



PENN VALLEY UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Torie F. England, Ed.D. - Superintendent

Received
8/23/17
TFA

August 1, 2017

Honorable Thomas M. Anderson, Presiding Judge
Nevada County Superior Court
210 Church Street
Nevada City, CA 95945

Re: Penn Valley Union Elementary 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 933.5, the Board of Education of
the Penn Valley Union Elementary School District (PVUESD) herby 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?"*

BOARD OF EDUCATION'S RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY 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:

Disagree wholly as to PVUESD.

At PVUESD, teacher collaboration occurs regularly in many forms. Staff meetings
are held twice a month at each site where the site principal serves as the teacher
leader for all staff who attend. Once a month, while school is in session, we have

District Committee Meetings where teachers work with site and District administration to create a focus for the year to support their individual team topics. Teachers throughout the District come together at one site to collaborate. Topics such as curriculum adoption, Response To Intervention, STEAM, Common Core Report Card creation, Academic Assessments, and many more have been part of our ongoing discussions and district-wide collaboration time. Also, each Wednesday is an early dismissal for students which allows 90 minutes for formal and informal collaboration and articulation. This release time is consistent across the district making it possible for staff to meet as a site team, as well as teachers across the district to regularly meet as grade level teams. As a school district that continues to decline in enrollment with fewer and fewer teachers, we feel we do an exceptional job working together as a highly functioning, communicative team.

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:

Disagree wholly as to PVUESD.

There is no lack of Professional Learning Communities taking place in the PVUESD. As mentioned in F1, collaboration time is created weekly for all staff. For District Committees, there is a designated teacher leader for each team. They include teachers across grade levels and sites on each team ensuring that each topic has adequate representation for future implementation. Board updates from each District Committee are provided twice throughout the year in order to continue to articulate overall District goals, needs, and progress to Board Members and the overall community. District Committee Meetings for the 2017-2018 school year are scheduled for the third Wednesday unless there is a conflict. The current schedule is as follows: Sept. 20, Oct 25, Nov 15, Dec 20, Jan 17, Feb 21, Mar 21, Apr 19, May 16, and June 6. Topics for the 2017-2018 school year are Curriculum Adoption (Science), Response To Intervention/MTSS, Mind-Up and Technology.

Finding 4:

There is 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:

Disagree wholly as to PVUESD and Nevada Union High School District.

Each year our 8th grade students travel to Nevada Union High School campus and take a tour of the facilities. They receive an overview of academic and extra-

curricular programs offered in order to choose their desired classes for the fall. After the visit, counselors from the high school visit our campuses to answer student and parent questions in order to assist in final course selections. We receive updates on our former students that demonstrates how prepared our students are upon entering high school. For students leaving our sites that have special needs or general academic or social struggles, a meeting including our site administration, the high school site administration, parents and student is completed prior to the end of the 8th grade year in order to properly communicate student needs for their first semester at high school. Our students have been extremely successful entering high school telling us that high school expectations are clear prior to students starting their first day at NU.

BOARD OF EDUCATION'S RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY 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.

Response to Recommendation 1:

This recommendation is currently being implemented.

Based on district sizes and needs, communication and collaboration guidelines may vary. The Superintendents of districts in the county meet monthly. Part of our monthly discussion is to see where cross collaboration among teachers at similar grade levels may be valuable. There have been combined collaboration meetings in the areas of Math and ELA for textbook adoptions and best teaching practices. The County Office of Education does an excellent job of providing a county-wide staff development day each September for all districts wanting to attend. PVUESD has attended each time this opportunity has been presented.

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.

Response to Recommendation 2:

This recommendation is currently being implemented.

Please see response to F2. The past two years teaching staff have participated in piloting many State approved curriculum programs for both ELA and Math. Ongoing collaboration takes places weekly in order to fully implement the programs with complete fidelity. In addition, teachers spend a great amount of time researching

assessment programs that will provide formative and summative data in order to drive daily and long-term instruction. The program selected mirrors our adopted programs which will make data analysis effective and efficient. In addition to Math and English Language Arts, PVUESD is also addressing our needs of updating New Generation Science Standards and our Social Studies curriculum over the next two years.

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.

Response to Recommendation 4:

This recommendation is already being implemented.

One of the benefits of a small rural school district is the professional and personal relationships formed among staff. Our small schools create a much easier pathway for school wide peer communication than in larger districts. Teacher leaders have the opportunity to serve on the committees that interest them most and where their expertise lie. We have been fortunate that teachers hired in our district remain for many years making it possible to coach and support new teachers each year.

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:

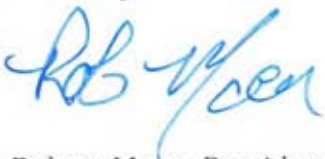
This recommendation is currently being implemented.

There have been some discussions between the high schools and feeder districts regarding ninth grade math during county-wide Principals Meetings. Nevada Union also implements a math placement test that all 8th graders take the spring of their promoting year. As discussed in F4 above, Nevada Union has developed an articulation process for incoming ninth graders and PVUESD is well aware of the expectations for entering high school. Logistics for any further collaborative efforts would need to be discussed by the superintendents.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the information provided, the District will continue to implement all programs and systems as mentioned for each finding and recommendation. PVUESD takes great pride in working collaboratively with other districts and the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools office to provide exceptional programs for all students and families we serve.

Sincerely,



Robert Moen, President
Board of Education
Penn Valley Union Elementary School District

cc: Members of the PVUESD Board of Education
Torie F. England, Ed.D., PVUESD Superintendent