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Lemoore, CA

Board Members

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The following are responses to questions gathered and shared from the Reestablishing Stratford on Monday, March 1, 2021.

Question: How did this proposal come to be?

District Response: The District regularly reviews enrollment numbers, data (academic, attendance, and behavioral), educational programs, combination classrooms, and possible solutions continuously. Combination classrooms have been a concern for often over the past ten years. They have been a long-standing topic of discussion with teachers and administration. Teachers have expressed concern over the formation of combination classrooms and the challenges this presents with students' optimal educational opportunities.

Additionally, the ongoing need to change teachers' classroom grade assignments due to enrollment fluctuation hampers a teacher's mastery of grade-level content standards as he/she strives to provide the best learning environment for our students.

Lastly, with the caps on classroom sizes, especially within the primary grade levels, as classrooms reach the maximum, new students from either Stratford or Central must be transferred to the site with available classroom space.

The concern of the ongoing need to create combination classrooms, teachers having to change grade levels from year to year, and the need to transfer students between the two campuses based upon class size impaction has been long-standing.

When learning gaps are identified, the teaching staff provides strategic and targeted interventions to fill those gaps in students' learning. As well as provide a solid core curriculum at the designated grade level. In Central Union Elementary School District, the following has been a priority.

1. Keeping the number of combination classrooms low to ensure students have the best learning environment possible to reach academic, behavioral, and social success.
2. Providing a solid core, Tier I Level of instruction, and strategic-Tier II and Targeted-Tier III interventions within the school day to mend learning gaps and continue learning the grade-level standards and targets.
3. Lastly, provide all certificated staff with a conducive environment to collaborate, and serve all students.

The impact of the COVID-19 this past year on instructional and learning has raised the level of concern. As seen by the data, enrollment numbers are fluctuating. There are concerns in academics, but until true-valid information is available, we are unaware of what our current generation of students will be facing. There is a great deal of research that discusses the benefits of a well-developed instructional program with tiered instruction and collaborative teams working together to meet the needs of the students they serve. Over the years, there have been comments and questions regarding if the District would ever consider merging Stratford and Central. All prudent educators in all districts are re-evaluating the current circumstances and are looking at all possible solutions. Hence proposals are developed.

Question: *Why weren't parents of the community notified regarding this proposal, given that it would directly affect and impact Stratford?*

District Response: The District maintained a notification plan, as outlined in the Board presentation of March 8, 2021.

There was a sequence in sharing the proposal, with community notification as a step in that process. Initially, conversations with site and district administration, union leadership, and staff were held. During those conversations, individual staff members were encouraged to share with the site principal and District administration if there were thoughts, either in support of or concerned about the proposal. Their concerns and questions would have been noted, reviewed, discussed, along with all other input received. The next step in the process was to meet with stakeholder groups and share the proposal and the reason behind the request. These groups include parent and community members and would also have the opportunity to provide their concerns and questions that would have been noted, reviewed, discussed, and all other input received. These organizations included: Re-establishing Stratford Organization, Tachi-Yokut Tribal

Council, District Advisory Committee, Indian Education Council, School Site Councils, District English Learner Advisory Committee, and Parent Meetings at each site.

However, following the Board meeting of March 8, 2021, there have been some alterations regarding the process. The board president has expressed a desire to form an advisory group for both communities to review and discuss this potential solution. Information and data will be presented to this advisory committee. From those discussions, the committee may formulate recommendations for board consideration.

Question: What is the mindset behind this transition being proposed now? Why do it now, given all the other changes kids are dealing with in regards to the pandemic and distance learning?

District Response: Due to the pandemic, the District is seeing significant learning loss at both campuses. Many of our students are struggling academically, and it will take creative approaches and measures to address these learning challenges.

The reconfiguration of the campuses provides enhanced opportunity for teachers to address the learning for all of our students, maximize learning for all students, creatively target how interventions will be created and developed, and implemented, which will result in more focused and concentrated support for our students. As an example, both campuses will be impacted by multiple combination classes. The intensive intervention that our students need will create hurdles to reach students when teachers are already balancing curriculum of two different grade levels. Having multiple teachers at each grade level will allow for shared responsibility in meeting all students' needs through targeted grade-level intervention.

Question: What action can parents take if the board decides to approve this proposal? Are alternate options being made available for students who don't want to combine with Central? Would the District be willing to transport Stratford students to the base schools as an alternative to this combination of schools?

District Response: The District plans for a full in-person return to our campuses in the Fall for the 2021-22 school year. Distance Learning options, unless provided by the State directives, will not be the normal course of business. Independent study options, provided that the request is consistent with education code allowance/regulations, will be offered. Intra-district transfers to NASL are only allowed if the parent/guardian otherwise has access to the installation. Central Union Elementary can only request

installation access provided that the individual is an employee and works on the installation. The District does not possess the unilateral ability to grant installation access.

Question: *Is the District taking transportation issues into account, such as parent access to vehicles?*

District response: Transportation will continue as the present. Lemoore Area Transportation provides bussing. Routes will be developed between the two campuses. As necessary, the school sites may investigate staggered start times, allowing upper-grade students at Stratford to escort younger-grade students to the Stratford campus. Following that, the upper-grade students would be transported to Central School. The transportation of students between the Stratford and the Central campuses is not a new practice as this has been in place for years with small numbers which has been due to class space availability at the site.

Question: *How will this transition affect after-school programs?*

District Response: Both campuses will continue to offer After School programs for students. The Kings County Office of Education operates these programs. They will continue to run similarly to the past.

Question: *Has the District taken into account the potential bullying that may occur when combining populations, including younger Stratford students (5th-6th graders, etc) with older Central students (7th-8th graders) that they are unfamiliar with?*

District Response: At every school in the Central Union District, we maintain programs and educational opportunities to provide the framework necessary to support appropriate student behavior. Within our Tiered framework for Social-Emotional Learning, each campus implements schoolwide and classroom-wide supports for students.

Examples of school site approaches include:

- o General classroom management by the classroom teacher
- o Back to school staff and student training
- o positive active student supervision
- o Playground training for students
- o Mid-Year and ongoing reviews as needed
- o Regular Positive Recognition for appropriate behavior
- o Universal System of Attendance & Behavior

- o School-Wide Behavior Expectations
- o Supportive Social Programs such as ... Dude Be Nice and Second Step
- o Clear Rules / Access & Exit Procedures
- o Procedures for Monitoring Input from students
- o Rapport Building

Further, within our support systems, the District offers guidance services to students provided by our School Counselors and School Psychologists. We support Social Emotional Learning for students by delivering Developmentally Appropriate Counseling Lessons. Comprehensive school needs are identified through the school site's universal screeners. Each school site's administration may request specific lessons and approaches based on identified needs.

The District maintains multiple partnerships for ongoing support based upon presented needs. These agency partnerships include the Kings County Sheriff (School Resource Officer), Kings County Behavioral Health, Santa Rosa Rancheria -Education Department, Kings County School Attendance Review Board, Foster/Homeless Youth.

Question: *How will this move affect sports programs on both campuses?*

District Response: It is understood that Sports are an essential part of life for our students, and parents want to be a part of that experience. The school will continue to offer A and B teams for each sport. Regardless of the merge, all sports and practices will occur after school to prevent interference with the academic schedule. Depending on student interest, coaches may hold tryouts similar to what the larger schools currently do. The Stratford gym can continue to be available for after-school practices and games as needed. Additional options regarding sports may emerge through the advisory committee process as this group develops.

Question: *What is the specific timeline for this project? When will the final decision be made, and when will this project go into effect?*

District Response: The initial consideration had a timeline, with stages for communication and notification, a four-stage process with input and communication during each step.

- o Proposal of the Merge (Sharing and Receiving Input)
- o Addressing Obstacles of the Merge
- o Planning and Building the steps and processes of the Merge

o Implementing the Merge

The timeline had an implementation date, provided board acceptance and approval for the Fall 2021-22 school year. However, given the present direction from the Board of Trustees, this implementation plan may be delayed as the Board has asked for the formation of an advisory committee to review this proposal's components.

Question: How will the District handle the issue of students who have daily medications that they carry with them daily? Will this be monitored in regards to now having to take their medications on and off a bus and onto another campus?

District Response: Medications will be handled the same way that they currently are. Most students do not self-carry medications, but rather those medications are housed in the nurse's office at the school of attendance. Students who self-carry medications (such as an inhaler) will continue to keep that medication in their backpacks as they travel to and from school.

Question: Can the issue of combo classes be resolved by hiring additional teachers?

District Response: As addressed in the proposals and different options, there are other potential solutions for the issues at present, and the scenarios have additional associated costs and still do not attain the level of staffing allocation as the presented proposal. The District is charged with maintaining fiscal solvency and accountability with all funding.

Question: How will the District handle the issue of non-driving parents picking up kids that get sick during the school day but are now on an out-of-town campus?

District Response: School administration will work hard to support parents with transportation in the event of a student emergency, just as it occurs presently. The District has a relationship with Kings County Sheriff and maintains a School Resource Officer for assistance; additionally, there are options for service through the Family Resource Center at Stratford.

Question: Can we find a way for teachers to collaborate without the proposed campus changes?

District Response: Teachers in the Central Union School District have had the opportunity to collaborate with staff from other campuses within the District for many years. While staff can collaborate between schools, the primary goal of collaboration and

professional learning communities is to discuss how best to meet our "shared" students' needs and design interventions/extensions as needed. When students can 'deploy' to other teachers of the same grade level based on student needs, it produces a greater use of instructional time.

Having multiple teachers within a grade level and collaborating allows more certificated staff to offer the interventions and extensions to meet all student learning needs. Students need more time with certificated instructors during the school day to provide direct instruction with strategic and targeted intervention. These interventions, which will result in more significant student opportunities, are enhanced by reconfiguring grade levels between the two schools. This is accomplished due to the simple fact that more faculty (teachers) will be available at each grade level to provide this learning opportunity to students.

With three teachers at a grade level, the sites can target intervention at three different levels in just one block of time, impacting student learning to a greater extent and providing a better focus on meeting the child's needs. A teacher in a single-grade classroom operates independently and must meet students' needs at every level. While this can be accomplished, the intensity that can be given to the student is increased when there are shared teaching responsibilities to address interventions for students.

Question: *What is the ratio of teacher and student transfer from Central to Stratford?*

District Response: The student transfers are included in the general presentation provided to the Board on March 8, 2021. This presentation will be posted on the District website.

Question: *Will distance learning continue if these changes are made during the next school year?*

District Response: The options surrounding Distance Learning were established due to the COVID-19 pandemic and allowances by the California State Legislature to provide this option while the nation recovered. These allowances were put into place due to that emergency. The ultimate goal of California legislative leaders is to return students to full-time in-person learning. All of the present legislation and state discussion is directed toward that goal. It is not conceivable that schools in California will continue with Distance Learning options in the Fall unless other imposed closures are issued by the Public Health Department or State Officials.

Question: How will this proposal be funded?

District Response: With the presented proposal, as reviewed, there are negligible costs associated with this proposal. Based on current enrollment numbers and staffing, personnel are sufficient to handle this proposal without increasing staffing. Thus, there is no need for additional funding. Classroom materials, furniture, and staff are already in place and are funded through the General Fund.

Question: When will board member seats be up for reelection?

District Response: District Trustee terms and the District trustee areas are listed on the District website, under Trustees.