

MINUTES
RIALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Board Meeting of the Board of Education

February 27, 2025
Dr. John R. Kazalunas Education Center
182 East Walnut Avenue
Rialto, California

Members Present: **Dr. Stephanie E. Lewis, President**
 Joseph W. Martinez, Vice President
 Edgar Montes, Clerk
 Evelyn P. Dominguez, LVN, Member
 Dakira R. Williams, Member

Members Absent: **Ivan Manzo, Student Board Member**

Staff Present: **Edward D'Souza, Ph.D., Acting Superintendent**
 Rhea McIver Gibbs, Ed.D., Lead Strategic Agent
 Diane Romo, Lead Business Services Agent
 Ingrid Lin, Ed.D., Lead Academic Agent: Elementary
 Roxanne Dominguez, Lead Personnel Agent
 Also present was Martha Degortari, Executive Administrative
 Agent, and Interpreter/Translator Jose Reyes

A. OPENING

A.1 CALL TO ORDER 6:00 p.m.

 The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

A.2 OPEN SESSION

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dr. Judy D. White, Retired Superintendent, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved By Clerk Montes

Seconded By Member Dominguez

Vote by Board Members to adopt the agenda:

Approved by a Unanimous Vote

D. CLOSED SESSION

COMMENTS ON CLOSED SESSION AGENDA ITEMS:

Any person wishing to speak on any item on the Closed Session Agenda will be granted three minutes.

Celia Saravia, Community Member Representing Amigos Unidos, expressed concern about the Board's decision to potentially remove Dr. D'Souza as the Acting Superintendent and replace him with an interim. She indicated that Dr. D'Souza has been an excellent professional and is an important support for students and the community. She asked if an evaluation of him had been conducted and requested that the District finish the school year with him and then begin a transparent process for hiring a permanent superintendent, always prioritizing the success of students.

Ana Gonzalez, District Parent, and Community Advocate acknowledged Dr. D'Souza's contributions but agreed that it might be time for a new superintendent to bring fresh perspectives and focus on healing and restorative justice for the District. She shared her concerns about the District's poor academic performance, pointing out that only 10% of students are meeting grade-level standards. She recommended a neutral person with no prior connections to come in and focus on improving student education and safety.

Mirna Ruiz, Community Member, shared that students should always be the District's priority. She recommended that a new superintendent be chosen with input from all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and the community. She requested accountability for the District's poor performance and the lack of support for special education students. She urged the Board to act on these issues with

real change, not just words, and to ensure that the District's actions reflect its commitment to students' well-being and success.

Frank Montes, Community Member, shared his concerns regarding Dr. D'Souza's leadership, particularly regarding an incident at Frisbie Middle School involving a pinball machine. He expressed his disappointment that Dr. D'Souza was aware of the situation but did not act quickly enough to address it, which he felt jeopardized student safety. He recommends the need for new leadership to address issues like lack of transparency, accountability, and failure to address misconduct.

Steve Figueroa, Community Member and Education Advocate, agreed with the concerns raised by and added that leadership should be conducted with integrity and transparency. He criticized the District for denying public records requests and for potential corruption involving special education contracts. He strongly suggests a new superintendent be appointed, an audit of special education spending, and the end of retaliation against those who raise concerns.

Leticia Garcia, Community Member and Child Advocate, shared her efforts in exposing teacher and staff misconduct, including sexual misconduct, and commended the Board for addressing these issues. She commented that Dr. D'Souza's position as Acting Superintendent should not be terminated hastily, as the District needs stability and a clear, thoughtful search process for a permanent superintendent. She also emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility and hiring a superintendent with experience and integrity.

Ofelia Fitzpatrick, District Employee, shared her pride in the Rialto community, noting the dedication and unity of long-time educators and residents. She commented that the community has always remained student-centered and that, despite challenges and turnover, they have built stability over the years. She criticized outsiders who speak about the community without truly understanding its values and passion for students. She reflected on the progress made over the last decade, with many former students now becoming educators and community leaders. She urged the Board to prioritize consistency and stability for students and to avoid decisions that would harm the community's heart and progress.

Tobin Brinker, Rialto Education Association (REA) President, asked the Board to delay the decision on new leadership and engage the community in the process. He commented that the special meeting lacked transparency and public engagement, which he felt caused division within the District. He recommended a full search for a new superintendent, including input from the community, and warned that a rushed decision would create instability, making it harder to attract qualified candidates.

Jasmin Valenzuela, a Retired Rialto Unified School District Educator, spoke in support of Dr. D'Souza, highlighting her 25 years of experience working with him. She praised his integrity, leadership, and strong connections with county and state officials, which benefit the District. She commented that Dr. D'Souza has not had a fair opportunity to fully exercise his leadership and that it would be wise for the Board to retain him as interim or permanent superintendent, given his dedication to the District's success and students.

Moved By Vice President Martinez

Seconded By Member Dominguez

As provided by law, the following are the items for discussion and consideration at the Closed Session of the Special Board Meeting:

- **PUBLIC EMPLOYEE APPOINTMENT (Government Code Section 54957)**

Title: Interim Superintendent

Vote by Board Members to move into Closed Session:

Time: 6:48 p.m.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote

E. ADJOURNMENT OF CLOSED SESSION

Moved By Vice President Martinez

Seconded By Member Williams

Vote by Board Members to adjourn Closed Session:

Time:

Approved by a Unanimous Vote

F. OPEN SESSION RECONVENED

Open session reconvened at 7:27 p.m.

G. REPORT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION

Moved By Vice President Martinez

Seconded By Member Williams

The Board approved the appointment of Dr. Judy D. White as Interim Superintendent, effective March 5, 2025. The Board will bring forward a contract for approval at our next regular Board Meeting of March 5, 2025.

Vote by Board Members:

(Ayes) President Lewis, Vice President Martinez, Member Williams

(Noes) Clerk Montes, Member Dominguez

Approved by a Majority Vote

H. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By Vice President Martinez

Seconded By Member Dominguez

Materials distributed or presented to the Board of Education at the Board Meeting are available upon request from the Superintendent's Office.

Vote by Board Members to adjourn:

Time: 7:29 p.m.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote


Clerk, Board of Education


Secretary, Board of Education