



VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Dr. César Morales, County Superintendent of Schools

This letter is delivered via email.

February 8, 2023

Dr. Rebecca Chandler, Governing Board President
rhandler@ojaiusd.org

Ms. Shelly Griffen, Governing Board Vice President
sgriffen@ojaiusd.org

Mr. Atticus Reyes, Governing Board Clerk
atticus.reyes@ojaiusd.org

Mr. Phil Moncharsh, Governing Board Trustee
phil.moncharsh@ojaiusd.org

Dr. Jim Halverson, Governing Board Trustee
jim.halverson@ojaiusd.org

Dear Governing Board Trustees:

The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) has reviewed the attached letter written by Dr. Rebecca Chandler, Board President, regarding the reasons for the 2021-22 negative unrestricted ending fund balance and the steps taken to ensure the negative balance will not occur at the end of 2022-23. While this letter was intended to be shared with us, it was not received with the emailed Board reductions list on Friday, January 20, 2023. Therefore, it's receipt was not acknowledged in our previous letter on January 27, 2023. We appreciate Dr. Morse submitting the letter to us on Friday, February 3, 2023, satisfying Education Code Section 42127.5:

***42127.5.** The governing board of any school district that reported a negative unrestricted fund balance or a negative cash balance in the annual report required by Section 42127 or in the audited annual financial statements required by Section 41020 shall include with the budget submitted in accordance with Section 42127 and the certifications required by Section 35015 a statement that identifies the reasons for the negative unrestricted fund balance or negative cash balance and the steps that have been taken to ensure that the negative balance will not occur at the end of the current fiscal year.*

We acknowledge and understand the Board and District staff are working diligently to identify and take action on more reductions to align expenditures with revenue, restore reserves, and ensure a balanced budget in 2023-24.

Thank you for placing a recurring agenda item for the Fiscal Advisor to provide an update and be available to answer questions and support the Board and District on my behalf, at the board meetings.

If there are any questions regarding this letter or if our office can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Misty Key, Deputy Superintendent of Fiscal and Administrative Services at mkey@vcoe.org or (805) 383-1905, or Danni Brook, Executive Director of School Business and Advisory Services at dbrook@vcoe.org or (805) 383-1981.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "César Morales". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "M".

Dr. César Morales
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

cc: District Superintendent



Ojai Unified School District

414 East Ojai Avenue Ojai, California 93024
(805) 640-4300 • www.ojaiusd.org

Dear Dr. Morales,

The Ojai Unified School District Board of Trustees is aware of the negative unrestricted fund balance after the unaudited actual report for 2021/22. We believe this balance was a result of three things:

- 1) COVID expenditures were incorrectly coded to the general fund, rather than the correct COVID resource
- 2) An overspending in Special Education of \$638,384, requiring a general fund contribution beyond what was identified in the budget
- 3) An overspending in utilities of \$84,970

The minimum reserves have been restored in 2022/23. The Board has taken the following steps to ensure that this does not occur again:

- Directed staff to perform monthly account analysis to track the funds expended versus the budget amount adopted by the Board.
- Approved the Registered Behavior Therapist job description so that Ojai Unified can hire their own staff in order to reduce the reliance on outside agency staff who cost 3-4 times the amount. To date, we have reduced from a high of 11 outside RBTs last year to 3 at this time, with continued effort to recruit internal staff.
- Directed staff to perform an analysis of utility usage.

Additionally, please find our attached Board-approved plan for our planned cuts both in the current year and subsequent years.

We will continue to collaborate and work closely with VCOE as we strengthen our financial condition and ensure the focus of the District and community remains on the students and the wonderful achievements happening at the Ojai schools. In that regard, we welcome all help that VCOE can provide.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rebecca Chandler, Board President

Administration

Dr. Tiffany Morse, Superintendent

Dr. Sherrill Knox, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services

Board Members

Dr. Rebecca Chandler, President, Trustee Area 2

Shelly Griffen, Vice-President, Trustee Area 4

Atticus Reyes, Clerk, Trustee Area 3

Phil Moncharsh, Trustee Area 1

Dr. Jim Halverson, Trustee Area 5