

MINUTES

RIALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Special Board Meeting of the Board of Education

July 17, 2020

**Dr. John R. Kazalunas Education Center
182 East Walnut Avenue
Rialto, California**

Members Present: Nancy O'Kelley, President
Dina Walker, Vice-President
Joseph Martinez, Clerk
Joseph Ayala, Member
Edgar Montes, Member

Staff Present: Cuauhtémoc Avila, Ed.D., Superintendent
Darren McDuffie, Ed.D., Lead Strategic Agent: Strategic,
Congruence and Social Justice
Mohammad Z. Islam, Associate Superintendent, Business
Services
Rhea McIver Gibbs, Ed.D., Lead Personnel Agent
Also present was Martha Degortari, Executive Administrative
Agent, and Jose Reyes, Interpreter/Translator

A. OPENING

Call to order 3:00 p.m.

The Special Board of Education meeting was called to order at 3:07 p.m.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board President, Mrs. Nancy G. O'Kelley, led the pledge of allegiance.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

C.1 COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

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

Superintendent, Dr. Avila, read the public comments which were received via email.

Board President Mrs. Nancy G. O'Kelley indicated that pursuant to Board Bylaw 4323, comments on the item on the agenda in today's Special Board meeting would be limited to 20 minutes total.

Aaron Thomas, Teacher in Rialto USD, and parent of three students in the District indicated that he attended and graduated from this District, and is familiar with the people in the community. Based on the current social environment, and the latest board meeting, on July 15th, 2020, he wanted to share the following:

As an educator in this district, he utilizes many tools and programs to ensure the learning of all of his students. He indicated that the majority of these things are provided by the District, and some are purchased by him. He was frustrated to hear that the District/Board was making unilateral decisions about programs without the input of classroom teachers. He questioned whether the District/Board actually knows what resources the teachers are using and does the District/Board know which programs teachers find useful or not useful? He was glad that none of the programs were dropped but extremely aggravated that the programs he uses for the students could possibly be taken away at a moment's notice. He shared about the ALEKS program that is used for math instruction, which he said is a staple in most secondary math classrooms (not in AP Calculus or AP Statistics). He understands the fiscal responsibilities of the District/Board, but there are no other resources out there that do the same thing for a cheaper price.

He also talked about the fact that math has not gone through adoption in quite some time, and even worse for AP math subjects (Calculus and Statistics). The District is currently using a 3rd edition text, and the most recent edition (6th edition with the new curriculum changes) was released this past January. He indicated that we need to use textbooks that are actually aligned with the state and federal standards, not just books that were thrown together last minute by publishing companies.

He says that he realizes that many of the rules and regulations regarding the opening of schools are changing on a daily basis depending on the politicians making the changes, and he is requesting that teachers not be required to physically be on campus. He does not understand the purpose of students being allowed to stay home and learn, but teachers being asked to show up to an empty classroom and work from there. He is hopeful that

the District and Board will see teachers as professionals and allow them to do their jobs from the safety of their own home. He said that in the last several years since Dr. Avila took over, the District and Board has started to turn things in the right direction and he would like to see this continue.

Rachel Garvin, 4th Grade Teacher at Boyd Elementary, but to her child, she is just "Mommy", shared that over the past several months she has social distanced herself and stayed isolated. She does not take her daughter out because she believes that when school campuses were closed in March that it was because little ones mattered. She shared that at times it was not easy to do distance learning with her child around, but she was strategic, when necessary, and made her part of her "classroom family", just like the siblings, parents, and grandparents of her students who popped into her Google Meets, sat in for virtual story time, and shared concerns about their little ones. Her parents understood that she was facing the same joys and struggles at her home. She indicated that if distance learning is now done from the classroom then she will have to share a bathroom with 50 staff members, be more exposed to public germs as she travels, and to take her daughter to daycare. She questioned why she spent the summer sequestered, to now sacrifice her health and safety. She is hopeful that the District will take everyone into consideration.

Samuel Hernandez, Teacher, shared that he wants to be back in the classroom. He said he would even sign a waiver from the District, if necessary. Those who want to teach in the classroom should have that opportunity and those who want their kids to go to school should also have the opportunity. He indicated that families should have the option to have their children stay home and engage in distance learning, and teachers who want to stay home should have students assigned to them and they can implement a distance learning program.

He recommended that class size should be higher for distance learning teachers. This would allow for safer working conditions for teachers and students at school. He shared that sacrifices need to be made on all sides so that the best opportunities are provided for our students and working families. He appreciates the opportunity of doing distance learning from the classroom as it is a much better setting for teaching. He is requesting that teachers be given a choice as to where we teach.

Caroline Collins, Teacher at Carter High School, shared her gratitude for making the responsible and difficult decision to have students attend school through distance learning. She has had the privilege to teach at Carter High

School for 14 years. She indicated that her students hold a special place in her heart, and as difficult as it will be to not see them face to face, she is deeply comforted by the fact that they and she can stay safe.

She shared that she has had the opportunity to participate in many professional development opportunities to help her prepare a strong distance learning experience for her students this coming year. She is a professional and said there is no reason why she cannot deliver powerful, meaningful lessons for her students from home. She indicated that the purpose of distance learning is to keep people at home to suppress the transmission of the virus; being required to report on campus completely defeats that purpose. She shared her concern for the number of teachers who have medical conditions, or have family members with medical conditions, for whom going onto campus can be dangerous. She knows there are teachers who feel that they would work better if they could deliver their lessons from their own classrooms and it comes down to choice and respect. She asked that they be respected as the professionals that they are, and be trusted with the choice to deliver lessons from their classrooms or from their homes.

Jeanine Singer, Teacher, shared that she is extremely disappointed in the decision to require teachers to work from their classrooms during distance learning. During their prior experience with distance learning, her work days consisted of 18 hour days. Those hours were spent planning, designing, and presenting virtual lessons and more hours were spent grading, giving feedback, and regrading work. Even more hours were spent answering logistical questions from parents and students. She is concerned that if she is required to do distance learning from the classroom that the quality of her teaching will decline because of the time constraints. She is 59 years old and has some health concerns and cares for her mother who is 91 years old.

She said she understands that there were some teachers who did not participate in distance learning during the last trimester, but most of them were dedicated to their job and did the absolute best they could. She requested that they be treated with the respect they deserve and principals could monitor their lessons, join their Google Meets, and review lesson plans. This will allow all them to stay home safely while delivering the best lessons possible during distance learning.

Stacey Pineiros, Teacher at Fitzgerald, shared her disagreement with having to report to our school sites four days a week. She is not opposed

to reporting to their school sites for 1 to 2 days per week. She feels utilizing textbooks and technology from their classrooms will definitely help enhance Google classroom and other forms of Distance Learning. However, reporting four days a week, seven hours a day, is a poor way of utilizing time, she feels that teachers sitting in a classroom for seven hours is not using time effectively. One - two days allows for collaboration, meetings and the ability to have access to things that we do not have at home.

Kimberly Ramos, Teacher, thanked the Board for the extra work they have been putting in during this time. She shared that she has worked in the District since 2006. She loves being a teacher and takes her responsibilities as a teacher seriously. She indicated that the first priority at any school site is safety; and as teachers, they are fully aware that they must put the safety of their students first, before their own. She would put herself in danger to protect her students, in cases of emergency. She shared that the situation we are in now is not a fire, it's not an earthquake and it's not a shooter on campus. It's an invisible virus. Scientific evidence shows that the best way to protect themselves from this virus is to stay at home. It's one of the reasons that the Board Meetings have happened remotely. She talked about those District employees with medical conditions who will be put at higher risk if they return to their sites. Some employees have young children at home whose schools and daycare remain closed for their safety. She indicated that teachers will be forced to utilize the "Families First Coronavirus Response Act" (An employer paid leave) that will enable employees to stay at home with 2/3 pay for up to 12 weeks. If enough teachers utilize this act, the District will be unable to provide enough substitute teachers to fill the positions. She requested that the Board consider letting teachers work from home and show that they care about their safety.

Sandra Bowden, Teacher, shared that as she listened to the opening comments of the Board meeting of July 15, 2020, she heard the Board state that they have the best interest in mind for students and staff. As a teacher who is starting her 28th year of teaching for this district, I truly appreciate that. Although we have not seen the entire MOU, we have been told that we as teachers are required to report to the classroom at least four days a week to teach our students who will be learning from home. I do not see how this has the teachers' best interest in mind. I ask you to vote no on the proposed MOU. I feel like the only reason we are being asked to teach distantly at the school site is because our District doesn't trust us to do our jobs. All we want to do is have the opportunity to teach from the safety of

our homes. When my union asks me to vote, I will be voting no on the current MOU.

Jessica Buckle, Teacher, shared that based on the MOU demand of teachers conducting distance learning education from their classrooms, the District is sending a negative messages to the community and she fears it would not only jeopardize health but also relationships and morale. By demanding instead of giving the option to teachers to teach from their classrooms she feels shows a lack of concern for the safety of teachers. She feels the District is also saying that they are willing to layoff valued personnel to save money. She is dedicated to her students and is dedicated to Rialto Unified School District, but she is very concerned for her coworkers who have real fears about returning to work based on their health or the health of their families and the additional hardship being placed on teachers who are parents. She shared her concern for her co-workers and said they can be just as effective doing distance learning from their homes, if not more, since the worries associated with the risk of being on campus will be removed. She asked that her concerns be taken into consideration.

D. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved By Vice-President Walker

Seconded By Member Montes

Agenda was modified by removing all pages of the supporting document, except for the first page entitled, "Executive Summary".

Vote by Board Members to adopt agenda as amended.

Time: 3:32 p.m.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

E.1 CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF PLAN TO OPEN SCHOOLS FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Moved By Clerk Martinez

Seconded By Vice-President Walker

Approve the plan to open schools for the 2020-2021 school year with all students participating in a distance learning instructional model.

Vote by Board Members.

Motion Dies

Amendment:

Moved By Clerk Martinez
Seconded By Vice-President Walker

Board President, Mrs. O'Kelley, shared that in light of the actions by Governor Newsome today, July 17, 2020, related to the opening of schools, which in part states that schools in counties that are on the COVID-19 watchlist cannot open schools until 14 days after they are off the watchlist, the Board should consider delaying action on the item on today's agenda given that San Bernardino County is a county on the watchlist. This would allow staff to update the proposed plan to open schools with new guidelines and also allow the bargaining process to be completed. Once the plan is updated, it will be presented for Board action at a future meeting.

The Board approved to delay action on approval of plan to open schools for the 2020-2021 school year until a future meeting.

Vote by Board Members.


Approved by a Unanimous Vote

F. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By Vice-President Walker
Seconded By Clerk Martinez
Vote by Board Members.

Time: 3:37 p.m.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote



Clerk, Board of Education



Secretary, Board of Education