

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): What is happening with Buellton and the Vista Del Mar School District?

As many of you may know, Buellton USD has opened a dialogue about ways we may be able to partner for improved educational opportunities for the children and young people of the Vista Del Mar School District and the Vista De Las Cruces school community.

There are several steps in a process which may occur in the near future. First, in 2019-2020, the two districts will have agreements in place which specify how we will share services to meet the needs of two school districts. It is likely that Vista will pursue “lapse” of the Vista Del Mar School District, meaning the district would “lapse” or cease to exist, possibly as early as in the spring of 2020. As partnering districts, Buellton will be in a great position to re-organize with Vista to form a new district. The decision regarding re-organization is under the authority of the Santa Barbara County Education Office Committee on District Organization. If approved, this new district would be a “community funded” or “basic aid” district with substantially greater resources than Buellton could achieve on its own. A community funded/basic aid district is funded by property taxes rather than by a per pupil allocation from the State. In addition, in the event of the district’s consolidation, the new district would enjoy the assets of the combined district: a new school site, property on the Gaviota coast, and a current reserve at Vista of approximately \$1.7 million (to put this in context, Buellton’s reserve is approximately \$250,000), as well as enhanced annual revenue.

Current discussions include a potential agreement for shared services in the coming school year (2019-2020), including attendance of Vista’s middle school students at Jonata Middle School, and possible future organizational changes. This is a complex situation, and the district is ready to enter an appropriate agreement for the coming school year.

What services would be “shared” in 2019-2020?

The primary purpose would be to provide educational services for Vista students from grades 6-8. Under the agreement being considered, approximately 10-15 students would attend at Jonata Middle School beginning in fall 2019. The attendance of these students would generate \$90,000-\$135,000 in additional revenue. This would offset the increased cost of increased staffing at Jonata Middle School next year. Under the terms of the agreement with Vista, their district will be responsible for transportation costs for these additional students, as well as the costs of additional instructional materials (including technology resources). Oversight of day-to-day instruction and supervision would be partially provided by a new Assistant Principal whose costs will be split 60/40 between Buellton and Vista. Vista will reimburse all costs associated with 40% of this position. As a safeguard to ensure appropriate oversight of this transition and Vista’s fiscal position, Vista may be charged up to \$10,000 for financial oversight.

In addition, the districts have drafted an agreement to share the services of a single Superintendent. Both districts will continue to function with all State compliance and local governance (including two separate boards), while moving through the complex process of lapsation and consolidation. Under the terms of this shared Superintendent agreement, the Superintendent would continue under the terms of the contract with Buellton USD. Vista would reimburse Buellton for all costs associated with 30% of the Superintendent's service, while Buellton would continue to bear the remaining costs. Recently, because of the Superintendent's responsibilities for oversight of the *Santa Ynez Valley Special Education Consortium* (SYVSEC), all participating districts will share the cost of 20% of the Buellton Superintendent's compensation starting in 2019-2020. If the Shared Superintendent agreement with Vista were approved, Buellton would only pay 50% of the Superintendent's compensation, with savings directed toward the new Assistant Principal position.

Is Buellton Union School District's budget in good shape?

Due to careful management over the last three years, the current budget is certified as "positive" by the Santa Barbara County Education Office in their legal responsibility for fiscal oversight of our district. Several aspects of the budget have been misrepresented over the past week:

- **Intervention**--Buellton has the same intervention as was in place in 2015-2016 when the district had more students, at a 90% position.
- **Counseling** is funded from supplemental dollars under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), so in order not to cut classroom instruction, the program was reduced to a 50% position this year. The district is simply spending the supplemental resources provided by the State to pay for counseling services. Buellton is the *only* district in the valley committing resources to crisis counseling in this manner, and Buellton students are also supported by *People Helping People* (the only counseling resource provided by neighboring districts).
- **Certificated teaching** positions are projected to **increase in 2019-2020 to 26.6** full-time equivalents (FTEs) from 25.4 FTEs in 2018-1019.
- **Class size** averages are currently **23.6/class in TK-3** (including the 3rd/4th combination class), **27.6/class in grades 4 & 5**, and **27.1/class in grades 6-8**.
- **Classified support staff** (including Instructional Aides) have ***increased*** from 16.53 FTE in 2015-2016 to **16.60 FTE this year**, and projected for **16.61 FTE for next year**.
- **Custodial and Maintenance** positions are proposed at **4.91 FTE for the 2019-2020 school year**...an increase from 4.34 FTE in 2017-2018.
- In the same time-frame, **Certificated and Classified Management** has been **reduced from 5.5 FTE in 2015-2016 to 4.3 FTE for 2019-2020** (even with the inclusion of a new part-time Assistant Principal). Any review of statewide average administration costs must take into account that our district

averages are combined with those from the Consortium (services provided to seven districts). This is not the same for other districts state-wide.

Why should anyone see a raise in pay at this point?

Attracting a qualified Assistant Principal meant a revision of the salary for a position that has been vacant for many years. Increasing this salary makes it necessary to adjust the K-8 Principal salary as well. Comparisons county-wide indicate that our highest principal's salary will still be \$18,000 below the average county-wide posted salary schedules (even after this adjustment).

It is critical during this transition that careful consideration is given to the financial implications of these changes. Our current Business Manager has functioned as a Chief Business Official (CBO) for several years (and is fully certified as a CBO) with oversight of several budgets (BUSD, SYVSEC, Combined). Acknowledging this work, especially as we consider the transition to a completely new funding model (community funded), and as we move through a time when staff at Vista may pursue other career opportunities elsewhere, this oversight is critical. Even with an augmentation to the CBO salary, this position's highest salary will be \$5,000 less than the average for Business Managers/Fiscal Directors county-wide posted salary schedules, and over \$32,000 less than the average salary for other CBOs. In addition, 15% of this position is paid as a shared cost for all participating districts in the SYVSEC, leaving only 80% paid by Buellton USD.

In the case of a shared Superintendent, it is important to consider the unique role of the Superintendency. By law, the Superintendent is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the district. In this circumstance, the Buellton Superintendent would take on oversight of all district operations for two school districts, including two Boards of Trustees. The goal is success in this new venture. Currently, the Buellton Superintendent is compensated \$20,000 per year less than the average of salaries for similar districts throughout Santa Barbara County. This discrepancy, along with the additional responsibilities associated with this transition and the oversight of two districts required the Buellton Board of Trustees to consider increased compensation under the terms of the current Superintendent contract. It is the choice of each school board and the Superintendent whether to enter into a Shared Superintendency as there are also complex legal considerations with regard to this assignment to two districts.

What are the next steps?

The Buellton Board of Trustees will meet on Wednesday, April 17 at 7:00 PM at the Jonata Middle School Library. The public is always welcome! If you have other questions, please feel free to reach out to Dr. Haggard at (805) 686-2767.