

Saddleback Valley Unified School District Legislative Platform

I n t r o d u c t i o n

Over the past decade, Saddleback Valley Unified School District, like many school districts across California, has been adapting to an educational agenda increasingly set in Sacramento by the Governor and State Legislature. During this time, there has been a steady trend toward reducing the authority of local school boards and their discretion over local budgets and educational programs. Saddleback Valley Unified School District's 2005-06 State Legislative Platform focuses our efforts on making the new reforms work by giving local governing boards more flexibility and authority to deliver results. Saddleback Valley Unified School District's highest legislative priorities are addressed below. The platform will move our school system toward our goal of excellence in education for all students.

G o v e r n a n c e

Local Control

- ✦ Return responsibility and authority for setting policy and allocating resources for public education to the local level. During the past decade, an avalanche of state and federal categorical programs has eroded the authority of local school boards. While many of those programs are relevant to the requirements of our changing society, they have often been mandated without giving enough flexibility for local boards to adjust to their community's needs and priorities.
- ✦ Over the last decade, the percentage of unrestricted funds has been reduced from approximately 75% to 68%. Saddleback Valley Unified School District embraces the opportunity to be held accountable to maintain high standards for all students, but it must have the requisite authority, freedom and flexibility to implement programs appropriate to our school community.

C u r r i c u l u m / I n s t r u c t i o n

K-3 Class Size Reduction

- ✦ Class Size Reduction funding only covers about 75% of the actual operating costs of this valuable program. The state must provide adequate funding for this program during these critical instructional years. Schools should also be allowed to average K-3 class sizes with an average size of 20 students and a cap of no more than 22 students per class. Though the law softened on the penalty, it still exists. School districts are still forced to reorganize entire grade levels of children when the twenty-first child enrolls in a K-3 classroom. This causes educational program disruption and expensive overstaffing at individual school sites.
- ✦ **Eliminate the unnecessary bureaucratic daily class count in K-3 classrooms.** The reporting for classrooms involved in the Class Size Reduction Initiative should be at the end of each school month, just as it is for class size reporting at other grade levels.

Alignment of Accountability Policies with State Standards

- ✦ Align accountability provisions with state standards. The Legislature must ensure that state required tests reflect the instructional standards so that students, parents, employers and educators have a consistent, reliable yardstick to measure performance. The State of California has developed high standards for all students coupled with high stakes student assessment. Ensure that the authors of the tests are in collaboration with the developers of the standards.

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Mandated Cost Reimbursement

- ✦ The Legislature requires that school districts perform a number of functions, and it is appropriate that districts be reimbursed for those requirements (an example is negotiations). In 2002-03 the state determined that it would “defer” this obligation at a cost to SVUSD totaling between \$1.5 million over three years.

F i n a n c e

Funding Based on Enrollment vs. Average Daily Attendance

- ✦ Districts in California receive their funding based on the average number of students attending class each day. On any given day, approximately 95.8% of the students enrolled in Saddleback Valley USD are in attendance.
- ✦ The current system of daily attendance counting should be replaced with an enrollment-based funding system similar to most other states. Instead of providing funding on the number of students in attendance, most other states provide funding based on the number of students enrolled. Funding based on enrollment more accurately reflects the actual cost of maintaining a school than when compared with average daily attendance funding. A school must provide classrooms, teachers, aides, custodians, etc. for 100% of the students enrolled.
- ✦ **If revenue limit funding were based on enrollment rather than average daily attendance, Saddleback Valley USD would receive an additional \$7,418,622 per year.**

Declining Enrollment

- ✦ SVUSD, like many districts in Orange County and the state, has been experiencing declining enrollment.
- ✦ For 2004-05, the decrease in students has resulted in a loss of revenue to SVUSD of \$1.1 million.
- ✦ For 2005-06, the projected decrease in students will result in a loss of revenue to SVUSD of \$1.5 million
- ✦ Districts with declining enrollment need more time to reduce personnel to address the loss of students. Legislation is needed to offset the quick turn-around time between loss of student enrollment and the loss of revenue.

Revenue Limit Equalization

- ✦ SVUSD is one of several districts in Orange County that receives less revenue limit funds per student than the statewide average. If SVUSD just received the same amount per student as the average district in the state, it would increase the District’s annual income by \$2 million.

Full Funding for State and Federal Programs

- ✦ Efforts must be elevated in California to increase the per-pupil spending to the national average or better. Based on 2003-04 data from the National Education Association, California is 33rd of the 50 states in per pupil expenditures and \$947 per pupil *below* the national average.

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Special Education

- ✦ Full funding must be provided for special education students.
- ✦ In 1976 when Congress passed the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it promised to pay states 40% of the cost of providing the mandated services. This promise has never been kept. If the federal government actually funded special education at 40%, SVUSD would receive an additional \$5 million annually.
- ✦ Due to under funding, SVUSD provides about 25% of special education costs from the General Fund budget.
- ✦ Current laws do not prevent or provide consequences to frivolous claims and litigation, which can be time consuming, costly, and draining to both personnel and monetary resources that could be better spent on the instructional program. **SVUSD supports tort reform legislation for protection from frivolous claims and litigation.**

Transportation

- ✦ The state should provide a more realistic apportionment for the transportation of students. SVUSD receives approximately \$2.6 million in transportation revenue from the state and parents pay nearly \$600,000 in ridership fees. This \$2.6 million in revenue only covers 57% of the cost of operating and maintaining our bus fleet. SVUSD must use \$1.4 million per year for transportation that could otherwise be spent in the classroom.

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FACTS

Vision Statement

“Preparing today’s students to succeed in tomorrow’s world.”

Number of Schools

26---- Elementary Schools
4 ---- Intermediate Schools
4 ---- High Schools
1 ---- Special Education School
1 ---- Continuation High School
1 ---- Independent Study High School

Enrollment

34,744 Students

Student Racial/Ethnic Composition

African American..... 2.3%
American Indian..... 0.4%
Asian 7.4%
Filipino..... 2.7%
Hispanic..... 21.0%
Pacific Islander0.4%
Caucasian 65.9%
Indian 0.4%

General Fund Budget

\$234.4 million

School District Personnel

Certificated positions..... 1,792
Classified positions..... 1,321
Total 3,113

Graduation Requirements

Social Studies 4 years
English..... 4 years
Math (must include Algebra 1 content) 3 years
Science..... 3 years
Physical Education 2 years
Foreign Language *or* Fine Arts
or Applied Arts/Technical..... 1 year
Health ½ year
Community Service 8 hours