



West Contra Costa Unified School District

Special Education Department

2465 Dolan Way, San Pablo, CA 94806

Phone: 510-307-4630 **Fax:** 510-724-8829

Steve Collins
SELPA Director

Matthew Duffy
Superintendent

September 7, 2016

John T. Laettner
Judge of the Superior Court
Contra Costa County
725 Court Street
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Dear Honorable Judge Laettner,

The West Contra Costa Unified School District (District) is in receipt of Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report No. 1615, "Truancy and Chronic Absence in Contra Costa County Schools" (Report).

Before we begin the statutorily required responses, we would like to take this opportunity to correct an error found on Page 4 in the Grand Jury Report. The Grand Jury states the attendance rate in the Richmond School District (sic) has an attendance rate of 62 percent. The actual attendance rate in the West Contra Costa Unified School District is about 94 percent for the 2015-16 school year, with no traditional school in Richmond below 85 percent attendance. We appreciate this opportunity to correct this data.

In addition, you should be aware that the District has several programs and services in place to combat chronic absenteeism, including much of the work of our Full Services Community Schools. Our community schools concept addresses the needs of the whole child and his or her family. To that end, the majority of our schools have access to medical and dental clinics, mental health counseling services, violence and bullying prevention efforts, and parent education programs. We have found that by offering these services to our students and their families, we positively impact the attendance rate, but also increase engagement with our neighborhood schools.

The Grand Jury has required the District to respond to Findings 3-4, 6-10, and 13-18.

In accordance with California Penal Code §933.05(a), the District's response to each of the above Findings is as follows:

F3. The District agrees with the Finding.

F4. The District neither agrees nor disagrees with the Finding. The District has no basis on which to determine other school district's compliance with the requirements of California Education Code section 15497. The West Contra Costa Unified School District collects, tracks and reports its chronically absent rates in its annual Local Control Accountability Plan.

F6. The District agrees with the Finding.

F7. The District agrees with the Finding.

F8. The District agrees with the Finding.

F9. The District neither agrees nor disagrees with the Finding. The District has no basis on which to determine other school district's communication with other school districts and the county office of education about best practices, common achievement goals, and best data systems regarding attendance.

F10. The District agrees with the Finding.

F13. The District agrees with the Finding.

F14. The District agrees with the Finding.

F15. The District neither agrees nor disagrees with the Finding. The District has no basis on which to determine the status of funding for attendance improvement programs used by the County's Juvenile Courts.

F16. The District agrees with the Finding.

F17. The District agrees with the Finding.

F18. The District disagrees with the Finding. District staff processes chronically absent students through the Parent or Truancy Court in Martinez.

In addition, the Grand Jury has required the District to respond to Recommendations 6, 9, 12 and 14.

In accordance with California Penal Code §933.05(b), the District's response to each of the above Recommendations is as follows:

R6. The Recommendation has been implemented. District staff participates in the Attendance Works program. The District also uses A2A as its attendance monitoring and prevention program.

R9. The Recommendation has been partially implemented. The District's anti-truancy efforts raise parent awareness as to the effects of student truancy. The District will analyze whether a larger campaign regarding the impact of student truancy on ADA funding would be effective. When student attendance is linked to funding, the message can be misinterpreted as a focus on raising revenue rather than student achievement and well-being.

R12. The Recommendation has been implemented. The District has staff designated 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.

R14. The Recommendation requires further analysis. Incentivizing schools to seek increased ADA funding by means such as splitting additional ADA money between the District and the school for achieving increased ADA funding is a strategy worth considering after careful review.

Respectfully submitted,



Steve Collins
Director, Special Education/Pupil Services

cc: Michael Simmons, Grand Jury Foreperson
Matthew Duffy, Superintendent
epant@contracosta.courts.ca.gov