



Twin Ridges Elementary School District

James Berardi, Superintendent/Principal

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*Reviewed
8/23/17
Dmf*

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

Response to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations Twin Ridges Elementary School District August 15, 2017

Findings

F1 The failure of the school districts within the County to identify teacher leaders and coordinate teacher collaboration and articulation negatively impacts student opportunity.

Response: TRESA Partially Disagrees

At TRESA, teacher collaboration occurs during our weekly staff meetings which occur every Wednesday throughout the school year. The Superintendent/Principal serves as the teacher leader for all grade levels. At these meetings we collaborate as a staff, participate in professional development, and articulate vertically. Due to our small certificated staff numbers all teachers teach two or more grade levels within the same classroom. This means that there is limited horizontal articulation because there are limited teachers. However, we do have two first grade teachers and the middle school teachers share students and communicate daily. Because of our district/school small size the teaching staff does lack some curriculum leadership opportunities that larger districts can offer. Having said that, our small size creates many opportunities for our teachers to grow and take on more responsibilities that would never be presented to teachers in a much larger district or school. Teachers within TRESA are doers and must become leaders to make it all happen. They wear many hats and have become skilled practitioners. For the past six years the Superintendent/Principals of the three smallest districts (CP, CC and TRESA) have met monthly to discuss and plan on shared

opportunities for training, collaboration, articulation and professional development. Our teachers have met several times to work together with curriculum development.

F2 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: TRES D Partially Disagrees

As was stated in the previous finding, Twin Ridges teachers and instructional aides meet on a weekly basis to discuss curriculum and other school related topics. A focus has always been on English Language Arts as well as Mathematics. This focus is directly related to the Smarter Balanced State testing. Even though all core subject matter is taught within the district, the state wide testing has always been driven by ELA and mathematics. Twin Ridges has adopted Common Core curriculum in both ELA and Mathematics on the scheduled adoption rotation. Along with these adoptions came professional development from the publishers and trainings were also conducted with Chicago Park School. Over the past six years Twin Ridges School District has had three intensive multiple day trainings with Step-up to Writing. This pedagogy is a well respected system that ties into our existing English Language Arts instructional program. In addition to what we do in-house and with the other small districts we also participate in the county-wide professional development that is put on by the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools Office. This office also provides us with multiple trainings as needed, for which we are grateful.

F4 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: TRES D Partially Disagrees

Twin Ridges partially disagrees with this finding as it relates to our students matriculating into NJUHSD. With several recent changes in the leadership at Nevada Union, TRES D believes that the communication and expectations have become more clear. Students are tested each spring in mathematics for a better placement at the high school. Teacher recommendations are sought and the high school superintendent and principals have reached out to our families prior to registration. Our eighth graders have been invited to visit the NU campus for orientation.

Recommendations

R1 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.

This recommendation is already being implemented.

Based on district sizes and needs, communication and collaboration guidelines may vary. The Superintendents of the three smallest districts in the county (CP, CC, TRES D) meet monthly 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 that TRES D always partakes in.

R2 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.

This recommendation is already being implemented.

This year Twin Ridges hired a new middle School teacher to teach English Language Arts and social studies. In addition to her multiple subjects credential she holds supplemental credential in ELA. This credential authorizes her to teach single-subject-matter (departmentalized ELA) courses. This teacher will now be our English Language Arts lead teacher assisting her colleagues within professional learning communities. We currently break-up our mathematics instruction into two separate elementary groups. Our three primary grade teachers work together as a team. They are given meeting time to articulate and plan best practices. Our middle school mathematics program is split between two teachers. There is not one leader, but rather a team approach. This seems to be the best way to plan and deliver the material. This shared team approach works well in the small school setting as they each know the student as individuals and can best prepare for when the kids move to the next grade level. Weakness and strengths are considered for each student at each level.

In addition to Math and English Language Arts, TRES D has participated in trainings and professional development in the Next Generation Science Standards hosted by both the county office of education and the educational instructors from

Sierra Streams Institute. Twin Ridges has joined with SSI in developing curriculum for science on over the past five years. We also wrote a state water board grant together that provides on-going science curriculum. A new teacher was hired this year that is a science specialist who will act as a team leader for science.

R4 These leaders should establish working relationships with their peers allowing them to freely share their ideas, plans, and the results of their instruction.

This recommendation is already being implemented.

As a small school district, we have only six classroom teachers, one resource teacher and five instructional aides. This intimate community makes it much easier to form professional and personal relationships. These small numbers create a much easier pathway for school wide peer communication than in larger districts. As was stated in the recommendation # 2, we have two new lead teachers this year. They are brand new to our district but the expectation is that they begin working with their peers within their specialty areas of focus. With our small size and our weekly meetings it is expected that this will happen at a much faster rate than a larger district.

R5 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.

We believe that this is a great idea and they should continue to enhance what is already in place. As we stated in Finding #4, the high school district has made great strides in connecting to our eighth graders and their families. More could be done but we feel that this recommendation is already in place.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Wayman
President
Twin Ridges Elementary School District Board