



Acalanes Union High School District

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Campolindo High School
Moraga

Las Lomas High School
Walnut Creek

Miramonte High School
Orinda

Date: September 1, 2016

Michael Simmons, Foreperson
Contra Costa Grand Jury
725 Court Street
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

From: Amy McNamara, Associate Superintendent, AUHSD

cc: Dr. John Nickerson, Superintendent

Re: Response to Report No.1615 - Truancy and Chronic Absence in Contra Costa County Schools.

On June 18, AUSHD received a copy of the Grand Jury Report No.1615, "Truancy and Chronic Absence in Contra Costa County Schools." The AUHSD is required to respond to the findings and recommendations contained within the Grand Jury Report No. 1516 on or before September 30, 2016. This document contains the AUHSD response. If there are any questions, please contact me.

CCC Grand Jury Findings and AUHSD Responses:

1. Finding: The SART and SARB programs help maintain and improve attendance rates, thereby increasing ADA funding for each school in the district and the COE. Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

2. Finding: Not all County Districts comply with the requirement found in California Education Code 15497 that each district collect, track and report its chronically absence rates in an annual LCAP. Response: The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. Other districts may not annual collect, track and report attendance rates, but AUHSD does report these rates in its LCAP and has annual goals to improve attendance.

3. Finding: 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. Response: The respondent agrees with the finding.

4. **Finding:** Some districts have little communication with other school districts and the COE about best practices, common achievement goals and best data systems regarding attendance. **Response:** The AUHSD partially disagrees with the finding. The AUHSD has a robust SARB program and shares information regularly with other districts, particularly its partner districts. Early intervention in 9th grade is critical, and partner districts share information on target students.
5. **Finding:** 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. **Response:** the respondent agrees with the finding.
6. **Finding:** Parent and Truancy courts offer attendance support and are one of the last opportunities to alter a student's attendance behavior. **Response:** The respondent agrees with the finding.
7. **Finding:** 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:** The respondent agrees with the finding.
8. **Finding:** The school districts that have Truancy or Resource Officers who connect directly with students help get chronically absent or truant students back on track. **Response:** The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. While School Resource Officers or Truancy officers provide a resource to schools, smaller schools such as those in the AUHSD do not have such staff. In those schools administrators, counselors and school staff are able to intervene with truancy issues with success.

CCC Grand Jury Recommendations and AUHSD Responses:

1. **Recommendation:** All districts should consider participating in the Attendance Works Program. **Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented as it is not needed at this time. The AUHSD uses the Aeries information system to track attendance and identify chronically absent students, who are notified immediately. At this time it is not warranted.
2. **Recommendation:** School districts should raise awareness concerning how to prevent a student's school absence from affecting ADA funding or the student's truancy rate. **Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. In 2017-18, the AUHSD is doing parent outreach nights and offering a parenting class for parents who are struggling with their students, some of whom have attendance issues. The importance of positive, regular attendance will be highlighted at these meetings.
3. **Recommendation:** 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. **Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. Every site has an attendance assistant, who tracks attendance, follows up with parents. Associate principals monitor both absences and tardiness for students, and the SART/SARB process is diligently followed.

4. Recommendation: 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. Response: This recommendation will not be implemented. AUHSD has a 95% attendance rate, with goals for increasing that by a percentage next year. These are part of the LCAP goals and schools are already working on this without the need for extra incentives.