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Interim Superintendent  
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Dr. Carmella S. Franco, State Trustee

## MEMORANDUM

Date: June 25, 2010

To: State Board of Education President Ted Mitchell  
Members of the State Board of Education

From: Dr. Carmella S. Franco  
State Trustee  
Alisal Union School District

Subject: **Initial Trustee Report and Recommendations on Progress Made by  
the Alisal Union School District**

### ***OVERVIEW***

The following is an initial assessment of the status of the Alisal Union Elementary School District which is located in Salinas, Monterey County. The District serves 7,583 students in grades K-6. 95% of the students are Hispanic, and 71% are English Learners. I have served in my role of State Trustee for one month. However, in that short time, it has been possible to ascertain the condition of various areas consistent with those defined in the State Trustee's Memorandum of Understanding. It is understood that a much more comprehensive report with specified corrective actions will be forthcoming by September 30, 2010.

### ***1.0 GOVERNANCE***

***Governance on the part of the Board of Education has been dysfunctional and is a major concern.***

#### ***Meetings***

Minutes of Board meetings have not been approved since September 2009.

At the meeting of June 28, 2010, ten sets of Board Meeting Minutes will be approved as follows:

- October 7, 2009
- October 12, 2009

- November 4, 2009
- November 16, 2009
- January 21, 2010
- January 27, 2010
- February 10, 2010
- February 17, 2010
- February 24, 2010
- June 14, 2010

The Minutes for meetings held between March and May 2010 will be considered for approval on July 28, 2010.

**Recommended Actions:**

- Individual meetings with Board Members will be scheduled monthly.  
(May - November 2010 and ongoing)
- Professional Development will be scheduled with the full Board on topics ranging from a “series in governance”, teambuilding, Brown Act, and other pertinent areas. Dr. Edward Lee Vargas will be a primary presenter.  
(August - November 2010 and ongoing).
- Study Sessions with the Board will be held to review drafts of new Board policies. All are currently outdated.  
(Beginning in October 2010)
- The concept of the “*Power of One: One Team*” will be introduced.  
(July 2010)
- The State Trustee will model appropriate Board behavior and actions.  
(Ongoing)
- Initial protocols have been developed for Board meetings and presented. These may be re-worked as Board Members exhibit collaborative behaviors.  
(June 14, 2010)
- A statement was developed and provided to the public as to the State Trustee’s expectations for how meetings will proceed.  
(June 14, 2010)
- Minutes of past Board meetings will be approved.  
(June 28, 2010; and July 28, 2010)
- Minutes will be approved at each Board meeting.  
(June 28, 2010 and ongoing)

**Fiscal Impact:** The cost of Board Professional Development shall not exceed \$25,000 during the 2010-2011 school year. The cost of a consultant to assist in revising all Board Policies shall not exceed \$15,000.

***The Alisal Board had not met since the meeting of March 26, 2010. Critical items were not acted upon.***

I have met individually with two of the three Board Members. One Board Member has not been responsive to repeated requests to meet, including phone calls and two certified letters.

The first Board meeting was held on June 14, 2010, and the three Board Members were in attendance. I read a statement to the audience regarding how I expected the meeting to proceed. (See Attachment A.) I also provided Board Members with simple but explicit protocols for the meeting. (See Attachment B.)

The meeting proceeded in an orderly manner. All speakers under Public Comments were calm and used normal voice tones. There was no inappropriate interactive communication with members of the public by Board Members.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for June 28, 2010. Protocols will continue to be strictly enforced. As of the writing of this report, a fourth individual was elected to the Board, and certification of the election results is expected on July 6, 2010. That individual is expected to be sworn in at the July 28, 2010 Board meeting. An election for a fifth Board Member will take place in November 2010.

The first Governance Training for Board Members will take place on Saturday, August 7, 2010. Dr. Edward Lee Vargas will conduct the initial series of trainings. Other training will include the Brown Act, and study sessions will be held on pertinent matters, e.g. revision of all Board Policies.

## ***2.0 DISTRICT LEADERSHIP***

***Leadership was significantly disrupted due to a lack of continuity in the governance system.***

### ***Interim Superintendent***

I am working closely with Interim Superintendent John Ramírez. He was appointed to his position on March 26, 2010, and does not have previous Superintendent experience. I am providing coaching, mentoring, and daily guidance and oversight.

I have approved Mr. Ramirez' participation in the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators Mentoring Program, and know his assigned mentor. I also have asked him to attend the Association of California School Administrators Curriculum and Instruction Academy which is held on eight weekends during the 2010-2011 school year.

The evaluation of the Interim Superintendent will emanate from the goals and objectives developed by the State Trustee for submission to the State Board of Education in August 2010.

***Other Senior Management***

***There is not an Educational Services Department to oversee all important aspects of instruction for the District.***

Currently, Senior Management consists of the Interim Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, and the Interim Director of Human Resources. (See proposed Organizational Chart, Attachment C.) Current vacancies open until filled include the following:

- Director of Fiscal Services and Categorical Programs
- Director of Special Education

The above-mentioned are being re-flown at this time. Additionally, the Educational Services Department is being reorganized to include the following positions.

- Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services, Assessment, and Accountability
- Director of Instruction and English Language Development
- Director of Instruction and Professional Development
- Coordinator of English Language Development
- Coordinator of Instructional Practices

Job descriptions for these positions are being finalized, and the positions will be flown statewide by July 1, 2010.

***Fiscal Impact:*** Vacant positions are included in the 2010-2011 Adopted Budget.

### ***Principals***

The District's eleven Principals were issued pink slips by the Board in March 2010; however, the lack of a Board meeting being held by May 15, 2010, a legal deadline, prevented the finalization of any releases. Two retreat days, which focused heavily on data and the improvement of student achievement, were held on June 15 and 16, 2010. A comprehensive professional development program for Principals will be developed by August 2010. Principals will be evaluated on key instructional goals and objectives directly tied in to those submitted by the State Trustee to the State Board of Education in August 2010.

### ***3.0 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT***

***The District and ten of the eleven schools continue in Program Improvement, and two schools rank in the bottom 5<sup>th</sup> percentile statewide.***

At the recent retreat with Senior Management and the School Principals, the daily instructional program for primary and upper grade students was analyzed and explained in detail. The confronting of brutal facts revealed that students currently are not receiving sufficient English instruction to enable them to become proficient. This fact was more pronounced and evident in certain settings. However, what I found was a great interest and enthusiasm by those present about setting a new course with a major focus on the development of English language skills. As a result, a preliminary model of English language time allocations was jointly developed. The grade for students to transition completely from Spanish to English will move from third grade to first grade. This move paves the way for redoing the Language Arts Textbook Adoption order. The original order was 2:1 Spanish to English materials. With the new model, the ratio will change to 2:1 English materials. This is a significant change which will be communicated to staff and parents.

***The District Assistance Intervention Team (DAIT) Plan is not being implemented as written.***

There has not been a staff member in charge of the DAIT Plan implementation since the former Superintendent left in March 2010. It is my understanding that the former Superintendent was the point person. Follow-up on implementation of set goals and objectives was to be conducted. Seven *Review and Update Reports* were entailed in the Program Improvement Action Plans, from February through May, 2010, with subsequent monthly reports to the Board. However, only one of the seven presentations was made and that occurred at the February 26, 2010 Board meeting. The Plan calls for oversight by a staff member with the title Director II Educational Services. No such individual or

title currently exists to manage the multitude of objectives and their discrete components. Tasks were also assigned in the Plan to a Director of Curriculum and Instruction. There is no such position at this time. The DAIT Team has not returned to Alisal since the departure of the former Superintendent.

**The following steps are being taken.**

- The DAIT Plan is being reviewed. Plans for a new provider are being studied. This decision will be made as soon as the new Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services is hired (early August 2010).
- A former Assistant Superintendent is assisting with urgent curricular matters, e.g. writing of and submission of the Consolidated Application. It is scheduled for approval at the June 28, 2010 Board meeting.
- Language Arts Textbook Adoption is scheduled for approval at the June 28, 2010 Board meeting.

**It is important that the following be addressed.**

- Professional development for teachers will be provided on how to teach English to English Learners.
- Language Arts Textbook Adoption teacher training scheduled for the first week of August will focus on English materials only.
- Staffing titles and responsibilities will be changed to reflect the new English Language Development emphasis.
- Schools will receive support from the District Office to ensure the success of this change and new District direction.

***4.0 COMMUNICATION***

A letter was provided to employees and parents/community members explaining the current Trustee oversight, and informing them about the planned major overhaul of the District's English Language Development Program. There have been several occasions for me to meet local officials. Community leaders' perceptions are that the District appears to have had significant problems in the area of governance, particularly at the Board and Superintendent level, prior to the appointment of the State Trustee.

***Associations***

Cordial meetings have been held with the leadership of both Associations (Alisal Teachers Association and the California School Employees Association) related to grievances and bargaining.

### ***Community***

I observed that sixth grade promotion ceremonies were well-attended by parents, families, and friends. Opportunities for meeting with parents/community members have been facilitated.

There is concern by Migrant Education parents about the temporary oversight by the Monterey County Office of Education. We are stressing that plans will be made for the return of oversight to the Alisal Union School District. (See Section 5.0 District Budget.)

### ***Schools***

I visited all eleven schools in my first four days; however, with the close of the school year imminent, it was not possible to visit the 276 classrooms. Even so, successful attempts were made to connect with both certificated and classified staff during breaks, lunch, and in several cases, at after school staff meetings.

### ***5.0 DISTRICT BUDGET***

The District currently has a healthy reserve of 11%. Categorical funds comprise 28% of the total budget revenue. It is anticipated that reserves will begin to drop in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 necessitating major budget adjustments. It is anticipated that approximately \$3,000,000 in reductions will need to be made for 2011-2012. A positive certification of the Adopted Budget will be acted on at the June 28, 2010 Board meeting and submitted to the Monterey County Office of Education.

On June 24, 2010, School Finance Consultant Paul Disario and Bob Blattner, formerly with School Services of California, spent a day with the Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, and then met with the Interim Superintendent and State Trustee to discuss their observations, validate Trustee observations, and to make suggestions.

One of the key areas of concern has been the Migrant Education Program. Approximately eight hundred thousand (\$800,000) should have been expended by June 30, 2010. This deadline was subsequently extended to September 30, 2010. The District has been unable to meet certain steps, and lacks the capacity to offer quality services to students between now and September 30, 2010. (See Chronology of Events, Attachment D.) Immediate action was needed in order to keep the program. The most effective recourse was to turn over the program to the Monterey County Office of Education to manage temporarily. At such time that capacity has been rebuilt in the Alisal Union School District, the District

could bring it back if so desired. The impact involves a required lay off of employees (11) and most will be able to apply for the County positions, bump into other District positions, and/or go on the 39-month rehire list.

A General Meeting for Migrant Education parents and community members was held on June 21, 2010 and hundreds of parents were in attendance. All were allowed to speak and express their concerns during two portions of the meeting. A presentation explained the background, need for temporary oversight, services to be provided, and plans for returning the program to the District. As soon as the full complement of Educational Services staff has been hired, the District can begin to make those plans. Formal action on an agreement with Monterey County Office of Education and action on layoffs is expected at the June 28, 2010 Board meeting. It is critical that there is no interruption of services to the students and their families.

## ***6.0 FACILITIES***

On November 7, 2006, voters approved a \$90 Million school construction bond, and the District established a Bond Oversight Committee in 2007. Multipurpose rooms are in various stages of construction and completion. My first observations are that there is attention placed on the appearance of the schools. The Bond Oversight Committee meets regularly to review expenditures to ensure they comply with the purposes that the public supported when they voted for the bond. The Committee must submit an annual report to the Board of Trustees on their findings with regard to the expenditures. Work on the annual report began in October 2009. The report is now complete and will be submitted to the State Trustee on June 28, 2010.

## ***7.0 GENERAL OPERATIONS***

There is a lack of systems and accompanying procedures at all levels, as supported by a County review. As daily operations and issues are addressed, it is increasingly apparent that there is a dramatic lack of basic processes and procedures for accomplishing, in some cases, routine tasks. Examples of some of these systems include:

- Agenda development
- Board policies
- Calendars
- Decision making models



## ***NEXT STEPS***

**Major priorities in the coming months include the following.**

- Continuing to work with Board Members and providing needed training
- Hiring of key personnel
- Developing plans for a major change in instructional delivery systems and accompanying professional development, particularly for English Learners
- Developing a plan for the return of Migrant Education oversight to the District
- Confirming the fiscal health of the District, and planning for budget adjustments
- Assessing all systems and, as a result of that assessment, overseeing the development of appropriate operations and procedures

This assessment will be modified with further recommendations as they are developed. I wish to thank the State Board of Education and California Department of Education executive staff for their input, guidance, and support during the past month.