

**SANTA PAULA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS BY COUNTY COUNSEL*
MEASURE "M"**

Approval of this measure will create a new, unified school district (serving grades K-12) to be known as the Santa Paula Unified School District, effective July 1, 2013.

The district will be formed from the territory of Santa Paula Union High School District (currently serving grades 9-12) and Santa Paula Elementary School District (currently serving grades K-8). Upon formation of the proposed unified school district, Santa Paula Union High School District and Santa Paula Elementary School District will cease to exist. The boundaries of the unified school district would be identical to the current boundaries of Santa Paula Union High School District. The new district would assume the rights and responsibilities of Santa Paula Union High School District and Santa Paula Elementary School District, including charter schools and community day schools. The proposed new unified school district will also hold all property, obligations, and bonded indebtedness of Santa Paula Union High School District and Santa Paula Elementary School District.

Briggs Elementary School District, Mupu Elementary School District, and Santa Clara Elementary School District will remain as independent elementary school districts (each serving grades K-8) whether or not this measure passes. They will continue to operate as they have but would send students to secondary schools in the new, unified district. The property, obligations, and bonded indebtedness of the Briggs, Mupu, and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts will be retained by those three districts.

Pursuant to Education Code Section 35555, the proposed unification will not impact the classification of the current, certificated employees in the affected school districts. Such employees will retain the same status with respect to their classifications, including service as probationary or permanent employees, after the unification as they had prior to the unification. Pursuant to Education Code Section 35556, unification will not affect the rights of employees in positions not requiring certification. Such employees will retain the same salary and other benefits they currently have if the proposed unification is approved.

If this measure is adopted, the new unified school district will be governed by a new, five member governing board whose members will be elected at the same election in which this measure is presented to voters. The board members will be selected "at large," that is, from qualified candidates residing anywhere within the territory of the new district. To stagger the terms of the members, their initial terms shall be three years for the three candidates who receive the highest number of votes and one year for the two candidates who receive the next highest number of votes for all candidates running for the office. After these initial terms expire, all board members will serve four-year terms. Governing board members will be seated only if Measure "M" passes.

To pass, Measure "M" requires a "Yes" vote by at least a majority of the qualified electors voting thereon.

* Section 9500 of the California Elections Code requires the County Counsel to prepare an impartial analysis for each school measure appearing on the ballot.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE "M"

UNIFICATION is good for Santa Paula. Unification will provide a better education for all Santa Paula kids. Unification means more money from the State with no new taxes and more money to spend in our classrooms from cutting administrative costs – every year.

UNIFICATION will allow for one school calendar for elementary, middle and high school students, to help families and schools coordinate activities and holidays and reduce the loss of State funds due to absences.

UNIFICATION means there will be one board, one superintendent, and one district staff. Duplicate administrative positions and services will be eliminated. There will be one coordinated program from Kindergarten through Grade 12, with no gaps between middle school and high school.

All estimates indicate there will be significantly more money for the classrooms when the new district begins than if the districts remain separate - even with Budget cuts. It is the right time for unification in order to improve the educational program for all our kids.

UNIFICATION makes it possible to work together to improve the educational program – to build on the traditions, strengths and successes of our schools; to share resources, technology and facilities; to improve and maintain all facilities; and to prepare our young people for their future in a competitive and technically oriented world.

With Unification there can be more efficient operations, better coordination and communication with one computer system, and better planning for integrating technology into the curriculum, coordinating professional development, and developing a coordinated K-12 curriculum, new district-wide policies and long-term plans for facilities.

Under Unification the same number of teachers will be needed in our classrooms, and State law will protect all classified employees for two years. Changes will occur at the district level far from our classrooms. Good teachers and principals will continue to be successful.

A responsible new Unified School Board will eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, duplication of services and expenditures. They will ensure that money is spent to maintain our classrooms and schools, keep classes small and retain programs such as music, technology, GATE, physical education and sports and MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement.)

UNIFICATION means the merger of the Santa Paula Elementary School District and the Santa Paula Union High School District only. Your property taxes will not change because of Unification. Mupu, Briggs and Santa Clara districts chose not to join in the Unified District but have the option of joining at a later date. Their students will continue to attend Santa Paula High School.

UNIFICATION is good for Santa Paula. Wasting taxpayer money on two Boards, two Superintendents, two offices and double expenses is not. A coordinated K-12 educational program, one calendar for

elementary, middle and high school, better planning, coordination and communication, and more money every year is good for students, families, our valuable teachers and classified staff and for Santa Paula. All of our kids are important - UNIFICATION is good for them and our future!

We urge you to vote YES on Measure M!

s/Robert S. Gonzales
Mayor, City of Santa Paula

s/Luis C. Villegas Jr.
Retired Superintendent

s/Marcia D. Edwards
Educator

s/Catherine M. Barringer
Community Leader

s/Alan M. Teague
Chairman, Limoneira Co.

ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE “M”

The Santa Paula Elementary School District Board of Trustees opposes unification. No official agency will answer our questions about unification. With the state’s budget unstable budget situation, we conclude this is not the time to put the education of our children at risk!

Why is there a rush to unify the districts now? Neither district asked for unification. It was started by the Chamber of Commerce and City Council. While well-intentioned, these groups are not familiar with the education codes that prevent schools from “being run like a business.” Do they know, for instance, that the state currently anticipates sending us only 78 cents on every dollar they owe us?

The elementary school district is doing well. Test scores are rising. We have two California Distinguished Schools and a national Blue Ribbon School. Our students won the national math, science and engineering competition. Our students, teachers and staff are succeeding in spite of continued budget reductions.

Unification would put the student-teacher ratio at risk by leading to teacher layoffs and increased class sizes. Under unification, all classified positions (non-teaching) are protected from job loss for two years. Teachers have no such protection.

Unification requires new administrative expenses. Although the state will loan us the money, how will we repay it without affecting the students in the classroom? Studies show unification “savings” take five years to realize. Many unifications have resulted in no savings.

Unification is supposed to unite the community, but three out of five school districts serving Santa Paula were left out of the equation. Why? And yet, people living in those three districts can serve on the unified school board and make decisions about schools their children are not eligible to attend. This is unfair.

Unification may increase the cost of youth sports leagues because the elementary district does not charge for the use of our facilities while the high school district does. Will our children have to pay to play on unified school district fields?

Educational Research, an independent authority on education research, reports that after studying dozens of unification efforts, “student achievement decreases for low-income students as the district size increases.” More than 90 percent of the students in our unified district would be classified as low-income. It has also found that 70 percent of most unified district budget goes to the high schools. Where will this leave our elementary sites?

We believe the Santa Paula Elementary School District is headed in the right direction and that unification would end the momentum. Unification at this time is not in the best interest of students.

The quality of education to our students should not be jeopardized because of the possibility of some highly unlikely monetary savings.

s/W. Richard Cadman
President, SPESD

s/Anthony Perez
Clerk, SPESD

s/Michelle Kolbeck
Board Trustee, SPESD

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE “M”

It is time for a change! Unification will boost the education and future of all Santa Paula kids with more money for schools every year, less waste, better organization, better oversight, and no new taxes. Unification makes it possible to develop a quality, seamless, coordinated, Preschool - Grade 12 educational program and one school calendar every year.

The Unification effort began in 2009 in a thoughtful and deliberative manner with much opportunity for Community input. The County, the State and even the Santa Paula Elementary Board’s expert all agree that Unification is feasible and brings more revenue and lower costs – even with State budget cuts. Now the voters can make Unification a reality.

Unification will cut unneeded administrative costs, streamline how our schools operate, generate savings, funnel those dollars back into the classrooms and prevent cuts to needed programs.

Do not be swayed by the self-serving, misleading statements and non-existent problems cited by those with a vested interest in protecting the status quo. Unification will not put teachers’ jobs at risk. Every classroom still needs a teacher and good teachers will succeed. Classified jobs are protected.

Without Unification our children will lose even more with on-going State budget cuts. Valuable programs and activities will continue to be cut. Why? There will be less money and no savings without Unification.

It’s about time! Unification provides a long-awaited opportunity to improve education for all Santa Paula kids.

We urge you to Vote YES on Measure M.

s/Alfonso A. Guilin
AG Consultants – Owner

s/M. Joyce Carlson
Former School Board Member

s/Elias F. Valdes
Chino’s Market – Owner (with Family)

s/Anita Pulido
Realtor

s/Elvia Hernandez
Community Activist

FULL TEXT OF MEASURE "M"

Statement of Official Information and Statistics

Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

Description of Proposal to Create a Unified School District

The proposal is to create a new unified K-12 school district from the territory of the Santa Paula Union High School District (grades 9-12) and the Santa Paula Elementary School District (grades K-8), with the Briggs Elementary School District (grades K-8), the Mupu Elementary School District (grades K-8), and the Santa Clara Elementary School District (grades K-6), remaining as independent elementary school districts that would continue to operate the grade levels currently served. The boundaries of the proposed unified school district would be identical to the current boundaries of the Santa Paula Union High School District.

If approved, and upon formation of the proposed unified school district, the Santa Paula Union High School District and the Santa Paula Elementary School District would cease to exist. The Briggs, Mupu and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts will remain independent elementary school districts and will send their students to secondary schools that will be a part of the proposed unified school district.

The proposed unification would include all of the property, obligations, and bonded indebtedness of the Santa Paula Union High School District and the Santa Paula Elementary School District. All property, obligations, and bonded indebtedness of the Briggs, Mupu, and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts will be retained by the Briggs, Mupu and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts. The new district would assume the rights and responsibilities of the Santa Paula Union High School District and the Santa Paula Elementary School District, including charter schools and community day schools.

The Briggs Elementary School District (grades K-8), Mupu Elementary School District (grades K-8), and Santa Clara Elementary School District (grades K-6), which are within the boundaries of, and currently send secondary students to schools in the Santa Paula Union High School District, would remain as independent elementary school districts, and would send their grades 9-12 (grades 7-12 in the case of Santa Clara) students to the secondary schools of the proposed unified school district.

Rationale

The proponents of this reorganization believe that creating a unified school district in the Santa Paula area would: (a) provide for greater educational opportunities to all of their students through seamless articulation and consolidation of programs and resources; and (b) promote sound fiscal and educational policy.

Background

This proposal was initiated on February 1, 2010, when the Santa Paula City Council, pursuant to Education Code Section 35721, adopted their Resolution Number 6649 requesting that the Ventura County Committee on School District Organization (VCCSDO) consider unification of the Santa Paula Union High School District and the Santa Paula Elementary School District. Resolution Number 6649 also requested that the Briggs, Mupu, and Santa Clara Elementary Schools Districts remain independent pursuant to Education Code Section 35542(b).

On March 17, 2010, as prescribed by Education Code Section 35721(c), the VCCSDO conducted an initial public hearing to receive testimony on the proposal to create the Santa Paula Unified School District. Upon completion of the public hearing, the VCCSDO took action to grant (accept) the request from the Santa Paula City Council to begin the unification process as prescribed in Education Code beginning with Section 35721(d).

In May of 2010, the VCCSDO held a series of public hearings in the area proposed for reorganization. Hearings were held at the following locations: Santa Clara School, Mupu School, Santa Paula Community Center, and Briggs School. The VCCSDO also conducted a study to determine if the conditions for reorganization listed in Education Code Section 35753 would be substantially met.

On July 15, 2010, the State Board of Education approved the exclusion of the Briggs Elementary School District, the Mupu Elementary School District, and the Santa Clara Elementary School District from the proposed reorganization. This action allows the Briggs, Mupu, and Santa Clara School Districts to remain as independent elementary school districts for the purposes of operating K-8 (K-6 for Santa Clara) programs and continue to send students to secondary schools that will be a part of the proposed unified school district.

On August 11, 2010, the VCCSDO determined that all the conditions for reorganization listed in Education Code Section 35753 were substantially met and approved a recommendation to create a unified school district from the territory of the Santa Paula Union High School District and the Santa Paula Elementary School District, with the Briggs Elementary School District, the Mupu Elementary School District, and the Santa Clara Elementary School District remaining separate independent elementary school districts under Education Code Section

35542(b) as previously approved by the California State Board of Education. That recommendation was transmitted to the California State Board of Education for further consideration.

On May 10, 2012, the California State Board of Education held a public hearing on the proposal to form the Santa Paula Unified School District. At that meeting, the California State Board of Education approved the proposal and established the election area for the proposal as the territory of the Santa Paula Union High School District and provided that the proposed district, if approved by the electorate, would have a five member governing board elected at-large from the voters of the entire proposed unified district.

The unification proposal will pass if a majority of all the votes cast are in favor of the proposal. If passed by the voters, the unification would be effective for all purposes on July 1, 2013.

Governing Board Members

Governing board members of the proposed unified school district are being elected at the same time as the election for the reorganization of the school districts. All voters that reside within the proposed area of the reorganization will be able to vote to select board members of the proposed unified school district.

Five governing board members for the proposed unified school district would be elected, at-large, from the area of the proposed unified school district. All candidates must reside in the area of the proposed unified school district. To stagger the terms of the members of the governing board, the three governing board candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected to initial three year terms ending on the first Friday in December of 2015, and the two governing board candidates receiving the next highest number of votes shall be elected to initial one year terms ending on the first Friday in December of 2013. Thereafter, all governing board members will be elected to four-year terms.

Rights of Employees

If the proposed unified school district is formed, employees of the Santa Paula Union High School District and the Santa Paula Elementary School District would become employees of the proposed district. Education Code Section 35555 provides that the proposed unification shall not affect the classification of certificated employees already employed by any affected school district. Such employees shall have the same status with respect to their classification by the district, including time served as probationary employees of the district, after the proposed unification as they had prior to it. Education Code Section 35556 provides that the unification shall not affect the rights of persons employed in positions not requiring certification qualifications to retain the salary, leaves, and other benefits that they would have had if the proposed unification had not occurred.

Merit System

Education Code Section 45120 provides that if one district has the merit system prior to the date of the reorganization election, and that district has more than half of the reorganized district's classified employees, the merit system is put into place automatically unless an election is requested by the classified employees of the reorganized district. If an election is requested, a simple majority of the vote's casts either establishes the merit system for the new district or not. If no election is requested, then the merit system is put in place automatically if half or more of the new district's employees came from the merit system district.

In this case, Santa Paula Elementary School District currently has the merit system in place and would provide more than half of the reorganized district's classified employees. Therefore, the reorganized district would automatically use the merit system unless an election is requested.

Enrollment and Rate of Growth

In fiscal year 2011-2012, the K-8 funded average daily attendance in the Santa Paula Elementary School District was 3,588 and the 9-12 funded average daily attendance in the Santa Paula Union High School District was 1,512. It is expected that if the proposed unified school district is approved, it would have between 4,900 and 5,200 students in its first year of operation (2013-2014), and little change in enrollment would be expected over the next few years unless there is substantial growth in the community.

Financial Information

Based on estimated 2011-2012 data provided by the districts, the undeficitated base revenue limit per unit of average daily attendance (ADA) for the proposed unified school district is estimated to be \$6,621. The proposed unified district would also receive an ongoing additional allocation of approximately \$337 per ADA for costs associated with combining the salary schedules of the district. This total estimated undeficitated base revenue limit of \$6,958 per ADA will be adjusted for any amounts funded in the state budget for fiscal years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, and the current revenue limit deficit will also be applied. Because of the uncertain nature of the budget of the State of California, those adjustments cannot be estimated at this time. If the proposed district is approved, the California Department of Education will calculate the actual revenue

limit, including any additional allocation, using actual data from the 2011-2012 fiscal year. This final calculation will become the proposed unified districts base undeficit revenue limit for future years. For comparative purposes, the estimated undeficit revenue limit for the proposed unified district of \$6,958 per ADA is approximately 6.5% higher than the average 2011-2012 undeficit revenue limit per ADA of the other unified school districts in Ventura County. Because Proposition 98 dictates the total state support for schools, this increase will not increase the total amount the state pays for education. In the future, state support for the proposed new district is expected to continue at levels comparable to those provided to unified school districts of similar size and characteristics.

The proposed unified school district will continue to receive additional state categorical funding currently being provided to the two existing districts. Unification would not generally impact continued eligibility for the current funding levels since the effect of unification on state categorical programs and entitlements is essentially revenue neutral due to funding that follows the students.

Facilities

Based upon a study commissioned by the VCCSDO, the proposal alone would not cause a significant increase in school housing costs. However, the actual costs for housing additional students will be based on decisions made by the governing board of the proposed district, the financial impact of which cannot be estimated at this time.

Bonded Indebtedness

Education Code Section 35573 provides that the newly unified school district shall be liable for the existing bonded indebtedness of the districts being merged. Bonded indebtedness of the component districts is acquired by the unified district. In this case, the newly unified school district would be liable for the bonded indebtedness of the Santa Paula Union High School District and the Santa Paula Elementary School District.

The tax base for this acquired indebtedness does not change. Ad valorem taxes currently associated to specific real property assigned for the retirement of voter approved bonded debt will continue to be assessed to those specific properties which voted on the bonded debt. For example, ad valorem taxes currently collected from property within the boundaries of the Santa Paula Elementary School District, and assigned to the retirement of bonded indebtedness authorized by the voters within those boundaries, would continue to be collected only from those property owners and go only to retire the acquired debt related to the Santa Paula Elementary School bonds.

The same rules apply for the acquired debt of the Santa Paula Union High School District. Ad valorem taxes currently associated with real property within the boundaries of the Santa Paula Union High School District will continue to be assessed to retire the acquired debt related to the Santa Paula Union High School District. This means that real property located in any of the effected school districts within the boundaries of the Santa Paula Union High School District will continue to be assessed taxes to retire the existing bonded debt of the Santa Paula Union High School District. This would also be true of any currently authorized but unissued bonds of the High School District.

The Briggs, Mupu, and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts will continue to be individually liable for any bonded debt issued by these districts.

If the proposed reorganization is approved by the voters, any bonded debt issued by the newly created unified school district will have to be specific to the elementary program or the high school program. Bonded debt issued for the benefit of the elementary programs of the unified district would be repaid by ad valorem taxes levied on property within the old boundaries of the Santa Paula Elementary School District. Bonded debt issued for the benefit of the high school programs of the unified district would be repaid by ad valorem taxes levied on property within the boundaries of the unified school district that would include property within the Briggs, Mupu, and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts.