

Ventura County Schools



Business Services Authority

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April 28, 2010

VIA Certified Mail and Electronic Mail

Ms. Theresa Garcia
Executive Director
State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Room 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE; Request for Exclusion from the Santa Paula Unification Proposal as per Education Code Section 35542(b) for Briggs Elementary School District, Mupu Elementary School District, and Santa Clara Elementary School District

Dear Ms. Garcia:

The Santa Paula City Council passed a resolution on February 1, 2010 requesting the Ventura County Committee on School District Organization to conduct a study on unifying the Santa Paula Elementary School District and the Santa Paula Union High School District. The resolution specifically requested that the small school districts within the Santa Paula Union High School District boundaries (Briggs Elementary School District, Mupu Elementary School District, and Santa Clara Elementary School District) remain independent.

The Ventura County Committee on School District Organization took action on March 17, 2010 to begin the unification process as prescribed by Education Code Section 35721(d), including conducting a study of unification of all school districts within the Santa Paula High School District boundaries (Santa Paula Union High School District, Santa Paula Elementary School District, Briggs Elementary School District, Mupu Elementary School District, and Santa Clara Elementary School District). The study will also include a comparison of unification of Santa Paula Union High School District and Santa Paula Elementary School District with the exclusion of the small school districts.

On behalf of the Briggs Elementary School District, Mupu Elementary School District, and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts ("small districts"), the following attached documents are being submitted to the State Board of Education to support the requests to be excluded from the proposed Santa Paula School District unification in order to retain independent status as separate elementary school districts:

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1. Resolutions of Intent to Retain an Independent Status as a School District:
 - a. Briggs Elementary School District Resolution Number 09-10-19
 - b. Mupu Elementary School District Resolution Number 09-10-07
 - c. Santa Clara Elementary School District Resolution Number 09-10-08
2. Cover letter signed by the Superintendent/Principal for each of the three small districts
3. Santa Paula City Council Resolution # 6649 requesting unification of Santa Paula Elementary School District and Santa Paula High School District
4. "Kids First!" Unification of Santa Paula's Elementary and High School Districts Report and Analysis (Final Report dated November 2, 2009)
5. "Kids First!" Question and Answer summary
6. 2009/2010 Second Interim Report Narrative for each of the three small districts (entire report available upon request)
7. 2008/2009 School Accountability Report Cards for each of the three small districts

These small districts, which are separated by farmlands, offer distinctly different opportunities for students based upon the culture and needs of their local community. They have a long history of independence and have been successfully educating students for more than 130 years. Briggs was established in 1870 and is comprised of an area of 22 square miles west of the city limits of Santa Paula. Mupu was established in 1879 and is comprised of an area of approximately 16 square miles within and outside of the city limits of Santa Paula. Santa Clara (also known as the "Little Red School House") is designated as a necessary small school and is located on Highway 126, four miles east of Santa Paula. The small districts accept inter-district transfer students which offer residents of Santa Paula, Ojai, and Fillmore choices for placing their children in the school environment that best suits each child's educational needs.

There would be little, if any, financial gain by including the small districts in the Santa Paula unification for the following reasons:

- The business services for the small districts are provided by the Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority (VCSBSA), a non profit joint powers authority formed in 1988 to provide small school districts in Ventura County with a professional business staff at a lower cost than maintaining in-house staff. The business costs allocated to the small districts have continued to decline over the past four years due to the economy of scale achieved by VCSBSA continuing to add more charter school business clients.

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- The chief certificated administrator for each district serves a dual role as the superintendent and principal. In addition, they have some teaching responsibilities, as well as other administrative duties since there are no other certificated administrative positions within the districts (with the exception of one additional principal for Briggs since there are two campuses). Therefore, there would likely be no savings in unifying since typically each school campus within a unified school district has a principal on site, and the salary range of the superintendent/principals of the small districts are comparable to the average salary range for elementary school principals. (Please refer to the attached School Accountability Report Cards for detail.)
- Each of the small districts has been able to maintain reserves for economic uncertainties above the state-recommended levels and is fiscally sound. (Please refer to the 2009/2010 Second Interim Report Narratives for more detail.)

For the reasons stated above, please consider the request of the Briggs Elementary School District, Mupu Elementary School District, and the Santa Clara Elementary School district to remain independent feeder elementary districts to the proposed Santa Paula Unified School District.

If you have any questions or would like any other information, please contact me at (805) 383-1972 (chansen@vcoe.org).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Hansen
Chief Business Official

Cc: **Larry Shirey, CDE Field Representative**
Ken Prosser, Ventura County Committee on School District Organization
Deborah Cuevas, Superintendent/Principal, Briggs Elementary School District
Jeanine Gore, Superintendent/Principal, Mupu Elementary School District
Kari Skidmore, Principal, Santa Clara Elementary School District