

Good Evening,

Unfortunately, I stand before you this evening prepared to discuss a topic that I had hoped was part of our history ---- never to happen again.

Of course I am discussing item # 8 on tonight's agenda.

It appears that what is being recommended is to cut 10.4 elementary teaching positions or in other words 10 classrooms... 10 teachers 10 households 10 families and leave them without jobs and insurance. In addition to which we must add the number of students lives affected.

I concede that we are in ridiculous financial times. California's children have not met such hazards to their education in my long remembered history of public education. The government of California has made decisions that just plain and simply harm the children and therefore all Californians. Being well rounded citizens with all the tools necessary to innovate and have personal success in the future, the 21st century future, has been hindered for our students, I don't think anyone would disagree.

At this time the educators of VESD have overcome many challenges. From the beginning of the school year, classrooms were packed over the maximums for up to 30 days at a time which has not assisted in our goals. Class changes, as many as 3 during the course of the year so far, have caused upset and slowed progress. This is of course not to mention the educators who have had to change schools mid year or even just been invited to return to the classroom off the 2010 RIF list (causing more class changes). All of these factors have shifted focus from

where it should be during a school year --- on the standards and giving the strategies and tools needed for success to the children. just rejelling and becoming a forward moving classroom unit has been challenging. We all know that while change is often a factor in our lives children may or may not be as easily adaptable when it happens frequently.... Stability is a major key to success.

When looking forward to 2011 – 12 school year and seeing this same pattern repeating – I find it distressing that we are repeating a pattern of severe consevativizm.

At this point in time, our classrooms are more full than ever. As an average of the enrollment in VESD, there is 1 open space in each classroom available for students. On the other hand as a more personal statistic - 9 of our 16 schools are in the position of having less than 1 space available per classroom which also might very well be per grade level. This has caused many shifts in students, in families, in grade levels and I won't begin to discuss the number of combination classrooms that have been created. As we all know this is not the ideal educational circumstances for the children of Victorville.

While I understand and agree with being conservative, 10 positions assumes a loss of 330 students at a minimum. To believe that this is a reasonable loss over one summer is seemingly farfetched. What it means in a practical sense is that school will start in August with overcrowded classrooms making education difficult for all. At the start of the 2010-11 school year we actually had teachers doing their very best to deliver a quality educational program with 38 – 42 children in front of them. While they did and always do a

commendable job - this is not appropriate. Our class limits are 33 in Kindergarten, 32 in grades 1-3 and 34 in grades 4-6. Just based on sheer space limitations how these teachers began and survived for the first 30 school days or first 6 weeks is a feat that should be recognized... then the class changes started. Some sites only did 1 class change but at others---- well as many as 3 were not unheard of this year. Are we really going to do this again?

Not paying the insurance for a family for 2 months is a savings BUT is it moral? I would question that on behalf of the teachers brought back in August. Even three months of insurance for those brought back in September. Is this worth putting the lives of these families and the educational situation of the students in turmoil?

Students deserve stability and while I do not argue that there are severe money issues, Is this how we want to resolve them? Being conservative is important... not putting the district in financial hardship is imperative but we are not there.

Check the statistics... decide the priorities... there are philosophical differences of opinion as to what is necessary – that is to be expected. But what comes to the top of the list? Saving money or the education of children? Let's be prudent – let's look at the whole picture not just an apparent easy fix.

Remember – we are in the children business... the business of educating, molding, inspiring, releasing the creativity and brilliance of each and every child within the borders of Victorville and I believe that means we touch the lives of 93% of the children living within those borders. We are and have always done an amazing job of educating... let's NOT hinder that now by creating a situation of instability and congestion.

This IS a big decision. Temper it. Be WISE about it. Be conservative but not so conservative that the children are affected.