

**SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
GAYLORD A. NELSON EDUCATION CENTER / BOARD ROOM
2901 ARCH-AIRPORT ROAD / STOCKTON, CA
OCTOBER 8, 2014 / 12:00 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

PRESENT: Mark Thiel, President; Janet Dyk, Vice-President; Dave Sorgent, Board member; Vernon Gebhardt, Board member; Peter Ottesen, Board member; Mick Founts, Secretary.

OTHERS PRESENT: James Mousalimas, Deputy Superintendent; Jim Thomas, Deputy Superintendent; Jane Steinkamp, Assistant Superintendent; Janine Cuaresma, Assistant Superintendent; Karyn Dexter, Kathy Focacci, Wendy Frink, Karen DePrater, Elsa Gonzales, Deb Nickols, Janet Johnson, Mary Vink, Doug McCreath, Mark Yost, Lonnie Cox, Stephanie Omste, Terrell Martinez, Rachele Tyler, Nancy Rieti, Larissa Founts, Kelly Fry, Adriana Cortes-Solorio, Linda Melson, Nancy Hopple, SJCOE staff; Suzanne Fagundes, Terry Cumpian, Lincoln Unified School District; Interdistrict transfer appellant and family members; Janai Stanton, Recorder.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

President Thiel called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Board member Dyk led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: There were no additions to the agenda.

III. COMMENTS: There were no comments from the audience.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Charter School Petition Renewal: President Thiel opened the hearing in order to collect public input relative to the Venture Academy Family of Schools charter petition renewal, which has been submitted to the San Joaquin County Board of Education for approval.

Dr. Founts initiated the conversation by providing the background of Venture Academy. He said that he and Kathy Focacci began a long time ago with 200 kids and the school site is home to approximately 1,600 students today.

Kathy Focacci continued the story and explained that when the charter opened on July 2, 2002, there were 235 students and 11 staff members, many of who are still with the program. She noted that this speaks well to the environment created for staff, adding that the fact there are now 1,600 students speaks well to the educational program provided to the students. Ms. Focacci said that the students come from every walk of life but have one thing in common, which is that the school district program in their neighborhood did not work for them. Those reasons range from the students' need to accelerate to those who are credit deficient; there are kids who have been bullies and kids who have been bullied. She referenced the petition renewal document indicating that it is full of the data and facts, but she also brought along staff to tell the rest of the story.

Janet Johnson, a Director at Venture Academy Family of Schools (VAFS), said she was proud to be part of the charter school movement, and part of VAFS. She was one of the founding members of the program, part of the team who wrote the renewal petition in 2011, and part of the team who wrote this renewal petition. Ms. Johnson said the staff and students move forward, work hard, and accomplish the impossible every day.

Mary Vink, a Director at VAFS, said she has been involved in charter schools since 1999 and joined VAFS in 2007. She said that her days are always different. Ms. Vink said she takes a special interest in the Special Education population. Right now there are 110 students receiving Special Education services that address many issues including Emotionally Disturbed disorder, Obsessive-compulsive disorder, Tourette syndrome, and Autism. Ms. Vink said the students do well and the parents love the program, not only in Special Education but at all grade levels. Being a school of choice, Mary added, the parents want to be here and the students want to be here as well.

Joni Gorton, a Teacher at VAFS, explained that she started working with home school students and now teaches sixth grade. She shared that one of the most important things she notices about VAFS is the staff's ability to build strong relationships with their students. She told the story of a student who began with them in Kindergarten and graduated several years ago. Ms. Gorton stayed in touch with the student and encouraged her to pursue a career in an area best suited for her own passions. This particular student is about to graduate from a CNA program. Ms. Gorton noted that keeping connection is one of the excellent things about VAFS because no one cares about how much you know until you know how much someone cares. Joni said that VAFS staff cares and loves their kids and helps them reach their goals.

Lia Rodriguez, a Teacher at Historic Durham Ferry, described the program at that site, sharing that it is a 300-acre site and the students are the stewards of the land. The students keep trails clean, clean stalls, feed animals that include horses, goats, chickens, turkeys, cats, and dogs.

Nancy Rieti, a teacher at ImagineIT, teaches art and government at a site that integrates academics with career and technical education offering multiple pathways for students. Students learn to do things with their hands and are introduced to problem solving so they are better prepared for the real world. Ms. Rieti reviewed the different pathways and wrapped up by saying she loves going to work every day because VAFS is a family.

Nathan Ahmed, an instructor at VAFS, said he provides a unique perspective in that he was once a VAFS student and now teaches at VAFS, and he also is working on his credential at Teachers College of San Joaquin. He said he felt safe at VAFS as a student and felt that the counselors were his aunts and uncles. He said he tried many different pathways including construction, broadcasting, and the energy academy. He interned at the energy academy and decided he wanted to teach. Mr. Ahmed said he believes he can take this whole perspective and give it to his students.

Joni Hellstrom, a counselor at VAFS, explained she is also a coach of the Mock Trial Team, she runs the leadership program, the choir, and chairs several committees. She said what might not come across in the binder full of paper is that teachers are empowered to do what they love. She indicated that teachers are passionate and offer things that fit a student rather than trying to make a student fit into what they have. She said the way that it works is that they try to do what is right for kids. She wrapped it up by saying she hoped the testimonies provided a picture of what really goes on at VAFS.

Vern Gebhardt, Board member, congratulated Ms. Focacci for her bright and enthusiastic staff and he indicated he knew the staff was doing a tremendous job by virtue of the six-year WASC accreditation. He thanked the staff for their good work and commented that the kids are very lucky to be in the VAFS program.

Dave Sorgent, Board member, also noted his appreciation for the staff, as well as the growth in the program. He did ask about the ethnic breakdown between teachers and students and said he would like to see that prior to voting on the petition next month. He said that he asked this question five years ago and believes there has been growth in the area of diversity but he would like to see evidence of the improvement.

Ms. Focacci indicated that the ethnic comparison between students and staff is not a requirement but a practice and part of the charter charge is to reflect as closely as possible the diversity of the city in which the charter school resides.

Dr. Founts said he truly believes that this charter creates a place for kids rather than forcing kids into a place. He said there are 1,600 kids who go to school here and that in itself is a commendation to VAFS. There is no transportation offered to families yet they get here because they want to get here. He announced that he cannot say enough about the staff and the job they have done. He said he is glad to be a part of the program.

The public hearing was closed at 12:55 p.m.

2. Charter School Petition Renewal: President Thiel opened the public hearing to receive input relative to the **one**.Charter - Academy of Visual and Performing Arts petition renewal, which will be submitted to the San Joaquin County Board of Education for approval.

Dr. Founts shared that this renewal is a little unusual in one respect but not unusual when one looks at the quality of the charter. He shared that this charter has existed for five years but there was some misunderstanding in terms of what was counted as the first year. He explained that due to an error by SJCOE staff falsely determining that the charter expiration date was a year later than what the California Department of Education (CDE) had determined, coupled with additional errors by other SJCOE staff, CDE was poised to close the **one**.Charter. Dr. Founts referred to a packet of information that was meant to give the Board a complete run down of what happened, hiding nothing. Dr. Founts referred the Board to Appendix A that was a letter from the CDE indicating that the charter had expired. He said he knew it was operational so he found it discerning but was able to determine there was a small glitch and he prepared this document in order to provide a summary of what happened. He explained that the County Board had approved the charter on September 18, 2009 and SJCOE had received Public Charter School Grant Program funding, which can only be given to a charter school within the term of their charter, whether students are in attendance or not.

Dr. Founts referred the Board to a series of emails between SJCOE staff and CDE staff regarding the actual start date of the charter. SJCOE staff believed the school was not operational until the time that students began attending the school and that a renewal petition was not needed until June 2015. Dr. Founts said this was clearly a problem and began corresponding with CDE regarding the issue. As such, the CDE came forward with two options. One option is that the charter term remains as August 9, 2009 through June 30, 2014 and the Board expedite the renewal process by holding a public hearing at the next available Board meeting. CDE asked that copies of Board minutes and action to renew the petition be sent to the CDE as soon as possible.

Dr. Founts explained that the second option is to change the term to July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2015 and the CDE database would be updated to indicate the date change. Once that occurs, the CDE will send an amended Grant Award Notice to cancel the grant and bill SJCOE for the Public Charter School Grant Program funding that was disbursed in error.

Next, Dr. Founts referred the Board to emails between CDE and himself on October 1, 2014 that explain the details of the code and indicate that if the renewal petition is expedited and approved, the renewal date would begin on July 1, 2014 and end on June 30, 2019.

He recommended the expedited option and indicated that the CDE has confirmed that this option would allow SJCOE to keep grant funding that has been received and also allow SJOCE to count the ADA that has been generated this year so far.

He said that his relationship with CDE staff, along with the track record of VAFS, is an indication that SJCOE is not pulling the wool over anyone's eyes. Dr. Founts apologized to the Board for the mistake and said he had been apologetic with CDE as well. He explained that there had also been discussion with CDE about the idea of sending notification to charter schools when it is time for petition renewals and, although that is not the responsibility of CDE, it is something that will be considered.

President Thiel asked Ms. Cuaresma to discuss the significant changes between the original petition and the new petition. Ms. Cuaresma reported that the site had expanded to two more campuses and staff has grown. The first petition called this charter school a sister school to the **one**. Program schools in order to provide another option for students. In June of 2010, it was decided to focus on visual and performing arts and now all three sites have that focus; each with their own twist. She explained that the newest site in Manteca recently added a recording studio meant to expand the art opportunities.

Ms. Cuaresma went on to explain that the renewal application holds evidence that all requirements of Education Code have been met with regard to pupil achievement. The petition includes all goals, actions, and measurable outcomes that are found in the LCAP plan. She addressed Board member Sorgent and indicated the demographic statistics for students is included in the application and teacher are listed, too, but the demographics for staff will be provided in November.

Board member Sorgent asked how the test scores fared for this group of students. Ms. Cuaresma explained that this is similar to an alternative school in that there is a high transiency rate amongst students. As such, they have applied to be considered an alternative measurement program, which allows for an API target rather than a ranking. She explained that they use their own program-wide assessments, which show that in the areas of Math and Language Arts there is a little growth, then a little drop, then growth again; scores are holding.

Board member Sorgent asked Dr. Founts if SJCOE would be losing ADA from July 1 through November when the petition will be considered for approval. Dr. Founts said that by doing an expedited renewal there will be no loss of Federal funding and there is no loss of authorization, it will just be provided retroactively.

Program Director, Deb Nickols, bragged about the charter sites by sharing information about the recent WASC accreditation, senior week, use of technology in the classroom, and the awesome instructors who provide the students with passion and purpose.

She requested that Board members call her and she will take them to the sites to show them what is provided to students. Ms. Nickols thanked the Board for reviewing the charter petition application.

Christopher Hanks, a teacher at **one**.Charter, introduced the idea that having a focused place for students to come and learn about the arts brings a wide-range of students who are free to explore their humanness at school. He said that students are asked to be critical thinkers about their art, the art around them, and the art they consume each day to help extend their point of view. He declared the other reasons this petition renewal is important is the access to resources that it provides. The students and teachers feel lucky about this access and it pulls the pieces together to make cool things happen. He said he is inspired by the chance to provide a common home for students who don't necessarily fit somewhere else, and he believes this is important work.

President Thiel thanked the audience and said the Board will take the information into consideration upon the review of the petition renewal.

The public hearing was closed at 1:30 p.m.

V. ITEMS SCHEDULED FOR ACTION:

3. Interdistrict Transfer Appeal Hearing #08-14-15: On a motion from Dave Sorgent, second by Vern Gebhardt, the Board granted the appeal of the decision by the Governing Board of the Lincoln Unified School District and ordered the transfer of attendance of student #08-14-15 from the Lodi Unified School District.

AYES: Thiel, Dyk, Sorgent, Gebhardt
NOES: Ottesen
ABSTAIN: None

4. Minutes: On a motion from Vern Gebhardt, second by Dave Sorgent, the Board approved the minutes from the September 17, 2014 meeting as presented.

AYES: Thiel, Dyk, Sorgent, Gebhardt, Ottesen
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None

5. Resolution #14-15-05 Adopting Revised 2013 - 2014 Actual Gann Expenditures Limit and Revised 2014 - 2015 Estimated Gann Expenditures Limit: On a motion from Pete Ottesen, second by Dave Sorgent, the Board approved this resolution as presented.

AYES: Thiel, Dyk, Sorgent, Gebhardt, Ottesen
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None

6. Board Bylaw Revision: This item was tabled until the next meeting.

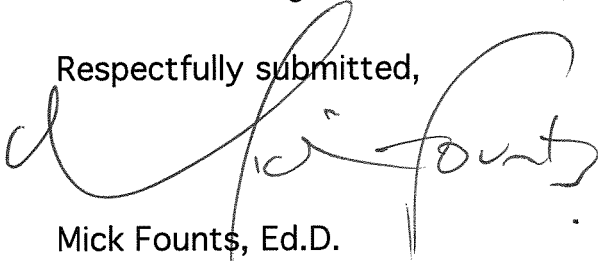
VI. CLOSING COMMENTS FOR BOARD MEMBERS:

- The next regular meeting of the San Joaquin County Board of Education will be held November 19, 2014, 12:00 p.m., at 2901 Arch-Airport Road, Stockton, CA.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mick Founts", written over the typed name and title.

Mick Founts, Ed.D.
Secretary to the Board /
Superintendent of Schools