

SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

May 31, 2023
AUSD District Office
2060 Challenger Drive
Alameda, CA 94501

UNADOPTED MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING: A Special meeting of the Board of Education was held at the place and date mentioned above.

A. **CALL TO ORDER**

1. Call to Order - 5:00pm - Pledge of Allegiance
Board of Education President Heather Little led the Pledge of Allegiance
2. Introduction of Board Members
Board of Education Members present: Board President Heather Little, Board Clerk Gary K. Lym, Board Trustee Jennifer Williams, and Board Trustee Ryan LaLonde. Student Board Members present: Alameda High Student Board Member Talia Kotovsky, and Encinal Student Board Member Vinny Camarillo.

Board of Education Members absent: Board Vice President Megan Sweet

B. **MODIFICATION(S) OF THE AGENDA**

There were no modifications of the agenda.

C. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

1. Study Session on School Level Initiatives to Support African American Achievement at Ruby Bridges Elementary School, Wood Middle School, and Encinal Jr. & Sr. High School

Superintendent Pasquale Scuderi opened up the meeting by welcoming audience members. Superintendent Scuderi explained AUSD continues to share the struggle of many school districts when it comes to serving all of our students effectively. That is, we continue to see differences in outcomes and opportunities for students in our system, differences that correlate to factors like race, disability, and housing status. This pattern warrants both our sustained attention and a sustained effort to disrupt.

It is our belief through collective action we can disrupt and change the outcomes we are seeing for our African American students.

This meeting is the first in a series of Study Sessions that will take place into the Fall of 2023, school site leadership and staff from Ruby Bridges Elementary, Wood Middle, and Encinal Jr. & Sr. High School were present to share with the Board their plans for particular programs and strategies to support achievement for our African American students.

Ruby Bridges Elementary

The team from Ruby Bridges Elementary School, Principal Danielle Pharr-Matthews, Lynne Martin, Brian Cooper, and Kristen Furuichi Fong were present to share their plans to increase student achievement for their students. The team shared some of the successes they have had at their site, for example, the Peer Mentoring Program, Restorative Practices, and a monthly Wellness Playbook used by 5th grade students in their PBIS program.

Some of the challenges the team mentioned was chronic absenteeism, the high turnover for teachers and staff at the school, a more diverse staff that would more closely reflect the students and families at the school. Among the needs the team asked for were a full-time school psychologist and more diverse hiring practices.

Specific goals the team at Ruby Bridges are going to work on for the 2023-2024 school year were a 20% reduction in chronic absenteeism for African American students and improved academic outcomes equivalent to 1 year or more as measured by Star SGP.

Board Vice President Megan Sweet arrived at 5:45pm.

Wood Middle School

Principal Kai Dwyer and her team Rob Picciotto, Lindsey Shepard, and Kellie Scott shared with the Board their plans for improving student outcomes for the 2023-2024 school year. These plans include teachers making personal phone calls to the homes of Black and African American families three times a year to form positive relationships with parent/guardians, teachers will become familiar with STAR reading scores for all Black/African American students to re-emphasize the focus on student achievement, a new full-time Intervention Lead who will support restorative practices to reduce suspensions for all student groups. The team will also focus on reducing chronic absenteeism.

Principal Kai Dwyer also shared that Black parents and students from the Black Student Union have given feedback about how they feel they are treated at Wood. Concerns such as anti-Black language not being addressed appropriately in class. Parents have also shared that Parent Square (district communication tool) messages are not making it into some Black homes. Principal Dwyer also mentioned specific outreach to families living at Alameda Point who sometimes have trouble with the sporadic bus schedules operated by AC Transit.

Some successes at Wood have included: a very active Black Student Union (not common at the middle school level), an improvement in attendance for Black students who had previously been chronically absent, and Principal Dwyer's expectation that all classrooms have respectful images of Black people and people of color on walls and in slide decks.

Board members asked about the racial makeup of the staff at Wood Middle School, and Principal Dwyer explained there were a few African American teachers at the school, and several clerical staff members. A Board member also asked about the AVID program, which is an elective that helps students

develop skills that help them learn. A Board member asked if there were any supports the district could provide to help to students who are still struggling to get to school from Alameda Point. A Board member remarked that she really liked the focus Principal Dwyer has in putting up positive images of Black/African American people in classrooms.

Encinal Jr. & Sr. High School

Principal Kirstin Snyder and her team Assistant Principals Jamilah Jones-McLean and Tim Zolezzi, and Dean Melissa Sackett shared information with the Board about their plans to increase student achievement, specifically African American students, in the 2023-2024 school year.

Challenges the team wants to focus their efforts on include: low UC eligibility rates for African American students, and higher than average D/F rates for African American students. The team also mentioned the need for more time for administrators to go over data pertaining to Encinal students.

The administrative team expressed very strongly that they want to disrupt the narrative of the “West End” schools being less than or not as worthy as schools on the East side of the Island. Board members stated they have also heard this unacceptable narrative and it is distressing.

Public Comments:

Vickie Smith, community activist, former McKinney Vento Homeless Liaison for AUSD: Ms. Smith, a very respected community member emotionally told the Board and audience that Black and African American students have historically been under-performing in Alameda, and the issue is not going to be fixed by putting a large amount of programs in place. Ms. Smith asked the Board to focus on a few key initiatives to help Alameda students.

A Board member asked what the suspension rate is for African American students. Principal Snyder stated she doesn’t have the exact numbers but African American students as a group of students have the highest rates of suspension. Principal Snyder stated they are approaching suspensions and discipline with an Equity lens, but there are some non-negotiables for discipline like safety and violence that still make the suspension rates higher than she would like for all students.

A Board member stated she appreciated the targeted support the schools presented on, but she wants to see the impact of these new programs. The Board member also wants to see that staff is supported in knowing what their goals and targets are. The Board member stated she would also like to know when we exit students out of the supports in order to take more students in that need support.

More than one Board member was interested in focusing on the D/F/I rate at the high school level as this can cause a negative ripple when students do not feel successful, or they feel like there is no reason for them to try because they are already unsuccessful.

A Board member also asked what happened to the CTE program at Encinal?

D. ADJOURNMENT – Board President Heather Little adjourned the meeting at 7:16pm.

Respectively Submitted,

Kerri Lonergan
Senior Executive Assistant
Alameda Unified School

