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9/19/17
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Received 19 Sep 2017

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

Re: Nevada City 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?"

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Board of Education of the Nevada City 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?"

The Board and District would like to thank each member of the Grand Jury for donating their time in serving on the Grand Jury. As we all realize, the California educational system is complex and manifold. When analyzing this topic in relation to Nevada County schools, we need to understand that we are unique when compared to other California public school districts. Nevada County parents insist on many school choices for their children, and with that a unified district model is generally not desired. This reality lends itself to small, intimate districts or charters in which parents have direct input. We are fortunate in that each District is committed to providing high quality educational opportunities for students, and are actively preparing our young people for success in high school and beyond.

In consideration of the Grand Jury's report, the Board and District has examined each finding and recommendation in the spirit of improvement and growth. With that, this response will clarify areas of concern, and update the Grand Jury to additional supports that have been added since the Nevada City School District Superintendent was interviewed.

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 disagrees with this finding.

The Nevada City Elementary School District and the Nevada City Faculty Association established agreed upon monthly Early Release days to provide teachers the opportunity to come together to discuss student learning, data driven instruction, and strategies for improving their teaching. This time is structured in tandem by District Leadership and the Curriculum Assessment Leads (CALs). Curriculum Assessment Leads are teachers at each grade level that support their team with curriculum, technology and data analysis. These teacher leaders were

hired in the 2016/17 school year and funded with Educator Effectiveness monies. The CAL model is continuing in the 2017/18 school year, and we are confident the data will bear out that this model is working for our teachers.

Additionally, each grade level has time in their scheduled day/week to meet together. Furthermore, this time allows teachers the opportunity to examine and analyze data from grade level assessments and develop a plan for re-teaching, remediation or intervention. When opportunities arise, NCSOS has sent teachers to countywide trainings that are offered throughout the school year during the school day. When offered after school hours, teachers are encouraged to participate in the countywide developed classes, seminars and discussion forums. Many of our teachers have been lead teachers at the county level, providing trainings to teachers county-wide.

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 disagrees with 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 Nevada City Elementary School District has implemented and supported Professional Learning Communities in all of the district's school sites. Additionally, our educators attend seminars and certification classes, and we collaborate with them to further their degree programs.

Based on all the foregoing, the Board 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 Nevada City Elementary School District.

Finding 3:

There is failure of NCSOS to train and support teachers in the nine school districts within the County in teacher leadership and the formation of functioning Professional Learning Communities negatively impacts student opportunity.

Response to Finding 3:

The Board disagrees with this finding.

The Nevada County Superintendent of Schools office does many things to support the nine school districts in teacher leadership and Professional Learning Communities. NCSOS implemented an Instructional Coaching model to support Nevada County Educators. Currently there are six Instructional Coaches who are Nevada County Educators and offer expertise in the areas of English Language Arts, Math, Science and Technology. In addition to providing workshops and professional development, these exceptional educators are available for individual coaching, staff meetings, PLC's and grade level meetings. Additionally, the women in the positions of

Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Associate Superintendent of Educational Services are extremely supportive to the needs of each district, and are available to train as well.

Each year, school districts receive a survey from NCSOS in regards to the service that was provided to our schools by the Instructional Coaches for that school year. This is for the county to receive information to make the necessary revisions for the next school year to better serve the school districts in the county.

For the past two years and planned for the 2017-2018 school year, NCSOS provides an entire day of Professional Development for all educators in Nevada County. During this day there are multiple opportunities for teacher leaders to receive professional development and facilitate professional Development.

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. In February of each year, counselors from the high school visit Seven Hills Middle School and provide information to students and parents regarding Nevada Union programs and assist the families in enrolling in the high school. The counselors also give the Seven Hills Middle School teachers opportunity to provide recommendations for the placement of their students in the mathematics, science, and language arts courses. The Nevada Joint Union High School District also coordinates an annual math placement test to help place incoming freshmen students in the most appropriate mathematics course.

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 Seven Hills Middle School and Nevada Joint Union High School District teachers.

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 Nevada City Elementary 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 has been met by the formation of Curriculum Assessment Leads (CALs) and will continue if the data proves that the model is working in benefitting student learning and achievement. However, to bring multiple districts together as Professional Learning Communities simply isn't feasible with the existing structure. Again, we do not have a unified system that lends itself to this.

Recommendation 3:

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 3:

The Board believes that the teacher leaders in the Nevada City Elementary School District have ample opportunities to establish working relationships with their peers.

The Nevada City Elementary School District believes NCSOS has established an opportunity to have working relationships with their peers from other school sites during the annual professional development and in-service days.

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 4:

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 4:

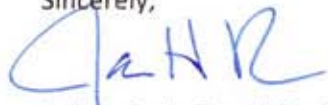
This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. As discussed earlier, Seven Hills Middle School is collaborating with Nevada Union High School and will continue to work on the communication between the two schools.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Pack', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Joshua Pack, Board President
Nevada City School District

c: Trustee Members of the Nevada City School District
Trisha Dellis, Superintendent, Nevada City School District