

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams.

WILLIAMS: Present.

BARKE: All right, so for the benefit of the record, the regular meeting of the Orange County Board of Education is called to order at 3:32. May I have a motion to approve the agenda?

SPARKS: So moved.

WILLIAMS: Second.

BARKE: All right, so I would like to, let's see, I need to amend it to remove the presentation for ACCBE. Does anybody have any issues with that? Okay. All those in favor?

WILLIAMS, BARKE, SHAW, VALDES, SPARKS: Aye.

BARKE: Okay, that's done. And then a motion to adopt the minutes.

SPARKS: So moved.

WILLIAMS: Second.

BARKE: All right, all those in favor?

WILLIAMS, BARKE, SHAW, VALDES, SPARKS: Aye.

BARKE: All right, we're good to go.

SPARKS: Perfect.

BARKE: So now we're going to move to closed session until 5:00 PM.

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

BARKE: All right. For the short delay, our inter-district transfers ran a little late. Love to get started and love to invite. I would love to invite Pastor Craig Hill.

PASTOR CRAIG HILL: Thank you, council members. Let's pause in a word of prayer. Our great God, we come this evening and we begin this meeting by recognizing your presence in this room, in our schools and in our lives. You are present this month especially and we offer a word of gratitude to you in this November busy time, but we take a moment to recognize the good things in our lives are ultimately a result of your graciousness to us. We pray for our board members, Valdes, Barke, Williams, Shaw, and Sparks that they would continue to provide the skilled oversight needed for the various educational programs and policies that serve the families and employees of our county. Grant them the wisdom necessary to make the decisions that they must. We also pray for our students, teachers and staff at our various schools and programs as they navigate the many challenges of learning and growing up in our digital and distracted age. Finally, we ask you our great God that we might honor you in this chamber today as we invite you into this meeting, as we recognize the overwhelming value of each student, the overwhelming value of each parent, of each teacher, of each staff member, of each administrator in the county of Orange, and even in this current cultural moment. Would you open our eyes to the humanity and dignity of our rivals and building us a compassion for each other that transcends our politics and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

BARKE: Thank you so much for those words of wisdom. Appreciate that. Next, I'd like to call up Dennis Cole to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

COLE: Would you all rise as we pledge allegiance to our nation's flag saying...

AUDIENCE: 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. You may be seated.

BARKE: Thank you. All right, do we have comment cards? We do.

SHAW: Yes we do.

BARKE: Okay. We do.

SHAW: Did we skip introductions?

BARKE: Do we have any introductions?

HENDRICK: We have none.

BARKE: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay, so I'm holding 23 comment cards, so we thought we would go to two minutes, so what I'll do is I'll read a name and then who's on deck so whoever's on deck we can maybe position yourself so we can kind of keep the line moving and we'll get through all of them. Okay, so I'll read out a first name. We're going to have Charles followed by Michelle.

CHARLES: Do the best I can since I'm being ripped off out of a minute, my name is Charles Kelly. I've been a teacher with the ACCESS in Orange County Department of Education since 1997. I spoke to this board about a year and a half ago to express concerns regarding Mr. Miramontes' financial improprieties in the county as far as I saw, and academic fraud as I'd put it. Sadly, I'm here a year and a half later to address those exact two same concerns, academic fraud. First of all, it's always been a problem in alternative ed programs. It's clearly spread district wide. Recently I had a student transferred to me after his freshman year at a district school in Orange High. First semester he had failed five out of six classes second semester, five out of six classes. Then in an eight-week summer school class, he managed to earn 50 credits, five, zero.

That's 10 courses over a summer school. I've never heard of that in my 28 years of teaching. Sadly, nobody seems to care except for me. As soon as I got that info, I passed it on emails to my principal, to a school counselor, to somebody at the director level and even to our current superintendent and I heard nothing from any of these people, so that's one issue. The other one regarding financial responsibility. When Mr. Miramontes came on board, he went on a hiring spree at the county like I've never seen in my time here, sadly, that is continued unabated. The vast majority of the hiring are people at extremely mid-level and upper level management with salaries of 200, 300K. If you make 200K, you're in the top 10% earners, 300K up, you're in the top 5% earners and all these sorts of people.

Then you can see on California Transparent, have received raises every single year for the last five years in a row. I understand. I'd like an explanation for Miramontes's one year here he got paid \$284,000 in regular pay, \$328,000 in other pay. Don't know what that means. I know that he got \$612,000 of taxpayer money for one year. That's outrageous. I'd love an explanation for that. I'd also like to point out that the federal government recently just raised the social security by 2.8% to try to keep up with 3% inflation. I understand I'm not very involved in the union at all, not even in the union, but I heard recently that during negotiations, the teachers like me who have been in a classroom for 28 years were offered a 2% raise while Mr. Bean who's been here for one year has been offered a 10% raise. I find this stuff kind of, I don't know, a bit ridiculous and shocking and I'm out of time.

SHAW: Michelle will be followed by Laurie.

MICHELLE: Good evening, board members. My name is Michelle Sapanara, assistant superintendent of student services at Springs Charter Schools and I'm proud to share some of the wonderful things happening at Citrus and Orange Springs Charter Schools. Our students are thriving academically and socially as we focus on strengthening skills in reading, writing, and math. Families have been amazing partners and together we're seeing great growth. Middle school students are especially excited about the career exploration program where they're getting hands-on experience in real-world fields like nursing, EMT, criminalistics, child development and information technology. Learning everything from fingerprinting and coding to surgical

hand washing and infant care. I'd also like to express strong support for NOVA Academy's charter petition. They provide a high-quality student-centered education, values that we share and celebrate with you across Orange County. Thank you for your continued support of public charter schools that put students first. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Laurie will be followed by Rob.

LAURIE: Good evening. Normally I like to come in here and sit quietly on the side, but I've been forced to come and make a statement and so have all the teachers that you see in red and the reason that we're here is we feel like we are being insulted with our three and a half percent COLA that is being offered to us. While an HR study was done and a majority of our upper administrative unit cabinet have not only gotten a 2% COLA but they've also gotten a new titles. They've also gotten, raises from about 5% to 28%, so we do the work here, we work with the students that nobody wants to work with. Every single day we come here and we give our energy, we give our love, we do the job that nobody else wants to do. To make us the top quartile is the very, we're asking just to be number seven in the county and we should be number one to be honest.

Nobody wants to do our job, nobody wants to work with the kids we work with, whether we're in mod severe, Connections programs, whether we're in ACCESS in juvenile hall, community day schools, nobody wants our job, we want our job. We're happy to do it. You've never seen these teachers before unless you visited our sites and that's because we do what we're supposed to do and we love what we do. Today you're seeing everyone in red because we're offended and we're upset that that's all we're being offered while others are getting 10% or more and a COLA on top of that. Thank you.

SHAW: Rob will be followed by Christine.

ROB: All right, good evening, Dr. Bean and members of the Orange County Board of Education. My name is Rob Simonson and I've been here for 32 years as a teacher now and for more than three decades I'd have the privilege of working with the toughest population in Orange County. Students facing serious behavioral, emotional and academic challenges and our teachers and staff show up every single day with patience, professionalism, and heart. They do some of the hardest and most meaningful work in education. Recently, Dr. Bean you received a 10% raise and the other OCDE staff have also received significant increases justified by the Department's goal of placing employees in the top quartile. By comparison, the rest of us teachers and staff received a 1% cost of living increase last year. To me, that's incredibly insulting and I don't know how you justify that.

Clearly the teachers in the frontline staff who work directly with our most vulnerable students are not being rewarded in the same way you are. Dr. Bean, we support you and appreciate your leadership, but that support must be mutual. If we are to stand behind you, we need you to stand behind us to show through action that you value the people who carry out the Department's mission every day. After 32 years. I can tell you this, the true strength of OCDE lies in its people, it's time that their pay reflects the value they bring. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Orange County students and educators.

SHAW: Christine will be followed by Jacqueline.

CHRISTINE: Good afternoon, board members and Dr. Bean, and Ms. Hendrick. I'm back. A few months ago, I came here to speak on behalf of my CCPA teachers. You listened. We came back and you guys granted a reduction in credits for our students to graduate. Today I'm back to ask you to listen to me and to my fellow teachers. I want you to know that many of our leaders here at OCDE to include Dr. Bean and Dr. Martinez-Poulin have shared with us their personal stories of a teacher who made an impact on their life. They both understand the importance that one teacher can make on one student's life. My fellow teachers in ACCESS and I are those difference makers for our students. We have the forgotten students, the displaced or the bottom, oh, excuse me, or the ones given up by the traditional schools. We help them graduate. We give them hope.

We build confidence. Despite our positive impact on our students and local community. Our ACCESS teachers and myself remain at the bottom of the county pay scale, A 25th, the 25th percentile or the bottom of the rung for a first year teacher coming out of college, 25 out of 30. 18 for those of his teachers with a high credential, I have a doctorate. I'm at 18 percentage. We don't get longevity. We don't get extra for our credentials. When teachers ask for raises, the Department say it can't afford them. Yet this past year it hired more top management positions than ever, gave significant raises, promotions, new titles, and a 2% COLA all while maintaining insurance premiums for management and administrative staff. The Department's actions reveal that us teachers are not a priority.

SHAW: Jacqueline will be followed by Dana.

JACQUELINE: Good evening, board members. My name is Jacqueline Kriskey. I'd like to let you know what I do as a teacher in ACCESS. I teach students who have set their homes on fire and killed their parents on purpose. I have students who have held guns and killed people. I have students who have been sex trafficked by their parents, their family members and their clergy. I have young people abused beyond recognition. Those are just my regular population. I have young people who have suffered, created suffering and my specialty is to provide them with hope, education and a way out. This group of teachers that you see here before you are the people students call when their lives are difficult when they're in turmoil because we are the adults that show up. We are more than teachers. We're social workers, resource managers, food deliveries. We buy diapers, clothes for interviews, Uber and Lyft rides, school supplies, baby clothes, baby food and we pay for it out of our own pocket. Over the course of time, I had to listen to Dr. Poulin, Dr. Bean talk about how education improve that public education and our teachers believed in them. Yet when it comes to valuing their own public school teachers, the message is clear. We don't value you. We watch as our superintendent and our board lend money to charters out of our money. Spend taking a month for a lobbying firm that lobbies against charter school accountability and raises the top management. The message is clear. Charters matter. Public doesn't. Thank you.

SHAW: Dana followed by Mariah.

DANA: First of all, thank you for allowing me to come up here and speak with you. Everybody you see here in red, you can see we're passionate about our job. We love what we do. We work

with a lot of students that a lot of other districts don't want to deal with, but we like what we do and what we do is we bond with these students. We forge personal relationships with them so we can get them educated to get them their high school diploma. We make them contributing members of society after everybody else has given up on them and we're just up here to say we love what we do. We're here. We're passionate. As you can see, there's a lot of us here. We have that passion for teaching. We love what we do and we just want to be respected. That's all. We feel like we've been disrespected.

I have a letter here that was presented to you guys back in May where they're talking about giving raises to the upper management and it says "According to the Department has made efforts to remain competitive with salaries in the upper quadrant among similar Orange County school districts and county offices". That's all we're asking for. We're not asking for a whole lot. We just want to make sure that we're respected and that you appreciate what we do and right now we don't feel that way and we've gone through three different superintendents in the last year and a half, two years and we've gone through a lot of different hiring. We've gone through a lot of different mission statements. We've been through a lot, but I just want you to know that we really care about what we do. We care about these students and we just hope that you reflect that in how you take care of us. Thank you for your time.

SHAW: Mariah followed by Christopher.

MARIAH: Good evening, members of the board and superintendent Dr. Bean. My name is Mariah Butron Sanders and I serve as the proud founding principal for Navigator Schools, Orange Prep High School, as well as our greater navigator community, which also includes Orange Prep School, our TK through eighth campus, both our scheduled to launch in August of 2026. We've had a really exciting few months, but before I continue, I just want to share my great appreciation for those who have spoken before me and their sentiments. I believe that their voices are incredibly strong and now I'll continue my update. We recently welcomed our new office manager and community engagement facilitator who's with me tonight, Margie, who are already helping us connect with many families along with our Orange Prep Principal Camille Geneva. We will begin hosting reading clubs, which are free weekly community-based events that help young students build early literacy and introduce families to what our schools are all about, which is strong academics and having a sense of belonging.

On the high school side we're continuing to work closely with Santiago Canyon College and their academic team to design a middle college program that will allow our future students to earn college credit, explore their public service passions and potentially earn an AA degree while still in high school. We're grateful to your support and I also wanted to voice my support of tonight's vote for NOVA Academy in favor. They have a phenomenal academic model and have built something really, really special, so I'm really looking forward to that vote tonight. Thank you for your time and for believing in what we're building.

SHAW: Christopher followed by Katherine.

CHRISTOPHER: Good evening board superintendent team. I began my career with OCDE in 1996, so 29 years ago and I have served students across multiple programs and campuses. I started in the deaf and hard of hearing program at University High School and had worked at

Venado Middle School as well as our one-time Deerfield Elementary School. I have worked in the ACCESS program and in juvenile hall as well, so I've seen many of the programs across the county and been a teacher in many of those programs as well. Our title is teacher but we do so much more than just teach. I have been on the committee when we built the 1000 building at University High School. I met with Pat McCaughey and we planned the furniture, the technology, met with Irvine and was a part of those committees. I was sent to Orange Coast College to set up the adult transition program.

We kind of rebuilt it from the ground up as it stands today. Currently I'm in juvenile hall and the range of kids that we get throughout ACCESS in juvenile hall is wide and they have a lot of needs and whatnot. I love it. I love the kids, I love the programs and we're just asking. Our title is more than just teacher. We all wear many hats and I have served as a technology coordinator for 20 years as well. While I was teaching without that title or any extra compensation, did all the purchasing, the repairing, the coordinating installations of smart boards, projectors, promethean boards, that kind of technology. I served in the grant writing committee for OCDE with a California Pathways Initiative with Amy Kaufman and we put that program together and planned everything that was going to be done. As a part of that, like many teachers, I've attended countless trainings and conferences, work directly with administrators to improve programs and thank you very much. We're just looking for equal compensation.

SHAW: Katherine followed by Rosalinda.

KATHERINE: Hi, my name is Katherine Lu. I've been a teacher at the county's alternative education program for 25 years. I'm reading another teacher's speech, Sonia Torres, who has been here for 26 years. "ACCESS has been experiencing a decline in student enrollment and yet we've seen more administrative hires in the last two years than any other time in my 26 year career. We're told that there's no money, but somehow our budget reserves continue to grow. Reserves that now exceed the state's statutory limits as outlined in the California Ed code. If we are truly operating at a loss, those reserves would not be increasing. As educators, we serve all marginalized, most vulnerable youth in Orange County. We do this work with dedication, passion, professionalism, but morale suffers when the message received is that there's more money for management but none for our certificated staff. Equitable compensation is not about entitlement or greed. It's about fairness. It's about recognizing that student success and engagement depends directly on teacher's morale. When educators feel valued and supported, students thrive. Alternative education and our special schools Connections, certificated staff deserve the same level of respect and consideration afforded to management, nothing more and certainly nothing less". Thank you.

SHAW: Rosalinda, followed by Joe.

ROSALINDA: Hi, good evening. My name is Rosalinda Ramirez. I've been a teacher with the ACCESS program for 20 years. I love what I do. I absolutely love the ACCESS population. I have jumped districts seven times, but I keep coming back to ACCESS. This is my third time, it will be my last time because I want to retire here. I really feel a passion towards my community and I came from alternative ed myself and I like being able to serve the students from where I came from. That being said, when I saw the salary study that was submitted to the board, it was most disappointing. I had wondered several staff had received hikes in pay of \$10,000 or more

and when was the last time that staff had worked one-on-one with the student to help them meet a IEP goal. When was the last time that staff had in sat in front of a room of students and instructed them? So, I would like to see equity, I would like to see teachers valued on the level that those staff were valued. That's all we're asking for. Thank you.

SHAW: Joe followed by Brittanie.

JOE: Good evening school board. My name's Joe. I'm also part of the ACCESS program and as my colleagues before me have stated, we love what we do, we love our students even though a lot of other places can't wait to get rid of these kids. I know when some of you have come to our graduations, you hear the stories of these kids, how hard home life was, foster care, whatever it might be, but then they give the speech and they're so thankful for the things that we have done for them. Sometimes you can't put a price on something like that and I just think that what we do for these kids is not just being a teacher. Counselors, we provide them needs, whatever their needs may be and also, but we're always there for them. They can miss two, three weeks, but one thing they always know is true when they come back to school, me, Mr. M., I will be there waiting for them, so all I'm asking is that be fair in everything that we do, so because we wear many hats, other people just do one thing, but we do many, so that's one. Two, I've always had this thing of, and then I know that the charter people, they do great things, but our district schools, a lot of the programs that they talk about, we already have at district schools. We have a college thing over there at the Santa College. We have that. We have a lot of stuff, so the thing is if it's money, then that's money should be going to our districts to improve them even more. We've talked about what programs that we can offer students and we all talk about. Yeah, sometimes not every kid will go to college, so let's offer them something else. Auto shop, nursing, all those kinds of things that they offer at Santa Ana Valley High School. They have a great program there. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Brittanie, followed by Catherine.

BRITTANIE: Good evening, members of the board. My name is Brittanie Flauding and I have proudly served the OCDE Connections program for nearly 20 years. I speak tonight for the educators who are the backbone of this Department, those who have served, the students who have been overlooked, misunderstood, or given up on in other settings. We are specialists. We provide trauma-informed care crisis intervention structure, unwavering belief in our students' potential. We show up every day not as teachers, but as mentors, advocates and emotional anchors, balancing intense and unpredictable challenges with professionalism, patience, and steady leadership. We manage aggressive outbursts. We're scratched, we're bitten, we're kicked, we're punched, and at times we have furniture thrown at us. And we intervene when students are in possession of a dangerous object or in crisis with intent to harm and we still show up and we stay regulated so our students can learn how. When staffing is short, we fill in the gaps. When situations escalate, we stabilize and restore safety and dignity and we return day after day because our students deserve consistency and they can depend on us to provide that. We don't only teach academics, we also teach communication, emotional regulation, independence and hope. We celebrate growth that doesn't show up on a spreadsheet. We build relationships and create lasting change. Many of us use personal funds to celebrate moments of belonging and celebrate those small wins. They really do matter. Words of appreciation are meaningful, but words alone are not enough. If you value the outcomes, the stability and the impact of this

program then value the teachers who make this impact possible. Invest in the teachers who invest in these students every single day. Thank you.

SHAW: Catherine, followed by Heidi.

CATHERINE: Hi, I'm Catherine Reid. I've started with Connection, a teacher for Connections. I started with the county 26 years ago in special classes and I've been a paraeducator and a transition behavior assistant and now I'm teaching. I love our students and I always just say the best things about them and I focus on their strengths. I do feel like now maybe is a time to kind of point out some of the significant struggles they have and how it affects us as teachers. So, to go off of Brittanie, I mean we work with very aggressive students sometimes. Some of them are very engaged in a lot of self-injuries behavior in which we're going to try to protect them and keep them safe, but in the process we're getting injured ourselves. So, I've had two weddings this summer where I had to find a dress that covered my arms all the way even though it was really hot outside because I was covered in bruises.

I was trying to hide those things. I've had a concussion where five minutes of doing the dishes I've had to sit down. I can't take care of my own family. I need help with that, but I still go back every day. I go back and I'm there for the kids. We work on not only all their daily living skills and their academic skills and we're trying to teach self-regulation and my goal is always to get them back to district. I've done that quite a few times. It's always a way to celebrate and we celebrate all their little things. Taking a year to teach a kid how to use a spoon, right, that's a huge deal, but I'm also there with the families. I'm there consoling the families when their child just had a five plus minute seizure and they're intubated right now in the hospital. I'm riding in the ambulances with the kids to the ER, staying with them until a parent comes. Sometimes staying with the parent because they're so emotional they don't know how to, they're just having too much of a hard time and I'm that comfort for them because we build relationships. Oh, thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Heidi. Followed by Ronna.

HEIDI: Hi. This is such a different experience hearing all the hearts of these people all surrounding me, but I do want to share that we are very grateful for what we're doing with our charter school. So, in the spirit of Thanksgiving approaching, I wanted to share some messages of gratitude for Suncoast. Some of the families and students shared with me just a few of them. It's a pleasure being here every month with you guys. All right, "I like my Zoom classes with Mr. Alex and Ms. Stacy and Ms. Rebecca and I like mama being my teacher with my friends. I like Suncoast because I like Miss Heidi, my mommy as my teacher", so young kids, "I'm most grateful for Suncoast because I get an awesome teacher. I get to learn cool and interesting things at my own pace. Go to fun enrichment classes like robotics". "I love Suncoast because I love the freedom to be able to teach my Eliana what I feel is best for her learning style and her educational journey. It's not dictated by a mainstream government system. Suncoast allows me to be in control of how she learns at her own pace and how she learns and gives me the privilege to raise her in the way I know it's best and provides the help, support and funds in order to keep her learning and loving school. I'm grateful for Suncoast Preparatory Academy that she receives funds to do fun things like gymnastics and pottery".

Macy is grateful for Suncoast Preparatory Academy that she receives funds to learn about the world around us. "I'm thankful for the specialized and unique education that Suncoast Preparatory Academy allows our family to experience through our great teacher Heidi Landgraf the educational field trips and the funds that allow us to experience new skills and to provide learning and materials for our children. I'm so grateful for the many opportunities I have to truly connect with so many of our families during our weekly field trips and while teaching my in-person classes weekly. Thank you for the bottom of our hearts for ensuring that Suncoast continues to thrive in every aspect". Thank you.

SHAW: All right, Ronna followed by Michele.

RONNA: Good evening board members. My name is Ronna Yelin, and I'm part of the school support leadership team at Suncoast Prep. Several coworkers and I are clearing our CTE credentials through the OCDE and have really appreciated the support of your staff. We are working on building our CTE program and we are excited to offer more opportunities for our students. I've also been grateful to be a part of the art administrator's monthly meetings led by Scott Fitzpatrick and last night Jen Salas with the guided language acquisition design, also known as GLAD strategies program was there to help reinforce what we learned at the multiple language learners in the arts. The professional development this past August, we got to brainstorm ideas on how we will incorporate GLAD into our school and we even have one of our amazing teachers, Alex Ferizuka become a train the trainer as he's already implementing GLAD with his students. This includes Biliteracy, the artist statement, the process, materials and storytelling through art. Steven Kahn introduced us to contacts for apprenticeships and helped us get a start with our chief science officer program via the OCDE. We had a very tight deadline, but we were able to sign up three students and we are thrilled to get them started. I was also able to meet Trish Walsh last night, which was also amazing. Again, our staff, teachers and families are appreciating all of your continued support. Thank you all so much.

SHAW: Michele followed by Michael.

MICHELE: Good afternoon board members and Dr. Bean. My name is Michele Hollis and I'm a teacher with the ACCESS program. I started as a paraeducator and I've been here for over 28 years. I'd like to say that the students that we work with, the teachers we're passionate about our jobs. The students that come to us, they're already in tier two or three and in terms of social emotional trauma. We are trained professionals, highly trained, and we don't feel valued. The things that we deal with on a daily basis, we have gangs, we have fights, we've had kids crushing pills on the desk and snorting it to get high. There's all kinds of things that I'm sure you guys don't deal with on a regular basis. These kids have not been successful at traditional school districts and they come to our program which is alternative and correctional and we are the ones that are on the front lines with these students working with them on a daily basis and top management and above has received compensation and we have not and it makes us feel insulted and not valued. The students that we're talking about, I've been to the gym and working with other teachers and they say, "Oh, you work for ACCESS". "Oh, those are the bad kids or the bottom of the barrel" and I don't see it that way. I love the kids we work with and I say that these are the kids that just got caught because kids will be kids, but there's significant social and emotional trauma and we are there every day to deal with that. Thank you.

SHAW: Michael followed by Marcia.

MICHAEL: Hi, good evening. Thank you for taking the time to hear me today, Dr. Bean. Hi, very good to see you. I wanted to tell you first, thank you so much for the family day in the park you had a couple of weeks ago. It was a really special day and it really built a sense of community. I could see it in the group and your vision 2030, I'm glad to be a part of that. I really enjoy the vision that you're putting together there and remind you we are your big audacious goal. To the board. Hi, it's been a while since I've been here. I don't know if you remember me. I was here the last two years as the Memorial Day teacher for the student who won the essay award. So, I've been up there taking pictures with you a couple of times and I'm looking forward to doing that again, this coming May. I have some students in mind that are absolutely special.

I'm about done with my tenure here with ACCESS. I'm in my 27th year. There's going to be a new group of teachers coming through and I would love for them to want to come and work with ACCESS and they're going to need to be paid. So, if we could please make sure that they are treated and that we can bring in people, they're going to be quality to take my place and a lot of the faces here who've been here for years and are ready to go and we're fighting for ACCESS for the future. So, I just wanted to say thank you again and keep us in mind as you're working on the upcoming races. Appreciate it. Thank you.

SHAW: Marcia, followed by Amy.

MARCIA: Good evening and thank you so much for allowing us to have our two minutes. My name is Marcia Garten and I am here as by student's last chance. As teachers here with the ACCESS program, we all know that these are the kids who we stand between them and a life of poverty. I love my job and my students and I took a massive pay cut to become the best teacher I could be because our students need the best teachers. We all know GATE program students can have just a teacher who breathes and fogs a mirror and those kids are going to be great, but our students who have oppositional defiant behaviors who have chronic truism, chronic poverty, I can go on and on, but they need a lot of help. I proudly stand with my colleagues who have many, many credentials because we're all dedicated to what we do.

I wanted to thank you to the pastor who reminded us all that this is the season to be grateful. This is the time for you all as a board to think about maybe coming to our schools and taking a look and meeting our students because I know you're all extremely proud of them when they graduate. In addition to which please remember that our students really are the poorest in the county with the most challenges. Yet as a teacher, I'm inspired by my students who overcome enormous challenges of drug addiction, severe poverty, chronic gang activity, extreme depression. We have my colleagues work with acute anxiety and some, I actually have students too. I'm so sorry to say I have suicidal ideations. This is not the average teacher's caseload. This is not. We talk about our students being so challenged, but they're not. Every single one of our students is a case study in and of themselves and everyone in this room knows all of our students' story. One of our last programs that was extremely effective was know my name, know my story, and that's what we stand before you. So, thank you for your support.

SHAW: Thank you. Amy, followed by Darren.

AMY: Good evening. My name is Amy Sydoruk and I have been a teacher for 27 years. 24 of those for ACCESS. I've worked in all sorts of settings. Day schools, contract learning, 18 years at Pacific Coast High School and I'm currently at Sunburst Youth Academy. I absolutely love my job. Every day, the teachers in ACCESS work. Well, first of all, we are all here tonight, not because we don't love our jobs. We're here because we do love our jobs. We want to keep doing this important work, but loving our love for our students shouldn't mean accepting less than fair compensation. Dr. Bean, respectfully, you received a 10% raise because your salary was considered below the county average. Fair enough? Absolutely. But where are we on that same pay scale? We're being offered a small percent while others received that on top of a raise. If you look at the budget on the first few pages, you'll see the Department's reserves are 115% of the annual budget, nearly triple what other county offices hold. That number keeps growing every year.

So, when we're told there's no money, it just doesn't simply add up. We don't want to take anything from anyone. We just want fairness, respect, and recognition. That the programs making a difference in our students' lives are worth investing in. Being in the top quartile for pay isn't just a go on paper, it's how you attract and retain quality educators. For our most challenging students, being valued isn't about words. It's about action. Our students fight every day to overcome obstacles. We do the same for them. Please show this department that this Department values the people who make its mission real. Thank you very much for your time.

SHAW: And Darren.

DARREN: I have notes. Hi, my name's Darren Lax. Can you guys hear me? My name's Darren Lax. I came to Irvine, California on a basketball scholarship to Christ College of Irvine in '92. Now it's Concordia. Kirk Anderson hired me as an ACCESS teacher. I'm here on, I'm going to retire in August, but I'm here on behalf of everybody in red. I want to let you guys know how hard it is to do what we do. And I'll give you an example. Recently at our site, after telling the administrator multiple times, gang members cannot be at the same site, but they put them there. Okay, Garden Grove PD had a revolver loaded revolver on campus, pointed it at somebody else, guy hit him with a car. Garden Grove PD arrested my student and his girlfriend who was there pregnant and the other people. Basically, I had no trust in this new leadership.

What I did was I went to Garden Grove PD and I said, listen, I need you guys to come to our site between 12:15, 12:45 because we had you guys arrest one of our students with a loaded gun. Showed up eight police cars. Okay, Mr. Williams, you're a sworn Sheriff reserve. You understand this better than anybody. Imagine these guys going to work every day worried about their safety more than teaching the kids. Imagine the kids' safety. So basically, what I'm saying is it's not easy what we do. I have two daughters. One goes to San Juan Hills, one's at Auburn. I want to come home to them. Very difficult. Thank you.

SHAW: Now that was all the cards I had. Is there any more? Okay, I guess that concludes public comments.

BARKE: Okay, thank you very much. We appreciate all of your time and you coming here to be with us tonight. We know you're busy and we really appreciate you coming and sharing your

comments, so thank you for being here. All right, we're going to move along in the agenda. I'm going to call up Jonathan Swanson and Wes Kriesel to the podium.

SWANSON: Good evening, Superintendent Bean, Board President Barke, members of the board, members of the audience. My name is Jonathan Swanson. I'm the executive director of our curriculum instruction and academic enrichment unit. And with me, I have Wes Kriesel who is our AI education lead. You had a chance to hear from Wes a little bit over a year ago on our AI progress and we're here actually today to present you with an AI framework as an update to our work for you to hear a little bit about. So, I'm going to share with Wes.

KRIESEL: Thank you. Good evening, everybody. It's a pleasure to be back here and as Jonathan said, I was here last year with an update and this year's update is to share our AI framework with you. So just to draw your attention to the 5-3-1 strategic initiative, Dr. Bean's 5-3-1 strategic initiative plan, AI or integrating AI is actually a part of those five strategic initiatives. So that's where this comes from. And furthermore, we have a vision statement up there. I'm not going to read it to you. I'm simply going to call out that three elements of the vision statement form the core of our framework, and you're going to see that on this next slide here. So, we have three domains, ethical integration, innovation and learning and workforce preparedness. Before we go into each of those demands, we're going to spend a little bit of time in each, but I just want to present to you this quote and I want you to look at this and just guess what number might be in there and I'm going to read it to you, "Blank percent of leaders would rather hire a less experienced candidate with AI skills over a more experienced candidate without them".

And the number is 71%. And so, as that might be surprising to you, this comes from the Microsoft LinkedIn 2024 work skills work trend index annual report, and it's a year old, but this is really making clear why it's relevant that we address this. Our first domain is ethical integration. We want to integrate AI ethically and safely. You'll notice that this has three white columns. These pillars are, you're going to see these audiences in each part of the framework. So, we have the first pillar for educators, the second for students, and the third for districts. So, the first pillar under ethical integration is what we call AI wisdom. I'm going to hit pause there and we're going to come back and we're going to spend a little more time on that because it is the one area the districts have requested the most support and help from us.

We're going to come back to that. AI literacy means do students know how to use AI when appropriate? Do they understand how AI works and can they recognize that? And AI awareness is we support districts with crafting messages to their communities and their staff about AI so that they're aware. Our second domain is innovation and learning. And I'm sure if I asked you, do we measure progress or our achievement in schools, you could think of statewide measures that we use, but if I said how do we measure innovation, the answer might be less clear. So, in this area, innovation and learning, we're paying attention to, for our educators, spotlighting effective practices so that districts can learn from each other. For AI agency for students, we have a student network that works on solving real world problems with AI applications. And then our third support for districts is helping them navigate how to optimize their ROI.

They spend dollars on AI tools. We help them understand that they have to have a way to evaluate whether those tools are really effective or not. And our final domain is workforce

preparedness. And so, we offer certifications for educators, we help districts with establishing competencies for students, and then we keep track of trends in the job market so that we can help our districts align with their offering to where the workforce is going. Let's circle back to AI wisdom. AI wisdom you'll remember is our pillar for educators Under ethical integration. We have three Es that we use efficiency and engagement and empowerment, and we refer to efficiency as, does AI help me do my job better, faster? And then we have, the second E is engagement. Does AI help me improve my relationships and my engagement with my colleagues or with my students? And our third E is empowerment, and this is the critical question, do I know when to use AI and when not to? And if I'm going to use AI, do I know which tool these three Es, which are part of AI wisdom, help us answer the question, is AI useful to us? And so, I want to thank you for your time and attention. I'm happy to answer any questions and I'm grateful to be here again to give you this update. Thank you.

BARKE: Thank you. Appreciate it. Any questions?

SPARKS: So, I'm sure you're doing this, but I just want clarification, are they also understanding how the different AI platforms have different types of bias built into them and some have less bias than others, and are you going into those kinds of ethical things as well? Because people hear AI and everyone thinks it's the same and it's not.

KRIESEL: Yes, you're absolutely right. And we do address that with our districts as we advise them and consult with them and make them aware that they should be addressing this with their staff and their students.

SPARKS: Okay. Yeah, very important and not easy because it's changing all the time too, but...

KRIESEL: Very true.

SPARKS: It's the wild west, so we need to be addressing the wild west constantly.

KRIESEL: Yeah. Thank you.

BARKE: Good point. Ken, did you have something?

WILLIAMS: I do. So as part of the ethical considerations, we've heard a lot about AI contributing to the suicidal ideation of a young man that was in the news a week or two ago. What are we doing to prevent that sort of situation?

KRIESEL: That's a great question. So, number one, we advise all districts have to have a technology vetting process, and so tools are not adopted unless they have data privacy safeguards in place, and that they have what we call a walled garden so the district administration can see the prompts and monitor those for red flag terms such as suicidal ideation. Granted the situation that I think you're talking about, the student wasn't on a school device, not in a school account, and so there's always that risk. So that's where AI literacy becomes important, and so we're coaching our districts on how to offer lessons that are grade appropriate, that show students how to detect AI, how to use it, how to understand what it is, because it is confusing. If you've ever used chat GPT, it sounds very convincing. It sounds like a very good friend, but you have to be able to tell what's real and what's human.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Trustee Sparks makes a good comment about sometimes the responses may be somewhat biased, and it all depends on who's programming it, right? Is it somebody with the right values and sensibilities and moderation that perhaps we want? I think the biggest buy-in from a parent's perspective is that you have to make it secure that their child is not going to be going down that pathway of darkness and despair and depression and suicidality.

KRIESEL: Yeah. You're absolutely right.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

BARKE: Any other questions? Well, thank you so much. We appreciate the update. Look forward to seeing you again.

KRIESEL: All right, thank you so much.

BARKE: Thank you. All right. Do I have a motion for the consent calendar?

SPARKS: So moved.

WILLIAMS: Second.

BARKE: Wonderful. All those in favor?

WILLIAMS, BARKE, SHAW, VALDES, SPARKS: Aye.

BARKE: Any opposed? All right. Passes 5-0. Renee, do we have any charter submissions?

HENDRICK: We have none this evening.

BARKE: Okay, great. Aracely, thank you everyone for being so patient tonight. Appreciate it.

CHASTAIN: Good evening, President Barke, trustees, Superintendent Bean. Today the board will hold a hearing to grant or deny the countywide charter petition submitted by NOVA Academy Orange County. The petition has been reviewed according to California Education Code as legally required. You've been provided with the Orange County Department of Education staff report that summarizes findings from that review and offers recommendations for consideration by this board. Following a comprehensive review with and clarification meetings with the petitioner's on September 8th and October 16th, staff recommend that the board approve the NOVA Academy OC countywide charter petition for a five-year term with conditions designed to ensure accountability and address the concerns identified in the report. NOVA Academy currently operates a district authorized charter in Santa Ana, NOVA Academy Early College High School. Under the authorization of the Santa Ana Unified School District. The proposed countywide school would serve new students beginning in middle school to allow for earlier intervention and academic support through a sixth through 12th model.

The petitioners emphasize that the new school would expand access to instructional supports for students across Orange County who might otherwise lack similar options within their local districts. Staff's review identified both academic concerns and areas of strength within the

petition. First, staff noted academic concerns that the existing NOVA Academy Early College High School. Over the past four years, student performance on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress or CAASPP shows a decline in proficiency in both English language arts and mathematics. In '24-'25 school year, only 2.17% of students met or exceeded standards in mathematics compared with 20.6% in Santa Ana Unified school district and 30.5% statewide. Performance among subgroups, including English learners and students with disabilities remains especially low with 0% meeting standards in mathematics. English learner progress on the ELPAC has also declined steadily over the past four years from nearly 40% proficient to 18% in 2025.

Second, internal benchmark data using the Star Renaissance assessment indicates some recent improvement in English language arts. The results have been inconsistent and gains have not yet been reflected on state assessments. These patterns highlight the need for stronger instructional supports and targeted interventions to ensure equitable and sustained academic growth. Staff, however, also identified areas of strength. The proposed new school would serve new middle school students allowing for earlier academic interventions and more consistent support. Finally, in terms of capacity, NOVA Academy's governing board and leadership team has significant operational experience, having successfully operated under the authorization of Santa Ana Unified since 2005. The proposed budget and multi-year projections for NOVA Academy OC are reasonable, fiscally sound, and supported by shared services with the existing high school. If the board approves the petition, staff recommend that approval be subject to the following conditions, which will be incorporated into the charter agreement.

By the third year of operation, NOVA Academy OC must achieve proficiency rates in English language arts and mathematics at or above the district and state averages for all students and subgroups. All students, including subgroups, must show annual growth and proficiency until those benchmarks are met or exceeded. Within 120 days of approval, the school must submit a plan for administering ESPAC formative assessments, internal growth measures, administer verified local assessments such as what they're currently using, the Star Renaissance in reading and mathematics three times annually, fall, winter, and spring. Demonstrate average annual grade level growth of at least 1.5 to two years per cohort. Maintain at least 95% participation annually on CAASPP, ELPAC and verified local assessments and within 120 days submit to OCDE an English learner master plan and special education annual plan for review and comment. Within the same period, provide a list of standards-based curricula and instructional materials for core subjects, including those supporting English learners, and provide semi-annual academic progress reports to OCDE, including desegregated data by subgroup and grade level.

Provide annual updates on interventions for students performing below grade level. And NOVA Academy Orange County may not open or operate within the boundaries of Santa Ana Unified School District unless the existing NOVA Academy Early College High School is denied or not approved for expansion to grades six through eight. Based on the review and findings, OCDE staff recommended the board approve the NOVA Academy Orange County countywide charter petition for a five-year term with these specific conditions. These conditions establish clear accountability measures and ensure that the new school demonstrates academic progress and equitable outcomes for all student groups. Prior to board action, the charter school representatives are allotted equal time and opportunity or 10 minutes, whichever is longer to

present evidence and testimony responsive to the staff recommendations and findings published on October 21st. I now call representatives from the charter school to the podium.

DUSTIN: Good evening, President Barke, members of the board, Dr. Bean and the OCDE administrative team. My name is Dustin Lester and I'm the CFO on the NOVA Academy Board of Directors. I am here this evening on behalf of our Executive Director Lisa Hernandez. Late last night, she received news of a deeply personal and serious family matter. When she asked for advice from our board of directors, we reminded her of what we tell our students every day, that family is irreplaceable. In moments like these, the most courageous thing a leader can do is stand where she is needed most. We respectfully ask that you keep her in your thoughts and prayers as she walks through this difficult time. At NOVA Academy, we believe that student success cannot be reduced to a single metric or viewed through one lens. Our work demands comprehensive approach, one that measures growth, persistence, college readiness, and the lived experiences of students who rely on us not only for our academics, but also for stability, opportunity, and hope. Tonight, the NOVA team will share how the NOVA Academy is closing the achievement gaps and accelerating student growth through intentional research driven practices rooted in equity and early college success. At the conclusion of this presentation, I will respectfully request that you approve NOVA Academy Orange County without conditions. Thank you for your time and for your unwavering commitment to the students and families of Orange County. Now we have a quick slide of a video that captures the ultimate success we deliver.

VINCENT: I chose to attend NOVA Academy because of its college connections and the way it can prepare you to attend college. What I like best about attending NOVA Academy is the positivity I receive here and just how friendly everyone can be.

ALEX: At NOVA Academy. You are going to have people care about you and think about you and invest in you in a way that I haven't seen in any other school.

DR. SANFORD: As we see the changes that have happened from the very early stages to where we're at now, it's a pretty phenomenal undertaking that has been ongoing for the last 20 years. So, we're excited to see what is to come the next 20 years is going to be that much better.

DAISY: It's just a great and supportive environment. You have mentors, teachers, counselors that are constantly pushing you and exposing you to unknowing scholarships and opportunities, and it's just a great environment to be around and just to have that support system around you.

SELINA: They've helped me discover the passions that I have through youth advocacy, through leadership, and that's something that this school has offered me that I know that I wouldn't have received any place else.

DUSTIN: Thank you. Now. Oh, I apologize. Okay. Now, regardless of closing the achievement gap, we accept the state proficiency data before you. The data confirms one thing. The students who enroll at NOVA Academy are among the highest need students in this county. Their scores reflect a difficult starting line, not the quality of our instruction. Our commitment is defined by who we serve. 92% of our students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and half come from central and downtown Santa Ana. Areas marked by low income homelessness and crime. 24%

are current English learners, and over 52% of the remaining portion of our student body has been an English learner at some point in their academic journey. Our student body has unique needs and the needs that I feel our school has served well for over 20 years. Our comprehensive evaluation requires both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Renaissance Star, a state approved measurement shows that students accelerate academically once they enroll. Even when starting far below grade level. Our verified growth data confirms that we are closing the achievement gap, especially among historically underserved groups.

DARYL: Good evening board. My name is Daryl Tripp. I am a teacher on special assignment at NOVA Academy. I was hired, brought on to focus on identifying and accelerating the various things that our school needs to be focusing on. Since we know our test data, our internal data proves with our model here, it shows what our verified model data is doing. We achieve significant measurable growth in '24-'25, as you can see, and demonstrating that our proactive strategies, including our SOAR program, have had a definite impact. When looking at our subgroups, it mimics the last graph you'll see within our significant subgroups. There has been over year over year growth of the student's achievement. Some of them are multiple grade achievement growth. And then finally, this translates directly to our growth we saw in '24-'25 that was shared with OCDE staff. 85.6% of our students achieved at least one year's growth and reading last year, as well as 79.8% of our students achieving at least one year's growth and math last year.

KIMBERLY: Good evening board and thank you for having us. My name is Kimberly Beckstrom and I'm the principal at NOVA Academy. And what we believe in at NOVA is the elevator approach. And we believe this because for historically underserved students and groups in Orange County, this will have the greatest impact on their success as students. By intervening early with a middle school, early college model, we can narrow the achievement gap and build the habits and skills students need for college success. This approach creates a stronger, more lasting foundation for their future. Our confidence in continued high growth comes from the proactive instructional systems we've put in place. From our OCDE partnership and targeted SOAR interventions to the use of the structured PLC data cycles and the visible learning framework, we address student needs with precision and rigor. These systems drove our significant growth in 2024-25, and we anticipate even stronger results in the coming years, especially as we start addressing the gaps much earlier in the middle school grades. Thank you.

DUSTIN: And as for multiple measures of success, you'll see here our students are enrolled in 263 college courses and earning 820 college credits. Our dual enrollment occurs on college campuses helping students identify as college students. Our attendance has shown growth coming back to in-person learning after the pandemic, while our graduation rate remains high. Career and college readiness indicators show strong performance. No D's are earned, and we keeping our A through G completion rates high. And lastly, our college attendance is strong, demonstrating readiness for post-secondary success. Now, the OCDE staff report provides a valuable snapshot of selected performance indicators. However, it does not fully capture the depth and breadth of what our students, of what defines student success nor the comprehensive effectiveness of a school community serving a complex urban population in downtown Santa Ana. It also does not reflect that NOVA Academy Orange County is seeking authorization for a new countywide charter serving grade six through eighth. A model intentionally designed to expand early college access and academic readiness before high school. This evening, we

respectfully request that the board approve NOVA Academy's Orange County's charter without conditions. We are confident that a collaborative partnership with the OCDE administration will allow us to build on shared goals, ensuring that every student, regardless of background, has the opportunity to realize their full potential. Thank you.

BARKE: Thank you.

CHASTAIN: Yes. The hearing is now open for 15 minutes of public comments. Trustee Shaw, please call for the first speaker.

SHAW: Thank you. We have 14 cards. We give 15 minutes, one minute total. I guess we have to do one minute. Doesn't mean you have to take the full one minute, but we will give everyone one minute. I'll call a name and then who's on deck. Renee will be followed by Hailey.

RENEE: I was going to introduce myself and to the trustees. I so appreciate you and Dr. Bean. He's a wonderful man and a great leader. We often celebrate schools that serve students with built in advantages, families with stability, resources and support. But what about the schools that do the opposite? The schools that gear up when others slow down, the schools that stand in the gap when every other safety net has failed. We stayed open during the pandemic. We, because exactly when it was safe, we had students come back in person. And I want to say that the condition to propose today, assume every school begins at the same starting line, but NOVA students begin sometimes miles behind and still they're catching up. Watch out for us, we're going to come around the corner. To measure them as if they didn't is not accountability. It's inequity. We're not asking for leniency. I'm almost done. We're asking for fairness, for recognition that a school serving this level of need and still producing growth and graduation and college success deserves partnership not penalty. So tonight, I ask you, with all respect to approve this petition without conditions. Thank you.

SHAW: Hailey. Followed by Joseph.

RENEE: And thank you to the staff and teachers and families and students who have worked with us day in and day out.

BARKE: You just want to lower the mic, I think. There you go. Okay. You don't have to take the full minute if you're embarrassed.

HAILEY: Good. I can't.

DARYL: Now go ahead. This, you got this. You got this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you want to come back after?

HAILEY: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're going to try it.

SHAW: All right, we'll try later. Joseph. Followed by Alex.

JOSEPH: Hello. Board members of the OCDE. My name is Joseph Sotomayor and I'm a senior at NOVA Academy. I've been a student at NOVA since my freshman year. And during my time here, I've been able to really connect with the students, teachers, and staff, and all of them have always supported me. During my freshman year, I left the charter school system to go to a traditional high school. During my time there, I realized that the charter school setting was where I really thrive. The charter school setting offered me the opportunity to discover who I am, what I want to do, and what I want to be in the future. This is why I returned to NOVA during my sophomore year. Here at NOVA, students connect with their teachers on a deeper level, feel motivated to pursue higher education, and I was able to really find myself within the school thanks to the great teachers and good connections with other students in my classes. Being exposed to different pathways and programs, both at the high school level and college level. All right, thank you.

BARKE: Thank you.

SHAW: Alex. Followed by Ana.

ALEX: Good evening. Buenas noches. President Barke. Dr. Bean, board members. My name is Alex Delgado and I have the privilege of teaching Spanish at NOVA since 2016. At NOVA, our use of data has truly transformed how we teach and support our students. Each week we review student progress, find where the gaps are and make real time adjustments to instruction. It's exciting to see students who were once struggling now gaining confidence and mastering skills they never thought possible. At NOVA, we're not just teaching lessons, we're creating opportunities and shaping futures, and I'm honored to be part of this team. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Ana. Followed by Javier.

ANA: Good evening. My name is Ana Olvera. I'm not a mom, I'm not a student, but I'm a grandma and I am a legal guardian of one of the students in NOVA. And I want to say that the first time I stepped in there, I noticed that there's a lot of safety in there. I noticed there's a lot of good, really good teachers and I'm really glad that my daughter was accepted there and I really hoping that you guys can let open for a middle school because everything that goes on in the NOVA, I feel like it's more secure for kids and I really hope that it's opening next year. Because I have another kid that is going to go to middle school too. Thank you so much.

SHAW: Javier. Followed by Joseph.

JAVIER: Good evening, President Barke and Superintendent Bean. I'm here on behalf of the California Charter School Association and members in a professional organization representing more than 1,250 public schools and strong support of the authorization for NOVA Academy for a new countywide petition without conditions. We've been working with NOVA Academy's leadership and we have witnessed firsthand the schools two decades of commitment to providing high quality educational programs to meet the needs and family across the Santa Ana community. NOVA Academy's impact and academic excellence have been recognized by respected research institution by the CREDO as a gap busting charter schools in California schools that are closing opportunity gaps for outperforming traditional public schools. This recognition validates NOVA's holistic approach in the students' learnings centered on social,

emotional, intellectual, and physical development of every student. So, we strongly suggest the board to approve this petition without conditions. Thank you very much.

SHAW: Joseph. Followed by Joe.

JOSEPH: Hello, my name is Joseph Haberman. I'm currently a math teacher at NOVA Academy Santa Ana. And I think what makes NOVA Academy a little bit different is that we focus on data a lot and we use that to ensure that the students are being met where they're at. We don't just look at the numbers. We try to figure out, okay, if this is where they're at, we're going to meet you there and we're going to try to make you get to the highest level possible that you can. I feel like the teachers that I work with are the most important part. They truly have a sense of what the students really need. They're not there just to look at the numbers. They're there to actually help and inspire the children and give the students that sometimes fall through the cracks, the opportunity to really succeed. So, I'm very thankful to be a part of a group that actually cares and wants to make a difference in the community and wants to help students be successful. Thank you.

SHAW: Great. Joe, followed by Yolanda.

JOE: Good evening, everyone. I am Joe Munoz and I am a freshman at NOVA. When I first came to NOVA, it was surprising to say the least. At first, I thought it was just going to be another high school, but in all reality, well, at least to me and maybe some others, it feels like a second home. A second home where we can express and challenge ourselves to what we want to be in the future and how we can achieve it. NOVA Academy, as you heard, gives early college courses to many people. Mostly its students, but it does help us grow and achieve things that we couldn't get at other high schools. But I also think that's not fair. People at younger ages should also be able to have this experience at a young age. So, what I'm saying or the conclusion, I'm coming to, people that go to NOVA feel not like students, but as members of community when they come to that school. Thank you for your time.

BARKE: Thank you.

SHAW: Yolanda. Followed by Luis.

YOLANDA: Good evening board members. My name is Yolanda, proud NOVA mother of Joe Munoz. He was just here, a freshman at NOVA Academy. I'm here today to express my support for NOVA Academy's expansion to add a middle school. My son Joe has been thriving at NOVA Academy and achieving excellent grades. I am grateful that Joe feels supported by his teachers, his peers, in a school community that truly cares about him. Next semester, my son will have the opportunity to take his first college course, and I have no doubt that he will have the support necessary to be successful in college. As a high school student, with this in mind, I can only imagine how much further ahead he could be if he had been given the opportunity to enroll at NOVA Academy as a sixth grader. Other parents deserve to be just as proud of their children's accomplishments as I am of mine. I hope we have your support and NOVA Academy's mission to expand. Thank you very much.

SHAW: Luis. Followed by Sonta.

LUIS: Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of NOVA Academy. Our student is coming from another district into NOVA. We thought about homeschooling because some of the reasons that were mentioned regarding the changing environment at schools. We thought it was dangerous for a student who was very mild, very easygoing. The experiences has been a positive one. We're no longer thinking about homeschooling. We're looking forward to all the grades until graduation at NOVA Academy. I can say that communication between school and parents is very, very good. So that's one thing that I admire, something we'd never had before in the junior high at junior high level. So, as it was mentioned before, we're asking to give NOVA the opportunity to expand their levels without restrictions. Thank you.

SHAW: Sonta followed by Janelle. Forgive me if I'm not saying that right. Gardner-Marcelo, maybe not. Maybe left. Okay. Counselor, you're up. Followed by Lorraine.

JANELLE: Good evening, Board President Barke, board members, Superintendent Dr. Bean. My name is Janelle Ruley with legal counsel for the charter school in strong support of NOVA OC. And our request today is that the board, as you've heard, approve this charter petition cleanly without conditions. The conditions in the staff report are quite unusual, including one I don't think I've ever seen before. NOVA's particularly concerned about a condition that it can't open a facility within Santa Ana until such time as it seeks and is denied a material revision of its early college high school charter petition. The concern really is that this, I think what gave rise to this condition is based on a false understanding of a board member in the district. To be clear, NOVA did all of the things right to do the notice, to provide notice that they were going to open a countywide charter. They made the notice over the summer. They got an acknowledgement, they had some back and forth. They corresponded with the district staff. All of those things were done. And so, I don't think that there's the particular need to do this. I would also say that basing a condition on the test scores of 11th graders and judging those for sixth and seventh graders just doesn't make sense. So, thank you for your time. Thanks for letting me have a couple seconds.

SHAW: Thank you. Lorraine, followed by Joseph.

LORRAINE: Hello, my name is Lorraine Perez and I'm the superintendent with Santa Ana Unified School District. I'm here on behalf of the Santa Ana Unified School Board of Education tonight. I thank you for your time and for your shared commitment to serving the students and families of Orange County. Tonight, we respectfully express opposition to the petition for NOVA Academy to establish a countywide charter without the OCDE staff recommendation conditions. What NOVA's proposing now is not a new school. It is not a new location. It is not a new model of service that spans multiple districts across the county. Instead, what is being proposed is a pathway to serve additional grade levels, grades that could have and should have been included in the renewal petition they submitted to our board at the very same time. We urged the board to deny this petition, not as a rejection of innovation or partnership, but as a matter of sound governance and lawful process. NOVA Academy is already authorized. If they wish to expand, they should return to the authorizer that already approve them for their charter. Thank you.

SHAW: And Joseph? No, Joseph. Okay. I guess that's it.

HENDRICK: I think Hailey might be ready.

SHAW: Hailey, you want to give another whirl?

HAILEY: Good evening. Board members of the OCDE. My name is Hailey Anguiano and I am a freshman at NOVA Academy. When I first came to NOVA, I was a bit scared. I was a bit nervous. I wasn't really sure if it was going to be much of the best school I would go to since none of my old schools were never that good. When I came, I feel like I changed a lot better and I felt a real big sense of belonging. I found good friends, I found nice teachers, and I just felt more at home there. What makes NOVA so special is how genuine they care about their students and how I felt so supported in the process of being there.

SHAW: Good job. A minute goes by fast and I think we had Sonta come by.

SONTA: Good evening, Superintendent Dr. Bean, President Barke and trustees. My name is Sonta Garner-Marcelo and I'm very proud to serve as president of Santa Ana Educators Association and as a teacher of 27 years in the Santa Ana Unified School District, I'm here tonight to urge you to deny the county white charter petition submitted by NOVA Academy. This petition does not meet the basic statutory requirements outlined in the California Education Code section 47605(6)(B), which clearly states that a county board of education may only grant a charter if the school has met that requirement. This proposal aims to expand an existing charter school in the Santa Ana Unified School District by two grade levels. That is a local issue for us and it should be handled through the local process with a reasonable justification for why it could not be established through the local school district. I urge you to consider following local governance and following the law and to deny the charter. Thank you for your time.

SHAW: Thank you. Okay, I think that was it.

CHASTAIN: The public hearing is now concluded. The board has three options for action. Option one, approve the charter petition as written. Option two, approve the petition with conditions. And option three, deny the charter petition. President Barke, I now close the public hearing and return the meeting to you.

BARKE: Thank you, Aracely. I appreciate you. All right, why don't we start far to the right with Dr. Sparks?

SPARKS: I'm going to pause. I'm going to...

BARKE: All right, Jorge.

VALDES: Okay. Let's start with the legal stuff. Janelle, would you step up here? So, you've heard some oppositions and just so everybody knows, I got a letter. The board got a letter from Hector Bustos dated quite literally today, 1, 2, 3, 3 and a half pages. So, I've read through it. He didn't give us a lot of time to digest this since it's dated today. But the gist of it is what one of the commentators essentially said, which is that, "The County Board of Education may only approve a countywide charter if it finds in addition to the other requirements of this section that the educational services to be provided by the charter school will offer services to a pupil population that will benefit from those services that cannot be served as well by a charter school that operates in only one school district in the county". I'm sure you're familiar with that statute. You probably read that all the time. How would you respond legally to that?

JANELLE: Well, I haven't seen the letter. The NOVA Charter petition contained many pages of its justification. I apologize, I don't have that charter in front of me, but there are several pages of that justification. I think first and foremost, the idea of running a program that serves now as proposed six through 12 that would have the opportunity to operate in more than one school district in the county. There may be plans down the road for one of the high school portions to be on the campus of a community college or something like that. I think as you're all aware, the geographic restrictions for a school district approved or denied charter are limited to that school district. As a countywide benefit, NOVA OC would have the opportunity to open campuses throughout the county, which is a similar justification as you've heard from a number of other petitioners along the or over the years. So, I think that was one of the concerns. The idea also of having to go through a material revision. There's no appeal on a denied material revision. And so, if Santa Ana says no, then that would be it. Then there would be no opportunity for NOVA Early College to operate middle school grades. So, it is possible that they couldn't serve those students at all. Not even as well. They just couldn't serve them at all if a material revision is denied.

VALDES: Okay. All right. Okay. Thank you for the legal stuff.

JANELLE: Sure.

VALDES: Young man with the blue suit, Dustin and Renee, come on up.

RENEE: Sorry about Lisa. She wanted to be here.

VALDES: Please send my condolences to Ms. Hernandez.

BARKE: Yes, please tell her we are so sorry for whatever's going on with her family. I know it must be serious if she's not here.

VALDES: It must be serious if she's not here.

BARKE: Yeah.

RENEE: She would fill some really good shoes if she was here. And some questions I know, but we're going to do our best.

VALDES: So, I want to give you guys my thoughts on this. You are authorized by Santa Ana. This is the first time we've really had a chance to sort of look at you guys closely. I want you to know that a lot of times the charters come down here. They have phenomenal track records. They're 30, 40 points above state, local and state levels. And for me, I mean that's a very simple yes vote. I want to offer choice to my constituents. And for me, I feel those schools are providing a better choice. And that's really what I want to tell my constituents is not only that I'm providing a choice, but better choices. When this one came up, quite frankly, this one had caused me some pause. And it's because of the test scores and I know that there's other ways to measure success. Now, it's not just test scores, there's other ways to measure educational outcomes.

But to me, the test scores are very important. And I try not to get too political up here, but there's no other way to say this. I would say that about 30% of the people out there simply do not like

what this board does. And the only thing they feel like we're doing is we're taking students away from the public schools and we're hurting the public schools. Now, to me, I'm talking basically to the 70% who feel that educational choice is important. And like I said, I want to give them not only the options, but the better options. But the concern that I have, the pause that I have that I want to impress upon you is that if this board begins to just approve charters and approve charters, where the test scores are basically what is happening at the local level and we bring our averages down and they're much higher than those averages.

Now I think you can see where I'm going with this. That 30% is not 30% anymore. It becomes 50%. Okay. And it becomes higher than that. If the public in general gets a perception that we are simply hurting the public schools, that 30% becomes higher and then the five of us are not sitting up here anymore. And then we have a board of education that won't approve any of these. To me, the test scores and the outcomes, it's, it's essentially existential. That's how important this is to me. This is my chance to impress that upon you because as one of the five authorizers as a businessman whose owned businesses all my life, the success of a business starts from the top. So, it has to come from this board to you and then you to the other people in your staff. This is a really, really important issue. This affects every charter, not just yours. And I don't want to see the other charters that we approve who are passing with flying colors affected by charter schools that are coming in at basically local averages. So, I'm going to demand excellence of you. Okay?

RENEE: Absolutely.

VALDES: If we approve this, you have to do better than the numbers that are coming in right now. And I'm not saying that to be heavy-handed.

RENEE: Nope.

VALDES: But that's my reason. Okay. I understand the reason why you want to do this. You want to get the kids earlier. I get it. I did a lot of investigation on this over the past month, as you can probably guess, I've called around. This board has done that previously for the Samuelli Academy. And I called Anthony Saba about this exact issue. And he absolutely believes that getting the kids earlier that we previously approved for him is dramatically affecting the educational outcomes later. So, your reasoning makes sense. So, I'm a yes vote tonight, but I just want to tell you and impress upon you how important this is. This is not a little issue. I feel like Lisa, this was really going to be directed to Lisa, but Lisa, and to the extent that you're still around, Renee involved in the day-to-day operations of the school, I feel like you really need to get down into the nitty gritty, figure out how to get those test scores up so that in a couple years when we review this, we can say this was a good decision. So that's all I have to say.

BARKE: Thank you, Tim.

SHAW: Thank you. I did want to ask our attorney, Mr. Rolen, if you had a chance to review the letter from Santa Ana Unified president that we got on our desk.

ROLEN: No.

SHAW: Okay. See, I'm not a lawyer, so when I have 20 seconds to try to read something and figure out the law behind it, I get very overwhelmed. So anyway.

ROLEN: I am a lawyer and I get overwhelmed by trying to do it in 20 seconds as well. So, the timing was unfortunate.

SHAW: It was tough timing. Okay. I just want to make sure I can, I understand that the timeline of what happened exactly. So, I know there was sort of some confusion at the Santa Ana meeting. Can you make sure and explain that to me exactly what happened when and what was being authorized? And just to clear the air on that, do you mind?

RENEE: First of all, I want to say thank you to Dr. Perez in the Santa Ana Unified School District. We've worked hand in hand with them for many years and we understand the students they serve because we also serve similar students. And I can only applaud them for the hard work because what they've had to do in the last year since the pandemic is monumental. And her predecessor came in setting the standard of emotional intelligence, grounding kids, getting them to a place where they could start to learn again, fighting chronic absenteeism, elevating summer programs similar to the things that we have done to try to engage students again and bring up our attendance and get to a place where we were the California Distinguished Award winner in 2019 and had 97%, and I'm sure Dr. Perez would say attendance rates at that time. And now we're at after the pandemic came to about 90% on a good day.

And so, we are moving kids and I can promise you, Mr. Valdes, that we are moving and closing the achievement gap. And this is going to happen. To answer your question, what we did before I left and retired, and so that's why I'm surprised I'm standing here right now. But in the fact that Lisa has gone through such a tragic event. In June, let's see, it was either May, I sent a letter to the predecessor of Dr. Perez and cc'd their entire team about what the actual procedures and exactly what we were doing. And I would like Janelle follow through. We sent more than a letter, an email. We also sent a hard copy signed by the superintendent's secretary, and we also sent a letter through snail mail. So, we did everything we can to let them know I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt and say during transitions, it's very difficult for communication to go on. And so, for whatever reason, Mr. Hector Bustos thought maybe we weren't transparent, which was not the case whatsoever, that is not something we would ever do to our partners at Santa Ana Unified School District because we value them and we want to honor them and respect them like we do you as well.

JANELLE: Just two things briefly, we wouldn't be standing here if we hadn't made the notice because your staff wouldn't let us proceed this far. And then second, there really was back and forth about the notice. There was discussion with district staff. The law does not say that we have to notify the chartering authority. It doesn't say we have to notify the district board. It just says the district. And so that's what we did, just like all the other countywides.

BARKE: Okay, Ken.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Janelle, just real quick for the record here. Whenever Aracely and our charter school unit makes recommendations, they're usually pretty top notch. We have a really...

JANELLE: They're among the best. Yes.

WILLIAMS: They're a really good crew. They want to work with charter schools. So, when they put these conditions of approval, I just want to go through some of them specifically the

facility location restriction. So, if this gets approved, the middle school, they'll be on the actual physical facility there with the high school program. Is that correct?

JANELLE: Yes, that's what's proposed.

WILLIAMS: Okay. And typically, in these countywide charter petitions, there's plans to advance and make other school sites, is that correct?

JANELLE: Typically, but not always.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So, the definitions of the state education code for a countywide charter has been met?

JANELLE: Yeah, the state code says one or more proposes to operate one or more sites in the county.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you for that.

JANELLE: Yep.

WILLIAMS: Are there any issues with the Santa Ana Unified School District with the SELPA? As we all can recall, the Orange County School of the Arts, we had that big problem with monies that were owed. Is there anything like that going on with NOVA?

JANELLE: It's been resolved and settled.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So, there's no money that you're going to owe Santa Ana Unified School District, is that correct? The CFO should know the answer to this question. You're looking at some...

RENEE: Yeah. I'll go ahead and that. I think there's an outstanding small balance due this December, which we have been on time and have paid and will be consistently, it's been accrued, so it's already, we know about it. We don't have a problem with it. And it happened a long time ago and we run our own SELPA and since the actual, and I think Dr. Perez could attest to that, that we've been financially very responsible because that's who we are and there is no problem whatsoever.

WILLIAMS: And how much do you owe the district for the SELPA fund?

RENEE: Oh, the total amount we've paid that we...

WILLIAMS: Give us a background. How much did you pay? How much do you owe? How much do you have left?

RENEE: The district asked us for \$20.2 million in SELPA back pay for 20 years. And then we settled for an amount, and I want to be honoring to them so that some of the smaller charter schools decided to settle earlier. And if you want to have a sidebar with me, I can let you know a

little more detail. But if we could keep some privacy here in honoring of the contract. I think there's just one payment left.

WILLIAMS: I don't want to compromise your integrity for your requests. I appreciate your...

RENEE: Yeah. Sorry, but thank you for the question. I mean, I believe you have a really good relationship with Santa Ana. It was new to hear from the President Hector Bustos that he was feeling we were not transparent because we've had a great relationship with them and made sure that we're always aboveboard.

WILLIAMS: Sure. And let me give acknowledgement to Dr. Perez. Thank you for coming to our meeting tonight. We know it takes a lot to come to these nighttime meetings and you're already busy there in your district. To the CFO, how much in hard cash do you have on hand? What's your cash flow? Give us a little bit of background on that.

DUSTIN: Yes, sir. Our budgets maintain healthy reserves usually well north of the 5% mark. Our usual cash on hand in terms of number of days in Santa Ana I believe is 180 plus from my understanding, which is consistent with all financial covenants we're required to maintain.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

RENEE: And then we also have quite a large number of funds in our children's foundation as well.

WILLIAMS: Can you give me ballpark figure?

RENEE: About \$700,000.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

RENEE: Directly for only programs. It was a donation, only, lots of donations that are for programs and for kids and that they help support our athletic program.

WILLIAMS: Lastly, for Aracely, if you could please our dear staff member who we love and appreciate and respect so much. So, the recommendations were based upon certain conditions and the conditions were unexpected. But I want to get a little bit of better understanding why they were made. I may not agree with them all.

CHASTAIN: Of course.

WILLIAMS: But I'd like to get a little bit better understanding from the staff perspective.

CHASTAIN: We were trying to get to a place where we were comfortable with an approval without the conditions in place, our recommendation would've been for denial. So, we have concerns about the academics. We're not asking them you know, they serve the population that Santa Ana Unified serves, which is great. So, they're serving the population of where they're located. We just were concerned with the academic data that was out there and we're concerned what that's going to look like on the Dashboard in the next year or two as well, which could

potentially negatively affect their renewal. So, we're just trying to get ahead of what that looks like for these new grade levels coming in. They'll be testing more kids, more kids will count on the CAASPP, which will probably be a good thing, right? Because it won't just be 11th grade that's being looked at, which is all that's looked at for high school now. There'll be sixth, seventh, eighth, and 11th grade. Well, they'll have more data, but we want to make sure that the majority of their kids is tested so that the data is good. And we want to make sure that the data, that their internal data and what they're doing internally is translating into CAASPP data and the Dashboard, which is what they're judged on in the end when it comes to renewal.

WILLIAMS: So, is it fair to then apply this condition because of the high school test scores to the middle school? Has that been done before?

CHASTAIN: We have never done conditions like this before.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

CHASTAIN: This is a first for us as well.

WILLIAMS: Because, and now I'd like to get where are you? Come back up here, Renee. In the last 20 years, your scores aren't really stellar.

RENEE: The last 19 years they've been...

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Tell us about those.

RENEE: They've been above Santa Ana High School, Century Valley for the last 19 years. The last year, 2025, they went below Santa Ana Unified's Century. I have to look and my, Lisa is not here, but we received the California Distinguished Award. I think the hardest part for both for serving the students that we serve, in all honesty is that after the pandemic, it was a quick turnaround for schools that might be in a more resourced family support districts. It was a long turnaround for our kids to come back, be engaged again, even though we did everything we could. We opened up early with safety measures. Our teachers came back, we were in person. We did everything we could. We had school with our LCAP funding in June and July. We knew without a doubt that our kids would have four to five years of struggle catching up again from being out for a year and then some of them coming back and being out for more than a year and a half just because they weren't engaged anymore. So, I think we struggle with similar students. Though I want to remind everyone that 50% of our students come from about, I hope I'm right, my data person, of Santa Ana Unified when we have students coming from outside the county and now we have a door-to-door trolley that comes right to the front of our school for kids outside the county to come to. So, they won't just be focused on Santa Ana Unified.

WILLIAMS: So, in the last 20 years, 19 have been very good.

RENEE: Very good.

WILLIAMS: Exemplary except for this last year. And that may be due to the COVID era in the restrictions and access to school [several inaudible words].

RENEE: We've had definitely a rippling effect on students that come in, higher special ed, higher English language learners. We moved from pre pandemic of 88% low social economic to now 92%. So, there's been a lot of different metrics of change from the pandemic to now. And I know by now everybody thinks why are we still talking about the pandemic? Right, Dr. Perez. But we are, because it had rippling effects on kids in our community like no one could ever believe. And it was hard on me and our board. We took a lot of grievance for opening up. It was hard on our teachers who came back with courage and just prayed, knowing that our students were already behind. So, we think we have done an amazing amount of different things to engage kids. And mainly the biggest thing we've done is to really create a sound pipeline for their college units.

Dr. Wilson, they go to college on the campus. We are not another dual enrollment program that you see all over Orange County. Our kids are transported every day with a very long school day, very long. Our teachers sometimes leave at 5:00 PM These are dedicated staff members. They don't check out at two. They're there because our kids during the day, during instructional time. So, we have to have a long instructional calendar, go to their college class at the college campus. So that has made a difference in them identifying as both career and college goers. So, you can take a student who might otherwise not look at himself as very successful and put him in a college class or a career like welding. And Santa Ana has been a huge partner with us as well as they are with the district. We just have the opportunity and flexibility to adapt quickly and have a longer day than most schools in order to have this ability to have students actually driven back and forth to college every day.

WILLIAMS: So, the school, as noted by our staff, has extensive governance and operational experience for the last 20 years and your enrollment and your cashflow, that sounds to be very, very stable. And so that gives us a lot of comfort here because we've had one particular charter recently. We had to not allow it to continue because of certain circumstances. I'm not so concerned about the condition that you have to be supplying all these information to us. I think this one-time occurrence based upon the 19 years is good enough evidence that you're on good track there. And plus getting these kids earlier at sixth, seventh grade, that's going to increase your scores when they get into the high school correct?

RENEE: That's what our hope is. We really want to reach out to the Orange County community and bring them in with an early college model. We already have a program with Santa Ana College where we can start college classes in middle school. Yes, you heard, right? We have a program that we can start middle schoolers already taking career classes and college classes and planning a vision for their life because we truly believe in students having a vision.

WILLIAMS: Very good. So, with all due respect to our great staff here, I feel comfortable in improving this without any of these conditions.

RENEE: Thank you, sir.

WILLIAMS: And I will make a motion for that. But real quickly, we've had quite a bit of conversations in the last few years with this board regarding...

BARKE: Go ahead.

WILLIAMS: Would you like to make the motion?

BARKE: Oh, I'd like to just ask them some questions. Chat. I've not had the chance, actually.

WILLIAMS: So, you're saying you want me to shut up and stop? Is that what you're saying?

BARKE: I do remember you telling me you were president at one time. Actually, I'm president right now.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So let me...

BARKE: Continue. Just please do give me a chance.

WILLIAMS: Mari and I really do have this admiration for one another, even though I'm being publicly reprimanded. I appreciate that.

RENEE: It's called loving in a kind.

WILLIAMS: Yes, yes. Lastly, we've had a lot of conversations in the last few years about some of the cultural changes in education with the DEI, which I think we have firmly established. You are aware of the MOU that we're assigning and you promise that any of this critical race theory...

RENEE: We're very aware of what you do.

WILLIAMS: Material, these critical theories, the DEI, you're going to be teaching and implementing a good standard constructive educational program for these kids.

RENEE: Absolutely.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. I am done, Mari.

BARKE: Thank you. Well, I do want to start off by thanking everyone, our staff who I know has spent hours and weeks and months on this. I want to thank Dr. Perez for coming out and seeing us tonight. Appreciate that. My colleagues, for all the great questions and phone calls and research. And I want to thank NOVA because I know you've also done quite a bit of work these last several months, probably more than...

RENEE: I want to say the staff.

BARKE: Yes, everyone in here for your public comments. I know for some it was harder than others. Hailey, we appreciate you. You did a great job.

HAILEY: Thank you.

BARKE: And I think since I've been on this board just about every year, unless I was out of town, I've done exit interviews on your campus. I've met a lot of the students. I've been extremely impressed with what you've done with them. You've changed their lives. They have been some of the most vulnerable students being raised by other than parents who got them into

your school and it really changed their life. And so I'm super excited. I'm super excited that you are going to have the opportunity to have these young people at an earlier age where you can make a more profound difference. I think it's wonderful and I applaud you for that. And even though I was planning to make this motion without conditions, if Dr. Williams really wants to make it, I'm going to defer to him.

WILLIAMS: No.

BARKE: Okay. Well then, I am thrilled to make a motion to approve Nova Academy without conditions.

SPARKS: I'll second that.

BARKE: And Lisa, Dr. Sparks has seconded the motion. So, we'll now call the vote. All those in favor?

WILLIAMS, BARKE, SHAW, VALDES, SPARKS: Aye.

BARKE: Any opposed? Okay. It looks like it passes unanimously. Thank you. Do we want to take a break until 7:15? Quick break.

SPARKS: Yeah.

SHAW: Quick break.

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

BARKE: All right. Thank you for your patience. And we are going to now have a board, sorry, board discussion. Consider requesting Dr. Bean create a committee of OCDE to evaluate charter school academic performance and propose best practices to raise test scores and overall performance.

HENDRICK: Actually...

BEAN: You skipped 15.

HENDRICK: Okay. We're going to do a presentation first...

BEAN: But the two do go hand in hand.

HENDRICK: They go hand in hand. So we're...

BARKE: Sorry. Yes, I did.

HENDRICK: We wanted to give a purview of what we do so that it can build on the conversation if that's helpful. I'm going to call Aracely up to the podium and she's going to be joined by a couple of friends you have met a few times and so we'll let them start.

CHASTAIN: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss oversight functions that we do on behalf of the board. In addition to monitoring fiscal and academic performance, the Orange County Department of Education also provides ongoing oversight and support to every charter school authorized by this board. Our goal is simple to ensure that the charter school operates according to its approved petition and that every student has access to high-quality education. Let's start with what the law requires under Education Code section 476040.32, the county office has several specific responsibilities that we undertake on behalf of the board. We must designate one staff member as the school's contact, visit each school at least once a year. Ensure the school submits all reports that are required by law and monitor each school's fiscal health, and notify the California Department of Education if the school is renewed, denied, revoked, or is going to close for any reason.

So that's what's in law. Beyond those legal requirements, our charter unit provides a much deeper level of academic oversight each year. That includes multiple onsite visits, a review of teacher credentials, English language development and special education compliance checks, governance and fiscal operation reviews. And verification the school is meeting state and federal requirements. At the end of each cycle, we compile our findings into a written oversight report that highlights what's going well with the school, identifies areas for growth and includes recommendations for continuous improvement. Our oversight approach is all about balance. We maintain accountability while respecting each charter school's autonomy. So here's how that works in practice. The charter unit serves as the liaison between the Orange County Board of Education and the charter schools. We monitor compliance, we analyze data, we ensure schools are meeting the terms of their charters. When concerns come up, we may request improvement plans and we usually connect schools with OCDE programs for technical assistance as much as we can.

The charter schools themselves are independent public schools, and so they design and implement their instructional programs and they're responsible for meeting the goals and outcomes outlined in their charters and in their LCAPs. And our educational services division provides academic support to all schools, which includes charter schools and through coaching, professional learning and subject area expertise. That support's always available but remains voluntary. It's never directive. So, to put it simply, the charter unit focuses on accountability. Charter schools focus on implementation, and our educational services division focuses on support. In practice, our oversight framework combines accountability with partnerships. So each year we review academic data such as the CAASPP data, Dashboard indicators, LCAPs. We conduct site visits where we observe classrooms, we talk with staff, and we provide both verbal and written feedback and offer technical assistance and professional development when requested. If a school's underperforming, we may issue a notice of concern and require an improvement plan, which they develop and submit to us.

Even then, though, our focus is always on collaboration and problem-solving, not punishment or a gotcha or anything like that. Oversight isn't something that happens just once a year. So even though the law only requires us to visit the school once a year, oversight is something that

happens continuously throughout the year. It's an ongoing process where we need to build communication and trust with the schools. And throughout the year, we stay connected through monthly check-ins with the charter school leaders and that's done through each of their assigned coordinators, which is their assigned contact under the law, regular convenings with the county superintendent and charter school leaders, weekly email updates with training opportunities and compliance reminders and targeted professional development upon requests from the charter school. This level of communication helps us catch potential issues early and ensure that there's no surprises when it comes time for renewal.

Finally, each year our team conducts a comprehensive academic review of every board authorized charter school. This process includes classroom observations, interviews with school leadership, interviews with school staff, and a close look at their instructional data, as well as all of their instructional documents such as their English learner master plan, their special education plan, and the student data that they give us. This isn't just an accountability exercise, it really is about continuous improvement. We're always looking at schools continuing to improve. Even in our most high-performing schools, we always have areas where we have advice and things that they can improve on while we recognize some of the good work that they're doing. We want every school to understand its strengths, identify areas for growth, and have access to the right resources to move forward. Our goal is to make oversight fair, transparent, and supportive. So ultimately our focus is on student success. We are fortunate to have incredible in-house content experts who help make that possible for us, especially during our annual oversight visits. And to share more about what that academic support looks like in practice. I'll turn it over to Trish Walsh.

WALSH: Good evening, everyone. Good evening, trustees. Dr. Bean, OCDE leadership. Thank you, Aracely. So, as Aracely mentioned, I'm here just to kind of give an overview from our educational services division. So I'm Trish Walsh, I'm the director of academic content and instructional support, and we are part of educational services, so that's our division. And then within our division we have lots of units with lots of different services that they offer. But my unit is the curriculum instruction and academic enrichment unit. So that's the next layer. And then our team, academic instruction, academic content, instructional support. We are the team that kind of make up the content experts that provide the different supports to not only our charter schools, but we are the ones that provide our supports for all of our districts around Orange County. We really look at our services as we're providing technical support, we're providing professional learning and instruction and we're here to help.

That is what we do in educational services. We work with charter schools in a few different ways. So number one, we have general services that I'll talk a little bit about. Number two, we assist with the charter oversight visits that Aracely mentioned. And then number three, there are some other charter convenings that we participate in just in order to build relationships and kind of get our services known to the public. So first, the support that we provide charter schools, like I said, is exactly what we offer are local education agencies. At any point, our team, any one of our different experts can partner with school districts, hear about their needs, hear about what they are looking to promote or work on in their schools, things that they're learning to strengthen their teaching and learning. What we focus on mostly is state standards based standards, frameworks and best practices in education.

So whatever that may be, that looks different district to district, it looks different school site to school site and even to the different charter schools. We really work with educators on everything from effective instructional practices to systems, to coaching to curriculum and program-specific training and more. It's really, we are here to co-design with schools, with districts, whatever they need. We are ready to help service and as Aracely said, problem solve. So much of this is done through a few different avenues that are pretty common to our division in general. We have networks in content areas specifically including literacy and language, math, science, social studies, physical education, arts. We have these networks that teachers can come together, other district leadership, anybody is welcome at these meetings. They're held regularly throughout the year. We also have professional learning communities that are either topic-specific or student group specific.

And those happen also throughout the year. They're open. Anyone's invited, depending on the topic of interest, they'll choose to join. We have professional learning workshops that we offer on a regular basis on different topics. And then we also have the opportunity to create custom contracts with schools, with districts. So much of this type of work is free of charge or at a very nominal fee with what we do, especially nominal compared to what it would cost for outside consultants or outside trainers. The custom contracts that I mentioned, that varies due to the nature of the work. What it's going to entail, how many days of work, what this is going to look like, again, just depends on the need of the district. And that is, it's fee-based when it's a custom contract, it's kind of like a supplemental service that we are providing based on specific need.

But again, it's very reasonable what we do when we do charge with our custom contracts. So the great news is related to charter schools specifically. We have charter schools that do engage in our networks that do attend our communities of practices and workshops and that do already establish custom contracts with us. It's great that we have a lot of opportunities to work with different schools around Orange County. One example I'll give, for instance, this was a recent one, TLC Charter School, Tomorrow's Leadership Collective. Just recently, they gave us a call. I've known the executive director, Jessica Tunney for many years, and they said, "We really are having some issues with math we want to talk about and just kind of hear what the options are". And that's a lot of where this starts with just some consultation. One of my math coordinators and I were able to meet with her, listen to what they had been going through, and then just kind of advise what might work for the staff.

And we were able to talk through some different ideas and work out a schedule and something that made sense for the teachers. We're going to be doing that work upcoming here starting in December. So that's just one example of a custom contract. The second thing that we mentioned was the oversight visits that we conduct throughout the year. We partner very closely with the charter school unit in each of the coordinators for these annual oversight reviews of our authorized charters and our coordinators from across the unit, including myself, I go on many of the visits myself. They attend, they provide notes, they provide recommendations, they provide advice, answer questions. They have the opportunity to do the classroom walkthroughs as well as interview the teachers. And they're just there to support as needed. It's pretty time-intensive to do this for all of the different schools that we authorize because they're reviewing information about the school beforehand.

They're writing up their notes afterwards and then they're there for the visit. But that's all free of charge, that's just all time that the Department is giving to support these visits. So they know what resources they have available to them. And that's another way for us to understand the needs of the schools and just the needs of different charters and different locations around the county. It's beneficial to us too to know that we can prepare for other types of things that we may not have encountered with some of the other schools or districts we've worked with previously. And then during this time, really one of the most important things is not only making the connections with the schools themselves, making connections with the charter team because that way they know we have this trust built between our departments. They know they can call us at any time, they can connect us with schools at any time, and we have really just a great working relationship with the coordinators there.

They know we're available as a resource. The last thing is the different charter convening. So we're very grateful to Dr. Bean to have come up with this opportunity for charters to meet on a regular basis. That's charter leadership, not only from our authorized charters, but from charters all across Orange County. And the leadership team comes together, other individuals from the charters come to those meetings and we get invited in for different topics to share updates, to talk more in depth about maybe something in particular. But that's another opportunity to make connections. It's another opportunity to kind of share a little bit about what we do and to kind of put a face with the name and say, you could call us anytime, whether it's through the coordinators in the charter unit or just giving us a call directly. And we really appreciate too the marketing efforts that the charter unit takes on because we have a lot of information to share about professional learning opportunities, a lot of events that we have opportunities to share.

And Aracely and her team are great distributing all of our flyers and calendars and invites and information really throughout the year. They're also great with inviting us to the summer kickoff that they do with the charter leadership. Just where we have the opportunity to again, share an overview of educational services in general and just what we have to offer and what they can take advantage of. And then specific things that they're invited to participate in. Again, some fee for service, just depending on what it is. So really, we just look to share ways we can work together. And again, we appreciate that opportunity to do that in a more systematic way through those monthly meetings. But then also the Listserves, we call them, that's our email way of getting information out to all the schools. That's one other thing that we do in the summer is the charter leadership's able to see all the different basically email distribution lists that we have and they can sign up for those lists. So then they just get everything automatically, directly from ed services. So, really we just again, have a great working relationship with the charter unit and we're here to serve our local districts, our local charters. They know they can call any of us with questions or support, needs that may come up at any point. So I would like to turn it over now to Diane Ehrle, who will share a little bit more about more intensified technical assistance and then we'll be here to answer any questions later.

EHRLE: Thank you, Trish. I'm Diane Ehrle. I'm the director of the continuous improvement and leadership unit within the educational services division. And I was asked to come and provide some information about the tier two level of supports that we provide to our charter schools. So as part of our state accountability system each year, the California School Dashboard reports publicly on how schools and districts are performing in key areas. So that would be student achievement in academics, progress for English learners, graduation rates, college and career

readiness, suspension rates and chronic absenteeism. The Dashboard provides a holistic picture of how our students are doing across the state and within Orange County beyond test scores. If a district, county office or charter school has specific student groups who are very low performing within those school dashboard areas, they are identified by the state for targeted supports or called differentiated assistance within the statewide system.

When this happens, the County Office of Education is responsible to work closely with the districts or charter schools to provide targeted technical assistance to close to the performance gaps and support overall improvement of student outcomes. For charter schools, this only happens if they are very underperforming for two years in a row. The OCDE continuous improvement team, also within the educational services division, provide supports to all eligible Orange County districts and district-authorized charter schools. In cases where a charter school is authorized by the County Board of Education, the differentiated assistance as part of California Ed code is required to be provided by a local county office of education. We cannot provide the technical assistance support directly. It's considered a conflict of interest and it is an insured at the statewide level to provide objective support. So, we have five charter schools that are being provided technical assistance by Riverside County Office of Education.

Currently, through differentiated assistance the schools work with Riverside County Office of Education to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment. They go through a system of data analysis, they identify the root cause analysis of the identified issues, and then design strategies to improve student outcomes, especially for the underserved student groups. This is a similar design to what we the continuous improvement team in OCDE provides to our 14 identified DA districts. This process is collaborative and focuses on equity and sustainability, not just on compliance. The participating charter schools have all made gains in these targeted areas this year and will continue to make gains as they implement the systems and processes that came from the DA support. In addition to the support provided by Riverside County Office of Education, the Orange County Charter Schools are also offered targeted technical assistance by our own OCDE continuous improvement team, including no-cost professional learning opportunities, LCAP plan development and review.

So, some of our charters come to our team prior to submitting to their authorizers to make sure they're in compliance with the state. We provide supportive assessment and accountability because many of our charters are lacking the depth of understanding of the assessment and accountability requirements that the state of California requires. We provide federal program monitoring support. So many of our charters over the last five years have been involved in federal program monitoring and it's a complex system and we work with them to support any needs they might have. And then guidance related to data analysis and reporting and program evaluation provided by our data team. Additionally, charter school leadership teams are invited to and participate in our network meetings where they receive information and reminders related to CDE requirements and best practices. That includes CALPADS meetings, state and federal program networks, assessment networks, LCAP directors, and we also provide a school principals network and charter schools are welcome to attend and we have a listing of charter school principals that we invite. I just wanted to add that the 2025 California Dashboard will be publicly released on November 13th, along with the new district and charter school eligibility list for technical assistance. Thank you.

BARKE: Thank you very much.

CHASTAIN: So, I'm just going to wrap real quick. Our approach, like I said, is really grounded in balance in partnerships. We hold schools accountable to their charters, to state law and to the expectations set by this board, but we also see ourselves as a resource and a thought partner with them. Our oversight is continuous, transparent, it's data data-driven. The goal is when the school comes to us for renewal, it comes to this board for renewal. There's no surprises because we've been working with them all along. So, thank you for your time and support and with that, we're happy to answer any questions that you may have.

BEAN: If I could just summarize...

BARKE: Thank you.

BEAN: May I summarize, President? So through a very rigorous oversight process that our staff engages in annually and throughout the year, they're constantly monitoring the student performance, achievement performance levels of schools, and when they see a disconnect or some concerns or whatever it may be, we have resources like our ed services department led by Trish, and then we have our data team and they have a mechanism called differentiated assistance to be able to support those schools in different ways in different capacities and involve other counties to do that support as well. And so, there's certainly lots of support at the county office of education level to address any concerns that we may see in performance of schools, and then of course bring it to the board. And that's what you get when you have annual presentations from Aracely. We don't just look at once a year and then say, look at the first time like you do. We're actually monitoring the performance of charters throughout the year. Okay.

BARKE: Yeah, I actually get great feedback from a lot of our charters, how helpful your team is in visits and things like that. So, I do hear about that. Any questions or comments?

VALDES: Well, this 15 really ties in with 16, so can we move on to 16? So...

BARKE: Yes.

VALDES: All right. So I think what happened here was I came up with this idea, I did call Dr. Bean about this, and the NOVA Academy was really the reason I came up with the idea, which is we have such a talented staff and Trish, you did such a great job with the ethnic study stuff, unfunded mandate now we find out, but you did a great job with that. And so, my thought was particularly for the charters, because those are the schools that we authorize to sort of gauge what the very high performing charters are doing, create some type of a knowledge base with respect to best practices and then identify the charters that are lower performing. So that's what I'm going to say and have a meeting with them, really do a deep dive on their educational curriculum, do what you guys do, and make suggestions on how we can raise the performance levels. Based on that presentation, it sounds like my idea is already being done, at least to a very large extent. Is there anything in my idea that you're not doing already? So, you're already doing all that? All right. You could have told me that a month ago.

BEAN: I tried.

HENDRICK: Trustee Valdes. Maybe if I could just share because you are going to get a charter update for Aracely in just a few minutes. We do do a lot of offering. It's also up to the charter school to take advantage to some of these things. And so, I do think that's something we have to look at in our recent experiences. It could be that they don't quite realize that until they're getting closer to renewal and they realize that all their test scores are going to be coming forward to you and they realize, oh my goodness, I think we should do more trainings now. I think that is one of the concerns we've had is they have different systems sometimes. I think just we do everything we can to make sure they're aware. There's a lot of phone calls. We are actually issuing notice concerns to a lot of the charters because of these things. And some of them respond great and say, "Yes, here's my plan and this is what I'm going to do". And then I think Trish was explaining the one district they did do that and then it didn't work very well, and so they called them back right away and said, please help us because this is not what we thought was going to work. I think it is just continual conversations with them and offering a lot of assistance.

VALDES: I mean, my idea was not really about pointing fingers or casting blame. If I am a charter school operator and I'm the executive director and my school is not performing as well as others, maybe it's just the way I operate, but I'm going to sit there with open ears to hear is there a better way to do something. So, it's a little disappointing to hear that it sounds like some of them are perhaps not taking it seriously or perhaps are not interested, but that to me is unfortunate. I would not have that approach if my...

BARKE: What percentage of the schools really take advantage of the services you offer? I mean just roughly 10%, 20%, 50%?

BEAN: I want to say if more and more are taking advantage because we are building a climate and a culture that is welcoming for them to take advantage of that.

BARKE: Okay. The majority you would say maybe?

SPARKS: I just want to offer one quick idea, maybe. I love that you're doing training workshops and stuff and sometimes that's viewed as kind of intimidating. So maybe you could also have a fun pedagogical workshop each semester and each charter school could come and talk about one thing that they're doing really well and in that they would learn from the others and get ideas. I mean, I'm sure you're doing stuff kind of like that, but sometimes I think they feel intimidated like, oh, we're coming to a training and oh. Yeah.

HENDRICK: I do think that's what their professional learning communities are. And so, they do. They get all the math people together, all the science people together, so they can kind of share their successes. Yeah.

SPARKS: Share their successes and through that they're going to get ideas from the other successes and trying to make it, I mean, I know you're doing all sorts of cool stuff, but just trying to make it fun and light so it doesn't feel so serious.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sugar and candy helps.

SPARKS: That helps. Candy and sugar helps. But anyway. Yeah.

BEAN: So, Aracely what is that percentage, you think?

CHASTAIN: The percentage I think, I'm not sure because a lot of times they don't come through us, but I would say maybe 25%. It's probably going up more, but I would gauge it at about that. One of the things obviously that we're probably going to start seeing an uptick of that. We haven't had renewals in a very long time. Those have continued to be extended. So we're going on schools that have eight, nine years. I think one has 10 years since they've had a renewal. So now that renewals are back on our docket, we're going to start seeing where those test scores really are. They're going to matter a lot and they're going to have to start really paying attention to those. So we're hoping that they'll reach out for more support during that. So I mean that's really, I hope that answers your question.

BARKE: Yeah, no, absolutely. Absolutely.

SPARKS: Okay. I have another idea. So you know how we have in the board and in these positions that we have to do these trainings, ethical trainings every two years or whatever. I wonder if we as a board could sort of, I don't know, mandate might be too strong of a word, but say that they have to go to a pedagogical type of workshop once every two years or something. I don't know. Because eight, nine years is a long time.

CHASTAIN: You could put that in your agreement. Where they choose to have that training would be completely up to the school. So, when you have a Waldorf school or something like that, they're going to go someplace completely different for that type of training than our staff. And so they have the choice of which vendor technically to go to. And the nice thing about the schools that are authorized by the board is that our oversight visit, as Trish mentioned already includes such a deep dive into a lot of what they do and they're already getting a lot of answers to questions, suggestions for improvement, things like that for free because they're being monitored by being authorized through the board. Anything deeper than that though, and the suggestions that we give, just because they don't go through our staff, we can't assume that they're not taking those suggestions. They may still be looking for those things, but they just may not be reaching out to our staff for that professional development. It may be through another vendor, which quite a few of our schools do as well.

BARKE: Thank you so much. It was a great presentation. Any other questions?

SPARKS: No.

BARKE: Well, thank you. Appreciate it. Sorry, it's running late tonight, but I've been trying to have very quick meetings. 55 minutes, a minute, five, but I mean an hour five, but tonight's a little bit long. All right, what do we have next? It looks like we're coming to the conclusion here with communication information discussion from our board liaison. Brandon.

GUEVARA: Good evening, everyone. Good evening trustees. Superintendent, public, you still here? Thanks for bearing with us. I promise I'll be fast. Thank you for tuning into my October review for the board liaison position. Let's see, starting off real quick, that's actually the perfect tangent talking about trainings because recently at the behest of our board and specifically Dr. Williams suggested be a great idea, considering that this is the Orange County Board of Education and Orange County Department of Education, we require excellence that I complete

the same trainings that our trustees are required to complete. And so, we decided this was appropriate considering it's so the Brown Act for those who aren't familiar, it dictates really a lot of what the board does in terms of open meetings. And feel free counsel, if I misspeak, please interrupt me, but I'll keep it very sparse. But it was important to note for me to be informed about those laws and just to avoid any missteps. So, we have now that on the docket for me too, so we can add that to the resume. Moving on really quick, what I'm really excited to bring your attention to and don't read too much because it's still supposed to be a surprise, it hasn't been unveiled yet. And sorry Tim, your face is up there.

SHAW: You picked the right one for the...

GUEVARA: I am happy to announce that our *OCBE Quarterly*, that's where we're going to be calling it. Our newsletter for the board is almost officially complete. We just really are dealing with the ins and the outs, the logistics, disseminating who's going to receive it, how they're going to receive it, those tic-tacky things. But I'm very excited. I've worked really hard on this we're, it's going to be featuring personal biographies from our board members, personal statements. It's going to feature links to trustee districts, including exclusive statements and stories from our charter schools, our local public schools, et cetera. It's going to feature school highlights from our local school districts. Excuse me. So, I'm really excited for that to come to light and I think you guys are really going to love it. I think the public's going to love it even more.

It's going to really bring your trustees into your homes and so you can really be familiar with them. And very quickly, just to discuss the next steps. Like I said, it's going to be the disseminations, it's going to look a lot like this. That's Trustee Tim right there. Sorry, you're featured today, Tim, forgive me. But it's going to feature a lot of, I would say the equivalent of door-knocking almost. We're going to be going to, or I'm going to be going to a lot of local school board meetings, getting more acquainted with them and just kind of telling them what we're all about. In this picture here, Tim was relaying to the Fullerton Joint Union High School District about our upcoming newsletter and we actually partnered with them and they're going to be featured in the first edition, I should say. And so that's really just going to be spreading the word just so they become aware about it.

And then I'm just going to briefly close out, it's a very short meeting today. The role, just to touch on the role of the board liaison position as it is growing very rapidly. And I think the newsletter is kind of symbolic of that and it's really taken me in places I would've never imagined it taking me. And from the left, it's taken me to medical seminars discussing pediatric health and kids and how it relates to education. I was fortunate enough to go there with Dr. Bean. In the middle, I represented the board with Tim Shaw at a Fullerton Rotary meeting. And then on the right, I represented the board with Dr. Bean and some of our staff up here at the Orange County, well, I'm abbreviating it, the OCBSA and the ACSA dinner, joint dinner annual, I believe it's an annual dinner. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the role continues to grow and we're making connections places that I never would've imagined.

I don't know if the board did, but as Dr. Williams like to say, we are building the plane as we're flying it, and I think it's saving up to be a pretty sturdy aircraft. And then to close out. And if you guys will allow me, I'd like to, that's the end of my professional review if you allow me to get a little personal, a little vulnerable, considering we are entering the season of giving and thanks. It

is Thanksgiving. I would just like to briefly explain or elaborate on what I'm grateful for. Today holds a lot of significance for me. Six years ago, I lost my brother in an accident and I oftentimes think about how proud he would be of me because he was my biggest supporter. And I just wanted to say publicly, I want to thank the board and the Department and Dr. Bean for being so gracious in their advice and their time and support and your vote of confidence in my abilities to perform this job. And I hope I continue to do a great job in the days and months, hopefully maybe years to come. But yeah, I think that sums up my review, everyone. Thank you for your time. I hope I was fast.

BARKE: Yay. Great, thank you.

GUEVARA: Any questions?

BARKE: Nope. Great job.

SPARKS: I just have a comment.

ROLEN: When you get a chance, why don't you fill me in on that whole Brown Act thing?

SPARKS: Oh yeah, exactly.

GUEVARA: You have the law degree, not me.

SPARKS: No, this is so cool that you're doing all this because I think a lot of people generally in the county don't fully understand what we do as a board. So, I think this is so important that the word gets out about what we do on a monthly basis, daily basis, and you're the liaison, so you're putting it all together and I really appreciate you going out and doing that work for us. So that's really fantastic.

GUEVARA: I'm glad to hear you're excited. Thank you so much.

SHAW: Brandon sort of mentioned very quickly there that we were going to maybe put in our newsletter, celebrating some of the successes of our local districts.

GUEVARA: Yes.

SHAW: So that's what I was talking with the Fullerton High School board about. And I think we want to have a little synergy here where they could kind of talk about the good work happening at the County Department of Ed. We highlight some of the good stuff going on at their local district and we can kind of help tell each other's story. And I think their superintendent and board was very excited about that idea. So, I think that's great. I mean, I know it's tough in such a big county. We've got so many schools and so many districts and so many great things going on, but here and there, we could try to highlight some real fun stuff happening at the local level.

GUEVARA: Absolutely. Thank you.

BARKE: Thank you, Brandon. Appreciate you. All right, announcements, superintendent.

BEAN: Well, first of all, just a reminder, Renee always put Brandon after me. Okay. I don't want to follow him. So, speaking of lifting and spotlighting districts across the county, I do want to share a little bit of updates around how we support our LEAs local education agencies, both charters and traditional districts. So, we're are going to live in this three support objectives. And the first way or first thing is that connects with what Tim, you were saying very closely, is that for the first time ever, we have awarded 12 schools as what we call the Orange County Impact Schools. And what that is, is that it's an opportunity for us to recognize school sites that lead with innovative practices and then for us as a team to go in and actually learn about what they're doing. So, actually, Fullerton Joint had one school and we actually announced one of our own schools, Sunburst Academy. So it's an amazing program as you all have been there. And so we're actually going to go into those 12 campuses to learn more about what they do so we can spotlight it across the county. They're going to get a banner and a certificate and award it to their boards. And so we're really excited to be able to do that and spotlight the great work that our districts do.

BARKE: Love that. Love it.

BEAN: And then in addition, we wanted to highlight, speaking of spotlighting, these four schools. As you know, blue ribbon program has been discontinued across the nation, but California has named its own nominees for the blue ribbon. And some of these are very interesting schools. One is Oxford Academy, Troy High School, and then Orange Lutheran High School, and then Tustin Memorial Academy. So California has nominated them to get the blue ribbon in our county. Another way that we support our districts is through multilingual academic services. So one that we've been doing is building or meeting with districts around building bridges, elevating cross-linguistic transfer. So they had a really nice convening just recently and a lot of great positive remarks from the participants on how supported they feel from the County Office of Education. And just recently, we are both our human resources and business conference led by Gina and Dean.

They put together this nice conference for all of our districts to come together, hosted by us to actually get support and training around HR and business services. And it is focused on collaboration compliance. We brought in experts to lead sessions to help learn more about their work that they do at the district level. So what is the pattern here? The pattern here is that you see that we serve the people that serve are students. And that is a mantra that I've been saying for the last 15, 16 months. And our team has significantly shown that in their heart as well is that we're here to support our districts. And then you heard from our ACCESS schools today, what we're going to do is we're going to change this vision from just ACCESS to actually now including our Connections program. So we're going to call this student 2030 or 2030 vision for students.

So it focuses in on our students in particular Connections just had a beautiful staff development day in which I had an opportunity to speak and they were over here at the building D and it was just a great opportunity to connect with their staff and how hard they work to support our mod to severe students with disabilities. Speaking of Connections, we are celebrating this year the 50 years of IDA. That's a special education law that came into place that actually the same year that I came over from Vietnam. And it used to be called Education of All Handicapped Children Act. And then it progressed to IDA and then it was reauthorized in 2004. It now currently serves 7.5 million students with disabilities. And so, the legacy that this law in particular or act has left is

this whole idea of equity inclusion for our students of disability. So we're going to have some big celebration in Connections. They brought in a big cake and we cut it up for over a couple hundred people at that session. So we're going to continue celebrating this year. All that to say is that at the end of the day, it is about students and it is about serving our districts and charter schools. So that's the superintendent report.

BARKE: Thank you very much.

BEAN: Yep.

HENDRICK: I know it's getting late, but we do have a few updates. So first I'll call up Dave. He has the Esplanade report that's in your folder, I believe.

GIORDANO: All right, well, thank you and good evening, President Barke, members of the board. Just want to give you a quick update on the first quarter report for the Esplanade property. And so, this report covers the months of July through September of the current fiscal year of '25-'26. Good news, again, occupancy rate for the property still remains high. It's at 93%, and that's as of the end of the first quarter period ending September 30th. Both are operating revenues and expenditures were again, we budgeted those conservatively, and both are trending either in line or better than projected. And this, of course, leaves us well-positioned for the current fiscal year. And that does conclude the report unless there are any questions of the board.

BARKE: Any questions? Thank you, David. Appreciate it.

GIORDANO: Thank you.

HENDRICK: As Aracely comes up to give the charter update, I wanted to let you know that in your red folder is also two letters from a constituent who wanted to give public comment but wasn't able to attend. And so, he asked that we give you those comments in your folder. So those are in there. And now Aracely, if you'd like to give us our, is it our fall I think is what you call it?

CHASTAIN: Yes. This is the fall charter school update. So, we do this twice a year in the fall and in the spring. So, it's just a quick update and a summary of what's happening. We've provided you in your folders both the financial update as well as an update on the 2025 CAASPP assessment results that was created by our research evaluation and data inquiry team. So that's Diane Ehrle's team. Overall, I would say regarding the financial condition overview, our charter portfolio is showing steady progress. A few schools are still working on stabilizing their financials. Others are moving toward much stronger, more sustainable operations. Currently, we have three schools identified as being in poor fiscal condition. As you can see in your report. I just want to give you a little bit of an update on those three schools. California Republic Leadership Academy Yorba Linda opened last year and it is experiencing early stage deficit, which is common to new schools.

The good news is that the enrollment has more than doubled from 60 to 148 students. And their current budget projects a small surplus that should move them into a positive fund balance by the end of this year. So, we are seeing good things from them. Orange County Academy of Sciences and Arts has been operating with deficits for the past two years. We issued a notice of concern in the spring and the school submitted a stabilization plan that includes several cost control

measures if they stay on track with that plan. It looks like they are, they're projecting a modest surplus this year. So, we also feel good about them. Explore Academy, however, continues to face some serious challenges related to declining enrollment and cashflow. So, enrollment dropped from 122 students last year to 73 students this year, and they carry about a million dollars in debt.

There's a \$100,000 principal payment due in the spring that we are really, really hoping they can make so that they don't go into default on that very large loan. Across the portfolio under enrollment remains the biggest contributor to financial strain, especially for newer expanding charter schools. For four new charters opened this fall and three came in below enrollment projections. So that's something we're monitoring very closely. We don't know the cause of all that. Renee probably would say it's declining enrollment throughout the county in general. So, our new and expanding schools are finding it, I think a little bit harder to meet those enrollment projections that they thought that they would have in the beginning and to fill those school spaces the way they thought that they could. Turning to academics. So that's your second report that you have. The board received the 2025 CAASPP results, which provide a snapshot of how students are performing the English language, arts, math, and science.

Overall, OCBE authorized charter schools demonstrate strong performance in ELA and science with several exceeding state averages. Six schools stand out consistently for strong results. So that's International School for Science and Culture. Irvine International Academy, Orange County Classical Academy, Orange County School of the Arts, Oxford Preparatory Academy, Middle and Oxford Preparatory Academy Saddleback Valley. These six schools really set the bar for not just charter schools but for all schools in Orange County. As we've seen among all public schools, math performance continues to lag behind English and language arts. The state average is already low at 37% and several of the board-authorized charter schools fall below that mark. Science results are mixed. Some schools performed exceptionally well while others show room for improvement. It highlights kind of inconsistent implementation of the next generation science standards, which have now been in place for quite a few years. And so that is something and feedback that we're giving as we go on our annual oversight visits.

On a positive note, schools had high participation rates across all assessments, which you can see on that last page, which is really great. The majority of them well above 95%, which is the goal, and which means that the data we're looking at is solid and reliable, so that's always good use as well. So, in summary, while several schools continue to face fiscal challenges, particularly those in their early years, others are showing signs of stabilization and improvement and academic results are mixed, but we see clear strengths in some schools, particularly established ones and ongoing growth opportunities and newer programs that are still building their capacity. OCDE staff will continue to monitor each school and provide updates to the board as needed.

SPARKS: Thank you.

BARKE: Thank you, Aracely.

HENDRICK: I have Explore Academy. I wanted to share some news with you.

SHAW: Is your mic on?

HENDRICK: No, it's not. I'm sorry. What'd you say? What was your question?

SHAW: Is your mic on?

HENDRICK: No, no, it wasn't on, I guess. So, Explore Academy. So, in your folder, we had told you a few months ago that they were going to have a FCMAT study to kind of help them with best practices. They did receive a very large report that is in your folder. I was present for the Explorer board meeting where FCMAT presented the report and I think FCMAT was really trying to, their biggest issue is their financial status right now and the fact that they're declining enrollment and that they are going to run out of cash pretty soon. They said there's a lot of best practice in there. They're very important, but that's their dire piece. They talked a little bit about that.

Also, in your folder is the third notice of concern for Explorer about their financials. I think we've shared one other one with you. We are still struggling to get regular data from the school, especially their cashflow reports. What we'd like to do is they are due to have that back to us by the end of November. We'd like to bring their plan back to you in December for you to see. There is a lot of concern. They have a very small school and they have one person running the school. But I think that what I share with them is they need to kind of go through the report and prioritize what they're going to do. But there are a lot of things that they have to do very quickly to be in order to be able to maintain. I just want to share with you, it's not the best news.

I think I'm concerned they're going to be able to get through everything. Honestly. I'm not sure they have the capacity in their group. There's a few things in there about they're paying a lot of money for consultant fees, but I'm not sure they can actually say what it's doing for them. I think that's kind of what FCMAT picked out in a couple of things. They've paid a consultant like \$90,000 for enrollment, for getting enrollment, and yet they have less than 70 students now. So, I think they're going to have to reprioritize things. I will say at the board meeting, they were going to purchase a van and I thought the board members asked really good questions. I think they are starting to realize that they have to ask a lot of questions. I think they're getting the review, but I do feel like they think, well, they're new because remember all the, there's an old executive director and different board members, and so now these are all the new people. So, they're promising they're going to get things straight. We hope in that plan you'll be able to see that progress. But I just want you to be aware and we'll bring that back to you because we do have very serious concerns.

BARKE: Thank you.

VALDES: When were they originally approved Renee?

HENDRICK: Well, they were approved about three years ago, but they've only been open for one year. So '24-'25 was their first year.

CHASTAIN: Right. That's the third year of their charter, but it was the first year actually opened and so they continued. That's part of the reason why some of their financials don't look great because they continued to have to spend money. And I believe they continued to pay on their facility during the years that they didn't open because they didn't want to lose the facility.

And so, all of that, and then having staff and consultants throughout that whole time has added to some of that.

VALDES: But they were approved in 2022?

CHASTAIN: 2022. Correct.

HENDRICK: So, if you have any questions once you go through that report, I can give you more information.

BARKE: And I think we knew they were going to take one year, but then they took two. Right. The plan, yeah.

HENDRICK: So that is kind of the issue we have with the planning years. They seem to keep expending money and not having any revenue coming in to go with it.

BARKE: Right.

HENDRICK: Okay. The other thing I have for you is much simpler and that is that our next board meeting, now that I've changed all my papers in front of me, is going to be in December. So many handouts today that I'm trying to find it.

SHAW: December 3rd.

HENDRICK: December 3rd. Thank you.

BARKE: And you have a submission deadline of November 17th, packet delivery of November 26th. Office closed at December 24th, 25th, 31st, and January 1st.

HENDRICK: Thank you.

ROLEN: You retire.

HENDRICK: I should. That's all we have, though if that answers your questions.

BARKE: All right.

SPARKS: And just note that January, it's going to be mid-January.

HENDRICK: Yes.

SPARKS: It's not what you think.

BARKE: Right. Right. It's the second.

SPARKS: January 14th.

HENDRICK: January 14th, because of the, I think religious holiday.

SPARKS: Yep.

BARKE: Okay. Yep. Right. Legislative updates. I don't think we have anything. Do we have anything, Tim?

SHAW: The legislature is out of session and Congress is shut down, so not a lot going on.

BARKE: All right. More to follow next month on that. Any committee reports? No. Board member comments?

SHAW: I did want to acknowledge our teachers that were here. There was a reference made to going into juvenile hall and being a teacher there and kind of struck with me. My dad was not an ACCESS teacher, but he worked for the Orange County Healthcare Agency, going into juvenile hall and he was the drug and alcohol abuse counselor. So I know it really wore him out emotionally. Being around young people that are incarcerated is very sad. So I do appreciate, I know the collective bargaining agreement process can be a lot of fun. We don't have a vote on that as a board member. My former job as a city council member, I did have a vote on collective bargaining agreements. I know how there can be challenges with that. So I'm sure we'll get to a happy place at some point. But I do want to thank and just hear publicly acknowledge the teachers that we have at the county.

BARKE: Yes, I agree. They had very compelling remarks and appreciate them coming here and chatting with us.

VALDES: Yeah, I definitely want to give a shout-out to the teachers that showed up here tonight. I was certainly listening and your stories about the types of kids that you work with are very compelling. I do want to mention one thing. There was one comment that I thought was a little unfair and I don't mind mentioning it. Someone said something about that we think the charter schools matter and the public schools don't. Ascribing that, I think to myself and this board I think is a little unfair.

BARKE: I would agree with that.

SPARKS: I would agree. Yeah.

BARKE: We care about all the kids and just making sure that each child has a choice of where they go to school. But we do care about all of them.

VALDES: I think because we authorize the charter schools, we talk about them a lot. But I absolutely very much care about what's going in the public schools and very much care about what's happening in ACCESS.

WILLIAMS: Do I have permission to talk?

BARKE: Please, please.

WILLIAMS: Likewise. The staff, the ACCESS staff are just incredible. With all those years of experience and sacrifice that they've given to our kids, it's absolutely an amazing story that we

tell each and every single time as far as the increase that we have no role on that. That is strictly Dr. Bean. I think there was a few unfair remarks about Dr. Bean's pay raise that we gave. And just for the record, that pay raise was to make his salary equivalent to other county superintendents of likes size. So, I wanted to put...

SPARKS: And we did a fair analysis of that, if I recall correctly, to make sure it was fair and equitable.

BARKE: Yeah, no, I know much research was done and it was really just to bring him in line with similar works and to compensate him for his travel and all of his efforts.

VALDES: And it was also a one time thing. So yeah.

BARKE: Anything else? Any other comments? All right, with that, I think we can close. We did not have a closed session, so there's nothing to report out. So we are adjourned.