

## **SBSD Information Clarification**

Version 1 (September 26, 2022)

The Solana Beach School District believes strongly in providing timely and accurate information for employees, parents, and community members. Recently, District leaders have been asked questions regarding public candidate comments and statements. This Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document has been created to clarify and provide factual information for our communities.

**1. Have there been cost overruns for the Solana Santa Fe (SSF) Modernization Project?**

A: The simple answer is, no. The SSF scope, timeline, and budget were approved by the Board on November 18, 2021. There have been no cost increases to the approved budget.

When the bond was passed (November 2016), \$10 million dollars was allocated for the modernization of SSF. Pre-COVID, a cost escalation factor was used for all school projects which more than doubled each year. COVID presented additional labor and supply chain shortages which significantly increased costs beyond the built in escalation figure for *all* building projects. The SSF scope, timeline, and budget was approved by the Board on November 18, 2021. Since then, there have been no cost increases to the approved budget. It is important to note that the same process was used with the Solana Vista construction project, and it is anticipated that the project will come in under the approved budget of \$40,680,150.

**2. Did a current Trustee vote to approve improvements to their home school, Solana Highlands (administration building and kitchen facilities)?**

No, the Trustee in question was not elected to the Board of Education until November 2018, which was after the approval of the improvements for Solana Highlands.

**3. Has the SBSB voted to ban books?**

No.

**4. Does one Board member of the Board of Education have the ability to make unilateral changes to Board Policy?**

No. The Board consists of five members of which a majority must approve of any and all decisions. It is also important to note that Board policies are based on Education Code (school law) and precedent-setting legal cases; therefore, Board Policies help districts operate in a legally defensible manner protecting the students, staff, and assets of the District.

**5. Does a Board of Education member have the ability to vote on contracts and vendors that personally benefit the Board member?**

If there is a potential conflict of interest, the Board either does not enter into the contract, or the Board Member with the conflict will recuse themselves from the consideration and not vote on that particular item.

**6. Does Solana Beach have reasonable class sizes? What is considered reasonable?**

Solana Beach School District is fortunate to have smaller class sizes than other state, county, and local school districts. The average class size for grades **K-3** this school year is **19:1** and the average class size for grades **4-6** is **24:1**. These class sizes are well under the collective bargaining agreement numbers.

**7. Why isn't Solana Beach School District offering Transitional Kindergarten?**

**A:** Solana Beach School District is not offering Transitional Kindergarten (TK) because the State of California is not providing the financial resources for community districts as they are for other districts.

Last year, Board members, the Superintendent, our Leadership Team, our employee unions, and parent leaders actively lobbied legislators to include funding for community funding districts in this new program. Unfortunately, while sufficient funding exists, our legislators did not include community funded districts in the funding equation. Without this funding, current SBSBD programs we love and expect (smaller class sizes, STREAM, music, library media center teachers, English Learner Development, intervention teachers, and summer programming) that benefit students in grades K-6 would be reduced or eliminated to provide one new grade level, transitional kindergarten. Like other community funded districts, SBSBD does not believe it should have to reduce or cut existing programs to fund a new state program, especially since the state has sufficient funding to do so. Nonetheless, SBSBD and other community funded districts are and will continue to advocate for funding in order to offer TK without having to eliminate other programs.

**8. What after school programs does the Solana Beach School District currently offer families?**

**A:** Information on the Solana Beach School District Child Development Program is provided here - <https://www.sbsd.k12.ca.us/cdc>

Solana Beach School District is one of the few districts that has its own before and after school childcare programming, available at all schools, including enrichment programs for students.

In addition, Solana Beach School District is one of the few districts that offer a toddler program to its families in addition to its preschool program.

**9. What additional after school programs are being considered, planned for by the District?**

**A:** The State of California has added a new requirement and provided funding in order that school districts offer additional before and after school programs and programming for a specific population. This program is to be offered to what the state defines as unduplicated pupils during school breaks (fall, winter, spring, summer). In SBSBD, this equates to approximately 500 students who would qualify. It is important to note that funding is allocated for this specific subset of students.

**10. Has Solana Ranch benefited from the Measure JJ bond passed in 2016?**

A. There was an existing agreement between the school district and the land developer Pardee Homes that precluded the District from including two neighborhoods in the bond initiative. The development agreements dated back to 1998 and 2004 and contain language that limited certain elections and tax measures until 10 years after the last building permit had been issued. In 2016 building permits were still being issued; therefore, Pacific Highlands Ranch (PHR) was not included in the School Facilities Improvement District (SFID 2016-1) which was created for all other district neighborhoods. Since both communities in PHR are already included in community facilities districts (CFDs), in which special taxes are placed on homeowners' property tax bills to fund schools and improvements, PHR residents did not have the option to vote on the bond measure. The projects financed by Measure JJ are for those schools identified within SFID 2016-1

**11. Did the Board decide to maintain underpopulated schools in neighborhoods with low student generation which resulted in the loss of \$20m in state matching funds and the cancellation of a second Highlands Ranch elementary school?**

A: In accordance with state law, an elementary school district's eligibility for state funding is determined based on a district-wide analysis of existing and projected future students, and available classroom capacity. In addition, a school district must provide matching funds equal to 50% of the costs of new school facilities. It was during the 2018-2019 school year, that the District was considering whether to proceed with an additional school in Pacific Highlands Ranch. Another contributing factor was that the District was and remains declining in enrollment. During this same time period, the state was placing school districts on a "wait list" to receive facilities funding. As result, the Board of Education determined that it would be more fiscally responsible to use available District funding to house students in existing schools with available capacity, than to construct a new school during a period of declining enrollment.