

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

MINUTES
Special Meeting
August 16, 2011

2011 – 2012 Study Session

The Solano County Board of Education met in special session on Tuesday, August 16, 2011, at 5100 Business Center Drive, Fairfield, California.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board President Larry Asera (Trustee Area 5) called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present

Larry Asera, President
Rozzana Verder-Aliga, Ed.D., Vice President
Mayrene Bates
Michelle Coleman
Doug Ford
John Galvan
Raymond Silva

Mr. Asera noted that a quorum was present as was Solano County Superintendent of Schools Jay Speck serving as Secretary to the Board.

Others Present:

County Superintendent of Schools Office –

Lettie Allen	Laryn Bishop	Monica Ross
Lisette Estrella-Henderson	Sam Neustadt	Sheldon Reber
Janet Harden		

III. APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Mr. Galvan, seconded by Mrs. Bates, and unanimously carried by those present to approve and adopt the agenda as presented.

IV. 2011 – 2012 STUDY SESSION

(a) Welcome, Purpose, Organizational Chart Update

Mr. Speck welcomed those present and congratulated the four Board incumbents who are unopposed in the November 8, 2011, election. Retaining the existing members will provide stability during the challenging times ahead, save money that would have been spent on election costs, and maintain the good rapport among the current Board and staff.

Mr. Speck said the purpose of the meeting was to not only talk about SCOE's programs but also its new initiatives. As an organization, we must change to fit the times and strategically plan our movements by figuring out where to adjust and how. There is no more business as usual and no road map for this journey. At every meeting of the Cabinet, the team talks about what is happening and what are the new threats and opportunities. Board members have issues that are important to them and their constituents. People entrust their precious children to the public school system, so we know that the public's expectations of education are great, but the context now is completely different. Today's problems are very deep and complicated. Our students and staff are faced with many complex issues and pressures – social, mental, economic, political, etc. – making our environment very toxic.

Under the present system, all of our public schools will be deemed as failures by 2014. If education does not stay strong, our future is in peril. We have to talk about more than just the symptoms that we see and, instead, discover the bigger problems that are causing these indicators. Mr. Speck said he appreciates how this Board likes to think deeply about issues.

As the new school year gets started, Mr. Speck has visited several districts, schools, and classrooms. The students and teachers are excited about this academic year, and it is clear that our communities care about education.

Mr. Speck presented updates to the Solano County Office of Education's Management Organizational Chart for 2011-12. SCOE is fortunate to have such excellent Cabinet members. The chart shows how responsibilities are divided among them: Lisette Estrella-Henderson, Associate Superintendent of Student Programs and Educational Services, oversees the majority of those areas having to do with students and learning such as special education, alternative education, professional development, youth development, and curriculum; Lettie Allen, Associate Superintendent of Administrative Services and Operations, manages those areas that support the student programs such as finance, technology, facilities, and transportation; and Janet Harden, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources/Workforce Development, is responsible for the preparation of students for employment as well as one of SCOE's most important investments – who we hire and if they are a good fit in the organization. The chart is not significantly different from the 2010-11 chart, except there is one less Cabinet member. Rob Phillips was not replaced after his retirement, and Mrs. Estrella-Henderson has assumed his responsibilities.

Comments would be welcome during the Cabinet members' presentations, but Mr. Speck asked the Board members to jot down their questions on the paper provided to ask at the end. This will permit presentation of the entire framework first, and help the meeting stay on schedule for the expulsion appeals to be heard afterward.

(b) Student Programs and Educational Services

Mrs. Estrella-Henderson discussed the challenges, opportunities, initiatives, and areas of focus for those programs under her supervision.

- Special Education

The special education staff makes up the largest number of SCOE's employees. Marsha Ludwig, Senior Director, leads the department which will focus in the coming year on teacher quality to improve the learning experience for our students, expanding the Aspiring Administrator Program to successfully grow our own leaders, and professional development in the areas of core curriculum implementation and effective classrooms.

Mr. Ford asked about the relationship between the Delta Program and special education. Mrs. Estrella-Henderson explained that Delta began last winter and is still in its first year. The program is for students with behavioral issues in addition to special education issues. There is also a Sigma Program operated by the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District (FSUSD) for students with more severe behavior issues that are not necessarily tied to special education.

Dr. Verder-Aliga inquired whether the Aspiring Administrator Program was only for SCOE employees. Mrs. Estrella-Henderson stated that it was an internal program at this time, but it would likely work for districts also. Its first year was very successful, and we plan to expand it in the coming year.

- Alternative Education

Rick Vaccaro, Director, leads this department, which includes programs associated with the Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) and the Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS). The JCCS Program is under contract with FSUSD to serve its students and is located at the Golden Hills Education Center. Focus areas include: (1) implementation of the Local Education Agency Plan (LEAP) as presented to the Board at its August 10, 2011, regular meeting, that will serve as our Program Improvement action plan; (2) putting interactive SMART Boards in classrooms to help students actively engage in the

learning process, and providing professional development to teachers to learn how to use them in the classroom; and (3) working with the Probation Department and local school districts to develop transition plans for JDF students reentering their district school that would offer case management, enrollment assistance, advocacy services, counseling, and follow-up in an effort to track their progress and prevent them from violating their probation and returning to JDF.

- Youth Development

Ken Scarberry, Director, manages SCOE's prevention education programs that help students make safe and healthy lifestyle choices. He also coordinates a number of successful countywide and regional academic events that have grown over the years, and he will concentrate on expanding some of those special events in the coming year such as: an Academic Bowl for students in the JDF; increasing the number of participants in the countywide spelling bee and developing a strategy for tie situations; increasing the number of College and Career Clubs from 24 to up to 55 clubs throughout our region using a recently received grant to develop Clubs at the middle school level; developing an Academic Decathlon speech training video and online essay submission capabilities; including a college fair at the State Academic Decathlon competition and inviting middle school students to attend with an assigned high school mentor; and achieving tobacco-free certification for all six school districts making them eligible for additional TUPE (Tobacco Use Prevention Education) funding.

- Professional Development

Sandy Jessop, Director of District and School Support, now performs some of the duties that previously belonged to Mrs. Estrella-Henderson prior to her replacing Mr. Phillips. Mrs. Jessop will plan for the future support of our county's schools by focusing on areas, as contained in State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson's recently published *Blueprint for Great Schools*, identified as key issues that impact students and districts such as accountability and assessments, early childhood education, leveraging resources, health/nutrition, and many others.

Dr. Cheryl Lynn de Werff, Director of Special Projects, will concentrate her efforts on school readiness activities. She has effectively expanded this area over the past three years by opening slots for four-year-olds to attend preschool and prepare for kindergarten. Dr. de Werff is the regional lead for the Transitional Kindergarten Network, which involves moving the cutoff month from December to November for students to turn five years old and enter kindergarten. The following year, the cutoff will move to October and by the third year will stop in September. Grant funds have been received to provide parents with training in behavioral support during the three-year transition. Mr. Speck added that the legislature's initial idea was to save money by delaying the start of kindergarten until a child reaches five years of age. Studies show the importance of critical brain development from birth to age five, but resources are dwindling away.

Becky Cruz is the Program Manager/Educational Liaison for the Foster and Homeless Youth program. This program's client-base is expanding due to the current economic conditions, and the program staff has also increased to meet the growing needs. Mrs. Cruz' activities in the coming year will focus on region-wide K-14 parent engagement strategies as well as adolescent transitions. The program will include assistance with more than just the students' academic needs but also their social and emotional needs. Tutoring and other services are provided in homeless centers and missions, where students need them most, through a core connection of organizations throughout our community including faith-based agencies. Mrs. Cruz organized a drive to collect backpacks and school supplies to help give homeless and foster youth a good start to the school year. We are actively seeking out homeless families instead of waiting for the students to enroll in school. In the past, students who did not have their immunization records or cumulative records from their former schools may have been discouraged from enrolling. Now we are able to provide transportation vouchers and health and education passports that facilitate the students' movement among schools with less trouble. SCOE serves as the conduit between the schools and County Health and Social Services to help keep these students on track to graduate, even if we do not have their school transcripts.

Mr. Speck added that Mrs. Cruz has done a fine job of making this program very responsive to the students' and districts' needs. Mr. Silva suggested that the Retired Teachers Association might be a good place to recruit former teachers to tutor the students.

(c) Human Resources and Workforce Development

Mrs. Harden reviewed the challenges, opportunities, initiatives, and areas of focus for the programs that she supervises. She has been in her position since January 2011. Due to some staff retirements and transitions, the Human Resources (HR) Department has been reorganized to be more effective. Among those changes were: Patsy McNally took on the responsibilities of Recruitment and Retention Manager, and Kathy Sims moved from the Golden Hills site, where she has experience with workforce development and Career Technical Education (CTE), to become the Executive Assistant replacing Carla Peak who retired. The HR Department was busy hiring about 44 new employees over the summer in preparation for the new school year.

HR is transitioning the hiring process to be as paperless as possible by conducting many functions online such as advertising, submitting applications and transcripts, and paper-screening. For applicants who do not have a computer, a kiosk will be available on which applications can be submitted. Interviews will continue to be performed in person, but those on the interview panel will use iPads that contain the necessary paperwork instead of having staff print paper packets of information. EDJOIN is training the HR staff, and the pilot is expected to begin in January 2012.

As Mr. Speck suggested when he became the County Superintendent, the HR Department has embraced the "Heat of Inquiry" test which is to question all programs to see if they hold their mettle, need to be adjusted, or should be stopped. This way of thinking is outside what is usually done, but it has caused us to find new ways to do things. SCOE is looking at every position that becomes vacant to be sure it still fits our needs. If it doesn't, then it is modified or eliminated by working with the appropriate bargaining unit. Due to current economic conditions, open positions tend to have a lot of applicants. SCOE is taking more time to find the right employee who fits into a particular position.

Dr. Verder-Aliga asked if SCOE uses interns in any of its positions. Mrs. Estrella-Henderson said her division had employed interns, and they worked out very well. Mr. Asera commented that the heat of inquiry is a much more rational approach than the heat of emergency in which last minute reactions are common. Good decisions take time. Mrs. Harden stated that SCOE is thoughtful and compassionate to employees' needs and offers an Employee Assistance Program to help deal with the increase in personal issues that seems to have surfaced in recent months. She believes that our visibility, transparency, and non-hostile work environment have helped with employee morale. In addition, internal reorganizations have enabled some administrative positions to remain unfilled, and SCOE has not yet had to introduce furlough days as so many of the districts have. Mr. Asera believes that other contributing factors to good employee morale include the mutual caring about kids and a good attitude by management that trickles down from the top. Mr. Galvan added that, since joining the Board, he has witnessed improved collaboration and communication with the organization. Mrs. Coleman stated that change can be frightening, and she commended Mrs. Harden on taking the leap.

- Career Technical Education

Gillie Miller is the Manager of CTE/Workforce Development. Based on a survey of our local school districts, which was previously presented to the Board, the CTE/Workforce Development Department changed how it provides services and partnered with the districts to better meet their needs. As a result, SCOE ended its Regional Occupational Program (ROP) and began offering CTE with good results. CTE has a countywide advisory board, and some of the improvements include an increased number of CTE classes offered this year, and parents and teachers realizing the value of involvement making them more supportive of leadership organizations for students. A countywide data collection system was developed, with SCOE serving as host, to provide districts with information on professional development by teacher and the number of classroom interactions.

We have been asked by two of our school districts to help them write and monitor a Carl D. Perkins CTE Improvement Act plan that would help them align accountability, required use of funds, implementation strategies, and strategic planning. SCOE received a grant that will bring CTE principles of engineering and robotics to middle schools and is working with the Solano Community College (SCC) to introduce hands-on wastewater labs. Job Shadow Week will continue for the JCCS students.

Mrs. Harden stated that SCOE is working with SCC on its Vision 20/20 program in an effort to articulate more of SCOE's CTE classes, and she encouraged interested Board members to attend related activities. Often a CTE teacher may be the only one of their kind on a school campus, so our local school districts want SCOE to develop more professional development and a network for CTE teachers enabling them to share best practices with each other. SCOE currently has a contract with the California Department of Education (CDE) to facilitate the alignment of CTE standards with common core standards. Mr. Speck added that receiving this contract is a great compliment to Mrs. Harden and her staff.

- Transition Programs

Susan Labrecque is the Program Manager of CTE/Workforce Development who leads the Transition Services Department including WorkAbility I, which promotes independent living and employment training for middle and high school students in special education who are transitioning from school into the workforce, and WorkAbility II (T2), which provides employment services for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or eligible for Department of Rehabilitation (DoR) services. Some of the high school students are employed by Raley's, Clorox, Safeway, and various hotels, while some adult students work for FSUSD or Marin General Hospital. Staff participates in mental health training and certification to be able to refer clients appropriately to applicable services at the DoR, County Mental Health, etc. The T2 staff has grown as a result of an increase in the number of clients and has moved to a larger building on the Golden Hills campus. T2 has a highly successful job closure rate (4th in the State), which records the number of students hired who maintained a job in their chosen career field for at least 90 days.

(d) Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

Sam Neustadt, Assistant Superintendent of the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), talked about the challenges, opportunities, pertinent legislation, and areas of focus relating to the SELPA division. Mr. Neustadt is starting his 12th year with SCOE. There has been, however, a lot of turnover with district administrators, and that necessitates additional training about Solano County's approach to teaching students with disabilities. SELPA is a legally required entity that compels the superintendents to come together to ensure authorized and equitable services.

Mental health as a related service is a hot topic in special education right now. AB 3632 is a major change for education and mental health. As a result of this legislation, approximately \$300 million was shifted from mental health service providers to SELPAs; our portion is about \$4.3 million. There was some one-time money from the legislature, but we must plan for sustainability. AB 3632 has caused debate between agencies because the law is not perfect, and there are gray areas where educational and medical services intersect. Presently, SELPA is splitting these duties with mental health providers, but it challenges what services are medically and mentally necessary and creates some discord about how to divide funding.

On the student level, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) separates medical services from education. At the legislative level, there is an effort to clarify some of the language in AB 3632. The Budget Act of 2011-12 repealed a portion of AB 3632, and now the Education Code needs to be revised to match it. Waivers are being sought until the legislation and code agree.

SELPA has created policies and procedures for school districts to help them access mental health service providers, with SELPA staff serving as coordinators. Unfortunately, County Mental Health has had about four directors in recent years, each with their own ideas on how matters should be handled, so any prior strategies and agreements have to begin again with each one. We currently do not have a

fully executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with County Mental Health, but we share a common commitment to use every possible dollar for the students.

Before the AB 3632 legislation, County Mental Health had the final word on the services provided and was reimbursed for those services. School districts offer a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and fitting services, but parents can now decline or opt out of some services giving them the final say in the IEP. SELPA staff has completed over 130 IEPs in the past few weeks. Program Specialists attend these meetings to inform parents of what to expect and help write the appropriate plans. It is a huge task. Although the dust is still settling around AB 3632, school is starting and students need services.

Mr. Asera asked if SELPA had a lobbyist working to resolve these legislative issues. Mr. Neustadt stated that alignment of California laws with Education Code is just one example of the discrepancies we face. There are also differences between federal and state requirements where California does things differently than other states. For instance, students may be eligible for certain related services in other states but not in California. Also, California Education Code entitles service through a student's 21st year, while federal regulations state until 21 years of age. California law further requires taking a family to court for a due process hearing when parents reject an IEP, and this and other factors cause legal fees to remain very high. There are only a few states that have more regulations in this area than California. The statewide SELPA administrators' association, of which he is the Chairman, spends a lot of time at the State and U.S. Capitols and works with legal counsel to ensure governmental compatibility. Mr. Speck stated that Mr. Neustadt is well respected throughout the state, and legislators often look to him for expertise. In the meantime, it is costing hundreds of thousands of dollars to figure out how to make this legislation feasible.

Other significant legislation includes SB 161 regarding the administration of medications on campus for conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy. Trained volunteers may administer the medications, but nurses are opposed preferring to be the only authorized administrators. We support the bill for the safety of our students who may need the medicine immediately and cannot wait for a school nurse, who may be at another site, to arrive. Another bill introduced would do away with seclusion and restraint procedures. Although these methods are rarely used, they are tools that need to be in place in some cases. We are also advocating for legislation or stipulated agreements that would compel insurance companies to cover behavioral health services.

Mr. Neustadt is concerned about the districts' reserve requirement being lowered to 1% this year, because just one unanticipated, unfunded residential placement can wipe out a small district's reserve, and this could lead to a statewide catastrophe.

SELPA offers a large number of professional development opportunities and has published an online catalog on SCOE's website. Newly added is a certification program in Autism Spectrum Disorder with the training provided locally and less expensively than competitors. Mrs. Coleman asked if there had been an increase in autism diagnosis in recent years. Mr. Neustadt stated that the spectrum of symptoms had increased, more research and resources are available, and there are better means of identification now than in the past. Approximately 1 in 130 children is diagnosed with a form of autism. The overall number of children with disabilities in our SELPA is declining, but the number with autism or emotional disabilities is increasing.

(e) Administrative Services and Operations

Mrs. Allen reviewed SCOE's fiscal state as well as the challenges, opportunities, and areas of focus for the departments that she oversees. Unique to this year is the decennial redistricting of the Board's trustee areas based on the 2010 Census. It is expected that the County Committee will also be asked to rule on the establishment of trustee areas for the FSUSD board after November's election of new board members. Other districts may follow with hope of averting a legal battle under the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). Such changes would take effect with the 2013 election unless an election waiver is approved by the state.

SCOE is maintaining fiscal stability and has approved all of the districts' budgets this year. The state's existing budget act will not let SCOE consider a district's multi-year projections when determining whether or not to approve its budget, but we continue to notify the districts of any fiscal concerns.

- Internal Business Services

Sandy Austin, Director, has been leading this department through the implementation of new government accounting standards and increased state reporting requirements that have caused us to make changes in how we account for certain funds. The flexibility option, of which SCOE has been taking advantage over the past few years, makes it difficult to compare one year to the next, but we definitely want to be transparent in making changes in our reporting practices.

Internal Business continues development of facilities accounting and reporting; supporting the transition to a new third party administrator for 403B and 457 plans; professional development of staff and other departments; and providing oversight and training to district staff.

- District Business Services

Tommy Welch serves as Director of this department, which continues to provide AB 1200 support to our districts. This requires his regular attendance at district board meetings. Cash flow is becoming the biggest issue with the districts despite how their budgets may look on paper. The Solano County Treasurer is helping districts make it through these difficult financial times and state deferrals by providing advances of anticipated tax revenue.

- Facilities/Maintenance

Alton Gay, Manager, has played a huge role in SCOE's efforts to secure financial hardship dollars for upcoming construction projects and oversee the Lease/Leaseback program for the six classroom project at Golden Hills. The Board Facilities Subcommittee was meeting later in the day and would receive further details.

- Transportation

Kerri Gardner, Transportation Manager, has been doing a great job finding funding and applying for grants to replace outdated buses and upgrade others.

- Information Services/Technology

Steve Ramos, Director, continues to move forward to provide technology equipment, services, and support to our county's students and programs. A new staff member has been hired to concentrate on state data reporting.

Mr. Speck concluded by saying that SCOE's departments are all interconnected, and we are fortunate to have such strong staff members as those mentioned in today's reports.

(f) 2008-2011 Strategic Planning Update

Mr. Speck stated that, in the past, SCOE's Strategic Plan was updated by inviting stakeholders from many different perspectives with a direct interest, involvement, or investment in education to meet and tell us how we were doing. This method can provide slanted information, though, depending on who attends and whether there is a balanced cross-section of participants. In the spring of 2012, the Cabinet plans to hold smaller focus group meetings and synthesize the information received to guide SCOE's work in future years.

V. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

There were no comments from the community.

VI. BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board members were given an opportunity to ask any additional questions they had.

Mr. Speck said that he and staff would talk about ways to reduce paper usage and would talk with the Board about which options might work best for them.

Dr. Verder-Aliga inquired about the status of SCOE’s collective bargaining and asked when our contracts expire. Mrs. Harden said that these difficult economic times make it more challenging to maintain positive relationships with our bargaining units, but it is important to us. We continuously look for ways to solve issues and find shared interests because we must balance looking out for the organization with looking out for the employees. Mrs. Allen joined the bargaining team this year to support our efforts. We are focusing a lot of attention to our collective bargaining. Mr. Speck added that SCOE recently renewed three-year contracts with all three of its bargaining units, but, in interest-based bargaining, every topic is open for discussion all the time.

VII. WRAP-UP/EVALUATION +/▲

Mr. Speck asked the group to list those aspects of the study session that had gone well and those that could be improved to make next year’s study session better.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and interaction among the various SCOE departments <i>(Mrs. Bates)</i> • Room set-up and meeting format <i>(Mrs. Harden)</i> • Conserving paper with fewer handouts <i>(Mr. Asera)</i> • Staff remains upbeat, open to new ideas, and moving forward despite challenging times <i>(Mrs. Bates)</i> • Content was streamlined and concise <i>(Mr. Galvan)</i> • Presentations were very informative and interesting <i>(Mrs. Coleman)</i> • Recommendations from last year’s session, to link the organizational chart with SCOE’s programs and work, were implemented and helpful to the Board in seeing how everything interacts <i>(Mr. Asera)</i> • Size of group <i>(Mr. Ford)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend agendized time for board members to talk about their relationship to their constituency (e.g., who it is they represent; connection to the unified school district in their own trustee area; their personal philosophy, perspectives, interests, etc.) <i>(Mr. Asera)</i> • In addition to SCOE reports, describe what is going on in the districts so Board members can skillfully inform their constituents about what SCOE is doing for them <i>(Dr. Verder-Aliga)</i> • Include on the organizational chart staff photos and a summary of what each person does, plus legal counsel who does work for SCOE <i>(Mr. Ford)</i> • More PowerPoint presentations showing interaction between management and students and the connection to programs <i>(Mr. Asera)</i>

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speck thanked the Board members for their attendance and input, and he thanked the Cabinet members for their presentations. It makes him proud to hear about all the good programs SCOE operates and how they are benefitting students and our community.

There being no further business, Mr. Asera adjourned the meeting at 12:06 PM.

Signature on File

Jay Speck
 Secretary to the Solano County Board of Education