

Better Together for Public Education

Exploring School District Unification in Marin

DRAFT Meeting Minutes November 8, 2021

I. Call to Order

Sheri Mowbray called to order the regular meeting of the Better Together Coalition at 12:00 on November 8, 2021 on Zoom.

II. Roll call

The following members were present: Sheri Mowbray, Sloan Bailey, Laura Anderson, Catherine Way, Ruth Dell, and Valerie Pitts.

III. Minutes from October 25, 2021 meeting approved

IV. Open issues:

1. Review of discussion with Sonoma County Superintendent Steven Herrington (Valerie)

- Superintendent Herrington is responding to requests from two separate school districts in Sonoma County to assist them with analyzing whether mergers in their area are feasible.
- Spending \$200,000 on this study with RFP's currently outstanding. Study to be completed in spring 2022. Will ask for the RFP to be shared with our committee.
- These districts are:
 - Santa Rosa City Schools (K-12) and the connecting districts
 - West Sonoma High School District
- Doing the study in collaboration with the County Committee
- Review being done through the framework of the nine elements required by CA law.
- Analysis includes:
 - Which districts might be interested in merging?
 - What are the districts were merging is not feasible?
 - Are districts that are running deficit budgets feasible?
 - What are enrollment trends?
 - How are the districts funded (reviewing state funds not federal \$)

Possible outcomes of the Sonoma review:

- Study could show financial viability for merger but findings rejected by school board. In that case, any other elected board around the school district in question can request that the matter be brought to the SDO (School District Organization) for review and determination.
- A petition of 10% of the voting population of the district can ask for a determination.

Implications for the Better Together committee:

- Need a pathway for collecting data such as the study being done in Sonoma County
- Do we ask an elected board in the county to ask for a research study?
- When or do we begin a petition to gather community support?

- Should we consider asking a larger district to invite another district to ask for a formal study like what the two Sonoma districts did?
- What will provide the greatest benefit to the largest number of students?

2. Follow-up Discussion with Superintendent Mary Jane Burke (Laura and Sheri)

- Positive reflections on the process our group have undertaken
- Discussed MJB idea of five Superintendents in all of Marin
 - Could attract high caliber professional looking for more challenge.
 - Could enhance retention and decrease “steppingstone”
 - Would have to increase salaries to make it more attractive and competitive.
 - This could allow a “cutting edge” organizational structure which might to appealing and different.
 - Could be geographically based or the boards under each Superintendent might not be adjacent to each other.
 - Board oversight and local control remains intact.
 - Would have
 - Horizontal Responsibilities – collaborate with other principles
 - Vertical Responsibilities – could have an area of expertise focus that is shared with peers. Expl: one Superintendent might be better in technology that they could assist the others with.
- Possible other benefits of five Superintendent
 - Better alignment with programming and curriculum
 - Less administration and administrative staff

3. Follow-up to Discussion with C.O.S.T. Leadership Mimi Willard (Valerie)

- Very supportive of our work
- We will keep them informed as we move forward in this work.

V: To Do Items:

- Contact Marin Community Foundation about funding ideas - **Catherine and Shelley**
- Additional reach out to Sonoma Supt of Schools for follow-up questions - **Valerie**
- Work on one-sheet to send to school districts, PTAs and Foundations - **Sheri, Doug, Shelley**
- Collect contact info for school board members, superintendents, PTA and Foundation leaders - **Laura**

VI: Adjournment

Sheri adjourned the meeting at 1:00 pm. Next meeting November 29, 2021.

DRAFT Minutes Submitted by: Catherine Way