

REGULAR MEETING
July 9, 2025
4:00 p.m.

[X] Mailed [] Distributed at meeting

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Location: Orange County Department of Education, Boardroom, 200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626
Alternate Locations : 899 West 530 South Street, Orem, UT 84058 and 5725 North Angela Road, Memphis, TN 38120; YouTube Livestream: <https://www.youtube.com/live/D9d-ACQcc4U>

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
AGENDA

WELCOME

CALL TO ORDER

STATEMENT OF PRESIDING OFFICER: For the benefit of the record, this Regular Meeting of the Orange County Board of Education is called to order.

ROLL CALL

(*) AGENDA

Regular Meeting of July 9, 2025 – Adoption

(*) MINUTES

Regular Meeting of June 18, 2025 – Approval

PUBLIC COMMENTS (related to Closed Session)

TIME CERTAIN

1. Inter-district Appeal Hearing (Closed) - Student #07092025001I - Tustin Unified School District to Newport-Mesa Unified School District.
2. Inter-district Appeal Hearing (Closed) - Student #07092025002I - Capistrano Unified School District to Saddleback Valley Unified School District.

CLOSED SESSION 1

Government Code Section 54956.8
Conference regarding real property located at Argosy, 601 S. Lewis Street, Orange, CA 92868.

INVOCATION

5:00 p.m.

Jenna Sagan, Cantor
Congregation B'nai Tzedek.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INTRODUCTIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

3. Election of Officers for 2025-2026 Term – President Ken L. Williams, D.O., will preside for the election of President of the Board, Vice President, and Clerk of the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (general)

CONSENT CALENDAR

- (*) 4. Approve the granting of diplomas to the students listed from Alternative, Community, and Correctional Education Schools and Services, Alternative Education Division.
- (*) 5. Approve disbursement of funds for Orange County Board of Education professional organization membership dues in the amount of \$250.00 for Orange County School Boards Association (OCSBA), 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- (*) 6. Approve disbursement of funds for Orange County Board of Education professional organization membership dues in the amount of \$50.00 for PTA, 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- (*) 7. Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by California School Boards Association (CSBA), effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- (*) 8. Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- (*) 9. Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by Orange County School Boards Association (OCSBA), effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- (*) 10. Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- (*) 11. Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by the Association of California County Boards of Education, effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- (*) 12. Approve Board conference attendance cash advances for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

13. Charter submissions

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

- (*) 14. Adopt Resolution #20-25, in Opposition to Assembly Bill 84 (2025-2026 Legislative Session).
- (*) 15. Board Ad Hoc Committee to recommend board liaison.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

- (*) 16. Adopt Resolution #21-25 authorizing the categorical exemption of California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") requirements for the reconstruction of the Rancho Sonado site.

TIME CERTAIN

17. Public Hearing – David Giordano, Associate Superintendent, Division of Administrative Services, will conduct a public hearing on OCSEA's Initial Proposal to Superintendent.
18. Public Hearing – David Giordano, Associate Superintendent, Division of Administrative Services, will conduct a public hearing on Superintendent's Initial Proposal to OCSEA.

INFORMATION ITEMS

- (*) COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION/DISCUSSION
- Salary Increases over \$10,000 in accordance with Education Code 1302 and board policy 100-10

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Superintendent
- Deputy Superintendent

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

CLOSED SESSION(S) PUBLIC REPORT OUT

ALTERNATE LOCATIONS

Trustee Shaw will be participating in the meeting remotely from the following publicly accessible location, 899 W 530 S, Orem, UT 84058.

Trustee Valdes will be participating in the meeting remotely from the following publicly accessible location, 5725 North Angela Road, Memphis, TN 38120.

ADJOURNMENT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Renee Hendrick", written over a horizontal line.

Renee Hendrick
Assistant Secretary, Board of Education

Next Regular Board Meeting - Wednesday, August 6, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Location - Orange County Department of Education, Boardroom, 200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626
and via YouTube Livestream

Individuals with disabilities requiring special accommodations, including agenda or agenda packet materials in alternative formats or auxiliary aids and services, may request assistance by contacting Darou Sisavath, Board Clerk, at (714) 966-4012.

(*) Printed items are included in materials mailed to Board Members.

MINUTES
Regular Meeting
June 18, 2025

[X] Mailed [] Distributed at meeting

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES

WELCOME

President Williams announced that, in compliance with the Brown Act, all action items will be decided by roll call vote due to Trustee Sparks' virtual participation.

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Orange County Board of Education was called to order by President Williams at 3:34 p.m., June 18, 2025, in the Board Room, 200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, ibis Annecy Centre Vieille Ville, 12 rue de la Gare, 74000 Annecy, France, and via YouTube live stream <https://www.youtube.com/live/PtK-RqGN2QI>.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Tim Shaw
Mari Barke
Ken L. Williams, D.O.
Lisa Sparks, Ph.D. (Virtual)

Absent:

Jorge Valdes, Esq.

AGENDA

Motion by Barke, seconded by Shaw and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the agenda of the Regular meeting of June 18, 2025 with an amendment to remove Items #5 and #6, as Compass Charter Schools of Santa Ana has withdrawn its petition.

MINUTES

Motion by Barke, seconded by Shaw and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the minutes of the Regular meeting of June 2, 2025.

The Board recessed into closed session at 3:58 p.m. to address closed session items and conduct student appeals.

CLOSED SESSION 1

CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-EXISTING LITIGATION Orange County Board of Education v. OC Superintendent of Schools, Al Mijares, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Thurmond Case No 30-2019-01112665-CU-WM-CJC - Government Code §§ 54956.9(a) and (d)(1)

CLOSED SESSION 2

Government Code Section 54956.8
Conference regarding real property located at Argosy, 601 S. Lewis Street, Orange, CA 92868.

TIME CERTAIN

1. Inter-district Appeal Hearing (Closed) - Student #06182025001I - Saddleback Valley Unified School District to Laguna Beach Unified School District.

Motion by Barke, seconded by Williams and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the appeal and allow the student to attend the Laguna Beach Unified School District for the period of one academic year (2025-2026).

2. Inter-district Appeal Hearing (Closed) - Student #06182025002I - Capistrano Unified School District to Saddleback Valley Unified School District.

Motion by Williams, seconded by Barke and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the appeal and allow the student to attend the Saddleback Valley Unified School District for the period of one academic year (2025-2026).

The Board reconvened in open session at 5:06 p.m.

INVOCATION

Rev. Ray Jordan
Interim Senior Minister
Corona Del Mar Community Church

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board President Ken L. Williams, D.O.

INTRODUCTIONS

There were no introductions at this meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (General)

- Gail
- Arthur
- Shixiong
- Tony
- Tiffany
- Yang
- Raumi
- Jennifer
- An
- Raymond
- Lisa
- Jack/ Christie
- Elizabeth
- Nathan
- Andrew
- Linda
- Peter
- Xiao
- Darren
- Yao

- Heidi
- Kendra
- Alina
- Michael
- Valery
- Daniel

CONSENT CALENDAR

3. Motion by Barke, seconded by Shaw and carried by a roll call vote 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the granting of diplomas to the students listed from Alternative, Community, and Correctional Education Schools and Services, Alternative Education Division.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

4. Charter submissions – Orange County Prep, Navigator School

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Motion Barke, seconded by Shaw and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to adopt the Orange County Department of Education Local Control and Accountability Plan.
6. Motion Barke, seconded by Shaw and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to adopt the College and Career Preparatory Academy (CCPA) Local Control and Accountability Plan.
7. Motion Barke, seconded by Shaw and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the Annual County School Services Fund Budget of the County Superintendent of Schools.
8. The Board received the California School Dashboard Local Indicators: Orange County Department of Education Schools and Programs (ACCESS County Community, ACCESS Juvenile Hall, OCCS: CHEP/PCHS, and CONNECTIONS).
9. The Board received the California School Dashboard Local Indicators: College and Career Preparatory Academy.
10. The Board received the Orange County Department of Education Annual Summary Report.
11. Motion by Williams, seconded by Barke and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve Resolution # 18-25 in accordance of regulations required under Proposition 30 and 55 regarding the Education Protection Account Proposed Expenditures.

12. Motion by Williams, seconded by Barke and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the Amira Learning screening tool.
13. Presentation – Ethnic Studies Curriculum, Jonathan Swanson, Director and Trish Walsh, Senior Administrator, Educational Services
14. Motion by Barke, seconded by Williams and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to approve the Ethnic Studies Curriculum.
15. Motion by Williams, seconded by Barke and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to adopt the Local Educational Agency Temporary Borrowing Policy to help establish the ability for the County Superintendent to offer short term loans for cash flow purposes.

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Motion by Barke, seconded by Williams and carried by a roll call vote of 4-0 (Valdes absent) to adopt Resolution #19-25, Supporting Title IX and Fairness in Girls' Interscholastic Sports.

INFORMATION ITEMS

COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

- Board Discussion - Irvine International Academy (IIA)

PUBLIC COMMENTS (IIA)

- Anh

COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION/DISCUSSION (continue)

- Acquisition of surplus school sites/ properties

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Superintendent
 - 5-3-1 Plan
 - CTE - Nicolas Junior High, built tiny homes for homeless youth
 - Supportive Objectives, Academic rigor
 - State of the Student Forum
 - Carl Fong, Chief, Information Technology – Nominee, 2025 OC Executive Leadership Forum
 - ACCESS/ Connections graduations
 - Samuel – USC
 - Debrief and overview in July
- Deputy Superintendent
 - Next board meeting is on July 9; submission deadline is June 25; Board packet delivery on July 3
 - Organization Meeting on July 9

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

- Trustee Shaw – SB 249 @ Assembly on July 2
- Trustee Barke – Oppose AB 84

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- Trustee Sparks – Commended Dr. Bean’s achievements
- Trustee Shaw – Placentia-Yorba Linda USD charter school issue
- Trustee Williams - Board liaison ad hoc committee, Highlighted Francine Scinto’s outstanding service

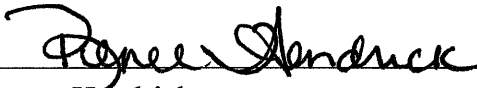
CLOSED SESSION(S) PUBLIC REPORT OUT

Mr. Brenner reported that during Closed Session 1, the Board held a discussion. No action was taken, other than the approval of the Epstein, Becker & Green invoices #1200160 and #1196963, and the Nielsen Merksamer invoice #284382.

Mr. Rolan, General Counsel, reported that during Closed Session 2, the Board received an update and no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded, the June 18, 2025, board meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.



Renee Hendrick
Assistant Secretary, Board of Education

Ken L. Williams, D.O.
President, Board of Education

Next Regular Board Meeting – Wednesday, July 9, 2025

Location - Orange County Department of Education, Boardroom, 200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 and via YouTube Livestream

Individuals with disabilities requiring special accommodations, including agenda or agenda packet materials in alternative formats or auxiliary aids and services, may request assistance by contacting Darou Sisavath, Board Clerk, at (714) 966-4012.

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF E July 9, 2025

BOARD AGENDA ITE ☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting 

DATE: 07/09/2025
TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent
FROM: Maria Martinez-Poulin Ed.D., Chief of Alternative Education - ACCESS
SUBJECT: Granting of Diplomas

The students listed on the attached pages have been certified for graduation by the Custodian of Records or their designee for the Division of Alternative Education and the Division of Special Education Services of the Orange County Department of Education. These students have met the standards of proficiency in the basic skills prescribed by the governing board in accordance with Education Code 51412. It is requested that the Board approve the granting of diplomas to these students.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve granting of diplomas to the students listed from Alternative, Community, and Correctional Education Schools and Services, Alternative Education Division and the Division of Special Education Services.

MMP:rc

Pages 11-17 removed (CONFIDENTIAL STUDENT INFORMATION)

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025
TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent
FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk
SUBJECT: Board Membership – OCSBA, 2025-2026

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve disbursement of funds for Orange County Board of Education professional organization membership dues in the amount of \$250.00 for Orange County School Boards Association (OCSBA), 2025-2026 fiscal year.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk

SUBJECT: Board Membership – PTA, 2025-2026

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve disbursement of funds for Orange County Board of Education professional organization membership dues in the amount of \$50.00 for PTA, 2025-2026 fiscal year.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD ☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk

SUBJECT: Registration and Travel for Board Members – CSBA

In accordance with specified statutory regulations, County Board Members are reimbursed for expenses incurred when attending education related events/meetings. In order to simplify these reimbursement procedures, it is requested that approval be given for advance payment of fees as required by meeting sponsor.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by California School Boards Association (CSBA), effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION ☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk

SUBJECT: Registration and Travel for Board Members – CCSA

In accordance with specified statutory regulations, County Board Members are reimbursed for expenses incurred when attending education related events/meetings. In order to simplify these reimbursement procedures, it is requested that approval be given for advance payment of fees as required by meeting sponsor.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF [X] Mailed [] Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025
TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent
FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk
SUBJECT: Registration and Travel for Board Members – OCSBA

In accordance with specified statutory regulations, County Board Members are reimbursed for expenses incurred when attending education related events/meetings. In order to simplify these reimbursement procedures, it is requested that approval be given for advance payment of fees as required by meeting sponsor.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by Orange County School Boards Association (OCSBA), effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF ☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk

SUBJECT: Registration and Travel for Board Members – National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

In accordance with specified statutory regulations, County Board Members are reimbursed for expenses incurred when attending education related events/meetings. In order to simplify these reimbursement procedures, it is requested that approval be given for advance payment of fees as required by meeting sponsor.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD C ☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk

SUBJECT: Registration and Travel for Board Members – ACCBE

In accordance with specified statutory regulations, County Board Members are reimbursed for expenses incurred when attending education related events/meetings. In order to simplify these reimbursement procedures, it is requested that approval be given for advance payment of fees as required by meeting sponsor.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve registration and travel for Board Members to attend education related events/meetings sponsored by Association of California County Boards of Education (ACCBE), effective July 1, 2025 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS [X] Mailed [] Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk

SUBJECT: Cash Advances for Board Members

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Board conference attendance cash advances for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Cash advances must meet the same policy criteria as department employees and the following:

- Board travel must be pre-approved
- Request must be originated by the Board Member
- Advance amount is limited to no more than 75% of expenses the traveler estimates he/she will have to pay out of pocket while traveling

Item: Board Recommendations #14

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Mari Barke, Board Vice President

SUBJECT: Resolution #20-25, In Opposition to Assembly Bill 84 (2025-2026
Legislative Session)

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Resolution #20-25, In Opposition to Assembly Bill 84 (2025-2026 Legislative Session).

**RESOLUTION OF THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
IN OPPOSITION TO ASSEMBLY BILL 84 (2025-2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION)**

July 9, 2025

WHEREAS, the Orange County Board of Education (Board) is committed to supporting a wide array of educational options to meet the diverse needs of all students in Orange County; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the value of flexible learning models, such as charter schools and nonclassroom-based programs, in supporting student success; and

WHEREAS, the Board is concerned that Assembly Bill 84 (AB 84) could significantly impact the funding and operations of these alternative educational programs, potentially limiting access to educational opportunities for students who thrive in these environments; and

WHEREAS, the Board believes that AB 84 could negatively affect students' access to robust educational experiences and real world learning opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Board is worried that AB 84 could divert funds from student-centered programs to increased oversight and recordkeeping, which could undermine the ability of certain schools, specifically charter schools and nonclassroom-based programs, to deliver effective instruction.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

1. The Board opposes AB 84 and urges the California State Legislature to reject this bill as it would have a detrimental impact on the Board's mission of supporting appropriate educational opportunities for all students in Orange County.
2. The Board will advocate for policies that support student learning while also promoting educational choice and flexibility for families and schools.
3. The Board will work with stakeholders, including parents, community organizations, school districts, and other county boards of education, to raise awareness about the potential negative impacts of AB 84 on students and schools.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED this 9th day of July, 2025 at a regular meeting of the Orange County Board of Education.

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstained:

State of California)
) ss.
County of Orange)

Ken L. Williams, D.O., President

Mari Barke, Vice President

July 9, 2025

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF ☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025
TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent
FROM: Darou Sisavath, Board Recording Clerk
SUBJECT: Board Liaison

RECOMMENDATION

The Orange County Board of Education established an ad-hoc committee to interview candidates for the Board Liaison position. The committee, comprised of Board President Dr. Ken Williams and Board Trustee Tim Shaw, conducted interviews on July 18. Following the interviews, the committee recommended a final candidate to County Superintendent Dr. Stefan Bean. Dr. Bean participated in the interview process and looks forward to extending an offer to the recommended candidate.

July 9, 2025

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ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent

FROM: David Giordano, Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services

SUBJECT: Approval of Notice of Exemption (NOE) for the Reconstruction of the Rancho Sonado Site from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Requirements

BACKGROUND:

The Board and the County Superintendent determined that it is necessary to construct new buildings and structures on the Rancho Sonado property that were destroyed during the 2020 Bond Fire

The Board approved Resolution #06-25 at its' March 5, 2025 Board meeting allowing the County Superintendent to move forward with the Lease-Leaseback Construction delivery method for the reconstruction of the Rancho Sonado site (Project).

Prior to construction of the Project, the County Superintendent must comply with California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the implementing regulations ("CEQA Guidelines," California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.).

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires environmental review for projects that may have a significant impact on the environment. However, Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines categorically exempts 33 classes of projects determined to not have a significant effect on the environment from extended environmental review.

The Class 1 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities), applies to the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.

The Project meets the conditions of Class 1 because the Project will involve the repair/restoration of Rancho Sonado and will not expand the former use of Rancho Sonado.

The Class 2 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction) consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have

substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including existing streets, pedestrian trails, and similar facilities; and restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety.

The Project meets the conditions of Class 2 because the Project will involve the reconstruction/replacement of Rancho Sonado structures and facilities and will not expand the former capacity or use of Rancho Sonado.

The Class 3 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure.

The Project meets the conditions of Class 3 because the Project will, in part, involve the construction of less than 2,500 square feet of new building/structure area at Rancho Sonado before the 2020 wildfire, and because the Project will not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances.

The Class 14 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section, Minor Additions to Schools) consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms, whichever is less.

The Project meets the conditions of Class 14 because the Project will not increase the daily or annual student attendance beyond pre-fire conditions and will not result in an increase in building area that equates to the size of ten classrooms (9,600 square feet); and

The County Superintendent has considered whether the Project is subject to any of the exceptions to the exemption set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2; and

The County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a) because the Property is not located in a particularly sensitive environment that will cause the Project to result in a significant effect; and

The County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(b) because the Project will not contribute to any significant impacts resulting from successive projects of the same type in the same place over time; and

The County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(c) because the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; and

The County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(d) because there are no officially designated state scenic highways

in the vicinity of the Project site, and as such, the Project will not result in damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway; and

The County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(e) because the Project will not be located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; and

The County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(f) because the Project will not result in the substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

The County Superintendent has balanced the interests of the public, including those of the County Superintendent and the State of California, and determined that the Project is categorically exempt from CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 (Class 1, Existing Facilities), 15302 (Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction), 15303 (Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15314 (Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools) and that none of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the Project.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Governing Board adopt Resolution #21-25 authorizing the categorical exemption of California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") requirements for the reconstruction of the Rancho Sonado site.

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BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 21-25

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVING THE RANCHO SONADO OUTDOOR SCIENCE EDUCATION CENTER PROJECT ("PROJECT"); FINDING AND DETERMINING THAT THE PROJECT IS CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT, AND FILING AND RECORDING A NOTICE OF EXEMPTION WITH THE ORANGE COUNTY CLERK.

WHEREAS, the Orange County Board of Education ("Board") owns certain real property and improvements located at 8755 Santiago Canyon Road in unincorporated Orange County, California (the "Property," APNs 105-201-32, -35, and -89, and 576-013-05, known as the Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center ("Rancho Sonado")); and

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent administers and operates the Inside the Outdoors Environmental Education Program, which offers science and social science educational programs at various venues throughout Orange County (the "Program"); and

WHEREAS, in December 2020, the Bond Fire, which burned 6,686 acres in the Santiago Canyon / Irvine Regional Park area, caused extensive damage to Rancho Sonado; and

WHEREAS, Rancho Sonado is accessed via an access easement on APN 576-013-05 owned by Orange County Parks that may require an amendment to the easement; and

WHEREAS, prior to the damage caused by the Bond Fire, Rancho Sonado was a critical venue for the Program, offering environmental instructional programs at an outdoor school in a natural environmental setting for schools located in Orange County, as well as providing opportunities to the public for similar programming and other special events and activities, pursuant to the California Civic Center Act (Government Code Section 38130 et seq.); and

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent proposes to renovate, repair, and reconstruct facilities for the Inside the Outdoors Environmental Education Program at Rancho Sonado, which were damaged by a wildfire in 2020, and resume previous school and public operations ("Project"); and

WHEREAS, the Project will consist of the renovation of seven (7) outdoor teaching stations on existing graded pads along the hiking trails, five (5) of which would be covered, picnic areas, a multipurpose educational building containing restrooms, an administrative building, a covered lunch area, and an outdoor amphitheater, all constructed with non-combustible materials; and

WHEREAS, the Project will also include sitework that includes improvement of the existing driveway/access road to provide adequate access to firefighting trucks/engines and other emergency vehicles to the property, installation of a new on site fire hydrant, renovation of landscaping with drought-tolerant and native plant species, an improved parking lot, and new wayfinding signage; and

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent proposes operation of similar Program activities as pre-fire conditions, including the participation of approximately 120 students each day between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, prior to constructing the Project, the County Superintendent must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA,” Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the implementing regulations (“CEQA Guidelines,” California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.); and

WHEREAS, Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines categorically exempts 33 classes of projects determined to not have a significant effect on the environment from extended environmental review; and

WHEREAS, the Class 1 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities), applies to the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 1 because the Project will involve the repair/restoration of Rancho Sonado and will not expand the former use of Rancho Sonado; and

WHEREAS, the Class 2 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction) consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including existing streets, pedestrian trails, and similar facilities; and restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 2 because the Project will involve the reconstruction/replacement of Rancho Sonado structures and facilities and will not expand the former capacity or use of Rancho Sonado; and

WHEREAS, the Class 3 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 3 because the Project will, in part, involve the construction of less than 2,500 square feet of new building/structure area at Rancho Sonado before the 2020 wildfire, and because the Project will not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances; and

WHEREAS, the Class 14 categorical exemption (CEQA Guidelines Section, Minor Additions to Schools) consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms, whichever is less; and

WHEREAS, the Project meets the conditions of Class 14 because the Project will not increase the daily or annual student attendance beyond pre-fire conditions and will not result in an increase in building area that equates to the size of ten classrooms (9,600 square feet); and

WHEREAS, the County Superintendent has considered whether the Project is subject to any of the exceptions to the exemption set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a) because the Property is not located in a particularly sensitive environment that will cause the Project to result in a significant effect; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(b) because the Project will not contribute to any significant impacts resulting from successive projects of the same type in the same place over time; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(c) because the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(d) because there are no officially designated state scenic highways in the vicinity of the Project site, and as such, the Project will not result in damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(e) because the Project will not be located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; and

WHEREAS, County Superintendent has determined that the Project meets the conditions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(f) because the Project will not result in the substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees of the Orange County Department of Education ("Board") hereby make the following findings:

SECTION 1. The foregoing recitals are true and correct and are a substantive part of the Resolution.

SECTION 2. That the Board has determined after evaluating the Project through its own independent judgement and analysis that the Project is categorically exempt from CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 (Class 1, Existing Facilities), 15302 (Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction), 15303 (Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15314 (Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools) and that none of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the Project.

SECTION 3. That the Board hereby approves the Project.

SECTION 4. That the Superintendent of Schools, or his designee, is instructed to file and/or record the Notice of Exemption prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, consistent with this Resolution, attached hereto as Exhibit "A," with any and all appropriate public agencies or entities, subject only to minor, non-substantive revisions, if necessary.

SECTION 5. The Notice of Exemption constitutes a record of these proceedings and will be kept at the Orange County Superintendent of Schools, Purchasing & Contracts Department at 200 Kalmus Drive, Building A, Costa Mesa, California under the control of the Executive Director, Business Operations; and

SECTION 6. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED and ADOPTED by the Governing Board of the Orange County Superintendent of Schools on July 9, 2025, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAINED:

I, _____, Secretary of the Orange County Board of Education, the Board, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of a resolution passed and adopted by said Board at a regularly scheduled and conducted meeting held on said date, which resolution is on file in office of said Board.

Secretary

Exhibit A
Notice of Exemption

Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Orange County Department of Education
200 Kalmus Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92628

Orange County Clerk
601 N. Ross Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center Fire Restoration Project

Project Title

8755 Santiago Canyon Road (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 105-201-32, -35, and -89, and 576-013-05)

Project Location – Specific

Silverado (unincorporated community)

Orange

Project Location – City

Project Location – County

The Orange County Department of Education proposes to renovate, repair, and reconstruct facilities for the Inside the Outdoors Environmental Education Program at Rancho Sonado, which were damaged by a wildfire in 2020, and resume previous school and public operations. The Project will consist of the renovation of seven (7) outdoor teaching stations on existing graded pads along the hiking trails, five(5) of which would be covered, picnic areas, a multipurpose educational building containing restrooms, an administrative building, a covered lunch area, and an outdoor amphitheater, all constructed with non-combustible materials. The Project will also include sitework that includes improvement of the existing driveway/access road to provide adequate access to firefighting trucks/engines and other emergency vehicles to the property, installation of a new on site fire hydrant, renovation of landscaping with drought-tolerant and native plant species, an improved parking lot, and new wayfinding signage.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project

Orange County Department of Education

Name of Public Agency Approving Project

Orange County Department of Education

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project

Exempt Status:

- ☒ Categorical Exemption: Sections 15301 (Class 1, Existing Facilities), 15302 (Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction), Class 3 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and 15314 (Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools)

Classes 1 and 2 apply because the project would involve the repair and reconstruction/replacement of the project site facilities after being damaged by a wildfire in December 2020, which resulted in closure of the Rancho Soñado Outdoor Science Education Center. Class 3 applies because the project would, in part, involve the construction of approximately 2,400 square feet of new facilities/structures that were not present onsite prior to the 2020 wildfire, and the project would not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances. Class 14 applies because the project would involve the renovation, repair, and reconstruction/replacement of the onsite facilities since being damaged by a wildfire, and, once reopened, the outdoor school would continue to allow the same number of students onsite as pre-fire conditions. Additionally, none of the exceptions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the project, nor are there any unusual circumstances that could result in significant environmental effects.

Reasons why project is exempt

David Giordano, Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services

(714) 966-4447

Lead Agency Contact Person

Area Code/Telephone

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption findings
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Signature:

Date:

Title: Associate Superintendent,
Administrative Services

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant



CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION EVALUATION REPORT

This Categorical Exemption Evaluation Report documents the eligibility of the Orange County Department of Education's (OCDE) proposed Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center Fire Restoration Project (project) to be exempt from expanded environmental review, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under California Public Resources Code Section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, Title 14 (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15061(b)(2) and 15300 et seq. The intent of the evaluation is to document the project's qualification for a Categorical Exemption (CE) under Class 1 (Existing Facilities), Class 2 (Replacement or Reconstruction), Class 3 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), and Class 14 (Minor Additions to Schools).

1. Project Background

The "Inside the Outdoors" program was established in 1974 and is a unique and hands-on environmental education program serving over 110,000 participants per school year via field trips, in-school presentations, virtual programs, and community programs. Participants range from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade students.¹ The Inside the Outdoors program is administered by OCDE, which supports 28 school districts serving more than 600 schools and approximately 450,000 students.²

The Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center (Rancho Sonado) serves as a field trip destination for the Inside the Outdoors program, and allows students to experience and learn about local ecology in-person. In December 2020, approximately 95 percent of the Rancho Sonado property was damaged by the 6,686-acre Bond Fire, which resulted in closure of the center. Prior to the fire, Rancho Sonado included main and field office buildings, barn with live animals, caretaker residence, swimming pool, outdoor picnic areas, portable restroom facilities, human-made pond, and outdoor teaching stations located along hiking trails. A driveway/access road provided vehicle access from Santiago Canyon Road to these facilities and a small gravel parking lot with a storage area.

Prior to the fire, Rancho Sonado offered full-day science-based field trips for students in elementary and middle schools in Orange County. During the school year, the Rancho Sonado campus was open from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. A typical day started with the arrival of students on one to four school buses at 9:00 a.m. and ended with the departure of the school buses at 2:30 p.m. Although there is a driveway and onsite parking, students were dropped off and picked up at Santiago Canyon Road.

The Inside the Outdoors program at Rancho Sonado accommodated up to 120 students per full-day program. The students were separated into 6 to 8 small learning groups. Each group was led by one naturalist and adult chaperones (e.g., teachers and parents). Students rotated through the outdoor teaching stations to learn and conduct hands-on activities. Students ate lunch at picnic tables and used portable restrooms at "basecamp," which is where the buildings were located onsite.

¹ Orange County Department of Education (OCDE). 2025. About Inside the Outdoors.
<https://ocde.us/ito/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed May 2025).

² Orange County Department of Education (OCDE). 2025. About OCDE.
<https://ocde.us/AboutOCDE/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed May 2025).



Prior to the fire, the project site was also available for community use and rental pursuant to the Civic Center Act.³ Numerous non-school events have been held at the project site, including but not limited to, winter/spring/summer-break and holiday day-camps, community and family nature day events, night hikes, astronomy nights, scouting events, and Disney and Boeing family volunteering and partnering events.

2. Project Description and Location

Project Location

The approximately 22-acre project site occurs on a portion of the 110-acre Rancho Sonado property, located at 8755 Santiago Canyon Road in unincorporated community of Silverado in Orange County in the Santa Ana Mountains on Assessor's Parcel Numbers 105-201-32, -35, and -89, and 576-013-05.

Rancho Sonado was closed in December 2020 due to damage caused by the Bond Fire. Some remnants of previous structures and infrastructure remain onsite currently, including the driveway/access road, a building and fountain at the northern terminus of the access road, a parking area in the southern portion of the sites, and the pedestrian hiking trails.

The project site is generally bounded by Santiago Canyon Road and vacant, undeveloped open space land (Limestone Canyon Regional Park) to the west; vacant, undeveloped open space land (including a portion in the Cleveland National Forest) to the north and east; and a plant nursery, a few single-family residences, Cleveland National Forest open space land, and Ridgetop Road to the south. Figure 1, *Regional Vicinity*, and Figure 2, *Project Site*, show the project site location and surrounding areas.

Land Use and Zoning Designations

The Orange County General Plan designates the majority of the Rancho Sonado property, including the main area proposed for development, as Rural Residential (1A).⁴ This land use designation is applied to areas in which limited residential use is compatible with the natural character of the terrain. The building intensity standard for Rural Residential ranges from 0.025 to 0.5 dwelling units per gross acre (du/ac). The remainder of the project site is designated as Suburban Residential (1B), which permits a wide range of housing types and a building density between 0.5 and 18 du/ac. The entire Rancho Sonado property has a zoning designation of A1(SR).⁵ The A1 "General Agricultural" District is a single-family residential district and permits agriculture, outdoor recreational uses, and low-intensity uses that have a predominately open space character. It permits a variety of neighborhood-serving facilities and services such as schools and local and community open space, trails, and parks. The SR "Sign Restriction Overlay" requires signage to comply with specifications provided in Orange County Zoning Code Sections 7-9-51.1 through 7-9-51.8.⁶ Educational institutions, park and recreational facilities, and riding and hiking trails are permitted under

³ California Education Code Section 38134 et seq.

⁴ County of Orange. 2015. Orange County General Plan, Land Use Designations Map. August 23. <https://ocds.ocpublicworks.com/sites/ocpwocds/files/import/data/files/58442.pdf> (accessed May 2025).

⁵ County of Orange. 2021. Unincorporated Orange County Zoning [interactive map]. October 27. <https://data-ocpw.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/OCPW::unincorporated-orange-county-zoning/explore> (accessed May 2025).

⁶ County of Orange Zoning Code. Adopted July 25, 2024. <https://ocds.ocpublicworks.com/sites/ocpwocds/files/2024-08/Adopted%20Orange%20County%20Zoning%20Code%207-25-24.pdf>



the underlying A1 zoning district with a use permit from the County. It is noted that pursuant to California Government Code Section 53094 et seq., the governing board of a school district may render city or county zoning ordinances and general plan requirements inapplicable. The Orange County Board of Education (Board) is the governing board for OCDE. On May 7, 2025, the Board adopted Resolution No. 15-25, which exempts the proposed project from the County of Orange's Zoning Code and related regulations and requirements.⁷

Project Description

OCDE proposes to renovate Rancho Sonado and to resume operations of the outdoor environmental education program onsite since being damaged by a wildfire in December 2020. The renovated Rancho Sonado would include seven outdoor teaching stations on existing graded pads along the hiking trails, picnic areas (including a covered lunch area at basecamp), a multipurpose educational building, an administrative building, a restroom building, and an outdoor amphitheater. All proposed improvements would be constructed with non-combustible materials, which exceeds the requirements of the California Building Code. The project would require sitework that includes improvement of the existing driveway/access road to provide adequate access to firefighting trucks/engines and other emergency vehicles to the property, renovation of landscaping with drought-tolerant and native plant species, an improved parking lot, and new wayfinding signage. The proposed project would also include the installation of non-habitable shade structures at five of the outdoor teaching stations, in addition to the proposed covered lunch area at basecamp. The teaching stations and picnic areas would be furnished with tables and seating made of non-combustible materials. The perimeters of the multipurpose educational building and administrative building would be buffered by fuel modification zones to minimize the potential for damage due to wildfires in the future. See Figure 3, *Project Site Plan*, for the locations and requirements/restrictions for combustible materials (including vegetation) of each fuel modification zone.

Operation

As it was before the fire, Rancho Sonado would continue to be a field trip destination for schools in Orange County and open to the public to participate in Inside the Outdoors environmental education programs and/or special permit activities. Once reopened, Rancho Sonado would continue to allow approximately 120 students to participate each day between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Instead of buses dropping off and picking up students along Santiago Canyon Road, the buses would drive the length of the access road and drop off/pick up students at the basecamp. The property would not be used for commercial purposes.

Construction

Construction of the proposed improvements is expected to take approximately 18 months to complete. Construction staging would occur in the existing parking lot and the previously graded areas at the

⁷ Orange County Board of Education. 2025. Resolution No. 15-25, Zoning Exemption for the Reconstruction of the Ranch Sonado Site from the County of Orange Zoning Requirements. May 7.
<https://ocbe.us/Documents/Resolution%202024-2025/15-25%20Zoning%20Exemption%20for%20the%20Reconstruction%20of%20the%20Rancho%20Sonado%20site.pdf>
(accessed June 2025).



basecamp onsite, as well as previously disturbed areas within a parcel owned by the OCDE Board of Education that abuts Santiago Canyon Road in the project area.

Construction Best Management Practices

The construction contractor(s) would implement the following construction best management practices (BMPs) that would ensure project compliance with adopted environmental laws and regulations:

1. Construction Noise. Construction activities would be conducted only between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and Saturdays, and not at any time on a Sunday or a federal holiday, pursuant to Section 4-6-7 of the County of Orange Noise Control Ordinance.⁸
2. Compliance with Applicable South Coast Air Quality Management District Rules. Construction of the project would comply with the following South Coast Air Quality Management District rules:
 - *Rule 402 (Nuisance)*. This rule prohibits the discharge “from any source whatsoever in such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public, or which endanger the comfort, repose, health, or safety of any such persons or the public, or which cause, or have a natural tendency to cause, injury or damage to business or property.”
 - *Rule 403 (Fugitive Dust)*. This rule requires fugitive dust sources to implement best available control measures for all sources and prohibits all forms of visible particulate matter (PM) from crossing any property line. This rule is intended to reduce coarse PM (PM₁₀) emissions from any transportation, handling, construction, or storage activity that has the potential to generate fugitive dust. Potential PM₁₀ suppression techniques are summarized below:
 - Exposed soil (including graded areas and stockpiled) would be seeded and watered until a vegetation cover is grown or the exposed soil is otherwise stabilized.
 - All onsite roads would be watered periodically or chemically stabilized until paved or revegetated.
 - All material transported offsite would be securely covered to prevent excessive amounts of dust.
 - The area disturbed by clearing, grading, earthmoving, and/or excavation activities would be minimized at all times.
 - Where vehicles exit the construction site and enter public streets, the streets would be swept daily or washed down at the end of each workday to remove soil tracked onto the paved surface.
 - *Rule 1113 (Architectural Coatings)*. This rule requires manufacturers, distributors, and end users of architectural and industrial maintenance coatings to reduce reactive organic gases

⁸ County of Orange. Codified Ordinances, Title 5, Division 6, Noise Control, Section 4-6-7, Special Provisions.
https://library.municode.com/ca/orange_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT4HESAANRE_DIV6NOCO
(access May 2025).



emissions from use of these coatings, primarily by placing limits on the reactive organic gas content of various coating categories.

3. Preconstruction Nesting Bird Surveys and Avoidance. Pursuant to the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the California Fish and Game Code (CFGF), if construction activities are scheduled to commence during the bird nesting season (January 1 to August 31), a pre-construction nesting bird clearance survey would be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than three days prior to the start of any vegetation removal or ground-disturbing activities. If an active bird nest is found, the species would be identified by the qualified biologist, and a “no-disturbance” buffer of 50 to 300 feet in width (depending on the species) would be established around the active nest. The size of the no-disturbance buffer would be increased or decreased based on the judgment of the qualified biologist and level of activity and sensitivity of the species. The qualified biologist would periodically monitor any active bird nests to determine if project-related activities occurring outside the no-disturbance buffer have any impact on nesting birds and if the no-disturbance buffer needs to increase to avoid impacts to an active nest. Once the young have fledged and left the nest, the no-disturbance buffer would be removed.
4. Pre-Activity Habitat Avoidance Demarcation. A qualified biologist would conduct a daily pre-activity inspection of active construction areas to identify and demarcate for avoidance the locations of any special-status plant or animal species with potential to be affected by construction that day. Inspection and demarcation would continue until the biologist determines it is no longer warranted due to absence of special-status species within areas potentially affected by earthwork, or when earthwork is complete. Daily inspection
5. Aquatic Resources Avoidance. Prior to the commencement of construction activities, a biologist would demarcate a 50-foot avoidance buffer from the outermost limits of wetlands and waters of United States/waters of the State. No construction personnel or equipment would be allowed within these avoidance areas without the presence of a biological monitor.
6. Archaeological Monitoring. A qualified archaeologist would be present during initial ground-disturbing activities, such as grading or excavation, to identify and appropriately address any previously unknown cultural resources that may be encountered. Monitoring would be completed upon archaeologist determination that further monitoring is unwarranted or upon completion of ground-disturbing activities. If there are any inadvertent discoveries, the archaeologist would be empowered to halt construction work in the vicinity of the discovery and determine next steps. The archaeologist would also prepare a memo summarizing the monitoring methods, findings, and discoveries for submittal to the OCDE and to the South Central Coastal Information Center at California State University, Fullerton.

If human remains are encountered, all work within 50 feet of the discovery would be suspended immediately, and the County coroner would be contacted in accordance with California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5.



3. Applicability of a Categorical Exemption

The CEQA Guidelines include classes of projects that have been determined to not have a significant effect on the environment and that can be categorically exempt from extended environmental review. As discussed below, the proposed project qualifies for a categorical exemption under Classes 1, 2, 3, and 14.

Class 1, Existing Facilities

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use. Examples include but are not limited to: existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety); and restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety (CEQA Guidelines Section 15301).

The proposed project qualifies for a categorical exemption under Class 1 because it would involve the repair/restoration of Rancho Sonado after being damaged by a wildfire in December 2020, which resulted in its closure. The project would include components similar to pre-fire conditions. The project also would include improving the existing driveway/access road to provide adequate access to firefighting trucks/engines and other emergency vehicles to the property and enhance public safety in the event of an emergency. Other project features that would help improve public safety and decrease the risk of future fire damage include the establishment of fuel modification zones surrounding the proposed buildings at basecamp, renovation of landscaping with drought-tolerant and native plant species, and replacing outdoor tables and seating with ones built from non-combustible materials. Once reopened, Rancho Sonado would not increase the daily or annual student attendance or the hours of operation beyond pre-fire conditions; approximately 120 students would participate each day between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in an expansion of Rancho Sonado's former use.

Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced (CEQA Guidelines Section 15302).

The proposed project qualifies for a categorical exemption under Class 2 because it would involve the reconstruction/replacement of Rancho Sonado structures and facilities since being damaged by a wildfire in December 2020. The project would include the replacement/reconstruction various structures and facilities that existed onsite prior to the 2020 wildfire. The sizes and locations of these replaced/reconstructed structures and facilities would be similar to pre-fire conditions.

Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures

Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure. The maximum number and size of structures allowed on any legal parcel are described in CEQA



Guidelines Section 15303 and include, but are not limited to: a store, motel, office, restaurant, or similar structure not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances, and not exceeding 2,500 square feet in floor area (CEQA Guidelines Section 15303).

The proposed project qualifies for a categorical exemption under Class 3 because it would, in part, involve the construction of approximately ___ square feet of new buildings/building additions at Rancho Sonado that were not present onsite prior to the December 2020 wildfire. The project would require the use of limited hazardous materials (e.g., diesel fuel, oils) during construction to fuel and lubricate construction equipment, as well as to coat structures (e.g., paint). During project operation, some hazardous materials, such as paint and cleaning solvents, may be stored and used onsite. Because the floor area of the proposed new building/structure area would be less than 2,500 square feet and because the proposed project would not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances, the proposed new construction would occur qualifies for a categorical exemption under Class 3.

Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools

Class 14 consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms, whichever is less (CEQA Guidelines Section 15314).

Rancho Sonado is considered an outdoor school, as students throughout Orange County are bused to the center to participate in the OCDE's Inside the Outdoors environmental education programs. The project would mainly include reconstruction/replacement of structures and facilities damaged during the 2020 fire but also would include minor new construction of facilities/structures, an improved parking lot, new wayfinding signage, and non-habitable shade structures at five of the outdoor teaching stations and the lunch area at basecamp. The project would not increase daily or annual student attendance. Once reopened, Rancho Sonado would continue to allow approximately 120 students to participate each day, similar to pre-fire conditions. Additionally, although the project would result in an increase in the square footage of buildings onsite compared to pre-fire conditions, the proposed additional building square footage would be approximately ___ square feet, which is less than the size of ten classrooms (or 9,600 square feet).⁹ As such, although the project would include minor additions to an existing school within existing school grounds, the proposed additions would not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms. The minor additions proposed by the project would therefore qualifies for a categorical exemption under Class 14.

4. Considerations of Exceptions to the Use of a Categorical Exemption

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 identifies the following exceptions to the use of a categorical exemption:

- a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located—a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous

⁹ Pursuant to Section 14030(g)(1) of the California Code of Regulations, classrooms for 1st through 12th grades must be no less than 960 square feet. Therefore, ten classrooms equates to a minimum of 9,600 square feet.



or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

- b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.
- c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.
- d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.
- e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

As evaluated below, none of these exceptions apply to the proposed project. Therefore, the lead agency (OCDE) is not precluded from categorically exempting the proposed project from CEQA.

CRITERION (a) *Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located—a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.*

The location exception does not apply to Class 1 (Existing Facilities), Class 2 (Replacement or Reconstruction), and Class 14 (Minor Additions to Schools) CEs; however, this exception applies to Class 3 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures). The proposed project involves the renovation of Rancho Sonado since being damaged by a wildfire in December 2020. The proposed project would, in part, involve the construction of approximately ___ square feet of new buildings/building additions at Rancho Sonado that were not present onsite prior to the 2020 wildfire. The location where the proposed new buildings would be constructed was previously disturbed during the original construction of Rancho Sonado and/or the 2020 Bond Fire, and therefore, is not considered to be a particularly sensitive environment. As such, the project would not result in a significant impact on the environment due to its location, and this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

CRITERION (b) *All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.*

The proposed project involves the renovation of Rancho Sonado in same area as pre-fire conditions and resuming operations of the outdoor environmental education program onsite since being damaged by a



wildfire in December 2020. The project would be consistent with the land use and zoning designations for the project area, as the project would involve reopening the center and resuming operations similar to pre-fire conditions. No other similar type projects are currently proposed or under construction in the project area. Therefore, the project would not contribute to any significant impacts resulting from successive projects of the same type in the same place over time, and this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

CRITERION (c) *A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

The proposed project involves the renovation of Rancho Sonado in same area as pre-fire conditions and resuming operations of the outdoor environmental education program onsite since being damaged by a wildfire in December 2020. To improve public safety at the center, the project would also include improving the existing driveway/access road to provide adequate access to firefighting trucks/engines and other emergency vehicles to the property, establishment of fuel modification zones surrounding the proposed buildings at basecamp, and renovation of landscaping with drought-tolerant and native plant species. The area that would be disturbed during reconstruction, repair, and renovation of the center was assessed to determine the existing conditions associated with biological and cultural resources.

Biological Resources

This section is based on the *Biological Resources Assessment for the Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center Fire Restoration Project*, prepared by Michael Baker International (Michael Baker) on June 9, 2025 (Attachment A). Michael Baker biologists conducted a thorough literature review and seven field surveys in 2024 and 2025 to confirm existing site conditions and assess the potential for special-status plant and wildlife species that have been documented or that are likely to occur on or within the project site, which includes the project impact area plus a 50-foot buffer.

The 2020 Bond Fire claimed most of the buildings and other structures on the project site and burned the surrounding natural vegetation. Vegetation onsite is recovering and consists of a mix of native and non-native species. The project site supports 12 natural and semi-natural vegetation communities and 3 land cover types. Two vegetation communities mapped within the project site, arroyo willow thickets and disturbed holly-leaf cherry-toyon-greenbark ceanothus chaparral, are listed as sensitive on the California Sensitive Natural Communities list.¹⁰ Five special-status wildlife species were observed on the project site during surveys: San Diegan tiger whiptail (CDFW Species of Special Concern [SSC]), Cooper's hawk (CDFW Watch List), southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (CDFW Watch List), willow flycatcher (state endangered), and yellow-breasted chat (CDFW Species of Special Concern).

Due to the presence of potentially suitable habitat, focused surveys were conducted for the coastal California gnatcatcher (federal threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern) in May and June 2024; however, no coastal California gnatcatchers were detected. Additionally, five special-status plant species were determined to have potential to occur and were the focus of special-status plant surveys: intermediate mariposa lily (California Rare Plant Rank [CRPR] 1B.2), chaparral nolina (CRPR 1B.2),

¹⁰ California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2025. Sensitive Natural Communities Only by Life Form. <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities> (accessed April 7, 2025).



Braunton's milk-vetch (federally endangered, CRPR 1B.1), Robinson's pepper-grass (CRPR 4.3), and summer holly (CRPR 1B.2).

Two of these species were detected within the project site during rare plant surveys conducted in May and June 2024: 40 intermediate mariposa lilies and 9 chaparral nolina individuals. During the aquatic resources delineation on May 16, 2024, five aquatic features supporting 1,277 linear feet of jurisdiction were mapped within the project site as summarized below. A total of 0.16 acres of USACE waters of the US (0.02 acres of wetland and 0.14 acres non-wetland), 0.25 acres of RWQCB waters of the State (0.02 acres of wetland and 0.23 acres non-wetland), and 0.75 acres under CDFW jurisdiction (0.34 acres of vegetated streambed and 0.41 acres of associated riparian) were mapped.

None of the sensitive biological resources onsite occur within the project impact/disturbance areas. In addition, the construction contractor(s) would implement the construction BMPs included in Section 2 of this report to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and ensure no significant effects would occur to biological resources, including conducting preconstruction nesting bird surveys and avoiding disturbance of any active nested, conducting daily pre-activity biological surveys of the active construction area prior to vegetation removal or trimming to ensure the area is devoid of sensitive biological resources, and avoidance of jurisdictional aquatic resources during construction.

Cultural Resources

This section is based on the *Cultural Resources Memo Report for the Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center Fire Restoration Project*, prepared by Michael Baker International (Michael Baker) on June 9 26, 2025 (Attachment B). As part of the project-specific cultural resources assessment, Michael Baker completed a South Central Coastal Information Center records search, a Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Lands File search, a literature and historical map review, an intensive archaeological pedestrian survey on April 23, 2025, and an archaeological sensitivity analysis.

The above-mentioned cultural resources identification efforts were conducted to determine if there are cultural resources within the project impact area. The records search indicated that of the 21 cultural resources studies conducted within 0.5 miles of the project impact area, one previous study from 2008 intersects the proposed project impact area. As a result of the previous studies, 24 cultural resources sites have been recorded within 0.5 miles of the project impact area, none of which were reported to occur within the project impact area. However, there is one archaeological site that was reported approximately 50 feet from the northern portion of the project impact area (site CA-ORA-1014). The site CA-ORA-1014 was first recorded in 1982 as containing groundstone artifacts, flakes, and cores. The site record was updated in 1991, when testing was conducted which confirmed the presence of a short-term campsite with various artifacts. Due to the lack of significant subsurface remains, the site was recommended as not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In 2007, geologic borings were conducted within and near the archaeological site boundary. These borings were monitored for evidence of subsurface cultural resources, but no midden soils or additional artifacts were observed. The search results of the Sacred Lands File was negative.

The intensive archaeological pedestrian survey results indicate that the project impact area has undergone several periods of development. Previously used as an outdoor camp, the area retains one of the camp's former buildings, paved roads, a swimming pool, a gravel lot, some modern debris, and landscaping. Based on aerial photography, the existing structure does not meet the 50-year age criteria for historical resources, and therefore, was not assessed for listing in the California Register of Historical



Resources. The previously recorded location of CA-ORA-1014 was revisited, but no artifacts were identified. However, visibility was extremely poor with little to no ground visibility. No other diagnostic historic-period or precontact artifacts or features was observed during the survey.

Although the Sacred Lands File search was negative, and no historic or archaeological resources were identified during the archaeological pedestrian survey, the project impact area has moderate sensitivity for archaeological resources due to the previously discovered archaeological resources sites in the vicinity and the proximity to significant water sources like the Santa Ana River and Santiago Creek, which were historically vital for Native American communities. However, the construction contractor(s) would implement the construction BMPs included in Section 2 of this report to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and ensure no significant effects would occur to cultural resources, including temporary halting of construction activities in the immediate vicinity of any unanticipated discovery of cultural resources and/or human remains until adequately evaluated and appropriately treated by a qualified archaeologist (for cultural resources) and/or the County coroner and, as required, the Most Likely Descendant (for human remains).

Conclusion

Therefore, the project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances, and this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

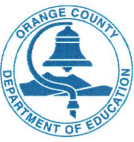
CRITERION (d) *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.*

There are no officially designated State scenic highways in the vicinity of the project site.¹¹ The closest officially designated state scenic highway is State Route 55 in Anaheim, approximately 10 miles from the project site. Views of the project site are not available from State Route 55 due to distance and intervening topography. Therefore, the project would not result in damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This exception does not apply to the proposed project.

CRITERION (e) *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.*

Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the State Water Resources Control Board to compile and maintain a hazardous materials sites listing. The project site and vicinity are not listed on the List of Hazardous Waste and Substances (Cortese List),

¹¹ California Department of Transportation. California State Scenic Highway System Map.
<https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>
(accessed May 2025).



including the GeoTracker and EnviroStor databases.^{12,13,14} Because the project would not be located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

CRITERION (f) *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

As discussed under Criterion (c) above and in the *Cultural Resources Memo Report for the Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center Fire Restoration Project* (Attachment B), based on aerial photography, the existing remaining structure onsite does not meet the 50-year age criteria for historical resources. As such, the project would not result in the substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, and this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on this analysis, the proposed Rancho Sonado Outdoor Science Education Center Fire Restoration Project meets the criteria to qualify for a Categorical Exemption under Classes 1, 2, 3, and 14, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301, 15302, 15303, and 15314. Further, none of the exceptions to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the proposed project, nor are there any unusual circumstances related to the project or site that could result in significant environmental effects. Therefore, OCDE concludes the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA.

¹² California Environmental Protection Agency. Cortese List Data Resources.
<https://calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/> (accessed May 2025).

¹³ State Water Resources Control Board. GeoTracker.
<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/?CMD=runreport&myaddress=8755+Santiago+Canyon+Rd%2C+Silverado%2C+CA%2C+92676%2C+USA#> (accessed May 2025).

¹⁴ California Department of Toxic Substances Control. EnviroStor.
<https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?myaddress=8755+Santiago+Cyn+Rd%2C+Silverado%2C+CA+92676> (accessed May 2025).

July 9, 2025

RH

☒ Mailed ☐ Distributed at meeting

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DATE: July 9, 2025
TO: Renee Hendrick, Deputy Superintendent
FROM: David Giordano, Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services
SUBJECT: Education Code Section 1302 Information

BACKGROUND:

In order to recruit and retain high quality candidates for positions within the organization, the Department has prided itself in maintaining a competitive salary and benefits package. Accordingly, the Department has made efforts to remain competitive with salaries in the upper quadrant among similar Orange County school districts and county offices. The Department recently completed a comprehensive maintenance study whereby many positions within the organization received an increase in salary in order to remain competitive with similar positions in Orange County school districts and county offices.

In accordance with Education Code Section 1302 and Board Policy 100-10, attached is information for all employees who will receive a salary increase of more than \$10,000 in a 12-month period since we last reported in November 2023. The \$10,000 limit was set in statute in 1999, and has not been adjusted since December 2024.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the Education Code Section 1302 information for all employees who will receive a salary increase of more than \$10,000 in a 12-month period.

COORDINATOR, WILLIAMS SETTLEMENT LEGISLATION	\$ 33,162.00
COORDINATOR, STUDENT PROGRAMS	\$ 20,520.00