

**West Contra Costa Unified School District
Minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting
El Cerrito High School Library
540 Ashbury Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530**

February 9, 2011

A. Opening Procedures

President Charles Ramsey called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

A.1 Pledge of Allegiance

President Ramsey led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

A.2 Welcome and Meeting Procedures

President Ramsey offered welcome and instructions to the public regarding the meeting.

A.3 Roll Call

Board Members Present: Madeline Kronenberg, Antonio Medrano, Elaine Merriweather, Charles Ramsey

Board Members Absent: Tony Thurmond

Staff Present: Carol Butcher, Stewart School Principal; Steve Collins, SELPA Director; Bob Evans, DeAnza Principal; Bill Fay, Associate Superintendent for Operations; Sheri Gamba, Associate Superintendent for Business Services; Sylvia Greenwood, DeJean Principal; Wendell Greer, Associate Superintendent for Secondary Schools; Bruce Harter, Superintendent; Linda Jackson, Executive Director; Lyn Potter, Director Categorical and Instructional Support Services; Nia Rashidchi, Assistant Superintendent Educational Services; Vince Rhea, Executive Director; Jason Reimann, El Cerrito High Principal; Ann Reinhausen, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Katie VonHusen, Pinole Middle School Principal; Guy Zakrevsky, Hercules Middle High School Principal

B. Public Comment

Jim Sanders

C. Improving Learning in Secondary Schools – Commitments and Single Plans for Student Achievement

President Ramsey asked Superintendent Harter to provide some introduction and background about the meeting. Assistant Superintendent Rashidchi provided the Board with an overview of the plan for the agenda with conversations designed for two major areas; the District Commitments, which include the core programs of the schools and the Single Plans for Student Achievement, which address the categorical or supplemental funding that schools receive.

After introductory remarks by Principals Reimann and Butcher, President Ramsey asked Board Member Kronenberg to describe her concerns about the Single Plans for Student Achievement. Ms. Kronenberg clarified that it was her intention in requesting this meeting that the Board would serve a helpful function in addressing the systemic barriers that principals identify as impacting their ability to improve student learning.

An extended discussion ensued and included all of the principals who were in attendance. Mr. Ramsey also called on Associate Superintendent Greer and Assistant Superintendent Rashidchi to weigh in on their perceptions of the system problems that the Board could address to provide additional support to secondary schools in improving student learning. The principals identified several barriers that they felt impeded their efforts to raise the achievement levels for all students and close the achievement gap. Board members Merriweather and Medrano asked questions of the principals and shared their insights and suggestions to the group.

Six areas emerged as key systemic challenges for middle and high schools in the District:

1. Articulation between elementary and middle schools and middle schools and high schools, was identified as a substantial issue. Principals noted that teachers needed time to confer with each other in their feeder patterns and by department to accelerate improved learning.
2. Alignment of instructional materials: Moving Into English (MIE) is the K-5 supplemental program to Open Court and Foro Abierto used to teach the ELD standards to English learners. Principals have expressed a

concern that this program is not having the impact that WCCUSD teachers and administrators want to see happen for English learners; current instruction with this program does not seem to meet the needs of EL students. Full use of the program to fidelity is challenging due to the complexity of matching program components to student proficiency levels.

3. The implementation of the collaboration time in schools where faculties have approved collaboration plans is problematic for principals in establishing and maintaining congruent and focused professional development.
4. The secondary master schedules represent another constraint for creating and sustaining support for students as well as time for teachers to work together.
5. The instructional day for middle school students is substantially shorter than high students. Middle schools struggle to provide the level of quality time that is required to teach students to reach the California standards. Principals advocated for increasing the amount of instructional time so that middle schools and high schools can be on the same schedules.
6. The teacher evaluation process has requirements and constraints that limit the principal's ability to provide accountability that is needed in their schools.

President Ramsey thanked all those who attended and reiterated that the purpose of the meeting had been to discuss the barriers to improving learning at our middle and high schools. He noted that the the meeting could have centered on the successes that are going on, but that would have been less helpful to the Board in considering policy changes that will be most supportive to the District's middle and high schools.

C. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.