

SOLANO COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
5100 Business Center Drive
Fairfield, California

MINUTES
Special Meeting
August 25, 2009

2009 – 2010 Planning Session

The Solano County Board of Education met in special session on Tuesday, August 25, 2009, at 5100 Business Center Drive, Fairfield, California.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board President John Galvan called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

John Galvan, President
Larry Asera, Vice President
Mayrene Bates
Doug Ford
Raymond Silva
Rozzana Verder-Aliga

Members Absent:

Maria Kennedy

Mr. Galvan noted that a quorum was present as was Solano County Superintendent of Schools Dee Alarcón serving as Secretary to the Board.

Others Present:

County Superintendent of Schools Office –

Rob Phillips

Lettie Allen

Lisette Estrella-Henderson

Jay Speck

Laryn Bishop

Sam Neustadt

Steve Ramos

Sheldon Reber

III. APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Sam Neustadt, Assistant Superintendent of SELPA, requested that the Board move item IV.(d) Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) to a time earlier on the agenda so he may address the topic and then leave the meeting to handle an urgent matter that has arisen.

Motion was made by Mr. Asera, seconded by Mrs. Bates, and unanimously carried by those present to approve and adopt the agenda with the requested change, moving Mr. Neustadt's item to IV.(b) immediately following (a) Management Organizational Chart Update.

IV. 2009 – 2010 PLANNING SESSION

Mrs. Alarcón thanked the Board members for their attendance and flexibility in changing the meeting time to accommodate the charter matter held just prior to this meeting. Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) Cabinet members will present planned areas of focus for the 2009-10 year and talk about the changes that lie ahead. The number of presenters has been pared down from previous years.

(a) Management Organizational Chart Update

Copies of the 2009-10 Management Organizational Chart were distributed. There are no additional positions planned in the coming year, but some have been deleted and changes made to others as a result of district requests. Due to cutbacks in their own districts, the top two

areas in which the districts need SCOE's assistance this year are: (1) expansion of the Alternative Education program; and (2) enhancement of Career/Technical Education (CTE). As reported to the Board at its regular meeting last June, Janet Harden will no longer oversee alternative education programs but will instead focus on CTE, especially in the Vallejo City and Fairfield-Suisun Unified School Districts; Rick Vaccaro is now the Director of Alternative Education and will report directly to Rob Phillips; and Darlene Perez has been moved to the Educational Services Department where she will, among other duties, manage the Mental Health Grant. Additional duties have been assigned to Lettie Allen including oversight of the trustee area redistricting that will result from the upcoming 2010 census.

(b) Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

Mr. Neustadt said the SELPA will focus on some new and different areas in the coming year to reflect the changing needs of Solano County's school districts and its SCOE clients. He mentioned the incredible influx of new special education administrators in the districts, many of whom have 2 or less years in their current positions, as well as new chief business officials and superintendents with limited experience in the realm of SELPA. This has made it necessary for SCOE to collectively try to help the new folks understand how we do business in Solano County. We are working with the special education directors on funding models and services and with the Council of Superintendents (COS) to ensure continuity in policy and practice. Due to the changing financial situation of the state budget, it is often difficult to maintain a shared activity within the county and with our partnering agencies such as the Regional Center and County Mental Health Department, as we receive student referrals and try to match them with the appropriate needed services.

In the coming year, the COS wants to be on the record concerning issues that affect children by increasing advocacy at the state and federal levels and has asked our office to develop language and provide input for the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). We are optimistic that we can achieve this goal, in part due to Mr. Neustadt's current position as Chair of the statewide SELPA organization. SELPA will continue to offer staff development in areas of need identified by the districts' special education directors and aid them as they apply for special education stimulus dollars while continuing to look for other pots of stimulus funding to tap into. SELPA is currently working with interagency partners to determine the intended and unintended effects of legislation on special education. For example, if cost-cutting measures by the legislature cut off funding for children at the age of three, SELPA needs to know how it will affect what we can offer the 3-year-olds when they are referred to us.

In recent months it was determined that the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) no longer applies to students in special education or with a 504 plan, but there is no differentiation between short- and long-term impairment. As a result, many legal challenges are anticipated, and there is widespread concern about potential legal action centered on discrimination against a protected class of individuals. Under this legislation, a student could graduate without taking the CAHSEE if s/he has enough credits and meets the other graduation requirements. As currently written, it is not retroactive, but there is uncertainty about whether a student who dropped out of high school could come back to graduate arguing that it is a continuation of his/her prior education. SELPAs statewide are attempting to develop a consensus on how to handle situations such as these.

(c) Administrative Services and Operations

Lettie Allen, Associate Superintendent of Administrative Services and Operations, shared that she has been with SCOE for 5 years, worked in Solano County for 9 years, and has been in the field of education for 33 years.

- Internal Business Services

Due to continued changes in the state budget, there is no reassurance that there will not be further reductions to education funding in the months ahead. SCOE is beginning its budget development in September rather than waiting until the usual spring timeframe after the Governor's annual budget revisions. Working closely together as a Cabinet and switching some areas of responsibility has helped us learn more about each other's departments. In the coming year, we will be looking at all of SCOE's departments and programs from the perspective of our goals, mission, and required functions to ensure we are meeting these expectations. Cabinet members will continue discussions with the district cabinets and make changes, as needed, to our blend of oversight and provided services. This is a time when the districts need SCOE's support, maybe more than ever before. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) dollars and fiscal flexibility opportunity are one-time options and will end, so we must plan accordingly and maintain a long-term focus. SCOE is fortunate to have the benefit of a strong financial position to carry us through this challenging time.

- District Business Services

Staff has finished reviewing the districts' budgets. All but one received approval or conditional approval (Travis USD). We are still reviewing Vallejo City USD's budget and have asked CDE for an extension to August 31, 2009, in order to fully examine it. If the VCUSD budget is conditional or rejected, the district will have a little time to make the necessary revisions. Mrs. Alarcón added that the district's acting superintendent has become the interim superintendent, and we need a clear view of how the district makes its decision and who is the decision-making authority (interim superintendent, state administrator, etc.). Since CDE reinstated some of the governing board's powers, SCOE does not have as much oversight control now.

This year's focus is moving toward cash flow management. Deferrals by the state meant fewer funds came in over the summer, and funds that were formerly restricted are now able to be used as unrestricted creating a choice in many programs of using these dollars in a different way than before. We are watching how the districts will manage one-time money, learning a new way of accounting for these funds, and closely monitoring details such as position control. Some business offices are struggling through the accounting changes, so we are supporting and working with the districts on the guidelines and expectations and holding them accountable.

- Facilities/Maintenance

SCOE applied for and received approval for about \$16 million in hardship funds to be used for construction and modernization projects, but the money is currently on hold due to the state's financial predicament. We will need a bond in 2010 to provide funds in order to move forward on these projects. Work done over the summer used deferred maintenance and redevelopment money since we have not received any state funds, and much of the labor was completed by qualified staff rather than outside contractors. Some of the projects being done include work on the interior of buildings at the Golden Hills Education Center; moving the audiology suite to Golden Hills from the now closed Amy Blanc Elementary School; building kitchens and classrooms to support the new transition programs; and modernizing facilities at K.I. Jones Elementary, Sem Yeto Continuation, Armijo High, and Silveyville schools. Our focus in the coming year will be on maintaining our existing sites and updating our five-year deferred maintenance plan.

- Information Services/Technology

For most of the past year, SCOE has been providing IS and technology services to Dixon USD because the district had no trained staff to handle it internally. We dealt with system failures and server crashes with no backups at the high school and two elementary schools. We have given the district our IS recommendations and identified funds with which they may hire

someone to develop and maintain DUSD's technology systems, and we will be transitioning these duties back to DUSD in the coming months.

The state has mandated additional unfunded initiatives including the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CalPADS), an information system that ties student achievement to demographics and teacher data, so the IS/Technology Department has been working on this project. Additionally, the issue of the H1N1 influenza has prompted implementation of a staff and parent communication system via e-mail, cell phone texts, and other methods of contact.

There was discussion about the level of spam filtering in SCOE's e-mail system. Although the amount of unwanted e-mails can be irritating, Mrs. Allen stated that improvements had been made recently to reduce this nuisance. A few years ago, SCOE switched to a less expensive product called Lightspeed that does not have all the features of the former system, but Steve Ramos, Director of Information Services/Technology, continues to contact the vendor on ways to improve the product. The spam notices can be turned off, but there is a risk that a desired message may be missed. We continue to evaluate the e-mail system and look for affordable options.

- Transportation

The Transportation Department has stabilized after the Fairfield-Suisun USD took back several of its routes last year. The reduction of routes prompted a few drivers to retire, others went to work for the districts, and some left the occupation for the time being. We will continue to work with FSUSD when our buses need repairs, and those declared obsolete will be put up for auction. There seem to be more districts increasing their use of commercial bus services, especially for fieldtrips and athletics. We recently established a new bus route in Dixon for the Easter Seals program.

- Human Resources

Jay Speck, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, said the state's financial issues and subsequent cuts to education funding have forced a change in SCOE's collective bargaining. We are fortunate to have an interest-based approach in place that allows us to solve problems while maintaining a positive relationship. The economic decline experienced last year stunned everyone, and the bargaining process basically stalled because we did not know where the economy was headed or when the downturn would stop. In the past, most contract changes were an improvement, but now we are faced with many challenges, among them:

- (1) Caps on medical benefits, which essentially cuts employee salaries because they are paying more out of pocket than they did last year. Our Health Benefits Committee continues to search for providers but has not yet found any who can do better for us than what we already have;
- (2) Legislation recently passed allowing districts to reduce instruction by five days without any penalties. This is a topic that must be collectively bargained, but for SCOE it is especially daunting because we are a service provider that has to work whenever the districts are in session and cannot reduce workdays unless the districts do so also or we would be out of compliance;
- (3) SCOE already has three noninstructional days scheduled but may need to look at staff buyback days for instructional development next year;
- (4) SCOE may end up having the highest compensated employees in the county, a position we have never been in before. As a service provider, we must provide a good service at a good price or we, unlike a district, will be out of business, so we prefer to stay in the second or third position; and

- (5) Step and column freezes are having a huge impact, and more grievances often result from the lack of salary increases. SCOE's employee groups, however, know management is in this together with them.

Mr. Speck is very involved in working on the H1N1 influenza matter and has arranged for a county doctor to come speak to the district superintendents at their monthly meeting on Friday. A widespread outbreak will be a challenge to human resources departments if a lot of employees contract the disease and call in sick, and there are not sufficient substitutes to fill in for them. We must be prepared to move people around in order to cover any staff shortages and ensure the safety of the students. If schools cannot support student safety due to these shortages, it can cause a state of emergency. SCOE may need to look to its managers to step in where needed. To date there has been a good flow of information from county and federal health officials. Children are one of the groups at high risk of contracting H1N1, and it is hoped that most will receive the vaccine scheduled to be available in October. The issue becomes more complicated since it appears that a series of two shots is needed to vaccinate each individual. At this time, county health officials are not planning to use school sites as immunization centers.

(d) Student Programs and Educational Services

Rob Phillips, Associate Superintendent of Student Programs and Educational Services, said the department's reorganization last year had worked well, and he expects this year's changes to be equally successful. He is in his ninth year with SCOE.

- Career Technical Education

One outcome from the Cabinet to Cabinet meetings was that the districts requested that SCOE focus more on career and technical education (CTE) rather than the regionalized occupational program (ROP). While ROP is still one of the components in CTE, it is no longer the center of the services, so that prompted the program's name change. In line with the 2008-2012 statewide plan, we are developing a countywide checklist to assess the program to make sure there is coherent system alignment, student leadership, etc. The districts want SCOE to shift its leadership, resources, and funding toward this area, and, now with the Tier 3 flexibility option, we have a steady stream of funds for the next three years. Since funding is no longer tied to ROP ADA, we intend to expand the types of services offered. Attendance is still an important objective, but funding is set at the level it was in 2007-08, meaning that if the program grows, no additional money is received; however, if enrollment declines, we will receive no less funding.

SCOE's partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) program, a new component of SCOE's T2 (Transition Partnership and WorkAbility II programs) Department, will enable us to expand services for students who meet the Department of Rehabilitation's requirements but didn't pass the CAHSEE. Marsha Ludwig, Senior Director of Special Education, is working closely with Janet Harden, Senior Director of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development, and Susan Labrecque, Program Manager of CTE/Workforce Development, to combine services and better serve our clients. At the end of last year, SCOE closed three ROP classes. All of those teachers are employed elsewhere. Last year we also started a successful mentor program through the local Rotary Club for the juvenile court and community school students at Golden Hills, and we will continue that program along with a career fair this year. Mrs. Harden is serving as SCOE's lead for a regional CTE grant project that we anticipate will strengthen our role in the community in the coming year. SCOE will continue to invest in the areas in which the districts want our leadership.

- Special Education

The Special Education Department has experienced a lot of facilities changes in recent months. SCOE's facilities staff has done a stellar job in making everything go smoothly. Two new

transition classes have been added to the Golden Hills site, one of which is completely compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and has lower counters and better accessibility, while the other classroom reflects the majority of the world so students can learn to work within that environment, too. We are considering turning one classroom into a replica of an apartment to aid students in learning to live in that type of situation. A new autism class has begun at Vaca Peña Middle School, and, as previously mentioned, the audiology suite was moved from Amy Blanc to Golden Hills where it underwent a renovation including a new air system, and new paint and carpet. Mrs. Ludwig and her administrative staff also moved to Golden Hills from the Irene Larsen Center. Some other classes were moved to new locations due to school closures in the FSUSD.

Among the new programs to be provided this year is direct service home instruction for special education students who are hospital- or homebound due to medical reasons. SCOE will continue to offer professional development pertaining to special education legal compliance issues.

- Alternative Education

As previously mentioned, Rick Vaccaro has been named Director of Alternative Education. He will continue to manage SCOE's programs for juvenile court and community school students at Golden Hills and in the Juvenile Detention Facility. Teachers are undergoing training for the program's new textbooks recently adopted by the Board. Since the textbooks align closely with the CAHSEE, it will help the students be on track for graduation when they return to their district school. Mr. Vaccaro is also working in partnership with the CTE Department on the mentoring program for students. He has been working on the triennial countywide expulsion plan and with FSUSD's new pupil services coordinator in considering various additional services SCOE can provide such as short-term placement of students awaiting expulsion.

- Educational Services

Lisette Estrella-Henderson, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, said her department will focus on two primary goals this year: the efficient provision of services and maximizing and leverage resources. SCOE is expanding its intern program to include Pittsburgh along with Contra Costa County, but fewer interns will be served in an effort to provide a higher quality of service. As a result of recent district layoffs, more credentialed teachers are participating this year.

Professional development will be looking at a standardized method of consistency in providing resources to each meeting so all groups are treated the same.

There will be an increased emphasis on partnerships and collaboration. The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) grant, signed by the Board of Supervisors earlier this month, will enable SCOE to provide behavioral support services and coordinate data collection. SCOE's partnership with U.C. Davis is shifting from the 8th grade history cohort to 11th grade and adding a mathematics cohort is under consideration. We are looking at a partnership with ARCHES to fund a local P-16 Council headed by Janet Harden that would start with a \$10,000 planning grant to examine the changing workforce in our county. Our partnership with First 5 Solano has been funded for another year to provide the Preschool For All program with the goal of increasing the number of preschool slots countywide to serve more children. All districts in our county currently have preschool programs, and, although SCOE does not provide these services, we are working to increase the number of children who can participate in the programs now that more facilities are available due to school closures. Touro University is helping us provide professional development to preschool providers.

We are also partnering this year with the Solano Narcotics Enforcement Team (SOL-NET) and the County District Attorney to develop a video on bullying, similar to the one previously produced on binge drinking.

The Friday Night Live program is working with the juvenile court and community schools on prevention services. Foster and homeless youth are receiving expanded support and services as well.

The more exposure SCOE has in the community, the better our leverage and opportunities to acquire additional resources and funding opportunities.

In addition to our support of the districts, Educational Services also wants to expand and provide support for our internal programs. As previously mentioned, math training is taking place for the juvenile court and community school teachers, and special education staff is being trained in the use of flip cameras to help monitor student progress and achievement of IEP goals.

Sheldon Reber, Public Information Officer, will take part in the P-16 initiative as it develops. He oversees SCOE's website, which continues to grow as the departments place more information on it. The addition of a "Contact Us" feature is generating lots of e-mails from the public on a variety of topics. He will continue to produce the state and federal legislative platforms, annual report calendar, and the countywide newsletter *Schools In Action* that successfully takes education news into over 40,000 households with each issue.

(e) 2008-2011 Strategic Planning Update

The members of Cabinet continuously work with their staff members to tweak SCOE's programs and ensure progress toward the Strategic Plan's goals. Cabinet has met to contemplate what changes may need to take place to SCOE's Strategic Plan now that the needs of the districts have shifted. Although the Plan remains in effect until 2011 when it will be rewritten, it remains an active, yet flexible, guideline that can be adjusted when the situation calls for it and our work needs to move in another direction. The Plan is an overview of what drives our efforts, and all that we do should be tied to its objectives.

Mrs. Bates said it is important for the Board to know what is contained in the Plan so they can talk about it in the community especially when times are tough and the public seems so critical of education. Members can contact staff with any questions about how the critical issues are being handled.

Mr. Phillips added that during SCOE's management meetings last year, an exercise was done in which the managers discussed how they can contribute toward the Plan's goals. The operational action steps are always changing, so the managers talked about how we could address the critical issues, put strategies in place and make them operational, evaluate our accomplishments, then look for new action plans to help us reach the goals.

It was decided that it would be helpful to have a copy of SCOE's organizational chart and Strategic Plan placed in the Board's meeting folders each month for the members' review as needed.

V. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

There were no comments from the community.

VI. BOARD DISCUSSION

There were no questions from the Board.

VII. WRAP-UP/EVALUATION +/-▲

Mr. Speck facilitated the discussion about what the group liked best about the planning session and what needed to be changed for next year's meeting.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condensed meeting format• Fewer meeting participants enabled a more streamlined meeting• Intimacy of the meeting room facilitated greater sharing• Handouts were kept to a minimum• The date, time, and length of meeting were convenient, and the notification timeframe was good• Prefer the futuristic approach of this year's reports; shows staff is in planning mode and looking ahead• Enjoy hearing about what will be done differently in the coming year rather than what SCOE is already doing• Synergy and continuity of the Cabinet members helps work run smoothly and stay focused on SCOE's programs• The SCOE management team has grown professionally in recent years and has used its expertise to lead and help the districts• Sees future growth potential in the career/tech education concepts, partnerships, and collaborations, allowing entities to share resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Missed the coffee and donuts usually available at early morning meetings

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Alarcón thanked everyone for attending and participating. Board members are encouraged to e-mail or meet individually with the appropriate department head whenever more information is desired or questions arise during the year.

There being no further business, Mr. Galvan adjourned the meeting at 12:46 PM.