

SAN LEANDRO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
SAN LEANDRO, CALIFORNIA
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SPECIAL STUDY SESSION OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION - MINUTES

January 18, 2011

The Board of Education of the San Leandro Unified School District met for a special study session on January 18, 2011, in the San Leandro Unified School District Administrative Office, Conference Room 1, 14735 Juniper Street, San Leandro, California.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by President Mack-Rose.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Trustee Ron Carey
Trustee Lance James (arrived at 6:05 p.m.)
Trustee Mike Katz-Lacabe
Trustee Carmen Sullivan (arrived at 6:36 p.m.)
Trustee Hermy Almonte, Clerk
Trustee Diana Prola, Vice President
Trustee Morgan Mack-Rose, President

DISTRICT STAFF PRESENT

Cindy Cathey, Superintendent
Song Chin-Bendib, Assistant Superintendent
Debbie Wong, Interim Assistant Superintendent
John Thompson, Ed. D., Senior Director II

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments concerning items on the closed session agenda.

CLOSED SESSION

At 6:04 p.m., the Board went into Closed Session for Conference with Labor Negotiator pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6.

The Board returned to open session at 7:07 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. President Mack-Rose noted that the Board had been in closed session where no reportable action was taken.

PRESENTATION

President Mack-Rose began by stating that tonight was a special Board study session on homework, explaining that study sessions set aside a time for a less formal and more in depth discussion on matters about which the Board makes decisions. Tonight, in addition to public comment cards already received, she would be extending an invitation to other audience members, who may not have filled out a speaker card, to ask questions and share their thoughts.

* Debbie Wong, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services and Mike Walbridge, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, facilitated a Board workshop on homework and provided information on the following:

- Current research on homework
- San Leandro's policy as well as a matrix of neighboring districts; who have recently revised their policies
- Snapshot of homework implementation in our schools
- Conclusions and options
- Questions, discussion and next steps

Key points included:

- Current research indicates that there is no conclusive evidence that homework increases student achievement
- In comparison, San Leandro Unified School District's Policy shares similar strands/components to the California School Board Association and other neighboring districts as well as the National Education Association (NEA) and National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) guidelines
- Research recommendations and other perspectives vary from no homework to more homework
- Evidence of inconsistent implementation of current policy
- Some Guiding Questions from ERIC DIGEST (Education Resources Information Center Publication) include
 - What kind of homework is most effective?
 - How much homework is useful learning tool?
 - Who is responsible for deciding how much homework to assign?
 - Who is responsible for monitoring homework?
- Possible Ideas to Consider:
 1. Fully implement the existing policy
 2. Make minor revisions and then fully implement the policy (i.e. change "Homework is to be assigned Monday through Thursday and on Friday as needed" to "No Homework Fridays") (approximately one year)
 3. Make major revisions to revamp policy (1½ to 2 years)

Following the presentation, the Board offered some general comments and

posed clarifying questions regarding the information presented related to the selection criteria used in determining which comparative districts to include, and the average number of academic classes taken by middle and high school students.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Ann D'Antonio, teacher and parent of two primary students, felt that there was too much homework at night (mostly consisting of busy work), which left no time for children to experience their own creativity.
- Latrina Dumas felt that homework was very essential to the learning process.
- Additional comments and questions from audience members included:
 - Who designs the homework?
 - Teachers across the District have different kinds of standards, and ideas related to homework
 - Inconsistencies exist throughout the District
 - Urged the Board to follow the data and decide what is right for the students
 - Homework teaches work habits and responsibility

During the discussion, it was noted that given the research limitations and conclusions, there was no simple answer; however, the Board felt that “homework” was something that needed to be addressed and offered the following thoughts:

- One size fits all does not work
- Teachers need to meet the needs of all students
- Would like a policy that works in our community, and at the same time, gives teachers academic freedom because they know their students best
- Eliminating homework would be a civil injustice
- Homework helps kids be successful and contributes to better tests scores, and enlists practice
- Homework is necessary to explore the subject matter
- Homework needs to be effective, not “busy work”
- Supports the 10-minute rule
- Teachers need to be educated on the homework policy
- Make homework for the student, not the parent
- Differences between primary and secondary levels require very different conversations
- Incorporate expectations for reading time into the instructional minutes

Looking ahead, the Board directed staff to proceed with option #2, “Make minor revisions and then fully implement the policy (i.e. changing “Homework...Friday as needed” to “No Homework Fridays”. Staff will organize a series of parent meetings, teacher task forces and site staff meetings to get input on minor changes, adding that staff will provide a project task list and timeline to the Board in late March or early April.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- The Board heard additional comments from the audience regarding low math test scores, staffing at the Fred T. Korematsu campus, and residency issues.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

The Board thanked staff for the presentation and those in attendance for their input.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Trustee Katz-Lacabe and seconded by Trustee James, the Board adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m. by a 7-0 vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Hermy Almonte, Clerk