation, and Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation at 7:30 p.m.

The Board of Education reconvened into Open Session at 9:29 p.m.

REPORT OUT
OF CLOSED
SESSION:

The Board of Education gave direction to administration regarding existing litigation on two cases. They also met with a potential candidate for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Business Services. The Closed Session was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.