



September 1, 2010

Dear State Board of Education:

As County Superintendent I assumed the role of State Board appointed Trustee of the Round Valley Unified School District (RVUSD) on July 1, 2010. As Trustee, I have stay and rescind powers and was charged to appoint a District Assistance and Intervention Team (DAIT) to contract with the district.

As County Superintendent, I have been working under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Round Valley Unified School District to provide Recovery Specialist/Superintendent services that include the day-to-day Superintendent, High School Principal, and Business Manager. This MOU has been in place since February, 2008. As a term and condition of the MOU, either party may terminate the agreement, with the MOU ending one year after date of termination. The RVUSD Board terminated the agreement in July, 2010, thus the MOU ends on June 30, 2011.

Following are highlights from the report I will present to the State Board of Education on September 15 or 16 covering activities in RVUSD over the past eight weeks.

Personnel

- A search lead by MCOE resulted in the RVUSD Board hiring Dr. Kevin Jolly as Superintendent on July 1, 2010. After 18 days on the job, Dr. Jolly passed away, a tragic blow to an already fragile school district.
- As County Superintendent/Trustee I have been functioning in the role of District Superintendent, assisted by Recovery Specialist/Superintendent, Dennis Ivey. I have resumed full activities of the Recovery Team and we maintain the operation of the District and the implementation of the LEAP.
- At the September 14 RVUSD Board meeting we will review the proposed process and timeline to recruit and hire a RVUSD employed District Superintendent, High School Principal, and Business Manager.
- The following positions have been successfully filled: HS English, Math, PE, and Continuation School teachers; two District Resource Specialists and one Elementary School Counselor. Interviews are currently concluding for the District Academic Coach.

Facilities

- All facilities projects classified as an "emergency" under the Williams Settlement along with summer preparation for the start of school have been completed and the RVUSD Facilities Inspection Tool (FIT) under Williams has been completed with a score of 98.75%.

Management Structure

- MCOE has assigned a high level Executive Assistant from MCOE to RVUSD three to five days per week to ensure timely board agendas, packets, and other time sensitive reporting requirements (Ms. Ruth Hubbell).

- MCOE is recruiting a District Administrator that will report to the Recovery Specialist/Superintendent and will support day-to-day operations of the schools, particularly providing back up for the site principals. This position closes on September 7.

Fiscal Operations

- A special board budget meeting was held August 10 and resulted in a hastily adopted budget of August 25.
- The RVUSD Board has finally voted to adopt a conditional budget on August 25 which is currently being reviewed by the County Office of Education for possible approval or modifications.
- Three year, multi-year projection shows deficit spending in 2010-2011 through 2012-2013 with a \$2.3 million negative fund balance in the third year out.
- All one-time dollars will be fully spent in 2010-2011.
- Ongoing work with staff and community budget committee will continue.
- Board members are receiving budget training by the business manager on a regular basis to ensure that they understand their fiduciary responsibilities as board members.

Governance

- The RVUSD Board has agreed to comprehensive, on-site board governance training.
- The RVUSD Board has adopted a board philosophy and behavior handbook.
- The RVUSD Board has refused to negotiate an MOU with the Mendocino County Superintendent for the State Appointed Trusteeship
- There continue to be apparent violations of the Brown act by individual board members
- The RVUSD Board recently voted to reduce the English requirement for high school graduation.

Instruction

- School began on August 18.
- Round Valley High School was granted a three-year WASC accreditation.

Special Projects

- **Building Resiliency Opportunities for the North Counties (BRONCO)** - This a Federal Safe School and Student grant. 2010 is the first year of full implementation. The grant is designed to increase school attendance and student safety. In cooperation with the local Tribal Council a local SARB has been formed. BRONCO provides the district with one FTE local coordinator, two - three-hour truancy outreach workers and one day per week of Mental Health counseling for students. An additional three-hour truancy outreach worker is being added. Agreements and partnerships with the Tribal Council and the Mendocino County Sherriff are being discussed to increase school/student safety.
- **Native American Land Curriculum** - The district received a \$140,000 grant to develop and implement Native American curriculum K-12. The grant requires and funds a multi-media assistant position. The Round Valley Unified School District Board has refused to fill the position which puts the funding source at risk.
- **Technology** - All teachers have been provided with a laptop computer, overhead projectors, and Smart Boards. Efforts to increase broadband to the community are near completion. Last year, the district received a

\$240,000 library media grant. The library at the elementary school has been updated and new books and materials are in place. A new high school library/media center has been established and media/journalism classes have been added to the master schedule.

- **DAIT** - Region 1 District Assistance and Intervention Team has been approved by the Round Valley Unified School District Board and a contract for services has been approved. The LEAP that was developed this spring and finally adopted by the RVUSD Board. The plan is currently being implemented. Plans are being developed and principals and teachers are being trained.
- **Tribal Council** – The Tribal Council and the school district meet on a regular basis once a month to discuss partnerships and tribal concerns. Most recently, County Superintendent and Recovery Specialist met with the Council to discuss DAIT and the BRONCO grant.

In conclusion, even though RVUSD has experienced a major setback with the death of the newly hired superintendent, the school year is off to a positive beginning. The MCOE Recovery team continues to provide day-to-day administrative support. All teaching positions have been filled and student enrollment is up from the 2009-2010 school year.

Make no doubt, the District remains in a fragile condition and in need of external support. The Round Valley Unified School District Board remains in opposition to the efforts of the County Superintendent and Recovery Team. Three board members were elected in November, 2009, with the publicly stated position of eliminating the County Superintendent services. This board position and the limitations of the powers of stay and rescind lead me to make the following recommendations:

- 1) Appoint an independent external Trustee with full governance authority, or
- 2) Extend full governance authority to the County Superintendent/Trustee.

Returning the powers and authority to a local School Board is critical to the long term success of the district. During the implementation of the DAIT/LEAP a plan to return full governance authority to a local board must be a priority.

While I am pleased with the progress my staff has made, they continue to face barrier after barrier. There are long-standing beliefs, alliances and an inability to sustain a functional school environment. In spite of these barriers, my staff report seeing and experiencing real and lasting change in the day-to-day operations of the district.

I will be available at the State Board of Education meeting on September 15 or 16 to answer any questions during my report.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Tichinin
County Superintendent
State Trustee for Round Valley Unified School District