

MINUTES
RIALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Board Meeting of the Board of Education

May 14, 2024
Dr. John R. Kazalunas Education Center
182 East Walnut Avenue
Rialto, California

Members Present: Joseph W. Martinez, President
Edgar Montes, Vice President
Evelyn P. Dominguez, Clerk
Nancy G. O'Kelley, Member

Members Absent: Stephanie E. Lewis, Member
Keyne Galazo, Student Board Member

Staff Present: Rhea McIver Gibbs, Ed.D., Lead Strategic Agent
Diane Romo, Lead Business Services Agent
Norberto Perez, Agent: Expanded Learning Programs
Ingrid Lin, Academic Agent: Elementary
Rhonda Kramer, Lead Personnel Agent
Also present was Martha Degortari, Executive Administrative Agent, and Jose Reyes, Interpreter/Translator

A. OPENING

A.1 CALL TO ORDER 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

A.2 OPEN SESSION

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Clerk Dominguez led the pledge of allegiance.

C. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved By Clerk Dominguez

Seconded By Vice President Montes

Member Lewis was absent. Vote by Board Members to adopt the agenda:

Approved by a Majority Vote

D. CLOSED SESSION

Moved By Member O'Kelley

Seconded By Clerk Dominguez

As provided by law, the following are the items for discussion and consideration at the Closed Session of the Board Meeting:

- **PUBLIC EMPLOYEE EMPLOYMENT / DISCIPLINE / DISMISSAL / RELEASE / REASSIGNMENT OF EMPLOYEES (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54957)**
- **PUBLIC EMPLOYEE EMPLOYMENT (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54957)**

Title: Acting Superintendent

COMMENTS ON CLOSED-SESSION AGENDA ITEMS

Any person wishing to speak on any item on the Closed Session Agenda will be granted three minutes.

Steven Figueroa, Inland Empire Latino Coalition and Education Advocate, shared his concerns that the Board already violated The Brown Act when, in the last meeting, they announced that staff was put on leave and it was not mentioned on the agenda. He commented that in the past, some of the Board members have been asked to resign for violating The Brown Act. He stated that the Board has become what they criticized when they got elected. He indicated that the Board needs to undo the vote and repost it so that the public can participate. He stated that some Board members have stated that the meetings are held early in the day so that the public cannot participate and that is what the Board did. He commented that the meeting should be held at a later time so that more of the public can

participate and provide input. He stated that Gil Navarro could not be here, but would agree with his comments. He addressed the Board by stating, "Don't violate the public's trust." He accused that the Board stole the public's first amendment right. He stated that what happened was wrong.

James Martinez, a parent of two students at Carter High School and a big advocate of this District shared that he understands that the Board has to do what the Board has to do. He commented that today is not an easy day for the Board. He said that as a parent, he is stuck with rumors and innuendoes and is getting very little to no information. He shared that he knows when he gets a call from Syeda Jafri, that he gets information, but in this case has received nothing. He says that as a parent, he needs to know who he is supporting for a superintendent. He questioned whether the superintendent had gone through Keenan training. He closed by stating that he was really sad that Mrs. Lewis was not here because this is a very important day.

Michael Montano, Rialto High School Teacher, resident of ten years in Rialto, and educator in the District for sixteen years, shared that he has had a lot of people who have reached out to him with questions. He thanked the Board for respecting people's privacy, and would like to meet with Board members individually going into next year with some ideas to carry into next year.

Tobin Brinker, Rialto Education Association (REA) President, came to provide the Board with some perspective as they go into Closed Session. He listed, first to disregard who we are talking about and focus on the nature of the job that the person holds. He then spoke about leadership. He reminded the Board about REA members who have been investigated in the past and after exoneration, they received nothing from the District to clear their names. He stated that has been the District practice. He reminded the Board that they operate under The Brown Act. He recited a quote from the State Attorney General explaining The Brown Act. He stated that he believes that the Board erred when they announced the employee's leave without identifying the employee by title. He stated that the community absolutely has the right to know that something has happened. He says the lack of transparency in this matter is problematic and said that in the past, the public was notified. He says that as the president of REA, he should have been notified immediately. He thanked the two Board members who responded when he reached out and thanked Dr. Gibbs. He stated that while none of those individuals could share any comments on any confidential personnel information, they did listen to his concerns and walked him through the process. He requested that the Board be as transparent as they can be when they report out. He says that uncertainty undermines all of our abilities to make good decisions. He says that

the Board's split decision to put the Superintendent on leave is problematic. He concluded with a quote.

Devonna Roberson, a parent organizer with Congregations Organize for Prophetic Engagement (COPE) shared that she represents many. She wanted to remind the Board and Cabinet of the commitment that was made to the community in regard to The Ebony Triangle. It is a community that makes up Fontana, Rialto, and San Bernardino. This group engages with those superintendents to partner in support of our African-American students and families. She reminded the Board that whoever leads this District that they are expecting the same partnership. This group is concerned about some things that they are hearing about the treatment of African-American families and staff in these School Districts.

Member Lewis was absent. Vote by Board Members to move into Closed Session:

Time: 4:18 p.m.

Approved by a Majority Vote

E. ADJOURNMENT OF CLOSED SESSION

Moved By Clerk Dominguez

Seconded By Vice President Montes

Member Lewis was absent and Member O'Kelley was not present during this vote. Vote by Board Members to adjourn Closed Session:

Time: 5:50 p.m.

Approved by a Majority Vote

F. OPEN SESSION RECONVENED

Open session reconvened at 5:50 p.m.

G. REPORT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION

Moved By Member O'Kelley

Seconded By Vice President Montes

The Governing Board took action to appoint Dr. Ed D'Souza as Acting Superintendent.

Member Lewis was absent. Vote by Board Members:

(Abstain) President Martinez

(Ayes) Vice President Montes, Clerk Dominguez, Member O'Kelley

Approved by a Majority Vote

G.1 STATEMENT READ OUT BY VICE PRESIDENT MONTES

Dear members of the educational community, at its regular meeting, May 8, 2024, the Board took action to place Superintendent Dr. Avila on non-disciplinary paid leave, effective immediately. Dr. Ed D'Souza has agreed to serve as acting Superintendent. Dr. Ed D'Souza knows our District and has over 40 years in education with a demonstrated commitment to student achievement and equity. The Board is confident in Dr. D'Souza's ability to lead the District at this moment, and we deeply appreciate his willingness to do so. We know that many of you will have many questions. This action, however, is a confidential personnel matter. As a result, to respect the Superintendent's employee privacy rights, the Board, its individual members, and District staff will refrain from providing comment. The Board will provide updates and discuss and address these matters through its designated spokesperson when it is appropriate. Thank you.

H. ADJOURNMENT

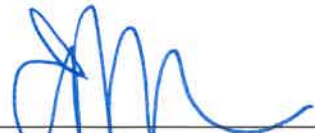
Moved By Clerk Dominguez

Seconded By Member O'Kelley

Vote by Board Members to adjourn:

Time: 5:52 p.m.

Approved by a Majority Vote



Clerk, Board of Education



Secretary, Board of Education