
VUSD SCHOOL BOARD REPORT

Perfect Score

At our recent (2/15) board meeting, the board joined with Superintendent Joyce Bales in recognizing the accomplishments of a 16-year old senior from Rancho Buena Vista HS. This young athlete got every question right on the ACT. Her choice of colleges and scholarships is wide open. I have been involved with our district for more than two decades, and the new focus on academics that our superintendent is promoting is refreshing and exciting. We are very fortunate to have Joyce Bales as our superintendent.

Teaching Kids to Read

The DELAC president urged the board to return the failed bilingual program as an option to parents. I noted that our district is scheduled to lose three schools to the state this fall if we don't teach students to read English. The bilingual program had been used during the last seven years and failed to teach enough students to save those schools. We should not return to a program that has so consistently failed our children, and if we did the state surely would take the schools from us. Jim Gibson said, "Our responsibility as board members is to insure that all students graduate reading at grade level. We currently have 10,265 students reading below grade level. That is unacceptable." The other board members seemed to be in agreement, with David Hubbard suggesting DELAC might have another goal in mind other than learning to read English. Staff will explore that issue.

Building Dual Magnet HS at Lincoln would cut cost in half, but Board Majority Insisting on Melrose/76 Location anyway

Staff gave a full disclosure of the budget for the Dual Magnet High schools. By June of 2006, VUSD had either expended or encumbered \$82 million and was \$4 million short. It is now believed the state will provide the extra funding. The Melrose/76 project originally budgeted at \$49 million is now at \$91 million which includes a \$4 million contingency.

Staff admitted that the Dual Magnet High schools, if built on Lincoln property, would cost about half this amount. Hubbard said, "I think we owe it to the entire school community to say this is what we're going to do. I think it's finally time that we tell people we're not going to be messing around with Lincoln anymore."

Personally, I think the board majority of Hubbard, Lilly and Herrera delivered this message more than a year ago. What they haven't told the parents is that if your middle school student is planning to attend Rancho Buena Vista HS, you need to move south of Hwy.78 because those to the north of 78 will be sent to Vista High. Hubbard, Herrera and Lilly fully expect the magnet campus to draw students almost entirely from the areas that are now served by Vista HS. This means RBV will remain overcrowded. Therefore, they plan to change the boundaries of both VHS and RBV. In the end, the Melrose campus will be reclassified as a comprehensive high school, and the board majority will have managed to overrule the mandate of the electorate as expressed in the Prop O plan.

Union Boss Outrageously Distorts My Views

Pam O'Reilly, the president of the Vista teachers' union, took the opportunity to make a long presentation in which she attacked me for comments I made on television. At the heart of the issue is my deep desire to see the union return to what it once was: a professional association that honored the classroom teacher by supporting high professional standards both in terms of academics and ethics. Such standards include condemning the small minority of teachers whose actions are reprehensible and indefensible. In so doing, the union would honor the vast majority of dedicated teachers who care deeply about serving our children.

In June 2002, the *North County Times* reported that a woman who had been a VUSD student came forth to charge that when she was in high school and only 15 years old, a teacher twice her age had used his position of authority to have sex with her repeatedly, and frequently engaged in these encounters on school premises. The law and most parents regard what happened as rape. The teacher did not deny the sex acts had taken place and was indicted. He subsequently resigned from the district.

It is rare for an adult to go public with such a painful experience, and this woman's action was motivated by the fact that her daughter was a student in the same school and the teacher was still on staff. In exposing the teacher's prior illegal behavior, she was protecting her daughter and other students currently in school who might become new victims. At the time the story was reported, the Vista teachers' union made no comment of any kind about the teacher's behavior. Even after his resignation, the union president failed to assure the community that the union was committed to policing its own and would not tolerate members who sexually exploited students in their schools.

In answer to a question on KOCT, I offered this case as an example of why I believe the Vista teachers' union no longer has a commitment to professional standards that would make it worthy of our trust and respect.

At last week's board meeting, the union president reaffirmed that her union's public image was still her primary concern. She took issue with me for making statements that put her union in a negative light, and in the process completely distorted my words by claiming that I had suggested that "teachers are rapists." Contrary to this outrageous characterization, I accused the union bosses of having standards so low they were willing to represent the "lowest of the low" and gave the example of the teacher/rapist that the union stood ready to represent until the day he resigned.

The union president said that if a member of her union had made "statements that embarrassed this community, we as a representative body would do all we could to censure that person."

Too bad her union is unwilling to do anything to expose members who engage in behavior that 99% of teachers regard as immoral. At the meeting, I asked the union president a question concerning a criminal matter that remains unresolved from last fall's school board election. Why has she done nothing to find the individual who made several untraceable telephone calls to former candidate Patty Anderson threatening to harm her children? The union president dodged the question by claiming she had not been contacted by the authorities. In so doing, I regret that she proved my point.

It is my hope that our many good teachers in the classroom will someday regain control of their own union and demand that its leaders uphold the high professional standards to which most teachers are committed. They and our children will be better served when that day arrives.

Your servant on the board,
Stephen Guffanti, MD

This email may be reproduced. It is designed to inform the taxpayer and the parent. VUSDWatch has graciously offered to post on its website all the documents that substantiate the different issues in these emails.

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