

I think this is a very important agenda item tonight and I do have some concerns with the current situation in Rowland and also the direction we are going.

I was on the Board 2001, 10 years ago for one term and I was off the Board and came back. From the first term to the second term, everything about Rowland has been changed a lot. It took me a while to get into the situation. I am very concerned with the situations that Rowland is facing right now.

So this is my comment. It is a little bit long but I need to make the comment so I would appreciate the time to make the comment.

The purpose of the evaluation of the superintendent is to hold her accountable for all aspects of the district: academic performance, fiscal responsibility, effective leadership and direction to advance the district, personnel decisions and relationships with and the support of the community to attract and maintain student enrollment.

Rowland District is in year 2 of Program Improvement and currently we have 11 schools or about 60% in Program Improvement between year 1 and year 4.

The data do not include those schools which may qualify but have chosen not to offer or accept Title 1 funding and services to socio-economically disadvantaged students. This denial of services to the neediest students is supported by the superintendent and is unacceptable to me.

6 of 20 schools in the District are ranked 5 or lower out of 10 in Similar School Rank  
12 of 20 schools approximately 60% are ranked 5 or lower out of 10 in Statewide Rank

The argument that many schools and districts are in Program Improvement does not justify the situation in Rowland. We are elected to be accountable for our schools and for our students only and to hold the superintendent accountable for results.

According to the Department of Education, a school has to fail to meet the improvement standards two (2) years in a row to be classified as a Year 1 PI school. Now, we have schools in Year 2 PI which means that they failed to reach the standards four (4) years in a row. We have three schools in Year 4 PI which means that they have not reached the goal in six (6) years.

This failing started 6 years ago when Dr. Ott joined Rowland. What have we done in those 4-6 years? Apparently, I don't think we have done enough for our kids. Part of the reason is that we failed to implement a robust accountability system; a very basic management system in running any business or organization. This also was revealed in the U.S.C. Study report. And according to the Department of Education regulations, the following could happen in Year 4 Program Improvement. They can reorganize the school as a charter school; replace all, every single one or most of the staff including the principal, contract with an outside entity to manage the school or a state takeover. Is this what we are waiting for? This is the promise we made to our students?

Before, when I was in my first term, we had many schools receiving Blue Ribbon, California Distinguished School, School to Watch Program. However, in the past six (6) years, we have not received any awards. The only thing we are facing is the Program Improvement situation. The PI schools not only affect student achievement but it also affects the district financially. According to the Department of

Education, the PI schools need to set aside a certain percentage of funds to do supplemental services and to transport students to other schools if the parents of the students chose to do that. I don't know how many of the children and parents chose to leave their home schools and to go to another school. If they did, this is an extra cost to the District. Up to today we have approved \$850,000 for supplemental services and that money, especially in today's economic situation is extremely important for the schools to use for our students. Unfortunately, because of the PI issue, we have to spend this \$850,000 from the program to outside contractors to provide the service. If we were not in the PI situation, we can use this \$850,000 for more employees and for more teachers to work with our students.

Six years ago in my last year, when Dr. Ott joined Rowland, we indicated that the schools back then were facing the issue that we were losing students to Walnut. Even when the District of Choice provisions were not in force, we continued to lose 350 students. In the past year, we lost almost 450 students to our neighbors. I cannot say every student went to our neighboring district but we did lose the students. Rather than spending our energy and money on lawsuits or changing schools to K-8 along the border of Walnut School District, we should have been addressing the reason why parents take their students to other school districts. Parents are after a good education, high achievement and the promise of a good future for their children. Parents have an expectation for high student achievement at all schools, elementary and secondary. Students are leaving Rowland not because we do not have strong elementary and intermediate schools; it is because we do not have strong high schools which can provide them entrance into good colleges which is the beginning point for their future.

I have been living in Rowland for more than 20 years. In the Asian community, parents will do everything to get the best education for their children. I am not sure whether this is true or not. According to several realtors, the housing availability in Rowland has increased in the past several months which is coincidental with the lawsuit that we brought up with Walnut. The Board supported the lawsuit. However, the main reason, the truth is that the main reason that we are facing is that we need to improve our high schools to retain the students, and to attract the students to the District.

Another point is about Measure R. We passed this over 4 years already. The initial expenditure from Measure R in 2006 for the football fields for a limited number of students was pushed ahead at a cost of \$4M, and after that we spent \$5M in demolition of Oswalt and built a brand new school at Oswalt. Yet, we still do not have upgraded secondary science labs which affect every single student in the District. According to construction management at one of the Board meetings, I specifically asked if we didn't push up those two projects would we have enough funding for the renovation of our science labs in our high schools and junior high schools for our students. The answer was "absolutely yes". The situation was expected because when the budget was made, the state economy was still in a very promising situation. However, for the past several years, the state economy has dropped significantly. That is why. We don't know if we can get the matching funds for our science labs which are extremely important to the District.

Another issue that concerns me is the process for the selection of key personnel at the sites and the district has not always been open to people inside and outside of the District. By making appointments over an open selection process, we have not had the opportunity to view a broad pool of candidates. I advocate for an open process for all positions in the District.

We continue to have issues with the Nogales Booster Clubs. This has been going on for two (2) years. I have requested information from our superintendent. According to the information submitted to the Board, the school has designated one day in every quarter as an “administrative day”. The reason that was given for this decision was that the District has had budget cuts and we cannot support the school site so they need to get this money. My question was who is collecting the money, how much was collected, who gets the money, how the money was used. I have been requesting this information for four (4) months minimum and I have not gotten any answer yet. All those things concern the parents in the Booster Clubs.

We have heard complaints from the Booster organizations, parents and student for several years. Now, the situation is more serious because an attorney or consultant came to the Board asking that we look into the legality of proposed regulations. Parents do not feel that the site and District administration is supporting them or students and has not shown them the respect they are due for all their work at the swap meet every weekend of the year. Yet, over the past 2 years, the District administration has not been shown to be parent/community responsive and took no action until we were threatened with a lawsuit.

We had a serious situation at one of the intermediate schools for two years. The teachers at that school requested transfers to another school. The District administration was aware of those issues but again did not take any action to alleviate the problems which led to costly litigation. We had two lawsuits brought against the District. There was low teacher morale, teachers and staff leaving the school and a major decline in student achievement. It was not until I made a public request for an investigation that action was finally taken to talk directly with the staff to change the situation at that school.

Another issue that is not known by the public is that there are issues among the diverse races which sometimes results in bullying of the students. The lack of acknowledgement that this occurs and the lack of immediate action to protect students place the District in jeopardy for litigation. This not only causes campus violence between different races but also plants the seeds for hate crimes in students’ future life.

I urge my fellow Board members to be cautious about the vote. The vote is not for us, it is not for me or for us as Board members; the vote is for the students, for our children; the children who are going to lead this country, the children who are going to work with your or my children or grandchildren, the children who may be part of your or my family in the future. And the most important, the children who will be responsible for our retirement.

For all the reasons that I and others have brought up in previous Board meetings, I firmly believe that this is the time for a change in leadership at the superintendent level.

Thank you.