

# Water rationing — if it comes, do it right: Thomas Elias

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## Centinela Valley district has made great strides with Superintendent Jose Fernandez: Guest commentary



Centinela Valley Union High School District has made remarkable strides in the six years that Jose Fernandez has been superintendent, and we feel the current focus on his compensation fails to do justice to the great work accomplished during his tenure.

It should be pointed out that the superintendent's compensation package was vetted by the school district's attorneys, submitted for review to the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and made public and approved at a properly noticed public meeting. The process was transparent.

Regrettably, concerns about the superintendent's compensation package have distracted from the district's core mission of educating our children.

As elected trustees of this district, we are committed to the best interests of the students and have seen first-hand the changes to students' lives resulting from the policies and commitments we have made under Mr. Fernandez's leadership and are gratified by this success:

- In 2008, the L.A. County Office of Education appointed a financial overseer to help us avoid insolvency and takeover by the state of California. In 2009 LACOE oversight ended, and subsequently the district has had positive budgets for five years in a row.

This is a period during which the financial situation of many other districts statewide was deteriorating because of tough economic times.

- Public confidence in our schools is reflected in the passage of two bond issues and a parcel tax, allowing Centinela Valley Union High School District to begin reconstruction of all three of our aging comprehensive school sites.

Already, this construction program has changed the face of the district and provided students with state-of-the-art facilities.

Construction of the Centinela Valley Center for the Arts — stalled for a half-dozen years — was resumed and completed under the superintendent's watch and is now not only a community

treasure but also a revenue-generator; the 44-classroom complex at Leuzinger was built in record time and praised as a model by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson; and recently the completion of the Hawthorne Digital Media Center demonstrated the district's strong commitment to providing students with 21st-century educational resources.

- By many measurable indicators our students are moving up.

The percentage of students meeting federal proficiency standards since 2008 has increased by 45 percent in math and by 37 percent in English.

Our students' pass rates on the California High School Exit Exam have shown steady improvement.

Graduation rates have increased from 79.7 percent in 2009-10 to 88.6 percent in 2011-12.

- Average daily attendance has increased from 88 percent in 2007-08 to 92 percent in 2012-13.

That's a further sign that our increasingly stimulating educational offerings are having a positive effect.

- One-sixth the number of students have been expelled for disciplinary reasons in 2012-13 compared to 2008-09 (17 vs. 109). This is a strong indicator that our campuses are viewed as safe havens that offer our students a more engaging learning environment.
- Since 2009, we have opened five small learning communities (academies) with two additional academies to open in the 2014-2015 school year, allowing the students to focus on curriculum based on their interests.

We are also the first in the South Bay to open an International Baccalaureate program at Hawthorne High School.

We are proud of our district's accomplishments.

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