

Reviewed
9/11/17
JMS

Received 19 Sep 2017

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

Re: Pleasant Ridge Union 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:

I would like to thank each member of the Grand Jury for donating their time in serving on the Grand Jury and investigating the "Cooperation and Coordination among the School Districts". It must be a very difficult task as education is very complex in the state of California. As a Trustee Board we believe that the collaboration and coordination within Pleasant Ridge Union School District and Nevada County schools are adequate and give teachers and administration the opportunity to develop and adopt the appropriate services to serve our clientele. We have been informed that each Superintendent meets on a monthly basis discussing the items you have outlined in your report.

Furthermore, we are confident that PRUSD staff are very collaborative and professional when it comes to their weekly PLC time. As a Trustee Board for Pleasant Ridge Union School District, it is our duty to make sure students are prepared for High School and beyond in Pleasant Ridge Union School District.

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 Pleasant Ridge Union School District and the Pleasant Ridge Teacher's Association established an agreed upon Professional Learning Community scheduled time to meet



weekly to discuss instruction, student achievement and district wide articulation. It was developed by the Superintendent, and since then a PRUSD lead teacher has been hired by Nevada County Office of Education as an Instructional Coach. Many of our teachers have been lead teachers at the county level, providing trainings to teachers county-wide. Early release days are provided for teachers every Friday. This set aside time is for teachers to collaborate, discuss student progress and pedagogy. Furthermore, teachers will examine and analyze data from grade level assessments and develop a plan for re-teaching, remediation or intervention. When opportunities present it, PRUSD 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. Additionally, our School Site Council committees pare teachers, administrators and parents together to develop solutions as well as quarterly District Advisory meetings.

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 Pleasant Ridge Union 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 Pleasant Ridge Union School District.

Finding 3:

There is failure of NCOE 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.

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 Magnolia Intermediate School and provide information to students and parents regarding the Bear River High School programs and assist the families in enrolling in the high school. The counselors also give the Magnolia Intermediate 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 Magnolia Intermediate School and Bear River High School.

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 Pleasant Ridge Union 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 at this time, as it is not financially feasible and furthermore, must be negotiated with Pleasant Ridge Teacher's Association.

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:

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. The Board believes that the teacher leaders in the Pleasant Ridge Union School District have ample opportunities to establish working relationships with their peers.

Pleasant Ridge Union 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 or is not reasonable. As discussed earlier, Magnolia Intermediate School is collaborating with Bear River 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,



Deanne Opdahl, President
Pleasant Ridge Union School District Trustee Board of Education

cc: Trustee Members of the Pleasant Ridge Union School District
Rusty S. Clark, Superintendent
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