

SHAW: Good afternoon, everybody. It's good to see everyone here. We're going to get started. We're probably going to have a long meeting ahead of us, so we should get started promptly. I'd like to call this meeting to order for the benefit of the record. Darou, would you please call roll?

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Present.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks.

SPARKS: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw.

SHAW: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams.

WILLIAMS: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke.

BARKE: Here.

SHAW: I looked down and saw some of the distinguished VIPs, but I had to pick one to lead us into the Pledge of Allegiance, so very good. Mayor Pro-Tem in the City of San Juan Capistrano is with us this evening. Please come forward and lead us.

BOURNE: If you'll join 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.

SHAW: Thank you for that, Mayor Pro-Tem Bourne. Okay, do I hear a motion to adopt the agenda for May 22, 2024?

SPARKS: So moved.

BARKE: Second.

SHAW: All in favor?

VALDES, SPARKS, SHAW, WILLIAMS, BARKE: Aye

SHAW: Any opposed? I see none. Okay, we will move to public comments. I'm assuming everyone wants to speak to the appointment of the Superintendent. How are we doing on cards?

HENDRICK: We have 30.

SHAW: Thirty. Okay, we wanted to try to keep it at 30 minutes so we could get going with the interviews here, so I guess that works out perfectly. One minute goes by quick, so we're just going to ask you guys to give your comment in one minute, and just so you know before you get up to speak, we will not be voting this evening on the appointment of the Superintendent so there will be other opportunities. This isn't going to be your one and only shot so if we could keep to one minute, we'll go through that and then get started on the interviews, okay?

SPARKS: Okay. So the way I'm going to call it out is I'll call each person and then I'll call the one who's on deck, and we'll ask you to come up to the podium back here for your public comments. First we have Betty Chu and on deck is Yan Killy, and again, you have one minute each.

BETTY: President, members of the board. I respectfully request the appointment of Dr. Stefan Bean for the Interim Superintendent position. I have submitted a letter for the reasons why he should be selected, particularly because he supports parental rights, school choice, protection of the children, and academic excellence. You have an amazing group to choose from, however, Dr. Bean came to step up to the plate when Orange County was facing educational governance turmoil and declining student enrollment. Out of all of this group of candidates, Dr. Stefan Bean was the only candidate here this evening who publicly advanced his support to protect our children by stepping up to challenge Dr. Mijares. His strong vote count despite the fact that he lost, and the election of the current board attests to the voters' desire for a superintendent who can work in collaboration with the board.

SPARKS: Thank you so much. All right we have Yan Killy, and on deck is Michelle O'Brien.

YAN: I know one minute goes very fast and I'm going to try to be very fast too. As a proud naturalized American Dr. Bean is, I strongly support his nomination to the board. He's proven himself as a worthy person who not only cares for this country, but more importantly, he cares for the children and parents' rights, so I strongly urge the board to consider him as the top candidate. Not to discount the rest of the candidates. They're all excellent, but in my opinion Dr. Bean will be the best. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Michelle O'Brien, and on deck is Pat Micone.

MICHELLE: Hello President Shaw, distinguished board members, my name is Michelle O'Brien, 30+ year resident of Orange County. I'm here to support Dr. Bean for Superintendent. He has a wealth of experience, including as teacher, principal, and superintendent. During his 24 years in education, he has been an advocate for the disadvantaged. I've spoken with many parents of children of special needs. Their stories are heartbreaking to hear that their children's educational needs aren't being met. I believe that Dr. Bean is the right choice for Superintendent. Thank you.

SPARKS: Okay, Pat Micone, and on deck is Benjamin Alley.

PAT: Hi, thank you for allowing me to speak today. I want to thank the President of the Board and all the trustees, and for all the people here today. I totally support the appointment of Dr. Stefan Bean. I've had the privilege to meet him several years ago when he was running, and for all the reasons the previous people spoke of his attributes and his character. I just want to say we need someone who can bring in healing and bring people together on this board in Orange County, and someone who will focus on the well-being of our children, and the parents' rights, so thank you. I thank all of you for really considering Dr. Bean. I believe he is the best candidate. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Benjamin Alley is up, and on deck is Tiffany Craft.

BENJAMIN: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. I'm an attorney here in Orange County. My office is in Irvine. I'm also a resident of Irvine, but the reason I'm speaking to you today is I have two kids, a 5-year-old and 7-year-old in the school where Dr. Bean is the principal and Executive Director. I have seen with my own eyes that he is a remarkable leader; a tremendous leader that was able to listen to people; that was able to steer the ship in the midst of potential and actual conflict in our school; a discerning leader, and probably the best thing that I know about him is his ability to inspire those that are below him, or that he's serving, to become better leaders, so I highly recommend it.

SPARKS: Thank you. Tiffany Craft is up, and Cyndie Borcaman is on deck.

TIFFANY: Thank you for this opportunity to comment, and thank you to all of the candidates who've applied for the position. I'm here tonight as the Treasurer of the Irvine International Academy Parent Teacher Organization to put in a positive word for Dr. Stefan Bean for the County Superintendent role. Dr. Bean is an extraordinary leader. He is a man of high character who is principled and thoughtful in his decision-making and communications. He embodies optimal doses of compassion and humility, apparent in his interactions and engagements with students, families, teachers, staff, the board, and the PTO. He embodies and promotes a growth mindset that inspires our IIA community, motivating students and staff alike to achieve at high levels. His investment in staff development is second to none. Dr. Bean brings a wealth of fiscal management experience and is well versed in implementation and administration of academic programs. His meticulous nature and attention to detail bodes well in the sphere of policy development and oversight. What he has been able to accomplish in two years at IIA, given the situation he inherited, is nothing short of a miracle, and is a testament to what he is capable of. Our community has grown stronger, more united, more engaged, and more high-achieving thanks to his leadership. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you so much. Cyndie Borcaman followed by Lorrie Kaylor on deck.

CYNDIE: Hello, my name is Cyndie Borcaman. Good afternoon, board. Today is about the election of the superintendent, and I want to endorse Dr. Bean because I've talked to him and he really cares about ACCESS students. I'm a retired ACCESS teacher. Currently we have under the leadership of Dr. Miramontes, we have cronyism going on. He's hiring all his friends.

Cronyism is an unethical practice of hiring your friends to positions that people that are well-qualified do not get. He has recently posted positions for principal and other jobs and what happens is if he gets those people in, then they're at their jobs, and you never can get them out. I'm very concerned about that. Also, I just want to say one more thing, he's also having a...

SPARKS: I'm sorry, your time is up, thank you. Lorrie Kaylor and on deck is Araceli Justiniani.

LORRIE: My name is Lorrie Kaylor. As a teacher with a bachelor's in psychology and a master's in education, I'm deeply concerned with education in Orange County. When I heard Dr. Stefan Bean share his amazing story and speak about running for Superintendent back in 2022, I was motivated to help him. Dr. Bean has proven to be an exceptional human being and has overcome many challenges. Tragically, in 2000, his wife died, leaving him with their four children. He knows the struggles of being a single parent and empathizes with families in Orange County. He fights for the marginalized in providing education for all. He believes in teaching children how to think, rather than what to think. With experience as a teacher, associate professor, principal, and superintendent, Dr. Bean is well-qualified for this role. He will be an advocate for students and for parents. Dr. Bean will work well with the board, as well as with the staff. I recently met with Dr. Bean, asked him difficult questions about challenging scenarios. He was forthright, realistic, and determined. Dr. Bean is the perfect man for Superintendent of Education. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Araceli Justiniani followed by Jose Fernandez.

ARACELI: I am a retired employee of Santa Ana Unified School, child and parent advocate for immigrant families. I support Dr. Stefan Bean for our next Orange County superintendent because of his values. He will be honest and up-front with our families in Orange County. 18 Hispanic community leaders met with Dr. Miramontes and Dennis Cole in July, 2023. We simply request full disclosure of what's going on in the schools behind parents' backs. We ask that they provide parents with information of the unlimited gender definitions, what's behind these crisis hotlines, the controversial curriculum, the explicit library books, and policies that exclude parents. They listened to us but did nothing. Nine months later, we still have to do public record requests in order to understand what's going on behind our backs. Dr. Bean will not enable this deception. I endorse Dr. Bean. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Jose Fernandez and on deck, Brenda Lebsack.

JOSE: Hi everyone. Just here to support Dr. Bean. My name is Joseph Fernandez. I'm Director of Student Services over at Irvine International Academy. Dr. Bean was my first principal 10 years ago when I became a special education teacher. It was in South Gate, and under his leadership, his mentorship, it's not just me personally how I've grown as a professional, and giving me leadership opportunities, but also what I've seen what he does with our kids, you know, with our students, particularly special education. How he cares, how he -- I don't know how to put into words -- but like he directs people, he leads people. When Dr. Bean says, "We're gonna do this, we're gonna make it happen," it's crazy, it happens. It always happens. Every

staff that have been working under him, like everyone has full confidence at him, and I can't say enough. I really endorse Dr. Bean and I think he's the right person for the job. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Brenda Lebsack, and on deck is Angela Brown.

BRENDA: Congratulations to the OC Trustees for attracting highly qualified applicants for this position. As a teacher in Orange County, member of the CTA and PTA, former schoolboard member, and founder of Interfaith 4 Kids, I believe one candidate literally personifies our diverse county. Orange County has many English learners. Dr. Stefan Bean is an immigrant from Vietnam and was himself, an English learner. OC has many foster youths. Dr. Bean was a foster child before he became adopted. OC has diverse racial groups. Dr. Bean was raised in a multi-racial home with 11 siblings that were Black, Hispanic, Asian, and White. OC has a large population of children with disabilities. Dr. Bean was born with a disability and had IEPs. OC has many single-parent homes. Dr. Bean is a single dad widower. Dr. Bean's breadth of intersectionality and personal resilience definitely makes him stand out above the rest. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Angela Brown, and on deck is Eva Weisz.

ANGELA: Good afternoon. Dr. Bean is a man with a vision. He always tells us at Irvine International Academy to look at things from a 30,000 foot view. My name is Angela Brown and I'm a teacher at Irvine International. I started there at his inception in 2021, and after a tumultuous year, we needed new leadership. Dr. Bean came in and turned our school around. With his leadership he showed us that people come first; he involved the staff in a leadership team; he involved the parents in opportunities to give input and take on responsibilities. Dr. Bean is a collaborative leader. One of the very first things he did in establishing that team of leaders was to start coaching us and to start leading us to be better leaders ourselves. When Dr. Bean joined us, we had very few systems in place. He made us understand from the very beginning, "Codify, codify, codify. Think of the future." He is always thinking of the future. Through his leadership our school enrollment has doubled and our academic achievement has improved.

SPARKS: Thank you, your time is up.

BROWN: Thank you.

SPARKS: Eva Weisz, and on deck is Troy Bourne.

EVA: My name is Eva Weisz. I'm from Huntington Beach. Good afternoon all of you, all of the Board of Education members, and everyone else. I would like to see to vote for Dr. Bean who would have fought against students indoctrination, parental right for school choice of their children, also for parents' notification about major issues in their children's life. Also, he's for excellent education, that is why he's homeschooling his children; he would advocate for higher level of learning. We are way behind with education here in the United States. Children not using their God-given brain to challenge themselves, but accepted, occupied with sex education

from kindergarten books with pornographic, and no one to fight against it. Sex change at age when a child does not understand what's going on.

SPARKS: Thank you. Your time is up. Troy Bourne, and on deck is Todd Odenath.

EVA: Thank you for giving us graciously the one minute. Thank you.

TROY: Hi. Troy Bourne. I'm here to speak on behalf of Kirsten Vital. I serve on the City Council in San Juan Capistrano and had the opportunity to serve as Mayor when she served as Superintendent of Capistrano Unified Schools. My wife and I have raised six children, my wife mostly, but I've been around -- elementary school, middle school, high school -- and could not have been happier with the experience they have had, and are having, through the language immersion programs, sports programs, academic challenging programs. I can't speak to the qualifications of every candidate that you guys are going to interview and meet with, but what I can say is that you guys go to appoint somebody, and a couple years somebody gets to run for election. You have the opportunity to appoint somebody who has been highly successful in the county's largest district doing exactly what we want done for our kids, and she has my recommendation. Thanks for all the work you guys do.

SPARKS: Thank you. Todd Odenath, and on deck is Linda Cone.

TODD: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Our eldest child has attended IIA since one year before Dr. Bean began, and the leadership was in shambles that first year. After meeting Dr. Bean, we decided to see if that was an opportunity for IIA to turn around, and now all three of our children are attending. We're very happy and satisfied. Dr. Bean has shown great character, he's humble and approachable, he's a clear communicator, he's honest and he listens, he's also compassionate as he puts the students first. He's served us well but you can't miss this opportunity for him to serve here. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Linda Cone, and on deck is Betsy Aasland.

LINDA: My name is Linda Cone. I've been involved in public education for 59 years. There's only one person in this room who spent more time here at board meetings than I, and that's Dr. Ken Williams. What you have just heard in the last several minutes is extraordinary. You have your marching orders. I want to underscore just one thing: the ability to work with diverse groups of people and make things happen for the best interest of kids is far most the number one characteristic that you should be looking for. One person, as you've already heard, has achieved this characteristic through his work in this county. I strongly support Dr. Stefan Bean for the position of Orange County Superintendent of Schools.

SPARKS: Thank you. Betsy Aasland, and on deck is Dianne Wells.

BETSY: Hi, thanks for having me. My name is Betsy Aasland. I'm a small business owner in San Clemente, and my kids are now graduated but they both came up through the Capo Unified School District, one through this dual immersion program, and one through the regular schools but she had a 504. I'm here to recommend that you appoint Kirsten Vital Brulte as the new

Orange County Superintendent of Schools. I had a prepared statement, but after listening to a lot of what people have to say about Dr. Bean, I had some thoughts. What if you can get all the qualities that people love about Dr. Bean: the vision, the special education advocacy, the charter school support, conservative values, along with the experience of running the largest district that you have in this county? The leadership, the fairness, and the knowledge of state and local policies. You already have that in Kirsten. One of the things that impressed me as a parent was the amount of transparency and communication that Superintendent Vital Brulte had with the community and the parents in particular. Thank you for your time.

SPARKS: Thank you. Dianne Wells, and on deck is Shisong Chen.

DIANNE: Good afternoon, board. My name is Dianne Wells. My sons graduated from the Newport-Mesa Unified schools. I am here to support the appointment of Dr. Stefan Bean as Superintendent of Orange County Schools. Dietrich Bonhoeffer inspired the world by saying, "The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children." Dr. Bean personifies the spirit of this famous quote. As a father and educator, he understands the great responsibility of educating children. Everything that Dr. Bean has achieved throughout his career as an educator, principal, executive director of schools, has proven that he's committed to educating our young generation and preparing them for the real world. Dr. Bean believes in giving the tools for our young students to think critically, independently. We need bold leadership to bring together a large coalition of students, teachers, parents, to make Orange County schools the shining example of academic excellence. Dr. Stefan Bean is ready to lead and ready to serve as the Orange County Superintendent of Schools. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Shisong Chen, and on deck is Alex Tran.

SHISONG: Thank you. My name is Shisong Chen. I'm the Irvine International Academy PTO President. I've been working with Dr. Bean for two years and I know he's amazing person. I always know he's more than just principles and I watch you guys on the YouTube quite often. It's good to see you guys and I'm praying for you to make a good decision. I think Dr. Bean can be nominated. It's a win-win for Orange County. If he didn't get nominated by you it'll be a win for IIA so pray for your guys.

SPARKS: Thank you. Alex Tran, and on deck is Lisa Kao.

ALEX: Dear Members of the Board of Education. My name is Alexander Tran, and I currently serve as a student board trustee at Orange Unified. With the recent recall of pro-parental board members Madison Miner and Rick Ledesma in my school district, the need for parental right advocates is ever more imperative. I've long believed that in order to put students first, we cannot leave parents last. This is why Dr. Stefan Bean, with his decades of experience in education, would be the right man to lead Orange County's public schools. As a Vietnamese American, Dr. Bean's experiences as a refugee resonate not only with myself, but tens of thousands of Vietnamese American students and parents alike. His love for educational freedom has a place here in Orange County, and most certainly, this department of education. This is especially true with the extensive targeting of this department by the union Sacramento liberals who seek to dilute my own quality of education. The need for a strong leader is now, someone

with experience in education, someone who resonates with local communities and that someone is Dr. Stefan Bean. I proudly support Dr. Bean, a family man, parental rights advocate, and refugee for Orange County Superintendent of Schools. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Lisa Kao, and on deck is Jasmivetto Perez

LISA: Mr. President, Members of the Board, my name is Lisa Kao. I have a daughter in TK at Irvine International Academy. I'm also a room parent so I go to almost every single meeting. There are three things I want to highlight about Dr. Stefan Bean. One is his experience and accomplishments. He's an incredible leader, he set plans and goals in place and built a team who shared his vision, and now the success of this dual immersion school is due to his strong leadership. We have strong academics and growth and enrollment. And then, who is he? It's the intangibles. He gets things done but he also has a warm and caring heart. He built a culture of family and we all feel comfortable sharing our school successes and areas of opportunities. Parents feel that they can make a difference in this school because he listens and is responsive. Even my daughter is trying to earn points to have lunch with him. That's how much students feel comfortable and want to hang out with him.

SPARKS: Thank you. Jasmivetto Perez, and on deck is Sarah Bach.

JASMIVETTO: Good afternoon. As a Mexican immigrant who just became a legal resident, I'm excited to vote for our education leaders. I have three children in the Orange County schools. We, the immigrant parents, as well as any other parents, want honest leaders. There are explicit and pornographic books in our schools, books that teach our children how to use adult sex dating apps. Our leaders have never informed us, to the parents, about it. I just recently found out. There are policies that allow our children, our school staff, to change our children's names, the genders, the pronouns, without our knowledge and our leaders never informed us about this either. We're talking about our children, the future of America. We have to protect them. We want a leader that speaks the truth to us. Dr. Stefan Bean has a heart for the people. Immigrants, parents like me, we want someone who has our backs. We want someone who is looking out for the well-being of our children, for the future of us. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Sarah Bach, and on deck is Lylian Nguyen.

SARAH: Good afternoon, Board of Trustees, public, those out in the ether. My name is Sarah Bach. I am the founding Executive Director of Sycamore Creek Community Charter School, and I'm here this evening because your decision will definitely affect our school, our charter school, our children, and those of other charters and all the children in this county. I'm here today in support of your efforts for transparency in the process. I look forward to the interviews this evening. I have had the great pleasure of interviewing and meeting Dr. Stefan Bean a few years ago, and I do think that he has not only the experience and knowledge, but also a heart to meet this moment. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Lylian Nguyen, and Stephanie Camacho-Vandyke is on deck.

LYLIAN: Hi, my name is Lylian Nguyen and I'm Vietnamese American and an immigrant. I am a campus safety manager and a parent of fourth grader at IIA for the last three years. When I first heard that Dr. Bean was leaving, was potentially leaving, I was shocked and grieved. It took me a while to process that this is happening. It is hard to believe that we would lose him to OCDE. Our school has grown from a struggling school to a tightly knit community because of his leadership. I admit that I felt selfish trying to keep him to ourselves, but after listening to him and learning about OCDE and the needs of the greater Orange County community, I now understand he has bigger mission. I truly believe that's the same way he is making our school the best version of itself. It's what he will do when he becomes the OC Superintendent. There's only one Dr. Bean and the students of OC needs him. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Stephanie Camacho-Vandyke, and on deck is Judy Bullockus.

STEPHANIE: Good afternoon, board. My name is Stephanie Camacho-Vandyke and I'm the Senior Director of Advocacy and Education at the LGBTQ Center, OC. Today is an important moment for our education system and we know the choice of a superintendent will significantly impact the direction and tenor of our schools as well as the investment in the well-being of our diverse students, educators and families. I know that during this transition process that there are many community members who are closely watching for what comes next. I urge you to consider the appointment of a leader who can inspire, innovate, and advocate for the needs of all students such as our LGBTQ+ students, as well as our educators. We need a superintendent who will not only uphold but advance the tenants of equity and inclusion, ensuring that our schools are safe and welcoming and that every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. I look forward to the interviews this afternoon. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Judy Bullockus, and on deck is Heidi.

JUDY: Good afternoon. My name is Judy Bullockus and I am a Trustee at Capistrano Unified School District since 2017. I'm a parent notification advocate, and very concerned about education's future. I highly recommend Kirsten Vital Brulte. Kirsten was always student and parent focused, what was best for the kids. Something you don't see unless you work with someone, is Kirsten's ability to remain calm and possess great strategic capacity in working through challenges. We've been through the eye of the storm, yet it continues. You need Kirsten Vital Brulte's expertise to lead with you as we navigate challenges in education. There's no one better qualified than Kirsten, and to partner with you to move forward to improve the educational outcomes for Orange County students. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Heidi, and on deck is Michelle Morgan.

HEIDI: Thank you for your attention. My name is Heidi and I am a mother, 35-year resident of Orange County, and retired community college professor. I want to express my strong support for Dr. Bean. He has a proven track record of unwavering moral leadership, educational freedom and most importantly, to me and a lot of people here, he strongly supports the family and the rights of parents to raise their own children. He is the best person to lead public education in Orange County. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Michelle Morgan, and on deck is Rebecca Friedrichs.

MICHELLE: Good afternoon, board. We support Dr. Bean. He is focused on kids and not politics. He understands special needs children and how to support their needs. Dr. Bean understands single parents, second language learners, because he's been all these things. His life experiences make him the best candidate for the job. Dr. Bean will support good teachers because he has been one. He will always be supportive of parents and their right to full disclosure of curriculum and transparency in the schools. Please appoint Dr. Bean for the future of our children and our country. God Bless America.

SPARKS: Thank you. Rebecca Friedrichs, and on deck is Darren Parker.

REBECCA: Good evening Mr. President, Trustees. I'm Rebecca Friedrichs. I've lived in Orange County since 1974. I'm the mother of two grown men who graduated from Orange County schools. I'm an Orange County taxpayer and also taught in Orange County public schools for 28 years. I'm here tonight as a taxpayer, a parent, and an educator, to respectfully ask you to please select a candidate who will put the educational needs of children and our community ahead of the politics and the social agenda of the so-called teacher unions. As a longtime teacher who also served as a union rep for three years, I speak with authority when I say that the unions have far too much power over our schools and they do not represent the values or desires of great teachers within our community. In fact, their policies have brought great harm to our schools, our children, and our families. It's imperative to the success of our county, and our nation, and its citizens, that we raise up a superintendent like Dr. Stefan Bean. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. And Darren Parker is our final public comment tonight.

DARREN: I'm last, right? I'm a parent of two children at Irvine International Academy, and like so many before me, I'm here to endorse Dr. Bean. Dr. Bean is not just an amazing communicator, he's a great listener, he's not afraid of the "hot seat." He will put himself out there time and time again. He deals with difficult situations well, but more than that, I've seen firsthand how he has taken this school and taken the teachers and gotten more from the staff and the teachers than I think anyone else could. He's a great leader, he's a great motivator, and I think he's really the only choice and I hope you guys make the right one.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Well thank you so much for all your comments and I'm sure we're all taking notes, but we do appreciate you all coming out and expressing your opinion. Before we dive into the interviews, I wanted to take a moment to thank and acknowledge Dr. Al Mijares. I pulled this up on his biography so just wanted to read a little bit here.

Dr. Mijares was appointed Orange County Superintendent of Schools in August, 2012. Prior to that time he served for six years as the Vice President of the College Board where he worked to expand the high school to university pipeline in order to assure the college readiness and success for students, especially the under representative. He served for 11 years as a superintendent in

the Santa Ana Unified School District. Before Santa Ana, Dr. Mijares served as superintendent of the Bakersfield City School District and Coachella Valley Unified School District, and as a principal in the Moreno Valley Unified School District out in Riverside County. Before these administrative posts, he held faculty positions as an adjunct professor at Chapman University and taught part-time at both Pepperdine universities, Los Angeles campus and at Compton College in California.

I could go on but Dr. Mijares obviously made his announcement that he's going to be retiring as our superintendent effective June 30th as he deals with a health challenge, so we want to remember him in our prayers and thoughts, and I just wanted to take a moment to publicly thank him for his many years of service as not only our superintendent, but in many capacities as an educator over his long and distinguished career. Thank you to Dr. Mijares.

I wanted to read a statement to go over some of the logistics here to make sure I get everything. I'll just go ahead and read this.

On behalf of the board, I want to thank all of the candidates who have applied. We understand this is a difficult commitment and we sincerely appreciate your participation. Each of you are here because you are worthy candidates. Regarding the interview process, since this is a public meeting, we cannot exclude any candidate from the room, however, we would ask your indulgence to wait outside the boardroom while other candidates are being interviewed to preserve the integrity of the process. Staff is available to escort you to and from the boardroom, and we have waiting rooms available, and I think we even put water and food in there.

To our members of the public we ask that you not electronically assist any candidate via text messaging, email, or otherwise. Again, we don't want to have one candidate have hours to think about the question and another candidate only having a moment so we thought that would be the fair way to go.

Regarding the interview format, the Board Executive Committee worked with the department staff and counsel to create an equitable and efficient process. I would personally really like to thank Deputy Superintendent Renee Hendrick for her great effort and assistance in helping us with the logistics here. We're going to interview candidates in random order -- we'll do that in a second -- each candidate will be given 10 minutes to make an opening statement followed by a 20-minute question period where each board member will ask questions. You don't have to take all 10 minutes. I'll say up to 10 minutes if you want to leave more time for the questions and answers. Your response time will be monitored by Darou here. Board members will be taking notes and we will retain these notes and provide copies to our counsel. And again, we will not be voting on the appointment of the superintendent here today.

We wanted to give the public an opportunity to weigh in again at our June -- this says June 1st, it's June 5th meeting -- June 5th meeting, we will provide a third public comment opportunity at our June 18th meeting, and it is our intention to have the vote on the appointment at that June 18th meeting. We happen to have two meetings in June anyway because of the budget cycle, that's when we're hearing the budget so it worked out that way. When we make the appointment, the appointment will obviously be effective, I guess July 1st since Dr. Mijares is retiring

effective June 30th. We would invite our appointed superintendent to be ceremonially sworn in on July 3rd, along with myself, Dr. Williams, and Trustee Valdes. We will be sworn in and we can do all four of us now, together I suppose, at that meeting.

A final admonition, I'm asking that between now and the time of the appointment that we do not have any contact directly between a board member or any of the applicants. I love your guys, but I don't think it would be appropriate to talk outside of the public meeting. That's at least something I'm going to try to follow. Renee, what did I miss? Did we get all that down?

Okay, to make it perfectly fair, as far as who goes first and second, we have the "magic basket" here so there's a name in here, and I don't even want to be the one touching them to pull them out so I'm going to go down and raise your hand if you're one of the applicants and you're gonna pull a name out and we have a number on here. Is that right?

HENDRICK: Yeah, we have a number and they can just let us know what their number is.

SHAW: Okay. Shake it up. Don't look. I can't see that.

HENDRICK: Can't see. So Kirsten, you're three. Kirsten, and then Maria, fourth; Ramon, five; and Dr. Bean, that leaves you as number 3, right? Two, whoop, I got one wrong, okay. Got it.

SHAW: So who's first?

HENDRICK: Chuck. If we could have... the rest of you, if you'd like to leave, we have some staff at the back that will be taking you to some waiting areas...

SHAW: Oh, and one thing I did forget, when you're done interviewing of course, you're free to go, or we're saying you're free to stay if you want to hear the other applicants, okay?

SHAW: Okay, you have up to 10 minutes.

HINMAN: All right, number one. Okay, am I good to go? All right, well thank you. This is quite the honor obviously Orange County Department of Ed. Orange County as a whole is one of the top counties in the nation, and definitely the state, so this is purely an honor, so I want to thank you for that.

I know you've had the time to look through my resumé, letter of recommendation, where I've been, what I've done. So I just want to take a quick moment to tell you a little bit about myself. My father played football at Wichita State and was drafted by the Rams. So he came out here to play football. That didn't last very long, but he did fall in love with Orange County. He called my mother to come out, they got married, and I was born and raised in Anaheim, California. So I went to Anaheim schools, Anaheim City, Anaheim Union High School District. My wife was a teacher at Newport Elementary School, and our children went through the Capo schools, so we've been pretty much Orange County through and through. I did have a tenure in West Covina

as Superintendent, although I remained living in Mission Viejo and that's a drive I never have to do again as long as I live. That will be a good thing.

So, why do I want to be Orange County Superintendent of Schools? Because I believe we all have a calling in life and my calling clearly has been education, dealing with families, students, staff. When I retired my head said, "You've run the race, it's time to stop." My heart didn't agree, because in very short order, I had this yearning to get back into the system. I just missed what I was doing and the difference I was able to make. So I was very, very fortunate and I started my life of interim work. I worked at Fountain Valley, and then Westminster, and most recently, Oxford Preparatory Academy, which is a local charter school.

This is a bigger job. I'm ready for this job. My whole career really has built me to this piece and I'm excited about the opportunity. I think the thing that I would want you to know is that I didn't come at this haphazard. I wasn't going to accept the job with people I couldn't work with. So as you have done your due diligence with me, I have done my due diligence with you. I've looked at your statements, I've read your statements, I've watched your board meetings, and I could tell you I pretty much found myself head-bobbing the entire time. I do agree philosophically with the stances you've taken in the county. I've tried to live my career by those same stances. I will tell you, it was difficult at times. Sometimes people have different positions on how children should be raised, but mine has always been true, but I had to live within certain boundaries.

I think what's really important for me as a leader is -- answering the next issue -- is establishing an effective relationship with the board. I can't work with the board unless I'm part of the team. That's truly how I see my role as a superintendent. I am, we are a team, and to be a team, communication is everything. I have to be honest -- I'm not trying to throw an arrow -- I was shocked as I watched many of your board meetings, when members would say, "I didn't know that" or, "I hadn't heard that." To me, that's a breakdown in communication because the board should know immediately, at all times, what's going on in the county and in the districts. I probably am guilty of overcommunication. I email almost daily to the board just updates on things, things that you need to know. I believe passionately that if you hear something from a constituent before you hear it from me, that's not good. You need to hear it from me first as part of your team. If it's an update, it would be an email; if it's something much more important, I would send you a text; and then, if it's something that might reach the level of crisis, I will be calling everybody. One way communication, clearly understand the Brown Act, and appreciate how that system works, but you need to be informed at all times.

If I came in with the board, I would come in with a skeleton 100-day plan. The reason it's a skeleton is because obvious things are I'm going to meet with staff, I'm going to meet with local municipalities, I'm going to meet with the school districts, but I need to know who you need me to be in contact with. I need to have one-on-one conversations with you. What are your priorities, who in our community, who are leadership partners that you want me to meet with so I can sit down and have those conversations. At the end of the 100 days, a final report, although I would be updating you obviously along the way.

Skills and experience, abilities that qualify me for this position. I have my doctorate, I've sat in office seats, I've been the coach, the teacher, the administrator, the high school principal, district

administrator, superintendent. I've taught college courses. I've been published. I've had a very storied career, and it's put me in a position to where I'm here today, which is to continue my leadership efforts for you, for the county, and doing what's best for kids: to help families, to help education. I have strong opinions on where we need to be in educating our kids. Your value of being leading the nation and being college and workplace ready, I'm there. But what's going to be the process? You know those are the kinds of things I'd like to explore with you and how we're going to have data to show that vision.

Ability to collaboratively work with Orange County districts. I think this is going to be one of my major strengths. Just for fun, I took the OC News Roll Call and I went through all the 28 school districts and the superintendents, and I know or have a relationship with 18 of them, so I know your LEAs very well and I think as a liaison with the board, I think I can make a lot of significant input with them, and we can start to come together a little bit, more so than maybe now and the relationship can really improve quickly.

I'm Ed lingual. I speak both board and superintendent -- that was a joke. It might vary just a little bit but it is true. I think it's really important that somebody knows how to communicate with your school boards and communicate with your superintendents. They're not always on the same page but as a liaison of you I think I can get out amongst and do the work with our constituents and our counterparts. I'm a member of Southern California Supes which is an organization of Southern California supes with a lot of Orange County superintendents. I'm a member of the Dean's Superintendents Advisory Group that's at USC. There's an Orange County group of graduated, excuse me, doctoral superintendents that work with the dean to advise. I just attended the California Charter Schools Conference. That was really fascinating. I've started to delve into the life of charter school. I have to tell you, it's been very fascinating for me because I've always believed strongly in parent rights, but it's always been from a traditional school view. And I hope I can go into with you at another time how frustrated I was of not being able to do, to allow parental choice in a lot of the positions that I had been in.

Leadership experience with federal, state, local levels. I was very fortunate. In 2006, I got a call from the White House. They asked me to come work with the DEA department. I had developed a voluntary drug testing program that took peer pressure away from kids to be able to participate in that, so I was able to write, be published with that, and also do some presentations for them. I've been to Sacramento several times as an advocate with a lobbyist. One of the biggest things I fought for was district of choice. West Covina High School was a DOC school. I'm sure you're familiar with that, but if you're a claimed DOC school district of choice, anyone can come to your district without having to do the interdistrict transfers. Come-one-come-all, but there were some politicians in Sacramento that felt that was a bad system because you were robbing kids from neighboring schools. Well, I'm a firm believer of what I call educational capitalism, meaning if you're losing kids, it's time to ask the question, "Why are they leaving?" and as an educator, all of my leadership roles were driven by that. I'm going to do whatever I need to do with my school system to ensure my kids stay. I've started numerous programs: dual immersion, IED programs. Whatever my constituents wanted to develop that might leave me for, I was wanting to be sure I could keep. And when they were going to cut DOC, I would have lost 800 students. And they weren't even going to grandfather it in. So needless to say, we went up and was able to successfully lobby that. Oh, that's my time.

SHAW: Okay, well we'll go into questions. Thank you, Doctor. Dr. Sparks will lead us off.

SPARKS: Okay, welcome.

HINMAN: Thank you.

SPARKS: You touched a little bit, but I want you to elaborate on, my first question is, and you have two minutes to answer each question. I have two questions so two minutes each. The first one is, tell me a time where you had a communication failure and how did you respond and/or recover?

HINMAN: It seems almost silly, but I have a servant leader mentality and I build camaraderie amongst our staff. I believe in inertia from the bottom up. If we have the right work and the right programs, that everyone gets onboard. Well, there was a time, it was a principal in San Clemente High School, budgets were tight -- which is another subject I'd love to touch on -- and we were taking API money at the time and spending \$35,000 to pay one of our mothers to run copies for the teachers and I thought, I got to cut that. So I arbitrarily cut it without going through the site council and the teachers, and I was able to save it by realizing am I going to lose that much trust and inertia that I took so long to build with my staff and community, and I reversed it, and then I went back to having a professional learning community that I took years to build.

SPARKS: Okay, thank you. And my second question would be, share a time when you gave inaccurate information about something, and how did you fix it, and what was involved in fixing it?

HINMAN: Well, so the worst one was, and this was a long parental choice. When I was in Capo, I was directed to make cold calls, saying that San Clemente High School was full and nobody else could come. And when I had worked so hard to make our school school of choice in that district, for me to have to pick up the phone and tell people that they couldn't come because you needed to go to San Juan Hills because we're full. That was one of the most painful things that I had to do. To fix the problem I had to work through my education foundation and I had to tell them without breaking district confidence, that this is the right thing to do for the moment because they are opening a brand new high school and as soon as that opportunity closes, we're going to go right back to where we were and we're going to be recruiting like no tomorrow to bring kids to San Clemente.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you very much.

SHAW: All right. Trustee Barke, I think you're up.

BARKE: All right. You touched quite a bit on the subject that I'm going to cover. One of the statutory functions of the Board of Education is ruling on interdistrict transfer appeals. What is your position on school choice?

HINMAN: Well, thank you for asking because I did want to touch a little bit more on that. It's always frustrated me so, again, as a high school principal, and also in West Covina which wasn't as big of a problem is, you build your school. I'm going to go back to educational capitalism. I want people to come to my school. I don't want to lose them for sure and I want to draw them in because we have the programs across the board with the academic, athletic, social. And when I started getting overturned on that because we were getting too full, it became really, really frustrating. So that's when my passion in the area really started to turn. Now, double that when I went to West Covina and they wanted to just cut me out altogether. I did have two charters in my district: San Jose Charter and California Virtual Academy. My relationship with them was phenomenal but I always argued with the principal that I'm getting them back. So we're going to continue to build our elementary programs. It was a K-8 so we're going to get our kids back. Not that I didn't want them to go, have the option to go, but it was just the right thing to do.

BARKE: Okay, thank you. My next question overlaps a little bit. What role do you see for the office of the superintendent of schools regarding the Orange County charter community?

HINMAN: Well, I support it and because I've been an interim in Oxford Preparatory Academy, I'm going to give anyone who's listening right now some advice on the charters because there's two things I learned and it brought me back. The first one goes back to San Jose Academy. They were going to renew their charter and the principal came to me and said, "We're going to pack the room and we're going to talk about why they need to approve the charter." I said, "Why, why are you going to do that? Let's have a conversation." And she trusted me that much because she still brought her attorney, but we had the conversation. I assured her, I've gone over the charter with the board, we're solid, you're going to get approval. So she came, sat, and was extremely surprised when there was no discussion, and it was approved.

The other issue that I would tell the Orange County, and I'll tell them regardless of this position or not, is the problem with the relationship between the charters and the schools that are issuing the charters, they're not communicating and that's a real problem. Matter of fact there seems to be such angst and anger between the traditional school districts and the charters that -- and no offense -- their first action is to go get attorneys and fight it out, and spend money, and they don't even know each other and they're so angry with each other. I had the opportunity to say, "Time out," kind of like before, went, since I was the Executive Director, I went and met with both school district representatives and we had a conversation. We had a cup of coffee. We talked about some of the concerns that my academy had and there weren't really any concerns on the backside, but they didn't communicate. So I think that's one of the first things I would do, is I would want to make sure that the charters knew that they're not the enemy, meaning the issuers, and that the issuers knew the charters are doing great work. We can all get along. We can get this done. There doesn't have to be this animosity out there. I truly believe that.

SHAW: Thank you. Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Again, I'm very impressed with your statements Dr. Hinman. Of my 28 years being on this board I've always talked about the primary purpose of education. My question to you is -- and you got two minutes to answer it -- how do you correct education mission drift that has occurred in the last two decades?

HINMAN: Thank you for asking. I am a huge supporter of Rick DuFour professional learning communities. The problem is the term "professional learning community" gets lost. Everybody claims to be a professional learning community. It's a good sound bite. But what hasn't gotten lost is the four most powerful questions that drive it. Forget the term. What do you want kids to learn? How will you know if they've learned it? And here's the magic, how will you respond if they haven't learned? And then there's the fourth, how do you respond if they have, which is important but nothing near as much as number two: how do you respond if they haven't learned, or number three? Because then that is the cure. It will always be the cure and you have data, you have proficiency rates, and people celebrate that there are districts that have a 47% proficiency in math or English. I congratulate them if they raised their scores but I'm not overly excited if that's what they have. And I'll tell you one more thing -- I should mention this -- there are two districts I know through my research: one Fountain Valley, and one Garden Grove. If you look at what they do in some of those districts with their lower socio-economic kids that are traditionally not meeting proficiency rates in other places, they're getting it done. So why aren't we bringing them in and driving, and showing what skills is going on, what they're doing to meet those needs. So, yes, I get very passionate about that and it can be done.

SHAW: Okay, I'll go up next. Can you tell me three specific ways you would support and/or cooperate with the board?

HINMAN: Absolutely. Well, one, quid pro quo right, because for me to cooperate with you I would want to be a partner of yours, I would want to have open dialogue with you, I would have the ability to have discussions with you, I am transparent as the day is long, I am strongly opinionated, but at the end of the day, I'm also a team member so that is important.

Number two of course is the communication. I think that's imperative. I will give to you all of the information I have. In return all I would ask of you is "no gotchas," is to always give me the opportunity to address whatever concerns that you might have.

And three, that we set specific goals that you have for your LEAs. Now I understand you don't have that kind of oversight but if your mission and vision is for students to be college and workplace ready, who's going to disagree with that? So how are we going to do that? How can we help support those school districts to meet those goals? I think before we blink, we're going to all be on the same team, and I'm talking about all of our constituents.

SHAW: Thank you. Back to Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: My next question has to do with pandemic school lockdowns, mask and vaccine mandates, and government extended emergency powers. A working paper by the John Hopkins as well as internationally acclaimed Cochrane Library, which raises the benchmark very high for good quality healthcare information, validated that there was no difference between those states that locked down and those states that did not, or those states that had vaccine or mask mandates. What did you personally learn through that COVID lockdown?

HINMAN: It was a crime and never should have happened, and I learned that I didn't have the power to run my school district. I was in LA County. I refused to close my schools. I mean, I

was point blank, "I am not closing my schools." What I found was, is that okay all the power has now been given to -- I won't say her name -- but it was not even a doctor, who started giving all this criteria and staff was eating it up. They were scared. I was not going to close my schools until one day the governor became the superintendent of my school district, and he shut my schools. I was so angry. What I've learned, and I don't want to get too overly political, is that when you have an argument and you only let one side speak, that's a crime. And I will tell you who did a good job: Orange County. Orange County did a good job. You know, they held on as long as they could, they got their doctor, he actually came to superintendent meetings and gave his view and was supportive of you guys and your schools as much as he could be -- I probably overstated that.

SHAW: Okay. Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Doctor, a December 22nd, 2022, LA Times report showed that LA Unified was promoting equitable grading practices. That same report showed that 73% of LA Unified 11th graders were receiving A's, B's, and C grades, when only 19% of those 11th graders were passing state mandated benchmarks. What are your thoughts on equitable grading policies as they relate to Orange County?

HINMAN: I don't believe in them. What are you setting your kids up... you're setting them up for failure. You're going to go to community college and they're just going to get wiped out. And all that self-esteem that you helped build up during that time is going to be clocked in literally no time. I personally -- again, this is Rick DeFour, not me -- but there's nothing wrong with teaching to the test if what you want kids to learn is on the test. The reality is if they don't learn, if you don't have proficiency by fourth grade, especially in reading with all the research, shows that you're going to be in big trouble. So I am vehemently against giving away anything. Now that being said, that doesn't let us off the hook either. So if they're not getting it, what are we doing to ensure they do and I'm going to come back to your question which is of the (inaudible). How do you respond when they're not getting it? Giving them a higher grade to feel good is something I philosophically would disagree with.

SHAW: Okay. I'll go next. Our board has, in the past, taken positions either supporting or opposing legislation at both the state and federal level. What role do you see for the county superintendent of schools regarding these board efforts?

HINMAN: Well, I'm on your team, right? So, advocacy. I've been there. The lobbyist that I worked with unfortunately passed away about a year ago, but I do know some other lobbyists up in Sacramento, which I'm sure you do too. I can't imagine being on a different side of whatever issue this board is particularly in favor with, and I would hope that this position would have some sway, and I would hope that after my tenure here it might even have more. I'm not near as connected as this board is but I do have people that I work with and would advocate with.

SHAW: Thank you. And, Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: We'll close this out.

HINMAN: No worries.

VALDES: Doctor, teachers are being told to use, to ask students about their feelings as they relate to social emotional learning. Do you have any concerns that social emotional learning leads to any type of content displacement?

HINMAN: No, but I will say this, and I'm taking your mission and I'm just adding some words to it. Unless you have a safe, secure, learning environment, kids are not going to learn. Safety's first. If you don't feel safe in a school then you're not going to learn, and I will always trump safety before I even go down the education road for that very reason. Safe speaks for itself. Secure is a different word. Do kids' social emotional issues need to be addressed in the schools? Sometimes. That's why we have counselors and psychologists, and programs, and some clubs. So, yes there is a time for social and emotional, however, should it have a direct impact on their academic outlook? No.

SHAW: Okay, I think that did it. Was that about 30 minutes Darou? Doctor, you did a terrific job so you're going to be a tough act to follow.

HINMAN: Thank you, I appreciate it.

SHAW: All right. Good luck.

HINMAN: Pleasure seeing you all.

SHAW: So like we said, you'll get up to 10 minutes as an introduction then we'll get into the questions. You don't have to use the whole 10 minutes because the questions will get going but go for it.

BEAN: All right. Well, good afternoon, board members. I'm Dr. Stefan Bean, and it is my honor to be here today. I've often been asked in education, why education? Over my 25-year journey in this field, I've grappled with its difficulties as a public school teacher at both Long Beach Unified and Clovis Unified, and the occasional loneliness as a principal, and the seemingly unrewarding moments as a superintendent. So why aspire to be the Orange County Superintendent of Schools?

To answer this, I must start from the beginning. My journey to becoming an educator began in Vietnam. I was born during the Vietnam War and at the age of two I contracted polio which left me paralyzed from the waist down. I was then abandoned on the streets of Saigon which, then an orphanage, took me in to care for me until 1975. The day before Saigon fell, President Nixon executed Operation Babylift and what that operation did was, the US military airlifted Vietnamese orphans to then be adopted into the United States. I remember the day as if it was yesterday, the chaos that ensued to try to get orphans on multiple planes. My possessions and records were placed on the first plane, and while I was mistakenly placed on the second plane. When the first plane took off, it had mechanical failure, crashed, and nearly all the orphans perished. By God's grace, the second plane brought me safely to the United States. There I would meet Greg and Judy Bean, first as a foster child and then later to be adopted by them.

The Beans raised 12 children of diverse ethnicities and abilities. Growing up, my adopted mother instilled in me a heart for the most vulnerable, while my father, a sixth-grade teacher, fostered my love for education. Not speaking English and living with a disability were hurdles that led to many struggles as a student. I was later inspired by my sixth-grade teacher, Mr. Geisinger, who saw through all these challenges and recognized my gift of communication. Of course, it's the gift of gab, right. He assigned me to give only oral reports on content that I learned that entire year. This transformative experience led me to academic success and a career dedicated to education. From that point on I received straight A's and was even asked to be a speaker in Washington D.C. in front of 15,000 youths and families advocating for students with disabilities. I then went on to receive scholarships to attend USC to get my master's later and then to get my doctorate in educational leadership.

But I think my greatest accomplishment actually was meeting my wife, Janet, at USC. We married and had four amazing kids, all who went through the public school system. Tragedy struck for our family in 2014 when my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer that metastasized to the brain. God gave Janet six wonderful years before passing in 2020. Together we raised our children to love God, to care for the marginalized, and to appreciate the liberating power of education. As a single father I promise to carry these values forward for our children. Driven by a deep admiration for educators like Mr. G and my father, I aspire to serve as the OC Superintendent of Schools. In this pivotal role, my mission is to empower educational leaders and teachers, fostering an environment where every student's potential can flourish.

I believe that the Orange County Department of Education is where I can most effectively realize this dream by leveraging my experiences and giving back to our country and county. It will be my imperative to first establish and maintain an effective working relationship with this board. I will do this by building trust through open communication, shared problem solving and transparency. In the past, there has been at times, a contentious relationship that needs to change. Drawing from my experience as a superintendent and executive director, I will create key committees for areas like budget management, charter schools, alternative education, and inviting board members to participate.

Furthermore, my goal will be to resolve any legal dispute between the board and the department by identifying mutually beneficial resolutions to enhance collaboration between the board and the staff. As I move forward my central focus will lie in cultivating a successfully and tightly knit staff. This involves celebrating their successes because there are many, I am sure, and addressing any challenges they encounter. I firmly believe that partnership is essential in this endeavor. The work we do is intricate and often messy but together we can overcome obstacles and achieve remarkable outcomes for our students.

As an educational leader I've honed skills and gained experiences that qualify me for this role. First, in the area of strategic leadership. As a superintendent in Los Angeles of 11 schools, I provided visionary leadership, promoting educational success to students and staff. Our vision of college for certain led to achievement results far above neighboring schools. It also led to a 100% graduation rate and an 84% AP participation rate among our predominantly minority and economically disadvantaged students. In operational management, I've overseen daily operations, setting budget policies and guidelines, in my role as the superintendent.

One of my greatest strengths, however, is establishing and maintaining strong relationships, both with internal and external stakeholders. As a superintendent, I conducted annual town halls with every school twice a year, engaging families, students, staff, and teachers. Our collaborative efforts resulted in a remarkable 95% or higher positivity rating on annual family and teammate surveys. Additionally, recognizing the challenges faced by our schools in Los Angeles' most impoverished area, I actively established relationships with Harbor Regional Center, city council members, law enforcement, and youth organizations to enhance wraparound services for students needing additional support beyond the classroom.

In the area of policy development, I've streamlined operational processes to enhance organizational effectiveness. Notable achievements include successful policies for standardized grading, co-teaching in middle and high school, fiscal improvements, and implementing a pandemic responsive distance learning plan.

In summary, my most crucial skills include active listening, continuous learning, and effective leadership. I listen to those most affected by decisions, learn from their experiences with empathy and then lead with a vision that positively impacts all stakeholders' students. As an educational leader I have a strong track record of collaborating effectively with traditional school districts and community. For several years I worked with Success for All, an educational organization affiliated with John Hopkins University. As a school system coach and trainer, I supported over 40 traditional public schools along with 10 traditional district schools, or districts across multiple states. And as the superintendent at Aspire, I led over 30 community conversations to reimagine our district vision and core values.

Part of my work as a leader in education also includes working with federal, state, and local levels of government. At the state level I worked with CSESA as a legislative advocate helping push laws to expand and support charter schools. At the county level I served on the Los Angeles Coalition for Excellent Schools. Locally I served on the Board of Orange County Classical Academy and W.A.Y.S. Academy for Young Scientists. In every leadership position I prioritize student academic excellence, create a safe, collegial, and effective environment for all staff and students to thrive.

I believe that my experience in working in traditional public schools and charter school systems gives me experience that most educators do not have and cannot draw from. For the record I do not have any immediate family members who are employees of the department, nor do I have any financial interest that would prohibit me from holding this office. In summary, as the OC Superintendent of Schools, I am committed to listening, learning, and leading. Together we can fulfill OCDE's vision.

I'd like to end by sharing a story from my childhood that illustrates this. Growing up in the Bean household our dinner table was a vibrant mix of voices: three Black sisters, two Latino brothers, and White siblings. Conversations flowed freely and everyone had equal input. We listened, learned, and respected each other. This upbringing shapes my leadership approach of emphasizing unity and mutual respect. As the potential OC Superintendent of Schools, I believe that in every seat a leader, in every seat a learner, and together we'll unlock the full potential of all of our students. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you, Dr. Bean. I did want to say, for real, my great-grandmother's maiden name is Bean. I think you and I might be cousins.

BEAN: Okay. We may be.

SHAW: My Vietnamese cousin. All right. Dr. Sparks.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you for outlining very concretely your accomplishments and lining them up. That was really, really good. I have two questions so each one will have a two-minute response. Okay. The first one is, tell me a time you had a communication failure and how did you respond and/or recover?

BEAN: When I was the superintendent of Aspire Public Schools, there was a strong leader in one of my high schools, and all of a sudden, he decided he wanted to resign. That leader had been there quite a long time. What happened was that we needed to then begin the process of hiring a new principal. I think that in the beginning when I sat with the community and this high school, I gave them the protocol of how we're going to search for a new principal. We went through the process and then we hired a principal. Well as it turns out, the principal that they hired was not the one that the community wanted. They wanted someone who was more cultural. Where I failed was, I did not express the vision to have a strong instructional leader. That school needed a strong instructional leader. Had I communicated that with the team, and we actually did in the second round, I made it very clear in the beginning, "Your school needs an instructional leader." When they heard that -- the second round -- when we hired another principal, they realized that in the interview process they needed that opportunity to hone in their skills on who an instructional leader would be. So that would be a good example where in the beginning, I should have expressed my expectations in the beginning.

SPARKS: Okay, great. Thank you. Second question. Share a time when you gave inaccurate information about something. How did you fix it, and what was involved in fixing it? Maybe a different example.

BEAN: Good question. So, oftentimes when you're working with the most vulnerable students and the most impoverished areas of LA, and I call community members in. I recall one time where we brought the Sheriff of LA County into a meeting and we are talking about some students and in the process of talking about some students, he asked for some data about some of the schools. Well I provided him actually, data from another school. So we were talking about this school the entire time and he kept on scratching his head trying to figure out what was going on. And then I began -- my assistant realized that we had the wrong report. So we corrected that and then that actually pivoted our conversation to be more productive. So, yes, we brought in the wrong school's report in that conversation with the county sheriff and when you do that it's not a good thing.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Trustee Barke.

BARKEE: All right. Thank you for coming today.

BEAN: Sure.

BARKE: One of our statutory functions here at the Board of Ed is ruling on interdistrict transfer appeals. What is your position on those and school choice in general?

BEAN: My position on school choice is very, very clear. I believe in parental rights, the parental right to choose what schools their child goes to whether it's a traditional school, charter school, private, or even homeschool. We've actually seen trends in the past several years in which parents are making that choice. We've also seen trends where then we have adversaries of parents trying to block their choice. So I'm 100% behind interschool, intra and interdistrict transfers because if that's the parent's choice, they ought to be able to do that because they know what is best for their child. So I'm 110% behind school choice. In particular, I'm 110% behind parents making that decision.

BARKE: Great. Thank you. Thank you for being so clear. Second question. What role do you see for the office of the superintendent of schools regarding the Orange County charter community?

BEAN: First of all, I commend the work that this board has done to actually advocate for charter schools. I've personally seen it myself. I've seen an expansion and focus on providing our parents and families with a variety of choices. If I were appointed I would come in to not only continue that, but to actually hopefully even expand that further to provide our families with more charter school choices, but also to highlight the success of our traditional public schools as well. When we present to families all of the successes, all of the programs that are out there, why not allow them to certainly choose? So my role, should I get this role, would be to actually be pretty close with the Charter School Division to encourage expansion, to support charter schools, and to even communicate that out to the public so they're aware of what their choices and options are.

SPARKS: All right. Thank you very much.

BEAN: Yeah.

SHAW: Thank you. Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Yes. Dr. Bean, what is the primary purpose of education and how do you correct the overt education drift that we've seen in the last couple decades?

BEAN: The number one purpose of education is to teach children to think critically so they can use their God-given talents and the skills of critical analysis to then make choices and decisions on community, government, national level, that can use those skills to make proper decisions and informed decisions. What I've seen is, I agree with you 100%, I've seen in education, or a mission drift where many schools, districts, are focusing on more adult type of issues. These adult issues, political issues, then creep into the education system. Poor teachers. I was once a

teacher. They're being pulled from so many different directions. They have no idea where we're heading as an educational system. We need clear vision, which is to teach our students to critically think, but we must also provide them the tools to explore their own interests rather than confusing them about the different things that we can learn in this world. So 100% it is about teaching not only -- bottom line is, not teaching kids what to think, but teaching kids how to think critically given the knowledge that is being presented to them by their teachers. I hope that one day we can set aside social politics and just get back to the basics of teaching our students academics.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. Could you give us three specific ways you would support and/or cooperate with the board.

BEAN: Well I think I've mentioned quite a few of them, but I'm going to say them again. I think number one, we must build trust and so if there's any sort of legal dispute between the office, or the department and the board, I think those need to be resolved. And by resolving those first begins to build a trust between the department and the board. And then I think transparency is absolutely important. And so what I would like to do is set up these committees in which we can invite one or two board members, of course we don't want to make it a quorum, so invite one or two board members to sit on those committees to look over the department budget, to look over the charter school plan, to look over alternative education. Before these decisions are made, I truly, truly, honestly believe that before decisions are made, you have to bring people to the table and have a conversation and a dialogue. So those are definitely ways. Other ways certainly is having an open-door policy where staff members can come and chat with you and the superintendent. So the bottom line is a board governs, the superintendent operates, but the two must go hand in hand for checks and balances. When one drifts to do their own thing, and the other drifts to do their own thing, then we have a situation where we are mission drift to your point, I'll use your terminology Dr. Williams, "mission drift." Let's get back everybody back together in one path and one direction.

SHAW: Thank you. Back to Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Great response. My next question has to do with pandemic school lockdowns, mask and then vaccine mandates, and an overextended emergency powers by the governor. What did you learn through the last four years?

BEAN: I learned that we were wrong. We, being the state and the nation. We reacted too quickly and when I say "we" I mean the leaders. We are the leaders of our children and we failed our children during the pandemic because we overreacted and responded. Had we taken the time as educators do, which is to research, test the research, test the conclusion, I think we would have had a better outcome. A lot of learning loss happened and we as a school community, as educators. Poor teachers, they are now spending so much time trying to recover that loss because of something that was very unnecessary. I really think that we learned our lesson as a nation and as a state. I hope we do not make that mistake again. And I hope that the next time, we take a research path, think critically and analytically. It goes back to my point of mission drift. If we teach our kids to think critically and speak criticism into a process, then we

would have been in a different situation. But what happened in that situation is we were told how to think about a certain emergency, and that's what happened.

SHAW: Thank you. Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Dr. Bean, a December 22nd, 2022, Los Angeles Times report showed that LA Unified was promoting equitable grading practices. That same report showed that 73% of LA Unified 11th graders were receiving A's, B's, and C grades when only 19% of those 11th graders were passing state mandated testing benchmarks. What are your thoughts on equitable grading policies as they relate to Orange County?

BEAN: I'm sorry, I don't mean to chuckle, but equitable grading policies. What does that even mean honestly? The bottom line is that grades, achievements, the work that we do, should be merit-based and let me tell you why. Because our college system, university system, for decades has been merit-based, scholarships have been merit-based, and had it not been merit-based, I would have never made it to USC. I made it through to USC with scholarships based on the hard work that was instilled in me by my parents. We should be rewarding that. We should be rewarding students who work extremely hard, especially given the circumstances that some of our students are in foster care, alternative education. And if they work really hard, then they should be rewarded for that. When you have equitable grading, I'm sorry, it's just funny because everybody getting an A? There's no common sense there. So that's my position on that.

SHAW: All right. In the past our board has taken positions either supporting or opposing legislation at the federal and state level. What role do you see for the county superintendent of schools regarding these efforts?

BEAN: Mr. Shaw, could you repeat that question again? I missed the first part of it.

SHAW: So our board sometimes will take a position to support bills in the state legislature or even in Congress -- support or oppose. So, what do you see your role as the county superintendent in regard to those efforts advocating for legislation?

BEAN: Yeah, I advocated for legislation as a superintendent in Los Angeles and that truly helped because Sacramento needs to see educators up there, not just the lobbyists, but they need to see educators up there speaking on behalf of educators. I believe that this role as a superintendent of Orange County. That is going to be pivotal for the superintendent along with the board to go up to Sacramento and be a presence and say here at Orange County we believe this, this, and this, and we do it together. And if there is legislation coming out of Sacramento that actually harms our students and harms or takes away parental rights, all these things, then you can rest assured that I would be the first in line along with this board to prevent that, and to go up to Sacramento and say, "This harms our kids."

SHAW: Trustee Valdes will close this out.

VALDES: Dr. Bean. Teachers are being told to ask students about their feelings as they relate to social and emotional learning. Do you have any concerns that SEL leads to academic content displacement?

BEAN: Yes. Yes, I have a concern with that. First of all, of course our students should feel safe in an educational setting. Let me tell you how they can feel safe. When parents are allowed to stand side by side with an educator and support their child, that child will feel safe. But when an educator takes it upon themselves to think they know what a child needs to feel safe without the guidance of that child's parent, then the child is going to be confused. By the way, SEL, I believe in emotional intelligence. I'm an emotional intelligent leader, meaning I'm very attuned to people's emotions, I'm attuned to my own, and I can respond to that, and that's why I'm a great collaborator. Emotional intelligence developed, or devolved actually is a better word, into this SEL and I think that had it stayed with the -- teaching kids about -- look, yes, these are important, your feelings are important, absolutely. So here are some strategies, along with your parents, here are some strategies to overcome them. But if it leads toward an agenda for a particular person, teacher, organization, then it's harmful for our kids. And what ironically what we've done is actually you've harmed our kids versus keeping them safe.

SHAW: Thank you Dr. Bean and good luck to you in this process. You did a terrific job.

BEAN: Thank you. My pleasure.

SHAW: We're going to use the restroom facilities for a brief moment.

[The Orange County Board of Education takes a break and returns.]

SPARKS: Hello, hello, time to sit down. We're going to resume the meeting guys. We would ask you to sit down please or leave the room.

SHAW: a one-minute break always becomes a 10 minute break. So like we said, up to 10 minutes. You don't have to use the whole 10 minutes. Just up to 10 minutes. Tell us about yourself, why you want the job and then we'll do our questions.

BRULTE: Great. Good evening. Thank you for inviting me here tonight. My name is Kirsten, like your ear, Vital Brulte, my husband likes to say Brulte, it rhymes with cruelty.

So why do I want this job? I want this job because I want to work with you. I want to collaborate with you. I feel like I have a skill set and experience that will help the county at this moment in time. I see this next step as really focusing on the charter schools and the work that's really innovative in this county on charter schools. I see this as creating kind of that voluntary mechanism of sharing practices and really that innovation across this district so they have a chance to collaborate and work together, again, if they so choose, but I want to be able to support those charters. And I think we can take a leadership role not just in the county but ultimately in the state. I think with the reduction in revenues from the state and at each and every district, I have an experience whether it is getting a district out of receivership. It's being a 14-year superintendent that I would be able to help school districts well in advance of them becoming

qualified. I think we have a lot that we're going to see and a lot that will unfold over the next few months with the (inaudible) and the budget and I think that's a really important thing that I want to be of help too. I want to proactively support the superintendents. As I walk into this I have their respect, I have the credibility, I worked side by side with them for almost nine years and so I feel like I can be an asset to this board in that collaboration.

And fifth, as the employer of this district, I would be able to work with you to really set some goals so that we would be able to look at a top to bottom view of the current structure of the organization, what's working, what's not working, make sure that the resources are being used best. Make sure, you know, the fact is I've led a district of over 4500 employees. I've had to make those hard decisions about employees and personnel. And so really making sure that we are setting those resources against a set of goals we create together and making sure that we're doing that effectively. And then we're able to accrue savings and in my career I've been able to accrue savings through restructuring to be able to do those strategic things. So in Capo I was able to restructure ROP and put counseling services in. I think about your last board meeting where you talked about this fund for startup charters and thinking about well, how could we build that fund in this restructuring so that we could support charters in that way? And I know there are legal liability kinds of things that are being vetted and talked about. But whether it's formal or informal collaboration, I would commit to being in this room leading with you collaboratively.

So how do we make this relationship? What does that look like? How do we establish it? I think first, I would set aside time to meet with you individually. I think that's really important. Those kinds of conversations I think are the best way to have that constant communication but then also, to have that transparency. I would make sure that we kept the board informed in a timely way. At the end of the day, for you to be able to make decisions, you need information and that's really critical. And we're responsible for so many things under Ed Code.

Third, you know in CUSD I had seven trustees. I met with them regularly and then we also developed things like a weekly update, two-way communications systems, a "no surprise" rule so we had all the information that we needed to work together. And I think it was in these conversations, and direction and feedback that we were really able to build that working relationship.

Fourth, I think those phone calls, hot emails on pressing issues, and tracking follow-up from the board meetings, are all really important to build that confidence and that relationship. You know, I love coffee and events and walking school sites together so we can see together what's happening for both our district charter schools and our programs in schools.

So the skills and experience and ability that, you know, qualify me. I've been a 14-year district superintendent. 10% of Orange County's enrollment was Capo Unified. I have then been able to supervise all of the areas: budget, HR, LCAPs, AB 1200s, everything that we're responsible for here in the county. I think one of my really important skills is that I can see the big picture. I really can think about them. What are those problems to solve based on goals and student outcomes?

And so, a couple of examples I wanted to share with you. One, by the restructuring of our ROP we're able to reduce the counseling load. So it was a thousand to one, one thousand students to one counselor. We were able to reduce it to 425 to 1. Really important especially after the pandemic and provide that elementary counseling to all our elementary students.

We improved special education dramatically. A 10% decrease in litigation costs, we had a really clear system for staffing, we had a district procedural handbook and then we were able to provide that training. Again, really important.

I think last, I want to highlight is my instructional expertise. We were able to put in place intervention and extension for students so teachers had collaborative time with coaching, and they were able to come together, make those formative assessments, look at the data, and then be able to pull students in small groups, give that really targeted instruction so that kids improved. And I think those are the kinds of things that are so important to districts and in supporting districts.

The background that demonstrates my ability to work with all the Orange County districts. First, I was one of them until January of '23. I met with the county superintendents. When I walk in there will be credibility and respect because we planned and worked together through that pandemic. And we actually got a reward together, that collaboration and that work we did together, you know, shoulder-to-shoulder working through those health guidelines that changed and changed and changed, and master schedules and (inaudible) and athletics.

I have lots of relationships at the federal, state, and local level, partnership with Hoag that really supported families in social emotional learning and anxiety, social media, drugs and alcohol, the kinds of things that they wanted help with with their kids. Amazing part of partnership was Saddleback College where kids had dual enrollment, so they were able to really take college classes in high school, and for some of them, they were able to get a certificate at the end of that. They took classes in Capo, and then at Saddleback for example, a surgical tech, and by the time they finished they were able to get a \$30 an hour job if that's what they so chose to do.

I have lots of leadership experiences with federal, state, and local levels of government. I think there are two that I want to point out that are most important at the state. One is that we did a Raise the Base campaign with PTA that allowed me to meet with superintendents and with representatives from all over California. And we were able to show them that it was better to raise the base for every child rather than just giving the money to concentration students. And so what happened in that process was that we were able to raise the base. And it was incredible getting that kind of feedback statewide, and it didn't happen in legislation, it happened in the budget.

Second one I want to talk about from the state was that you know, we had opened schools early. It was really exciting to be able to provide that for families and students, but the state later decided to come out with their own reopening plans and unfortunately, those reopening plans would have forced us to close because they didn't grandfather in at the time because you have to have a set of criteria, an MOU, Memorandum of Understanding, with your bargaining units. And so, because of my connections and my direct access, we were able to get to the governor's

office, to the pro-tem at that time and then the speaker, and really explain to them that schools shouldn't be closed that are already open. They should be grandfathered in and I'm proud to say that that was enacted and schools that are already open got to stay open. I've hosted mayors' roundtables, mental wellness with our local assemblywoman, training programs with sheriff's department, and been to Washington D.C. to support getting more IDEA funding. And so I've had a lot of those experiences.

So to kind of close up, the question was, "How do my philosophy and leadership style connect with the Orange County Department of Education's values?" I think there's alignment. I get up for 437,000 kids as the Orange County Superintendent of Schools. I hold myself to very high standards, and everyone else. I have lived experience of supporting students and really focusing on students no matter what. I'm a visionary leader, I'm innovative and supportive. It's that coaching model: support first, and then accountability. I think my team would say I'm collaborative and caring, and have integrity, am ethical and professional, and I'm able and willing to make those hard decisions and have those hard conversations based on what is best for students.

So finally, and most importantly, I want to leave with you that I am student centered, students first in everything that I do. And I just do need to mention that I don't have any immediate family working in the county office and so I wouldn't have any financial interests or anything that would have to recuse me. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Good job. So we'll start off with Dr. Sparks.

SPARKS: Okay. Welcome. Thank you for outlining your background and qualifications. So, I have two questions for you and each one I'd ask you to answer in two minutes because we have four minutes total. First one would be, tell me a time that you had a communication failure. How did you respond and/or recover?

BRULTE: Great question. I think one of the situations that comes to mind was at the beginning of the pandemic. Being really clear with folks about -- well trying to be really clear with folks -- about what the rules were, and how this was going to work. And I just felt like we put out information and then we had to pull it back. It wasn't always our fault but I took full responsibility for it because at the end of the day, I'm the superintendent. But we'd put out to people, okay, here are the rules, these are the next steps, and everybody's going to be six feet apart, and then we kept pulling back. And so we kind of got to this point where the recovery was stepping back and saying, "We're not going to put out a communication until we're a little clearer about what we're going to say, and how we're going to say it," rather than kind of that shotgun approach of "Here's more information, here's more information." But I think things were coming fast and furious and we were doing the best we could at the time to get that information to people. And I do think we had recovery by then sending something out weekly, by really being clear about what's going to go in that particular information to families. I think the other thing is part of that was also putting your testing dashboard, and so I felt like that was kind of a mess at first and we finally got that clear because I wanted full transparency to our community about what was happening in the schools, and what the rules were that we had to follow.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you. Second question is, share a time when you gave inaccurate information about something. How did you fix it and what was involved in fixing it?

BRULTE: Oh wow, so I think one thing that comes to mind is that we gave inaccurate information about library books. And so there was a situation in Capo in which there was personnel that had made their own decisions about library books and I had no idea, and that then came to my attention. So we set up a process in recovery to say, okay, these books, what's approved, and what's not approved? We're going to have a red pile, a yellow pile, and a green pile. Green goes back on the shelf. Yellow, question, we need to pull and figure out. Red have got to go. And that was a really surprising, kind of hit me, because we had a whole library system so I thought, okay, the books must be right. Well, they weren't. And so I had reported inaccurately and then we stepped back and said, "Nope, this is how we're going to do it." And right before I left Capo, I left a system right, for us to really review library books and be really clear about what's appropriate and not appropriate.

SPARKS: Thank you very much.

BRULTE: You're welcome.

SHAW: Thank you. Trustee Barke.

BARKE: Hi. Welcome. Thanks for coming in today.

BRULTE: Thank you.

BARKE: One statutory function of the board of education is ruling on interdistrict transfer appeals. What is your position on school choice with regard to interdistrict appeals?

BRULTE: I fully support school choice. I think that's really important. I think that families are children's first teachers. They know what's best for them and I think it's really important for them to be able to choose where their kids, what that looks like and how they go to school, and they know that this program, or that program... You know as a parent, we put our child in a dual immersion program. I can't imagine anything else. That's good for our family. That doesn't mean that it's good for another family. So I do think that, and fully support that parent choice.

BARKE: Great. Thank you. And my second question is, what role do you see for the office of the superintendent of schools regarding the Orange County charter community?

BRULTE: Well, I think this is a huge highlight for this board and of Orange County. So in my opening comments, trying to meet my 10 minutes, I was going a little faster than I wanted to. But I think it's important. We did this in Oakland where we pulled the charter community -- again, it's voluntary -- but pulled the charter community together to really learn from those innovative practices, to understand how they're meeting the needs of kids in very different ways. And so I'd want to highlight that and work together in order to continue to support that innovation. In Alameda I was able to take a district school and turn it into a charter and they're thriving today. It was under No Child Left Behind and they were in program improvement. And

so I just think there's so much for us to learn from that community and we could really not just lead the county, but lead the state, and really highlighting those practices and what's working for children.

BARKE: Great. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Hello. Good afternoon. Great responses so far. My questions have to do with what is the primary purpose of education, and how do we correct the overt education drift that we've seen for the last couple decades?

BRULTE: So, at the end of the day, it is back to the basics. We need to make sure that kids understand mathematics and English, can write, can read at grade level, that they're able to not be told what to think, but they're taught critical thinking skills. And it always concerns me when we are telling kids messages that are not appropriate for school. Again, as I said, parents are their children's first teachers and we want to make sure that those values are coming from their parents and their families and guardians. And so I think the purpose absolutely is to prepare them for college career, the workplace, military, those certificate programs that I was talking about earlier, what they and their family want for them. And we know every child is different, but those basic academic tenants I think is what's important in education. And so how do we make sure that doesn't happen? Well, I think it's really important that, you know, in my career it was always training and supporting administrators as the districts got bigger. It was people that supported those administrators so that we had a coherent curriculum across the board and that that's what we taught to children.

SHAW: Thank you. We're trying to ask the same questions to all the applicants so I know you may have addressed some of these things. We're going to ask the same questions anyway so if you could tell me three specific ways you would support and/or cooperate with the board as the superintendent.

BRULTE: Oh sure. So I'm gonna go back to my fast talking. It gives me a minute to be able to share a little more with you all. Really, first and foremost, meeting with you and having those conversations. I do think we have to have goals that we co-create to say this what we're doing, then how do the resources support that? So I do think it's those one-on-one conversations. It's conversations, deep conversations in this boardroom. It is visiting the schools together. It's a powerful experience, a superintendent and a trustee walking together, to see what's going on and continue to see how that policy translates. I think it's as I said earlier, its copies and board updates, and it's keeping you informed, and then providing the reports and information you need to be able to make those decisions you have to make. It's important to me that this is a collaborative relationship, that we're in this together, and that we're working together, whatever that takes.

SHAW: Thank you. Back to Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: My question has to do with a topic that you've already touched upon but I'm going to allow you to elaborate more. The topic is pandemic school lockdowns, mask and vaccine mandates, and an unconstitutional hold on emergency powers by the governor. Can you elaborate on what you learned and what you would do differently?

BRULTE: Yeah, actually my dissertation that I am currently but surely finishing, is about leading through the pandemic and it's a series of vignettes on what really happened during the pandemic, the skills and actions superintendents took. And so I didn't agree with the mandates. I was required by law to implement the mandates. I was really clear in communicating with people about what we were doing and how we were doing it. I felt it was a blessing when, finally, masks were an option for children. And we did a lot of work to build that culture in the classroom so that no one was, you know, everyone was supported for the choice they made, whether they wore the mask or they didn't wear the mask. You know, it was particularly frustrating for me as a superintendent. I'll never forget with Dr. Fauci got on and it was like, they said, they went through the whole history. It was the first time we heard that history. It was the very first time, but they went through the whole history of the pandemic, what happened, and then they said, "And we'll tell you in two weeks whether we're going to take the masks off or not," and that moment was like (mind blown gesture) hardest moment as a superintendent. There were a lot of hard moments, but that was a hard moment. And then I think what happened was people were done. They wanted an answer and so did I, so I think we had to do what we had to do and I was very grateful when we got that option to change.

SHAW: Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: A December 22, 2022, Los Angeles Times report showed that LA Unified was promoting equitable grading practices. That same report showed that 73% of LA Unified 11th graders were receiving A's, B's, and C grades when only 19% of those 11th graders were passing state mandated testing benchmarks. What are your thoughts on equitable grading practices as they relate to Orange County?

BRULTE: Well, I think it's important that we are grading children to a standard, right. Because by the time they graduate, one of the things we worked on in Capistrano was the profile of a graduate, right. What are we expecting kids to know and be able to do when they walk across that stage, and then what does that mean for 11th grade, 10th grade, 9th grade, all the way down to kindergarten? The alignment with after school programs and everywhere else. There has to be that standard that is tested once a year, and in other ways throughout the year by teachers that kids meet that standard. It is our responsibility to take kids where they are and bring them to that standard. So when I talked earlier about instructional expertise, teachers coming together to be able to create formative assessments, look at data, real time data, be able to then group kids and make those mitigations. It's our responsibility to get kids there wherever they are, but not to lower any standards for kids. We want them to be able to be ready and able to college, career, whatever it is that they choose, community college certificate programs. I think its really important that grading practices support that standard.

SHAW: So I'll go. In the past this board has taken positions either supporting or opposing legislation at the federal and state level. What do you see as the role of the county superintendent of schools regarding those efforts?

BRULTE: So I would see that, as an elected official, different than a superintendent in a district, that I would be taking stands on different legislation depending on what's happening in the education sphere. I do think there's a current -- I'm going to get the number maybe wrong -- that would want to add two more seats to this board. I think it's really important that when something is not broken, you don't try to fix it.

SHAW: Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Teachers are being told to ask students about their feelings as they relate to social and emotional learning. Do you have any concerns that SEL has led to academic content displacement?

BRULTE: You know, I would hope not. Quite frankly, it's why we built in counseling services in Capistrano. There is a place where a counselor with a PPS credential, you know, in partnership with a family and that family knowing what's happening, and that family being a part of that for those kinds of services and again, a lot of it was to make sure that we kept kids on track so that they could make those postgraduation choices. So I would hope not. I would hope that a professional, someone who's credentialed, would be able to have a conversation again, first with that family, and then ultimately with that student if the student needs help. One of the terrible things -- one of many terrible things that came out of the pandemic -- was that we have kids who are more anxious, right. The fact that we kept them out of school. Not in Capo. We got them back but we kept them out of school, we put masks on them, they had to be six feet away. I mean, you all know, it definitely was harmful to children and so coming out of that I think has been a really incredible but important thing.

SHAW: Thank you so much. You did a terrific job so good luck to you and all right.

BRULTE: Thank you so much. It's a privilege to have been here. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Wonderful. Okay. Welcome. Next victim, no (laughter.) So like we said, you don't have to take the full 10 minutes, but up to 10 minutes about yourself, why you want to be the superintendent, what your vision is, and then we're going to ask you some questions, so 10 minutes.

MARTINEZ-POULIN: All right. Thank you so much. I'd like to start by saying good afternoon, Orange County Board of Education. Thank you for this opportunity to share a little bit more about myself with you. It is an honor to apply for the position of Orange County Superintendent of Schools because I value the hard work and expertise it takes to implement the vision, the mission, and the high standards of Orange County Department of Ed. I'd like to express my gratitude for the teachers, the classified staff, the administrators that do the great work with our students in the community, their tireless efforts and commitment to our youth. I appreciate the exciting endeavor it would be to be part of the next phase of Orange County

Department of Ed and help meet the challenges facing students and schools in our community. The foundation of the mission statement aligns with my philosophy of approaching goals and growth opportunities with integrity.

I learned about responsibility from my mother who was a champion of education. My mother instilled in me the values of public service, giving back, hard work, integrity, and responsibility. And I know Orange County children and their families are counting on us to do this work in partnership with them. Like some of your students, I was an English language learner. My mom was a single parent and were new to California when I enrolled in school in kindergarten. I understand the value of education in changing trajectory. It is a competitive world and we need to prepare all students to achieve their highest potential.

Orange County students deserve a world-class education which values compassion and accountability. Creating a learning environment with engaged families, community members and staff strengthens connection and shared responsibility.

I'm interested in the superintendent of schools' position because I see this challenge as a moral imperative and a calling. My leadership style is grounded in the practice of active listening and relationship building which are foundational in my experience to thriving, learning communities. To support the transition of the new superintendent, the need to reset clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, expectations, and norms for mutual accountability, would be my starting point with the board. I would establish a communication system that includes the following: prioritizing open and transparent communication; regularly scheduling one-on-one board member appointments; provide updates on key initiatives in a timely manner; solicit feedback on proposed policies and structures of communication; support decision-making options with clear analysis of issues and options; schedule, plan and hold a retreat with the board to review and set priorities, board protocols, and effective meeting procedures. Establishing a regular communication system with the board that meets the needs of board members, individually and collectively, to nurture an effective working relationship, will help us to better focus on student success.

My experience in education spans 30 years. I started as a classroom instructional aide to pay for college. I was a teacher at the elementary, high school, principal, assistant supe, superintendent and deputy superintendent. The skills I learned in the classroom as a teacher and the abilities I gained in superintendent positions, allowed me most recently to carry out the direction of the Culver City Unified School District board with the focus on the diverse needs of students. Additionally, while serving as interim superintendent with Culver City Unified, I was able to unite district families, community, and elected leaders to support an education facilities bond which passed in March. Like many districts, they were facing the turbulence of an abrupt leadership transition and I was able to successfully navigate the high-pressure environment by using strategies to bring focus and nurture goodwill in the relationships. By collaborating with community, staff and parents, we came up with solutions that gave them peace of mind and helped them support the bond. I committed to being a visible superintendent at the school sites, visiting district departments and collaborating with department staff and union leaders for creative problem solving of issues that had been lingering. I became a trusted district representative in the schools and community.

As Deputy Superintendent with the Los Angeles Office of Education, I provided oversight in many key areas of the county office. With a strong knowledge of fiscal matters, I also played a critical role in securing a budget aligned to the LACOE Strategic Plan. We saw the impact of the pandemic on mental health and set out to champion individual and collective care and well-being. To that end, I was instrumental in allocating funding for a Chief of Well-Being position that helped us to operationalize a holistic vision addressing student engagement and absenteeism and focusing on the well-being of staff. Moreover, with a dedicated team of colleagues, I coordinated services and support for the 80 school districts and 13 community colleges serving the nearly 1.7 (inaudible) students in Los Angeles County. I have demonstrated the skills to carry out the function of a county superintendent and have shown the ability to work well with staff and communities from various organizations and districts to help students succeed. Having been an assistant superintendent and principal in Orange County, I collaborated with OCDE for professional development to come up with strategies to improve our outcomes for students and I developed great relationships with school families, with PTA. It was one of the highlights of my career, serving as a principal.

Another example, in addition to serving as an assistant superintendent, I enjoyed my job as a principal, here in Orange County. I had the privilege of working with PTA. The families came together to support the schools, meet our needs, and make sure that the kids had what they needed in order to move forward. And that partnership developed into a sustained partnership and a friendship to this day. I have supported Orange County district administrators through a mentorship program with the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators and while it's not specifically with Orange County, during my time with Culver City, I also was able to start a student advisory council so that students could work directly with me and share what they were most proud of, what they were most concerned about, and how we could celebrate achievement. In my experience, I have collaborated with Orange County groups and individual leaders who are committed to quality public education, and I am a better leader as a result.

I would like to share a few examples of my experience with different levels of government. At the state level, as LACOE Deputy Superintendent, I served as liaison with the California Department of Education regarding policies and guidance to schools. At LACOE we drafted toolkits and scheduled meetings for regional support to school districts. While at Culver City Unified School District, I helped initiate the introduction and sponsorship of state legislation authored by our Senate Representative, Senator Smallwood-Cuevas. I also testified as a primary witness in support of the bill during a legislative hearing in Sacramento.

My experience with local levels of government include collaborating with the Culver City Council and community members to support a direly needed \$358 million facilities bond measure which the community successfully passed, again in March. To me it's important to be intentional in our advocacy at the state and local levels, and to build influence and sustained engagement to help bring positive change.

In regard to question number six about family members working for OCDE, I do not have any family members that work for the Orange County Department of Ed.

In closing, I am seeking the position because I have the experience and integrity necessary to fulfill the responsibilities to the board and to the Orange County community. As your superintendent, I will work closely with the Orange County Board of Education, district superintendents, students, and families to ensure that our educational system meets the diverse needs of the community. My commitment to fostering partnerships and open communication to address challenges and create a supportive learning environment for all students, is unwavering. Together we can strive for excellence and equity in education, empowering every student to reach their full potential. Thank you for this opportunity to interview.

SHAW: Thank you. So, Dr. Sparks is going to lead us off.

SPARKS: Thank you for, you know, telling us all about your background and putting it all into context for us. I appreciate that. All right. I have two questions and each one you'll have two minutes to answer. The first one is, tell me a time you had a communication failure. How did you respond and/or recover?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: Allow me to say that I was not fully prepared for the pandemic. When we sent kids home March 13th of 2020, it was not the most elegant dismissal and I remember at the time saying to families, I don't know if you recall. We were saying, "We're going to go home for 10 days." And then it was, how do we contact them again so that we can say, "Actually it's going to be longer," and how do we explain? And the most important thing that I could do was to hold townhall meetings with staff, with parents, and to be honest, to say, "This is what we know now and I'm sharing what we know now based on this, based on direction from the governor, based on direction from the Department of Public Health. This is what the board has asked us to do and we're moving forward with it." It was difficult. It was humbling, because up until then we thought we had our communication plan ready to go. It matched our strategic plan, and everything was wonderful and we had mapped out the next three years -- did not count on the pandemic at all.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you. The next question would be, share a time when you gave inaccurate information about something and how did you fix it, and what was involved in fixing it?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: If I could go back to the pandemic example, and I apologize for bringing that over and over, but it was one of the most difficult times for us in education. I think as we sent students and staff to work from home, again, it was a difficult time. It was humbling and it was important for us to correct it and to be honest and humble about it. And so I would say, "You have to do this today," and then they would change the number of days for quarantine and I would say, "Now it's changed and effective the next 10 days, it's going to be something different." And so I think it made things very clear for me in a sense that schools, school districts, are very interconnected to other agencies and we are very interconnected to community, and if we can work together so that we can build a community that is safe, that is open, and is realistic about what we were hearing, then that to me was about correcting it. Because again, it was a time when we knew so little, when things were changing so quickly, and it really was about fostering a safe environment so that people could learn but it was a very difficult time.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Trustee Barke.

BARKE: Welcome. I have a couple questions for you again, and mine are on mostly school choice. One statutory function of the Board of Education is ruling on interdistrict transfer appeals. What is your position on these appeals regarding school choice?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: I think the role of the department of education is to help provide the board with information that will assist them in their deliberations, to make sure that we have reports, that we have all the necessary information that will facilitate that conversation for board members. I think it's important for us to work with schools, with charters, to work with districts to make sure that we are holding everyone accountable and that there are quality programs that are meeting the needs of our students and supporting our families. And so I would see my role as one to make sure that staff is providing the board with that timely information, those reports, the analysis, and that we make ourselves available should we have follow-up questions and that we can assist you in making an informed decision that supports the needs of the students and addresses the concerns in the community.

BARKE: All right. Thank you. And my second question is, what role do you see for the office of the superintendent of schools regarding the Orange County charter community?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: I see the role of the superintendent to be connected to charters just like we're connected to all the 600 schools in the county, the 28 districts, to make sure that there is a relationship. And one of the things that I learned during the pandemic was that we have to address the needs of all of our kids because when they're on the playground, they don't say, "Hey, I go to this church so I'm not going to get on the slide with you." They're playing together. They're hanging out. And so we need to address and create a mindset that says we meet the needs of all of our children, we hold everyone accountable, we invite everyone to a meeting, we set up communication systems, include everyone. Because we want to make sure that wherever our kids go, they are going to the best place that will help them and support them, and I would love to be a part of that conversation.

BARKE: Great. Thank you so much.

SHAW: Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: My question has to do with the primary purpose of education and if you believe if there is an overt education drift, and how to handle that?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: I'm sorry, could you repeat that second part?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, so what is the primary purpose of education, and if there is overt education drift, how do we handle that? What would you do?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: What would I do? I think the primary purpose of education is to help provide students with the ability to think creatively, to feel confident, to innovate, and to be able to express themselves in different modalities. I think that education is about bringing different philosophies, different ideas, different content areas to students and help them build up their understanding of the world around them. And I think that's what education does, that we help them so that they can begin to see the world, they can begin to articulate their thoughts, they can go out there and really be, be innovative in the world. And as far as drift, I think it's important for us to keep tabs on what's happening, what's interesting to students, and how we can help them so that they stay engaged, connected, and are a part of the instructional day on a day-to-day basis. But I would say that again, it's about making sure that we have critical thinkers that are also creative and compassionate.

SHAW: Thank you. So my question would be, can you give us three ways you would support and/or cooperate with the board as the superintendent?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: If I could go back to my examples of effective communication. I would start by making sure that the board is full informed with timely information, that you are invited to visit sites, that you have information and resources available to you and I would provide Friday memo so that you have that information in one place, and make sure that my staff is available to you so should you have follow-up, that you would also have that follow-up made available to you. Then create again, a loop, so that if one board member reaches out to a staff member, we could take that information and share it with the rest of the board so that there is that common knowledge across the body. And again, it will help inform your deliberations when you come together to your board meetings, and will help you with your policy making, with your strategic planning, and meeting the needs of the community.

SHAW: Thank you. Back to Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So I'm going to give you another opportunity to get back to the pandemic question. That seemed to be something that, as you said, you weren't ready for. I don't think anyone was ready for that. But we've had the John Hopkins study that did an analysis review as a working paper, then we had the Cochrane Library, which is a very high-quality source of healthcare information. Basically, they came down with the assumption that between those schools or states that locked down, and did not lock down, there was not a whole lot of difference except for the economic difference. Knowing this information now, how would you react for the potential next pandemic?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: Let us all add that chapter to our safe plans, right. I think what was important, what I learned from the pandemic, was that we didn't know. We just did not know. The novel coronavirus was so new that we did not know the hazard, the potential hazard and impact it could have on children and on staff. And because we did not know, I understand that we had to err on the side of caution. I will tell you it was the most difficult decision in my professional career to send students and staff home to teach and learn from their homes because it exasperated what we already knew, and that is that there are some issues that exist within our families and society that just make it harder and more challenging.

We saw the disparity in access to healthcare, we saw the disparity in access to the internet, we saw the disparity in access to having resources to learn and grow. In my district I saw extreme examples. I saw one family that said, "Dr. Poulin, don't look so sad. It's fine. We now get to go to Temecula as a family more often. It's okay. Look at the new room we created in our grandma's house," and when I saw it, it was the most amazing thing. They had replicated the classroom in the spare bedroom. There was a little library, there was a desk, there was a whiteboard. It was amazing. But then I saw other students who did not have the same space to learn. They were sitting under tables because they lacked the space. There were students that we lost. We lost touch and did not see them for months. And one thing we know about education is that we serve as mandated reporters and when we weren't there to keep eyes on them, their health was in peril.

SHAW: Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Good evening, Dr. Martinez. A December 22, 2022, Los Angeles Times report showed that LA Unified was promoting equitable grading practices. That same report showed that 73% of LA Unified 11th graders were receiving A's, B's, and C grades when only 19% of those 11th graders were passing state mandated testing benchmarks. What are your thoughts on equitable grading practices as they relate to Orange County?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: I am committed to the idea that Orange County students and families deserve the best, the best quality education that meets the needs of the students, that helps them with support, and that grades show and reflect attainment, that they reflect proficiency and how we help our students exceed proficiency, that they reflect how students are growing and making strides to grow. And for me, it's important to support our educators, to support our schools in establishing those grading scales at the school sites. But it's important that again, we're in agreement that it's about reflecting attainment and making sure that students are demonstrating growth and proficiency. If I could add, at the bare minimum, they should be able to exceed but at the bare minimum, there should be that proficiency level.

SHAW: Thank you. While you may have addressed some of these issues, we're trying to ask all the applicants the same exact question so it may seem repetitive. My question here, in the past our board has taken positions on legislation at both the state and federal level involving education. What do you see as your role as the superintendent regarding efforts at advocacy, in legislation at both the state and federal level?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: I believe it's important to be intentional, that we are advocating for support that will transform education so that it becomes a living, accessible attainment for all of our students and our families. And I believe there is space for a time when the board will support and endorse a Senate bill, an Assembly bill, and perhaps the superintendent does not. I, however, believe that it's important that it's done with respect and that we move forward in a way that there is a systematic norm as to how to do that. I believe that in education we're allowed to disagree as long as we disagree that we can move forward and we will continue to keep our focus on children and bolstering community achievement.

SHAW: Okay. Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Teachers are being told to ask students about their feelings as they relate to social and emotional learning. Do you have any concerns that SEL has led to academic content displacement?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: I don't think there's displacement. I think there is a space to have both. In education we talk about being able to meet the needs of our students, our social emotional and also their academic development. So we want to meet their Maslow. We want them to have the nurturing portion of it and the blooms, that they're thinking, and thinking critically and moving forward in their thought process. So I would say, it's "Masbloom." I apologize. It's really a meshing and one of the things that we've been able to do since the pandemic, and that is to say, let's find a way to bring the two together so that we are meeting the needs of our students, their social emotional needs and that they are ready to learn and grow but also have the support that they need, should they need it.

SHAW: Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to go through this process and we want to, you know, wish you the best. You did a terrific job so we'll see you next time, okay?

MARTINEZ-POULIN: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you, Maria. Well, here's a familiar face. Like we said, you don't have to take the full 10 minutes but you can use the full 10 minutes, up to 10 minutes, why you want to have the job of Superintendent, what your plans would be and why you're the best candidate for the job. So, go ahead.

MIRAMONTES: Thank you. Good evening esteemed board members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

In the clearest and most concise terms I'm laser focused on moving things forward ensuring every learner has the resources and opportunities to thrive. As your superintendent, I would dedicate every waking moment, making this vision a reality for Orange County. Together we must be driven by nothing less than improving outcomes for all learners. We know the pandemic caused setbacks but we owe it to our students and families to ensure that's not an excuse for where we need to be. It's time for an all-hands-on deck approach to enhance academic performance and college readiness. I am committed to ensuring all students, from the highest achievers to those experiencing homelessness or foster care, have the support they need to succeed. Promoting career education is crucial so students gain valuable skills and training while still in school.

Additionally, mental health is a necessary prerequisite to learning and we must prioritize the well-being of our students, happy and healthy students. As a county office we must promote highly effective professional development, provide top-notch technical assistance, and offer opportunities that reflect all Orange County has to offer. OCDE must be seen as a beacon of support for our districts by demonstrating the highest levels of customer service. Collaboration at all levels is key to achieving these goals. By working with this board, teachers, administrators, parents, community partners, and business leaders, we can build a support system that propels

our students toward success. Together, we can establish Orange County as a model of educational excellence for other counties to emulate.

I believe establishing, maintaining an effective working relationship with the Orange County Board of Education critical for the collective success. Here's how I would approach it: First, I would propose an initial workshop or meeting with the board or its executive committee to map out our shared, measurable goals. This collaborative session would help align our vision and priorities ensuring that we are all working toward common objectives. To maintain momentum, I would schedule regular sessions throughout the year to review progress on shared goals and to discuss any new developments or challenges. These sessions will allow us to collaborate on all areas where the board and superintendent have shared responsibilities such as policy development and budget planning.

In addition, I would ensure that our updates during board meetings are meaningful and purposeful, covering significant developments to OCDE, local schools, and districts to ensure the board is well informed and engaged in our work. I would also engage the board's interest in a weekly memo with updates and developments to keep trustees updated between meetings. This communication would share important information about our initiatives, progress on our goals, and any issues that may require the board's attention. I know that we are all united in the desire to advance student achievement - there is no question by that. By establishing an upfront foundation of shared goals, regular collaboration, and consistent communication, we can build a strong working relationship ultimately benefiting the schools and students that we serve.

For the past 33 years of my life I have served students and their families as if they were my own. Along the way I've been recognized in each capacity that I served, receiving accolades such as Teach of the Year, Principal of the Year, District Administrator of the Year, and Superintendent of the Year. These accolades highlight my skills and abilities to lead, communicate, collaborate, and most importantly, my commitment to developing and valuing the leadership capacity of both individuals and teams within the organization.

My experience includes working with two county offices in different roles and serving as an assistant superintendent and superintendent in this county. This diverse background provides me the qualifications needed for this position. Working with cabinet this past year, alongside them, and understanding their roles and responsibilities of how we serve districts, has been powerful. Superintendents have acknowledged OCDE for its support, especially in times of crisis.

My efforts and actions in building trusting relationships with families and working closely with county agencies, community partners, business leaders, higher education partners, and the OC superintendents and assistant superintendents, have laid a strong foundation and for stability and strength in the region. This foundation contributes directly to the improved outcomes and performance by ensuring that students and families receive the consistent support and resources they need to thrive.

As a deputy superintendent, I collated the Superintendent Advisory Committee, working closely with the district leaders to share best practices and develop strategies that benefit all of Orange County students. Our efforts have strengthened educational frameworks across the county, and

we're just getting things started. I've also partnered with higher education institutions to create pathways for students, facilitating smooth transitions from K-12 to higher education. These partnerships have led to dual enrollment programs, college readiness workshops, and collaborative research initiatives. Under my leadership we have expanded apprenticeships and internships across the county and are launching career connected school certifications next year to prepare students for the modern economy. This work is advancing as we speak. I would be remiss if not mentioning my participation on advisory boards, such as the Orange County Business Council and the CEO Leadership Alliance of Orange County, aimed at aligning educational outcomes with workforce needs.

Additionally, my involvement with the juvenile justice education commission and the Orange County juvenile justice stakeholder group addresses the unique needs of at-risk youth, providing them with necessary support and services.

My background, including my Doctorate in K-12 Educational Leadership from USC has provided a solid foundation in research-based strategies and best practices. However, it is my extensive leadership experience that has taught me to approach every challenge with a comprehensive and collaborative mindset.

In my current role as a deputy superintendent with responsibilities delegated by Dr. Mijares and as a former superintendent in the Buena Park School District, I have extensive experience working collaboratively with federal, state, and local levels of government. Maintaining ongoing connections with representatives and their staff is crucial for prioritizing the interest of Orange County students and their families. Recently I was part of a coalition of California County Superintendents that met with Congress to advocate for Orange County and state districts on federal legislation. During this trip I met with five local representatives from both sides of the House, including Congresswoman Young Kim, who was Buena Park's former representative.

In March OCDE and the district superintendents hosted the 2nd Annual Legislative Day with state representatives to discuss issues impacting local schools, and to keep OC interest at the forefront. This was followed up by a visit to the state Capitol to ensure our voices were being heard.

In my current role, my team and I built strong productive relationships with county leaders from probation, Social Services, First 5 California, and others. Our coordinated efforts on prevention and early intervention support children and their families across the county ensuring they do not fall behind academically.

My reputation as a consensus builder is founded on my ability to work with all leaders to do what's right for students. It's about uniting behind student outcomes ensuring that every decision we make is focused on their success.

My philosophy and leadership style align closely with OCDE's vision, mission and values, which is why I wanted to come here. The commitment to ensuring that Orange County students lead the nation in college and career readiness and success drives our focus on pursuing innovation and collaboration. OCDE's mission is to equip all students with competencies needed to thrive

in the 21st century, and that resonates with me deeply. In my role I've led initiatives to enhance college and career readiness ensuring equitable access and resources, and opportunities for every student regardless of their background. The initiative we've launched in career education directly prepares students to be competitive for the competitive, high demand careers, aligning with the vision of leading the nation in college and career readiness and success.

I believe in prioritizing respect, responsibility and integrity, and professional ethics in everything we do. We have to live those traits and demand them of one another. If I'm fortunate enough to be your next county superintendent, I'm committed to continue to work with you, leveraging partnerships to local and state, federal leaders to further OC's mission and vision and making our department a beacon of educational excellence and innovation.

And for the record, I have no immediate family members who are employees of OCDE, and no financial interest that prohibit me from holding the office of the county superintendent.

SHAW: Just a handsome guy in the mirror? Is that the only... All right. We're going to start off with Dr. Sparks.

SPARKS: Okay. Well, thank you for outlining and highlighting your extensive career. I appreciate you putting context behind your resumé and everything. So I'm going to ask two questions and I'll give you two minutes for each question. First one, tell me a time you had a communication failure. How did you respond and/or recover?

MIRAMONTES: Well, recently we've undergone some communication failures here in ACCESS. And as I told the division, I could say for sure, there was some lapse in the communication that flowed through from what the vision is of ACCESS. You know, I rely on my assistant superintendents and my directors to share that responsibility as I oversee both divisions, the educational services side and the educational program side. The message that filtered down on the educational program side, specifically ACCESS, I think CONNECTIONS heard it loud and clear. We need to bring things up to the 21st century with protocols and practices. The message wasn't being very clear and I'm trying to rectify that with a 30, 60, 90-day plan ensuring that everybody understands the vision and mission of how we support students, teachers, and family members in our ACCESS program.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you. My second question is, share a time when you gave inaccurate information about something. How did you fix it and what was involved in fixing it?

MIRAMONTES: Inaccurate information about something. I can't think of anything where I gave inaccurate information. I can say that, gosh, I have to go way back to even my principal days, when you hear things that come from different angles. That's why I think it's important to have that cascading communication coming down, everybody saying the same thing at the same time, the same way, very detailed about how we communicate that. But I think when I was a principal, one of the first things I did, as in early in my career, is something was shared with me but there was no timeline on when to share it, and my staff found out by other staff members from other school sites. So, that was a failure of communication. Not that it was inaccurate, it wasn't timely at the same time as everybody else.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Trustee Barke.

BARKE: One moment please. All right. I don't think my questions will surprise you. Welcome. Our statutory function of the board of education is ruling on interdistrict transfer appeals. What is your position on school choice regarding those?

MIRAMONTES: You know, in North County we have a gentleman's agreement and when Joanne Culverhouse was the superintendent, she was also part of the gentleman's agreement, but we have students that flowed from Fullerton School District to Buena Park School District all the time. Centralia and Buena Park had the same thing. For every five kids that we sent out, five kids came back. So I believe in parent choice. I had my own children not attend their neighborhood schools. As a matter of fact, my own children attended schools that were different than their older brothers and sisters. So definitely believe in parent choice. My sister-in-law had homeschooled her children through our CHEP program, our CHEP program way back in the day with Placentia-Yorba Linda, and then ended up at the Biola Torrey Academy program that they had there when it was -- they were running that as well. I have a sister that currently teaches in a charter school, online charter school, and her children attend the charter school as well and it's led by a faith-based organization. Her kids also attend Saddleback Community Academy as well as an additional piece. So parent choices is there. In Buena Park, as a superintendent I also created academies, or magnets, across the district where students can flow back and forth. It didn't really matter where you lived in the neighborhood, it's what the parents really wanted for their students.

BARKE: Excellent answer. Next question is, what role do you see for the office of the superintendent of schools regarding the Orange County charter community?

MIRAMONTES: You know, I've watched this for a while, even prior to me being a superintendent, as an assistant superintendent in Buena Park, and also in LA County where charters were a little more prevalent back in gosh, 2015. So I actually read some of the charter school applications that came through from an HR perspective. For three years I had to read some of those things to provide guidance to some of the charter schools. Charter schools are here to stay. It's how do we extend that olive branch? When I came in as the deputy superintendent, that was one of the first things I wanted to do. I wanted to go out and visit charter schools. So I've gone out to multiple charter schools: Vista Academy, Vista Global, Samueli, which I was super impressed with Samueli Academy. It was, wow, I mean that was an incredible school and the last one was the -- gosh, can't think of the third one. But I've been out to three -- oh, the one in San Juan Capistrano, OCASA -- impressed with that school as well.

So, they're here and I think we need to work with them. I've been part of the facilities group that we're meeting with. I think Trustee Valdes and Trustee Dr. Williams had put together this facility and I've been meeting with the charter schools leaders on what their needs are, and I've been communicating with our superintendents about what their responsibilities are for space. And as I've explained, some of the charter schools with more and more programs that have added you know, specifically in the kinders. I gave them an example, Buena Park. You know, we

needed six additional classrooms. Even though we were in declining enrollment we needed six additional classrooms because we had a TK preschool and 20-1 for our kindergarten classroom. So I think, yeah, having that positive working relationship, I know that's high priority for the board. Charter schools and parent choice. I can support that and work with that as well.

BARKE: Thank you. Appreciate it.

SHAW: Okay. Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Thank you again. With all the competing interest in curriculum and all the ideologies and policies that are out there, what is your definition, the primary purpose of education? And do you believe that mission drift has occurred and how would you correct that?

MIRAMONTES: I'm sorry, Dr. Williams, the second part was?

WILLIAMS: If you believe that mission drift has occurred, how would you correct that?

MIRAMONTES: The primary role of education is to help educate students, and we can go back to the three R's: reading, writing and arithmetic. But it goes a little bit deeper than that. It's really, you know, making sure kids know how to critically think on their own, problem solve on their own, and with the changing environment in our schools, meaning when I went to school, it was a little bit easier. I think today it's a little bit harder for kids because of the social media aspect, the technology that's been driven but technology is a tool. I think we also have to blend in technology alongside that because that's where the careers are going nowadays. If the mission has scaled away from that, there's a way to pull it all back. As a superintendent, there's this loose and close thing. We kept the first three hours, first three and a half hours, really tight on what we taught. So that first three hours of the day was really tight on what we taught and we made sure that we knew what our teachers were actually teaching, but we worked with them. We designed curriculum units. Parents had input to them as well in Buena Park. We were a dedicated school, reading and writing workshop, CGI. Again, all problem solving and critical thinking and we kept to it. When a new person came onboard, we stuck to it but it was Special Ed, it was Gen Ed, it was everybody had the same focus moving forward.

SHAW: Thank you. So, we're asking each applicant the same questions so I know you've kind of addressed some of these things so forgive me if it seems a little repetitive, but in the interest of uniform questions, could you tell us three ways you could support and/or cooperate with the board as the county superintendent?

MIRAMONTES: I think first and foremost, get on the same page, understand a little bit more how we might work together to model for other districts and other counties. How well when a collective governance team works together you can get a lot more done. Super proud of the work we did in Buena Park and we had new trustees that came onboard. We worked with CSBA, we had a consultant come out that worked with... I wasn't part of CSBA but had been a board member that helped work with our board on the responsibilities and roles. So I think one is working collaboratively, communicating and having that ongoing communication. I need to know what your communication styles are. I had a relationship where I was on the phone with

our board members on a daily basis. It might have been different for one member, it might have been on the phone, for another it was, "Let's have a cup of coffee. Let's talk about where we are and where we want to go."

And then third, having measurable goals. If it really is about parent choice and charters, what does this board expect from that so that I can communicate that also with the districts that we work with.

SHAW: Perfect. Back to Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: This question has to do with the pandemic lockdowns in the last four years, mask and then vaccine mandates, and an extended unconstitutional exercise of emergency powers by the governor. There has been some hallmark studies by John Hopkins and the Cochrane Library which is considered a source of high-quality information on healthcare which showed that red and blue states really, there was not much change except that the kids lost education. What would you do differently if we were to have the same situation occur in the next year or two?

MIRAMONTES: I think it would be a lot different. First of all, I love John Hopkins University. We implemented Success for All from that program there. Great research from that. But as far as what I would do differently, definitely work with this board, definitely work with our superintendents, because it really comes down to local control. Every community is different and as you experience this frontline, when you're on the frontlines as a superintendent, and everybody's doing things a little bit different. I think we would work with the school board, listen to our parents, because there are parents that really want to come back. And in Buena Park, when we could come back, we came back. So it would be a little bit of listening to our parents, it would be a little bit of waiting a little bit, maybe not jumping and waiting eight weeks to reopen, but it's hard to tell with a pandemic. Definitely not going to the extreme that we went to the last time. We didn't know last what it was, but I think we've learned a lot from this and I think we would use our best judgment and allow local districts to be able to do that. And same thing goes for our county students as well.

SHAW: Thank you. Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Good evening Dr. Miramontes. A December 22, 2022, Los Angeles Times report showed that LA Unified was promoting equitable grading practices. That same report showed that 73% of LA Unified 11th graders were receiving A's, B's, and C grades, when only 19% of those 11th graders were passing state mandated testing benchmarks. What are your thoughts on equitable grading policies as they relate to Orange County?

MIRAMONTES: Well first of all, grade inflation is not good for kids. You're setting them up for failure first and foremost. I do believe in equitable grading practices across schools and we've done that in districts. We've calibrated with rubrics, writing rubrics. We've calibrated with benchmark reading scores, but as far as inflating grades and providing that, you're setting the kids up, and the families up, and the teachers of the following year up, for failure. When I was a principal, I go back to my first days as a principal. We had a teacher that gave every student a four on a one through four scale. We had four teachers in the grade level. On of them

gave every single one of the students a four, and everybody else had, what kids really earned. When I sat down with that teacher, and this teacher was super proud of advocating for the English learner, the minority student. It was in a (inaudible) school at the time, advocated profusely about equity but when we sat down, we looked at the grades and we compared them to his lowest kids to the highest kids, there was a big discrepancy. I called him out on it. That teacher ended up resigning the next day. I mean it was that drastic, the end of year, but it was that drastic. I don't believe in inflating grades at all and I think that as far as test scores go, sometimes that correlation isn't quite there, but definitely keeping the grades to where they're manageable and everybody has a say in how we sort of grade and provide grading practices based on policy and procedures that districts set up.

SHAW: Okay. I'm up next. In the past, our board has gone ahead and taken positions either in support or in opposition to legislation that's going on at the state and federal level. What role do you see as the county superintendent regarding those efforts?

MIRAMONTES: Again, when we have measurable goals, we can say, "This is what we're supporting." I think there are some things though that may be where we take a neutral position and we do that currently right now with legislation, we take a neutral position, but as long as we're transparent about our goals and it is in the best interests of all students, meaning the students in ACCESS and CONNECTIONS, we leave the other stuff to the local school boards across the county. Los Alamitos has their school board, and we allow their school board to make decisions for their students. But as far as our ACCESS and CONNECTIONS students, definitely measurable goals, and we can look at legislation that supports them as well.

SHAW: Okay. Back to Trustee Valdes who will close us out.

VALDES: Teachers are being told to ask students about their feelings as they relate to social and emotional learning. Do you have any concerns that SEL has led to academic content displacement?

MIRAMONTES: SEL has been around for a long time. As a principal in Fullerton, I remember coming back as a principal and sitting next to my fifth, sixth grade teacher and we were sitting at a professional development workshop and we talked a little bit about when they were first rolling out SEL. And he said, "Ramon, this is nothing new. It's just been changed a little bit." Think about when we talk about the feelings, we talk about the Golden Rule. I was taught the Golden Rule in elementary school: "Do unto others you would want them to do unto you." I was taught about making the best decisions. I can remember two kids that he brought back and he talked about that would always come back from recess and never went to the restroom during recess because they want to play tetherball all the time, and he would always ask, "Are you making the right decisions?" I think when kids are happy and healthy in an environment that produces excellence for students, I think SEL should be there. But I think it's how we treat people when they first walk in and how we value what their strength... that when they come into a classroom and in schoolwide... At Beechwood School in Fullerton, I would say was second in the county when it came to school culture -- that was my school -- when it came to school culture and what we did. We promoted, not necessarily SEL, but we promoted healthy and happy relationships with students and their families. Parents were on our campus all the

time. But it really came down to really how you treat students and how you value them, and how you look at their strengths moving forward.

SHAW: Wonderful. Well I think that does it. Thank you Dr. Miramontes and best wishes to you and good luck.

MIRAMONTES: Thank you for the opportunity.

SHAW: All right. And least but not last, excuse me, last but not ... Mr. Cole.

COLE: Hello, President Shaw.

SHAW: Hi there. He's passing something out.

COLE: I was going to say, after all you've heard I think I need to prepare a song or something to keep you awake, right. Maybe a little dance up here?

BARKE: Yes, exactly. On the table of course.

SHAW: So you don't have to use the whole 10 minutes but as we said, up to 10 minutes, why you want to be the superintendent, why you're the best candidate and then we'll go into questions.

COLE: Excellent.

SHAW: Go ahead.

COLE: Well, good evening, President Shaw, and Honorable Trustees. Thank you so much for inviting me here today, and I want to tell you first of all, I'm Dennis Cole and there's two reasons that I want to be the county superintendent of schools. First of all, helping youth grow is the reason I exist. Personally, 29 years in education in Orange County, 11 years as a teacher, 10 as a principal, eight as a countywide director. On a personal level, I've been married 30 years and my wife and I have five kids together. We actually have been foster parents for 11 kids and we adopted five. And so our children range from 32 to 12. And everything in my personal life and private life is all about helping kids to grow and thrive. In my church I'm a youth group leader. I'm a leader for our college ministry as well. I've been a deacon and an elder for 24 years, caring for hundreds of families. All of these roles put me at the forefront of leadership for families and youth in every moment of my personal and in my professional life. This is what God made me to do. I love it and I do it well.

So the county superintendent of schools has a huge impact on our community and I'm well prepared to do all that is required in this role. I will wisely navigate the various spheres of influence to better educate our kids across Orange County. So this role, as you all know, really requires someone who knows how to manage fiscal policy, LCAPs, educational programming, school safety, staffing, community engagement in a huge organization. And all the while they have to also know how to shield against outside influencers who would detract, or even harm our

students. I currently do this every day across Orange County in my role here at Orange County Department of Education.

My second reason for seeking this role is that it requires somebody special. Not only someone who can do the job, but that the voters trust to continue doing the job long term. It's an elected role. So I am currently serving as the elected trustee for Fountain Valley Unified School District -- Fountain Valley School District. I ran a highly successful campaign, winning the highest seat next to the incumbent. So I would not only serve this two-year term but I will also successfully run and win in the next election so I can continue serving, and that's my goal.

So this does highlight a conflict of interest that I want to make sure you're aware of. Upon beginning this role as county superintendent of schools, I would contact my Fountain Valley board trustees, my fellow colleagues, and let them know immediately that I would be resigning my position to take up this one. But other than this I have no other familial or financial interest that would prohibit me from holding this role.

Once I'm selected, my first step would be to establish an effective working relationship with you. In the first week on the job I would meet with each of you to learn about you and your goals, how you like to communicate, what are the big issues you desire to address in education, and then we would begin to work on that plan together to address those issues. I'm confident based on what I already know about each of you that we strive for the same issues and know that education needs champions like us to defend and secure it for our students all over Orange County.

So you need someone who agrees with your concerns about issues impacting education and who also knows the internal systems and is trusted in the educational space across Orange County. I fit both of these requirements better than anyone so I can get started day one executing on the plans to make education better.

Looking at my skills, experience and abilities. I'm a highly trained educator, a skilled communicator, a leader in all I do. I have a large network of educators and community leaders I work with daily and will lead them to serve our students well. My experience in education in Orange County covers Transitional Kindergarten all the way through 12th grade and higher education. I've been in all 28 district offices and schools, meeting with superintendents, leading their teams on many initiatives including planning safety, training staff, advising on LCAPs, student placement policy. You name it, and I've done it in our districts in Orange County. I know how to run schools from the granular level. So building master schedules, scheduling courses, managing facilities, all these things that an educator needs to know baseline, building positive student discipline and engaging parents. I also know how to build capacity and scale up by getting the right school principals, coordinators and directors in place to organize the districtwide work effectively.

Another key point, I have experience working with all the different educational systems, so public, charter, private, higher ed. I am a strong supporter of charter schools which offer a valuable option for our families. My kids have all attended public school and charter schools depending on their current educational needs. My youngest son is 16 and he's about a third of

the way to his A.A. degree at Golden West College, so that's the kind of things that you can have when you look at all the educational options as a parent and make sure that you guide your children through that.

I work collaboratively with Orange County school districts and the community every day. I meet with every school district team regularly to discuss their programs and their needs for their students. They email, and call, and text me all hours of the day and night because they know if they've got a concern, something that comes up last minute, something they need to know. They know that if they text me or call me they're going to get a response immediately and I'm going to get them plugged in with the right information they need to make the decision they need to make, or I'm going to get them plugged in to the right person who can help them. So I'm a resource to people across the county already in this way.

I have an educational network across our Orange County community. I currently sit on 16 boards, advisory councils of colleges, educational leadership organizations, community and youth organizations, faith-based organizations, and business partners. I know it sounds crazy. Everybody looks at me and says, "How do you do 16 boards?" The reality is I advise them on what to do in education, how they can make education better, how they can help in education, what they can do. So that's what I do.

A few examples: I'm on the executive board for Junior Achievement Orange County, helping to guide how to educate students fiscally and how to be successful at college. I serve on the Vanguard University Teacher Education Advisory Council, setting up how do we guide our next cadre of teachers coming in. How do we get them plugged in and starting well? I've been SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union's President's Advisory Council. I've also been elected president by our school administrators across the county.

So one highlight of this community involvement that I'm most proud of. Over the past four years I've grown OCDE's relationship with our Sheriff, Don Barnes. I serve on the Sheriff Advisory Council and collaborate with all the law enforcement there and educational initiatives that they're working on. Sheriff Barnes trusts my leadership completely as evidenced by the letter that he wrote for me, the recommendation. We've worked together to educate our community about the dangers of fentanyl to promote a drug-free lifestyle for our kids and to support legislation that will better our schools and community and oppose legislation that's harmful.

I have over 16 years of high-level leadership experience with federal, state, and local government. In Orange County, I currently have many roles representing OCDE and interfacing with numerous governmental agencies and representatives. I serve on the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council with our district attorney, county supervisors, and Judge Arthur, to provide oversight on how we care for youth in custody. I am currently Co-chair of the Orange County Interagency Leadership Team which brings together leaders from each of our agencies to talk about and have discussion around AB 2083, which is caring for our foster youth. I'm currently on the Conditions of Children Steering Committee as well. I regularly meet with top leaders in our healthcare agency, probation, law enforcement, Social Services, First 5, Regional Center -- name it, I've been in the room with them trying to help them with education. So I do this

because I really know how to help kids learn and I really know how to leverage community to work together so we can get more and more for our schools.

So within these circles of influences I regularly assess hundreds of new pieces of legislation and advise educational partners of what their impact will be on kids and families. In short, I've got many relationships with legislators, state and county departments, and our local leaders. And I leverage these connections to inform them what good policy should look like. They trust me and often work with me to find better solutions.

When I talk about mission and vision and values, the vision for Orange County students is that we would... they would lead the nation in college and career readiness and success. So I get to live this vision out every day. It's what makes me smile every day when I get up. I look in the mirror and I say, "I'm living the dream. I can't believe I get to do this." I monitor our team's effectiveness regularly in this and I will ensure that we have the best trained staff and the best programs and curriculum to focus on the best education for our youth, and to stay away from all of the distractors that we see -- the shiny things in our culture that want to draw us away from what we really should focus on.

For our mission, it's to ensure that all students are equipped with the competencies they need to thrive in the 21st century and again, I already live out this mission daily. But I want to be really clear. I hope you all hear this above all else. I'm not saying OCDE is perfect. There's things that we would need to change and so I know the change that we need. I know the things that we can work on and I'm the best equipped to effect those changes in this role. I would begin by elevating parent voice and choice, and by ensuring student safety and competency come first. When we look at our values: respect, responsibility, integrity, professional ethics, you've already seen that I have this so I'll end by saying one thing: "I will take good care of our kids and you can trust me in this." Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Dr. Sparks. Good job. Dr. Sparks will lead off the questioning.

SPARKS: Thank you for providing context to your resumé. I love learning more about you and your background and all the different fingers you have in a lot of different pies. So I have two questions and each question I would ask you to answer in two minutes because we have four minutes total. So the first question is, tell me a time you had a communication failure. How did you respond and/or recover?

COLE: Well I wish I could say there was only one but it just happens sometimes. I would say a time that I had a communication failure would be affecting a change as a principal at a school site. I'm going back about eight years ago, and parents had desired a new elective for students and so I went to staff and said, "Hey, let's try this new elective. Let's do this." And the staff said, "We don't think we're staffed for that yet." And I didn't move on it quick enough for the parents and so they were upset and I realized quickly, I don't think I brought everybody in the room together to have this conversation broadly. And so as a young principal I learned pretty quickly you don't just bounce between groups. You kind of get people all together and you kind of envision together, what do we see this looking like? And then you make sure you're very good at communicating, "Okay, in order to affect that change, we're going to need X, Y, and Z

and make sure everybody knows that." And so there's no confusion about how a change is going to happen. Communicating the process along the way in change is vital. And so I learned as a young principal that that was important.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you. Yeah, it's never easy. Okay, my other question is, share a time when you gave inaccurate information about something. How did you fix it and what was involved in fixing it?

COLE: That's good. So I can't think of a time when I gave inaccurate information on a big issue because I've learned you dig in deep and make sure you get the right information before you share it out. I can think of plenty of times where I thought something was true. I said it to my staff at a staff meeting, only to find that it wasn't true. And the way you fix it is by quickly by making sure that everybody that got the wrong information gets the right information in multiple ways. Send out an email to the whole staff and say, "Hey yesterday at the staff meeting I said this, but one of you, I'm very grateful to you, you came to me and said that was inaccurate and here is actually what is true." And then I say it at the next staff meeting and I say it at the next parent meeting, and make sure that the correct information washes away what was wrong.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you so much.

SHAW: Trustee Barke.

BARKE: Welcome. Thanks for sharing all of your, all of your involvement. You are a very busy person. People tell me I'm busy but I think you may have me beat. One statutory function of the board of education is ruling on interdistrict transfer appeals. What is your position on school choice regarding those transfer appeals?

COLE: I believe completely in parent choice. So I believe that if a parent desires their child to be at a school that we don't hold them back from that. I do understand that there are times when a school is completely packed to the gills and full, and so there needs to be a very transparent process about how do you make selections, what order, that kind of thing. But when it comes down to parents wanting to transfer from one place to another, I'm completely for total parent choice.

BARKE: Okay. And my second question is, what role do you see for the office of the superintendent of schools regarding the Orange County charter community?

COLE: Well there are a lot of opportunities. There's a lot of space here to grow. We're a community that's beginning to explore this more and more, and as you heard me say in my initial statements, there is such a value that charter schools and micro schools, there's all kinds of different facets to this. My wife and I have explored this as parents ourselves. So I see lots of conversations to be had. I don't see these as exclusive realms. I mean, ideally, this is any community in any topic, right. You want everybody who loves kids and wants them to learn and grow, to work together to benefit each other. And so ideally, we would have people from all different facets of schools, whether they're your regular corner public school, or micro school, or homeschooling, or charter schooling all working to teach teachers how to teach the best and give

students opportunities. So I would envision beginning that conversation. It's going to take time to build those friendships and those relationships. I will say that in my role as... my first four years here at OCDE, I was the Director for STEM and Humanities and my teams ran the training across the county. I had a number of charter schools that would call me because they knew me, just through my work in charter schools as a parent. And I would always say, "Yeah, our staff will come out and train you. We'd love to." Because they're educators like all of us, right.

BARKE: Thank you.

SHAW: Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Yes sir. Thank you, Mr. Cole. Can you please give me your definition of what is the primary purpose of education? Secondary question, if mission drift is a real thing, what would you do to correct it?

COLE: So the primary purpose of education is to make sure that our students grow up to be effective members of our community, that they can pursue life, liberty, happiness. All the things that our Constitution provides. And we want to make sure that they are educated enough so that they can do that well. I think a big part of that too, is making sure that they understand that they're going into a life of service, they're not going into a life to serve themselves, and so that's a big part of that. That would be the primary purpose of education, to make sure they have all the tools in place so that they can be successful in life.

Mission drift. Anything that's not accomplishing that needs to go by the wayside. I don't believe that it's too easy to try and pack so many things in our school day, and already when you talk to teachers, they wonder how they're going to teach at all, right, every day. We need to make sure that we really have a laser focus on, what are the competencies students need, what are the skills they need to have? We should be working with our partners across the community and I feel we do this well at OCDE already of working with community partners in things like OC Pathways, CTE Pathways, and other ways like that. But we need to expand that to every area so that in our community, the people that are going to be hiring our students or the colleges they are going to be going to can help us to understand what should they know, and then we make sure we focus on that. And that will keep us from mission drift. If mission drift happens, to answer your second question, you begin cutting off those things that are taking up the time from what those focused areas are.

SHAW: Thank you. So we are asking each applicant the same questions so I know you may have touched on this but just to keep it uniform, I'm going to ask, what are three specific ways you would support and/or cooperate with the board as a superintendent?

COLE: Okay, great. Yeah. Well, obviously I think what I said already was I would first of all want to know you personally. It's so important. We're all educators together, we all love kids and we all have... each of us has skill in this room that together we can do a lot. So the first thing would be building a very good personal relationship where we communicate regularly. I'd find out how we communicate best and I would make sure that we sit down together and share what are our plans for what we can attack. I think, Mr. Williams, his question was a good one, where

is mission drift already happening? I think we should identify that first and then let's hone away from that, hone back in on what are the competencies that we want to work on, what are the things that our kids need to know. So I think those initial areas are where I would start. And then I did share already, that giving parents their choice and their voice is vital and I think we should focus on that as well as a community.

SHAW: Great. Dr. Williams.

WILLIAMS: My question has to do with the time period of the pandemic which started in March of 2020, up until it actually ended with the governor declaring that his emergency powers are no longer in effect. What did you learn through those few years and what would you do differently today?

COLE: Yeah. Well I'd like to say I learned something new from all of that. So I'll say something new I learned, that even in the face of kind of crazy adversity, we can still succeed. We can still help our kids. But we saw a lot of learning loss during that time. What I did learn, and just confirmed what I know is we, locally, know better what our kids need than people far away know. And that was the chief failing in that period of time I believe. What I learned is, if somebody else is telling us how to do things here in Orange County, that we come together as a community and decide what's going to be best for our kids and then we do that.

SHAW: Okay. Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Dr. Cole.

COLE: Not quite a doctor but thank you for the promotion.

VALDES: A December 22, 2022, Los Angeles Times report showed that LA Unified schools were promoting equitable grading practices. That same report showed that 73% of LA Unified 11th graders were receiving A's, B's, and C grades when only 19% of those 11th graders were passing state mandated testing benchmarks. What are your thoughts on equitable grading policies as they relate to Orange County?

COLE: Yeah, so equitable grading in the way that I'm hearing it from the LA side is, "Let's just change the grading scale so that kids who are getting D's are now getting C's and B's and A's." And that's not appropriate. We are here to train our kids to succeed at college and to succeed in life. So equitable grading would be, hey, I make sure I give kids enough access to the tutoring they need, enough access to the supports they need so they will elevate their grades from D's to B's and A's. So that's what I believe should happen there, not changing grading policies to inflate grades so that we look good as an organization.

SHAW: In the past our board has taken positions opposing or supporting legislation, both federal and state. What do you see as the role of county superintendent in regard to those efforts?

COLE: We'd absolutely want to lead in that conversation. I have spent the last 15 years of my professional career as an administrator going to Sacramento every year to talk to legislators about what legislation would be good for our schools and what wouldn't. It's a regular part of my job. I've been to Sacramento way more than I'd like to admit, but I go there for a purpose. Because I learned quickly as a teacher and as a young administrator that the things that come from higher up impact us a lot more sometimes than the daily decisions that we make. If we can affect that then we can make these decisions without anybody controlling that. So I can give you all kinds of examples of times... our current TK situation where they tell us we're going to be required to bring in all of our students into TK, but there's zero dollars behind that and they have no idea that hey, you're talking about four-year-olds. They don't even fit in the desks we currently have. Hey, we also don't have enough classrooms to house those kids. And they can't go to the bathroom because the toilets are too big for them so we would need some funding if you're going to make a big sweeping decision like that but more important, I think getting ahead of that conversation is important. We need to have relations with them ahead of time so they ask us these questions before they make these decisions. And that's what my role would be.

SHAW: Wonderful. And Trustee Valdes will close us out.

VALDES: Teachers are being told to ask their students about their feelings as they relate to social and emotional learning. Do you have any concerns that SEL has led to academic content displacement?

COLE: That's a good question. There's a place to ask kids how they're doing always. So, working in our ACCESS schools, we have some kids who are really struggling sometimes with what's going on in their lives. And so to ask a kid how they're feeling is a good thing, right. My wife asks me how I'm feeling every day and I ask her how she's feeling every day. We want to have relationships that way. But I do want to address what you're saying, Dr. Valdes, because it's true...

VALDES: I'm not a doctor.

COLE: Hey, right back at you then. We just promoted each other. I love it. I thought you were, so okay.

SHAW: He's an attorney so he doesn't count.

VALDES: I get the esquire name.

COLE: There you go. I do want to point out what you're saying, and that is it does create, creep in the classroom. We can't just talk about feelings and not teach people to be effective, not to teach them to grow and learn. The teams that I oversee right now, we have students that go into custody. They're in our court schools and they're in the worst place in their lives. So we do have to ask them how they're feeling but we have to show them that no matter how low your life gets, you're going to learn your way out of this. We're going to help you keep learning and we're going to teach them how to do that and make them effective at that. And that's hard to do with a kid when you're looking at them and they're going through a very tough part of life, but you do

have to have a relationship with that kid. And so I do believe it's important to have a conversation with kids that's personal but it is not to take the place of good instruction and making sure that they have all the advantages of the classroom they should have.

SHAW: Wonderful. Well thank you. You did a terrific job and wish you the best. Good luck.

COLE: Thank you all. I appreciate it.

SHAW: All right. Good job. So with that, let's see, do I have comments from the staff? Any of my colleagues want to make any comments?

WILLIAMS: I'll make a few comments. I thought this was a great, what, almost four hours that we've been here, learned a lot from the six very competent individuals, six great potential leaders. The questions that were asked by my colleagues were great, insightful, and very thoughtful and this is a very different experience in the two previous opportunities that I had in selecting the new superintendent, and I thought this was well designed by our executive committee so, good job.

SHAW: Well thank you. Mari, did you have anything to say?

BARKE: I would just comment as well that it was a great experience. I learned a lot and it was nice to put personal examples behind the paperwork and the resumés and just to get to know everyone a little better. Also appreciate all of the people that came out tonight. A few of them are still here, but just appreciate their public comment and them just taking the time to sit here with us and listen and maybe even send us emails about what they thought, or things like that. So I appreciate the candidates as well as the audience, and everyone's work on the board.

SHAW: Thank you.

BARKE: And the staff.

SHAW: And the staff. Dr. Sparks.

SPARKS: I just want to thank the candidates who have left by now but maybe they'll watch YouTube. Thank everyone for applying and I especially thank the audience for coming out and sticking with us and supporting us as we tried to really be diligent in the questions and thoughtful in the questions that we asked of the candidates. This is such an important appointment. I want to thank the staff for setting this all up and, you know, it required a lot of hours out of your time to set it up but also sitting here tonight and thank Mr. Roland for helping us in the organization as well with Tim and I on the executive committee. We tried to put a lot of thought into the structure of this to make it as smooth as possible and while getting the best information that we could out of all of the candidates. So I look forward to additional public comments and hearing what the public thinks, those who are able to watch it on YouTube who weren't able to be here so that we can take that into consideration as we tally our appointment. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Jorge, anything to say?

VALDES: All I'm going to say is this is going to be a tough decision for me.

SHAW: I printed out everyone's application at work when I got it and I've literally, every time, everywhere I go if I have a few minutes I'm rereading and rereading your resumé. I feel like I've really gotten to... but it's one thing to read someone's resumé and then when you, you know, kind of interview them in person you do get a little more feeling of what they're about. So it's been fascinating learning about these six wonderful applicants and I know this is going to be very... I feel like boy, choosing one out of these six, I literally want to go in the back room and go cry right now. It's going to be very difficult but we have great applicants to choose from obviously. And Lisa is right, we should mention Mr. Roland's participation in helping us prepare for this. We wanted this to be transparent, smooth as possible. We were kind of... we're operating on a bit of a timeline because when we found out Dr. Mijares was retiring we wanted to have some period of time for people to apply. And on the back end we want to have someone in place. Even Renee and I were talking about getting signatures on the paychecks that are coming out in July across the entire county. We need the new superintendent's signature. I mean there's logistics involved and people...

WILLIAMS: Interesting.

SHAW: Yeah, I hadn't even thought of that. I'm like, "Oh gee, you're right, we got to get that in order," and many of these people would have to be leaving a job and so we want to give them time to quit and you know, separate themselves from their previous, or current jobs. So anyway, we will wish all of you guys the best and look forward... I'm sure our emails will be blowing up over the next few weeks but we'll continue this in the future so we will stand adjourned until our regular meeting on June 5th at 5 p.m., or do we need to say, "closed session?" June 5th, right?

ROLAND: June 5th next.

SHAW: June 5th. We'll see you then. All right.