



Educational Frenemies¹: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?

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SUMMARY

Upon a suggestion from a member of the public, the 2013-2014 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) examined whether public charter schools in San Mateo County (the County) were sharing information (such as teaching methodologies designed to promote better student outcomes) with traditional public schools in fulfilling the California Legislature's intent of helping to increase learning opportunities for all pupils, regardless of enrollment in any specific school. The results of this investigation lead to three major findings: (i) charter schools in the County are generally not sharing information (such as teaching methodologies designed to promote better student outcomes) with traditional public schools, (ii) no formal avenue exists to foster such sharing; and (iii) the failure of charter schools to fulfill the legislative intent of the laws authorizing their existence may be moot, because in this county the organizational freedoms allowed by charter status do not seem to be a significant determinative factor in creating better student outcomes.² Based on its investigation, the Grand Jury recommends that the County Office of Education facilitate more constructive communication between charter and traditional public schools.

BACKGROUND

Public³ charter schools⁴ were authorized in the state of California by the California charter schools act of 1992 (ca. Ed. Code §47600 et. Seq.) (1992 act). The intent of the 1992 act included the goals of improving pupil learning, increasing learning opportunities "*for all pupils*"

¹ "Frenemy" can refer to someone who really is a friend, but also a rival. The term is used to describe relationships both among individuals and groups or institutions. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frenemy>. See also http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/frenemy. Though popularized in recent media, the term has been in use since at least 1953 in both news media and comic strips. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frenemy>

² Whether charter schools provide better, worse or similar "pupil outcomes" is outside of the focus of this report. (See Ca. Ed. Code §§47605(b)(5)(B) and (C), and §45604.5(d) for a discussion of "pupil outcomes".)

³ Unless otherwise indicated, any reference to a "charter school" or "charter" shall mean a public charter school. See Ca. Ed. Code §47615, which provides in part "The Legislature finds and declares ... Charter schools are part of the Public School System as defined in Article IX of the California Constitution [and] Charter schools are under the jurisdiction of the Public School System and the exclusive control of the offices of public schools..."

⁴ This report does not draw a distinction between "dependent" and "independent" charter schools. For further information, see http://www.lao.ca.gov/1997/121197_charter_schools/sri_charter_schools_1297-part2.html, and <http://www.scusd.edu/dependentcharters>.

and stimulating improvements “*in all public schools*”⁵ to help achieve these goals, the 1992 act freed charter schools from the constraints of nearly every provision of the California education code – provisions which continue to govern the operation of traditional public schools in the state.⁶ Charter schools in San Mateo County do not report to, and are not operated under the auspices of the county office of education. Instead, charter schools answer to the governing board of the school district which granted the charter establishing each such school.⁷

METHODOLOGY

Documents

- The Grand Jury reviewed the documentation set forth in Appendix A including but not limited to:
 - the websites, mission statements, charters, pending charter renewal applications, and strategic plans of charter schools and non-charter schools and school districts in the county;
 - relevant studies conducted by public and private entities; and
 - articles appearing in the general press applicable to the inquiry.

Interviews

- As part of its inquiry for this report, the Grand Jury interviewed:
 - Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents and former Superintendents of representative school districts across the County, educating students from kindergarten through 12th grade, and including both large and small districts, as well as districts with and without charter schools;
 - Leaders of charter schools or charter school organizations with schools in the County;
 - Multiple current or former political representatives knowledgeable about charter schools, including persons with experience advising the United States Senate and United States House of Representatives Committees on Education, serving in the California Department of Education and serving on education committees in the California State Assembly;
 - Representatives from the County Office of Education;
 - Representatives from private entities focused on the study of education, and of charter schools in particular;
 - Representatives from labor unions representing teachers in the County and teachers throughout California; and
 - Other individual third parties studying education and charter schools in California.

⁵ Ca. Ed. Code §47601. Emphasis added.

⁶ See, e.g., Ca. Ed. Code §47610 and 47605(l).

⁷ See, e.g., Ca. Ed. Code §47604 through 47604.33. Charter schools are required to file certain annual financial reports with the County Office of Education. Charter schools are generally established by a petition signed by a minimum number of parents and or teachers, and which is normally submitted to and approved by the governing board of the local school district. (See Ca. Ed. Code § 47605(a).)

DISCUSSION

Charter schools have been granted freedom from most provisions of the California Education Code.⁸ This freedom has been cited as a key factor in the success⁹ of charter schools. But is it?

Certain freedoms which charter schools enjoy have a basis in state law including the ability of charters to utilize certain non-certificated instructors (including the ability to hire non-certificated physical education associates and computer/technical associates, and to use community members as instructors), to utilize off-site learning opportunities, and to have more flexibility in how they count instructional minutes.¹⁰ Charter status may also give a school more flexibility in managing its budget. Some of the key factors cited (by previous researchers and by persons interviewed by the Grand Jury) as differentiators between charter and non-charter schools, however, seem to be more smoke than fire.

Education codes (in California and elsewhere) have repeatedly been blamed by researchers,¹¹ administrators of both charter and traditional public schools,¹² and county-level education officials for preventing traditional public schools from implementing programs or procedures which might improve student outcomes. In that same vein, the new Strategic Plan of the San Carlos School District (a district with nearly all charter schools) states that “The District’s status of having mostly charter schools allows it more flexibility to implement many of the changes envisioned in this plan... .”¹³ The Grand Jury’s conclusions in this regard, however, stand in direct contrast to this seemingly broadly accepted (or at least regularly repeated) view. In particular, the Grand Jury finds that blame placed on the California Education code in this regard is misdirected.

One of the most commonly cited hurdles to better student outcomes is the supposed inability of non-charter schools to offer longer school days or longer school years. Longer teaching cycles

⁸ See note 5, supra.

⁹ See note 1, supra.

¹⁰ I.e., alternatives to traditional “seat time” requirements otherwise enforced by the Legislature.

¹¹ See, e.g., Booker, K., Gilpatric, S., Gronberg, T. & Jansen, D. The Effect of Charter Schools on Traditional Public School Students in Texas: Are Children Who Stay Behind Left Behind?” (September 2005), finding that charters benefit by having “greater degrees of freedom in dealing with certain regulations” and the ability to “differentiate their product from that offered by traditional public schools”. See also, Alexander, K. Can Traditional Schools Learn a Lesson From Charters’ Efficiency? (August 18, 2012). <http://www.statesman.com/news/news/state-regional-govt-politics/can-traditional-schools-learn-a-lesson-from-char-1/nRNcH/>.

¹² Educational leaders interviewed by the Grand Jury referred to the Education Code as “very important” in the success of charter schools, claimed that the Education Code “restricts creativity” in non-charter schools, and cited leaders of non-charter schools as having a near-mantra of “If I didn’t have all these regulations...”.

¹³ San Carlos School District Strategic Plan 2013-2018.

have been repeatedly cited as contributing to better student outcomes in research studies,¹⁴ by local education officials,¹⁵ and even by union representatives.¹⁶ The Education Code, however, does not prevent school boards, school districts and county offices of education in California from having longer school days or longer school years. The applicable provisions of the Education Code set only a minimum number of school hours and school days. It is within the purview of each district – irrespective of the charter or non-charter status of individual schools – to determine whether to extend the length of their school day and their school year.¹⁷ In fact, some school districts in California have already lengthened, or considered lengthening, their school year beyond 180 days.¹⁸

The Education Code also has been blamed for “restricting creativity”¹⁹ of non-charter schools, in particular by forcing such schools to adopt curriculum from a list approved by the state,²⁰ (though any such a requirement, at least for the time being, does not exist).²¹ Officials from non-charter schools also repeatedly indicated envy at the ability of charter schools to offer more professional development to their teaching staff.²² This, too, is an issue not generally arising from any restriction in the Education Code.²³

¹⁴ See, e.g., DiCarlo, M. The Evidence on Charter Schools and Test Scores. The Albert Shanker Institute. (December 2011). Researchers concluded that longer school days and longer school years are a key factor in better student outcomes. The Shanker study reached its conclusion in part based on previous research efforts, including Hoxby, C.M., J.L. Kang, and S. Murarka. 2009.

¹⁵ Leaders of both charter and non-charter schools and districts across the County cited longer school days and longer school years as key factors leading to student success (including but not limited to offering the ability to provide “more differentiated support” to students). See also, the San Carlos School District’s Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (which calls for “extending and redefining the school day”) and the Ravenswood City School District Ravenswood 2009 response to the Final Report of the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury, citing “the advantage of creating a longer day without additional compensation to staff as allowing charter schools to systematically offer families longer instructional days and an enriched curriculum”).

¹⁶ Representatives of both local and state unions claimed that “The Legislature has set the school year at 180 days.”

¹⁷ See California Education Code Section 46200 et. seq.; California Education Code Section 41420 et. seq.; and California Education Code Section 46112 et. seq. See also the website of the California Department of Education. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/fap.asp>.

¹⁸ See <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/districts-355225-school-plans.html?data=1> and <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:A6G77Hhd9Z4J:edsource.org/today/2013/lausd-discussing-200-day-school-year/39426+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us#.UxVlzvldWSo>.

¹⁹ See further discussion, *infra*, regarding the importance of creativity by education leaders in creating better student outcomes.

²⁰ (See: California Board of Education, State Board Adopted Instruction Materials; <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/im/rlaadoptionlist.asp>).

²¹ In 2013, California Education Code Section 60210 was added via AB 1246 (Brownley), which allows schools in California to use “instructional materials that have not been adopted by the state board pursuant to Section 60200.”

²² Educational leaders interviewed by the Grand Jury indicated that teaching staff at charter schools in the County receive anywhere from 20-40 more days of professional development each school year than do their counterparts at non-charter schools.

²³ To the extent that some charter schools can offer additional staff professional development by temporarily replacing regular teachers with non-certificated instructors, restrictions in the Education Code may come into play.

The Grand Jury recognizes that hurdles exist in the road to longer instruction days or years, and potentially to more professional development for teaching staff. But the hurdles for the most part are not embodied in the law; they more frequently live in the relationships between school districts and local, state and national teachers' unions.²⁴

Both publicly²⁵ and privately,²⁶ charter school organizations in the County claim to be fulfilling – or trying to fulfill – the California Legislature's intent that charter schools increase learning opportunities for all pupils and stimulate improvements in all public schools.²⁷ Yet the Grand Jury's investigation and interviews with such organizations revealed that real evidence of sharing lessons learned is scant at best.²⁸ Charter schools in California are required to include in their charters both (i) their goals and (ii) planned annual actions to achieve those goals.²⁹ Yet only one of the charters and mission statements reviewed as a part of the inquiry for this report directly stated any goal related to communicating or sharing information in any manner with traditional public schools in the county for the betterment of pupils.³⁰ Furthermore, despite the claims of charter schools related to their missions and goals, the Grand Jury found no evidence of any actual communication between charter and non-charter schools in the County. No administrator of any school district or traditional public school interviewed by the Grand Jury could cite any memory of being contacted by any charter school or charter school organization in the County in the context of sharing lessons learned by the charter.³¹ This is consistent with the findings of the 2008-2009 San Mateo County Grand Jury.³²

²⁴ See further discussion, *infra*, regarding the influence of unions vis-à-vis adopting new strategies and practices to create better student outcomes.

²⁵ James Gallagher, Aspire Public School's director of instruction was quoted as stating that Aspire wants to "catalyze change in public education", serve as a "beacon of innovation" and "pull some traditional districts with us." See Tucker, J. Charter Schools at Core of Teacher-Rating Debate. (December 6, 2013). San Francisco Chronicle, page A1. Aspire's mission statement calls for its organization to "catalyze change in public education not just by opening and operating schools, but also by sharing the successful practices we've developed and honed along the way. ... We don't presume to have all the answers, but we do believe in the importance of sharing." See Mission Statement of Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School, contained in Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School Renewal Charter for the term July 1, 2009 through June 20, 2014. Summit Preparatory Charter High School's charter material revision expressly quotes the legislative intent, and their mission statement states (in part) that "The school aspires to serve as a model for high schools endeavoring to prepare all students for post-secondary academic pursuits." A charter school leader also cited their organization's goal to "take our original mission as incubator of innovation and spread it far and wide."

²⁶ Charter school leaders in the County spoke of sending "teams" of personnel out to "share information", and of hosting educational and information sharing events to which they invited school leaders across the County.

²⁷ See note 3, *supra*.

²⁸ Leaders of charter organizations interviewed by the Grand Jury admitted that "far too little" sharing goes on, and that communication "could be better." While one charter school leader spoke proudly of sharing lessons learned across their own internal charter organization, they could provide no examples of sharing with non-charter schools in the County.

²⁹ Ca. Ed. Code §§47605(b)(5)A), 47605.6(b)(5)(a) and 47606.5.

³⁰ See note 25, *supra*.

³¹ One charter school provided the Grand Jury with an extensive mailing list, but could provide no evidence of when or to what extent that list was actually used. And no leader of any non-charter school district could remember ever being contacted. Non-

The 2013-2014 Grand Jury also found that greater assistance in fostering such information sharing could be provided by the County Office of Education (COE). Although the COE sponsors regular meetings of educational leaders in this county (e.g., monthly meetings of district superintendents), representatives of charter schools are routinely not included in those meetings.³³ While representatives of charter and non-charter schools do occasionally meet, those meetings generally are ad hoc and do not address the sharing of lessons related to better student outcomes.³⁴ In addition, it appears that the charter schools in the County do not as a rule meet with each other in any organized fashion.³⁵

The COE is the logical entity to promote improved communication between charter and non-charter schools in the County. While representatives from the COE have stated that the office is “trying to shepherd along more opportunities for information sharing,”³⁶ this assertion was not validated by persons interviewed by the Grand Jury.³⁷ In addition, certain education leaders expressed concern that meetings hosted by COE focused too infrequently on curriculum and best practices in teaching.³⁸

Furthermore, whether or not the COE focuses more closely on the relationship between charter and non-charter schools, the Grand Jury determined that (despite any mission statements or goals

charter educational leaders across the County cited “not a lot of conversation” about charter schools, a lack of any visits to charter sites, a complete absence of conversation with leaders of charter schools, no examples of information sharing between charter and non-charter schools, and no knowledge of whether charter schools were operating as incubators of change. While charter leaders were referred to as “gracious when we go to them”, multiple education leaders cited a lack of “reaching out” by charter schools in the County. As one leader summed it up: “Real communication doesn’t actually exist.”

³² See, What Grades are the Charter Schools in East Palo Alto Earning? San Mateo Grand Jury Final Report. 2009, which found a lack of communication between charter and non-charter schools.

³³ Representatives of charter schools indicated almost universally that they do not attend, and are not invited to attend, the monthly COE meetings. (The exception is the San Carlos School District, with six charter schools and one non-charter school.) The Grand Jury found that charter organizations in our county are also notably absent from other educational conferences often attended by leaders of non-charter schools and districts (such as Education and Community Leadership conferences, annual superintendents’ symposiums, conferences, of school boards, Association of California School Administrator conferences, etc.).

³⁴ Charter leaders are likely to meet with non-charter educational leaders in their home district “if requested”, or “if there’s an agenda item related” to the charter, or “when necessary” (such as in those rare years where a charter is up for renewal).

³⁵ As stated by one charter leader, there is “no regular communication” between the various charter organizations in this county.

³⁶ The COE specifically cited an effort over the last 18 months to try “to do more outreach to charter schools.”

³⁷ Leaders of school districts in this county stated that the COE has not tried to communicate successes and/or failures of charter schools, that the COE is not shepherding opportunities for communication, that there is “not a lot of incentive” for the sectors to communicate, and that the COE does not provide “structure” to help foster communication. As stated by one educational leader: “No one ever developed a mechanism to allow charters to share information.” At the same time, several charter leaders indicated that no one from the COE has tried to communicate with them, and that they have “no real relationship” with the COE. One charter leader did not even recognize the name “Anne Campbell” (Ms. Campbell is the Superintendent of the COE.)

³⁸ As stated by one school district leader, “[e]very district has its own culture on how they serve students, curricular practices, etc.” Thus while the COE meetings may focus on important topics (such as workers’ compensation, employee classifications, legal alerts, technology challenges, etc.) the subjects (even when discussing subjects like the transition to Common Core) are “not usually best practices related to teaching or student outcomes.”

expressed in official school documents or Grand Jury interviews) it is clear that there is not an easy relationship between charter and non-charter schools. The Grand Jury agrees with the conclusions of previous researchers who found that leaders of traditional public schools are more likely to make positive changes in their operations when charter schools exist nearby.³⁹ The Grand Jury's investigation revealed at least two material roadblocks which stand in the way of more robust avenues of communication: an apparent underlying contentiousness between some members of the charter and non-charter factions, and the pure impact of the time and effort which cross-sector communication would require from already overworked administrators in all schools. Overcoming these basic and emotional issues will require commitment by all parties.

Studies across the country have cited underlying tensions between charter and non-charter schools.⁴⁰ These adversarial feelings were regularly confirmed by leaders of both charter and non-charter schools in this county,⁴¹ as well as by others familiar with the relationships.⁴² The Grand Jury found that leaders of charter and non-charter schools expressed both (i) their own eagerness to open communication with the other "side", while at the same time acknowledging (ii) a co-existing feeling that some emotional component (often blamed on the other party) prevented that communication from occurring. Some tensions between the two sectors appear to be based on a fear by traditional public schools that charter schools are "stealing" students,⁴³

³⁹ The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Civic Report found that district superintendents were more likely to make changes "to produce more appealing and effective schools" where charter schools existed. Changes included new accountability for student performance, changes to budget processes, adoption of Montessori-style schools, addition of before-school and after-school programs, and more. That same 2000 report also concluded in part that "Principals adopt more innovations at their school in direct proportion to the competitive enrollment pressure that they feel." Another study used 8 years of data to test the effect of charter schools on traditional public schools, and found a "positive and significant effect of charter school penetration on traditional public school outcomes." Booker, et. al., note 10, supra.

⁴⁰ "[C]harter school advocates sometimes put forth a "we can do it better" attitude that can heighten tensions with traditional public schools." Usable Knowledge: Learning from Charter Schools: Lessons for Educators. Harvard Graduate School of Education. (March 2009). "Significantly, we found that there is often a fundamental hostility between traditional public schools and the charter schools. Even in districts where the level of hostility is low we found little evidence that the schools in either sector have reached out to schools in the other sector.") Does Charter School Competition Improve Traditional Public Schools? Manhattan Institute for Policy Research (2000). In 2009, the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury described "a relationship lacking in trust" between charters and non-charters. What Grades are the Charter Schools in East Palo Alto Earning? San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Final Report (2009). In fact, in 2009 the Summit Institute (which has run several charter schools in the County) sued the Sequoia Union High School District. (See e.g. Charter School Sues High School District. The Almanac. Retrieved from <http://www.almanacnews.com/news/2009/07/24/charter-school-sues-high-school-district> on February 18, 2014.)

⁴¹ Various school district leaders in the County described the relationships between charters and non-charters as "inherently controversial", "adversarial" and (with respect to charter schools' authorizing bodies) even "antagonistic". These same leaders described a partnership "hurdle" fed by a feeling that charters have the attitude of "we're better" than traditional public schools. And another educational leader interviewed by the Grand Jury stated that the "traditional system has seen charter schools as a threat."

⁴² The relationship between charter and non-charter schools was described by one researcher as "immediately fraught" with "social and financial tension."

⁴³ See Harvard Graduate School of Education report, March 2009 discussing the issues surrounding charters taking students and the attendant per-pupil funding. While charter school leaders deny any intent to "steal" students or funding, they do acknowledge a perception by non-charter schools that charters "pull from the top" of available students and "take away funds from bigger schools." Charter school researchers familiar with inter-school relationships in the County cited these exact perceptions as a basis for hostilities underlying the relationship between charter schools and traditional public schools.

along with the per-pupil funding dollars that follow the student. These tensions, while perhaps not unique to the County, are not necessarily realized in other local counties.⁴⁴

Additionally, school leaders from both charter and non-charter schools cited simple lack of time as a hurdle to more robust communication. As stated by one district leader, it “takes a lot of work... and it’s all on top of what is already a fulltime job.”⁴⁵

The Grand Jury also found that charter schools in the County haven’t yet figured how – or even why – to share information. One charter school leader stated that it would be “great” to actively share with other schools in this county, but asked, “what’s the mechanism?”⁴⁶ Another charter school leader stated that, “there’s no disincentive” to sharing information, but there’s also a lot of incentive to stay “insular” (a term which was used by several interviewees). A district superintendent in this county not responsible for charter schools echoed the same sentiment, wondering whether charter schools were proprietary about their teaching methods, and stating that “it seems odd that after 21 years [of charter schools] there really hasn’t been anything” in the way of deliberate outreach.⁴⁷

School administrators, however, are only part of the overall equation. While unionization of teaching staff is not strictly a charter vs. non-charter issue,⁴⁸ the Grand Jury cannot ignore the issue of unions vs. district administration in implementing solutions to create better student outcomes.⁴⁹ Multiple studies looking at charter schools have cited the existence of teachers’

⁴⁴ While several interviewees noted the presence of certain “really strong hostilities” in the County, it was also noted that “if you step over the county line”, you find entirely different (and more positive) relationships between charter and traditional public schools. The Grand Jury was offered examples of such positive relationships existing in the San Jose Unified School District, the San Francisco Unified School District, and the Oakland Unified School District. Despite the public controversy over the number of charter schools in Oakland, more than one interviewee made reference to Oakland Unified School District’s Office of Charter Schools which seeks to, among other things, “act as a vehicle by which charter school lessons have a positive impact on the entire public school system.” See, <http://www.ousdcharters.net/>.

⁴⁵ Another district leader told us that “It’s hard enough to make change happen in your own district”; there is no real time to think about what might be happening outside of your local boundaries.

⁴⁶ This same leader indicated that their charter organization is now doing “exploratory” work with school districts to determine whether those districts would be interested in hearing from the charter organization. But even if the answer is “yes”, next steps are not so simple. The charter organization would then need to “develop a business plan and business case” for such sharing.

⁴⁷ In this same vein, a leader of one charter organization stated a need “to figure out where the demand is”, adding “We don’t know if districts would be open” to receiving information from the charter school.

⁴⁸ Nothing prevents charter school teachers from unionizing. The teachers in the San Carlos School District (which is comprised almost entirely of charter schools) are unionized. The California Teachers’ Association has helped certain charter school staffs to unionize. According to sources interviewed by the Grand Jury, each year in this county teachers at one or more charter schools approach union representatives to inquire about possible unionization. In addition, the California Teachers’ Association has developed a presentation specifically educating unions on the importance of engaging charter school teaching staffs. <http://www.cta.org/en/Professional-Development/Events/Conferences/~/media/Documents/PDFs/Conferences/2013%20Equity%20and%20Human%20Rights%20materials/Charter201314Schools.ashx>.

⁴⁹ Whether or not unions are in touch truly with their constituencies is outside the scope of this report. The Grand Jury predictably heard strong opinions and examples on both sides of this question from district leaders and from union representatives.

unions in traditional public schools (in comparison to generally non-union staffs at charter schools) as a negative influence on better student outcomes.⁵⁰ In interviews related to this report, representatives of both charter and non-charter schools repeatedly cited the influence of unions, either directly or indirectly.⁵¹ In addition, district leaders across the county indicated that unions (from national to state to local levels) hinder districts' ability to provide additional staff professional development, to institute longer school days or school years,⁵² to adopt before-school and after-school programs, and to use broader criteria to evaluate teachers' performance.⁵³ Conversely, union representatives interviewed in connection with this report stated materially different, yet equally reasonable positions, citing both fair compensation for teachers based on hours actually worked, and the ability of teachers (or any person) to continue to be effective as work days continue to increase in length.⁵⁴

The Grand Jury found that every issue between unions and district administrators ultimately turned on budgets and teacher compensation.⁵⁵ The Grand Jury also found a disconnect between philosophies and behaviors with respect to unions' and administrators' ability to work together on behalf of students. Both sides expressed (subject to a list of caveats) a willingness to listen to, and to talk with, the other side. But this stated willingness was overshadowed in many cases by posturing and finger pointing. The Grand Jury concluded that it is not unions by themselves that are the "hurdle". The hurdles (with respect to unions) are both compensation and the ability of teachers to be able to continue to provide a quality education if additional obligations (for example, extended work days or work years) limit, rather than enable teachers' effectiveness.

⁵⁰ See, e.g. Harvard Graduate School of Education report (March 2009) citing freedom from unions as a key in being "able to mobilize quickly, and to institute changes faster than traditional schools."

⁵¹ One district superintendent stated that a school's success depends on the district's union contract (in particular as the contract relates to the length of a school day and the number of hours teachers can work). Another district leader called unions "a challenge to flexibility and innovation, or even a blockade", but "rarely a support." Yet another district superintendent feared delays in implementing district-approved plans for better student outcomes if the union opposes some key planned measures. See also, Ravenswood City School District Ravenswood 2009 response to the report of the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury, citing as a "major consideration" "the 'freedom' of academic program development afforded to charter schools without the restrictions of bargaining unit agreements".

⁵² The Grand Jury is sensitive to the argument that if one district changes its schedule, it can have an adverse effect on staff in the district who have children attending out-of-district schools where the out-of-district school does not change its daily or yearly schedule.

⁵³ Examples cited to the Grand Jury include teacher pay systems built on a "growth on the teaching continuum" rather than seniority, being able to use student achievement as part of teacher evaluations, having no set cap on the number of hours teachers can work, and the ability to remove teachers at-will if required.

⁵⁴ Union representatives, for example, state uniformly that they would support (i) more staff professional development "If [teachers] were compensated for it, and it is meaningful", (ii) longer school years if teachers were adequately compensated, and (iii) adding both before- and after-school programs staffed by district teachers, subject to "fair treatment" of the employees. The union representatives cited a concern over teachers "stretched past the point of being able to offer a good education." In addition, union representatives cited as potential hurdles compensation for teachers for all additional hours worked, the use of student performance in evaluations driving teachers away from teaching lower-performing or special education students, and the ability of failed professional (e.g. principal-teacher) relationships to negatively affect a teacher's evaluation and career.

⁵⁵ Superintendents and district leaders claimed that unions refuse to accept longer working hours, even where the districts offered additional compensation and "further professionalization." Union representatives claimed that districts want teachers to work "the days without the pay."

That hurdle is contributed to equally by representatives of the unions and of the administration of unionized schools/districts.⁵⁶

Even if the stars otherwise aligned, would all sides (including unions) be willing to work together more closely toward common goals? From the research conducted in connection with this report, the answer is not clear. One research group looking at this issue concluded that where hostilities exist, where incentive is low, and where time is a rare commodity, communication is unlikely to occur.⁵⁷ The Grand Jury found this to be true in San Mateo County.⁵⁸

Furthermore, despite any other complicating factors, it is not clear who wants to listen to whom.⁵⁹ Nearly all parties interviewed in connection with this report stated that more robust communication between the sectors would be beneficial, and leaders of both charter and non-charter schools affirmed their willingness to play a part in that process.⁶⁰ Conversely, there was an expressed desire by at least one traditional public school to *not* hear from charter organizations.⁶¹ This aversion to communication was confirmed by researchers familiar with school relationships in the County.⁶² Additionally, more than one person interviewed by the

⁵⁶ The Harvard Graduate School of Education report (March 2009) found that with respect to implementing changes, unions “are usually willing to try new things when the districts ask.” Union representatives interviewed in connection with this report admitted that “We do block practices”, but only those “that would be detrimental to teachers being effective in the classroom” (e.g. class size; increasing the number of student contacts). Union representatives also stated that, as a rule, superintendents and school boards are willing to listen to union positions “on most issues”, but that “money is always the issue.” In some cases, the “hurdle” may be simply a lack of total available funds. But sources interviewed by the Grand Jury indicated that more often, controversy arises from how district administrators and union representatives differ on how to allocate existing funds.

⁵⁷ “There is an expectation that the lines of communication between the two sectors [charter schools and traditional public schools] will be open and that information will flow freely between them. [But] the attitude of school district officials towards charter schools varies widely; districts that are hostile to charter schools are unlikely to encourage communication. ... [A school district official] suggested that there is little actual communication between sectors because there is no incentive for educators at charter schools to convey information back to the traditional public schools, as they are too busy and because many of them have little desire to communicate.” Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Civic Report.

⁵⁸ Researchers familiar with the school relationships in the County stated that, as a rule, non-charter schools “don’t pay a lot of attention” to charter schools. The exception to that rule is when a student’s performance materially improves after transferring from a traditional public school to a charter school, an occurrence which “rankles” the traditional public school in a way that is more likely to cause it to make changes.

⁵⁹ As stated by a leader at one charter organization, “We don’t yet know who is willing to work with us.” And while many non-charter leaders were “open to hearing” from charters, some interviewees again cited the perceived charter attitude of “we’re better than traditional public schools” as a hurdle to such communicative relationships. Furthermore, as stated in the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Civic Report, “there is also evidence that officials of traditional public schools do not believe charter schools in these cities are beacons of innovation, particularly in terms of curricula. Thus, even if lines of communication were open, in reality public schools officials may not want to listen.”

⁶⁰ One leader of a charter organization stated that their school(s) would be “open and eager” to attend the quarterly superintendent meetings sponsored by the COE.

⁶¹ As stated by one district leader, “We don’t *want* to hear from charters. Charters are not creative. We are more innovative, more creative, and have better programs. ... If I were told to go to [a local charter school] and learn what they’re doing, I’d say ‘why?’”

⁶² As stated by researchers familiar with charter and non-charter schools in the County, there is “potential” for lessons to be learned from charter schools in our county, “but it’s pretty low.”

Grand Jury expressed the concern that one school's best practices may not be easily transferrable to other sites.⁶³ The Grand Jury found that it will be human interactions, not laws, which will enable or inhibit changes contributing to better student outcomes in this county.⁶⁴ Yet without some method of incentivizing deeper and more positive relationships, such as seeking outside funding specifically targeted toward collaboration, the outlook for such improved communication is not bright.

In conclusion, the Grand Jury found many hurdles to the efficient flow of information between charter and non-charter schools in the County. The Grand Jury finds that all of the following could contribute to better student outcomes in San Mateo County:

- Establish an environment of improved cooperation⁶⁵, in particular by both taking proactive steps to mend existing rifts in relationships, and by including charter school leaders in future County educational discussions and meetings. Until existing hostilities are overcome, meaningful dialog benefitting students will always be hampered.
- Hire strong leaders enabled to make change. Few of the recommendations in this report can be implemented absent a strong leader driving change and maintaining commitment throughout an organization. Interviewees repeatedly cited the importance of leadership strength throughout educational organizations, from principals to superintendents to school boards, all supporting the same missions. Strong leaders not only drive change and keep their teams focused, but also help to maintain morale among the "troops".⁶⁶ School leaders also must be willing and able to remove persons from the organization who are not helping to move the mission forward.⁶⁷

⁶³ One leader of a charter school organization agreed that other schools would benefit from knowing what his/her schools are doing, but at the same time admitted that "it's not necessarily easily adoptable. It's more of 'how do you operate that way?'" It is thus not program-based, but thought-based. Conversely, a leader from another charter school organization acknowledged that while "change is hard", lessons from their school "should be replicable anywhere".

⁶⁴ Researchers have found that the attitudes of district leaders and principals are critical to leverage benefits. See Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Civic Report. "In our fieldwork, we found that district leaders and principals who are entrepreneurial and reform-oriented are using charter schools as a tool to increase their leverage over their schools and force them to institute new programs and improve performance." Id. However, the study also found that benefits do not accrue where "public school officials do not believe the charter schools actually provide new models or programs". Ibid.

⁶⁵ As stated by one charter school leader, "Move past the past."

⁶⁶ Leaders interviewed by the Grand Jury cited a "focused" (and even "visionary") leader as one of the most important factors in changing the "inertia of the system", and lauded in particular one superintendent described as a "master of keeping people focused on the mission". A district superintendent claimed that most positive changes in schools are driven by strong principals. Union representatives called the drive of the leader "very important" and "key", and noted that "when we don't have a strong leader, morale goes down."

⁶⁷ While interviewees stressed the importance of a strong leader with "a very clear vision of where they want to go," that leader must have the support of his or her superintendent and board, as well as staff buy-in. And, as stated by one non-charter leader, "in that process, sometimes you have to get rid of people." As summarized by one interviewee: schools "need the right people in the right seats on the bus" ... or they need to get those persons "off the bus".

- Consider longer school days and/or longer school years. Research of successful charter schools has repeatedly cited longer school days as one of the key driving factors.⁶⁸ Educational leaders interviewed by this Grand Jury agreed that extended teaching time is crucial to achieving better student outcomes.⁶⁹
- Encourage creativity as a driving force in school leaders. Inherent in nearly every factor cited as crucial to the success of schools was a simply stated but difficult-to-define concept: creativity. Creativity as a strength in school leaders is not necessarily a new concept, and it has been cited in studies looking at successful schools. The Grand Jury found it enlightening to see how much importance educational leaders in the County placed on this amorphous ideal.⁷⁰ In terms of better student outcomes, leaders of both charter and non-charter schools referred to creativity and innovation as “critical”, “huge”, and “it’s everything”. School leaders even credited creativity and innovation as leading factors in attracting and retaining teachers. School leaders also stressed the importance of creativity and innovation in the context of our students’ future careers: many of our current students will be working in jobs few of us have yet envisioned.⁷¹
- Implement meaningful mission statements, as they are crucial to the success of schools.⁷² Leaders of both charter and non-charter schools across the County cited a strong mission statement as the “foundation” for the school, and “key to our success.”⁷³ But mission statements

⁶⁸ See The Evidence on Charter Schools and Test Scores. The Albert Shanker Institute. Policy Brief (2011). Based on its own research and data compiled by previous studies, the Shanker brief cited longer school days/years as key factors in better student outcomes. See also, Hoxby, C.M., J.L. Kang, and S. Murarka. 2009. “Technical Report: How New York City Charter Schools Affect Achievement.” NBER Working Paper. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Another report concluded that the single biggest influence of charter schools on traditional schools was the expansion of programs in traditional schools taking place before or after the traditional school day. (Manhattan Institute for Policy Research Civic Report) Furthermore, this County’s Grand Jury found in 2009 that one of the most important factors for a school’s success was an “extended school day with extra time to reinforce curriculum”. (What Grades are the Charter Schools in East Palo Alto Earning?” San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Final Report (2009)).

⁶⁹ Educational leaders from all consistently cited a need for longer school days, with non-charter superintendents suggesting teacher hours of 8:00-5:00 or even 7:30-6:00. Charter school leaders repeatedly named longer school days as key to their success model. Certain Grand Jury interviewees were careful to note, however, extending the school day or school year could cause an adverse reaction in families who believe their students are already performing well.

⁷⁰ Creativity and innovation are not tied to school size. Smaller schools (like many charters) may be able to move more quickly or nimbly. But larger schools (like many non-charters) may have more resources to fund their creativity. One charter school leader in the county pegged their school(s) success in part to thinking creatively, but clarified that it was not based on charter status; “it’s based the way we behave”. “We could do those things even if we were not a charter” organization. With that said, not every interviewee tied creativity generally to success. Union representatives cautioned against moving too quickly, and certain researchers noted that many successful schools follow a more traditional, “1950s Wonderbread® model.”

⁷¹ As stated by one district leader, “Most kids will be doing jobs not yet invented today.” See also the San Carlos School District Strategic Plan 2013-2018: “In order to prepare [students] for the future and yet undefined careers...”

⁷² See, e.g.: The Albert Shanker Institute policy brief (citing as a key factor in better student outcomes mission statements based on academic achievement); and Graduate School of Education (stating that good schools exhibit “a stunning clarity of mission. Teachers, administrators, families, and students in these schools all articulate the mission of their school with clarity of common language and shared beliefs. Nothing is ambiguous about the work of these schools; no one works at cross purposes.”).

⁷³ As explained by the leader of one charter organization, “Everyone understands the intent of the mission. It’s in every school and in every teacher lounge.” Another school noted that in the teacher hiring process, they “evaluate for philosophical match” with the mission statement. Researchers interviewed in connection with this report echoed that sentiment, stating that success can depend in large part on a “huge consistency in school culture”.

must not just be words on a piece of paper. As stated by one educational leader in this county, there must be “unity of mission” and “a shared vision throughout the organization.” Accomplishing this goal begins with a strong and empowered leader.

- Increase focus on student progress. School leaders interviewed by the Grand Jury stressed the importance of frequent, data-based student assessments (as often as every two weeks). These same leaders also cited the importance of personalized (or differentiated) instruction, along with dedicated advisory programs and a commitment to provide each student with an adult mentor whom the student knows is on his or her side.⁷⁴ The concept of “student focus” should also include environments outside the school, including efforts to involve families in supporting the student’s progress.⁷⁵

FINDINGS

- F1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.
- F2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.
- F3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school’s ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.
- F4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers’ unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.
- F5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents’ meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

⁷⁴ One charter school official noted that “every student meets with their mentor at least every week.” And a county-level education leader stated that “Kids need to know that there is at least one adult who knows them and cares about them.” Researchers interviewed by the Grand Jury expressed similar opinions, tying schools’ success in part to the idea that “every kid can learn” and “learning can be fun.”

⁷⁵ Both charter and non-charter leaders were consistent in stressing the importance of home environments which share common goals with the schools. One local principal was lauded by a superintendent for hiring a coordinator specifically to work on family outreach. Another district leader called parent involvement “key” and opined that once you have that family encouragement and support, better student outcomes “are like shooting fish in a barrel.”

- R2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.
- R3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.
- R4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses to the recommendations in this report as follows in accordance with the time periods set forth in Penal Code section 933(c):

From the following governing bodies:

- For each of the charter schools listed in Appendix A, the governing board of each such charter school
- The governing board of each San Mateo County school district
- The Board of Trustees of the San Mateo County Office of Education
- Each San Mateo County school district

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.
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APPENDIX A
Partial List of Sources Reviewed

California Education Code Section 47600 et. seq. (The “Charter Schools Act of 1992”)

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Mission Statement of Aspire East Palo Phoenix Academy (id.).

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Sequoia Union High School District Board Polices (retrieved from <http://www.seq.org/?id=193> December 01, 2013).

Jefferson Elementary School District Message from the Superintendent (November 2013) (retrieved from <http://www.jsd.k12.ca.us/District/130476-Superintendent.html> December 01 2013).

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Issued: June 9, 2014



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www.aspirepublicschools.org

September 8, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Aspire Public Schools Response to Grand Jury Report: "Educational Frenemis: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Dear Judge Novak:

This letter constitutes Aspire Public Schools' ("Aspire") response to the above-referenced San Mateo County Grand Jury report. Aspire's Board of Directors will consider this response at its September 11, 2014 Board meeting conducted pursuant to the provisions of the Brown Act. Absent a further communication to the contrary on or subsequent to that date, Your Honor may infer that Aspire's Board considered and approved/ratified this response.

Aspire is a California non-profit public benefit corporation and charter management organization ("CMO") operating 38 high-performing public charter schools serving more than 14,600 students in low-income communities across California and in Memphis, Tennessee. Aspire's mission is to increase the academic outcomes for the pupils in these communities, to develop effective educators, to share successful practices with other forward-thinking educators, and to catalyze change in public schools (emphasis added.) Aspire is committed to transforming traditionally underserved communities by way of effective public education regardless of economic barriers. Aspire's students are 85% African-American or Hispanic and 80% are categorized as low-income. Most Aspire pupils will be the first in their family to attend college. Please see: <http://www.aspirepublicschools.org>



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FINDINGS

F1: Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

Aspire does not have sufficient information to comment on the actions of other charter schools and charter school organizations. With regards to its own practices, Aspire disagrees with this finding as it is committed to sharing successful practices with other forward-thinking educators, and it has put this principle to practice as further explained below.

In 2012, Aspire entered into a teacher effectiveness collaboration with Oakland Unified School District ("OUSD.") The goal of the collaboration was to support the OUSD employee training concerning the teacher effectiveness framework and observation process for four OUSD schools. OUSD designees attended training at Aspire's Home Office in Oakland and received training on assessment norming and scoring onsite at OUSD schools. Aspire provided remote ongoing technical assistance and consulting support throughout the collaboration. OUSD has expressed appreciation for this collaboration and support. Aspire is proud of such collaboration and shares this expression on its website. Please see: <http://aspirepublicschools.org/sharing-practices/collaboration>

Aspire was also responsible for the launch of Schoolzilla in 2013, which provides information and data to both charter school organizations and traditional school districts. Schoolzilla provides support to over 20,000 students attending traditional school districts through one of more of its paid solutions and to over 400,000 students attending traditional school districts, both in California and in other states, through free solutions. Consistent with Aspire's mission to serve pupils and families in traditionally underserved communities, over 70% of Schoolzilla's supported students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Please see: <http://thejournal.com/articles/2013/07/24/aspire-charter-schools-cuts-data-tech-schoolzilla-loose.aspx>

F2: No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Aspire does not have sufficient information to comment on the actions of the San Mateo County Office of Education. Aspire is not aware of a formalized, efficient avenue for sharing of information between



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charter and non-charter schools in San Mateo County. Aspire welcomes the opportunity for further knowledge-sharing between charter and non-charter schools in San Mateo County.

F3: The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

Aspire agrees that the California Education Code, by itself, does not restrict a school's ability to be successful; however, Aspire notes that the flexibility afforded by the Charter Schools Act of 1992 allows for innovation and "vigorous competition" among all public schools, charter or non-charter, for the express purpose of increasing and bettering student outcomes.

F4: Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

Aspire does not have sufficient information to comment on the actions of administrators and teachers at other charter schools. Aspire does not have sufficient information to comments on the actions of schools administrators and teachers' unions. With regards to its own practices, Aspire disagrees with this finding.

F5: Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

Aspire agrees with this finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meeting with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create a more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

Aspire is not in a position to assert that this recommendation has or will be implemented by the San Mateo County Office of Education. Aspire welcomes the development and implementation of such a written protocol.



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R2: By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Aspire is not in a position to assert that this recommendation has or will be implemented by traditional school districts in San Mateo County. Aspire supports the notion of an extended school day as this has been part of Aspire's success.

R3: By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Aspire is not in a position to assert that this recommendation has or will be implemented by traditional school districts in San Mateo County. Aspire supports the notion of an extended school year as this has been part of Aspire's success.

R4: By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly available website.

Aspire is not in a position to assert that this recommendation has or will be implemented by traditional school districts in San Mateo County. Aspire welcomes the development of such mission statements.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Willcox", is written over the typed name.

JAMES WILLCOX

Aspire Public Schools
Chief Executive Officer



Anne E. Campbell · County Superintendent of Schools

August 21, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak,

The San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) has received and reviewed the 2013-14 Grand Jury Report entitled “Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County.” We appreciate the Grand Jury’s interest in studying current practices regarding the sharing of information between and among charter schools and school districts in San Mateo County. We have read and considered the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury and have the following comments to offer.

FINDINGS

1. *Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.*

SMCOE agrees with the Grand Jury that charter schools and charter organizations are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in San Mateo County.

2. *No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.*

SMCOE agrees with the Grand Jury that currently there is not a formalized, efficient mechanism for sharing of information. SMCOE would note that it does not have a statutory responsibility to facilitate the sharing of such information and so would take exception to the characterization of not “adequately facilitating” this process. SMCOE would also note that it is not opposed to serving in such a facilitative role.

3. *The California Education Code does not restrict a school’s ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.*

SMCOE agrees that the California Education Code does not place insurmountable obstacles in the way of a school’s ability to be successful or in its ability to foster better student outcomes.

SMCOE does note, however, that school districts in San Mateo County do not have the same flexibility as that provided to charter schools in the California Education Code.

4. *Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.*

SMCOE disagrees with the scope of this finding. While in individual situations underlying contentions may exist, SMCOE does not believe such contentions are widespread in San Mateo County. SMCOE does not believe that such contentions are so prevalent that they sabotage constructive collaboration, either between charters and school districts or between administrators and teachers' unions.

5. *Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.*

SMCOE agrees with this finding. The 180-day school year is an artifact from a bygone era based upon an agrarian economy. Today most other developed nations in the world have longer school years than is currently the case in the United States. International achievement data indicate that students from such nations are achieving at a higher level than American students. A longer school day can also be beneficial to student learning, as long as such a day provides developmentally appropriate activities commensurate with the needs of different age groups. SMCOE would note, however, that merely having a longer school year and/or longer school day will not in and of themselves automatically benefit students. Such additional hours and days must be filled with meaningful instruction provided by well-qualified and well-trained teachers who have appropriate academic preparation, sufficient planning time, and multiple opportunities for collegial collaboration. It should also be noted that implementing longer teaching cycles would require additional school funding to compensate employees who would be working an extended day or year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.*

The recommendation requires further analysis. The monthly superintendent meetings are not run by the County Office of Education but rather by the San Mateo County Superintendents' Association. The Association has an elected President who establishes the monthly meeting agendas. The County Superintendent will consult with the Association President about including this request on an upcoming Association agenda for discussion by the superintendents and anticipates that the Association will have an opportunity to discuss the request before December 2014.

SMCOE will explore other ways to include charter school leaders in relevant meetings held at SMCOE. For example, the Curriculum and Instruction leaders have regularly scheduled meetings, as do Chief Business Officials and Chief Technology Officials. SMCOE staff leading these meetings will reach out to the leadership of San Mateo County's charter schools to invite them to attend and participate in these meetings.

In addition, SMCOE will make a focused effort to be sure charter schools know they are invited to attend conferences and professional development activities held at SMCOE where opportunities are readily available for sharing best practices.

2. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.*

SMCOE will not implement this recommendation because extending the school day is a decision that is district-specific. If individual school districts wish to access SMCOE services as they consider whether to implement this recommendation, SMCOE will be prepared to assist in a way that best meets district needs.

3. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.*

SMCOE will not implement this recommendation because extending the school year is a decision that is district-specific. If individual school districts wish to access SMCOE services as they consider whether to implement this recommendation, SMCOE will be prepared to assist in a way that best meets district needs.

4. *By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.*

SMCOE will not implement this recommendation because it is district-specific.

Both the Grand Jury Report and the responses of the San Mateo County Office of Education were presented to the San Mateo County Board of Education on August 20, 2014.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or require additional information.

Very truly yours,



Anne E. Campbell
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

AEC:a



1 MARTIN STREET
DALY CITY, CA 94014
Phone:415.467.5443
Fax:415.467.1542
www.bayshore.k12.ca.us

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INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT

DR. AUDRA PITTMAN

August 19, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655
Dear Judge Novak,

The Bayshore Elementary School District has received and reviewed the 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Below you will find the Bayshore Elementary School District's response the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations as approved by the District's board on August 19, 2014:

FINDINGS

1. The respondent agrees with the finding.
2. The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. While there is no formalized, efficient avenue that exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, the respondent believes it is the individual districts responsibilities to formalize communication between the charter school organizations that exist in their individual districts.
3. The California Education Code is exceptionally complex, with over 100,000 provisions published in a 21-volume set. Therefore, it is difficult to answer this question meaningfully as it is not possible for us to analyze the entire code and comprehensively assess whether each provision as written helps or hinders school success and student outcomes. With this caveat, the respondent agrees with the finding at a very general level.
4. The respondent disagrees with the finding. To assume there are underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools is not warranted.
5. The respondent partially agrees with the finding. Extending the school day or school year are promising reforms, but because they are costly, they must compete with other funding priorities and reform approaches. Whether extending the school day or school year will increase student achievement depends on many factors, including the specific budget, staff, and program trade-offs such reforms would necessitate. If such trade-offs to increase the quantity of instruction result in a decrease in the quality of instruction, student achievement may suffer.

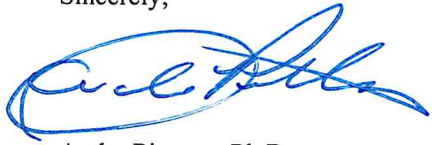
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This recommendation will be implemented in that the superintendent will participate in monthly superintendents' meetings.

2. The recommendation will be implemented by June 30, 2015 as the district and the Bayshore Teacher's Union participates in contract negotiations, which will include discussion around the feasibility of extending the school day.
3. The recommendation will be implemented by June 30, 2015 as the district and the Bayshore Teacher's Union participates in contract negotiations, which will include discussion around the feasibility of extending the school year.
4. The recommendation has been implemented. The Bayshore Elementary School District Mission statement was posted on our website prior to the release of the Grand Jury Report. The mission statement can be found on our home webpage: www.bayshore.k12.ca.us.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Audra Pittman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and end.

Audra Pittman, Ph.D.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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**Belmont-Redwood Shores
School District**
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Belmont, CA 94002-2999
650-637-4800 - Main
650-637-4811 - Fax

<http://www.brssd.org>

September 2, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak,

The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District has received and reviewed the 2013-14 Grand Jury Report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County." We welcome the Grand Jury's interest in studying current practices regarding the sharing of information between and among charter schools and school districts in San Mateo County. We have read and considered the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury and have the following comments to offer.

FINDINGS

The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District agrees generally with the findings numbered 1 through 5.

FINDINGS STATEMENTS

Finding #1

Charter schools in the Country are generally not sharing information (such as teaching methodoloiges designed to promote better student outcomes) with traditional public schools.

Finding #2

No formal avenue exists to foster such sharing.

Finding #3

The failure of charter schools to fulfill the legislative intent of the laws authorizing their existence may not be moot, because in this county the organizational freedoms allowed by charter status do not seem to be a significant determinative factor in creating better student outcomes.

Findings #4

Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

Findings #5

Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.*

The Belmont-Redwood Shores Superintendent attends the monthly County Superintendents' meetings. The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District would be receptive to a written protocol, developed by the County Superintendents or some other group, to facilitate the sharing of information between charter schools and traditional public schools.

2. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.*

We do not believe a plan is necessary or viable. This would have to be a made a priority in a collective bargain and it would cost the district in employee compensation. A better remedy might be the state's instructional minutes guidelines, which all districts follow.

3. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.*

See response #2. We follow state guidelines.

4. *By December 31, 2014 develop, at district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.*

The Belmont Redwood Shores School District currently has detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. And the district's mission statement and goals are accessible to the public.

Both the Grand Jury Report and the responses of the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District were presented to the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District Board of Trustees on August 21, 2014.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Michael Milliken, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Building Thoughtful Citizens

August 21, 2014

Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report:
"Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Dear Judge Novak,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the findings of the Grand Jury. Please accept this letter as response from the Brisbane School District to the recommendations found therein.

FINDINGS

F1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

The Brisbane School District disagrees partially with the Grand Jury finding due to inadequate information. Charter schools and charter organizations are not actively sharing information with the Brisbane School District, however, it should be noted that the Brisbane School District does not have any charter schools within its boundaries. Finally, we have no direct knowledge of whether this finding is true or not with regard to all traditional public schools in all of San Mateo County.

F2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

The Brisbane School District agrees with the finding that there is no formalized, efficient avenue that exists in the County for sharing information between charter and non-charter schools. We do not, however, believe that it is the statutory responsibility of the SMCOE to facilitate such sharing of information.

F3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

The Brisbane School District disagrees partially with this finding. The California Education Code does, in fact, place some restrictions on a school's ability to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes, such as restrictions with regard to teacher discipline and tenure. The Brisbane School District does note, however, that traditional public schools do not have the same flexibility as that provided to charter schools in the California Education Code.

F4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

The Brisbane School District disagrees with this finding. We have no direct knowledge or evidence of contentions preventing collaboration between charter schools and traditional public schools in this county.

F5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

The Brisbane School District disagrees partially with this finding. While longer teaching cycles can be very beneficial, they are not beneficial unless time is utilized appropriately. We believe that local governing boards are best suited to determine whether or not students in their district would benefit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

The recommendation requires further analysis. The monthly superintendent meetings are not run by the County Office of Education but rather by the San Mateo County Superintendents' Association. As such, the members of the San Mateo County Superintendents' Association will need to discuss this recommendation and determine whether they wish to implement it.

R2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Implementation of this recommendation needs further analysis and would depend upon negotiations with the district's bargaining units. The Brisbane School District currently exceeds the minimum required instructional minutes for all grade levels. The governing board of each

school district should determine whether a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day is appropriate.

R3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Implementation of this recommendation needs further analysis and would depend upon negotiations with the district's bargaining units. The governing board of each school district should determine whether a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year is appropriate.

R4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

The Brisbane School District considers this recommendation implemented. Included within the development of its Local Educational Agency (LEA) Plan and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. We believe that the LEA Plan and LCAP are better suited to have listed goals and metrics designed to produce better student outcomes than in the District's mission statement. The District's Mission Statement, LCAP and LEA Plan Addendum are currently posted on a publicly accessible website.

If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (415) 467-0550.

Sincerely,



Toni Presta
Superintendent

CC: Brisbane Board of Trustees - clerk
grandjury@sanmateocourt.org (via email)

Board Approval:

This response was hereby approved by the Board of Trustees of the Brisbane School District at the August 20, 2014 board meeting.



**BURLINGAME
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Michael Barber

Kay Coskey

Davina Drabkin

Mark G. Intrieri

Gregory Land

**DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATION**

Maggie MacIsaac, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Dennis Hills
*Assistant Superintendent,
Administrative Services*

Gaby Hellier
*Assistant Superintendent,
Business Services/CBO*

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(650) 259-3800

<http://www.bsd.k12.ca.us>

August 20, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak,
The Burlingame School District reviewed the 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Below you will find the Burlingame School District's response to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations as approved by the District's board on August 19, 2014:

Grand Jury Finding #1. Charter Schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

Response: Partially disagree. Charter and Traditional schools welcome visits from other professionals and share information informally at conferences. However, there is currently no formal mechanism for sharing information between us.

Grand Jury Finding #2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Response: Partially disagree. Although there is no formal structure for all charter and non-charter schools to share information, the County Office of Education has invited charter school organizations to professional development and to topical meetings where ideas and practices have been shared informally.

Grand Jury Finding #3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes. California Education Code could be simplified, revised, and less restrictive allowing both charter and traditional school districts more opportunity to be creative and serve the needs of students.

Response: Partially Agree.

Grand Jury Finding #4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

Response: Disagree. This has not been the experience in the interactions the Burlingame School District has had with charter and traditional administrators in meeting settings, at professional development opportunities or at conferences.

Grand Jury Finding #5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

Response: Partially disagree. Longer school days or teaching cycles alone will not improve student performance. There are several variables that must be considered such as program, curriculum, instructional practices, financial resources, and purpose of the extended time.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends:

1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

Response: The development of a formal structure for communication between leaders from charter and traditional public schools will have to be done under the guidance and direction of the County Office of Education. The Burlingame School District will defer to the Chair of the San Mateo County Superintendent's Association and the San Mateo County Office of Education for discussion and direction on this recommendation.

2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units, financial resources, student goals, curriculum development and staffing.

3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units. financial resources, student goals, curriculum development and staffing.

4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

Response: The Burlingame School District has already partially implemented this recommendation through the goals listed in the publicly displayed LCAP Plan. The District Mission Statement is currently being revised to match the LCAP and Targeted Action Plan of the District.



CABRILLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

498 Kelly Ave, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019 • 650 712-7100 • Fax 650 726-0279 • www.cabrillo.k12.ca.us

SUPERINTENDENT
Tony Roehrick, Ed.D.

GOVERNING BOARD
Michael Ahern
Kate Livingston
Freya McCamant
Robert Pappalardo
Kirk Riemer

August 15, 2014

Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Dear Hon. Novak:

As requested by the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury, below please find the Cabrillo Unified School District ("District") Governing Board's ("Board") responses to the above referenced Grand Jury Report ("Report"). The Governing Board approved the following responses at their August 14, 2014 regular meeting. Currently, no charter schools operate within the District's boundaries, therefore many of the findings and recommendations made by the Report are inapplicable to the District and the Board may lack sufficient information to respond meaningfully to many of the findings and recommendations.

Board's Responses to Findings

Grand Jury Report Finding 1

Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

Board's Response to Finding 1

The Board lacks the information necessary to fully respond to this finding as no charter schools operate within the District's boundaries and the Board is not privy to the operation of other school districts. However, based on its knowledge and information, the Board generally agrees with the finding.

Grand Jury Report Finding 2

No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Board's Response to Finding 2

The Board lacks the information necessary to fully respond to this finding as no charter schools operate within the District's boundaries and the Board is not privy to the operation of other school districts. The Board acknowledges it is not aware of any "formalized, efficient avenue ... in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools," but the Board does not have sufficient knowledge to respond to the finding that "the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information."

Grand Jury Report Finding 3

The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

Board's Response to Finding 3

The Board notes that the breadth of this finding and the scope of the Education Code make it difficult for the Board to "agree" or "disagree" with this finding. Because of this breadth, the Board observes that in various ways the Education Code both restricts and does not restrict a District's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

Grand Jury Report Finding 4

Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

Board's Response to Finding 4

The Board lacks the information necessary to fully respond to this finding as no charter schools operate within the District's boundaries and the Board is not privy to the operation of other school districts. However, based on its own knowledge the Board disagrees wholly with this finding. The Board is confident that relationships among teachers and administrators within the District are advantageous to the students it serves.

Grand Jury Report Finding 5

Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer schools days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

Board's Response to Finding 5

The Board agrees that longer school days or longer school years “are likely” to benefit students, but cautions against considering such a program in a vacuum without examining the other impacts of longer teaching cycles or the use of resources to support other options to benefit students.

Board's Responses to Recommendations

Grand Jury Report Recommendation 1

By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meeting with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determine a method for including charter school leader in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

Board's Response to Recommendation 1

This recommendation is directed to the County Office of Education, therefore the Board cannot respond to or implement this recommendation.

Grand Jury Report Recommendation 2

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Board's Response to Recommendation 2

The Board cannot implement this recommendation within the timeframe provided by the Grand Jury Report since the determination of the length of the school day is a long-range planning decision which should only be made after comprehensive review of the impacts of any changes and consideration of alternatives. Additionally, the Board responds that the Recommendation is neither warranted nor reasonable given the current lack of the fiscal resources needed to study and/or implement this Recommendation.

Grand Jury Report Recommendation 3

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Board's Response to Recommendation 3

The Board cannot implement this recommendation within the timeframe provided by the Grand Jury Report since the determination of the length of the school year is a long-range planning decision which should only be made after comprehensive review of the impacts of any changes and consideration of alternatives. Additionally, the Board responds that the Recommendation is neither warranted nor reasonable given the current lack of the fiscal resources needed to study and/or implement this Recommendation.

Grand Jury Report Recommendation 4

By December 31, 2014 develop, at the district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

Board's Response to Recommendation 4

The Board responds that it has already implemented this Recommendation. Prior to the issuance of the Grand Jury Report, the Board voluntarily expended considerable time and resources to develop a community-based mission statement. The District's mission statement is located on our website at http://www.cabrillo.k12.ca.us/CUSD_topic/desc_mission.html. In addition, the Board has expended considerable time and resources to develop quantifiable goals to produce better student outcomes. These goals are embedded in such documents as our Local Control Accountability Plan, our district-wide Local Education Authority Plan, and our school-based Single Plans for Student Achievement. The District's Local Education Authority Plan is located on our website at http://www.cabrillo.k12.ca.us/CUSD_file/LCFF_LCAP/LCAP-Board-Approved-June2014.pdf.

The Governing Board of the Cabrillo Unified School District is pleased to provide this information to the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury. Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Tony Roehrick, Ed.D.
Superintendent/CUSD Governing Board Secretary



March 6, 2015

Hon. Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063 – 1655

RE: California Virtual Academy @ San Mateo charter school's response to the Grand Jury Report: "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Dear Judge Novak,

California Virtual Academy @ San Mateo would like to thank the Grand Jury of San Mateo County for conducting this study to learn more about and to better understand the relationship between traditional public schools and public charter schools within the county. The Governing Board of California Virtual Academy @ San Mateo approved this response on March 6, 2015.

We have read and considered the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury and the following comments to offer:

FINDINGS

Finding # 1

*Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County. **Indifferent***

California Virtual Academy @ San Mateo does not have adequate information to comment on this finding as our school does share information with our authorizer. We cannot comment on whether or not the other charter schools within the county have the same relationship with their authorizer or not.

Finding 2

*No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information. **SOMEWHAT AGREE***

We do believe that there is information that is being shared with charter schools within the county such as minutes of business meetings, professional development or training opportunities for teachers and/or parents, etc. However, we would agree that there is not a formal or commonly used format for distribution amongst all organizations within the county. Charter schools and traditional schools alike would benefit from a more formalized process of

distribution. This pertains to information distributed from districts to charter schools as well as the county office of education to charter schools alike.

Finding 3

*The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes. **AGREE***

We believe that while Ed Code can be interpreted or construed as being restricting in what a traditional school or district can and cannot do in regards to autonomy of instructional programs, implementation, etc., we believe that the true intent is not that. We believe that Ed Code provides a broad framework in which to work by thus permitting for a lot of flexibility in the instructional programs of a district/county office of education. Unfortunately, we also believe that many traditional (non-charter) schools often shy away from unique or less common trends of instructional practices therefore self-limiting their instructional programs.

Finding 4

*Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in the County. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE***

Regardless of whether the district, school or charter is involved with a union, we believe that the overall desire of all educators is to improve the instructional offering at their school. We would like to believe that the strives that are often created between teachers' unions and districts are kept beyond the classroom door, however know that at times, this is not the reality. We believe that a more collaborative and meaningful relationship between teachers' unions and districts, with a clear understanding and acceptance of student achievement needs, would benefit all programs within the county.

Finding 5

*Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County. **AGREE ~ With Stipulation***

While we agree in principle, time is not the only variable that impacts student performance. When looking at student performance we must look at all contributing factors. We believe that these are parent/guardian involvement/influence, teacher quality and curricular/instructional quality and student engagement. If we were to extend the school year and/or school day, we must also provide expectations of structure for this time in order to ensure meaningful allocation of resource(s).

Recommendation #1

By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meeting with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

California Virtual Academy @ San Mateo does not feel that they are appropriately authorized to dictate or assert what the County Office of Education should or shouldn't do in regards to protocol. We do however welcome the participation in more robust communication with the office and other entities within the county.

Recommendation 2

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Without proper structure and determination of how added days or minutes would be allocated in such a manner in which to influence increased student improvement, we do not feel that this is reasonable or that we are appropriately authorized to make such a decision for schools within the county.

Recommendation 3

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Same response as that of Recommendation #2.

Recommendation 4

By December 31, 2014 develop at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

We agree and have already implemented this.

Sincerely,



Katrina Abston
Head of School
California Virtual Academy @ San Mateo



635 Oakside Ave.
Redwood City, CA 90463
www.connectrwc.org
(650) 562-7190

June 27, 2014

Via email: grandjury@sanmateocourt.org

Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063

Dear Judge Novak:

Please accept this letter as the formal response from the Connect Community Charter School Board of Directors to the 2013-14 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury report "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?" released June 9, 2014.

The Connect Board of Directors reviewed the report and approved this response at its June 26, 2014 meeting, which was conducted in accordance with the Brown Act.

Connect has just completed its first year of operations, and is not in a position to agree or disagree with the finding related to existing communications between charter schools and traditional districts (F1, F2, and F4). We are in agreement with F3; we feel that the Ed Code allows a great deal of flexibility for instruction. We also agree that more instruction, through longer days or academic years, is likely to benefit students (F5).

With regard to the first recommendation of the report (R1), Connect is committed to the idea of sharing proven, research-driven instructional approaches to improve teaching in all settings. We are especially interested in research on approaches shown to be effective in diverse populations that include traditionally disadvantaged students. We support the idea of improving communications between district and charter leaders.

Connect's budgeting and planning process exists somewhat independently of that of the Redwood City School District, thought as our authorizer, the district provides oversight. The board considers that Connect's standard operations are aligned with the other recommendations (R2, R3, and R4) through our normal budgeting process, our accessible web site, and the Local Control Accountability Plan related to the Local



635 Oakside Ave.
Redwood City, CA 90463
www.connectrwc.org
(650) 562-7190

Control Funding Formula. Connect does provides a slightly longer school day (R2) and school year (R3) than is typical, and we are explicit about our mission and the goals related to it (R4).

The Connect Board appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Whitney Wood".

Whitney Wood
President, Board of Directors



Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

August 28, 2014

Re: Grand Jury Report, “**Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?**”

To the Honorable Lisa A. Novak:

This response was approved on August 28, 2014 at a public meeting of the board that governed our school when the report was filed in June 2014.

Finding 1: Our school works closely with its chartering high school district, and shares information whenever it is requested. In addition, we work closely with the district that houses our predominant feeder elementary and middle schools, and with its principals. The complexities of these relationships, as outlined in the footnotes to the report, are valid and true.

Finding 2: We agree only partially with this finding. LEA members of the County SELPA, and any schools within the County that receive categorical funds can participate in monthly meetings at the County Office of Education. These address topics that include special education programs, funding, and legal matters; federal categorical programs, funding, and legal matters; and so on. At the same time, we have not heard of “formalized, efficient” ways to share curriculum, instructional best practices, and the like that are sponsored by the County.

Finding 3: We disagree with this finding, though we acknowledge that the exemptions for charter schools are very helpful. While it is clear that Education Code is intended to meet the needs of students, it creates bureaucratic barriers in many cases, and some of the ideas are simply outdated and punitive. It is also a text that is dense and difficult to interpret, in part because of the various strictures that have been appended to, but not included in the code.

Finding 4: We are sure that these relationships vary depending upon the schools and districts in question.

Finding 5: We disagree that longer teaching cycles (whether longer days or longer years) will necessarily benefit students in the county. Investments should be made into robust training for all school stakeholders (administrators, teachers, aides, support staff) so that their time is better spent during the existing school year. This could even mean a shorter school year for students, and a longer training period for staff, without sacrificing the critically important summer “break.” Additionally, increasing interdisciplinary collaboration time amongst teachers is both energizing and more likely to produce dynamic instruction that engages students. Increasing recreational time for students, particularly emphasizing fresh air and movement increases positive educational outcomes and brain functioning. Increasing opportunities for internships and off-campus experiences increases student engagement and motivation. To simply expand compulsory time in school is not a sufficient response to meeting students’ needs.


Recommendation 1: Using monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop a written protocol for increasing communication seems like a reasonable starting point, but leaves out many of the stakeholders who have expressed concerns in the report. A plan that is responsive to diverse needs requires diverse perspectives.

Recommendation 2: This seems like a potential waste, unless the extension of the day is going to be extraordinarily wonderful for students and their families. If, for example, more resources will be used to provide recreation and enrichment, it seems like a wonderful investment. Resources might be better spent figuring out how to make the school day a more effective learning space and context. Schools cannot afford to have more resources taken away while being asked to do more. There are simply insufficient resources to do much of what is already required as it is.

Recommendation 3: This seems like a potential waste. Resources might be better spent figuring out how to make the school year a more effective learning space and context.

Recommendation 4: This seems like an excellent use of resources, particularly the emphasis on developing goals designed to produce better student outcomes, but only if the student outcomes are truly in the service of students achieving health, happiness, growth, self-efficacy, independence, and positive forward movement. Test scores, grades, and attendance are insufficient measurements alone. Posting mission statements publicly online is a first step to making them a source of accountability. Districts should also engage in responsible outreach to their stakeholder communities to share their missions, and should regularly solicit feedback as to whether they are fulfilling their missions. Outreach to some communities may differ from outreach to others.

Sincerely,



Deborah Stipek
President, Stanford New Schools

300 El Cerrito Avenue • Hillsborough, CA 94010

BOARD OF EDUCATION
GREGORY J. DANNIS
LYNNE ESSELSTEIN
DON GEDDIS
MARGI POWER
GILBERT WAI

SUPERINTENDENT
ANTHONY H. RANII

July 10, 2014

Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak,

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the Grand Jury Report "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?" which was received by this district on June 9, 2014, and approved at the Hillsborough City School District public Board meeting on June 24, 2014.

FINDINGS

- F1. **"Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County."**

Answer:

Though we cannot comment on how effectively charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County have actively shared information with traditional public schools county-wide, we can affirm that Charter Schools/Organizations have not actively shared information with the Hillsborough City School District. Therefore, we disagree partially with this finding due to inadequate information.

- F2. **"No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information."**

Answer:

We agree with this finding.

- F3. **"The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes."**

Answer:

The Ed Code does place some restrictions on a School's ability to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes. For example, there are restrictions regarding credentialing that make hiring difficult. Therefore, we disagree partially with this finding.

- F4. **“Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers’ unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students.”**

Answer:

Our district, schools, administrators, teachers, teacher unions and School Board are not contentious towards Charter Schools or each other. We cannot speak to this finding more widely. Therefore, we disagree partially with this finding due to inadequate information.

- F5. **“Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in san Mateo County.”**

Answer:

Longer teaching cycles may or may not be beneficial to students in a specific district. Local School Boards, informed by data and input from their stakeholders, are best equipped to determine what programs, practices, and innovations are likely to benefit students in their local district. Therefore, we disagree partially with this finding as longer teaching cycles may not benefit all students in San Mateo County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. **“By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents” meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.”**

Answer:

We agree with this recommendation and will work with other stakeholders to implement it within the specified time frame.

- R2. **“By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.”**

Answer:

The Governing Board of each School District should determine whether a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day is appropriate. The recommendation will not be implemented at this time as our students consistently

perform in the top 1% of students in the state of California, leading us to believe that an extended school day is not needed at this time.

- R3. **“By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.”**

Answer:

The Governing Board of each School District should determine whether a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year is appropriate. The recommendation will not be implemented at this time as our students consistently perform in the top 1% of students in the state of California, leading us to believe that an extended the school year is not needed at this time.

- R4. **“By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publically accessible website.”**

Answer:

The Local Control Accountability Plan already includes a mission statement and quantifiable goals and is available on a publically available website. Therefore, we consider this recommendation to have already been implemented.

If you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (650) 548-4210.

Sincerely,



Anthony Ranii
Superintendent



Jefferson Elementary School District

Martin Luther King Jr. Education Center
101 Lincoln Avenue, Daly City, CA 94015
(650) 991-1000 Fax (650) 992-2265
www.jsd.k12.ca.us

Governing Board

Shakeel Ali
Marie Brizuela
Rebecca Douglass, PhD
Joseph Otayde
Joseph Waters

Superintendent
Bernardo Vidales

August 27, 2014

Hon. Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

RE: Jefferson Elementary School District Response
2013-14 Grand Jury
Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?

Honorable Lisa A. Novak,

The Jefferson Elementary School District Board of Trustees understands and appreciates the concerns that have arisen regarding professional sharing and cross-sector implementation of successful practices between different types of school systems – public, private and charters in San Mateo County. The Grand Jury has correctly identified that adequate resource availability is critical to the sharing and implementation of best practices within and across school systems.

Since 2007-08 Public School systems have sustained over 20% in resource reduction and just recently have begun to see some additional money restored. If the legislature's plan is implemented on schedule, schools will again receive equivalent levels of funding as in 2007-2008 by 2020-21. Many charter schools have also experienced this drop in funding, however many have also partnered with benefactors or management organizations and benefited from additional funding rather than rely solely on state support for their operations.

Please see the following responses to the findings and recommendations in your report.

Finding 1

*Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County. **AGREE***

Finding 2

*No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE***

We do not have sufficient information to determine the adequacy of actions the San Mateo County Office of Education has taken to facilitate or initiate sharing of information. The San Mateo County Office of Education has not directly authorized any charter schools and has little if any oversight, guidance or influence in the operations of charter schools chartered by local school boards in the County. Most charter schools are independently operated and have no oversight by any jurisdictional authority except the State Department of Education.

Finding 3

*The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE***

Education Code provides guidance and direction and often influences the program offered in a school district. While there may not be restrictions when considering length of school day or year – two practices, among many, on which the Grand Jury has elected to highlight and focus – there are restrictions and guidance offered in Education Code that may hinder the implementation of programs or offerings available in some charter schools. For example, the requirement for students to have a minimum amount of minutes in physical education or to be supervised by appropriately credentialed teachers are found in Education Code, though these guidelines are not always adhered to in some charter schools. The additional flexibility found in some charter schools by being exempt from sections of the Education Code, can allow for cost savings that can impact other areas of programing that support student learning outcomes that are beyond the length of the instructional day or year.

Finding 4

*Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in the County. **DISAGREE***

This is a simplistic and insufficiently nuanced finding. The report highlights the critical nature of time for collaboration and sufficient funding in order to learn and implement successful practices, though it is not listed as a finding. In our experience, educators, regardless of system or rank, are interested in outcomes that will benefit students and will work collaboratively in order to determine how to make that happen given that time and resources allow for the collaboration as well as the implementation.

Finding 5

*Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE***

In principle we can agree, but time is not the only variable that impacts outcomes, what students do during that extra time or who is guiding them can have equal, if not greater, impact on learning outcomes as time. There are some who claim that students spend too much time in school and with the right program under the right conditions, more students can achieve mastery in less time than in the traditional or charter school setting.

Recommendation 1

By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meeting with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

NOT APPLICABLE. NOT IMPLEMENTED.

The Jefferson Elementary School District does not have jurisdiction over the San Mateo County Superintendents Association but will defer to the leadership of the chair and the San Mateo County Office of Education.

Recommendation 2

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day. **NOT WARRANTED OR REASONABLE.**

Recommendation 3

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year. **NOT WARRANTED OR REASONABLE.**

In our opinion, Recommendations 2 and 3 are beyond the purview of the Grand Jury function and delve too far into the operation and management of a local school district. While these recommendations are well-intended, they bypass the local subsidiarity principle that the Governor and Legislature have written into the Local Control Funding Formula expectations and process. In our district we have adopted a community process to yearly identify the priorities of programs for funding that will best support improved achievement outcomes for students and we will continue to engage in that process to update our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). If longer school days and years arise as high priorities and are determined to be the action that will spur an increase in achievement for our students, we will engage in a process to develop a plan for its viability.

The San Mateo County Office of Education has also advocated, under the auspices of The Big Lift campaign, an increase to the opportunities for students to participate in engaging summer experiences by facilitating partnerships between local providers and school districts. We will continue to engage in these processes and as funds and opportunities become available take the necessary steps to implement in the fashion that best suits our context. In addition, Jefferson Elementary School District exceeds the minimum amount of minutes required at every grade level and there are currently many programs in place that extend the school day and school year for many students as well as programs that increase learning opportunities besides lengthening the school day and/or year.

Recommendation 4

By December 31, 2014 develop at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website. **IMPLEMENTED.**

The LCAP, which is currently posted on our website includes not only quantifiable goals designed to achieve improved student outcomes but also the actions that the district will undertake to make progress toward those goals. The district Mission Statement is also posted.

This response was approved by the Jefferson Elementary School District Board of Trustees at its regularly scheduled public meeting on August 27, 2014.

Sincerely,



Bernardo Vidales
Superintendent



Jefferson Union High School District

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES – SERRAMONTE DEL REY

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Board of Trustees

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Kalimah Y. Salahuddin
Rosie U. Tejada

Thomas H. Minshew
Superintendent

September 3, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak:

On September 2, 2014, during a regularly scheduled public meeting, the Jefferson Union High School District Board of Trustees reviewed and approved the 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?" Below are responses to the findings and recommendations in the report.

FINDINGS:

1. *Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.*

The District agrees with the Grand Jury that charter schools and charter school organizations are not actively sharing information with the traditional public schools in San Mateo County.

2. *No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.*

The District agrees with the Grand Jury that there is no formalized, efficient avenue in the County for sharing information. However, the County is not opposed to facilitate the sharing of information.

3. *The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.*

The District agrees that the California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes. However, charter schools' flexibility in areas of curriculum and instruction may affect student learning outcomes.

4. *Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in the County*

The District disagrees with the finding. There may be minor contentions that exist, but not enough to interfere with the collaboration between administrators and teachers to benefit student learning.

5. *Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.*

The District partially agrees with the finding. Additional time could benefit students, but the additional time needs to be meaningful to result in achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. *By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meeting with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.*

Not applicable. The Jefferson Union High School District does not have jurisdiction over the San Mateo County Superintendents Association.

2. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.*

Not feasible at this time as extending the school day involves negotiations with the Union Membership and will involve serious financial implications that are not viable at this point.

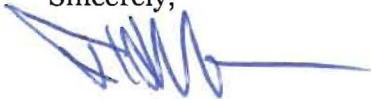
3. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.*

Not feasible at this time as extending the school year involves negotiations with the Union Membership and will involve serious financial implications that are not viable at this point.

4. *By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.*

The District adopted a Strategic Plan in March of 2014 which includes a mission statement. This is accessible at the District's website. The Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), which is also posted on the website, contains measurable goals to improve student achievement.

Sincerely,



Thomas H. Minshew
Superintendent



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(650) 854-2880

Las Lomas School
299 Alameda de las Pulgas
Atherton, CA 94027
(650) 854-5900

La Entrada School
2200 Sharon Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 854-3962

August 1, 2014

Hon. Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak,

This letter responds to the 2013-14 Grand Jury report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Response to Findings:

Finding 1: Charter schools and charter organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

The Las Lomas Elementary School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 2: No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the county for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

The Las Lomas Elementary School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 3: The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

The Las Lomas Elementary School District agrees with this finding as it pertains to the sharing of information and best practices between public traditional schools and charter schools.

Finding 4: Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

The Las Lomas Elementary School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 5: Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

The Las Lomas Elementary School District agrees with this finding.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

The logical entity to promote improved communication between charter and non-charter schools is the County Office of Education. The Las Lomas Elementary School district will not facilitate or implement this process and will leave it up to the SMCOE to do so.

Recommendation 2: By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Recommendation 3: By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Recommendation 4: By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

Recommendations 2, 3, 4 should be driven by the Las Lomas School District and therefore the recommendations will not be implemented at this time. The Las Lomas Elementary School District may initiate a process to develop a timeline that works for LLESB and takes into account the priorities already established by the District's Governing Board through the strategic planning process as well as the recently adopted LCAP. While we do not have issues with extending the school year or the school day, there are budget and union contract implications and a complicated bus schedule that needs to be considered. Furthermore, the Las Lomas Elementary School District is embarking on a building program which will take considerable time over the course of the 2014-15 school year and beyond. We have already established priorities for the 2014-15 school year and our building plan limits our capacity as a small district to take on one more initiative.

The Las Lomas Elementary School District's Governing Board discussed and approved this response at their August 13, 2014 School Board Meeting. Please call me if you require any additional information or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa Cesario
Superintendent, LLESB
lcesario@llesd.org
650-854-2850



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Board of Education
Jeff Child
Maria Hilton
Scott Hinshaw
Joan Lambert
Terry Thygesen

Every child achieves academic excellence.
Every child becomes emotionally and physically stronger.
Every child discovers and grows their talents.

Maurice Ghysels, Ed.D.,
Superintendent

September 9, 2014

Diane White,
Chief Business Official

Dear Judge Novak:

Kathryn Christopherson,
Human Resources

The Menlo Park City School District has reviewed the Grand Jury Report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?" Thank you for your interest in exploring the relationship between charter schools and their authorizing educational agencies. We have reviewed the Findings and Recommendations and have the following responses and comments, as approved by the District's Board of Trustees on September 9, 2014.

Alicia Bowman,
Director, Student
Assessment, Program
Evaluation and Research

Findings

Al Hart,
Director, Technology

F1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

Jennifer Kollmann,
Director, Curriculum and
Instruction

The Menlo Park City School District does not presently have any charter schools operating under its supervision who would be responsible for sharing information. We **agree** that charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County have not actively shared information with the MPCSD. The MPCSD has no information about whether charter schools in other school districts are receiving such information.

Ginny Maiwald,
Director, Student Services

F2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Ahmad Sheikholeslami,
Director, Facilities and
Operations

We **agree** that no efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools. We **disagree** that the County Office of Education is not "adequately" facilitating such sharing of information, because this implies some kind of failure to perform a duty or role. There is no statutory requirement that the County Office of Education act as a liaison between charter schools and district schools. and due to the unique structure of the relationship between charter schools and their authorizers, it is not evident that the County Office of Education should play such a role.

We are a community working together to inspire high academic achievement among all students, serve their needs, challenge their minds, and enrich their lives, laying a foundation for success and participation in our democratic society and as citizens of the world.

F3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

We **partially agree** that the California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes. There are several provisions of the Education Code that are obsolete, overly restrictive, and should be repealed or amended, but the MPCSD believes that all California public schools should either operate under the same set of rules or that all public schools be expressly allowed by state law to adopt local practices. A public school should not have greater flexibility by virtue of the fact it is run by a non-profit's Board of Directors rather than by elected representatives of the residents of a school district. If a particular provision of the Education Code is shown by the data to interfere in teaching and learning, it should be repealed for *all* schools (or should become a matter of local policy only), not just for charter schools.

F4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

We **disagree** with this finding. The MPCSD does not find there to be "underlying contentions" between charter schools and traditional public schools any greater than the disagreements that appear between other public agencies with different representatives, particularly when one agency has control over a resource desired by the other agency. The finding improperly assumes that there is an obviously optimal allocation of resources and that the disagreements can be attributed merely to political or personality conflicts.

F5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

We **agree** with this finding.

Recommendations

R1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

This recommendation is directed to the County Office of Education; therefore, the Board cannot respond to or implement this recommendation. However, we **partially disagree** with this recommendation. A charter school is responsible to its authorizing agency and to its student and parent population. The idea of a "relevant meeting" is a matter for the charter school and its authorizer to work out. Moreover, different charter schools desire different levels of engagement with other educational institutions. For these charter schools, independence is not a bug, but a feature. Having a countywide approach to these relationships is not beneficial. If the County Superintendent believes that a charter school may benefit from an invitation to a particular meeting involving other educational agencies, she is free to extend such an invitation.

R2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

We **partially agree** with this recommendation, but the timeframe is **not warranted** and is **unreasonable**. The school day is the subject of collective bargaining agreements with our employees. The issue will be raised in our regular negotiations cycle, which may not result in resolution before December 31.

R3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

We **partially agree** with this recommendation, but the timeframe is **not warranted** and is **unreasonable**. The school day is the subject of collective bargaining agreements with our employees. The issue will be raised in our regular negotiations cycle, which may not result in resolution before December 31.

R4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

We **agree** with this recommendation and have **implemented** it. A copy of our Mission Statement, Vision, and Core Values is attached. Moreover, a copy of our District's Local Control Accountability Plan is available online.



02 September 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak,

The Millbrae Elementary School District (MESD) has received and reviewed the 2013-14 Grand Jury Report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County." We appreciate the Grand Jury's interest in studying current practices regarding the sharing of information between and among charter schools and school district in San Mateo County. We have read and considered the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury and have the following comments to offer.

FINDINGS

1. *Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.*

Response: Partially disagree. There is no formal mechanism for sharing information between charter and traditional public schools.

2. *No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.*

Response: Partially disagree. Although there is no formal structure for all charter and non-charter schools to share information, the County Office of Education has invited charter school organizations to topical meetings where ideas and practices have been shared informally.

3. *The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.*

Response: Partially agree. MESD agrees that the California Education Code does not place insurmountable obstacles in the way of a school's ability to be successful or in its ability to foster better student outcomes. MESD does note, however, that school districts in San Mateo County do not have the same flexibility as that provided to charter schools in the California Education Code.



4. *Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.*

Response: MESD disagrees with the scope of this finding. While in individual situations underlying contentions may exist, MESD does not believe such contentions are widespread in this county. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and employee bargaining units, may stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

5. *Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.*

Response: MESD partially agrees with this finding. Today most other developed nations in the world have longer school year than is currently the case in the United States. International achievement data indicate that students from such nations are achieving at a higher level than American students. A longer school day can also be beneficial to student learning, as long as such a day provides developmentally appropriate activities commensurate with the needs of different age groups. However, longer school days or teaching cycles alone will not improve student performance. There are several variables that must be considered: Such additional hours and days must be filled with meaningful instruction provided by well-qualified and well-trained teachers who have appropriate academic preparation, sufficient planning time, and multiple opportunities for collaboration. Most importantly, longer teaching cycles would require additional funding to compensate employees who would be working an extended day or year and instructional materials needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.*

Response: MESD will defer to the Chair of the San Mateo County Superintendent's Association and the San Mateo County Office of Education for discussion and direction on this recommendation.

2. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.*

Response: Consideration of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with each District's bargaining units, financial resources, student goals, curriculum development and staffing.



Millbrae Elementary School District ♦ 555 Richmond Drive ♦ Millbrae, CA 94030
650-697-5693 ♦ 650-697-6865 (fax) ♦ millbraeschooldistrict.org

3. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine viability of extending the school year.*

Response: Consideration of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with each District's bargaining units, financial resources, student goals, curriculum development and staffing.

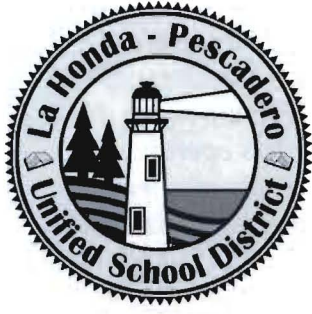
4. *By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.*

Response: The MESD has already partially implemented this recommendation through the goals listed in the publicly displayed Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and targeted Action Plans of the District. Mission statements will be reviewed through the Academic Committees

the Millbrae Elementary School District on September 2, 2014.

Very truly yours,

Linda C. Luna
Superintendent
Millbrae Elementary School District



LA HONDA-PESCADERO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
PO Box 189 • 360 Butano Cut Off, Pescadero, CA 94060
650-879-0286 • FAX 650-879-0816

Amy Wooliever, Superintendent

September 1, 2014

Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?

Dear Judge Novak,

The La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District has reviewed the Grand Jury Report titled, "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?" Responses to findings and recommendations are listed below.

Findings and Response

F1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

Response: Partially disagree. Charter schools and charter school organizations welcome interaction and visits from traditional public schools in the County. Charter school organizations have welcomed LHPUSD at site visits for the purpose of sharing information. While there is no formalized outreach effort, LHPUSD staff has not encountered obstacles in efforts to learn about charter school operations.

F2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Response: The Board lacks the information to determine whether there are structured information sharing mechanisms in San Mateo County between charter and non-charter schools. There are no charter schools operating within district boundaries.

F3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

Board of Trustees

Andy Wilson, Bob McCahon, Humberto Perez, Peter Bohacek, Connie Sarabia

Response: The California Education Code is an exceedingly detailed, complex document with provisions addressing a wide variety of circumstances and situations. Due to the broadness of this statement, it is difficult for the Board to determine if it agrees or disagrees with this finding. The Board agrees that traditional public schools bound by Ed Code provisions have less operational flexibility than charter schools not bound by California Ed Code. While this flexibility may lead to better pupil outcomes in some circumstances, it is not easily determined whether it leads to better pupil outcomes in all circumstances.

F4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

Response: Disagree. The LHPUSD Board has not encountered underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools. Constructive collaboration at LHPUSD is not stymied by underlying contentions between school administrators and teachers' unions.

F5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

Response: Agree. A longer day/year with meaningful instruction can have a positive impact on student achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

R1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

Response: The superintendent will continue to attend monthly superintendent meetings with the San Mateo Superintendent's Association but will defer to the leadership of the Association to determine how to best implement the recommendation.

R2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented by December 31, 2014. LHPUSD already operates extended day at 2 district schools and extended year K-8. LHPUSD staff will evaluate the feasibility of district-wide extended day by June 15th, 2015 in conjunction with LCAP planning and teacher contract negotiations.

R3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Board of Trustees

Andy Wilson, Bob McCahon, Humberto Perez, Peter Bohacek, Connie Sarabia

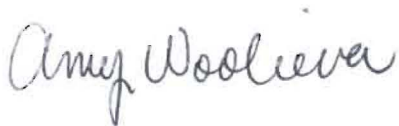
Response: LHPUSD operates an extended school year for K-8 students. The school calendar for 2014-2015 has an additional 40 instructional days for K-8 students. These additional days are held during Professional Development Days, February and Spring Break as well as during the summer. LHPUSD staff will determine the viability of extending the school year for 9-12 grade students by June 15, 2015.

R4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

Response: LHPUSD vision and mission can be found on the district website at www.lhpusd.com. For detailed, quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes, please see the district Local Control Accountability Plan (also on the website) which details specific yearly goals and the actions and resources targeted to achieve stated goals.

This response was reviewed by the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District Board of Trustees during the September 11, 2014 meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Sincerely,



Amy Wooliever
Superintendent



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Richard Faust
Andrea Gould
Matthew Levie
Eric Ruchames
Joan Weideman

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Wendy S. Tukloff, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Ray S. Avila, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent,
Human Resources/Integrated Services
Josephine Peterson
Chief Business Official
Tina Van Raaphorst
Director, Special Projects

ADDRESS

375 Reina del Mar Ave
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August 6, 2014

Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak:

Pacifica School District
Approved: August 6, 2014, Public Board of Education Meeting

Please accept this letter as the response of the Pacifica School District to your report entitled: Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?

Findings:

Grand Jury Finding #1. Charter Schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

Response: Disagrees partially with the finding.

At the present time, Pacifica School District does not have any charter schools within its District boundaries. Therefore, Pacifica School District has no direct knowledge on whether this finding is true or not. Therefore, the District cannot agree with this finding.

Grand Jury Finding #2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Response: Disagrees partially with the finding.

At the present time, Pacifica School District does not have any charter schools within its District boundaries. Therefore, Pacifica School District has no direct knowledge on whether this finding is true or not. Therefore, the District cannot agree with this finding.

Grand Jury Finding #3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

Response: Agree.

Grand Jury Finding #4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

Response: Disagrees partially with the finding.

At the present time, Pacifica School District does not have any charter schools within its District boundaries. Therefore, Pacifica School District has no direct knowledge on whether this finding is true or not. Therefore, the District cannot agree with this finding.

Grand Jury Finding #5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

Response: Agree.

Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends:

1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

Response: The recommendation will need further analysis, and Pacifica School District will defer to the Chair of the San Mateo County Superintendents' Association and the San Mateo County Office of Education for discussion and direction.

2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units. Therefore, this recommendation will need further analysis by the certificated labor partner LSEA and Pacifica School District Negotiations Team. Currently, Pacifica School District exceeds the minimum required instructional minutes for all grade levels. Additionally, Pacifica School District uses before school and after school time to extend students' learning options.

3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units. Therefore, this recommendation will need further analysis by the certificated labor partner LSEA and Pacifica School District Negotiations Team. Currently, Pacifica School District offers "Kick off to Kindergarten" for students coming into Pacifica School District, specifically targeting children with no pre-school experience. We also offer extended learning options for students during the summer months at our K-5 schools.

4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

Response: The Pacifica School District has already partially implemented this in that the District mission statement is posted on a publicly accessible website. The Pacifica School District has included within the development of its Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. It is the District's position that the LCAP is the better suited to have listed goals and metrics designed to produce better student outcomes than in the District's mission statement. The District's LCAP is also currently posted on a publicly accessible website.

Sincerely,



Wendy S. Tukloff, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Cc: Pacifica School District Board of Trustees

Portola Valley School District
Ormondale School (K-3) • Corte Madera School (4-8)

Board of Trustees: Caitha Ambler, Timothy McAdam, Jocelyn Swisher, Karen Tate, Linda Wong

Lisa Marie Gonzales, Ed.D., Superintendent

Jon Barth, MPA, Chief Business Official

January 21, 2015

Hon. Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

RE: Jefferson Elementary School District Response 2013-14 Grand Jury *Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?*

Honorable Lisa A. Novak,

The Portola Valley Elementary School District Board of Trustees understands and appreciates the concerns that have arisen regarding professional sharing and cross-sector implementation of successful practices between different types of school systems – public, private and charters in San Mateo County. The Grand Jury has correctly identified that adequate resource availability is critical to the sharing and implementation of best practices within and across school systems.

Since 2007-08 Public School systems have sustained over 20% in resource reduction and just recently have begun to see some additional money restored. If the legislature's plan is implemented on schedule, schools will again receive equivalent levels of funding as in 2007-08 by 2020-21. Many charter schools have also experienced this drop in funding, however many have also partnered with benefactors or management organizations and benefited from additional funding rather than rely solely on state support for their operations.

Please see the following responses to the findings and recommendations in your report.

Finding 1

*Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County. **AGREE***

Finding 2

*No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE***

We do not have enough information to determine the adequacy of actions the San Mateo County Office of Education has taken to facilitate or initiate sharing of information. The San Mateo County Office of Education has not directly authorized any charter schools and has little if any oversight, guidance or influence in the operations of charter schools chartered by local school boards in the County. Most charter schools are independently operated and have no oversight by any jurisdictional authority except the State Department of Education.

Finding 3

*The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE***

Education Code provides guidance and direction and often influences the program offered in a school district. While there may not be restrictions when considering length of school day or year – two practices, among many, the Grand Jury has elected to highlight and focus its report on – there are restrictions and guidance offered in Education Code that may hinder the implementation of programs or offerings available in some charter schools. For example, the requirement for students to have a minimum amount of minutes in physical education or to be supervised by appropriately credentialed teachers are found in Education Code, though these guidelines are not always adhered to in some charter schools. The additional flexibility found in some charter schools by being exempt from sections of the Education Code, can allow for cost savings that can impact other areas of programing that support student learning outcomes that are beyond the length of the instructional day or year.

Finding 4

*Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in the County. **DISAGREE***

This is a simplistic and insufficiently nuanced finding. The report highlights the critical nature of time for collaboration and sufficient funding in order to learn and implement successful practices, though it is not listed as a finding. In our experience, educators, regardless of system or rank, are interested in outcomes that will benefit students and will work collaboratively in order to determine how to make that happen given that time and resources allow for the collaboration as well as the implementation.

Finding 5

*Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE***

In principle we can agree, but time is not the only variable that impacts outcomes, what students do during that extra time or who is guiding them can have equal if not larger impact on learning outcomes as time. There are some who claim that students spend too much time in school and with the right program under the right conditions, more students can achieve mastery in less time than in the traditional or charter school setting.

Recommendation 1

*By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meeting with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts. **NOT APPLICABLE. NOT IMPLEMENTED.***

Response: The recommendation will need further analysis, and Portola Valley Elementary School District will defer to the Chair of the San Mateo County Superintendent's Association and the San Mateo County Office of Education for discussion and direction.

Recommendation 2

*By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day. **NOT WARRANTED OR REASONABLE.***

Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units. Therefore, this recommendation will need further analysis by the certificated labor partner PVTa and Portola Valley Elementary School District Negotiations Team. Currently, Portola Valley Elementary School District exceeds the minimum required instructional minutes for all grade levels. Additionally, Pacifica School District uses before school and after school time to extend students' learning options.

Recommendation 3

*By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year. **NOT WARRANTED OR REASONABLE.***

Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units. Therefore, this recommendation will need further analysis by the certificated labor partner PVTa and Portola Valley Elementary School District Negotiations Team. Currently, Portola Valley Elementary School District offers a shift to full-day Kindergarten at the mid-point in the year, which is a specific enhancement offering significant benefit to students coming to Portola Valley Elementary School District. We also offer extended learning options for students during the summer months at our K-8 schools.

In our opinion, Recommendations 2 and 3 are beyond the purview of the Grand Jury function and delve too far into the operation and management of a local school district. While these recommendations are well-intended, they bypass the local subsidiarity

principle that the Governor and Legislature have written into the Local Control Funding Formula expectations and process. In our district we have adopted a community process to yearly identify the priorities of programs for funding that will best support improved achievement outcomes for students and we will continue to engage in that process to update our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). If longer school days and years arise as high priorities and are determined to be the action that will spur an increase in achievement for our students, we will engage in a process to develop a plan for its viability.

The San Mateo County Office of Education has also advocated, under the auspices of The Big Lift campaign, an increase in opportunities for students to participate in engaging summer experiences by facilitating partnerships between local providers and school districts. We will continue to engage in these processes and as funds and opportunities become available take the necessary steps to implement in the fashion that best suits our context. In addition, there are currently many programs in place that extend the school day and school year for many students and there are many ways to increase learning opportunities besides lengthening the school day and/or year.

Recommendation 4

*By December 31, 2014 develop at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website. **IMPLEMENTED.***

The LCAP, which is currently posted on our website (and that of other districts) includes not only quantifiable goals designed to achieve improved student outcomes but also the actions that the district will undertake to make progress toward those goals. The district Mission Statement is also posted.

This response was approved by the Portola Valley Elementary School District Board of Trustees at its regularly scheduled public meeting on January 21, 2015

Sincerely,

Lisa Marie Gonzales. Ed.D.
Superintendent
Portola Valley School District



"OUR CHILDREN - OUR FUTURE"

Ravenswood City School District

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

2120 Euclid Avenue, East Palo Alto, California 94303
(650) 329-2800 Fax (650) 323-1072

Board Members:

Ana Maria Pulido, President
Sharifa Wilson, Vice President
Marco Chavez, Clerk
Marcelino López, Member
Charlie M. Knight, Member

Dr. Gloria Hernandez-Goff
Superintendent

January 5, 2015

Honorable Lisa A. Novak,

This letter is in response to the Grand Jury findings of 2013-2014 entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

As to the findings: The Ravenswood City School District is in agreement with the findings. However, in all fairness to the San Mateo County Office of Education, the responsibility for ensuring sharing of best practices between public and charter schools has not historically been their policy and practice.

F1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

F2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

F3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

F4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

F5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

As to the recommendations from the Grand Jury:

R1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

The monthly meetings held by the San Mateo County Office of Education have been including information on charter school outcomes and best practices. There has not yet been active participation by any charter school administrators.

R2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

The Ravenswood City School District through contract negotiations with the teachers union and classified union has lengthened the school day for Transitional Kindergarten through third grade by forty minutes daily. Fourth through eighth grades have increased the school day by ten minutes.

R3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

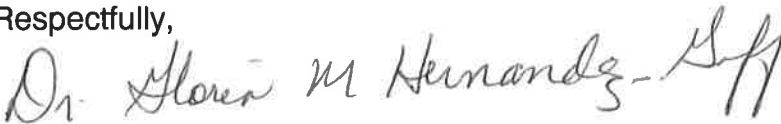
The Ravenswood City School District, again, through contract negotiations with the teachers union and classified union, has extended the school year by adding three days to the contract year.

R4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

The Ravenswood City School District is developing a new Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan which will be board approved by June 2015.

If you have further questions or need clarification, please contact me at ghernandez@ravenswoodschools.org.

Respectfully,



Dr. Gloria M. Hernandez-Goff
Superintendent

Board Approved on: January 15, 2015

REDWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

750 Bradford Street • Redwood City • CA 94063 (650) 423-2200 FAX: (650) 423-2204

Board of Education

María Díaz-Slocum, President
Dennis McBride, Vice President
Alisa MacAvoy, Clerk
Hilary Paulson
Shelly Masur



Superintendent

Jan Christensen

August 27, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

Dear Judge Novak,

The Redwood City School District has received and reviewed the 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report entitled "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County." We have read and considered the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury and have the following response.

FINDINGS:

1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools.
 - The district can not respond for all the schools in San Mateo County but the Redwood City School District has a long history of working collaboratively with its charter schools and sharing information. The District authorized a new charter school that opened in the 2013-2014 school year and was actively engaged with representatives from the charter school on a variety of issues.
 - The District has subsequently authorized two new charter schools scheduled to open in 2015-2016 school year. Both district staff and school board members visited the same charter schools (KIPP and Rocketship) in other districts. Both charter schools have shared books and information with the district about their schools' programs.
 - We are also working with an outside entity, Innovate Public Schools, to revitalize one of our schools. This involves the principal and assistant principal of the school working with new charter principals on similar change initiatives.
2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

- The District cannot speak for the County Office of Education, but generally concurs with this finding.
3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.
 - The Redwood City School District does not concur with that finding.
 - School districts have far less flexibility to implement reforms in schools than do charter schools.
 - The California Education Code places many restrictions on school districts that are not applicable to charter schools.
 4. Underlining contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.
 - The Redwood City School District disagrees with the scope of this finding. In fact, the District has maintained excellent relationships with its current charter school that is co-located with another district school on the Fair Oaks campus. The two principals worked together to ensure student safety and shared facilities in an amicable manner.
 - Charter school staff were very positive about their relationship with the district staff and even praised the head of maintenance for his efforts to ensure them adequate facilities.
 - It is the expectation that there will be similar, positive communications between the District and the two, new charter schools when they open in 2015.
 5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer schools days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.
 - The Redwood City School District agrees with this finding.

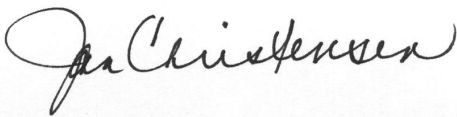
RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. By December 31, 2014 utilize monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.
 - The monthly superintendent meetings in San Mateo County are organized and run by the San Mateo County Superintendents' Association. The President is elected by the Association and he/she establishes the monthly agendas with the rest of the elected board members.
2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

- The Redwood City School District has already considered lengthening the school day.
 - It would be subject to negotiation with the Redwood City Teachers Association.
 - Generally, if the school day is to be lengthened it would require additional compensation for the teachers.
 - The Redwood City School District has gone through years of budget cuts due to the state cuts to revenue limit districts and does not have funds at this time to increase the teachers' day.
 - The Redwood City School District does have after school programs that students may participate in at all of its schools. Many of these programs go until 6 p.m. every day. Funding for these programs are paid for by the grant monies or are fee based.
3. By December 31, 2014 develop at a district level, detailed mission statements, which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.
- The Redwood City School District has had a posted mission statement on its website for many years. The School Board adopted goals that guide the district. During the 2012/13 school year, those goals were reaffirmed and specific objectives were incorporated, which include increasing access to summer and after school. It also has copies of each school's plan to improve student achievement, the district's plan, and the district's newly adopted LCAP. All of those include quantifiable goals to increase student achievement. To read more about the Redwood City School District's goals, please visit:
<http://www.rcsd.k12.ca.us/Page/8>.

Both the Grand Jury Report and the responses of the Redwood City School District were presented to the Redwood City School Board of Education on August 27, 2014.

Sincerely,



Jan Christensen
Superintendent

Jennifer Blanco
Patrick J. Flynn
John P. Marinos
Kevin J. Martinez
Henry Sanchez, M.D.



David E. Hutt, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Ellen Merritt
Director of Student Services and
Special Education

August 13, 2014



The San Bruno Park School District agrees with the five (5) findings published in the report, "Educational Frenemies" with the following perspective:

Finding #4: I know of no specific "contentions" that exist on a county-wide scale between administration and teachers at charter and traditional schools; each local educational agency has unique operational issues and challenges that make respective applications unique.

Finding #5: Longer teaching cycles do have the potential to benefit students. Such potential is only realized through actual attendance, sound management of instructional opportunities and aligned developmentally appropriate assignments to grade level expectations.

Recommendation #1:

The recommendation will not be implemented because the scope of authority rests with the county office of education; not the district.

Recommendation #2:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but is part of the district's adopted Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) which will be implemented in a future time frame over the next three years.

Recommendation #3:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but is part of the district's adopted Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) which will be implemented in a future time frame over the next three years.

Recommendation #4:

The recommendation has been implemented. The district's mission statement is:

"The mission of the San Bruno Park School District is to provide our diverse community of learners a challenging and high-level academic program in a positive, safe and secure environment by cultivating creativity, curiosity, compassion, and respectful coexistence."

The overarching goals to address this mission include:

- To ensure that students understand and appreciate cultural diversity
- To provide curriculum which develops students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills.
- To use technology to facilitate effective instruction, administrative support, and community outreach.
- To provide students with organizational structures and educational opportunities which are responsive to the unique and challenging needs of students.
- To establish partnerships with parents, community members, and businesses in order to ensure broad participation in the educational process.
- To provide students with highly trained motivated and competent staff who are innovative, creative, adaptable, and enthusiastic about student progress.
- To engage in long-range fiscal and program planning which ensures a continued quality educational program by giving first priority to direct services to students, encouraging cost effective operations, providing adequate resources for contingencies and seeking additional financial support.



SAN CARLOS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Craig Baker, Ed.D., Superintendent
Robert Porter, Chief Operations Officer
Mary Jude Doeringhaus, Assistant Superintendent

1200 Industrial Road, Unit 9
San Carlos, CA 94070
Voice: (650) 508-7333
Fax: (650) 508-7340
www.scsdk8.org

August 29, 2014

Hon. Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Dear Judge Novak:

On August 28, 2014, the Governing Board ("Board") of the San Carlos School District ("SCSD") in its regularly scheduled public meeting discussed and agreed on the following response to the above referenced Grand Jury report ("Report").

General Response:

We find the Report issued on June 9, 2014 by the 2013-14 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury ("Grand Jury") to state both fairly obvious conclusions and generally opine on findings that do not apply to our district. As a district that has six out of seven schools that are charter schools, we all work together on a regular basis, regardless of whether the school is an independent charter (of which we have one), a dependent charter (of which we have 5), or our (one and only) non-charter school. We also work with both charter and non-charter schools throughout California and over the years have been invited to share our experience and knowledge at local and statewide educational conferences.

Response to Findings:

F1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

The District wholly disagrees with this finding as it is meant to apply to our District. We constantly collaborate with both charter and non-charter schools throughout the County.

F2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Board of Education ~ Adam Rak • Carol Elliott • Kathleen Farley • Seth Rosenblatt • Nicole Bergeron

The District only partially agrees with this finding. Again, our District has found it relatively easy to engage in learning opportunities to learn from and with other schools, both charter and non-charter throughout the County. We have never seen it as the responsibility of the County Office of Education to make this happen, and so we cannot address this directly. However, last year alone, the SMCOE invited our Superintendent and his staff to give presentations to County districts on the various innovations we've undertaken over the past several years.

F3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

The District wholeheartedly disagrees with this finding. There are far too many limitations put on schools by the California Education Code. These regulations do indeed serve to block the creativity of schools and individual educators and otherwise hamper their abilities to provide truly innovative learning experiences and learning spaces.

F4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

The District agrees with this statement as it applies to our District. We do note that the state of relations between administrators and teachers' unions is a separate topic not directly addressed by this report and seemingly outside the scope of this report.

F5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

The District absolutely agrees, which is why our strategic and implementation plans (that apply to all our schools—charter and non-charter alike) address this point. We have attached our Strategic Plan to this response. However, the Report overstates the simplicity in implementing such solutions, including the increased financial resources needed as well as other structural and regulatory hurdles.

Response to Recommendations:

R1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

This recommendation would appear to only apply to the SMCOE, but SCSD would certainly participate if any such discussions. Again, we have always been open to countywide conversations and sharing of educational practices with leaders of charter and non-charter schools.

R2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

We are already in the process of implementing a Strategic Plan which addresses solutions such as this, particularly the notion of reconsidering the traditional time and space of schooling. Our two middle schools, in particular, have already been piloting several new ways of managing the school day that challenge traditional approaches to master scheduling. We welcome the support of others

in the County, but we do not see that as necessary to making such changes. What would make a difference, however, would be an infusion of new legislation and funding that could actually support such efforts. Our timeframe for making these changes are inextricably connected to the funding that we hope will come soon to support these efforts. Without knowing when the state can and will provide such support, however, we simply cannot provide a timeline other than what is noted in our Strategic Plan (attached).

R3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

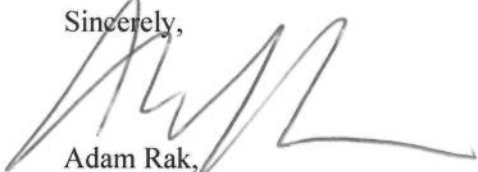
This response is the same as the response to R2, and it is unclear if it is feasible to have a plan by the specified date.

R4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements that include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

We have already produced such a document and it is posted on our website.

As we have done in the past, the Board would like to comment that these Grand Jury Reports and their responses have generally not produced useful information or guidance to the community, to our District, or to our students. Responding to these reports requires considerable staff time and energy that could otherwise benefit students and their learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Rak', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Adam Rak,
President,
Governing Board of the San Carlos School District.

SEQUOIA UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

480 JAMES AVENUE, REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA 94062-1098

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES (650) 369-1411

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CARRIE DU BOIS
OLIVIA G. MARTINEZ
ALAN SARVER
CHRIS THOMSEN
ALLEN WEINER

August 15, 2014

JAMES LIANIDES
SUPERINTENDENT

Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, Second Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Grand Jury Report: "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?"

Dear Judge Novak:

This letter is in response to the Civil Grand Jury Report, "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?" which was received by this district on June 9, 2014, and approved by the Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees on August 13, 2014.

Findings

F1. *"Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County."*

There are four charter high schools that operate within the Sequoia Union High School District. We are aware of their instructional programs both through direct communication and through the comments and experiences of students that return to us from their schools. I have found the charters to be more than willing to share information as their programs and instructional methodologies.

F2. *"No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information."*

The San Mateo County Office of Education can best respond to this finding.

F3. *"The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes."*

The California Education Code is highly regulatory and governs most aspects of how school districts operate. Some of these regulations may limit innovations that may lead to better student outcomes, therefore we disagree with the finding.

F4. *"Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county."*

The Sequoia Union High School District currently enjoys good relations with its independent charters. In the case of East Palo Alto Academy (EPAA), which recently became a dependent charter to the district, a successful collaboration occurred with the Sequoia District Teachers' Association allowing for a smooth transition to the district that preserved aspects of EPAA's uniqueness. Both positive and negative examples of relationships among all the parties can be cited across the county, state, and nation.

F5. *“Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.”*

High quality programs that extend the day and the year are beneficial to students. However, they are very costly and cannot be seriously considered unless significant new resources are provided.

Recommendations for San Mateo County School Districts

R1. *“By December 31, 2014, utilize the monthly superintendents’ meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.”*

Charter schools are already part of the San Mateo County Special Education Local Plan Area and participate in meetings alongside county school districts at meetings. The County Superintendents’ Association can explore the possible role of charter schools in county educational activities, but this is not a recommendation a single district can respond to.

R2. *“By December 31, 2014, develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.”*

There are many activities on our school campuses that extend the day for students. They include tutoring, participation in enrichment programs provided by outside non-profits, and participation in school-sponsored sports programs. The district cannot develop a plan to expand these programs unless new outside funding is identified.

R3. *“By December 31, 2014, develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.”*

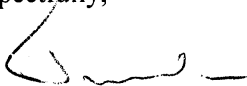
There are a number of targeted summer academic programs in place at our schools and a number of summer academic programs in the community supported by non-profits. All of these programs are dependent on continued funding sources. The district cannot develop a plan to extend the school year unless new outside funding is identified.

R4. *“By December 31, 2014, develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.”*

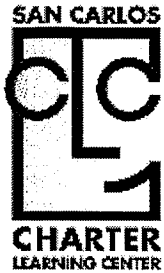
The district will be undertaking a strategic planning process this fall. The plan will be posted on the district website upon its completion.

The Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees approved this response to the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury at its meeting on August 13, 2013.

Respectfully,



James Lianides, Ed.D.
Superintendent



750 DARTMOUTH AVENUE
SAN CARLOS, CA 94070
PHONE: 650-508-7343
FAX: 650-508-7341

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Report: "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcome in Public Schools in San Mateo County?". This letter constitutes the complete response from San Carlos Charter Learning Center (SCCLC), a kindergarten through 8th grade charter school chartered by the San Carlos Elementary School District. This letter was presented and approved by the Board of Directors of SCCLC at a public meeting of the Board on September 6, 2014.

Findings

F1. Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

Response: We believe this is dependent upon the school district and individual charter school experiences. The San Carlos Charter Learning Center and the San Carlos School District have collaborated in many learning endeavors over our 20-year association. Most recently, the SCCLC developed a math networking lunch with the district 8th grade math teachers in the SCSD on Common Core standards. We collaborated with our district at the Learning Environments for Tomorrow Conference at Harvard this year. We have participated in the Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative and we frequently present at the Annual California Charter School Conference sharing best practices and ideas with other charter schools, board members and school district representatives.

F2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

Response: We agree that this is, in general, true.

F3. The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

APPROVED
9/16/2014

Response: There are many examples of successful public schools both charter and traditional, including schools operating under all the compliance requirements within the California Education Code.

F4. Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

Response: We believe this is dependent upon the school districts and individual charter school experiences. The SCCLC middle school math educators had been meeting regularly with the SCSD district middle school math educators for a couple of years when the district had grant money. We have continued to network (as mentioned above) to discuss textbooks, projects, problems, and assessments. Our middle school Language Arts teacher collaborates with Tierra Linda middle school teachers to discuss Common Core writing activities. In our experience the educators at the SCCLC have a good working relationship with district educators on our shared campus. The chief impediment is time and distance. It is more challenging to form relationships when there is no shared campus or other formal mechanisms for creating collaborative opportunities.

F5. Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

Response: Research has shown that increased instructional time can increase student learning but it is not a guarantee. Excellent instructional practices/pedagogical approaches, a school culture centered on academic performance, and, parent involvement often plays a stronger role in academic success.

Responses

R1. By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts

The San Carlos Charter Learning Center is not the County Office of Education, this response is primarily their responsibility. However, as a charter school, time permitting we would be willing to participate in this type of meeting if the meetings are arranged by the San Mateo COE.

R2. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

The San Carlos Charter Learning Center is not a school district and this response does not pertain to us. However, as a direct funded charter school and with our ability to design our own instructional calendar, our instructional minutes already exceed the required instructional minutes.

Annual Instructional Minutes		
Grade	Charter Schools Required	SCCLC 2014 – 2015
Kindergarten	36,000	40,035
Grades 1 – 3	50,400	53,565
Grade 4	54,000	54,450
Grades 5 – 8	54,000	56,220

We would be interested in the option of adding additional instructional time, funds permitting, but this is contingent upon sufficient state funding to support this additional instructional time.

R3. By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

The San Carlos Charter Learning Center not a school district and this response does not pertain to us. As a direct funded charter school we have made a determination to exceed the minimum number of instructional days required by charter schools from 175 days of instruction to 177 days of instruction. We exceed the instructional minutes required of charter schools as noted above. We would be interested in the option of adding additional instructional time, funds permitting, but this is contingent upon sufficient state funding to support this additional instructional time.

R4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

We are not a school district and this response is required of school districts. The SCCLC has information on our website which includes our Mission Statement located here: <http://scclc.net/mission/>

Our Vision Statement is located here: <http://scclc.net/vision/>

Sincerely,



Stacy Giles Emory
 School Director
 San Carlos Charter Learning Center



SAN MATEO-FOSTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

August 22, 2014

Hon. Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Review and Comments on San Mateo County Grand Jury Report
“Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools
in San Mateo County?”

To the Honorable Lisa A. Novak,

The June 9, 2014 San Mateo County Grand Jury Report referenced above has been reviewed. In the final report, the San Mateo County Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Trustees of each school district in San Mateo County do the following:

Recommendation R1:

“By December 31, 2014 utilize monthly superintendents’ meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

District Response:

A variety of opportunities currently exist for charter and non-charter educators to come together, primarily through professional development sessions offered by the San Mateo County Office of Education. The county superintendents can explore additional avenues for connecting local charter school leaders with non-charter peers.

Recommendation R2:

“By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.”

District Response:

Schools in the San Mateo-Foster City School District currently exceed the required number of instructional minutes for the school day.

Recommendation R3:

“By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.”

District Response:

The San Mateo-Foster City School District will determine the cost of extending the school year and viability of funding the increase in costs within the District’s existing budget by December 31, 2014.

1170 Chess Drive
Foster City, California 94404
650.312.7700 Tel
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www.smfcsd.net

Board of Trustees
Chelsea Bonini, Ed Coady, Lory Lorimer Lawson, Audrey Ng, Colleen Sullivan

Superintendent
Cynthia S. Simms, Ph.D.

Recommendation R4:

“By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.”

District Response:

The San Mateo-Foster City School District has a detailed Strategic Plan with quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes posted on the District’s publicly accessible website. The Strategic Plan includes the Mission Statement for the San Mateo-Foster City School District.

The Board of Trustees has discussed these topics at public meetings and will continue to do so. The Board of Trustees approved this response at their regularly scheduled meeting on August 21, 2014.

Sincerely,



Cynthia S. Simms, Ph.D.
Superintendent

cc: San Mateo-Foster City School District Board of Trustees
grandjury@sanmateocourt.org

San Mateo Union High School District

Kevin Skelly, Ph.D., Superintendent
Elizabeth McManus, Deputy Superintendent Business Services
Kirk Black, Ed.D., Deputy Supt. Human Resources & Instruction
KindyLee Mackamul, Associate Superintendent Student Services



September 10, 2015

The Honorable Susan Etezadi
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Etezadi,

It has come to my attention that our district neglected to respond to the Grand Jury Report: "Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County". I apologize for this oversight.

Attached please find our responses to your report.

Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

F1. Agree

No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

F2. Agree

The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

F3. Agree

Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

F4. The Board lacks the information necessary to fully respond to this finding as only one charter school operates within the District's boundaries and the Board is not privy to the operation of other school districts or charter schools.

Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

F5. Agree

Recommendations

By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meeting with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public

650 North Delaware Street, San Mateo, CA 94401-1732 (650) 558-2299 (650) 762-0249 FAX

Adult School - Aragon - Burlingame - Capuchino - Hillsdale - Middle College - Mills - Peninsula - San Mateo

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schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.

R1. This recommendation is directed to the County Office of Education; therefore the Board cannot respond to or implement this recommendation.

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.

R2. This Recommendation was not feasible given the expected completion date of December 31, 2014. The district is always searching for ways to improve the education of its students as constrained by district financial resources. It should be noted that an extended day and year is available for students for remedial or academic advancement.

By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.

R3. See Recommendation R2

By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

R4. The district is in the process of identifying quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes as part of its annual district goals. The mission statement is published on the district website and is easily accessible.

Both the Grand Jury Report and the responses of the San Mateo Union High School District were presented to the San Mateo Union High School District Board of Trustees on September 10, 2015.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Kevin Skelly, Ph.D.
Superintendent
San Mateo Union High School District



SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

398 B Street, South San Francisco, CA 94080-4423

(650) 877-8700 / Fax (650) 583-4717

www.ssfusd.org

SUPERINTENDENT
Alejandro Hogan

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Judith M. Bush
Maurice D. Goodman
Patrick A. Lucy
Philip J. Weise

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Lisa A. Novak
Judge of the San Mateo County Superior Court
c/o Charlene Kresevich
Hall of Justice and Records
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Novak:

The South San Francisco Unified School District ("District") has reviewed the 2013-2014 Grand Jury Report entitled *Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?* Pursuant to the request of the Grand Jury, the District's Governing Board considered the report at its meeting of November 6, 2014 and has directed me to transmit to you responses to the findings and recommendations set forth in the report.

Specifically, the Governing Board has directed that I send the following responses to you:

Grand Jury Finding No. 1. Charter Schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

District Response: Partially disagree. Charter and traditional schools welcome visits from other professionals and share information informally at conferences. The District also notes that staff from charter schools and traditional schools meet periodically at meetings of the San Mateo County Special Education Local Plan Area ("SELPA"), where matters relating to the delivery of special education services are discussed. However, beyond this, there is currently no formal mechanism for sharing information between us.

Grand Jury Finding No. 2. No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

District Response: Partially disagree. Although there is no formal structure for all charter and non-charter schools to share information, the County Office of Education has invited charter school organizations to professional development and to topical meetings where ideas and practices have been shared informally. Also, as noted, special education staff from charter schools and traditional schools meet and collaborate at SELPA meetings and activities.

Grand Jury Finding No. 3. *The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.*

District Response: Agree.

Grand Jury Finding No. 4. *Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.*

District Response: Disagree. The District's experience, and that of its staff, in terms of the interactions between charter school and traditional school staffs, has not been consistent with the Grand Jury's findings.

Grand Jury Finding No. 5. *Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.*

District Response: Partially disagree. The District's view is that longer school days and teaching cycles will not themselves improve student performance. Rather, there are several other variables that must be considered in terms of student outcomes, such as program, curriculum, instructional practices, and purpose of the extended time.

Grand Jury Recommendation No. 1. *By December 31, 2014 utilize the monthly superintendents' meetings with the County Office of Education to develop and implement a written protocol to create more robust communication among the leaders of charter and traditional public schools, including but not limited to determining a method for including charter school leaders in relevant meetings of leaders of non-charter schools and districts.*

District Response: The District's position is that the development of a formal structure for communication among leaders of charter and traditional public schools should be undertaken by the County Office of Education. The District defers to the Chair of the San Mateo County Superintendent's Association and the San Mateo County Office of Education with respect to whether and how to implement this recommendation.

Grand Jury Recommendation No. 2. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school day.*

District Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units, financial resources, student goals, curriculum development and staffing.

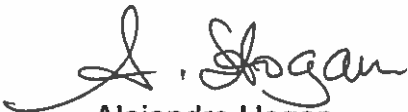
Grand Jury Recommendation No. 3. *By December 31, 2014 develop in each County school district a plan to determine the viability of extending the school year.*

District Response: Implementation of this recommendation will depend upon the negotiations with the District's bargaining units, financial resources, student goals, curriculum development and staffing.

Grand Jury Recommendation No. 4. By December 31, 2014 develop, at a district level, detailed mission statements which include quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. Mission statements will be posted on a publicly accessible website.

District Response: The District has already partially implemented this recommendation through the goals listed in its publicly available LCAP Plan. Mission statements are generally a reflection of the District's philosophy and do not include detailed, quantifiable goals. Board goals or values is the forum for detailed, quantifiable goals designed to produce better student outcomes. South San Francisco Unified School District's mission statement is posted on its website.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alejandro Hogan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Alejandro Hogan
Superintendent

cc: South San Francisco Unified School District Board of Trustees
John Nibbelin, County Counsel



455 Fifth Avenue
Redwood City, CA 94063

www.summitps.org
info@summitps.org

At Summit Public Schools, our mission is to prepare a diverse student body for success in a four-year college, and to be thoughtful, contributing members of society; and to have a transformative impact on public education. We are thrilled that our schools continue to be one of the many public school options for families across San Mateo County.

Aligned with our mission, Summit schools are committed to being true citizens of their communities, and do so by building strong, collaborative relationships in the communities in which they are located. We believe that active participation and authentic partnerships strengthen our schools and our wider communities, and each of our Summit schools embodies this belief in their respective neighborhood.

Since the founding of our flagship school, Summit Preparatory Charter High School, in 2003, we have also intently focused on fulfilling the promise of public charter schools to serve as laboratories of innovation and as examples of high-performing public schools that are fully operable on the California state allocation. We do this by:

- **Investing in educational research and development on college & career readiness** for all students. We believe deeply that every child should have the opportunity to succeed in college, career and life.
- Ensuring all curricula and learning resources that we develop from our educational research and development **are free and publicly available to any educator**. We recognize our peers are working tirelessly to provide college and career ready opportunities to their students, and we are committed to supporting them in their work.
- **Opening all Summit schools to our peers and communities**, both locally and from across the world, to share best practices and learn from each other.
- **Offering our nationally acclaimed professional development** model and resources to our peers, both locally and nationally.

Local examples of our partnership and collaboration include:

1. Over the past 12 years, Summit Preparatory Charter High School has built a collaborative relationship with the Sequoia Union High School District. The SUHSD continues to take proactive measures to provide a portfolio of high-quality high school options for all students, and they are planning to open two more small schools in the near future. We hope to work closely with the District to share what we have learned about operating small schools successfully and on the state allocation.
2. Summit Public Schools invited neighboring districts in San Mateo County to participate in free professional development alongside Summit teachers during the summer of 2014.



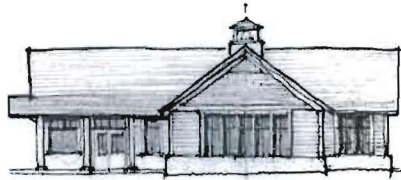
3. Teachers and administrators at Summit's Everest Public High School learned more about supporting undocumented students' college aspirations from a workshop led by Sequoia High School's Dream Club.
4. SUHSD and Summit educators have collaborated to improve their practice at the Stanford Summer Teacher Institute.
5. Multiple teachers in the SUHSD have opened their classrooms for observation by Summit colleagues.

National examples of this collaboration include:

1. Summit Public Schools invited teachers and school leaders from districts and charter schools across the country to participate in professional development during June and July of 2014. In total, over 150 educators from outside of Summit Public Schools accepted this invitation and joined us for 2-5 days of professional development, completely free of charge.
2. Summit Public Schools, in partnership with Girard Education Foundation, created the website ActivateInstruction.org, which provides free, accessible Common-Core aligned curriculum. In May of 2014, this site had over 20,000 unique visits.
3. Summit schools hosted tours for over 1,000 visitors, representing approximately 200 organizations from across the world, in the 2013/14 school year.

In short, we have made extensive efforts to collaborate with our colleagues in the county and beyond. We welcome the opportunity to continue this collaboration, and hope to participate in creating more robust channels of communication with districts in the county.

This response was approved by the Summit Public Schools Board of Directors at a public meeting on September 4, 2014.



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RECEIVED

SEP 22 2014

Dept. No. 13

Approved at the September 9, 2014 School Board Meeting

Date: August 27, 2014

To: San Mateo Civil Grand Jury

From: Woodside Elementary School District

Re: Educational Frenemies: Can Charter Schools Inspire Better Student Outcomes in Public Schools in San Mateo County?

The Woodside School District Governing Board is in receipt of the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding the relationship between charter schools and traditional public schools.

On behalf of the Woodside School District I will briefly share context regarding my professional connection with charter programs both in and out of this county. My doctoral dissertation centered on educational philosophies espoused by public schools both traditional and charter. In addition the research was conducted in Aspire public charter schools in East Oakland with the goal of determining the level of implementation of stated instructional goals and philosophies.

Within San Mateo County, Woodside Elementary School District has reached out to Everest and Summit Charter High Schools. One of our goals is to reach out to all the high schools our students may matriculate. I initiated those exchanges of information with the goal of better supporting our students in their high school selection process.

I will respond on behalf of WSD to each finding based on my collective experience with charter programs.

F1: Charter schools and charter school organizations in San Mateo County are not actively sharing information with traditional public schools in the County.

WSD would agree with this statement. We have received no invitations to share best practices with and among charter programs in San Mateo County.

F2: No formalized, efficient avenue exists in the County for sharing of information between charter and non-charter schools, and in particular the County Office of Education is not adequately facilitating such sharing of information.

A central depository of best practice, facilitated by the County Office of Education, would be welcomed by staff at WSD. Communication regarding our practices and programs that have been successful should not be limited to Charter programs, but should include all educational agencies in our county. There has been some discussion of LCAP plans being a possible resource for such an exchange.

F3: The California Education Code does not restrict a school's ability to be successful or to implement policies or practices leading to better student outcomes.

WSD does not agree with this finding in its entirety.

WSD staff has found that the largest deterrent to creative solutions to the delivery of programs lie within credentialing requirements. The most recent issues have arisen over the requirements for instructors in design thinking and/or instructional technology.

Diligent and well-trained administrators can mitigate the restrictions set forth by the Education Code in terms of supervision and evaluation.

Seniority requirements and the tenure timeline do impede our ability to implement programs as we see fit. The impact of the seniority system is problematic in the event of a layoff and the rehiring procedures. In some circumstances the rehiring restrictions and impact of layoff hearings can result in inappropriate teacher placements. The largest complaint from administrators in regards to tenure is the amount of time in which we are required to make such an important decision. 15 months is not a sufficient amount of time to determine quality or fit.

F4: Underlying contentions between administrators and teachers at charter and traditional public schools, as well as between school administrators and teachers' unions, stand in the way of constructive collaboration beneficial to students in this county.

WSD does not agree with this finding.

WSD does not have any antagonism toward charter programs and have no evidence that they do in return. As mentioned in the introduction we have an ongoing relationship with all our local high schools and work together to best support our families from K-12. There are no competing K-8 charters in our attendance area.

Our working relationship with our collective bargaining group is healthy and respectful. We are able to work creatively to solve problems, communicate with transparency and be student centered in all our collective decision-making.

We have no evidence that either assertion is true.

F5: Longer teaching cycles (whether in the form of longer school days or longer school years) are likely to benefit students in San Mateo County.

WSD does not agree with this finding.

WSD operates our school programs to include 180 instructional days.

Our 4-8th grade instructional minutes exceed the state requirement by 5,580 minutes. Our most recent API was 968. WSD students do extremely well academically. Our students and their families have full lives with many outside interests. We have no intention of expanding the school day or year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Beth Polito", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Beth Polito
Superintendent