

Antonio Medrano

1. Achievement. We are not meeting the needs of our students at all levels. More intensive tutoring is needed. We need to identify those students who are in the most need of help and begin asap to assist them. An example: this past summer I was asked to help out with the ELD students at Richmond H.S. The materials did not arrive until two weeks into the summer course and then we were expected to finish all three sections which would have been impossible even with fluent English speaking students. In the four sections that I helped in I was the only Spanish speaking instructor. This was all volunteer work and no pay was received. For those who have difficulty in English, then intensive writing exercises would help.

Identify those students who arrive at the high schools who are below basic and begin that semester to offer them tutoring (before and after school and if necessary on Saturdays).

2. Charter schools. They have not been successful in the past few years. Leadership Charter H.S. may show some success. We need to see their scores and compare them with the other schools in our area. Parents do need a choice but I believe that many times they take away the best students from our schools.

3. Equity. The social and economic backgrounds do affect our students' lives. We ask parents to donate funds to our schools and some can not afford the extra expense. The most recent case was charging parents \$12.00 to send home their grades. This I brought up to the district and that policy was changed. In the more affluent areas of our district parents can and do donate more funds to the school, but is that fair to the students whose parents do not have the funds? We need to make sure that equipment, books, textbooks, and all materials for the classrooms are available to all the teachers and students. Computers in the parent room at Richmond High are still not connected (since last year and complaints were made and promises were also made).

Parents see schools in the hills who have everything and students do a lot better on the standardized tests and they ask why? Do more experienced teachers transfer to those schools and leave us with inexperienced teachers in the flatlands? The answer is Yes. It is the whole question of seniority.

4. K-8. The K-8 committee worked and brought forth studies that showed that maybe a pilot program should be attempted. As a choice for the parents, we should try it. Regional K-8's should be studied and let us look at the data for and against that configuration. We should have both options but only after a study, parent involvement and thorough discussion of the issue.

5. Middle School Improvements. I agree that many parents think that our middle schools are deficient in terms of safety and lack the academic rigor that they expect. What can we do to make them "gems of learning" in our district. Rigorous classes, discipline and zero tolerance for gangs, violence and stricter attendance policy. Better communication with the parents and be ready to offer them help and tutoring for their students. Principals need to be held accountable.

6. Operating Budget. Allocation of resource should be made on what the students need the most. Is it tutoring, counseling, libraries, music, art or all of the above? I would prefer the site-based budgeting system not being used in Oakland. That way everyone knows where the funds are being spent.

7. Proper role of the School Board. Our building program is great but I think that our board needs to pay more attention the academic core of our schools. Is the "Court" approach the best for our students. We need more counselors, more music, and art for our students. We also need to pay more attention to the maintenance of our schools. We have beautiful buildings but who is going to take care of them. Board members need to visit more classes and see what is happening in our schools. And then ask our Superintendent why?, how,? how much? And why do some of our teachers leave our district? Pay and benefits are an issue, for all: teachers, classified staff, principals.

The question of the Exit Exam. Were the students given adequate instruction for the exam? Were the students identified early on and given the special attention that they needed. Were they taught by qualified instructors, with up to date materials. I used some of the materials when I worked at Richmond High and many were grammar school level vocabulary, infantile illustrations and very little at appropriate high school level interests, vocabulary and situations. Some States are accepting other measures of judging student progress. Might we not do the same.

8. Role of Teachers. I believe that teachers should not be disciplined for their opinions about policies at their schools. Is the instruction working and are students improving in their work. Is the literacy portion really effective or is it just rote learning? But teachers should be allowed to take training classes, staff development, go to other schools where they can see effective instruction taking place. Learn from their peers. But they should not boycott classes, or faculty meetings.

9. Safety and Order. I do not think that our schools are safe and orderly. We need more site supervisors, bring back our campus security, make it easier for parents to volunteer. Zero tolerance on gangs, violence, and lack of respect. Students must be in classes and not wandering around the campus or visiting friends in the quad. Many parents choose to send their students to private schools because of the perception of lack of safety, lack of a rigorous curriculum and not holding students and parents responsible

10. School Building Program. I am proud of the building program and the successes that we have had. But I raise the issue again and again. What about the maintenance of our schools. We need to bring back our classified staff that we let go to ensure the proper maintenance of our schools. Two glaziers for our entire district is a joke.

Our Bond Oversight Committee tries to keep track of the building program and the cost overruns. This is difficult for the committee. We do not have the expertise within our committee to gauge and understand the complexities of our building program. The staff gives the committee explanations of why the cost overruns. We have areas of our district that request extra funds for gyms, sport fields, theaters, etc. and the budget has to be re-adjusted. What does that do for the schools that are still on the list to be rebuilt and that were promised to the community?. How do we explain that we could not do their school because of cost overruns at some sites?

11. Uniforms. A survey should have been done asking the parents what their what their desires were. Some schools did surveys a couple fo years ago and the parents were in favor of uniforms. Why was this not done for the middle school parents? I do not know. Many parents come from countries where uniforms are normal and accepted for all students. Parents should have the opt-out option. I support unifoms for K-8. Less economic distractions.

12. We need to pay our teachers, counselors, classified staff more. Otherwise they will leave our district and go where the pay is better. We need better administration support for our teachers,and classified staff. They need our respect.