

Byron Union School District



December 8, 2016

14301 Byron Highway Byron, CA 94514
(925) 809-7500 FAX: (925) 634-9421
Debbie Gold, Ed.D., Superintendent

Michael Simmons, Foreperson
Contra Costa Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
PO BOX 431
Martinez, CA 94553

Re: Responses to 2015-16 Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report # 1615, "Truancy and Chronic Absence in Contra Costa County Schools"

Dear Foreperson Simmons,

In accordance with Section 933.05a of the California Government Code, the Byron Union School District has prepared this written response to findings of Grand Jury Report #1615, "Truancy and Chronic Absence in Contra Costa County Schools"

FINDINGS

Finding #3

The SART and the SARB programs help maintain and improve attendance rates, thereby increasing ADA funding for each school in the district and in the county.

Response to Finding #3

The respondent agrees with this.

Finding #4

Not all county school districts comply with the requirement in California Education Code section 15497 that each district collect, track and report its chronically absent rates in an annual LCAP.

Response to Finding #4

We do not know about other school districts. The Byron Union School District adheres to this requirement.

Finding #6

To identify students with attendance issues and quickly address these issues, the school district needs to complete accurate data about attendance and a well-developed support infrastructure.

Finding #6

Agreed

Finding #7

The school district has its own software system for collecting attendance information.

Response to Finding #7

Agreed. Byron Union uses Illuminate to track attendance and to store information.

Finding #8



Without a centralized attendance system or compatible software among school districts, it is challenging to get a complete picture of a student's attendance profile and patterns over multiple years or across districts.

Response to Finding #8

The district agrees this could be difficult for students who change districts but not for students who remain in the district.

Finding #9

Some school districts have little communication with other school districts and the COE about best practices, common achievement goals, and the best data systems regarding attendance.

Response to Finding #9

While some districts may have little communication with other school districts, Byron Union School District works closely with nearby Districts in East CCC and with the COE as well as attending workshops for the student identification system. Principals work closely on attendance incentives.

Finding #10

The California Attorney General Kamala Harris 2015 report indicates over 80% of chronically absent students in Kindergarten and 1st grade are unable to read at grade level by 3rd grade. These students are 4 times more likely to drop out than children who can read at grade level.

Response to Finding #10

Agreed.

Finding #13

Chronically absent truancy students who do not get back on track by age 18 are more likely to drop out.

Response to Finding #13

Agreed

Finding #14

Parent and Truancy Courts offer attendance support and are one the last opportunities to alter a student's attendance behavior.

Response to Finding #14

Agreed.

Finding #15

Attendance improvement programs used by the County's Juvenile Courts, such as the Lincoln Child Center, ankle monitors, drug and mental health counselors and tutoring classes lack long term funding.

Response to Finding #15

We cannot respond because we are not familiar with the County's funding model.

Finding #16

The school districts that have Truancy and Resource Officers who connect directly with students help chronically absent or truant students back on track.

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Response to Finding #16

Byron Union SD doesn't have a truancy officer so we cannot respond to this however our principals offer attendance incentives and work closely with teachers and students for attendance.

Recommendations #6

All school districts should consider participating in attendance programs to benefit students.

Response to Recommendations #6

Byron Union School District participates in the Every Day Counts Program through the CCCOE.

Recommendation #9

School district should raise parent awareness concerning how to prevent a student's school absence from affecting ADA funding.

Response to Recommendation #9

The district communicates this to all families and to the students. The district works closely with families who need extra support.

Recommendation #12

Each school district should consider designation staff to collect, track, and analyze attendance data in order to follow up on students that appear at risk, and identifying funds to do so.

Response to Recommendation #12

The district has staff (school counselors, vice principal, director of educational services) and procedures in place to report and track attendance data.

Recommendation #14

The school district should consider incentivizing schools to seek increased ADA funding by means such as splitting additional ADA money between district and the school for achieving increased ADA funding.

Response to Recommendation #14

This is something that Byron Union will consider and discuss.

Thank you for your work.

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Debbie Gold, Ed.D., Superintendent

Sincerely,

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