

Transcript of the December 14, 2022, Orange County Board of Education Meeting

SPARKS: Welcome. For the benefit of the record, this regular meeting of the Orange County Board of Education is called to order. Darou, roll call.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Present.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams? Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Here.

SPARKS: I would ask for the adoption of the regular meeting of December 14, 2022?

BARKE: So moved.

SHAW: Second.

VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, SHAW, VALDES, SPARKS: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay, 4-0. Now the approval of the regular meeting of November 2, 2022.

BARKE: So moved.

SHAW: Second.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, SHAW, VALDES, SPARKS: Aye.

SPARKS: Four to zero. Now, Nina do we have any comment cards received for our closed session items?

BOYD: We do not.

SPARKS: Okay. So now we will take a recess to go into closed session and be back at 5 o'clock.

BOYD: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

[The Board conducts closed sessions and returns to open session.]

SPARKS: Okay, we will call the meeting to order. Welcome, everybody. We are going to roll over our closed session until after the meeting because we have a few items that we still need to discuss. Moving right along, we will start with our invocation, Pastor Christina Williams, welcome.

WILLIAMS: Thank you for having me. For unto us a child is born, a son is given. The government will rest on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Lord, at this festive time, we pray that you would be with us in all that we do and all that we plan. And today, we particularly ask you to bless this meeting and those who will participate in it. We pray that your love will shine during this time and that we will reflect you in all our actions, attitudes, and behaviors during this meeting.

Help us to remember that you are the God who sees in secret and rewards openly, that you care deeply on how we live and respond in the places of leadership that you put us in. We ask that you would bless this group abundantly and that they may seek your wisdom, guidance, courage, and strength. Be with them in deliberations and help them to be wise in the decisions that they make for the protection and good of all those who have placed their trust and confidence in their leadership. Give them insight to lead with integrity, that their decisions may reflect what is right and good. Help them to make decisions that are for the good of all and guard them from anything destructive.

Lord, grant us humility in all. We seek your will. We want to do what you would have us do and say. That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God who is the savior of all people. All glory be to you, loving God, now and always. Amen.

SPARKS: Amen. Thank you, Pastor Christina Williams from the Harbor Light Church of Costa Mesa. We appreciate you being here tonight. Next, we have our Pledge of Allegiance. Henny Abraham, come on up.

ABRAHAM: Please rise. If you knew how important this is to me, I wasn't born in America. To stand in front of you, and, as a free, American woman whose country right now is fighting for its revolution, I'm Iranian. This is a great honor and privilege. So for the fact that we live in the best country and a free country, please face the flag and repeat after me. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SPARKS: Thank you, Henny. Nina, do we have any introductions?

BOYD: There are no introductions at this meeting.

SPARKS: Okay, thank you. At this point, we can approve the consent calendar, items one through three, unless you want to tease one out.

BARKE: Are you moving that?

BOYD: You have public—

SPARKS: I am moving that—well, you can move it.

BARKE: I'll move it. Go ahead. So moved.

SPARKS: Second, anybody?

VALDES: Second.

SPARKS: All right. All in favor of approving the consent calendar one through three?

BARKE, SHAW, VALDES, SPARKS: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay. Passes 4-0.

BOYD: You skipped over public comments.

SPARKS: Oh, and I forgot public comments. I sure did. Sorry about that.

SHAW: No worries. We have a number of you. I will call a name followed by the backup speaker, so you can be ready to go on deck. We will first—

HENDRICK: These are under general comments. I'm sorry. We are handing you a few more.

SHAW: Oh.

SPARKS: Oh.

SHAW: More are coming.

HENDRICK: Five or six speakers.

SHAW: Okay. So we are going to start with Lynne, followed by Sherine.

SPARKS: Go ahead.

LYNNE: Just as the TV anchor proclaimed in network, I'm mad as hell and I'm not taking it anymore. I'm enraged with Trustee William's policy 400-4. I'm equally disdainful, as was the Orange County Register's November 17th editorial, with each of you for permitting this vile dictatorial policy to remain pending as if it had any socially redeeming feature worthy of your consideration. No wordsmithing can fix the arrogance and cruelty of this policy. I insist that 400-4 be buried and that no other such embarrassingly written, factually vacuous policy ever be placed before, we, the public, again. I fully embrace every word in the Register's November 17 editorial. It absolutely exposed, not only William's mock-worthy 400-4 curriculum proposal, but it likewise nailed the complicity of this entire board. Expressingly calling it, and calling you, "silly, addicted to culture war spats, and preening for Fox News." And then summarizing the Board's consistent conduct as "political theater." Wow, that has to burn.

Most powerful was the editorials calling out the Board, and I quote, "For its abuse of power, your fox preening of exaggerated totally fictional jurisdiction." The Board's authority, said the Register, and I quote, "Is limited to special education and alternative schools. It cannot dictate policy for the districts." And I add my own legal view that neither can this board dictate policy or curriculum to our charter schools. So, bury 400-4. And above all, stop using our county board of education as a platform, as the Register rightly said, for you, conservative board members to impose your political views on our kids. I'm Lynne Riddle. I'm a resident of the county of Orange. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. We will go to Sherine, followed by Nancy.

SHERINE: Good evening, President Sparks and members of the Board. Big brother is a term from the novel "1984" by George Orwell, that functions as a synonym for abuse of government power, especially related to civil liberties. Last month, Board Member Ken Williams brought forth proposed board policy 400-4 that includes a 14-point list of forbidden, quote, "indoctrination topics." As stated in the November 18, Orange County Register editorial entitled "Orange County Board of Education Addicted to Silly Culture War Spats," this policy is little more than political theater and cast a big-brotherish pall over any potentially controversial topic. The Register goes on to say, "This proposal isn't really an effort to stop teachers from promoting liberal political views, but a means for a conservative board member to impose his political views on kids."

Your proposed policy creates the misconception that we are teaching communism and Marxism in our schools. It is a fear-based document based on the assumption that our hardworking teachers and administrators and the school communities that support and guide them are not to be trusted with teaching and learning. I worked in our public schools for more than 30 years as a teacher, a middle school principal, a high school principal and superintendent. Not once did I, or any teacher that worked for me, advocate or teach communism, Marxism or Stalinism with the intent to indoctrinate or to inculcate in any pupil a preference for same, as prohibited by this proposed policy, which is already prohibited by the California Education Code.

Your policy is a straw man. I strongly encourage you to stop the culture war nonsense and drop any further pursuit of this policy. Thank you for your time.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Nancy will be followed by Dorie.

NANCY: Good evening. Political theater, culture war spats, these were the terms that were used in the Orange County Register editorial to denounce the introduction of proposed policy 400-4. The OC Register editorial staff who endorsed many of the trustees on this board, in past elections, made it clear in their editorial that they believe the Orange County Board of Education should focus on relevant educational issues, instead of preening for Fox News. That is a direct quote from the editorial. The Orange County Register article demonstrates that the Orange County Board of Ed is losing support and past supporters are now ridiculing the Board. Proposed policy 400-4 was brought as an action item in October, and an information item in November, and it is now tabled to a future agenda.

To summarize again why this is poor policy, here are a few key points. Proposed policy 400-4 allows the school board to become the sensor of classroom discussion that touches on history of current affairs. That is from the Orange County Register. There is no rationale for this resolution based on truth, or facts, or what is happening in the schools. This policy isn't necessary, nor helpful. Proposed Policy 400-4 is politicized propaganda that demonstrates a complete lack of understanding about education in general and the meaning of quality education for all students in Orange County. This proposed policy should not move forward in any form. I hope you will abandon this reckless policy and focus more on supporting quality education for all students. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: We will hear from Dorie, followed by Nomi.

DORIE: Good evening, Trustees and members of the audience, and thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Dorie Krepton and I'm a resident of Huntington Beach. I'm here to speak against the shameful proposal 400-4. At the last meeting, an overwhelmingly number of people spoke against this proposal and its censorship of teachers' free speech. After the meeting, the Orange County Register, a conservative newspaper that has been a supporter of the Board, had this to say in its editorial, "Trustee Ken William's proposed policy is little more than political theater, advanced topic categories and hobbles the ability of teachers to have serious discussion about civil rights, race, and gender. This is a means for a conservative board member to impose his politics and views on kids," end of quote.

The Register got it right. What is this policy based on? There is no evidence to support it. It's a modern day witch hunt, a revival of McCarthyism complete with censorship. And sadly, what does it create? Fear. Teachers fearing what they discuss in their classroom and how they choose their words, and parents fearing their children are being indoctrinated with false narratives on history and current affairs. You see, fear is a powerful emotion. It makes people afraid, and when cultivated, it can lead to hatred, violence, and the harming of people.

We have witnessed today a surge of hate groups and unsolicited violence against minorities. You, the Board, need to stop the censorship of teachers with this harmful proposal. It's time for the Board to create an atmosphere of respect and trust for our teachers. Be accountable for your decisions. Vote your conscience. Do the right thing. Vote it out. Don't let one trustee mislead you. Don't behave like a herd of sheep, unashamed, following one person and rubber stamping an ill-founded proposal that creates nothing but fear. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Nomi will be followed by Michael. Forgive me if I'm not doing justice to your name.

NOMI: That is okay. You are doing great justice to my name. I'm here with my colleague, Katie. We were just figuring out who was going to speak. My name is Nomi Abadi. I am here to support the comments of my colleague, Katie Bollinger. We are both alumni from the Orange County School of the Arts. Thank you.

KATIE: As Nomi said, I'm Katie Bollinger, an alumna of Orange County School of the Arts with my fellow alumna, Nomi Abadi. Thank you for your time. I'm sure that you have seen the press reports about the lawsuits and allegations regarding the decades long history of sexual abuse at Orange County School of the Arts. Some of the faculty and administrators who are named in the press or in the lawsuits are still holding positions of authority at OCSA today.

We are here to ask you, the Orange County Board of Education, under your authority, as the organization that holds OCSA's charter, to launch an independent formal investigation into the reports of sexual abuse of students by faculty and staff at OCSA that goes back decades. Thank you. Happy to answer any questions.

SHAW: So, you are Katie?

KATIE: I'm Katie.

SHAW: Okay. You had your self checked as speaking on item number five so that is why I had set you aside.

KATIE: Oh, no, that is what he had told us, not realizing that we were not for that charter school.

SHAW: No worries. Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

KATIE: Of course. Of course. Thank you so much.

VALDES: Ms. Bollinger.

KATIE: Yes.

BOYD: You can't ask questions.

KATIE: Oh.

SHAW: It's okay.

KATIE: All right.

SHAW: We will hear from, thank you, Michael followed by Peter.

VALDES: She is making a very serious allegation (inaudible).

MICHAEL: Thank you. My name is Michael Rosen. I'm on the board of the Anti-Defamation League in Orange County Long Beach. I'm actually the regional board chair of ADL in Orange County, and I'm opposed to proposed policy 400-4. The ADL was formed and founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of anti-Semitism and bigotry. We are a leading anti-hate organization with a mission to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all.

We are a leading provider of anti-bias education and an advocate for Holocaust education. ADL is deeply concerned about 400-4. We strongly believe that learning about the Holocaust and its lessons of anti-Semitism and racism is one of the best ways to fight prejudice and discrimination. And such learning contributes to healthy school climates, where all students in the rich and varying diversity know and feel they belong.

Under policy 400-4 teachers would be prohibited from using curriculum that advance the idea that an individual is inherently, morally or otherwise superior to another individual. And the Nazis felt that they were superior, so this policy would ban teaching about Nazis or White supremacy. Under policy 400-4, teachers would be prohibited from teaching that an individual, whether consciously or unconsciously by virtue of his or her ethnicity, skin color, race, sex, or gender identity is inherently racist, sexist, or otherwise biased against another individual.

ADL is an expert in anti-bias education, and we believe this misrepresents what biases are and how biases are formed. Additionally, this policy neglects the potential negative impact on students when unhealthy biases go unchecked. And ultimately, this policy would ban any education revenue to this. Together, these referred reference prohibitions effectively create a heckler's veto of essential education in our public schools. For these reasons, I'm opposed to the proposed policy.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay. Peter will be followed by Joyce.

PETER: I'm Peter Levi. I'm the regional director for the Anti-Defamation League, and I'm going to pick up where my board chair left off, about how this creates a de facto of heckler's veto of important and essential education. For example, any legitimate holocaust curriculum or educational program must necessarily condemn the antisemitic and racist ideology of Nazis, as well as Holocaust denial. And it's a leading authority on extremism, terrorism, and hate, both

foreign and domestic. ADL also notes that today's White supremacists and neo-Nazis are vehemently antisemitic, racist, xenophobic, misogynistic, and homophobic. Thus, any student or employee who is White and holds these odious beliefs, whether or not affiliated with an extremist group, could claim that Holocaust education programs violate policy 400-4 because it makes them feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or other psychological distress because of their White race. And this concern is not hypothetical.

Only two years ago, there was a disturbing issue at a South Florida public high school where parents who do not believe the Holocaust occurred, impacted the school's delivery of state mandated holocaust education. Let's not set that groundwork to have that happen here in Orange County. Additionally, policy 400-4 would prohibit instruction that quote, "Cultural, social, political, divisive statements about citizens or students, social status based on ethnicity, skin color, race, sex or gender identity." Right? How does the school board plan to define cultural, social, politically divisive statements? The vague and subjective nature of this policy leaves it open to expanded interpretations that will undoubtedly result in harmful unintended consequences.

From ADL's long and deep experience in this type of education, in bias and in bullying prevention, we firmly believe that policy 400-4 with its prohibitions to address these issues of ethnicity, skin color, race, sex, or gender identity, will silence and eliminate any efforts to create inclusive environments for students in marginalized groups based precisely on those qualities of ethnicity, skin color, race, sex, or gender identity. And it will actively send a message that these students do not have, and are not welcome, and included in their schools.

At a time of rising hate incidents in K-12 schools, they need to teach the universal lessons of the Holocaust, the consequences of bigotry and hate is desperately needed. And for these reasons, I too oppose policy 400-4 and strongly urge that neither that policy or anything similar be brought forward to this board. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Joyce will be followed by Sean.

JOYCE: Thank you for giving us the chance to comment, and I apologize for my sinusy condition.

BOYD: Can you lower the mic, Joyce? Thank you.

JOYCE: I'm Joyce McNabb of Costa Mesa, known as "Grandma" to three Estancia High School graduates who have gone on to UC Davis, San Diego State, and UCLA. My own alma mater is from the first of our country's land-grant colleges, and to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to Michigan State University." It's no wonder that I believe in public education as the foundation of our democracy. My concern this evening is with the proposed Orange County Board policy 400-4.

On November 17, the Editorial Board of the Orange County Register published its condemnation of the proposal saying it would, quote, “Hobble the ability of teachers to have serious discussions about civil rights, race, and gender.” They go on to say, “If it passes, the Board would ultimately become the sensor of any classroom discussion that touches on history or current affairs,” so censorship. And as the Register goes on, big brotherism and abuse of power.

I have no idea what percentage of Orange County voters differentiate between the County Board of Education and the county's Department of Education. But I fear that the Board's proposed policy would, in the minds of many, tarnish the Department of Education's reputation for excellence. So I urge you to once and for all stop any action on this proposal. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Sean will be followed by Beck.

SEAN: Hello, everyone. My name is Sean Drexler. I am from Costa Mesa, still living here. Yeah, I love everyone's comments and I thank you all so much. I think history is so important and that history be taught, like, with a full account of all the things that have happened. I was looking through the proposal. I thought it was really ironic how it talks about like how freedom of speech and stuff is something that should be valued in education, and then it's like, well, you can't talk about these things, you know, because it might make some people uncomfortable. I thought that was pretty, pretty bad.

Then speaking of history, some colleagues of mine, CJ Atkins and Eric Gordon wrote some things that I thought were some pretty interesting comparisons. Things leading up into the 1930s Germany. Germany was actually at the forefront of research into sexuality, and gender and things like that as some may be aware here. The book burnings were largely books on gender theory and gender studies. We often see this in history. These cycles of progress and then these pushbacks of reaction, and I think we are seeing that now.

Some specifics on that, in 1897, German scientist, Magnus Hirschfeld and some of his comrades in the social Democratic Party of Germany founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Berlin. The world's very first organization that advocated for both homosexual, and what would become known as transgender rights. The committee's first act was to push for repeal of paragraph 175, which criminalized homosexuality. Hirschfeld would later go on to found the World League for Sexual Reform, targeted by the Nazis for being a Jew, a socialist, and a sex researcher. Hirschfeld had to go into exile in France in 1933 where he died in 1935.

The extensive archives and library of his Institute for Sexology in Berlin were burned by the Nazis, a loss still felt. This is reputed to be the first of the Nazis famous public book burnings, a model for all the later ones. Not only in fascist Germany, but anywhere a regime wants to suppress knowledge. We have seen that in the US and we are seeing it today.

And then last, I would just like to point out I was recently reading this book called, “*Labor's Untold History*”. It's put up by the (UE), the United Electrical Union. They talk about how the abolitionists even were accused of being like communists and socialists, insurrectionists, and that

that was the goal, you know, of them trying to, like, end slavery. So yeah, all the references to, like, communism, and Stalinism, and stuff in the proposal, those are often the first signs of a right-wing push against progressive rights. Is that the end of my time or my close?

BARKE: Yes.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SEAN: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you for your comments. Beck will be followed by Chelsea.

BECK: Hello, my name is Beck. My pronouns are they, them, theirs, and I am the system change advocate for the Dayle McIntosh Center for the disabled. I would like to speak against the policy number 400-4 limiting education regarding race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. I won't belabor the points made by my colleagues. I will however, encourage the education of other intersectional topics such as disability history, a worthy topic that has yet to have its day in US history lessons. Please do not censor teachers. Please do not support policy 400-4.

SPARKS: Thank you

SHAW: Chelsea will be followed by David.

CHELSEA: Hi, I'm Chelsea. I didn't know I was going to be speaking tonight. I'm kind of a guest in this room, and I'm here to listen and observe. I would say that I come from kind of a background where I have had a diverse education. I have been in multiple states, multiple places, and education is something that is really important to me. I was interested kind of in the discussion of censorship, what we are going to be talking about tonight, kind of. I just kind of want to see how it goes and see what everyone has to bring to the table and talk about. I think it's incredibly important to spend time in other people's space. That includes reading in different subject matter and different people's life experiences. I think that just makes people more well-rounded and able to converse with other people in this place, you know, where we live and are with each other.

Thank you for having me. I'm going to just sit back down, and listen, and observe. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: David, followed by Rylee.

DAVID: All right, hello. I have to just echo the sentiments that were shared by others up here against a proposed policy. I don't want to retread that same ground, so I just want to note a few things. I do agree with what Sean said earlier. This represents a reactionary push. This is a backwards push, anti-factual push. And just note a few things. They talk about, in the beginning of the document, communism and its totalitarian nature. This sort of anti-fact approach is kind of

blatant and offensive in light of some recent facts. Again, I didn't prepare a speech like some of my friends here, and they were quite excellent, I'm just going to share some things off the cuff. But over the last two years through this pandemic, the United States uniquely suffered in terms of its caseload and death in proportion to its population: 4% of the world's population, 15% of the world's cases, and 16% of the world's deaths.

I share this because, you know, we often hear, say, China, talk of China and its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are trying to scare monger these, you know, communist, socialist regimes, but they have quite low case rate compared to the United States: 0.2% of the world's Covid cases and 0.08% of the world's deaths. If you are wondering, why I am bringing up Covid, it's just to illustrate this kind of scaremongering, backwards approach, and anti-factual approach.

If we are afraid to teach facts and you are censoring on that basis, you are teaching an anti-factual approach and I cannot endorse that. I cannot stand by it, which is why I'm here. Another thing, when it comes to gender-based oppression, we want to ignore socialist states like Cuba that are passing extremely progressive policy, the Family Code Act, for example. In the United States, you know, there is a lot of celebration and this proposed policy, the mandating of the pledge and things like this. We had a pledge at the beginning, and yet the United States blocks a lifesaving medication. Let me see if I got the—yes. So when it comes to diabetes, preventable disease in the United States, 100,000 people dying a year. Cuba has a lifesaving medication that we block through our political economic blockade on Cuba.

This is controversial. We are not supposed to talk about the success of socialist regimes, so I just wanted to kind of speak out against that because this is, again, just an under undercover topic here. But I think it's worth noting. And again, I just echo the sentiments of everyone who came before, excellent points. So thank you very much.

SPARKS: Thank you,

SHAW: Rylee, followed by Stephanie.

RYLEE: Good evening, everyone, working people of Orange County. I don't have a prepared speech either. I don't have quotes from the Orange County Register. I'm not an educator. I'm not a parent. But I am a student, and I would say that I went through our public education system more recently than most people here. And I'm going to be honest. We did not talk about communism, or Marxism, or Stalinism, really at all even in our history courses. So that begs the question, why on earth are we suddenly having this push to crack down on something that, from my view, as someone who has gone through our education system, isn't even happening?

Well, I will put it like this. The kinds of things that this proposed policy 400-4 are trying to crack down on, are not related to this issue at all. They have nothing to do with communism. They have nothing to do with Marxism. These are facts that I think that most people are aware of. That there is an issue of systemic oppression in this country. However, the proposed 400-4 would not allow students to even discuss such a thing.

This isn't even the only place in the country we are seeing this. There are similar policies happening in places like Florida, and I think that what needs to be said is that for the kind of people proposing these things, teaching that this country might in any way be unfair at all for anyone, is in itself a manifestation of the dreaded communism. I want you to think about that. I want you to think about why our elected officials, why the people who are supposed to be representing our will, are so afraid of facing the truth, that there could be anything wrong with this country, that we could have any room to improve.

The bill also talks about exercises in patriotism. Isn't patriotism the desire for one's country to be the best it can be? If there is room for us to improve, should we not be aware of it and seek to move forward in that direction? I don't think the Board agrees. That is all I'm going to say about that.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Stephanie will be followed by Hengameh.

STEPHANIE: Hello again, Board of trustees. I wish Mr. Williams was here tonight to hear all the wonderful commentary about standing against this proposed proposition 400-4. My name is Stephanie Camacho Van Dyke. I'm the director of advocacy and education at the LGBTQ Center OC incorporated in 1971. The LGBTQ Center OC remains the long-standing LGBTQ specific organization located here in Orange County. We have been responsive to the changing and growing needs of the LGBTQ population, providing culturally appropriate and affirming health and wellness services.

I am here to call on the Board to put an end to proposed policy 400-4 once and for all. In particular, I would like to draw attention to an opinion piece written last month by the OC Register Editorial Board. Here they point out 400-4's very hypocrisy. Quote, "The proposal extols Americans free speech rights, but then would ban topics, categories, and hobble the ability of teachers to have serious discussions about civil rights, race, and gender. It is astounding to see this attempt at preventing independent and critical thinking in the classroom. Orange County students deserve access to unbiased, inclusive, and diverse education."

I myself attended Capistrano Unified School District, K-12, so this is very important to me. Inclusive education values diversity and acknowledges the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every student feels supported, feeling represented and heard, as well as having a sense of belonging at school. Censorship does not belong in our classrooms. Preventing students from accessing inclusive education and books that provide factual, historical perspective that they might not otherwise encounter is an injustice to education. Awareness and visibility is not indoctrination. Please put an end to proposed policy 400-4 once and for all. Otherwise, you will probably be seeing us more often here. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay. Hengameh, followed by Joshua.

HENGAMEH: Good evening, Madam President and members of the Board. I had no intention of speaking tonight. I came to support my amazing pastor and I had the privilege of giving the Pledge. Now I'm here listening to 15 amazing speakers. Then I get to just give you a little bit of piece of information about what you have been speaking about from someone's point of view who has lived in a country that falls under socialism, communism, and currently, dictatorship.

I was born and raised in Iran and I was 14 years old when I moved here. I was 12 years old when I shaved my head in protest of a mandatory head cover that they make 6 and 7-year-old girls wear. If you think we have prejudice here, I am so sorry to tell you that your privilege is allowing you to say that. You have no idea what it means to live under authoritarian government and I appreciate you so much.

One of you gentlemen brought up some very, very good points about some literature and some books that we should all read. But let me give you a little bit of piece of information about the state of education in California. This is [edsource.org](https://www.edsource.org), and it's an article that was published on August 22, 2022. I will be more than welcome to share it with any of you. "California fourth graders trail the nation in reading and half of its third graders, including two thirds of Black students, and 61% of Latino students do not read at grade level."

Now, if we are so concerned about our minority population, including myself, why are we not advocating for better literacy programs? We are so caught up right now trying to figure out what to do that we are literally hurting our children by not providing proper education. I finished junior high in Iran. I went to high school here. I went to Saddleback Valley Unified School District Mission Viejo, graduate of Cal State Fullerton, so I kind of went through the public system. I love the public system, but when my five-year-old was in kindergarten, and it was Covid, and I actually saw what was being taught in schools, I am proudly standing in front of you as a homeschooling mom and I will not put my kid back in any public school until we see changes.

I understand where you are coming from and I agree with 90% of what you guys said, but there is a better way of going around it. I'm not standing here supporting any policy. I'm standing here talking to you as someone who has a different background than most of you. That knows what it means not to live in a free country, not to be born a free person, to have all the privilege that we have—thank you.

SHAW: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Joshua.

JOSHUA: Hi everyone. Thank you for having me here today. I actually didn't know I was going to speak, but I wanted to come and support the LGBTQ community. As someone who is gay and Mexican, I have gone through a lot of hardship in my life. I have been called the f-slur so many times in my life. I have been called things walking down the street, holding my boyfriend's hand, being told stuff, just doing nothing. I always wished that things got better for us. And while they

have sometimes, sometimes they haven't. Look at the club, what happened at the club, the shooting? Being LGBTQ, that is the second most perpetrated hate crime, after being Black. The youth need to be protected. They need to understand that we are getting treated like this. Whether you take away the teaching of that, people are still going to be gay, people are still going to be Black, and people are still going to walk around like that.

If you are going to say, well, being gay is a sin. I will remind you that the first straight couple in this world brought sin. It's true. It's true. And the Bible says, God is love, and we need to show more love to people. You can have your own ideas, your own beliefs, but at the end of the day, we just want to be respected and we just want to know that our voices are heard. Thank you everybody. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: That concludes our public comments.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you. Do we need to do consent calendar again since I went out of order or is it okay?

BOYD: You are fine. Okay.

SPARKS: So then we will move on to charter schools. Do we have any charter submissions, Nina?

BOYD: We did have charter submissions. Let me pull out my sheet. We had three charter submissions, Oxford Preparatory Academy-Saddleback Valley submitted a material revision, California Republic Leadership Academy Capistrano has an appeal, and Irvine International Academy submitted a material revision.

SHAW: Okay, so I will call Teresa Johnson to the podium to facilitate the public hearing.

JOHNSON: Good evening, President Sparks, Trustees and Superintendent. Today the Board will hold a hearing to consider public input regarding the request for a material revision to the Oxford Preparatory Academy-Saddleback Valley's Charter School petition. On October 5, 2022, the Orange County Board of Education approved a middle school petition for Oxford Preparatory Academy. Oxford Preparatory Academy Middle School will begin operating in the 2023-2024 school year. On November 4, 2022, Oxford Preparatory Academy-Saddleback Valley submitted a material revision to remove grades sixth through eighth from its operating charter school, effective July 1, 2023.

Prior to public comments, representatives from Oxford Preparatory Academy-Saddleback Valley are allotted 10 minutes to address the Board. I now invite representatives from Oxford Preparatory Academy to the podium.

BOYD: There is a PowerPoint in your red folders and I will remind the Board that binders can be picked up when you leave out of your chambers.

SPARKS: Okay.

BOYD: Okay, for the material.

SPARKS: Thank you.

KERNAN: Thank you, President Sparks, Trustees, and Superintendent Mijares, as well as everyone who is joining us tonight, I will keep this pretty brief because we were just here. It seems pretty recently, talking to you about our new middle school that we are very excited to be opening in the fall. That being said, we now are coming back to remove the middle school grades from our current Saddleback Valley campus, because those students will be, thanks to you all, attending our middle school in the fall.

Again, this material revision really is just to pull our grades sixth through eighth off of our current charter. As you guys know, our Saddleback Valley campus is currently TK through eighth grade, so it will result in Saddleback Valley just being a TK-5 school. That is allowing us, kind of like we discussed when we were here before, to really focus more on what our elementary school students need and really elementary school education. As we all know, I had a middle schooler, I'm sure some of you guys have middle schoolers, they are kind of a class of their own. So it is nice to be able to give them their own campus and then be able to really focus on our elementary school students. I have Mr. Right here. He is the principal of our Saddleback Valley campus. I know our administrators are happy to really be able to focus on those elementary school students now. So the approval, again, of our middle school makes it necessary for us to come today for the material revision.

Really our requested changes are just to remove all of the language from the charter pertaining to grade sixth through eighth, update our admissions preferences because we do want to make sure we do have the families who attend our schools from TK-8 grade. We want to have that preference for students in the middle school for their siblings to be able to attend our elementary schools and then remove language also. We have taken all of our business services functions in-house over the last year; to remove the language that was in the charter previously referring to any back office service providers.

We put that new language in the middle school charter, but this charter was approved before we did that. So we want to make sure that everything is accurate and remove that language. And then just updated a few changes due to changes in charter law that have happened since the last time we did our renewal. The impacts of the material revision are that students in sixth through eighth will be starting our middle school in 2023. Our overall projected enrollment at Saddleback Valley will decrease from 679 to 574.

Again, like I said, a greater focus on middle school students and their programs, also allowing us to provide more enrichment and support opportunities for our elementary school students. Right now they get kind of limited world language, music, those types of things, because they have to

share with our middle school students who take up much more of those specialty teachers time. This will allow us to really provide them a lot more enrichment, a lot of different programs. And then we are also looking to lower our class size in all grade levels to be about an average of 24-25 to 1 so that our teachers, our students, can have a lot more individualized attention.

So I'm going to keep it pretty brief, again, because we were just here. We do greatly appreciate the continued support and partnership that we have with Orange County Board of Education and the Orange County Department of Education, and we would be happy to answer any questions that you have.

SPARKS: Thank you. Teresa? Yeah. She needs to wrap up.

JOHNSON: The hearing is now open for public comments. Deputy Superintendent Boyd, are there any public comments for this agenda item?

BOYD: We have none, or do you have?

SHAW: No, the card I read was mistakenly checked for number five, I believe.

BOYD: Okay. We have none for this public hearing.

JOHNSON: This concludes the public hearing. The Orange County Department of Education Staff Report will be published on January 17, 2023, and the Board will take action at its February 1 meeting. President Sparks, I close the public hearing and turn the meeting back over to you.

SPARKS: Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

JOHNSON: Thank you.

SPARKS: Okay, well, we can start to my right. Trustee Valdes, do you have a question or two?

VALDES: I have a question for Ms. Kernan.

KERNAN: Yes.

VALDES: Hello again.

KERNAN: Hello.

VALDES: Good to see you. A couple months ago, I would characterize our interaction, you know, perhaps as a speed bump. But we got past that, so that was great. But the one thing I wanted to ask you was at the end of that meeting, I made a request of you that—and by the way, there have been no parent complaints that have come to my email since that meeting, so kudos to you. It seems like the issues have resolved. One of the things I did ask of you, since you are here, was in your procedure. If a parent complaint does come in, that the parent would be notified that there is a complaint procedure. You said you would change that, as I recall. Have you done that?

KERNAN: We do. We have it posted in multiple places on our website. We have also communicated that out to parents. So there is different places where parents can go and find out what the complaint procedures are. There is a form that parents can fill out. Not just for uniform complaints or Williams complaints, but just general complaints, as well as all the different people that they can go to if they have complaints, as well as different, you know, who is in charge of different things that they can go to.

VALDES: I just think a parent should be notified if there is going to be a complaint about curriculum or whatever, that they be told that there is a complaint procedure.

KERNAN: Mm-hmm.

VALDES: Sounds like you have done that. Okay. That is all I have.

SPARKS: Okay. Trustee Shaw, do you have any questions? No? Trustee Barke? I don't really have any questions, but kudos to everything. I have kind of a question, I guess.

KERNAN: Mm-hmm.

SPARKS: Given the restructuring, and I know you have given a lot of thought to it, what do you think is the most exciting thing that you are looking forward to because of this and what is the most challenging thing?

KERNAN: There is tons of exciting things that are happening. We have had a few parent town halls and we have had great questions from our parents, a lot of feedback from our parents. We are currently doing our strategic planning and LCAP surveys, and we have a section on the middle school for those parents getting ready to send their students to the middle school. We also give it to our students in grades fifth through eighth and our staff members. We are really looking forward and excited to continue to get that feedback.

Now we are kind of down to the logistics planning, you know, bell schedules, and electives, and pre-CTE pathways and things like that, so it is kind of the fun and exciting planning part. I would say that probably right at this moment, we are still working on our Prop 39 facilities request. In every single meeting, the first question is, well, where is the site?

SPARKS: Yeah.

KERNAN: And every time we have to say, well, we don't quite know yet, but it's probably here or there. So really just kind of looking forward to finding out where that school site will be so we can do some more specific facilities planning and things like that.

SPARKS: Okay.

KERNAN: Overall, super excited and just looking forward to starting a new adventure.

SPARKS: Excellent. Well, thank you all for your hard work and we look forward to seeing you back in February.

KERNAN: Yes. We just like to keep going.

VALDES: That sort of begs a different question now.

SPARKS: Oh, okay.

VALDES: Well, you are asking to change the charter, but you don't even have a site yet identified.

KERNAN: We turned in a Prop 39 facilities request, and, based on that timeline, the district has until February 1 to give us our exact site location. They have to give us a site that accommodates our projection of students, but they don't need to tell us exactly where that is until February.

VALDES: Okay.

SPARKS: Okay. Any other questions? All right. Thank you all for your hard work. We really appreciate it.

KERNAN: Thank you.

SPARKS: All right, we will move on then to board recommendations. Item number six, I got to get my glasses here, to approve the board date changed from April 5 to April 12, which was put forth by a board member. Do we have a motion?

VALDES: Was that because of some type of holiday?

SPARKS: A conflict.

BOYD: Mari, we can't hear you.

BARKE: Yes, it is a holiday.

SHAW: Your mic is off.

BARKE: What's that?

VALDES: Your mic.

BARKE: Yes, it is a holiday. It is a Jewish holiday.

VALDES: Oh, okay.

SPARKS: Do we have a second?

VALDES: Second.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay. Passes 4-0. And now we will move on to item number seven, which is taking board action on board policy regarding the Orange County Board of Education professional development.

SHAW: I think I just saw one typo.

SPARKS: Okay.

SHAW: Shoot. Sorry, my binder got stuck. So if I was looking at that, right at the very end there is a “y.”

SPARKS: A “y” yeah.

SHAW: Was that inadvertent?

BOYD: Very end of what?

VALDES: Last paragraph.

SHAW: Page 51 of our board packet under ratification and reporting, it says, in the professional development “y” shall publicly report. I think that was just a typo there, I assume.

BOYD: Got it. Thank you.

SPARKS: Yeah.

BOYD: I see another one that we will correct also.

SPARKS: Okay.

BOYD: We will get that.

SPARKS: So do we have a motion with that friendly amendment for the corrections?

BARKE: I'll make a motion.

SPARKS: Do I have a second?

SHAW: Second.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay, passes 4-0. And that brings us to item number eight, approving revision to the annual budget in excess of \$25,000—

BOYD: President Sparks, I'm sorry to interrupt.

SPARKS: Yes.

BOYD: But we just want to clarify who moved and seconded that?

BARKE: I moved it.

SPARKS: Mari moved.

BOYD: You moved it, but who second it?

SPARKS: Jorge.

BOYD: Jorge. Thank you.

SPARKS: Or was it you?

BARKE: It was Tim.

SPARKS: Oh, it was Tim, sorry.

BOYD: I had Jorge for the one before, so that is why.

SPARKS: Okay. Are we good?

BOYD: Yes.

SPARKS: Okay. Moving to item number eight, approve revision to the annual budget in excess of \$25,000, as per Education Code section 1280. This revision has been included in the First Interim Report that is certified positive by the County Superintendent of Schools. Any motion?

BARKE: A motion to discuss or motion to approve?

SPARKS: Whichever you guys want.

BARKE: Yeah, I will go ahead and make a motion so we can discuss it.

SPARKS: Okay. Motion to discuss. Any discussion questions around item number eight?

SHAW: I will second.

SPARKS: Oh, I think we are discussing right now.

BOYD: The motion was to discuss. Approve, but you have to—

SPARKS: Oh, right. Motion—

BOYD: To discuss it.

SPARKS: We didn't get a second though, did we?

BOYD: Tim.

SPARKS: Oh, Tim. Okay. Second, and now we are going to discuss. Okay. So anyone like to jump in to discuss, ask questions of the Interim Report?

SHAW: I will ask Renee a question. Under the summary on page B2, just looking at what was budgeted, or the Adopted Budget versus the Interim Budget. And I kind of glanced down the variance to see—

HENDRICK: Sorry, what page are you on?

SHAW: Sorry, right at the beginning.

BARKE: B2.

HENDRICK: Okay, thank you.

SHAW: Yeah, just kind of the high level view, I guess, you know, seeing where we varied. It did seem that the first two object code lines, certificated salaries and classified salaries, I mean maybe in a percentage term it wasn't a large variance, but dollar amount. I mean, certificated salaries had a \$1.1 million variance and classified salaries \$4.1 million. Was this an updated collective bargaining agreement or something like that?

HENDRICK: Yes. If you remember at the last meeting we discussed that we had settled with both groups, so that includes all groups and the management team, settlements are included. Yeah.

SHAW: So that is where that got reflected?

HENDRICK: Yes.

SHAW: Okay. I understand.

HENDRICK: And so these are just your changes over \$25,000. If you go under the tab, it says number two assumptions, it gives you more detail for each of the different areas. So you can see for the, say, certificated salaries, it may include the cost of the settlement. It also has some savings for us for positions that haven't been filled and things like that, so you kind of tie the two together.

SHAW: Thank you.

SPARKS: Okay. Trustee Valdes, do you have a question?

VALDES: I do. Renee, I have been contacted by quite a few people over the past month regarding an Equity and OC Social Determinants of Health Implementation Grant. Can you tell me where in the budget that is listed?

HENDRICK: It is not included in this budget.

VALDES: So it's just not in the—

HENDRICK: Well, the time that this budget was completed, we hadn't had a grant award for that, so it's not included in here.

VALDES: Are grants normally included in—

HENDRICK: We only include contracts, and grants, and that once we have the final approval for those. We don't include them in the budget until then.

VALDES: So when would it be included then? In March?

HENDRICK: In March, or I would bring you an update normally in the next month. So I have been trying to give you updates on a monthly basis of new items, but the next interim budget is, yes, March 15, by March 15th.

VALDES: Are you familiar with the grant in particular that I'm speaking of?

HENDRICK: I am not as familiar with that grant. I probably have somebody else who could speak to it.

VALDES: Is there any staff member here that is familiar with it?

BOYD: A couple of us. Depending on what the question is, we can bring the right person up.

HENDRICK: Right.

VALDES: Okay. So, the grant is over a half million dollars, I believe it's \$507,000 payable in three installments. And it is for WellSpaces, a catalyst for equitable access for students. I have been approached by constituents of mine that are concerned that the grant is being spent on

gender affirming counseling and puberty blockers being performed in school. And I don't know if any of that is true or not.

BOYD: That would be inaccurate.

OLMSTEAD: That is inaccurate. I'm Christine Olmstead, the Chief Academic Officer for Orange County Department of Education.

VALDES: Hi, Christine.

OLMSTEAD: Hello. I oversee the WellSpace Project. We have actually opened 19 WellSpaces across Orange County. None of them are doing gender anything in the WellSpaces. Really, what they are, they are calming centers for students when they need to deescalate.

VALDES: They are what, Christine?

OLMSTEAD: Calming centers. When a student has a lot of anxiety or needs a timeout, they can go to a space where there is usually a school counselor staffed in that space. They can take a break. They can speak to the school counselor and just have kind of sometime to kind of come back to regulation and then go back to the classroom. There is opportunities for them to do some mindful coloring, or work with some sand art, or some art therapy and things like that. It's a therapeutic setting that is being opened for students. So we got a grant from the Healthcare Agency to open more WellSpaces across Orange County.

VALDES: Okay. Well that, I mean, that is completely different—

OLMSTEAD: It is.

VALDES: Just for the record, that is completely different—

OLMSTEAD: There is misinformation out there.

VALDES: —from what I was told.

OLMSTEAD: Yeah.

VALDES: That doesn't sound problematic to me at all. Are there any documents on the grant, like the application or anything else?

OLMSTEAD: Yeah, we have the grant application.

VALDES: Is there any document out there on how the money is being spent?

OLMSTEAD: The whole grant identifies how we will be spending the money. It's to buy furniture and materials to go into the WellSpaces.

VALDES: Like I said, none of that sounds problematic to me.

OLMSTEAD: No. And we have examples if you wanted to go visit some of them across Orange County.

VALDES: Is there any document that the Department has on how the money is being spent?

OLMSTEAD: Mm-hmm. Yeah, our whole grant document outlines how the money will be spent.

VALDES: Can we put that on the agenda for January then?

BOYD: Put what on the agenda? Just the Equity OC?

SPARKS: The proposal.

BOYD: I can furnish you all a copy of the grant, the board members. I can send that to you tomorrow so that you could see it, and then you can determine what it is that you want on the Agenda. I'm not sure what it is that you are asking.

BARKE: Nina, is that something, if we would get a question, because I get a lot of random questions on things, is that something we could share with whomever is emailing us about that?

BOYD: Certainly.

OLMSTEAD: It's a public document.

BOYD: Certainly. Or you can, I mean, and as you have done in the past, you can forward those questions.

BARKE: Right, yeah.

BOYD: I can give you the answer or the information.

BARKE: Okay. Okay.

BOYD: If you want to hand them off because you know, in some cases you have done that.

BARKE: Yeah, I do like to do that.

BOYD: Then we certainly will do that also.

BARKE: Yeah, I do like to do that.

BOYD: But I can forward you a copy of the Equity OC grant documents tomorrow morning when we come back to the office.

SPARKS: Yeah.

BOYD: So that you can take a look at that.

SPARKS: So I think the grant documents, the proposal, as well as the allocation of where the budget for the proposal as well.

BOYD: Well, it's in the document.

SPARKS: Yeah, it is in the proposal. Okay, perfect.

VALDES: Like I said, I have been contacted by quite a few people in the last month.

OLMSTEAD: Yeah. There is a lot of misinformation out there about what a WellSpace is, so we do have all that documentation on what it is and what we are doing with the WellSpace in helping our schools.

BOYD: We actually were planning to do a staff update to the Board in January to show our WellSpace. We have one at Sunburst Academy, and Ian and his staff have gone out and done a video. We have some information from the cadre as well as students, related to usage and so forth. I think that might be helpful. You would have a visual, so we would be sharing that with the Board under our information discussion item next month.

SPARKS: Yeah. I mean, it certainly helps. The more information we have, the better so that we can have that information.

OLMSTEAD: Yeah.

SPARKS: So we can send out the right messaging when the constituents are asking us questions.

OLMSTEAD: Absolutely. Because it's a wonderful project that I think you all would be very proud of to support.

SPARKS: Yeah.

OLMSTEAD: Because it is helping with—

SPARKS: Absolutely.

OLMSTEAD: You know, social emotional learning, de-escalation techniques, things like that. A lot of the behaviors we are seeing post pandemic, we have a lot of maladaptive behaviors happening in classrooms.

VALDES: I think what happens is perhaps a few people out there—

OLMSTEAD: Absolutely.

VALDES: Sort of get an idea of what is going on and then, I don't know about you guys, but they contact me for sure.

OLMSTEAD: Yeah. Right.

VALDES: And ask me to do something about it or investigate it, and then you are telling me that this is substantially different from what I'm being told.

OLMSTEAD: Right.

VALDES: So I'm just trying to figure out what it is that is going on.

OLMSTEAD: Absolutely. Yeah.

SPARKS: Thank you so much.

OLMSTEAD: You are welcome.

SPARKS: Any other questions? No? Okay. Perfect.

BOYD: I would just add, anytime you all get questions, please email us because we would like to also give you information sooner than later so that it doesn't start being something that might be a wildfire, or that potentially you can get the information to individuals quicker.

SPARKS: Yeah. And that is why from the beginning, from four years ago, we have been interested in the content of a lot of these grants so that we know what is coming down the pike so that we can be informed in terms of—

BOYD: Right.

SPARKS: When questions come to us. So we appreciate that information. All right, any other questions related to this interim budget before us?

BOYD: You all will recall first interim, second interim, they have requirements in terms of dates that they have to—

SPARKS: Yeah.

BOYD: Documents have to be into the state. So since the board meeting was moved from last week to this week, Renee is actually required to get the state reporting completed by tomorrow.

SPARKS: Oh, okay.

BOYD: So the 15th is the deadline.

SPARKS: Got it. Okay. So I just have one additional question. I know we have touched on it a few times, but if you could just explain one last time? I noticed for the increases over \$25,000, the variance of the MTSS was \$7.5 million it looks like.

HENDRICK: Yes.

SPARKS: Could you just explain that?

HENDRICK: Because we had more grant funds, we received the money in 2020-2021 to be spent over five years, so this is the fifth year. So we are putting more money in to spend out the grant. So the expenditures are going, it is mostly passed through to school districts.

SPARKS: Okay.

HENDRICK: Okay.

SPARKS: All right. Great.

HENDRICK: One of the things if I could just add in here, too? Two of the new grants I had shared with, or entitlements from the state, that I shared with you the month before last from the Governor's Budget, is the Arts and Music Block grant and the Learning Recovery Block Grant. We have recognized the revenue in the budget, but we are not putting expenditures in there yet. I am anticipating that we will not this year because it is the same purpose of dollars as all of our federal funds, which have an expiration date of 2023. So we are going to spend those first, and then we will come forward with a plan for the others. But since we did receive the funding, I have to recognize it as revenue.

SPARKS: Okay.

HENDRICK: Okay.

SPARKS: I see. Okay. Thank you for that. All right. I'm okay with moving forward if I have a motion to approve the revision to the Annual Budget in excess of \$25,000 for item number eight.

BARKE: So moved.

SPARKS: Do I have a second?

VALDES: Second.

SPARKS: Okay. All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Great. So you can get busy for tomorrow's deadline.

BARKE: Off she goes.

SPARKS: All right. I would like to start, or do we have any communication information or discussion before we go into announcements? Tim, do you have anything to report on that? Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: I don't think so.

SPARKS: Okay.

SHAW: Am I supposed to?

SPARKS: I don't know.

SHAW: Am I in trouble?

SPARKS: I thought you were on this Communication Committee or whatever.

SHAW: Oh well. I know that many of us, I don't know if—have all the board members had their—I know a few of us.

BOYD: Only two of the five have done their videos. We do need the rest of the board members too. Darou will follow up with the three remaining so that we can get that done. Our target date was to have that completed by this month so that the Media staff could clean them up and have them posted by January. I still would like to be able to get them posted by January, because the intent is to post them all at the same time. We will work with you all on your dates. But if we can try to get two done on the same date or if we can get them all done on the same date?

VALDES: December is a much better time for me than November was.

BARKE: Well, and they are amazingly quick. I came here. I put an hour in my calendar and I think I was out in like four minutes or something. You don't have to—

BOYD: Well, you must be really good.

BARKE: I don't know, maybe it was seven. It was very quick. It's not nothing you have to—

BOYD: They didn't have to keep doing double takes on you.

BARKE: No, no. I think just the first time, I didn't say my district and then second time, foo fin. It was very quick.

SPARKS: So we got one-take Mari.

BARKE: I'm always, you know, less is more.

SPARKS: Right. Exactly. So we will work with you after the meeting to schedule in December.

BOYD: Yeah.

SPARKS: Okay. Let's move on to announcements, starting with the Superintendent.

MIJARES: Okay. Well, thank you Madame President, members of the Board. It is great to be with you this evening, as always. Just wanted to call your attention to a few things, and, Mr. Valdes, thank you Trustee Valdes for bringing that to us in terms of that grant coming from the Orange County Healthcare Agency. It is coming through the Board of Supervisors, Healthcare Agency, to us, designed to serve the students and families of our great county. Somebody reacted to the word cadre. They said, why are you using the word cadre? They told somebody and it got to my desk. Well, in Sunburst, that is a military term, and Sunburst uses that word all the time. It just means commissioned officers who are involved in training, who is training people. So, cadre is used often. But there was almost like an implication that we were now bringing in these terms that were subverting the system, so anytime something comes up, let us know.

Some people have a problem with the word equity. Well, that is a term that came out of the county. They identified the grant that way, so we are using the terminology that was established by those who are providing the funding. But we will talk more. And we, as Nina said, we definitely wanted to bring that to your attention through a presentation that we will make next month.

So just a couple of quick things that I wanted to bring to your attention. First of all, we just celebrated Native American Heritage Month, and we are trying to spend time really examining the Native American students in our county. We do not have a large number, but we do have Native American students in our county. Often they have Spanish surnames, so they blend in with the Hispanic culture, I should say the Mexican-American culture to be more specific. But they have a very distinct culture as you know, even a different language in many cases. There is often a plurality and a mixture of both cultures that have been blended as well.

So we had two speakers and we did a video conference, and all this stuff is accessible to you if you care to look at it. There was a time, and I think the numbers still hold true, the highest dropout rate was with Native American students that were living on a reservation and just not completing high school education. So the needs of Native American students, unfortunately, are so pronounced that we are doing everything we can to be sensitive to them. But we did have these speakers, Pamela Agoyo, who is the director and special assistant to president for American Indian Affairs, University of New Mexico; Domingo Belardes who lived right here in our very county. He is the president and curator of the Blas Aguilar Adobe Museum Foundation and the Acjachemen Culture Center here. And then we heard from Dr. Crystal Martinez-Alire who is board president of the Elk Grove Unified School District, and she is a member of the lone band of Miwok Indians. They did a great presentation, so I just wanted you to be aware of that.

On the 28th, we also were involved in saluting the Mendez family. The city of Westminster, along with Orange County Department of Education, we have been involved in the creation of a tribute for the family. If you haven't seen this, I would encourage you to go to Westminster and

you can see that the sculptor really did a beautiful job of the Mendez family. And now Westminster wants to be like a destination city for people who want to know more about, basically, the first case that made it through the courts and denounced separate but equal. The doctrine of separate but equal that ultimately went up to the Supreme Court.

Thurgood Marshall was one of the attorneys that helped fight that lawsuit here and took a lot of the archive of the suit itself. Then converted it into *Brown v. Board of Education*, which pretty much denounced separate but equal across the country, not just in California. But really when you think of the seminal work, a little seed that was planted. It was so profound because when separate but equal was knocked out of the schools, it knocked it out of housing, employment, women's rights, and so many things went away with that one move. It all started here in Orange County.

VALDES: Kind of hard to believe that *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which was the Supreme Court case that said separate but equal was okay. It's kind of hard to believe that the United States Supreme Court for 11 years, I think it was 11 years, actually allowed that to stand.

MIJARES: Yeah. Yeah. Right. But we are helping in terms of being docents, and populating the story, and building curriculum around this, not only for the city of Westminster, but for all of our districts in the county. Thank you for going. Mr. Shaw appeared. He went to our Sunburst graduation on the eighth at Mariner's Church. Tim, thank you for being there. We appreciate it when the Board shows up for these events. Anything that you see that pops out on Newsroom or things that we are doing and you want to be a part of that, let us know.

I wanted to commend our crisis response team. We have a crisis response network, and Dr. Olmstead is the head of that. We provided services for Fountain Valley Unified School District at the death of one of their principals that was widely publicized. I mean, it basically cascaded through the country when something like that happens, Disneyland no less. The act occurred on a Saturday night and by the next day, Sunday, we were meeting with the district officials. We were meeting with the superintendent and cabinet to figure out a way to deal with this crisis, because that next Monday, it is a problem. These things happen. And guess what, the next day happens too. You can't hide from it. You can't run from it. You have to confront it.

We have a team of clinicians who go to the school site, and the district is very complimentary of our folks because, nobody is expecting this, right? So suddenly the principal commits an act of suicide, whose children go to the same district. You want to immediately get sucked into the nuances of this, but you have to remember that there is so much of this that is inexplicable because of the human mind. People who get into crisis, and the body breaks down, and people don't perceive reality as they maybe should. Not in every case, but in this case I think that happened. Very popular person in that school district. We were there.

We also have comfort dogs we bring. We put on a webinar for parents that wanted to know more details and what the district was doing to avert any kind of a negative reaction that would affect the classroom and their students, so we did everything we could just to support the district. I just thought they did a phenomenal job. I want to thank Christine Olmstead and our crisis response network for the great work they do. We do all that work when there is ever a problem.

Frequently, we find ourselves at schools because of the death of somebody, or it could be something, not necessarily the death, but a crisis occurs of some type.

I also wanted to let you know that we did our Ninth Annual OC Pathway Showcase, so I want to thank Kathy Boyd, Dr. Olmstead, and Nadia Khodadadi who did a great job. It was done virtually. This is what we do to celebrate career technical education and how that has been revolutionized. Many people think of the ROP model, Regional Occupational Center model. What we have here is we have students who are in AP classes taking career tech classes as well, because that is how the world has been flattened, through technology. People who drive electric cars, they can't find enough people to fix those cars. It could take months to get your car fixed if you have an electric car. So there is a niche, right, that somebody can go into who has the mind to understand that type of technology. They are taking advanced placement courses, they are graduating from high school, going on to very prestigious universities, and, at the same time, they are learning career technical education.

We used to bifurcate that, like some nations do. They say, some of you are going into the professions because of these high test courses. The others are going into the vocations, and the two are different. Japan right now is trying to take those students, because of a declining birth rate, they don't have enough people that are going in to be engineers. So they are taking people that historically have gone into the vocations and redirecting them back into the professions and following a model that we use here in the United States. It is to really make sure that they have the labor demands of their nation covered by their people, as opposed to importing. There are people who import all the time. Right? And there is nothing wrong with that. I'm not casting blame there.

We have immigrants who come here on an H-1B visa to work in the United States for a short period of time, then they return to their country. But the fact is that we need to have our own people step up and take those jobs, I believe. Bill Gates even said, don't stop the H-1B visas if that is going to hurt the American economy, so that is a viable thing that the Congress does. But how much better to train our kids to be taking these jobs, high paying jobs? So I wanted to just commend our people. We have been recognized across the country for our OC Pathways and we did a showcase, and it was phenomenal. So that is all I have under my reports today, Madam President. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Thank you, sir. Deputy Superintendent? Nina, do you have any comments?

BOYD: Yes. Just as a reminder, the next board meeting is Wednesday, January 4, and submission deadline is actually Friday, December 16. We talked about a compressed schedule, so we already started working on the agenda so that we can meet with the Executive Committee on Monday. Wanted to let you know that board packets are going to be delivered early to board members, so you will be getting your board packets delivered on December 22. The office will be closed on December 23, December 26, December 30, and January 2. Because the Christmas holiday as well as New Year's falls on a weekend, then collective bargaining agreements, and holiday schedule is the Friday and the Monday.

SPARKS: So you will be out of pocket, basically the 22nd until we meet, until the third or something?

BOYD: Right, and we will come back to the office on the third.

SPARKS: Okay.

BOYD: And the board meeting is the next day.

SPARKS: Okay. So I know if I need to bug you.

BOYD: Yeah, and Darou and I will be on vacation the week of the 26th, right after Christmas holiday, so that week we won't be in the office. I will monitor emails just in case something comes up.

VALDES: It would have to be the biggest of emergencies for me to do that.

SPARKS: Yeah. Don't worry.

BOYD: And I solely appreciate that, but we never know. Things happening. It's part of what we do. Right, Dr. Mijares?

MIJARES: Yes. Exactly.

BOYD: From that standpoint, we will make sure that if there is something that the Board needs, we will get it taken care of.

SPARKS: Wonderful.

BOYD: I also wanted to just remind you, I stated earlier, but you actually have three binders in chambers for the submissions that we received. I want to make sure that you remember to take those tonight. If for some reason you forget those, then we will get them delivered to you.

SPARKS: Thank you. We will finish up with legislative updates, committee report, and board member comments. But then we are going to have to go back into closed session for not too long of a time before I come out and close out the meeting, just so you know what is coming down the pike. Do we have any legislative updates from any board members? No? Okay. How about any committee reports? No? Okay. I would like to make a board comment.

MIJARES: President?

SPARKS: Yes.

MIJARES: Can I make one comment?

SPARKS: Yeah.

MIJARES: I do want to let you know, you will know soon enough, but Dr. Olmstead is going to be leaving us.

SPARKS: Okay.

MIJARES: She has just been appointed as an assistant superintendent of the Vista School District, which is here in San Diego and it's a large district. She will be the number two person, reporting directly to the superintendent. I just wanted to commend her for all the work that she has done in our county.

SPARKS: Congratulations.

VALDES: Congratulations.

MIJARES: Thank you.

SPARKS: We were just getting used to all of your wonderful reports. I would like to just take a moment to recognize our dear member of the board family who is going through a tough time, a very rough time. I wouldn't want the troubles broadcast, but I think if we just take a moment to recall and remember, and bless the sanctity of life and the love of a child, I think that would be an honorable thing to do. If we could take 10 seconds or so for that? Okay. I appreciate you all listening to that. Any other board comments?

VALDES: I have a few.

SPARKS: Go for it.

VALDES: I just wanted to mention that I continue to go out into my district. I did have a meeting with charter school leaders on December 2, which was fantastic. I was invited to a party at College Prep and I showed up there for their December party. That was very nice to see on December 9. I know we don't get an opportunity to comment on the public comments, but I figured this is my only opportunity to do that at the end. I think at some point we should change this so maybe we can say something at the end of the public comments because a bunch of the people have left.

But there was a comment tonight about California schools in general, and I really think that is something that the record needs to be clear. Thanks to my conversations with Dr. Olmsted and some of the reports she gave me, Orange County does much better than California overall, folks. We are not at the bottom of this nation with respect to reading and writing. We are doing much, much better than that and I would encourage you to contact the Department for the statistics in that regard. I take a little umbridge when Orange County sort of gets floated into all of California and I just wanted to correct that.

There were a lot of comments tonight about Dr. Williams and I really wish he was here. If it wasn't for that health crisis in his family, I'm sure he would be. But as far as that proposed board policy 400-4, I think the public should be aware that any board member can bring up a policy in

any given month. We are not empowered to simply strike something down. I know that that policy is currently tabled. But for purposes of the public, when it was raised by Dr. Williams, I know I seconded it for purposes of discussion. Then he called for a vote, as I recall, and there were no other trustees that voted in favor, so you can take that for what it's worth.

There was a comment tonight about a lawsuit at OCSA, which I'd like to speak with somebody about. The allegations that were made are very serious. I take them very seriously, particularly because they are in Santa Ana, in my district. Those are my comments. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you, Trustee Valdes. Trustee Shaw, do you have anything to add?

SHAW: I was just going to thank everyone for inviting me and including me at the Sunburst Youth Academy graduation. It was a lot of fun. That is not a quiet group of graduates. My ears are still ringing here. But they bring quite a bit of enthusiasm, obviously. Just hearing from the students and their experience, it's obviously really a life-changing event for those young people. It's very exciting to be part of over there.

I have just been sitting here thinking of a way to sabotage Christine's new job. Not sure if I will be successful at that, but we have been trying. I'm sick about the idea of losing you, but happy for you. You have been such a joy. That is all.

SPARKS: Thank you. Trustee Barke?

BARKE: I don't have any comments.

SPARKS: Thank you. At this point we will go to closed session. Hopefully we won't be there too long, and then we will come out and close out the meeting. Thank you all so much for attending.

[The Orange County Board of Education conducts closed session and returns.]

SPARKS: We are back from closed session. Welcome back. Before we wrap up this meeting, it might be a record for us, we are going to have our good counsel, Jonathan Brenner, report out closed session.

BRENNER: Good evening, Madam President, members of the Board, and Superintendent Mijares. Good to be with you this evening. This is the report out for closed sessions one through four. On item number one, a discussion was held between the board members and counsel; no action was taken. I should note, that at closed session, Trustee Williams was not present, every other board member was. For items two through four, a discussion was held with counsel. No action was taken other than, with respect to Epstein Becker's invoices, the Board approved those invoices 4-0. All of the four members voting in favor who are present, and those invoices are all dated November 30, number 1103527, 1103528, and 1103529. That is the report out for the closed session. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you, Mr. Brenner. That makes it a wrap, so I will adjourn the meeting and wish you all a very happy holiday if I don't see you. Thank you.

BARKE: Merry Christmas.