



COMMENTARY

Time for a radical revolution in education

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Measure V is a golden opportunity for voters to weigh in on the current state of education.

With a 54 percent dropout rate and consistently low rankings on standardized tests, the current educational system is a dysfunctional and costly disservice to students, parents, future employers and to taxpayers.

We seek here not to point fingers. But the unmistakable truth is that what we are doing in education is not working and we need to demand radical change now.

So we believe it is irresponsible to support Measure V, the Victor Valley Union High School District's request for a \$500 million loan to further a system of government schools that we already know does not work.

Then what is the answer?

While we continue to be strong advocates for a school voucher system, we see no sign that vouchers will come to California anytime soon. In the meantime, we urge the public to, first, reject Measure V. Then we all must pressure the Victor Valley Union High School District leadership to create a series of new charter schools, including a new charter high school for Adelanto.

But funding for new schools — especially the district's massive request for \$500 million — should focus on expanding the charter school models. The district has already been successful with its Excelsior Education Center charter school. **And the nationally recognized Lewis Center in Apple Valley is a shining example of the very best in American education.**

The Lewis Center is a public school, but because it is also a charter school, it is free from a lot of the state's educational rules and regulations. While it must meet state standards, curricula are not dictated by Sacramento. So innovation is the norm.

Voters, we believe, would be more willing to support a bond measure if they were confident they would be getting a good value and that local students would at least have a

shot at a first-rate education. We are convinced that a network of public charter schools will work for the Victor Valley Union High School District students.

The Lewis Center has built a national reputation, with standardized test scores to match.

The keys are simple: Throwing out traditional ideas about how students learn, creating innovation through public/private partnerships, slicing through government bureaucracy and raising expectations for both students and parents alike.

For those who mistakenly think the Lewis Center is successful only because of a select, elite student body, the school draws students randomly by lottery.

Some may worry that the Lewis Center model might not work for underprivileged students. Again, that's false. Because of the Lewis Center's successes, founder Rick Piercy has been asked to replicate the school in a tough, impoverished area surrounding the former Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino.

And the Lewis Center does it all with less funding than traditional public schools.

So let's give it a try here.

If you think the current school system is working properly to the benefit of students, taxpayers and the community as a whole, then you'll get \$500 million more of the same with Measure V, which would add \$60 per year in property tax on a \$200,000 home.

If you want something better for our kids, then vote no on Measure V — and demand that your elected school boards get creative and offer a charter school plan that will serve us all well.

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