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# Grass Valley School District

Eric Fredrickson  
Superintendent

August 8, 2017

Honorable Thomas M. Anderson, Presiding Judge  
Nevada County Superior Court  
210 Church Street  
Nevada City, CA 95959

**Re: Grass Valley School District, Response to Nevada County 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report, "Cooperation and Coordination among the School Districts in Nevada County "Can We Talk?"**

Honorable Judge Anderson:

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Board of Education of the Grass Valley School District hereby submits its formal response to the 2016-2017 Nevada County Grand Jury Report entitled, "Cooperation and Coordination among the School Districts in Nevada County "Can We Talk?"

## OVERVIEW OF BOARD'S RESPONSE

The Board and the District consider the effectiveness of the District's certificated staff (Teachers, Counselors, Administrators, Coordinators, and Directors) to be of paramount importance in providing exemplary educational experiences for the District's Transitional Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grades students, as we prepare these students to be successful in high school, college and/or career. Consequently, the Board and District have very carefully and thoroughly considered each and every one of the Grand Jury's factual contentions, findings and recommendations contained in the above-referenced report in order to determine if the Grass Valley School District needs to create or modify its existing practices relating to teacher training, collaboration, and articulation, to help ensure that our students are proficient in the Common Core State Standards and will be prepared for high school, college and/or career.

Based on the Board's review of all available evidence relevant to the items identified in the Grand Jury's report, the Board has determined to disagree with the findings identified in the Grand Jury's report regarding the alleged "failure" of the Grass Valley School District to identify teacher leaders and coordinate teacher collaboration and articulation, and the alleged "apparent lack of" Professional Learning Communities in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics in the Grass Valley School District, and the alleged "lack of" communication and collaboration between the two comprehensive high schools and the Grass Valley School District concerning expectations for entering ninth graders.

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION'S RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY'S FINDINGS**

### **Finding 1:**

The failure of the school districts within the county to identify teacher leaders and coordinate teacher collaboration and articulation negatively impacts student opportunity.

### **Response to Finding 1:**

The Board respectfully wholly disagrees with this finding. No credible evidence exists to substantiate this finding.

The Grass Valley School District has established a very strong and effective teacher collaboration model. Article 3 of the Agreement between the Grass Valley School District and the Grass Valley Teachers Association, clearly outlines the efforts of the district to provide an effective and intentional time to collaborate. Early release collaboration days are provided for teachers every Wednesday. This dedicated time for teachers to work together is outlined in the agreement. It also clearly outlines that collaboration teams will examine and analyze data from district-wide benchmark assessments and grade level assessments and develop a plan for re-teaching, remediation or extension. It further states that collaboration will follow the best practices of Professional Learning Communities. The language also clarifies that a team of teachers will work with district administration to develop a collaboration calendar framework and Professional Development schedule for each trimester, as needed. The district has fully implemented the language in this agreement.

Teacher curriculum leaders have been identified at each school site, and these leaders meet on a regular basis with teacher leaders from the other school sites in the district. The plans and strategies developed during these meetings are articulated to the other teachers in the district during the Wednesday collaboration days.

The effectiveness of these collaboration and professional learning communities has been clearly demonstrated in the California Dashboard Report, which shows that students in the Grass Valley School District have increased in student proficiency on both the English Language Arts and Mathematics state assessments.

Based on all the foregoing, the Board wholly disagrees with the Grand Jury's finding that the failure of the school districts within the county to identify teacher leaders and coordinate teacher collaboration and articulation negatively impacts student opportunity.

### **Finding 2:**

There is an apparent lack of Professional Learning Communities in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics in the nine school districts in the County.

### **Response to Finding 2:**

The Board respectfully wholly disagrees with this finding. No credible evidence exists to substantiate this finding.

With respect to the Board's concerns regarding the information it received from the Grand Jury in support of this conclusion, please refer to the explanation provided under "Response to Finding 1" above. The Board harbors identical concerns with respect to the support provided by the Grand Jury for its Finding 2. The Grass Valley School District has implemented and supported Professional Learning Communities in all of the district's school sites.

Based on all the foregoing, the Board wholly disagrees with the Grand Jury's finding that there is an apparent lack of Professional Learning Communities in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics in the nine school districts in the County. As set forth above, no credible evidence exists to support the Grand Jury's conclusion, as it pertains to the Grass Valley School District.

**Finding 4:**

There is a lack of communication and collaboration between the two comprehensive high schools and their feeder elementary districts concerning expectations for entering ninth graders.

**Response to Finding 4:**

The Board respectfully partially disagrees. There is limited evidence to substantiate this finding.

Each month the superintendents of the nine school districts, and the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, meet to collaborate and discuss issues relating to educational programs in their districts. The superintendent of the Nevada Joint Union High School District regularly shares information regarding the high school programs and discusses articulation between the feeder programs. Each year in the fall, the high school facilitates a day for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to visit the Nevada Union High School campus and provides an opportunity for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders to visit the classrooms, talk to teachers, and learn about the academic and extracurricular programs at the high school. In February of each year, counselors from the high school visit Lyman Gilmore Middle School and provide information to students and parents regarding the Nevada Union High School programs and assist the families in enrolling in the high school. The counselors also give the Lyman Gilmore teachers opportunity to provide recommendations for the placement of their students in the mathematics, science, and language arts courses. The Nevada Union Joint Union High School District also coordinates an annual math placement test to help place incoming freshmen students in the most appropriate mathematics course. The principal from Lyman Gilmore Middle School and the principal from Nevada Joint Union High School engage in regular conversations regarding programs and curriculum at the two school sites.

Each year, prior to the start of a new school year, the high school conducts 8<sup>th</sup> grade non-grad conferences to help enroll these students at the high school. In attendance at these meetings are the site administrators and counselors from both Lyman Gilmore and Nevada Union. These conferences have been very effective in enrolling these students in the proper courses, and provide both academic and social emotional support for these at-risk youth.

Although the Board disagrees with the majority of this finding, it does acknowledge that it would be beneficial to increase the level and frequency of communication and articulation between the Grass Valley School District and the Nevada Joint Union High School District.

Based on all the foregoing, the Board partially disagrees with the Grand Jury's finding that there is a lack of communication and collaboration between the two comprehensive high schools and their feeder elementary districts concerning expectations for entering ninth graders. There is limited evidence to support the conclusion.

## **BOARD'S RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1:**

The superintendents from each district should come together and set communication and collaboration guidelines for teachers including the coordination of time for this communication and collaboration. (F1 and F4)

### **Response to Recommendation 1:**

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Board believes that the level of communication and collaboration that occurs between the teachers in the Grass Valley School District is adequate and effective, and that there are appropriate professional development and articulation opportunities provided by the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools for the district's teachers to collaborate with their peers from other districts.

Nevertheless, the board will direct the District Superintendent to communicate with the other district superintendents to determine if there is a need to increase communication and collaboration between the teachers from other school districts.

### **Recommendation 2:**

The individual school districts should select teachers to act as leaders in the process of forming Professional Learning Communities in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. (F1 and F2)

### **Response to Recommendation 2:**

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Board believes that the Grass Valley School District has selected teacher leaders that facilitate Professional Learning Communities in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. For the reasons given in the Board's Response to Finding 2 above, the Board does not believe that it is necessary or appropriate to implement the above recommendation.

### **Recommendation 4:**

These leaders should establish working relationships with their peers allowing them to freely share their ideas, plans, and the results of their instruction. F1, F2, and F4)

**Response to Recommendation 4:**

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Board believes that the teacher leaders in the Grass Valley School District have ample opportunities to establish working relationships with their peers, as our district has a student enrollment that supports the need for numerous teachers at each grade level, and these leaders have time to collaborate on a regular bases with like peers. Further, as the Board responded in Recommendation 1, teacher leaders from the Grass Valley School District have opportunities to establish working relationships with their peers from other school sites during professional development and articulation meetings sponsored by the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools.

Nevertheless, the board will direct the District Superintendent to communicate with the other district superintendents and the Nevada County Superintendent of School to determine if there is a need to increase opportunities for teacher leaders to share ideas, plans, and results of their instruction.

**Recommendation 5:**

The Nevada Joint Union High School District should develop a process in collaboration with the elementary districts to more clearly identify the expectations for entering ninth graders.

**Response to Recommendation 5:**

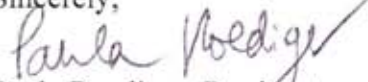
This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. As is discussed in the Board's Response to Finding 4 above, the Nevada Joint Union High School District has developed an articulation process for incoming ninth grade students and the Grass Valley School District is very aware of the expectations for entering ninth grade students.

Nevertheless, the board will direct the District Superintendent to communicate with the Nevada Joint Union High School superintendent and the other elementary school district superintendents to determine if there is a need to more clearly identify the expectations for the entering ninth grade students.

**CONCLUSION**

The Board will implement the Grand Jury's recommendations to the extent and in the manner set forth above.

Sincerely,



Paula Roediger, President  
Board of Education  
Grass Valley School District

cc: Members of the GVSD Board of Education  
Eric Fredrickson, GVSD Superintendent  
Grass Valley School District  
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