



**Orinda Union School District**  
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October 24, 2016

Civil Grand Jury, Foreperson  
725 Court Street  
Martinez, CA 94553-0091  
[epant@contraconsta.courts.ca.gov](mailto:epant@contraconsta.courts.ca.gov)

**RE: Report 1615/Tuancy and Chronic Absence in Contra Costa County Schools**

Dear Mr. Simmons:

Following is Orinda Union School District's (OUSD's) response to the Grand Jury's findings contained in the report referenced above and dated June 2, 2016.

- 1) **The SART and SARB programs help maintain and improve attendance rates, thereby increasing ADA funding for each school in the district and in the COE.**

OUSD agrees with the finding.

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

OUSD agrees with the finding.

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

OUSD agrees with the finding.

- 4) **The California Attorney General, Kamala Harris 2015 report, "In-School and on Track", indicates that over 80 percent of chronically absent students in kindergarten and 1st grade are unable to read at grade level by 3rd grade. These students are four times more likely to drop out than children who can read at grade level.**

OUSD agrees with the finding.

- 5) **Chronically absent or truant students, who do not get back on track before age 18, are more likely to drop out of high school before graduation.**

OUSD agrees with the finding.

- 6) The school districts that have Truancy or Resource Officers who connect directly with students, help get chronically absent or truant students back on track.**

OUSD agrees with the finding.

Following is OUSD's response to the Grand Jury's recommendations contained in the Grand Jury report:

- 1) All school districts should consider participating in the Attendance Works program.**

The recommendation requires further analysis. OUSD is in the process of formalizing its SARB/SART process. We are consulting with neighboring districts to help determine the most appropriate strategies for tracking and prevention. As part of this process, Attendance Works will be considered for possible implementation. A recommendation for improving district practice will be presented to the OUSD Governing Board by or before June 2017.

- 2) School districts should raise parent awareness concerning how to prevent a student's school absence from affecting ADA funding or the student's truancy rate.**

The recommendation has been implemented. Although there is no formal attendance program in place in our district, there is regular communication between the site principals and parents, emphasizing the importance of school attendance. Communication of this message appears in school newsletters, and during face-to-face communication between staff and parents. A more robust communication effort is expected as part of improving our policies and procedures in this area.

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

The recommendation has been implemented. Due to the advantage of being a small district, we are able to get to know the students and their families on a very individual basis. The school secretary and clerk at each of our five schools are responsible for tracking daily attendance data. In addition, if students have 504 Plans or IEPs, the school counselors and/or IEP case managers play an active role in tracking attendance and investigating the reasons for absenteeism. In some cases, students and families are provided with intensive individualized services to promote better school attendance.

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

The recommendation requires further analysis. Since the identification and reporting of truancy seems to be inconsistent across OUSD schools, it is unknown at this time whether the district could benefit from such an incentive. Once consistent reporting protocols are established, OUSD will have a better idea of the impact to ADA funding due to truancy.

The information contained herein will be discussed during a meeting of the Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees on November 14, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Seaton, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools