

Santa Ana Unified School District  
1601 E. Chestnut Avenue  
Santa Ana, California 92701

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING  
SANTA ANA BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 3, 2007

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Board President Richardson. Other members in attendance were Mrs. Avila, Dr. Yamagata-Noji, Mr. Hernandez, and Mr. Palacio.

Cabinet members present were Ms. Russo, Mr. Trigg, Mr. Lopez, Dr. Stainer, Dr. Bratcher, and Ms. Lohnes.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by President Richardson.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/PRESENTATIONS:

President Richardson asked members of the community who wished to address the Board to step to the podium.

There were no public comments.

Evaluation of Special Education Programs

Ms. Lohnes, Assistant Superintendent, Support Services, began the presentation by introducing Special Education administrators, program specialists, teachers, and parents in attendance. She then introduced Mr. Goldfinger, Ms. Kubinec, and Ms. Popp from School Services of California, Inc., who collectively provided the presentation.

Mr. Goldfinger and staff stated that School Services of California, Inc., was asked to review the District's special education program and provide ideas to increase cost-efficiency and effectiveness, improve program quality, validate strengths and identify weaknesses within the Special Education program. A comprehensive evaluation was conducted utilizing data from the 2005-06 school year. They began by identifying the program facts that included expenditures. They discussed findings and recommendations concerning fiscal analysis, pupil count, program model, staffing caseloads, class sizes, program management, staff development, relationships with parents, and technology. Mr. Goldfinger stated that the District operates many high-quality special education programs, but there is room for improvement. He stated that the District is poised to make a culture change and that there are many recommendations, which the District will need to prioritize. He added that it makes sense to start by piloting new strategies

and approaches to see what impact the change will have. He stated that special education is not a separate program, but everyone's responsibility. He added that District is committed and has the expertise to improve the cost-effectiveness and quality of its special education program.

Board discussion ensued with Mr. Goldfinger, Ms. Kubinec, and Ms. Popp addressing questions from the Board.

The Board requested information and/or follow up in Week In Review or at the subsequent Board meeting concerning the following:

- Suggested that an instruction or training manual be developed in the area of procedures
- That a *critical goal* would provide centralized direction and deal with parent concerns proactively
- Suggested that a survey instrument be sent to schools and be included at the secondary level
- Useful tool similar to the *stop-light report* or an *at-a-glance mechanism* that would provide indicators where staff reports progress
- The number of special education students at each school site
- Impact of students in group homes
- Provide a report regarding special education students who will attend Godinez Fundamental
- Update the Board in 90-days regarding next steps
- Provide plan for hiring special education staff recommended in the report

Ms. Lohnes, Assistant Superintendent Support Services, provided a presentation in response to the report of School Services of California, Inc. She said that ownership must be at all levels and that a culture must be created that strengthens the bond between general and special education staff. A teacher survey regarding literacy will be conducted with a priority to improve the achievement of students in special education. Ms. Lohnes discussed staff development for the 2007-08 school year, and stated that general and special education would work together to provide intervention support to all students. She spoke about program models, legal direction for mainstreaming, expanding the program by hiring two occupational and three physical therapists to serve students rather than consultants. She discussed technology and the Special Education Information System (SEIS) Web-based IEP program. She stated that she has begun clarifying roles and responsibilities at all levels with meetings currently taking place. She talked about due process activity and responding quickly to parents' requests for Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), and working cooperatively with juvenile court staff to avoid costly legal proceedings.

#### MEETING RECESSED AND RECONVENED

At 8:25 p.m., the Regular Meeting was recessed for a brief intermission. The Regular meeting reconvened at 8:45 p.m.

#### Open Court Update

Dr. Stainer, Assistant Superintendent Elementary Education; Freda Odum, Director of Elementary Student Achievement; and Marjorie Cochran, Reading First Administrator presented an overview of the *Open Court Reading Program* and *Write From the Beginning* writing support strategies. Dr. Stainer stated that the *Open Court Reading Program* (OCR) was adopted by the Board of Education in 2003 as the base reading/language arts program for elementary schools. She stated that four of the five program components worked very well for our students and teachers. In the area of writing, however, teachers began expressing their concern with the writing component. They

stated that the students were not making the level of progress that was expected. Several teachers had worked with *Write From the Beginning* strategies and began using them along with the OCR base program. They reported that student progress increased at a more rapid rate with these strategies enhancing the base OCR Program. The *Write from the Beginning* strategies together with *Thinking Maps* were brought to the Instructional Leadership Team, per Board Policy, to be reviewed by those wishing to implement it at other sites and to receive training. Following review, training was offered on a voluntary basis to school sites, to be used in addition to the *Open Court* writing program. Dr. Stainer stated that the current training was stopped mid-course due to board member request.

Following training, teachers who used the program, together with the *Open Court* writing stated that student writing greatly improved. Dr. Stainer clarified that the strategies were optional and not intended to replace any components of the base program.

A video was presented showing classroom clips of several classroom teachers and students during writing instruction. Mrs. Odum outlined the details of the Reading First and Sequoia grants. She described the challenges experienced in the classroom. She provided an overview of the supplemental materials *Thinking Maps* and *Write From the Beginning*, described training and staff development, and talked about literacy coaches and support staff from the District to help schools succeed. Mrs. Odum stated that the *Open Court Reading Program* has proven to be successful and is fully implemented in all schools.

Mrs. Jennifer Charles, classroom teacher at Manuel Esqueda Elementary School, also provided an *Open Court* presentation. Mrs. Charles outlined API and AYP statistics, and Reading First grant timelines for implementation. Mrs. Charles stated that the focus and simplicity of *Open Court Reading* as approved by the state and SAUSD contains all the components and routines to produce fluent, comprehensive readers and writers. Mrs. Charles stated that the *Write From the Beginning* and *Thinking Map* strategies were not optional and diluted the core program. She recommended a return to the core program exclusively, the removal of all "unapproved" materials/programs from classrooms, the training of staff and administration on the use of core-adopted program through model instruction videos, AB trainings, and publisher assistance.

Dr. Stainer stated that following investigation, it was determined that at Manuel Esqueda Elementary, the *Write From the Beginning* strategies had been required, rather than being voluntary as was the District policy. This mistake in implementation has been remedied and the strategies are now voluntary.

Mrs. Avila suggested that the *Open Court Program* be the sole program throughout the District and that a committee be developed having Mrs. Charles as the Chair, to train school sites in the use of the *Open Court* core program exclusively.

Dr. Stainer reiterated that the *Write From the Beginning* strategies were intended to be voluntary, to be supplementary in nature, that the core *Open Court* program is required in all classrooms, and that all teachers had received training in the core program.

When questioned about the expense of funds for *Write From the Beginning* and *Thinking Maps* training and materials, Dr. Stainer explained that the District receives categorical funds which are intended to be spent on materials and staff to support English Learners in making core curriculum accessible for all students. Access to the core curriculum includes

specialized personnel (i.e. coaches), as well as multiple supplemental strategies and programs.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

FUTURE MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, April 10, 2007, at 6:00 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Jane Russo  
Secretary  
Board of Education