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Online And Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand And Supplement Educational Opportunities In San Mateo County Schools

Issue

Are school districts in San Mateo County utilizing online and virtual classroom programs to expand and supplement the curriculum?

Background

Online learning is a teaching method in which students interact with a program via the internet and may have email access to an instructor. The student can work at anytime. In the virtual classroom, students connect to the class, at a pre-established time, via the internet, to create a real-time interactive version of the lecture environment. The virtual classroom gives students an electronic forum in which they can verbally interact with instructors and other students. Both online and virtual classroom systems are web-based, and in this report the term “web-based” is used where both are meant. (However the term “online” in the literature often refers to both.)

Web-based learning is available for coursework from Kindergarten through 12th grade, college, graduate school and occupational training, including teacher accreditation programs. Programs for special education students, gifted children, and English Language Learners are also available. Online learning and virtual classroom programs are used for K-12 specifically by:

- Students in states that have virtual schools for all core and expanded subjects which they choose, at no cost.
- Students who need to make up class work—for example, those that may transfer from another system in which they weren’t required to take courses that the new system requires.
- Students who need remedial training--who have, for example, failed a course.
- Special education students who can use audible web-based material read to them and who can use materials geared to their level of ability. Some special education students are found to be adept at computer use.
- Gifted and advanced placement students who want to take college credit courses.

- Teachers who use on-line resources and course segments to enrich learning opportunities in their classes.
- Teachers for teacher accreditation.
- Schools that want to expand their course offerings but don't have the financial resources to accommodate just a few students, especially for foreign languages.
- Home schools, for all subjects.
- Students who speak English as a second language.

Features of web-based learning programs include:

- Allowing teachers to teach from home in their area of expertise.
- Allowing course work to be quality controlled, tested and perfected.
- Interactive and engaging lessons, frequently testing students for understanding of the material, and redirecting them to review it, when understanding is weak.
- Continually measuring student progress and report student scores to designated teachers or administrators.
- Making all kinds of learning experiences accessible to all students, which helps to provide equality in education.
- Accessibility of programs, 24-hours a day.

Some states recognize the importance of online and virtual classroom learning. States such as Utah, Florida, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin (and others), operate “virtual schools” by offering a full menu of middle and high-school web-based courses free to students in the state. Some allow students outside these states to access these courses for a fee.

School districts that operate in states without virtual schools typically depend on multiple online learning providers, including postsecondary institutions, independent vendors and other state virtual schools, as well as developing and providing their own web-based courses.¹ San Mateo County school districts have used these resources since California is not a virtual school state.

Investigation

The Grand Jury interviewed a math teacher, two principals, two County Office of Education Board Members, and four district administrators, representing elementary, middle and high schools in San Mateo County school districts. The Grand Jury also visited one private school, and researched information on a variety of websites including a National Public Radio segment on Innovative Learning², Center for the Future of Learning and Teaching³, North American Council for Online Learning⁴, Eschool News⁵, and websites for many of the virtual schools.⁶

¹ The Sloan Consortium http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/survey/k-12_06.asp

² <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89070946&sc=emaf&sc=emaf>

³ www.cfl.org

⁴ www.nacol.org

⁵ www.eschoolnews.com

⁶ <http://www.utahvirtual.org/>, Florida <http://www.flvs.net/>, Michigan <http://www.mivhs.org/>, North Carolina <http://www.ncvps.org>, <http://www.virtualvirginia.org>, www.wisconsinvirtualschool.org, Mississippi <http://www.mvps.mde.k12.ms.us/>

Findings

The Grand Jury found that:

Although many studies are currently in progress, those done to date suggest that students taking online and virtual classroom programs outperform their peers. The studies also suggest that once startup costs are covered, the courses cost less than brick and mortar counterparts. (See Appendix 1 for references and a fuller discussion.)

The National Education Association, the nation's largest teacher's union,⁷ endorses web-based courses and advocates that teachers be trained to provide them. In the "Guide to Teaching Online Courses," the NEA writes: "Online courses now make it possible for students in even the most remote locations to have access to classes their home schools were previously unable to provide. The lesson of large-scale natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina is that the provision of educational services to students need no longer be constrained within classroom walls."⁸

With respect to Bay Area and San Mateo County Schools, the Grand Jury found:

1. A 2007 survey of 923 Bay Area elementary schools revealed that 41% of the teachers surveyed felt unprepared to teach science. The survey also showed that 80% of these teachers taught science--which is considered a core subject--less than one hour per week.⁹
2. In 2006, San Mateo County schools ranked tenth worst county (out of 58 counties) in the state for teachers who have not completed the educational requirements to become a teacher, or earned a preliminary or professional credential.¹⁰
3. In San Mateo County, at least three school districts have recruited and hired teachers from overseas to help fill in gaps in subject areas, such as science and math and for special education classes. They did so after recruiting unsuccessfully in the United States--through job fairs and advertisements.¹¹

The Grand Jury found that in San Mateo County, some K-12 schools are doing the following:

1. Using online learning to enhance the progress of some special education students.
2. Providing online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

⁷ "The Largest Teachers Union" Toppo and Tumulty, USA Today, http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/employment/2006-02-24-nea-usat_x.htm

⁸ <http://www.nea.org/technology/images/onlineteachguide.pdf>

⁹ "Science Courses Nearly Extinct in Elementary Grades, Study Finds," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 25, 2007

¹⁰ "Number of underqualified teachers drops but state still can't meet standards..." Asimov, *San Francisco Chronicle*, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/12/06/BAGK6MQ2CD1.DTL>

¹¹ "Local Schools Hiring Teachers from Philippines," *Oakland Tribune*, December 26, 2005

3. Accessing postings of online programs and resources for teachers from the San Mateo County Office of Education to help meet federal No-Child-Left Behind grant standards issued by the state.
4. Developing technology programs which makes schools eligible for No Child Left Behind technology grants, administered by the State. Eleven of the 36 schools in San Mateo County have such three-to-five year technology plans in place.
5. Applying for and receiving federal Title I funds that cover some of the costs for online programs for remedial help for students.
6. Attempting to set up a virtual Mandarin class. One high-school, which cannot justify the cost of Mandarin for five students, is working with another school to access its Mandarin class via virtual classroom technology.
7. Providing some online resources for teachers to access from the County Office of Education website.

However, the Grand Jury also found that:

1. Online learning is available, but not widely used, in the classroom for supplementary course work, remedial work, advanced placement, and special education. (Examples of online programs used by various districts within the county can be seen in appendix 2.)
2. One school district had an arrangement with the University of California which provided free online services, especially for advanced college credit, but in 2005, funding for that program stopped. Thirty to forty students used the program.
3. At least one school district does not have the staffing or equipment to support web-based systems.
4. Some schools provide online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.
5. The San Mateo County Office of Education does not provide web-based infrastructure or support to the school districts. Teachers and administrators from county school districts look to other counties for web-based training opportunities, and curriculum.
6. One middle school which believes a group of eighth- grade students would benefit from studying geometry postponed a decision to offer geometry, and did not consider the online learning option.
7. None of the county school districts, to the Grand Jury's knowledge, use virtual classrooms to teach foreign languages, especially those for those languages such as Mandarin, Latin, Japanese, and Arabic in which qualified teachers are difficult to find.

Conclusions

Online and virtual classroom learning may be cost-effective methods for enhancing and expanding the educational system and the education students receive. The limited number of teachers and the excellent online and virtual classroom programs now available demands that new methods and tools for teaching be utilized, and a new vision of education be cultivated.

Some San Mateo County school districts experience a shortage of teachers, especially qualified math, science and/ or foreign language teachers.

Neither the school districts in San Mateo County nor the County Office of Education are focused on virtual schools or online programs as a solution to the teacher shortage problem in math, science and foreign language. As a result, students in the district are being deprived of the expertise developed in web-based programming and the opportunity to take foreign language and other courses.

Funds may have to be diverted from other programs to cover the startup costs associated with establishing web-based learning programs. Another source of funds may be from No Child Left Behind technology grants.

There are successful web-based programs available to study and emulate, and there is expertise available in Silicon Valley to help set up technological infrastructure.

In the short-term, with the availability of web-based courses, there is no longer an excuse for schools to have under-qualified teachers teaching any course. There is no excuse for science to be overlooked in elementary schools, and there is no excuse for schools to restrict language choice.

Recommendations

The 2007-2008 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The boards of trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:
 - a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.
 - b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.
 - c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.
 - d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

2. The County Superintendent of Schools:
 - a. Provide more professional development for teachers to enable them to better utilize technological resources.
 - b. Provide leadership, as necessary, to provide cost-effective resources for online and virtual classroom learning.

3. The County Board of Education:
 - a. Work with the County Superintendent of Schools to achieve the aforementioned goals.
 - b. Adopt a policy that supports online and virtual classroom learning in San Mateo County schools.

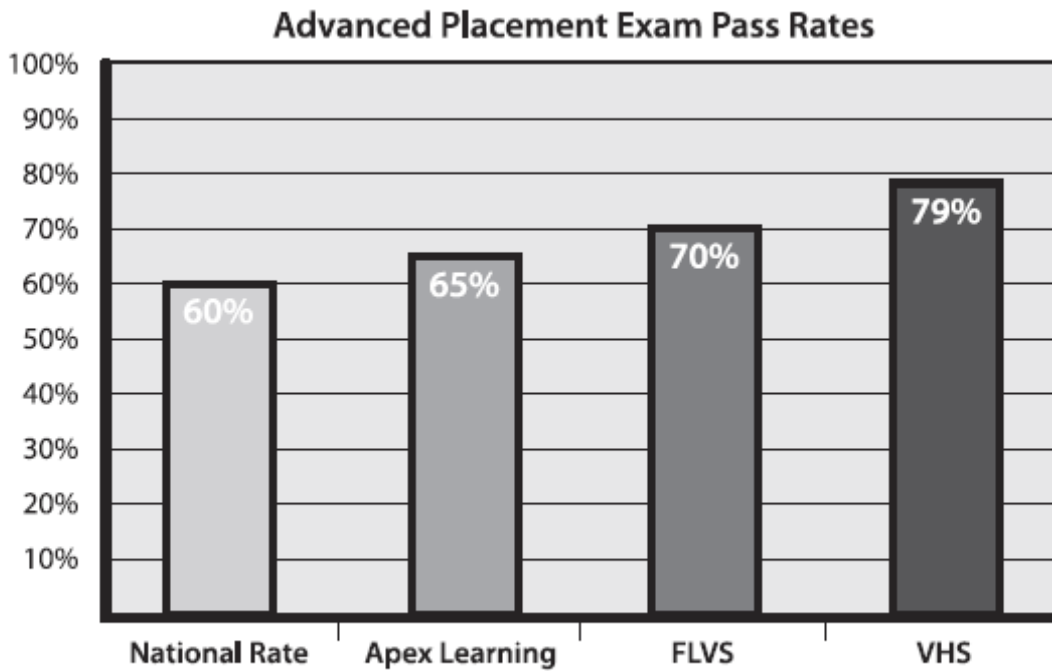
Appendix 1

Effectiveness of online learning

Information on the effectiveness of online and virtual learning programs is becoming more available as web-based-education tools become more prevalent in K-12 schools. According to the National Primer On K-12 Online Learning: “On average, students seem to perform equally well or better academically in online [and virtual classroom] learning.”¹²

A comparison of Advanced-Placement exam data from three online [and virtual classroom] programs (Apex, Florida Virtual Schools, and Virtual High School), with the national average of all students taking AP exams shows that results for online [and virtual classroom] programs all exceed the national average. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1



¹² North American Council for Online Learning, http://www.nacol.org/docs/national_report.pdf

In a report on the effectiveness of online [and virtual classroom] learning programs in Florida,¹³ students were measured against themselves. The final grades of Florida Virtual School (FLVS) students were compiled for the 2005-06 school year. These were compared with the grades that those same students had earned in that subject area the year before at a traditional public high school. The findings were that FLVS students earned higher grades in their online [and virtual classroom] courses than they had earned in courses in that same subject area in the traditional public school setting (as depicted in Figure 2)

Figure 2

Grade Earned in Subject Area w/Enrollment Pattern of Traditional Public High School (2005) to FLVS (2006)	Traditional Public School	FLVS
A	39%	55%
B	28%	27%
C	17%	12%
D	8%	3%
F	8%	3%

In another analysis, the grades earned in high school subjects taken by students via FLVS were compared against grades earned in the same subjects by students in the traditional public high school setting. A letter grade to numeric grade conversion was utilized to determine these results.

When compared with other students, FLVS high school and middle school students outperformed their traditional school counterparts in nine out of ten subject areas in the years 2004-05 and 2005-06. However, in 2005-06, they scored the same (not below, as they had the previous year) in the art/visual arts area. The report also found that the dropped course rate in the Virtual Schools was relatively high.

Cost Effectiveness of Online learning

The cost of online [and virtual classroom] learning alone and in comparison to the cost of traditional classrooms, has recently been the focus of several studies. Some preliminary indicators suggest that the cost of online [and virtual classroom] courses is about the same as traditional classroom classes, especially within online programs that are relatively new and small. These studies include:

1. The Ohio legislature has studied the cost of its eCommunity Schools, which are online [and virtual classroom] charter schools. The Legislative Committee on Education Oversight looked at five statewide online [and virtual classroom] schools and found that they spent \$5382 per student, compared to \$7452 for students in brick and mortar charter schools, and \$8437 for students in traditional, non-charter schools. Technology made up

¹³Florida Tax Watch, <http://www.floridatxwatch.org/resources/pdf/110507FinalReportFLVS.pdf>

28% of the spending, followed by instruction at 23%, administration at 16%, and curriculum at 9%. The report concluded that these costs are “reasonable.”¹⁴

2. An independent study commissioned by the BellSouth Foundation and executed by the school finance consulting firm Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates (APA) found that the “operating costs of online programs are about the same as the operating costs of a regular brick-and-mortar school.”¹⁵
3. The Southern Regional Education Board studied costs of state-led supplemental online [and virtual classroom] programs and estimated that a small program with 1,000 one-semester student enrollments would cost \$1,500,000, while a larger program with 10,000 one-semester student enrollments would cost \$6,000,000,¹⁶ indicating that cost effectiveness increases with the number of students.

While online [and virtual classroom] programs may have some cost savings due to less need for physical classrooms and other facilities, these savings are offset by the need for hardware, software, and connectivity for classes, on-going technical support, comprehensive student support, course development or licensing, and other costs, especially while a program is in a startup phase.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ohio Legislative Committee on Education Oversight, *The Operating Costs of Ohio’s eCommunity Schools*, June 2005; retrieved from http://www.loeo.state.oh.us/reports/PreEleSecPDF/eSchools2_Web.pdf

¹⁵ *Costs and Funding of Virtual Schools*, Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, October 2006, available at www.apaconsulting.net

¹⁶ *Cost Guidelines for State Virtual Schools*, Southern Regional Education Board, August 2006; http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/PDF/06T03_Virtual_School_Costs.pdf

¹⁷ Ibid

Appendix 2

Examples of online learning programs used in K-12 San Mateo County Schools¹⁸

- **Kurzweil Educational Systems** is the leading developer of reading technology for people with learning difficulties.
- **Renzulli Learning** has the motto: “No Child Left Bored.”
- **ALEKS** (Assessment and Learning, K-12) provides a complete web based educational environment for K-12 mathematics.
- **NovaNET** is a comprehensive, on-line courseware system designed for grades 6-12.
- **EPGY** (Education Program for Gifted Youth) at Stanford University provides high-ability students of all ages K-12 with an individualized educational experience, optimized in both pace and content, in a variety of subjects at levels ranging from kindergarten through advanced-undergraduate.

¹⁸ <http://kurzweiledu.com>, <http://www.renzullilearning.com>, <http://www.aleks.com>, <http://www.pearsonschool.com>, <http://epgy.stanford.edu/>



PVSD

PORTOLA VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

4575 Alpine Road • Portola Valley, CA 94028

Phone: (650) 851-1777 • Fax: (650) 851-3700 • www.pvsd.net

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August 18, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott,

The Portola Valley School District Governing Board has received the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding online and virtual classroom learning and responds as follows:

1. The Portola Valley School District currently uses online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum and anticipates continuing to do so.
2. All of Portola Valley's teachers are fully qualified; however, they do use online and virtual programs as appropriate with their students.
3. The Portola Valley Technology Plan places heavy emphasis upon teacher training in the use of web-based resources. In fact, this year we have scheduled a district-wide all day staff development session on this topic as well as monthly training sessions during the school year.
4. We use para-educators to assist in monitoring our computer labs, but believe that our students benefit from contact with individuals who have extensive training in instructional technology. We therefore staff accordingly and plan to continue doing so.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond regarding the Grand Jury recommendations regarding online and virtual classroom learning.

Very truly yours,

Ray Villareal
Board President

August 7, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott:

The Hillsborough City School District Board of Trustees has asked me to respond to the Grand Jury's report regarding Online and Virtual Classroom Learning.

Finding 1:

This finding reports that based on the studies reviewed by the Grand Jury, data suggests students taking online courses outperform their peers. One study compared advanced placement exams and it is believable that highly motivated students working in a technological environment which allows the student greater control over his or her learning process could enhance learning. Without knowing the make up of the students in the Florida study or the selection process for students in Florida Virtual Schools (FLVS), it is difficult to make a comment on those results. This district supports the practice of online learning.

Finding 2:

1. This District engages in multiple staff development activities to enhance teachers' acquisitions of knowledge and skills in the teaching of science. Science is taught at all grade levels for more than one hour per week. We have Science enrichment teachers in each school.
2. All of this District's teachers have the appropriate State credentials.
3. This District hired 3 teachers from Spain to teach Spanish to our students. All are fully qualified and credentialed California teachers. This District has not recruited or hired teachers elsewhere.

Finding 3:

1. The respondent agrees with this finding.
2. This District is unfamiliar with other districts' practices in this area. This district has on line connections in every classroom and media technology center in the district and supervises student use with credentialed staff.
3. The respondent agrees with this finding.
4. The respondent agrees with this finding.
5. The respondent agrees with this finding.
6. The respondent agrees with this finding.

7. The respondent agrees with this finding.

Finding 4:

1. The respondent agrees with this finding.
2. This District has no knowledge of the program referenced.
3. This District has no knowledge of the program referenced.
4. The respondent agrees with this finding.
5. This District disagrees with this statement. The SMCOE offers a portal which allows web based access. Further, the COE provides support through training and technological services.
6. This District has no knowledge of the program referenced. This District offers 2 geometry classes to its 8th graders.
7. The respondent agrees with this finding.

Recommendations:

1a.) Presently, online experiences abound in this District. However, the implication of this statement is that online experiences replace direct classroom instruction. This District has not found that online experiences can replace direct instruction. The most effective instruction incorporates online learning with direct instruction. This practice is ongoing in this District.

1b.) This recommendation could be implemented if this District had a need to do so. Presently, we have qualified teachers in all of our classes.

1c.) This recommendation is fully implemented in this District. Staff development by in-house staff, as well as by outside experts, occurs regularly.

1d.) This District has fully implemented this practice through differentiated staffing for the past 20 years.

2a.) This District supports this recommendation and will utilize any opportunity presented.

2b.) This District supports this recommendation and will utilize any opportunity presented.

3a.) This District supports this recommendation.

3b.) This District supports this recommendation.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Loushin-Miller
Superintendent, Hillsborough City School District

MLM:td



Pacifica School District

375 Reina Del Mar Avenue • Pacifica, California 94044
(650) 738-6600 • (650) 557-9672 (fax)

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August 28, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online/Virtual Classroom Learning

Dear Judge Scott:

The Pacifica School District is in receipt of the July 14, 2008 San Mateo Civil Grand Jury Report which contains findings and recommendations regarding Online/Virtual Classroom Learning.

The Pacifica School District partially agrees with the findings. The first recommendation pertains to San Mateo County school districts while the other two recommendations pertain to the County Office of Education. The Pacifica School District submits the following in response to the Grand Jury's recommendations:

1. Recommendation:

The Board of Trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to

- (a) Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, advanced placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.
- (b) Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.
- (c) Increase teacher training to make better use of web based resources.
- (d) Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

District Response:

The Pacifica School District Governing Board partially agrees with the Civil Grand Jury's first recommendation for the following reasons:

- (a) It is staff's experience that technology can be a great supplement to quality classroom instruction, but technology is not a substitute for quality teaching. While the Pacifica School District is very interested to explore the possibilities of online and virtual learning as a means to supplement classroom instruction, the District's primary focus has been to hire and retain highly qualified teachers and provide a strong support system of professional development to make them effective instructors.
- (b) Staff is in agreement that teachers should receive increased training to make better use of web based resources, but as a supplement to quality teaching and proven instructional strategies.
- (c) It is not clear how nationwide online and virtual learning programs align with California state standards in core subjects or how virtual learning meets No Child Left Behind requirements for highly qualified teachers.
- (d) The report suggests that funds may have to be diverted from other programs to cover start up costs. This is going to be a very difficult year to divert funds as so many programs face cuts due to the state budget crisis.

The Pacifica School District Board of Trustees and staff will continue to implement new technology and appropriate web-based resources to enhance learning opportunities for students.

Sincerely,



James Lianides, Ed. D.
Superintendent

JL:sc

Cc: Pacifica School District, Board of Trustees



Jefferson Union High School District

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES – SERRAMONTE DEL REY
699 Serramonte Boulevard, Suite 100
Daly City, CA 94015-4132
650-550-7900 • FAX 650-550-7888

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September 22, 2008

The Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools Report

Dear Judge Scott:

The Jefferson Union High School District Board of Trustees has asked me to respond to the Grand Jury's Report regarding Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools.

The Jefferson Union High School District generally supports the intent of the recommendations of the Grand Jury found in items 1a, 1b, and 1c which encourage greater use of on-line programs, web-based programs for all level students, virtual learning programs and generally expanded opportunities for students. As a school district, we currently utilize programs and on-line services which expand and support these opportunities for students. Our teachers are offered training; many have taken advantage of these opportunities and broadened their use of resources available through the internet. Our librarians, in particular, are tremendous resources in this area and provide support to both teachers and students.

The district has particular concern about the recommendation found in item **1d** which calls for non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs. Using volunteers or non-credentialed staff to supervise students in classroom or computer lab facilities without the presence of a credentialed teacher would contravene the protocol of this district and increase the liability exposure of the district. Further, leaving students in the supervision of volunteers or other non-credentialed monitors could present a conflict with California law and the California Education Code.

Item Response:

The 2007-2008 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The boards of the 23 school district in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:

- a) Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.**

The Jefferson Union High School District agrees with the intent of the recommendation. The district has expanded the use of on-line web-based curriculum in the past several years and provided remedial/tutorial opportunities for students as well as make-up course opportunities. Web-based courses in multiple subject areas have been provided in the same classroom under the direction of a single credentialed teacher for courses in which too few students have requested enrollment. This has preserved the academic opportunity for students while maintaining the fiscal and supervisory responsibility of the district.

- b) Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.**

The Jefferson Union High School District agrees with the intent of the recommendation. Through not used frequently, the Jefferson Union High School District has on occasion used on-line courses as part of the regular student schedule when a fully qualified instructor was not available. This is not the preferred method, but is used in the absence of a credentialed subject area teacher.

- c) Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.**

The Jefferson Union High School District agrees with the intent of the recommendation. District teachers have the opportunity for staff development in technology and web-based applications. The JUHSD Director of Technology has presented workshops and trainings, and has generally responded to the in-service requests of staff.

- d) Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.**

The Jefferson Union High School District disagrees with this recommendation. Using volunteers or non-credentialed staff to supervise students in classroom or computer lab facilities without the presence of a credentialed teacher would contravene the protocol of this district and increase the liability exposure of the

district. Further, leaving students in the supervision of volunteers or other non-credentialed monitors could present a conflict with California law and the California Education Code. The district believes students are best served by a qualified credentialed instructor.

If you are in need of further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 650-550-7969.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Crilly
Superintendent

c Board of Trustees

Sequoia Union High School District

480 JAMES AVENUE, REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA 94062-1098

Administrative Offices (650) 369-1412

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September 23, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, Second Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools

Dear Judge Scott:

The District's governing board received a letter dated July 14, 2008, from the Grand Jury of San Mateo County. A District response is required to the Grand Jury Report, Recommendation Number 1, which states.

The 2007-08 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

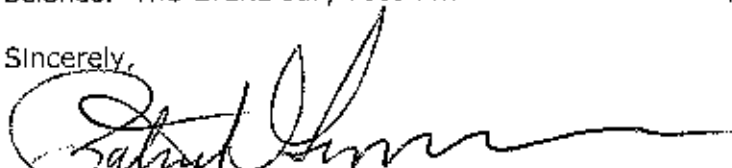
1. *The Board of Trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:*
 - a. *Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs and remedial and special education programs.*
 - b. *Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.*
 - c. *Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.*
 - d. *Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.*

Sequoia Union High School District Response

The Sequoia Union High School District agrees with the Grand Jury Report Recommendation Number 1.

The District will share the Grand Jury recommendations with the District's Educational Services Division staff, Principals, Instructional Vice Principals, Head Guidance Advisors, and the appropriate Subject Area Councils; i.e. Foreign Language, English/Language Arts, Special Education, Math, Science, and Social Science. The Grand Jury recommendations will be implemented in the areas where appropriate.

Sincerely,



Patrick R. Gemma, Ed.D.
Superintendent

c: Board of Trustees
Superintendent's Staff



**BURLINGAME
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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*Assistant Superintendent,
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Lourdes S. Desai
*Director, Special Education &
Categorical Programs*

September 9, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement
Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools Report

Dear Hon. Joseph C. Scott;

Burlingame School District agrees with the finding.

Additionally, as to each Grand Jury recommendation, Burlingame School District finds that the recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the governing body of the school district. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of this report.

Sincerely,

Dianne Talarico, Superintendent
Burlingame School District



Jefferson School District

Martin Luther King Jr. Education Center

101 Lincoln Ave. • Daly City, CA 94015

(650) 746-2410 • Fax (650) 997-0273

Web Address: www.jsd.k12.ca.us

Governing Board

Marie Brizuela

Adam Duran

Hans Hansen

K. Annette Hipona

Marianne E. Petroni

Superintendent

Matteo Rizzo

Director of Curriculum and Instruction/Pupil Services

Bernie Vidales

September 10, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

**JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSE TO 2007-2008
SAN MATEO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT:
“ONLINE AND VIRTUAL CLASSROOM LEARNING: TO EXPAND
AND SUPPLEMENT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN
SAN MATEO COUNTY SCHOOLS”**

For each Finding of the Civil Grand Jury, the response must either: (1) agree with the finding, or (2) disagree with it, wholly or partially, and explain why. For each Recommendation made by the Civil Grand Jury, the responding party must provide one of the following four responses:

Response One: the recommendation has been implemented, with a summary explanation of how it was implemented.

Response Two: the recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for the implementation;

Response Three: the recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.

Response Four: the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

OVERVIEW

- 1) In its report dated July 14, 2008, the Civil Grand Jury of San Mateo raises many important issues and concerns regarding the use of online learning opportunities for both

students and teachers in San Mateo County. The Jefferson School District shares the interest of the Grand Jury to utilize online learning opportunities when appropriate, promises to advance student learning and financially feasible. However, many of the recommendations the grand jury provides are based on two assertions (assertions that the Jefferson Elementary School District does not completely find compelling given the evidence provided). These assertions are: 1) students in online learning situations outperform their peers in classroom situations and 2) the costs of developing an online learning program (after initial start-up costs) are less than the brick and mortar counterparts.

After reviewing and analyzing the materials provided for in the appendix to the grand jury report, the above assertions could not be justified completely. For example, when suggesting that students in online programs outperform their peers in classrooms, a study referencing the achievement of advanced placement students was cited as evidence. The report failed to recognize whether the students taking the on-line course were already stronger students before taking the course. No effort to standardize the characteristics of the two groups (the experimental and control groups) was made before analyzing the result of the treatment (online or classroom learning). This basic design principle would need to be investigated before drawing any large scale implications for this study. In addition, by citing a study dealing only with the rate of achievement of Advanced Placement students, the grand jury failed to recognize that the results of this study may only have implications for this target population. On the contrary, the recommendations made span the student population to include English Language Learners and the students participating in Special Education Programs – two groups with very different needs than the students in the Advanced Placement population.

The report also cites another finding of the same study that suggests students in online courses receive better grades than their classroom only peers. Again, no effort was made to standardize the grading criteria, select appropriately matched comparison groups or look at progress on any other common assessment besides the Advanced Placement test. In fact, the finding that the drop rate on the online course was higher than the classroom course drop rate would suggest that the two groups were not well matched at the end of the course (only the most motivated, academically prepared student stayed with the online course).

In looking at the costs associated with online and brick and mortar counterparts, the civil grand jury suggests that they are less expensive to operate (after the acquisition and set up of equipment has been accounted for). This assertion is not supported by the materials supplied in the appendix of the report. In fact, one study commissioned by the Bell South Foundation (and cited in the report) found that the “operating costs of online programs are about the same as the operating costs of a regular brick-and-mortar school.” Only after significantly scaling the number of participants from 1,000 to 10,000 would there be an appreciable reduction in program operating costs and therefore increase cost effectiveness.

One area that the civil grand jury failed to address and that would have great implications for this policy are pandemic or disaster response uses of online learning. As a small district with limited resources it would be great to have a coordinated county or region-wide approach to the use of online learning opportunities in such cases.

The mere availability of online courses, without analysis of their quality or impact on student learning as well as impact on already strained resources in the public school setting, does not justify a whole scale movement into adopting these practices. However, these courses do provide an opportunity to learn about their impact and potential uses for each agency given its local context.

FINDINGS

With respect to Bay Area and San Mateo County Schools, the Grand Jury found:

1. A 2007 survey of 923 Bay Area elementary schools revealed that 41% of the teachers surveyed felt unprepared to teach science. The survey also showed that 80% of these teachers taught science--which is considered a core subject--less than one hour per week:

Disagree in part. The report does not differentiate whether teacher unpreparedness relates to content knowledge, use of recommended pedagogical strategies or sufficient time for preparing experiences for teaching science. In the past ten years, elementary science instruction has taken a turn to emphasizing a “hands-on” approach to science learning. Experiments, labs and other learning opportunities require teachers to prepare experiences, outside of those expected from traditional textbook instruction as a basis for science instruction. The responses in the survey indicating teachers feeling “unprepared” could be interpreted by respondents that they do not have sufficient time to prepare the experiences required or that they do not feel adequately prepared to teach science in the recommended format versus a textbook-based approach in addition to not having adequate content knowledge to address elementary science concepts. It appears that the civil grand jury has interpreted this finding to mean that teachers lack the appropriate content knowledge to teach elementary science, which may not be the case.

As for the finding that 80% of elementary teachers teach science less than 1 hour per week, the report did not provide adequate evidence that this was related to teachers’ lack of content knowledge in the area of science and not any of the other factors addressed above. In addition with the increasing accountability pressure of the NCLB Act of 2001 in the areas of Reading and Mathematics – all content areas outside of these two could have seen a drop in the frequency and duration of instruction due to increased time devoted to mathematics and reading instruction. Since the amount of time at school remains a constant, this finding may well be true even if on-line science courses were available in the elementary school settings.

2. In 2006, San Mateo County schools ranked tenth worst county (out of 58 counties) in state for teachers who have not completed the educational requirements to become a teacher or earn a preliminary teaching credential.

Disagree in part. While this finding may have been true in 2006, the report fails to make the connection that teacher preparation, as defined by the state, has a negative impact on student learning and achievement. While San Mateo County may have been the worst county for teacher preparation, it certainly was not the worst county when ranked by student achievement on the tests administered by the STAR program of California for all students or for any of the major demographic subgroups in the county.

3. In San Mateo County, at least three school districts have recruited and hired teachers from overseas to help fill in gaps in subject areas, such as science and math and for special education classes. They did so after recruiting unsuccessfully in the United States – through job fairs and advertisements.

Disagree in part. While the above stated fact is very likely true, the same fact can be cited for a variety of other industries and sectors of the economy. The technology industry has even higher rates of recruiting outside the US for an adequately trained workforce in the areas of the sciences and engineering. The report fails to identify how many in each of the different categories were hired, how the performance of the students in such classrooms fared or whether these efforts to recruit and hire from outside the US negatively impacts the operations of school districts that engage in such practices.

Additional Findings:

The Jefferson Elementary School District does not have evidence to contradict or support any of the additional findings listed below and therefore agrees with the civil grand jury's following findings and statements.

Some K-12 schools are doing the following:

1. Using online learning to enhance the progress of some special education students.
2. Providing online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.
3. Accessing postings of online programs and resources for teachers from the San Mateo County Office of Education to help meet federal No-Child-Left Behind grant standards issued by the state.
4. Developing technology programs which makes schools eligible for No Child Left Behind technology grants, administered by the State. Eleven of the 36 schools in San Mateo County have such three-to-five year technology plans in place.
5. Applying for and receiving federal Title I funds that cover some of the costs for online programs for remedial help for students.
6. Attempting to set up a virtual Mandarin class. One high-school, which cannot justify the cost of Mandarin for five students, is working with another school to access its Mandarin class via virtual classroom technology.
7. Providing some online resources for teachers to access from the County Office of Education website.

However, the Grand Jury also found that:

1. Online learning is available, but not widely used, in the classroom for supplementary course work, remedial work, advanced placement, and special education. (Examples of online programs used by various districts within the county can be seen in appendix 2.)
2. One school district had an arrangement with the University of California which provided free online services, especially for advanced college credit, but in 2005, funding for that program stopped. Thirty to forty students used the program.
3. At least one school district does not have the staffing or equipment to support web-based systems.
4. Some schools provide online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

5. The San Mateo County Office of Education does not provide web-based infrastructure or support to the school districts. Teachers and administrators from county school districts look to other counties for web-based training opportunities, and curriculum.
6. One middle school which believes a group of eighth- grade students would benefit from studying geometry postponed a decision to offer geometry, and did not consider the online learning option.
7. None of the county school districts, to the Grand Jury's knowledge, use virtual classrooms to teach foreign languages, especially those for those languages such as Mandarin, Latin, Japanese, and Arabic in which qualified teachers are difficult to find.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2007-2008 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The boards of trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:
 - a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.

Response three. Further investigation into the availability of online courses, remedial support and their compliance with federal and state guidelines for appropriate use of funds needs to be conducted. California places strict requirements for use of funds to purchase instructional materials. In order to use existing funds for this purpose, the State of California would need to place specific programs on State adoption list for curricular materials. When appropriate and cost feasibility is not prohibitive these options will be pursued. A technology plan which includes the use of online learning will be developed and presented to the governing board by the beginning of the 2009 calendar year.

- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.

Response three. The same reasons and timeline as in (a) above.

- c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

Response three. The same reasons and timeline as in (a) above.

- d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

Response four. Per the Education Code, students must be under the direct supervision of a credentialed teacher during instructional periods.

2. The County Superintendent of Schools:
 - a. Provide more professional development for teachers to enable them to better utilize technological resources.

Response four. This is a county recommendation. However its implementation would greatly support whatever efforts are undertaken at a district level.

- b. Provide leadership, as necessary, to provide cost-effective resources for online and virtual classroom learning.

Response four. This is a county recommendation. However its implementation would greatly support whatever efforts are undertaken at a district level.

3 The County Board of Education:

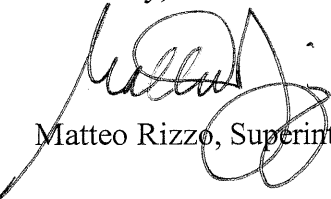
- a. Work with the county Superintendent of Schools to achieve the aforementioned goals.

Response four. This is a county recommendation. However its implementation would greatly support whatever efforts are undertaken at a district level.

- b. Adopt a policy that supports online and virtual classroom learning in San Mateo County Schools.

Response four. This is a county recommendation. However its implementation would greatly support whatever efforts are undertaken at a district level.

Sincerely,



Matteo Rizzo, Superintendent

October 1, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools Report

Following are responses from Cabrillo Unified School District regarding the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this report:

Findings

With respect to Bay Area and San Mateo County Schools, the Grand Jury found:

1. A 2007 survey of 923 Bay Area elementary schools revealed that 41% of the teachers surveyed felt unprepared to teach science. The survey also showed that 80% of these teachers taught science--which is considered a core subject-- less than one hour per week.

District response: While we concur with this more general finding, a 2007 science survey indicated that Cabrillo's K-5 teachers teach science two to three times per week, for an average of 45 minutes per session.

2. In 2006, San Mateo County schools ranked tenth worst county (out of 58 counties) in the state for teachers who have not completed the educational requirements to become a teacher, or earned a preliminary or professional credential.

District response: In Cabrillo, all teachers hold preliminary, intern, or clear credentials.

3. In San Mateo County, at least three school districts have recruited and hired teachers from overseas to help fill in gaps in subject areas, such as science and math and for special education classes. They did so after recruiting unsuccessfully in the United States--through job fairs and advertisements.

District response: We concur that filling certain “specialized” teaching positions is becoming increasingly difficult. Cabrillo has been fortunate to fill our science, math, and SPED positions without overseas recruiting. For SPED, we advertise in national publications and have yet to implement overseas recruitment. Cabrillo did hire a new mathematics teacher who was recruited by the SMFC SD via an international process.

The Grand Jury found that in San Mateo County, some K-12 schools are doing the following:

1. Using online learning to enhance the progress of some special education students.

District response: This finding does apply to the Cabrillo Unified School District.

2. Providing online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

District response: This finding does not apply to the Cabrillo Unified School District.

3. Accessing postings of online programs and resources for teachers from the San Mateo County Office of Education to help meet federal No-Child-Left Behind grant standards issued by the state.

District response: This finding does not apply to the Cabrillo Unified School District.

4. Developing technology programs which makes schools eligible for No Child Left Behind technology grants, administered by the State. Eleven of the 36 schools in San Mateo County have such three-to-five year technology plans in place.

District response: Cabrillo Unified has a state approved five-year technology plan, a requirement for NCLB grants, but on other criteria we only qualify for the formula grant... not the larger competitive grant.

5. Applying for and receiving federal Title I funds that cover some of the costs for online programs for remedial help for students.

District response: We concur with this strategy. Some of Cabrillo’s after school programs have ventured into this arena with varying success.

6. Attempting to set up a virtual Mandarin class. One high-school, which cannot justify the cost of Mandarin for five students, is working with another school to access its Mandarin class via virtual classroom technology.

District response: This finding does not apply to the Cabrillo Unified School District.

7. Providing some online resources for teachers to access from the County Office of Education website.

District response: While we concur with this finding as a way to provide teachers with additional resources, Cabrillo does not have the funding available at this point in time to pay for the portal.

However, the Grand Jury also found that:

1. Online learning is available, but not widely used, in the classroom for supplementary course work, remedial work, advanced placement, and special education.

District response: We concur with this finding. Cunha Intermediate’s Mathematics Department has used ALEKS as supplementary course work. Professional development would need to be provided to staff members in order to expand online learning opportunities in our classrooms.

2. One school district had an arrangement with the University of California which provided free online services, especially for advanced college credit, but in 2005, funding for that program stopped. Thirty to forty students used the program.

District response: We concur that this was a great resource for schools. Cabrillo used the same UCOP system until it was discontinued.

3. At least one school district does not have the staffing or equipment to support web-based systems.

District response: We concur with this finding. Adequate band width for online learning, especially for communications containing videos, is a problem for Cabrillo... geographically spread out and “over the hill”.

4. Some schools provide online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

District response: We concur that this is a good model, particularly for remedial, unit capture, and HSEE preparation. Cabrillo will investigate whether a similar can be implemented involving a cooperative effort between Alternative Education and Half Moon Bay High School.

5. The San Mateo County Office of Education does not provide web-based infrastructure or support to the school districts. Teachers and administrators from county school districts look to other counties for web-based training opportunities, and curriculum.

District response: We concur with this finding. While Cabrillo’s middle school staff has used San Mateo’s County Office of Education numerous times for web-based training and curriculum assistance, in general, SMCOE is not well-positioned to assist districts like ours in building capacity for online and virtual classroom learning.

6. One middle school which believes a group of eighth- grade students would benefit from studying geometry postponed a decision to offer geometry, and did not consider the online learning option.

District response: We concur with this finding. However at this point in time, Cabrillo’s middle school does not offer geometry.

7. None of the county school districts, to the Grand Jury’s knowledge, use virtual classrooms to teach foreign languages, especially those for those languages such as Mandarin, Latin, Japanese, and Arabic in which qualified teachers are difficult to find.

District response: While we generally concur with this finding, Cabrillo has used virtual classrooms to provide upper level Spanish language courses to qualified students.

Conclusions

“Online and virtual classroom learning may be cost-effective methods for enhancing and expanding the educational system and the education students receive. The limited number of teachers and the excellent online and virtual classroom programs now available demands that new methods and tools for teaching be utilized, and a new vision of education be cultivated.”

District response: The extent to which an online classroom is cost-effective is based on a number of factors—not the least of which is the state of a district’s infrastructure (including labs and networks). A single, stand-alone virtual learning lab setting—staffed by a “highly qualified” and certificated staff member serving 30 students—would

actually cost more to operate than a traditional classroom when you factor in on-line registration fees and equipment costs. We see the greatest advantage as being one of offering students highly specialized programs that could not be provided in a typical master schedule offered on a comprehensive high school setting.

“Some San Mateo County school districts experience a shortage of teachers, especially qualified math, science and/ or foreign language teachers.”

District response: While we generally concur with this finding, this conclusion also suggests a related challenge—finding online programs that are CA standards-based and taught by a teacher deemed to be “highly qualified” under current Federal rules and guidelines.

“Neither the school districts in San Mateo County nor the County Office of Education are focused on virtual schools or online programs as a solution to the teacher shortage problem in math, science and foreign language. As a result, students in the district are being deprived of the expertise developed in web-based programming and the opportunity to take foreign language and other courses.”

District response: While we generally concur with this finding, we remain concerned by the extent to which online courses are 1) taught by instructors deemed NCLB highly qualified and 2) aligned with approved state standards. Still another issue is the extent to which both the material covered and assessment strategies/grading systems are consistent with District practice.

Funds may have to be diverted from other programs to cover the startup costs associated with establishing web-based learning programs. Another source of funds may be from No Child Left Behind technology grants.

District response: We respectfully disagree with this finding. We are a revenue-limit district... and in a budget-reduction mode. Current EETT formula grant funding levels are minimal. Possible future funding sources might come from the state (some sort of next generation “Digital High School” grants) or from a local parcel tax measure. The notion of “diverting from other programs” is not feasible at this time.

There are successful web-based programs available to study and emulate, and there is expertise available in Silicon Valley to help set up technological infrastructure.

District response: We concur with this finding. Expertise would be a big help... but funding remains a larger roadblock.

In the short-term, with the availability of web-based courses, there is no longer an excuse for schools to have under-qualified teachers teaching any course. There is no excuse for

science to be overlooked in elementary schools, and there is no excuse for schools to restrict language choice.

District response: We concur with this finding with the reservations noted.

Recommendations

The 2007-2008 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The boards of trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:
 - a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.

District response: We concur with this recommendation with the reservations noted above. A good first step for our District would be to draft and adopt a board policy governing future online and virtual learning opportunities.

- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.

District response: We concur with this recommendation.

- c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

District response: We concur with this recommendation.

- d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

District response: While we concur that such an action could reduce the cost of operating computer labs we believe that such an action would pose serious contractual issues with our classified and certificated employee associations. This is another example of a “sounds good in concept” recommendation that may be challenging to implement.

2. The County Superintendent of Schools:
 - a. Provide more professional development for teachers to enable them to better utilize technological resources.

District response: We concur with this recommendation.

- b. Provide leadership, as necessary, to provide cost-effective resources for online and virtual classroom learning.

District response: We concur with this recommendation.

3. The County Board of Education:

- a. Work with the County Superintendent of Schools to achieve the aforementioned goals.

District response: We concur with this recommendation.

- b. Adopt a policy that supports online and virtual classroom learning in San Mateo County schools.

District response: We concur with this recommendation and encourage the policy-building process to occur in such a manner that similar and supportive policies are also adopted by individual San Mateo County school districts.

Respondent for the Cabrillo Unified School District:

Elizabeth Schuck, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction



SAN MATEO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Jean Holbrook, Ed.D., County Superintendent of Schools

October 1, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott:

This letter responds to the 2007-08 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury's Report entitled "Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools."

Recommendation 2.a. The County Superintendent of Schools provide more professional development for teachers to enable them to better utilize technological resources.

The County Superintendent agrees with this recommendation. A position of Instructional Technology Coordinator was recently created for this purpose. The coordinator facilitates monthly meetings with district technology coordinators, provides technical assistance and professional development for teachers, and coordinates with the regional California Technology Assistance Project (CTAP) which brings resources and support to teachers in the County.

Recommendation 2.b. The County Superintendent of Schools provide leadership, as necessary, to provide cost-effective resources for online and virtual classroom learning.

The County Superintendent agrees with this recommendation. Through the Superintendent's work with district superintendents and staff's work with instructional staff, the County Office will be responsive to expressed needs in this area. To the extent that the support of the County Office can effect cost-savings or efficiencies for delivery of these services, the County Superintendent will provide leadership and support to districts.

Within the last year, the County Office has launched a portal service which provides interactive, online tools for teachers. Training and a help desk further support the use of these resources by educators in the County.

Recommendation 3.a. The County Board of Education work with the County Superintendent to achieve the aforementioned goals.

The County Board of Education agrees with the recommendation, and will lend its support to achievement of these goals.

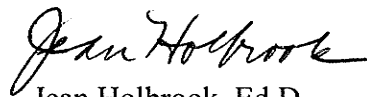
Recommendation 3.b. The County Board of Education adopt a policy that supports online and virtual classroom learning in San Mateo County schools.

The County Board of Education adopts policies for its own operations. To that end, the Board will review its policies related to instructional technology to include and encourage a wide range of applications to support teaching and learning.

Sincerely,



Beverly Gerard
President
San Mateo County Board of Education



Jean Holbrook, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

JH

Copy: San Mateo County Board of Education
John C. Fitton, Court Executive Office
grandjury@sanmateocourt.org (via email)

September 25, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
2nd Floor
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Response to the 2007-2008 Grand Jury Report

Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools Report

Our responses appear below each Finding or Recommendation.

Responses to the Grand Jury's Findings

Please note that we have renumbered the Findings to keep them organized as a single list.

- 1) A 2007 survey of 923 Bay Area elementary schools revealed that 41% of the teachers surveyed felt unprepared to teach science. The survey also showed that 80% of these teachers taught science--which is considered a core subject--less than one hour per week.

Response: We neither agree nor disagree with the finding because we have no independent knowledge of the Bay Area situation upon which the finding is based. However, in our own district, our sense is that far fewer of our teachers feel unprepared to teach science. In addition, our curriculum calls has initiated a major initiative in the training and support of science instruction.

- 2) In 2006, San Mateo County schools ranked tenth worst county (out of 58 counties) in the state for teachers who have not completed the educational requirements to become a teacher, or earned a preliminary or professional credential

Response: We neither agree nor disagree with the finding because we have no independent knowledge of the statewide situation upon which the finding is based. However, in our own district, all of our teaching staff have completed the educational requirements to become a teacher, and hold a professional credential.

- 3) In San Mateo County, at least three school districts have recruited and hired teachers from overseas to help fill in gaps in subject areas, such as science and math and for special education classes. They did so after recruiting unsuccessfully in the United States--through job fairs and advertisements.

Response: We neither agree nor disagree with the finding because we have no independent knowledge of the statewide situation upon which the finding is based. However, in our own district, we have not, in recent memory, recruited or hired teachers from overseas. We are also unsure as to why the country of origin of a teacher, if she or he is otherwise fully qualified for a position, is relevant to a hiring decision.

- 4) The Grand Jury found that in San Mateo County, some K-12 schools are doing the following:

- a. Using online learning to enhance the progress of some special education students.

Response: We use online learning to support some students within our AVID middle school program, as one component of a comprehensive program.

- b. Providing online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

Response: Our AVID middle school program uses computers in a classroom environment, overseen by a teacher. However, the room is not a dedicated online computer room.

- c. Accessing postings of online programs and resources for teachers from the San Mateo County Office of Education to help meet federal No-Child-Left Behind grant standards issued by the state.

Response: This district makes use of this program as provided by S.M.O.E.

- d. Developing technology programs which makes schools eligible for No Child Left Behind technology grants, administered by the State. Eleven of the 36 schools in San Mateo County have such three-to-five year technology plans in place.

Response: We have not developed technology programs in order to apply for No Child Left Behind technology grants. However, we have had, for years, a plan to incorporate technology into our educational process. We are currently in the process of updating our technology plan.

- e. Applying for and receiving federal Title I funds that cover some of the costs for online programs for remedial help for students.

Response: We have not made such applications .

- f. Attempting to set up a virtual Mandarin class. One high school, which cannot justify the cost of Mandarin for five students, is working with another school to access its Mandarin class via virtual classroom technology.

Response: We have not pursued this type of opportunity, for Mandarin or any other subject.

- g. Providing some online resources for teachers to access from the County Office of Education website.

Response: We provide these resources to our teachers through links on our website as well as through the S.M.O.E. portal.

- 5) Online learning is available, but not widely used, in the classroom for supplementary course work, remedial work, advanced placement, and special education. (Examples of online programs used by various districts within the county can be seen in appendix 2.)

Response: We utilize online learning, in limited settings, when and where it is appropriate. We believe that the overwhelming majority of K-8 students learn best when interacting with a trained teacher, or other adult working under the close supervision of a trained teacher.

- 6) One school district had an arrangement with the University of California which provided free online services, especially for advanced college credit, but in 2005, funding for that program stopped. Thirty to forty students used the program.

Response: We neither agree nor disagree with the finding because we have no independent knowledge of the situation upon which the finding is based.

- 7) At least one school district does not have the staffing or equipment to support web-based systems.

Response: Our classrooms are all wired, and also generally accessible from a wireless network. In addition, our network infrastructure is capable of supporting web-based systems.

- 8) Some schools provide online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

Response: We have computer labs at all of our schools, but these are used for teaching lessons involving the use of technology, not exclusively for online learning.

- 9) The San Mateo County Office of Education does not provide web-based infrastructure or support to the school districts. Teachers and administrators from county school districts look to other counties for web-based training opportunities, and curriculum.

Response: We neither agree nor disagree with the finding because we have no independent knowledge of the situation upon which the finding is based.

- 10) One middle school which believes a group of eighth- grade students would benefit from studying geometry postponed a decision to offer geometry, and did not consider the online learning option.

Response: We neither agree nor disagree with the finding because we have no independent knowledge of the situation upon which the finding is based. In our own district, both of our middle schools offer geometry to selected middle school students.

- 11) None of the county school districts, to the Grand Jury's knowledge, use virtual classrooms to teach foreign languages, especially those for those languages such as Mandarin, Latin, Japanese, and Arabic in which qualified teachers are difficult to find.

Response: We neither agree nor disagree with the finding because we have no independent knowledge of the situation upon which the finding is based. In our own district, virtual classrooms do not play a part in our foreign language program.

Responses to the Grand Jury's Recommendations

1. The boards of trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County [should] instruct their administrators to:
 - a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.

Response: Our board encourages our administrators to stay on top of new findings on how to educate children, and to bring ideas forward for implementing new approaches when we deem them appropriate. While we believe online and virtual learning programs may be able to provide value in education, we do not believe that mandates to introduce particular teaching methodologies or technologies is a useful approach.

In addition, we also believe that, for the K-8 age group, students learn best when interacting with a trained teacher, or an adult working under the close supervision of a trained teacher. However, we do support the flexible application of online and virtual learning programs to situations where such programs can provide benefits to students.

- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.

Response: We do not believe that mandates to introduce particular teaching methodologies or technologies is a useful approach. In cases where no fully-qualified teacher is available we could see online and virtual learning programs playing a role. However, if the hypothesized situation were to occur in our district, we would work long and hard as a governance team to understand why no suitable teacher could be found, and work to improve conditions so as to increase the pool of fully-qualified candidates. In other words, in the hypothesized situation we would see online and virtual learning as stopgaps rather than long-term solutions.

- c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

Response: As part of our ongoing professional development effort we continue to train teachers in the availability of web-based resources that they can use in their classrooms. We also encourage teachers to identify such resources themselves, and to share them with their colleagues.

- d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

Response: We have utilized this concept for years in our district.

2. The County Superintendent of Schools [should]:

- a. Provide more professional development for teachers to enable them to better utilize technological resources.

Response: We support this concept. However, we believe such an effort should reflect an integrated approach that looks at all aspects of professional development, not just technology utilization.

- b. Provide leadership, as necessary, to provide cost-effective resources for online and virtual classroom learning.

Response: We support this concept. However, we believe such an effort should reflect an integrated approach to supporting the educational needs of the County's districts, not just online and virtual classroom learning.

3. The County Board of Education [should]:

- a. Work with the County Superintendent of Schools to achieve the aforementioned goals.

Response: We believe the County Board should work with the County Superintendent on improving the educational opportunities offered to

all the students in the county, not just on goals specifically targeting online and virtual learning.

- b. Adopt a policy that supports online and virtual classroom learning in San Mateo County schools.

Response: We believe educational policies should always focus on what's best for students. We support this particular recommendation, provided the policy focuses on using online and virtual classroom learning to improve educational opportunities and outcomes, not online and virtual classroom learning per se.

Board of Trustees, San Carlos School District

Sincerely,

Steven G. Mitrovich
Superintendent
San Carlos School District



Millbrae School District

555 Richmond Drive, Millbrae, CA 94030

650-697-5693 • 650-697-6865 (fax) • <http://www.MillbraeSchoolDistrict.org>

SHIRLEY MARTIN
Superintendent

NANCY PALMER
Chief Business Official

SHARON DE BIAGIO
Director of Curriculum

BRIAN INGLESBY
Director of Student Services

September 16, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott:

The Millbrae School District is in receipt of the 2007-2008 Grand Jury report entitled "Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo Schools Report."

Millbrae School District agrees there is a shortage of elementary school teachers qualified in science, math and foreign language.

Also, Millbrae School District agrees that online and virtual classroom learning may be cost effective.

We are not familiar as to whether the County Office and other school districts are focused on online or virtual schools, but we are aware we are not focused on online or virtual schools.

As to diverting funds, with the budget problems we are experiencing, it would be difficult to divert some of these funds for online or virtual schools.

There may well be successful web-based programs available and there probably is expertise available in Silicon Valley. Whether successful web-based programs are available or not, there is no excuse to have underqualified teachers teaching any courses or to overlook science.

These issues as well as restricting language choice are issues often affected or controlled by budget.

As to the Grand Jury recommendations, the Millbrae School District has qualified math and science teachers. As to foreign language we offer Spanish, if more money was available and it was a high enough priority we would offer additional languages.

Sincerely,

Shirley Martin
Superintendent

SM/edm

REDWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Board of Education

Shelly Masur, President
Maria Diaz-Slocum, Vice President
Dennis McBride, Clerk
Alisa MacAvoy
Hilary Paulson



Superintendent

Jan Christensen

October 2, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
400 County Center, Second Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott:

The Redwood City School District received the Grand Jury report dated July 14, 2008 on “Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: to Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools.”

The District agrees with the Grand Jury’s findings. As requested, attached please find information on how the District’s implements the action.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (650) 423-2230.

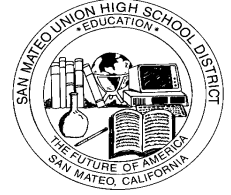
Sincerely,

Jan Christensen
Superintendent

JC:jo
08.43

Attachment

San Mateo Union High School District



David Miller, Ph.D., Superintendent

Elizabeth McManus, Deputy Supt. Business Services

Matthew Biggar, Associate Supt. Instructional Services

Kirk Black, Associate Supt. Human Resources & Admin. Services

*650 North Delaware Street
San Mateo, CA 94401-1795
(650) 558-2299
(650) 762-0249 FAX*

October 3, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

San Mateo Union High School District Response to Grand Jury Report of July 10: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools Report

I. Grand Jury Findings

With respect to Bay Area and San Mateo County Schools, the Grand Jury found:

1. *A 2007 survey of 923 Bay Area elementary schools revealed that 41 percent of the teachers surveyed felt unprepared to teach science. The survey also showed that 80 percent of these teachers taught science-which is considered a core subject – less than on hour per week.*

We are unable to comment on this finding, since we are a high school district.

2. *In 2006, San Mateo County schools ranked as the tenth worst county (out of 58 counties) in the State for teachers who have not completed the educational requirements to become a teacher, or earned a preliminary or professional credential.*

While we do not dispute the finding for the County, we disagree with the finding for our school district. In 2007-08, 99 percent of our core academic teachers were designated ‘Highly Qualified’ using the Federal criteria of the No Child Left Behind Act.

3. *In San Mateo County, at least three school districts have recruited and hired teachers from overseas to help fill in gaps in subject areas, such as science and math for special education classes. They did so after recruiting unsuccessfully in the United States – through job fairs and advertisements.*

While we do not dispute the finding for the County, we disagree with the finding for our school district. We have not recruited for teachers from overseas.

The Grand Jury found that in San Mateo County, some K-12 schools are doing the following:

1. *Using online learning to enhance the progress of some special education students.*

We agree with the finding.

2. *Providing online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversee the students and helps, as necessary.*

We agree with the finding.

3. *Accessing postings of online programs and resources for teachers from the San Mateo County Office of Education to help meet federal No Child Left Behind grant standards issued by the State.*

We are unable to comment on this finding, as we are not aware of the use of these specific online programs and resources.

4. *Developing technology programs which makes schools eligible for No Child Left Behind technology grants, administered by the State. Eleven of the thirty-six schools in San Mateo County have such three-to-five year technology plans in place.*

We agree with the finding.

5. *Applying for and receiving federal Title I funds that cover some of the costs for online programs for remedial help for students.*

We agree with the finding.

6. *Attempting to set up a virtual Mandarin class. One high school, which cannot justify the cost of Mandarin for five students, is working with another school to access its Mandarin class via virtual classroom technology.*

We agree with the finding.

7. *Providing some online resources for teachers to access from the County Office of Education website.*

We agree with the finding.

However, the Grand Jury also found that:

1. *Online learning is available, but not widely used, in the classroom for supplementary course work, remedial work, advanced placement, and Special Education. (Examples of online programs used by various districts within the county can be seen in appendix 2.)*

We partially disagree with the finding. In our response to the Grand Jury recommendations, we have listed a number of online learning opportunities available to students in these programs in our district.

2. *One school district had an arrangement with the University of California which provided free online services, especially for advanced college credit, but in 2005, funding for that program stopped. Thirty-to-forty students used the program.*

We cannot comment as we do not have knowledge of this district's arrangement.

3. *At least one school district does not have the staffing or equipment to support web-based systems.*

We cannot comment as we do not have knowledge of this district's arrangement. In our district, we do have staffing and equipment to support our web-based systems.

4. *Some schools provide online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversee the students and help, as necessary.*

We agree with the finding.

5. *The San Mateo County Office of Education does not provide web-based infrastructure or support to the school districts. Teachers and administrators from county school districts look to other counties for web-based training opportunities and curriculum.*

We partially disagree with the finding. The San Mateo County Office of Education has provided for some of our web-based needs, including our primary connection to the Internet.

6. *One middle school which believes a group of eighth grade students would benefit from studying geometry postponed a decision to offer geometry and did not consider the online learning option.*

We cannot comment as we do not have knowledge of this district's decision.

7. *None of the county school districts, to the Grand Jury's knowledge, use virtual classrooms to teach foreign languages, especially those for those languages such as Mandarin, Latin, Japanese, and Arabic in which qualified teachers are difficult to find.*

We agree with the finding.

II. Grand Jury Recommendations

The San Mateo Union High School District Board of Trustees has instructed its administrators to:

a. *Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and Special Education programs.*

This recommendation has been implemented. Teachers and students use a variety of online and virtual learning programs for teaching and learning in these designated areas. In Foreign Language, G-mail and other online correspondence are used with students overseas. In Special Education and remedial programs, students use Dragon Drop, Text-Zoom, Kurzweil Educational Systems and Interactive Novel for reading development and tools like Co-Writer for writing development. We also use PLATO leaning network for reading remediation and high school exit exam practice. Students also use online curriculum provided by textbook publishers with links to additional web-based resources in most every subject area. Special Education teachers and instructional aides use the Gene Connection and Virtual Cell to assist students in Biology. A variety of other online programs are used in Special Education including Quia for speech and language, HotMath.com, online grammar programs, 'Hands on Algebra', Edhelper.com, and many other websites that host online and virtual learning programs. In Technology Arts, students use Animation-Acme and Zettl's Video Basics. As a district, we will continue to explore and incorporate online and virtual learning programs where it will enhance and support learning for students. Our district has a certificated Technology Coordinator at every school site, supported by a District Technology Council, who leads and supports technology as a tool for instruction.

b. *Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully-qualified teacher is not available.*

This recommendation has been implemented. In 2007-08, 99 percent of our core academic teachers were designated 'Highly Qualified' using federal criteria of the No Child Left Behind Act. Therefore, we have very few sections where a core academic subject is taught by a teacher who is not fully-qualified. Nonetheless, we offer a variety of online and virtual learning programs in math, science and other core area subjects. In addition to programs listed under recommendation 'a', we use Geometry Sketch Pad and Fathom in Math. In Social Science, we use library databases listed below and the Library of Congress online resources and online news programs. In Science, we use a variety of web-based learning tools that simulate science such as Gene Connection and Virtual Cell to assist students in Biology. For multiple disciplines, we have student and staff accessible databases in our library including Facts.com, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, Infotrac, World Book and Web Feet.

c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

This recommendation has been implemented. Teachers are trained on web-based resources during professional development days, collaboration and meeting times and after-school sessions. Each school technology coordinator is also available on an ongoing one-on-one or small group basis to conduct trainings in regards to web-based resources. Recently, we held trainings on web-based resources including AERIES (online student information system), School Loop (online learning community for teachers, students and parents), Google Apps (a variety of applications to assist student learning), Wikis (online learning tool), Naviance (a web-based resource to develop student four-year high school plans and to assist with applying to college), YouTube and online library resources. Teachers are encouraged to pursue their continuing education units through technology classes such as those offered by the Center for Innovation LINC Program. The District provides a variety of resources including a Wiki web site that provides information on district technology support which features links to EdTech Resources, Google for Educators, Learning with Web 2.0, and Digital Citizenship.

d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

This recommendation has been implemented. We have some non-credentialed computer lab monitors in our schools. We also utilize parent volunteers to help monitor computer labs.

Sincerely,

David Miller, Ph.D.
Superintendent and Secretary to the
Board of Trustees



LA HONDA-PESCADERO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
P.O. Box 189 • 620 North Street, Pescadero, CA 94060
650-879-0286 • FAX 650-879-0816

Timothy A. Beard, Superintendent

October 8, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

RE: Grand Jury Report on Online and Virtual Classroom Learning

Hon. Judge Scott:

This letter is in reference to the 2007-08 County Grand Jury report on Online and Virtual Classroom Learning. La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District has considered the Grand Jury's findings and submits this letter in response to the recommendations to school districts in the County.

Recommendation:

The Board of Trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:

- a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, advanced placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.
- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.
- c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.
- d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

District Response:

- a. La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District agrees with the Civil Grand Jury's conclusion that technology can supplement classroom instruction. This is especially true in AP classes. However, technology cannot fill all the curriculum and instructional needs of our student population, particularly remedial and Special Education students who benefit from the personal attention of highly qualified teachers.
- b. Our district will continue to explore the possibilities of online and virtual learning as a means to supplement classroom instruction and enhance learning opportunities for students.
- c. We agree that teachers should receive increased training to make better use of web based resources.
- d. We will continue to seek out volunteers to supplement the operation of computer labs. However, the limitations of volunteers in terms of quality and consistency make this a supplemental solution at best.

Sincerely,

Timothy A. Beard,
District Superintendent



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jeni Benelli
Catherine Bonnar
Karen Clancy
Cathy Wright

Dr. Emerita Orta-Camilleri
Superintendent

Penny Weaver
*Assistant Superintendent,
Educational Services and Personnel*

Nellie Hungerford
*Assistant Superintendent,
Business Services and Operations*

CENTRAL SCHOOL
Cori McKenzie, Principal
525 Middle Road, Belmont
650-637-4820

CIPRIANI SCHOOL
Maria Lang-Gavidia,
Interim Principal
2525 Buena Vista Avenue, Belmont
650-637-4840

FOX SCHOOL
Chris Marchetti, Principal
3100 St. James Road, Belmont
650-637-4850

NESBIT SCHOOL
Cherie Ho, Principal
500 Biddulph Way, Belmont
650-637-4860

RALSTON MIDDLE SCHOOL
Jennifer Kollmann, Principal
2675 Ralston Avenue, Belmont
650-637-4880

SANDPIPER SCHOOL
Linda McDaniel, Principal
801 Redwood Shores Parkway
Redwood City, CA 94065
650-631-5510

**Belmont-Redwood Shores
School District**
2960 Hallmark Drive
Belmont, CA 94002-2999
650-637-4800 - Main
650-637-4811 - Fax

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

September 29, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, California 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott:

The Belmont-Redwood Shores School District Governing Board is in receipt of the Grand Jury's recommendation regarding online and virtual classroom programs that expand and supplement the curriculum.

Response to Recommendations:

- a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.

The District agrees that the use of online and virtual learning programs expand the core program and provide avenues for students to close achievement gaps as well as to extend learning opportunities for students achieving at and above the grade level standards. Online resources are available through recently adopted textbook programs in the areas of math, science, and history/social science.

- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.

Online resources are in place with elementary science specialists delivering instruction at 4th and 5th grade levels.

Interactive activities engage students in Kindergarten through 5th grades online through a website provided by Delta Education, the publisher of our adopted science program. There are resource areas on the www.foosweb.com site available to teachers and parents as well.

The use of other virtual learning programs and online resources is encouraged. The District subscribes to the SMEDCenter Portal services through the San Mateo County Office of Education. The SMEDCenter Portal is a portal providing a one-stop, educational gateway where teachers and staff can find streaming video services and other useful resources. Staff members have received training during staff meetings at the start of the school year on how to use this service.

- b. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

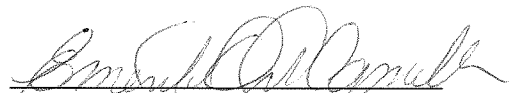
Belmont-Redwood Shores School District has a state-approved Master Plan for Technology in place. Ongoing assessment of teacher technology skills is a component of the plan. Teachers develop a technology user profile through a web-based tool provided by CTAP (California Technology Assistance Project). The profile information is aggregated to provide a view of the teachers' technology proficiencies. Staff development opportunities are provided to increase the level of proficiency in identified areas. For example, Ralston Middle School staff members were provided with training during the 2007/2008 school year on working with software applications and the District's student information system. Also, teachers selected to participate in Foothill College's Merit Program summer session 2008 are being supported with up to date equipment to implement their multi-media projects with classes this year. One of the Merit Program teachers is a language arts teacher at Ralston Middle School. She participated as a trainer during the new teacher induction program to demonstrate how web-based resources can be incorporated into lessons that extend the core program. Training in the use of different technologies and integration into instruction continues to be a focus area.

- c. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

All schools in the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District have active Parent-Teacher Associations. Parents do volunteer to support a variety of needs in each school. Nesbit Elementary staff members have developed a Volunteer Guide in conjunction with Oracle who provided the school with a community grant. This guide is utilized to recruit and train volunteers assisting with mobile and fixed computer labs at Nesbit Elementary. Another example of volunteers in BRSSD schools is the Sandpiper Elementary community technology support group which is made up of parents who are professionals in the field of Information Technology. They provide support in the operation of the network and the ongoing use of computers. In that the District has a contract with the California School Employee's Association (CSEA), care is taken not to impact duties that fall under the job descriptions of classified positions.

Thank you for your concern and for the opportunity to respond to the implementation of valuable online resources and virtual learning programs that supplement and enrich the core program. We are working to maximize our integration of virtual and online resources that meet our particular needs and are available under the current fiscal constraints we are experiencing.

Very Truly Yours,



Dr. Emerita Orta-Camilleri,
Superintendent



Administrative Offices
1011 Altschul Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(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

October 15, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott;

The administrative staff and the Board of Trustees of the Las Lomas School District reviewed the Grand Jury's report entitled "Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools" and are providing the responses as requested.

Online learning is a huge topic with a vast number of options available to individuals and institutions. Online learning can be as simple as providing additional content in a variety of formats in order to enrich a lesson, or as complex as providing a comprehensive self paced course of instruction complete with examinations and the issuance of grades and credits acceptable to high schools and universities.

The viability of any one option must be considered with respect to cost, accessibility, existence of necessary infrastructure, relationship to labor agreements in place, academic integrity and security, academic rigor, alignment with state standards, recognition by high schools of K-8 online curricula, recognition by CSU and UC systems of high school level online curricula, and the efficacy of instruction delivered remotely and reliant on student self-motivation and pacing, among other concerns.

The Grand Jury's report is of necessity an overview based on a sampling of schools and districts, and thus many of the findings are quite general and don't address the issues enumerated above.

Findings Concerning Bay Area and San Mateo County Schools:

1. With respect to the October, 2007 *San Francisco Chronicle* article concerning preparation levels in science for elementary teachers, we believe that these findings do not apply to the teachers in the Las Lomas School District. Our K-5 teachers have recently received extensive training in the FOSS program and are implementing it with great fidelity, and our schools' 2008 STAR scores indicate that this curriculum is quite successful. Students in grades K-5 receive a minimum of 60 minutes of science instruction per week (early grades) and progress to 2 ½ hours per week (3rd and 4th grades) up to daily periods of science instruction at the 5th grade.

2. With respect to the December, 2006 *San Francisco Chronicle* article on the preparation levels of teachers, the Las Lomas School District cannot judge the accuracy or thoroughness of that report but can state that 100% of the Las Lomas School District's teachers have completed the educational requirements to become a teacher.
3. Concerning the December 2005 *Oakland Tribune* story about OUSD recruiting teachers from the Philippines, the Las Lomas School District cannot verify or refute this finding, but can say that the Las Lomas School District is able to recruit fully qualified teachers through the normal channels of local IHEs and the state-wide teacher placement network known as EdJoin.

Findings Concerning Some San Mateo County K-12 Schools:

1. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some K-12 districts in San Mateo County are using online learning and that the Las Lomas School District utilizes several aspects of online learning.
2. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some K-12 districts in San Mateo County provide online learning rooms. The Las Lomas School District has heavily-used computer labs which make online learning possible in each of its schools.
3. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some K-12 districts in San Mateo County are accessing posting of online programs made available by the SMCOE; the Las Lomas School District is one of them.
4. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some K-12 districts in San Mateo County are developing technology programs that make schools eligible for NCLB grants. The district disagrees with the implication that the county's districts are only partially implementing the requirement to have state-approved technology plans, as the latest data from CTAP indicates that *all* of our county's districts are in compliance.
5. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some K-12 districts in San Mateo County are applying for and receiving Title I funds that cover some costs of online instruction. The Las Lomas District has not used any of its Title I funds this way.
6. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some K-12 districts in San Mateo County are attempting to set up a virtual Mandarin class.
7. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some K-12 districts in San Mateo County are providing online resources for teachers to access the SMCOE website. The Las Lomas School District accesses online resources through SMCOE's portal.

Additional Findings:

1. The Las Lomas School District agrees that there is a large variety of online options for learning but has no opinion about what “widely used” means or how desirable it is that online learning be widely used. Online resources are frequently used by LLESB teachers.
2. The Las Lomas School District agrees that at least one district in San Mateo County had to terminate an arrangement with UC for online provision of advanced classes.
3. Regarding the “one school district [that] does not have staffing or equipment to support web-based systems,” the Las Lomas School District believes that that might be an accurate number.
4. The Las Lomas School District agrees that some schools provide online learning rooms.
5. The Las Lomas School District disagrees with the finding that the SMCBE does not provide web-based infrastructure or support to school districts. The Las Lomas School District subscribes to the county portal which provides a rich infrastructure for the support of current and future instructional needs.
6. The Las Lomas School District agrees that the Grand Jury found a school district that did not consider using online learning to provide instruction in Geometry. The Las Lomas School District provides regular instruction in Geometry as an option for some 8th graders.
7. The Las Lomas School District is not aware of any schools that use online instruction to provide instruction in foreign languages where qualified teachers are hard to find. The Las Lomas School District has been able to find qualified teachers in Spanish, French, and Latin.

Recommendations:

1. The boards of trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:
 - a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement options, and remedial and special education programs.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. The Board of Trustees for the Las Lomas School District does not instruct administrators to use specific curricula or teaching strategies unless they are mandated by state or federal law; curricular materials and instructional strategies are developed through a collaborative process using the latest frameworks and materials available, including those classified as “online.”

During the curriculum review process, online learning opportunities are explored and considered for implementation in the quest to meet all students’ needs. Teachers have access to web-based instructional resources and many of them can use these in the classroom in real time through the use of SmartBoards.

- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science, and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Las Lomas School District is always able to find fully qualified teachers in all the referenced subject areas.

- c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

Response: This recommendation is implemented, with the caveat that it is unclear what it means “to make better use of web-based resources.” The Las Lomas School District already devotes significant training in the use of web-based resources.

- d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The Las Lomas School District has been able to budget sufficient funds to staff each computer lab with a classified employee who is able to maintain equipment and assist teachers in providing web-based instruction. This person also supervises unpaid volunteers. The district never utilizes unsupervised volunteers.

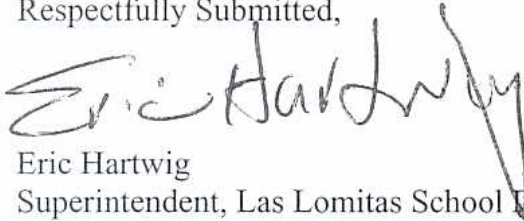
2. The County Superintendent of Schools...

Response: Not Applicable

3. The County Board of Education....

Response: Not Applicable

Respectfully Submitted,



Eric Hartwig
Superintendent, Las Lomas School District



District Office
181 Encinal Avenue
Atherton, California 94027
650-321-7140
FAX: 650-321-7184
www.mpcsd.org

Board of Education
Jeff Child
Deborah Fitz
Bruce Ives
Laura Rich
Terry Thygesen

*A Community of educators, scholars, parents and staff working together
to inspire, serve, challenge and enrich all students*

Kenneth Ranella,
Superintendent

Jo Sauer Mitchell,
Asst.Supt/Curriculum &
Instruction

Diane White,
Chief Business Official

Olivia Mandilk,
Dir. Of Student Services

Jim Bowlby
Dir. Of Technology

Kathryn Tinio,
Human Resources

Ahmad Sheikholeslami
Facility Program Manager

Dennis Hatfield
Supervisor Maintenance,
Transportation,
Operations

October 10, 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools Report

Following is the response to the request from the 2007-08 San Mateo County Grand Jury regarding the issue: Are school districts in San Mateo County utilizing online and virtual classroom programs to expand and supplement the curriculum?

The Menlo Park City School District has committed to the use and development of technology and technological resources within its District Strategic Plan as a means of maximizing learning of all students and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of individual students. A staff development program, entitled the 21st Century Classroom Project, has operated for three years identifying the technologies and strategies to reach such objectives. The District has made a substantial investment in hardware, training and infrastructure.

The Menlo Park City School District acknowledges the potential of virtual learning programs as a means of expanding curriculum, and has explored such use in limited ways. The District does believe and supports direct instruction by professional educators and fortunately possesses the necessary resources to offer an enriched elective program at the middle school level and many specialists for enrichments and remedial education at the elementary schools.

The integration of the use of technology within the instructional program to address curriculum objectives is of primary importance in the District schools. The District intends to collapse computer labs that have served as pullout programs promoting the use of technology within classrooms. Laptop laboratories, SMART Boards, and other technologies have been expanded along with substantial training to ensure their use. Within classrooms teachers are employing web-based resources and online programs as appropriate to their instructional programs.

Regarding the use of online and virtual classrooms to provide curriculum programs that are not currently offered within the schools, the District Technology Instructional Coordinator will be researching such applications as a component of our overall efforts.

Sincerely,

Kenneth J. Ranella
Superintendent

c: Board of Education



San Mateo-Foster City School District

Superior Court of San Mateo County
Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement
Opportunities in San Mateo County School Reports

Dear Judge Scott,

The San Mateo-Foster City School District Governing Board received the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding online and virtual classroom learning on July 14, 2008. The San Mateo-Foster City School District agrees with most of the findings of the Grand Jury and disagrees with others. Our responses are as follows:

RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. San Mateo-Foster City School District continues to increase our use of online and virtual learning and the expansion of educational technology.
2. The San Mateo-Foster City School District emphasizes the necessity of integrating technology into our education programs and instruction. A high level of professional development is provided teachers on an ongoing basis in this area for accessing student data and the use of technology as an instructional tool.
3. San Mateo-Foster City has highly qualified teachers. We are No Child Left Behind Compliant. We encourage teachers to improve their individual professional development growth through both online and off-line courses.

Board of Trustees:

Jack E. Coyne Jr.
Mark D. Hudak
Lory Loimer Lawson
Cathy Rincon
Colleen Sullivan

Superintendent:

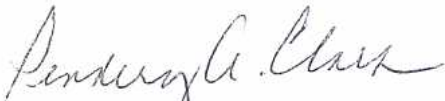
Pendery A. Clark, Ed.D.

1170 Chess Drive
Foster City, CA 94404
(650) 312-7700
FAX (650) 312-7779
www.smfc.k12.ca.us

4. Several teachers in our District use interactive white boards and other emerging technologies to increase student achievement.
5. We have recently implemented two programs, Pinnacle and Data Director, to provide opportunities for standards based reporting.
6. We will work in collaboration with the County Board of Education and Superintendent of schools to achieve the goals set forth by the Grand Jury.

Thank you for your recommendations and providing us an opportunity to respond. Please contact Dr. Toni-Sue Passantino, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services, at 650-312-7236 if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Pendery A. Clark, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Cc: Board of Trustees
Dr. Jean Holbrook, County Superintendent
Dr. Toni-Sue Passantino, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services



Woodside Elementary School District
3195 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062
650-851-1571 – fax: 650-851-5577
www.woodside.k12.ca.us

September 17, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Judge Scott,

The Woodside Elementary School District Governing Board has received the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding online and virtual classroom learning and responds as follows:

1. Teachers employed by the Woodside Elementary School District are all fully qualified; however, they do use online and virtual programs as appropriate with their students.
2. Students at Woodside School are provided opportunities to use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum.
3. The District's technology plan places an emphasis on teacher training in the use of web-based resources.
4. While para-educators do provide assistance to students in the area of technology, we believe that our students benefit from instruction from certificated personnel who possess a high level of training in instructional technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond regarding this important issue.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bettina U. Pike". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bettina U. Pike, Board President

South San Francisco Unified School District

Response to San Mateo County Grand Jury Report

Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools Report

With respect to Bay Area and San Mateo County Schools, the Grand Jury found:

Finding 1:

A 2007 survey of 923 Bay Area elementary schools revealed that 41% of the teachers surveyed felt unprepared to teach science. The survey also showed that 80% of these teachers taught science—which is considered a core subject—less than one hour per week.

SSFUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District is a K-12 district. All our secondary teachers are fully prepared to teach science and teach the subject one hour per day. At the elementary level, this finding may be accurate.**

Finding 2:

In 2006, San Mateo County schools ranked tenth worst county (out of 58 counties) in the state for teachers who have not completed the educational requirements to become a teacher, or earned a preliminary for professional credential.

SSFUSD Response: **In South San Francisco Unified School District all our teachers are fully qualified.**

Finding 3:

In San Mateo County, at least three school districts have recruited and hired teachers from overseas to help fill in gaps in subject areas, such as science and math and for special education classes. They did so after recruiting unsuccessfully in the United States—through job fairs and advertisements.

SSFUSD Response: **This district does not recruit from overseas and generally does not hire from overseas.**

With respect to Bay Area and San Mateo County Schools, the Grand Jury found:

Finding 1:

Using online learning to enhance the progress of some special education students.

SSFUSD Response: **Agrees with this finding.**

Finding 2:

Providing online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

SSFUSD Response: **Agrees with this finding.**

Finding 3:

Accessing postings of online programs and resources for teachers from the San Mateo County Office of Education to help meet federal No-Child-Left Behind grant standards issued by the state.

SSFUSD Response: **Agrees with this finding.**

Finding 4:

Developing technology programs which makes schools eligible for No-Child-Left Behind technology grants, administered by the State. Eleven of the 36 schools in San Mateo County have such three-to-five year technology plans in place.

SSFUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District has no knowledge of other districts. SSFUSD has a 5-year technology plan in place. This plan will be revised in 2009.**

Finding 5:

Applying for and receiving federal Title I funds that cover some of the costs for online programs for remedial help for students.

SSFUSD Response: **Agrees with this finding.**

Finding 6:

Attempting to set up a virtual Mandarin class. One high school, which cannot justify the cost of Mandarin for five students, is working with another school to access its Mandarin class via virtual classroom technology.

SSFUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District has no knowledge of this finding.**

Finding 7:

Providing some online resources for teachers to access from the County Office of Education website.

SSFUSD Response: **Agrees with this finding.**

However, the Grand Jury also found that:

Finding 1:

Online learning is available, but not widely used, in the classroom for supplementary course work, remedial work, advanced placement, and special education.

SSFUSD Response: **Agrees with this finding.**

Finding 2:

One school district had an arrangement with the University of California which provided free online services, especially for advanced college credit, but in 2005, funding for that program stopped. Thirty to forty students used the program.

SSFUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District has no knowledge of this program.**

Finding 3:

At least one school district does not have the staffing or equipment to support web-based systems.

SSUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District has no knowledge of this issue.**

Finding 4:

Some schools provide online computer rooms, in which a teacher or credentialed staff oversees the students and helps, as necessary.

SSUSD Response: **Agrees with this finding.**

Finding 5:

The San Mateo County Office of Education does not provide web-based infrastructure or support to the school districts. Teachers and administrators from county school districts look to other countries for web-based training opportunities, and curriculum.

SSUSD Response: **Disagrees with this statement.**

Finding 6:

One middle school which believes a group of eighth-grade students would benefit from studying geometry postponed a decision to offer geometry, and did not consider the online learning options.

SSUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District has no knowledge of this issue. South San Francisco Unified School District provides a program for eighth-grade students who would benefit from taking geometry as eighth graders.**

Finding 7:

None of the county school districts, to the Grand Jury's knowledge, use virtual classrooms to teach for eight languages, especially those languages such as Mandarin, Latin, Japanese, and Arabic in which qualified teachers are difficult to find.

SSUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District has no knowledge of this issue.**

Recommendation 1:

The boards of trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:

- a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.

SSFUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District currently uses online programs to expand the curriculum.**

- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.

SSFUSD Response: **All South San Francisco Unified School District teachers are fully qualified; however, online programs are used when appropriate.**

- c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

SSFUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District technology plan and EETT grant resources places heavy emphasis on teacher training.**

- d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

SSFUSD Response: **South San Francisco Unified School District uses non-credentialed and credentialed employees to monitor computer labs. However, more attention needs to be given to this area.**



San Mateo-Foster City School District

October 13, 2008

Superior Court of San Mateo County
Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement
Opportunities in San Mateo County School Reports

Dear Judge Scott,

The San Mateo-Foster City School District Governing Board received the Grand Jury's recommendations regarding online and virtual classroom learning on July 14, 2008. The San Mateo-Foster City School District agrees with most of the findings of the Grand Jury and disagrees with others. Our responses are as follows:

RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. San Mateo-Foster City School District continues to increase our use of online and virtual learning and the expansion of educational technology.
2. The San Mateo- Foster City School District emphasizes the necessity of integrating technology into our education programs and instruction. A high level of professional development is provided teachers on an ongoing basis in this area for accessing student data and the use of technology as an instructional tool.
3. San Mateo-Foster City has highly qualified teachers. We are No Child Left Behind Compliant. We encourage teachers to improve their individual professional development growth through both online and off-line courses.

Board of Trustees:

Jack E. Coyne, Jr.
Mark D. Hudak
Lory Lorimer Lawson
Cathy Rincon
Colleen Sullivan

Superintendent:

Pendery A. Clark, Ed.D.

1170 Chess Drive
Foster City, CA 94404
(650) 312-7700
FAX (650) 312-7779
www.smfc.k.12.ca.us



San Mateo-Foster City School District

4. Several teachers in our District use interactive white boards and other emerging technologies to increase student achievement.
5. We have recently implemented two programs, Pinnacle and Data Director, to provide opportunities for standards based reporting.
6. We will work in collaboration with the County Board of Education and Superintendent of schools to achieve the goals set forth by the Grand Jury.

Thank you for your recommendations and providing us an opportunity to respond. Please contact Dr. Toni-Sue Passantino, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services, at 650-312-7236 if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Pendery A. Clark, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Cc: Board of Trustees
Dr. Jean Holbrook, County Superintendent
Dr. Toni-Sue Passantino, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services

Board of Trustees:

Jack E. Coyne, Jr.
Mark D. Hudak
Lory Lorimer Lawson
Cathy Rincon
Colleen Sullivan

Superintendent:

Pendery A. Clark, Ed.D.

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ADMINISTRATION

David E. Hutt, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Lynn Orong
Chief Business Officer

Response to Recommendation

The Respondent agrees with the finding. Online and virtual classroom learning can extend the breadth of learning opportunities.

The recommendation has been limited on a pilot basis, such as course offerings through the "Advanced Academics" and "University of Phoenix, National University and NOVA University for professional development.

Science in the San Bruno Park School District is not overlooked in elementary schools, nor taught by under qualified teachers at any level. There are significant constraints on amounts of instructional time that is available, although San Bruno Park School District is extending the instructional day with "before"/"after"/"Saturday" offerings. Additionally, it is problematic to divert limited operational funds to augment current levels of support. We continue in this work. Use of Computer Lab Instructional Aides to support the operation of computer labs is taking place, where warranted.



Kevin J. Martinez
Clerk, San Bruno Park School District
Governing Board

08/13/08

Date



AYSHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

ONE MARTIN STREET, DALY CITY, CA 94014
TEL: 415-467-5443 FAX: 415-467-1542

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NORMAN D. FOBERT
PRINCIPAL
ELAINE H. WHITNEY

Cultivating Thoughtful Citizens

1 December 2008

Honorable Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Honorable Joseph C. Scott:

The Bayshore Elementary School District is in receipt of “Online And Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand And Supplement Educational Opportunities In San Mateo County Schools”

The District is a small, urban, elementary school district with student on two campuses from Kindergarten through the eighth grade. The District agrees with the findings of the Grand Jury and as to each recommendation commits to further analysis of each matter.

Numerous considerations make it imperative that a small, economically disadvantaged district such as ours seek partnerships with other districts and organizations to assist in accessing such opportunities. Economic and human resource scale considerations make it imperative that we focus those limited resources on the core responsibility of educating the whole child. We have already begun to use online and virtual environments to provide interventions and academic support to students in English Language Acquisition, Special Education and Mathematics.

Additional resources will be required to not only provide these types of opportunities, but the necessity of teacher training and capital investment in technological hardware and infrastructure to accomplish the recommendations and findings. We look forward to the environment and resources to accomplish these commendable goals.

Sincerely,

Norman D. Fobert
Superintendent

Cc: Bayshore Board of Trustees
grandjury@sanmateocourt.org



Brisbane School District
One Solano Street, Brisbane, Ca 94005
Tel: 415-467-0550 Fax: 415-467-2914

Board of Trustees
Joseph Blank
Diane Crampton
Bob Dettmer
Tom Ledda
Ken Walker

Superintendent
Toni Presta

Building Thoughtful Citizens

November 7, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Response to Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: To Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools

Dear Judge Scott,

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

Findings:

We neither agree nor disagree with Grand Jury's findings that students taking online and virtual classroom programs outperform their peers. There are many ways of assessing learning and determining educational value and we withhold judgment at this time. Further, we do not have enough information to make a determination regarding the cost of virtual programs vs. brick and mortar counterparts.

With regard to the 20 findings listed specifically, we neither agree nor disagree. It seems that this is information collected by the Grand Jury and we trust that it is accurate.

Recommendations by the Grand Jury:

The San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (2007-2008) recommends that:

- 1 The boards of trustees for the 23 school districts in San Mateo County instruct their administrators to:*

- a. Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.*

The district is neutral regarding this recommendation. The underlying assumption is that students do well academically when provided curriculum in this manner and the district is not convinced that this is true.

- b. Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.*

The district is neutral regarding this recommendation. Again, the underlying assumption is that students will do well academically when provided curriculum in this manner and the district is not convinced that this is true.

- c. Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.*

The district agrees with this recommendation and has provided some training to staff already. We plan on providing training in the future as well.

- d. Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.*

The district agrees with this recommendation. Volunteers and non-credentialed monitors currently assist in computer labs at all of our schools.

Sincerely,

Toni Presta
Superintendent

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



“OUR CHILDREN – OUR FUTURE”

Ravenswood City School District

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

Board Members:

M. F. Chester Palesoo , President
Larry Moody, Vice President
Marcelino López, Clerk
John Bostic, Member
Jacqueline Wallace Greene, Member

María M. De La Vega
Superintendent

December 2, 2008

Hon. Joseph C. Scott
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Dear Honorable Joseph C. Scott:

Re: Online and Virtual Classroom Learning: to Expand and Supplement Educational Opportunities in San Mateo County Schools

The Ravenswood City School District has received the above mentioned Grand Jury report. While our school district agrees in principle to the findings we have taken steps toward accomplishing the stated recommendations:

Recommendation: Use online and virtual learning programs to expand the curriculum, e.g. for the teaching of foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, and remedial and special education programs.

The Ravenswood City School District does not have foreign languages, Advanced Placement programs, or remedial programs. Currently, all of our students, including those in special education programs, use the web based programs that are part of our social studies and science programs in grades where available. We will be adopting a new mathematics curriculum this year which will include web based learning opportunities in some grades. In 2010 we will be adopting a new English language arts and English language development program that will include web based learning opportunities in all grades.

Recommendation: Use online and virtual learning programs for math, science and other core area subjects where a fully qualified teacher is not available.

All students in the Ravenswood City School District are taught by a fully qualified teacher as specified by the No Child Left Behind Act and Williams Act.

Recommendation: Increase teacher training to make better use of web-based resources.

All teachers in the Ravenswood City School District receive 40 hours of training in the core mathematics and English language arts curriculum which included how to use the web based resources that come with the adopted curriculum. Teachers received 2 hours of training on the core social studies and science curriculum which included how to use the web based resources that came with the adopted curriculum.

Recommendation: Seek out volunteers or non-credentialed monitors to reduce the cost of operating computer labs.

Each school site in the Ravenswood City School District currently employs a non-credentialed monitor to operate the computer lab.

Please contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria De La Vega".

Maria De La Vega
Superintendent