

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

MINUTES
Special Meeting
August 22, 2012

2012 – 2013 Study Session

The Solano County Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, August 22, 2012, at the Solano County Office of Education (SCOE), 5100 Business Center Drive in Fairfield, California.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board President Dr. Rozzana Verder-Aliga called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Trustee Larry Asera led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present

Rozzana Verder-Aliga, Ed.D., President (Area 7)
Doug Ford, Vice President (Area 6)
Larry Asera (Area 5)
Mayrene Bates (Area 4)
Michelle Coleman (Area 1)
Raymond Silva (Area 2)

Members Absent

John Galvan (Area 3)

Dr. Verder-Aliga 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

Lisette Estrella-Henderson

Janet Harden

Laryn Bishop

Sam Neustadt

Monica Ross

Steve Ramos

Barry Eberling, Daily Republic

III. APPROVAL AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

There were no comments from the community.

V. 2012 – 2013 STUDY SESSION

SCOE Cabinet members presented department overviews illustrating their focus to support our local school districts in the coming year.

(a) Welcome and Organizational Chart Update

Mr. Speck welcomed those present and thanked them for taking time out of their busy schedules to study more about SCOE's programs and what is ahead in the new year. This is his 37th year with SCOE, and, as he was attending the back-to-school meetings of the various employee groups, he recognized how much has changed since he started his career here. Many of SCOE's current

employees were not even born in 1978 when Proposition 13 was passed. At that time, California's per pupil funding was at its highest level, but now we have fallen to 47th in the Nation. We have experienced a long period of decline, more rapid recently, and many of our districts are facing significant reductions depending on what happens in the November election.

Mr. Speck reviewed SCOE's updated Management Organizational Chart. The chart is structured like that of prior years, and he discussed upcoming known retirements, recent replacements and promotions, and existing vacancies in various positions.

Mr. Speck prefaced the departmental reports by saying that, based on last year's feedback, this year's presentations were aimed at tying the organizational chart with what has been happening in each division, focusing on the core programs and services SCOE offers that support the districts, and conveying the ways in which SCOE's programs work together to promote new initiatives that benefit our districts and students.

(b) Student Programs and Educational Services

Lisette Estrella-Henderson, Associate Superintendent of Student Programs and Educational Services, presented an overview of the programs under her supervision and the ways each will support our local school districts in the 2012-13 academic year.

- Special Education: SCOE serves approximately 512 students with disabilities from infant to age 22 from throughout the county, not including the Vallejo City Unified School District (VCUSD). Focus areas in the coming year will be ongoing program development through adoption of new curriculum to keep pace with innovations and meet the changing needs of the students.
- Educational Services: The focus will be on providing quality relevant professional development to: teachers of English learners or science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects, as well as district and school support staff through networking and consortiums; building leadership capacity through coaching; and training teachers on the State's common core standards set for full implementation in 2014. Student assessments are technology based, and instructional technology will help teachers determine what students need to move to higher learning levels.

Mr. Asera shared that VCUSD had added an 'A' for the arts and now refers to the term as "STEAM" instead of STEM.

- Student Programs: This year's focus will be the ongoing development of educational options such as distance learning, community school, the Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services (DUCS), and the county jail program for adults. Golden Hills Community School will be going through the Western Accreditation of Schools and Colleges (WASC) pre-accreditation this year. It is an extensive process but, once accredited, will enable SCOE to award high school diplomas. This will be particularly beneficial to students in the Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF) who may earn all the required credits but do not have the opportunity to return to their high school of residence to receive a diploma. To further support JDF students toward graduation, SCOE hired a Student Support Specialist to help those transitioning back to their district of residence. This effort has been very successful, and the county's Probation Department has informed SCOE of its support to expand the position to serve students in the New Foundations facility so they will also have a successful transition back into a mainstream school setting.

Mr. Silva asked about the age limit for participation in the county jail program. Mrs. Estrella-Henderson responded that the students are age 18 and above, and the program helps them prepare for the General Educational Development (GED) test. Mr. Speck added that SCOE has operated the program for a number of years and is meeting with the sheriff this week to discuss a partnership to possibly expand this program.

Mr. Asera inquired about whether the WASC accreditation aligns with the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET). Mrs. Estrella-Henderson said she would look into it.

Another student program is Foster, Homeless, and Youth Engagement, which will focus in the coming year on training the trainer to address the needs of districts that need an onsite person to help foster and homeless students. SCOE presently serves about 400 documented foster and homeless youth and this year received a \$67,000 grant from the California Department of Education (CDE) to provide outreach and continue developing our work with homeless students. Each year the program coordinates a campaign to collect backpacks and school supplies and provides transition case management to ease the education transition caused by the many disruptions that homeless and foster youth face when having to change schools. The program also partners with Solano Community College (SCC) to support a smooth transfer for those students entering college. SCOE further provides technical assistance, training, networking, and mini-grants to our school districts for their efforts in serving this at-risk student population.

The Youth Development program organizes many countywide events such as the Academic Decathlon, Academic Bowl for JDF students, Elementary Spelling Bee, student Art Faire, and Educators of the Year awards and also provides prevention education services. SCOE recently received \$300,000 from CDE to focus on the prevention of on-campus tobacco use for middle and high school students and engaging students with high-risk behaviors in community projects as a deterrent.

Mr. Speck noted that SCOE's many community partnerships and its ability to acquire funding to sustain and enhance its programs is a credit to Mrs. Estrella-Henderson and her staff. SCOE is very capable of successfully competing for grants and pays attention to the districts in order to help and quickly respond to their needs. Mr. Asera asked whether SCOE has internal grant writers or contracts the work to an outside vendor. Mrs. Estrella-Henderson said SCOE staff members write the grants because outside assistance can be very expensive. Mrs. Bates added that the partnerships are important in showing the public how involved SCOE is in the community.

(c) Human Resources and Workforce Development

Janet Harden, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Workforce Development, presented an overview of the programs she supervises and talked about how these programs help to support our local school districts.

- **Workforce Development:** The budget crisis has led SCOE to evolve its services and find new opportunities. We provide technical support and services and work with all local districts, middle schools, and high schools, with the goal of expanding into elementary schools in the future. We have been so successful in writing lucrative grants that districts are now asking SCOE to help them write grant applications, work with staff to manage the funds, and work together to pool resources. SCOE manages STEM programs in area middle schools as well as engineering and robotics programs in afterschool clubs, both of which are designed to engage students in science projects and competitions while learning and having fun. High school students mentor the middle schoolers, and the program has grown so much that SCOE is helping to build a matriculation pathway.

As of September 1st, there will be new state standards for career technical education (CTE) which must be aligned with the common core standards. In the coming year the Workforce Development Department will work with the Educational Services Department to provide staff with professional development on the standards. Many robotics competitions will be held at the U.C. Davis campus in the coming year, and Mrs. Harden will make sure the Board receives the dates. SCOE coordinates many CTE activities in schools such as providing guest speakers, helping students learn how to write a résumé, and conducting mock interviews. District funds are stretched, and many students would not receive these types of services if SCOE did not provide them.

Mr. Speck stated that SCOE's CTE program and its staff are well known throughout the state. When CDE decided to align the standards, it looked to our CTE program as the model. These standards are being developed by programs across the country meaning that our model program

will have national impact. Mrs. Bates agreed that the CTE staff is very dedicated and does so much with such a small staff.

- Human Resources (HR): Mrs. Harden said she has been working in HR for almost two years, and she loves it more every day. SCOE provides state-mandated credential monitoring to all districts ensuring that teachers have the appropriate credentials and works with the districts to maintain compliance. We offer fingerprinting services to all internal, and some external, districts. We coordinate a Labor Law Consortium that meets 10 times per year that is comprised of HR personnel from each of Solano County's school districts. The Consortium helps the districts remain up to date on laws, gain practice through the situational resolutions of other members, and confer regularly with legal counsel on hot topics. Napa County has expressed an interest in joining the Consortium next year. Paraeducator training and testing continues through SCOE's two-week program designed to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requirements.

Dr. Verder-Aliga asked if the districts pay SCOE for HR's services. Mrs. Harden replied that they pay for the cost of classes, fingerprinting, and to belong to the Consortium.

Innovation and technology advancements call for an online hiring process, and the districts are watching to see how SCOE's process works and how we handle any kinks in that process. Our online paper screening process is working well, and a part of new employee orientations is now online, too. Some procedures still require paperwork, but the electronic portions help make SCOE more efficient and better able to serve its employees.

Mr. Speck added that Mrs. Harden also handles SCOE's collective bargaining and is doing a good job working with the three associations. This is a huge and ever-changing responsibility.

(d) Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

Sam Neustadt, Assistant Superintendent of the SELPA, talked about the ways in which SELPA programs are helping to support Solano County's school districts. He explained that VCUSD has its own SELPA, and the River Delta USD in Rio Vista is part of the Sacramento SELPA, but the rest of our districts are members of the Solano SELPA whose key tasks include trying to sustain systems under the current budget situation.

The Solano SELPA's Alternative Dispute Resolution process is working well. Statewide there are 4.5 per 1,000 filings for due process hearings, while Solano's filings are only 1.8 per 1,000. We work hard to ensure students' civil rights are addressed in every case.

With the recent change in responsibility of mental health as a related service under AB 3632, all children are being served well. Over 200 cases, including many high risk students, were segued from the County's Mental Health Department to the SELPA. To date, there have been no major problems with the transition, and it has been a smooth success. As the State gathers data on the costs involved, we expect funding to decrease because the funding methodology changed from a service-based model to a population-based model. In the first year, we inherited the services that were determined and ordered by a mental health diagnosis, but the move to a population-based model helps curb the tendency to over-diagnose. Students can opt out of the services at age 18 or age out at 22 years old, whichever they choose.

SELPA is generating internal grant revenues and has received about \$70,000 for behavior interventions and Reading at the Secondary Level.

Regarding work on legislative policies, everything is filtered through the budget bill because cost is always a factor. Mr. Neustadt has been spending time to fully inform the legislature on special education issues and cost avoidance. He gave the example of the Hughes Bill and dealing with the behavioral emergencies of special education students. California has restrictions in excess of federal law regarding what staff can and cannot do. Each state tracks such emergencies, and educators are mandated to deal with them, but there is no funding attached to the mandate for costs such as much-needed training. This issue is in the courts now, and a trailer bill is being worked on that will be voted

upon on the floor of the legislature with no opportunity for public input. The statewide SELPA organization and the Coalition of SELPAs also perform lobbying efforts and keep other organizations, like CSBA and various disability rights groups, informed of important special education matters.

The sweep and flex budgeting options, that many education agencies have taking advantage of in recent years, make some secondary level funds no longer available to special education. Legally, funding is distributed to special education first, and what remains is given to general education.

Mrs. Bates asked how California compared to other states in special education spending. Mr. Neustadt replied that, according to our State's demographics, about 11% of the school-age population qualifies for special education services, and that is close to the same as in other states at this time. If we receive fewer funds for intervention services, more students may be identified sooner as needing special education services, and that will increase our costs. Local contributions make up about 33% of SELPA's budget. Mr. Speck added that whenever the legislators move funds in to Proposition 98 from outside of Prop 98, it affects funding; when one string is pulled, it affects another one. Mr. Neustadt is the senior SELPA director in the State, and our legislators often go to him when considering action related to special education. Mr. Neustadt said this is his 13th presentation to the Board, and yet the issues remain similar to those faced when he first began working with SCOE.

(e) Administrative Services and Operations

Lettie Allen, Associate Superintendent of Administrative Services and Operations, presented an overview of the programs under her supervision and explained how these programs will help to support our local school districts in the coming year. She provided those present with a list of the acronyms used in her presentation.

- Centralized Financial, HR, and Payroll Systems: SCOE serves as the lead financial agency for the school districts in Solano County. It is important for the districts and SCOE to use the same financial system so we can efficiently access records and provide technical support. SCOE manages the equipment and system for five of the districts (Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District (FSUSD) chose to use a different system), provides help desk support when districts have issues with the system, and handles all of the districts' retirement reporting. Recent changes to the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) have presented a challenge, and SCOE provided training to district staff on the new penalties and interest being imposed. In the past few years, there has been 100% turnover of district business officials, so support is very important.

Referencing one of Mrs. Allen's PowerPoint slides, Mr. Asera asked for additional information about the Solano County Education Technology Consortium (SCETC). Mrs. Allen replied that the Consortium members are all school districts in our county, and the group's initial focus to support the financial system has been expanded to include general technology support. The group works closely with SCOE's Instructional Technology Department.

Mrs. Allen shared that the districts are currently looking for a new financial system. The existing system is 10 years old, has experienced hardware and software problems, is difficult to obtain parts for when repairs are needed, and the costs of maintaining it are increasing. There are both financial and efficiency incentives to move to a new technology platform in the near future. A request for proposals (RFP) has been sent to various vendors, and SCOE and the districts will soon review the proposals and arrange for select demonstrations to ensure the new system meets our needs. SCOE is working to develop a funding model to pay for the new system that will not severely impact the districts.

The State's funding deferrals have been tough on the districts, and all are worried about their cash levels. She credits the County Treasurer's office for providing constitutional tax advances and bridge loans that are helping the districts through this difficult time. SCOE continues to support and work closely with those districts that are negative or qualified. Mrs. Allen serves as their fiscal advisor, and the districts are billed for her services.

- Information Services and Technology (IST): In addition to the services previously mentioned, IST serves the internet needs of all the districts except Dixon Unified School District (DUSD).
- Print Shop: Due to budget constraints, many of our districts have had to reduce or eliminate their own printing services, and SCOE's print shop provides duplicating services to them at a lower rate than external vendors. Additionally, mail and payday delivery services are provided three days per week at no cost to the districts. The courier also distributes mail and other important documents to our own staff members who work at district sites. Mrs. Coleman asked about the cost savings of processing payroll checks electronically instead of printing them, and Mrs. Allen replied that SCOE cannot require employees to use their banks' electronic deposit feature because that is a negotiable item with the bargaining units. SCOE is not the only entity that still uses printed checks; the districts also use them. SCOE is looking into a self-service module in the new financial system that would enable employees to access all of their payroll information online.

Mr. Silva stated that the Retired Teachers Association uses the print shop's services because staff does excellent work, the cost is less, and the money stays within education rather than going to an outside vendor. Mrs. Allen said the print shop performs work for many nonprofits who are watching their budgets.

Mr. Speck said SCOE continues to evaluate this service to make sure it is still meeting our needs and those of the districts. A couple of years ago, the courier service was reduced from five days per week to three while continuing to meet the users' needs.

- Transportation: SCOE presently maintains 13 bus routes that cross district boundaries and transports about 73 students of various ages to programs in and out of Solano County including Richmond, Concord, Davis, and Sacramento. Last year, our buses drove a total of 326,487 miles. SCOE has two certified bus driver trainers who provide training not only to our bus drivers but also to the districts as needed. Mr. Asera mentioned that funds are available for converting buses to alternative fuel which would save money and reduce SCOE's carbon footprint.
- Facilities/Maintenance/Operations: SCOE's new building projects include six new classrooms at Golden Hills Education Center as well as computer labs for students and staff development. We also have portable buildings on some district sites that will be updated and plans to modify the facilities of two preschool programs and refurbish other old portables.

Mrs. Bates asked if there would be a ribbon cutting for the new building at Golden Hills. Mrs. Allen said she expects it will occur in December or January, and she will make sure the Board is notified of the date. We are hoping to move students into the new classrooms for the second semester. Although the construction was relatively quick, this project's development took about eight years to complete.

Mr. Speck gave a brief update on the dissolution of redevelopment agencies saying that the legislation concerning their disbandment is murky. Mr. Asera asked about the length of the terms for those serving on the oversight committees. Mr. Speck responded that the term is two years. Mr. Asera stated he would be interested in serving. Mr. Speck pointed out the need to ensure no conflict of interest exists when each agency's group dissolves into one main oversight committee. He does not know how Solano County will decide between the different entities.

Mrs. Allen gave a brief update on DUSD's budget saying that SCOE had conditionally approved it but sent a letter containing the steps necessary to achieve full budget approval. SCOE also gave DUSD additional time to close its 2011-12 financial books with the anticipation that the district's fiscal situation may improve during the process once its unaudited actuals are finalized. At the next Board meeting, she will talk more about the districts' budget situations and planned furlough days.

VI. BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Speck stated that, since he took office as County Superintendent, he had made a mindful effort to question all standing assumptions to see if they can withstand the "heat of inquiry" or need to be

modified, replaced, or eliminated. This thinking led him to ask the Board about its preferences concerning some issues that had arisen in recent months.

(a) Event Participation and Professional Development

Mr. Speck said it is important for SCOE and the Board members to be supportive of community events and stay up to date through professional development opportunities. It is also vital to consider the best use of public funds and what will benefit children while avoiding scrutiny as an organization and elected officials.

Mr. Speck reviewed existing SCOE Administrative Policy 3350 regarding employee travel expenses and mileage and Board Policy 9250 regarding allowable expenses for attendance at organization meetings. The policies call for the Board to receive the same reimbursements that employees receive. Employees receive reimbursement for activities that are approved in advance and include a professional development component. Employees do not receive reimbursement for attendance at events that are purely social.

While employees are not reimbursed for voluntary activities, the Board's policy allows for the selection of one or more members to represent the Board in an official capacity at various functions. In the past, the Board has appointed certain members to represent the whole at conferences. This approval occurs when the item is agendaized and action is taken during a Board meeting.

Mr. Speck asked the members if they felt revisions were needed to the Board's policies or if they wanted to add a standard item to the Board agendas that would provide an opportunity for members to state their desire to represent the Board at an event and the estimated amount of reimbursable expenses.

Mr. Asera said he attends certain events as both a personal businessman as well as a Board member, and he felt that a more detailed discussion was needed at a future Board meeting.

Mrs. Bates stated that SCOE has paid for Board member attendance at some events in the past but will no longer do so.

Mrs. Coleman felt that the California Academic Decathlon competition was a legitimate expense because it is student-centered and relies on hard-to-find community volunteers to support the event.

Mr. Speck said it is for these reasons that the matter is being brought up in order to sort through how the Board wishes to handle these situations. He and staff must carefully and fairly monitor SCOE's expenses, and it would be helpful to the budget management process to have an advance estimate of how much the Board members plan to spend on various work-related activities.

Dr. Verder-Aliga asked that staff put together a list of the events that SCOE currently does and does not pay for the Board. This information will be helpful for the Board's discussion at a future meeting.

(b) December Board Meeting

Mr. Speck stated that the caterer who normally prepares the Board's annual holiday luncheon with SCOE's bargaining unit leaders is having surgery and will be unable to help the Board this year. He asked for the Board's direction regarding whether to look for another caterer, hold a potluck, go to a restaurant, or cancel this year's luncheon. After some discussion, the Board members agreed that the funds are better spent elsewhere and opted to cancel this year's event. The Board may take action at a future regular meeting to change the December meeting time back to its normal 6:00 PM timeslot.

(c) November Tax Initiatives

Mr. Speck provided information from respected educational organizations (e.g., California School Boards Association (CSBA), California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), etc.) containing a balanced summary of two tax initiatives that impact education and will appear on the November 6, 2012, ballot: Proposition 30 introduced by Governor Brown and

Proposition 38 introduced by attorney Molly Munger. CSBA has requested that the Board pass a resolution in support of both tax initiatives. Discussion followed on the pros and cons of each initiative and the effects if one, both, or none are passed by voters. Dr. Verder-Aliga asked that the matter be placed on an upcoming Board meeting agenda so the members can discuss their stance on this matter and consider taking action.

(d) Gifts and Donations

Mr. Speck provided information about the rules guiding gifts and donations to and from elected public officials. The rules were slightly adjusted in January 2012, and it is important for public officials to remain aware of those rules. He will instruct staff to send the Board the link to a webinar that he recently found helpful in explaining many of the exceptions to the rules. Further guidance is available from the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) or legal counsel.

(e) Question and Answer Period

The Board was given the opportunity to make further comments and ask the Cabinet members additional questions about the information presented.

Mrs. Coleman said she was aware that some elected officials were required by law to complete ethics training, and she asked about training for herself and fellow Board members. Mr. Speck replied that, when the law was first established several years ago, SCOE sought a legal opinion to clarify whether the law applied to our Board members. Attorneys from the California Legislative Counsel's office, Solano County Counsel, and School and College Legal Services of California all opined that AB 1234 does not apply to school districts, community college districts, or county offices of education. Board members may take ethics training on their own, but it is not a requirement at this time.

Mrs. Coleman said she had heard that FSUSD was planning to take over the DELTA program that SCOE established. Mr. Neustadt explained that DELTA is an alternative to nonpublic school placement. FSUSD already operates the SIGMA program on the same school site, and both are similar programs. At this time, FSUSD has submitted a notice of program transfer with an intent to operate the DELTA program. It is the district's right to do so since the site is in the district's boundaries, the students in the DELTA program are from FSUSD, and the district may prefer to operate the program rather than pay SCOE to manage it. However, before such a transfer can take place, the law requires SELPA to review seven factors to ensure the change is in the best interests of the students being served and does not disrupt the continuum of services. The matter is currently being reviewed by the SELPA Council of Superintendents, of which Mr. Speck is a member, but the outcome remains to be seen. Mr. Speck added that the issue is complicated, and employee rights must be considered, so it is not certain that the transfer will occur. Mrs. Coleman asked that the Board be kept informed.

Mr. Speck asked if the Board found the annual study session to be a valuable use of time and an event they wish to continue, or if they felt it was more a traditional event that had lost its merit. Mr. Asera said the presentations had greatly improved since he became a member of the Board. He found this year's presentations to be focused and concise. He does see a need to conduct a year-end meeting that emphasizes the organizational mission, goals, outcomes, and policy development. Dr. Verder-Aliga agreed that the study session is beneficial since the Board usually meets only once a month. Mrs. Bates added that the information received helps keep the Board apprised of issues that are of concern to members of the public. Others expressed their support of continuing these annual meetings.

VII. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

There were no comments from the community.

VIII. WRAP-UP/EVALUATION +/▲

The Board discussed aspects of the study session that went well as well as those that can be improved in order to make next year’s session better.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to ask questions and make comments as they came up instead of waiting until the end; made the meeting more interactive • Electronic copies of all the meeting materials and PowerPoint presentations saved a lot of paper • Appreciated having both electronic and paper copies of meeting materials for those who have not yet had iPad training • PowerPoint presentations contained good information and were brief • Staff is doing great work even in financially difficult times and with limited resources • Staff is working very hard and wearing more than one hat • Good to have a member of the media present to share with the public all the wonderful things SCOE is doing to help students and our districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like next year’s agenda to include an opportunity for Board members to give a report on their individual trustee area • Include in next year’s session the departmental missions, goals, policy issues, and actions for moving forward • Incorporate a “State of the County” report broken down by district (e.g., fiscal, student achievement, or other areas that the Board suggests to staff in advance)

IX. ELECTRONIC AGENDA TRAINING

Steve Ramos, Director of Information Services and Technology, trained the Board members on the process and features of using an iPad to access meeting agendas, materials, and presentations. By converting to electronic documents, the Board expects to significantly reduce paper waste.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Dr. Verder-Aliga adjourned the meeting at 12:55 PM.

Signature on File

Jay Speck
 Secretary to the Solano County Board of Education