



School news

from the Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Zaca Preschool to move forward with help of community partnership

As a result of a partnership among staff members, parents, and political and community leaders, the Zaca Preschool Program in Buellton will be able to move forward and continue to serve children and families.

The future of the program, which began 20 years ago under the umbrella of the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO), became uncertain when changes to the funding model for education made it impossible for the SBCEO to sustain the program financially.

SBCEO put in motion a series of steps to help ensure that this high quality, model preschool program could continue. The program has long enjoyed enthusiastic support of the parents of all the children involved, and the annual waiting list demonstrated its desirability and value to the families and the community.

As part of the efforts to ensure sustainability, SBCEO appointed Dr. Florene Bednersh, who established the Zaca Preschool Program two decades earlier, to identify ways to move forward. She and Shelly Grand, director of the Zaca program, are leading the transition with a partnership that has emerged among parents, staff members, and Buellton City staff and community members.

A 501c3 will be created, and staff members and the director will stay with the program. Parents and City Council members have also indicated a willingness to take part in potential fund-raising efforts.

“With all these stakeholders working together in partnership for a common purpose, it is clear that the outlook is bright,” said County Superintendent Bill Cirone. “We are particularly proud and impressed by the parents involved, and their level of enthusiasm and caring,” he said, adding that several families moved to the proximity just so their children could attend this model, full-inclusion program.

“We recognize that a preschool program of this high caliber is a valuable asset to the children and families involved, and also to the elementary school the program feeds, as evidenced by the praise of kindergarten teachers for the preparation and abilities of the students who arrive from Zaca,” he added.

SBCEO is working to make sure that everything is in place by the next school year. If the process takes more time than anticipated, SBCEO will continue to provide support throughout the transition period until everything is finalized.

For further information, please contact Dr. Florene Bednersh at (805) 964-4710 ext. 4480.

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