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Sonora Union High School District
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The Honorable Eric L. DuTemple
Judge of the Superior Court
Tuolumne County Administration Center
2 South Green Street
Sonora, California 95370

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FILED
AUG 13 2010
Superior Court of California
County of Tuolumne
BY *Jayne Barnes*
Clerk

Re: Response to the 2009-2010 Grand Jury Report

The recommendations of the 2009-2010 Tuolumne County Grand Jury are printed in bold italics. The required response by the Sonora Union High School District follows:

- 1. For Findings 1 and 5, staff members at all levels need to recognize the mandated requirements to respond to Grand Jury requests for documents in an expeditious manner. Grand Juries normally do not make written requests for documents.***

Status: Disagree in Part- The recommendation has been implemented.

School clerical staff reported that the individual from the Grand Jury did not know the correct names of the documents he was requesting. For example, he asked for a "WASC Report." He was then asked if he wanted the WASC Site Self Study, the WASC Visiting Team Report, or the WASC Mid-Term Evaluation Report. The self study document alone is more than 100 pages with an equally large appendix. He wasn't sure and again repeated he wanted the "WASC Report."

A copy of the WASC Site Self Study from 2007 was made by the Sonora High School principal's secretary along with several other requested documents. These documents were never picked up by the jury member who requested them. The phone number he provided was disconnected and he was not listed in the Sonora telephone book. These documents sat in the Principal's Office for several months. No jury member followed up with a phone call or visit to the school for the requested documents.

Tuolumne County Superintendent Joe Silva told District Superintendent Mike McCoy in March 2010 that the Grand Jury had complained to his office about getting documents from Sonora High School. Dr. McCoy called the Grand Jury Foreman Mike Woicicki at his residence that evening. Woicicki said that the jury wanted a copy of the WASC report, the school accountability report card, a staff handbook and student handbook. The next day these documents were hand delivered to the jury mail box on South Green Street.

The Sonora Union High School District recommends that document requests from the Grand Jury be made in writing for several reasons. The simple one page form (see attached) specifies the name of the individual requesting the records, mailing address, phone and fax. It also clearly identifies the documents being requested and the types of information requested. If this simple form had been filled out by the jury member, the information would have been mailed within 10 days.

The District also recommends that jury members have photo identification as Grand Jury members. The individual who initially requested the documents had no identification. He was not able to present any evidence that he was a member of the jury.

- 2. For finding 2, more unprocessed food products need to be made available to students. This can be done within the mandated state guidelines.***

Status: Disagree in part- This recommendation has been implemented.

Student food services in California public schools are one of the most regulated programs in the state. (The Pupil Nutrition, Health and Achievement Act of 2001/ California Education Code 49430 et al) All student menus have a mandated mix of fruit, protein, grains and dairy. Schools are not allowed to sell or advertise candy, soft drinks or other “junk food” items during the school day. Vegetables, fruit, fruit juice and other nutritious foods are sold every day for breakfast, brunch and lunch. The District has employed two nutrition consultants in school year 2009-2010 to upgrade its food menu and to improve efficiency. The District is fully compliant with California Education Code 49430.

The Grand Jury took a very short tour of the school cafeteria. Their assertion that “no whole wheat breads, pastas or brown rice” were offered was in error. Most of the bread products are whole wheat. Rice, cereals and pasta are served on a regular basis. The Grand Jury did not request a meeting with district Chief Business Official Kim Burr who manages the food service program. A meeting with Ms. Burr and the cafeteria staff would have provided the Grand Jury with accurate information and data on nutrition.

- 3. For Finding 3, if grounds keepers have been cut due to budget constraints, students can be encouraged to help clean the grounds following the examples of the staff members. If a student sees a staff member pick up a piece of trash, most likely the student will follow suit.***

Status: Disagree in part- This recommendation can not be implemented.

The California Education Code prohibits using student workers or community volunteers to perform duties previously performed by classified staff members who have been laid off due to a reduction in force action by a school board. It is permissible to have volunteer work days several times a year for campus beautification. The work to be performed has to be outside the normal scope of duties performed by maintenance staff. These work days have to be done via negotiation and with the agreement of the California School Employees Association.

Sonora High School has done a reduction of force in the Maintenance Department in 2008 and again in 2009. Despite the lay off of staff, CSEA Local Chapter 744 has allowed the

school administration to host campus clean up and beautification days several times a year. In July 2010 for example, the Sonora High football players and coaches pressure washed gum off of sidewalks, painted the stadium area, and weeded flower beds.

The Grand Jury members observed the campus right after a lunch period. Most American middle and high schools struggle with litter and student cleanliness during the lunch period. The district and site administration are not happy with the appearance of the Sonora High School campus after lunch. The site administration will work with the school's Leadership Class to provide incentives to reduce litter on the grounds of the school. The District Superintendent met with the District Manager of Waste Management Inc. and the Director of Solid Waste Management for Tuolumne County in August 2010. The District is developing a plan in partnership with Tuolumne County for inorganic waste recycling for the fall of 2010 on all of its school campuses.

- 4. For Finding 4, security staff members need to present a more professional appearance. Button down shirts and neat slacks should be worn. Identifying badges or jackets should be worn to make identification easier for both visitors and new students.***

Status: Disagree- Not implemented

Education Code 451.38 mandates that if a school district requires the wearing of a specific uniform or garment, the cost of the purchase, lease or rental of uniforms and garments shall be borne by the district. While the District encourages security staff to dress appropriately, the District does not have the financial resources to provide security uniforms or to require a buttoned shirt and slacks. A buttoned down school logo shirt would cost approximately \$ 35 to \$ 50 per item since the district would only be ordering a very small allotment. Three shirts and two pair of slacks would cost more than \$200 per employee. A simple school logo jacket is \$50. For six security staff members, this would be a cost of \$ 1,500.00. This is cost prohibitive in the current budget crisis. All security staff members do wear visible identification. They are encouraged to dress appropriately and have a neat appearance. Any change in working conditions, requiring uniforms for example, has to be negotiated with the employee's union as per the collective bargaining agreement. The union has the right to not wear the uniform if they feel this is unreasonable.

- 5. There is no recommendation for finding 6.***

- 6. For finding 7, in this age of technology, students need to lean more, not less. No cuts in requirements should be made.***

Status: Disagree- Not implemented. Jury finding was in error.

The superintendent and site principal recommended to the District's Board of Trustees in the Spring of 2010 that the graduation requirements for Sonora High School be reduced from 240 units to 230. If a student takes the required six classes per term for four years and passes all classes, the student will have 240 credits. If a student fails one class for one semester, they would be a non-graduate. More than 1/3 of all students at Sonora High School have at least one F on their transcript.

With the loss of after school tutorial funding and the loss of summer school funding by the State in 2009, the site and district administration were concerned students would be unable to make up classes and recover credit. Of the 85 high school districts in California, no other district in California has such high graduation requirements. Most districts require 210 to 230 credits if they are on a traditional six period schedule. Summerville High School students for example take eight classes on a block schedule for a total of 320 credits but only require 300 for graduation.

The Grand Jury was in error when it said "proposals to cut the present 240 credits to 220 credits have been made." The board appointed a subcommittee to look into the recommendation. It has not yet made its findings known. The district still requires 240 units for graduation. It should be noted that this was a recent policy implemented in 2004. Prior to this change, Sonora High School's graduation requirements were similar to other high school districts in our state at 220 credits required for graduation.

7. For Finding 8, consideration should be made to require student uniforms.

Status: Disagree- Not implemented

The only secondary schools in California that require uniforms for high school students are private schools and some public charter schools. No other public high schools in the foothill region require uniforms. This recommendation is not reasonable. It would not be supported by students, parents or staff members. The dress code at Sonora High School is the same dress code as other high schools in our region. It is enforced on a daily basis.

8. For Finding 9, emphasis must be placed on getting more students into AP courses and a greater of courses need to be offered as soon as possible.

Status: Agree- Not implemented

Sonora High School currently offers advanced courses in the following subjects:

U.S. History, U.S. Government, Spanish Language, World Literature, English Composition, Physics, Calculus A/B.

Sonora High School currently offers honors courses in the following subjects:

Chemistry, Anatomy-Physiology, World History, Economics

Courses offered at the high school are driven by enrollment requests. Students can not be forced to take Advanced Placement courses or to take an honors course of study. With the current economic climate, the district can not afford to support courses with fewer than 28 enrolled students. Unless the enrollment requests increase, the course will not be offered. The cost to add a single course to the course schedule is approximately \$17,000 for the teacher for a single teaching period, \$ 3,000 for books, and \$ 300 for supplies.

The Grand Jury said in their report that "2% of the SUHS students are enrolled in Advanced Placement courses." This was an error. AP courses are taken by 11th and 12th graders with few

exceptions. Last year 15% of the senior class was enrolled in AP or Honors classes. 17% of the 11th grade students were enrolled in honors and AP courses. This is the same ratio as other schools in our region.

- 9. *This recommendation does not relate to any specific finding. More agriculture/vocational classes are needed, especially in a "rural community" such as Tuolumne County. The present staffing needs to be maintained in order to keep the program as strong as possible. Most other "rural" counties have three to five teachers in this field. It is doubtful there are other staff members at SUHS with the proper credential that can teach all of the present vocational classes and continue to build the program. SUHS needs to maintain and increase these classes because Tuolumne County is a rural community based on many facets of agriculture.***

Status: Agree- Already implemented prior to report

As noted earlier, high schools offer courses based on enrollment requests. A standard teaching load for five periods is 150 students or 30 students per course. With the economic crisis, the school is pressing courses closer to 35 students. Most comprehensive high schools with enrollments up to 2,000 students have a single agricultural science teacher. No high school in the foothill region, Tuolumne, Calaveras, Amador, El Dorado, Placer or Nevada counties, has three to five Agriculture science teachers at a school site. No school in the foothill region has more than a single full time assignment in this subject as per the California Department of Education.

If the Grand Jury was referring to agriculture and vocational classes, Sonora High School currently offers courses in construction, agricultural science, wood, welding, agricultural mechanics, business law, technology, computer programming, medical careers, business, marketing, cosmetology, sports medicine and commercial photography. There are currently 12 teachers that teach career-technical education courses at Sonora High School. The school is adding a new ROP Marketing Program in the fall of 2010 in partnership with the MOCSE credit union of Modesto. A real working credit union with student bank tellers will provide students with real hands on experience in the career area of financial services.

Fewer than 12 students have signed up for the ROP Auto Program for the Fall of 2010. This is not a full complement of students. The District has been meeting this summer with Columbia College to create a partnership program to provide an automotive brakes and automotive electrical course via the Regional Occupational Program for the winter of 2010-2011.

If the Grand Jury had met with the superintendent, one of the two school site principals, or the Coordinator for Career Technical Education for the district, or a Guidance Counselor, they would have had the correct data on program enrollments. They would also have comparative staffing information from similar schools in the region.

- 10. *This recommendation does not relate to any specific finding. Future Grand Juries need to look long and hard at the Sonora Union High School over the next several years. This level of oversight is needed to insure compliance with the school's own written policies and guidelines as well as complying with the responses to the Grand Jury's recommendations.***

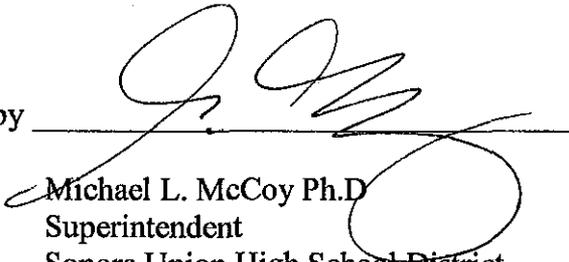
Status: Disagree

The Sonora Union High School District Superintendent Dr. Mike McCoy was asked to speak with the Grand Jury in August 2009 on the impact of the California budget crisis on local schools and the high school district. At no time was there ever any mention of any complaints against the district. Dr. McCoy handed out business cards and invited the foreman and jury members to call him personally if they had additional questions. After that date, neither Dr. McCoy, Chief Business Official Kim Burr, Board President Kate Segerstrom nor new Board President Jeanie Smith were ever called regarding any complaints or concerns by the Grand Jury. To the present time, no specific complaints or allegations have been articulated by the jury or the jury foreman with the district administration.

The Grand Jury Report had a number of factual errors. The report did not take into consideration state law, employment statutes, employee collective bargaining agreements or education code in the final recommendations. The Grand Jury never articulated the complaints they were investigating with district administration. They did not accurately identify documents or data in their requests of school personnel. They did not interview district administration in their fact finding. When they did visit the Sonora High School campus, they did not articulate what programs they wanted to visit other than the cafeteria. The negative publicity in the local newspaper from this naïve, poorly written inaccurate report has caused irreparable harm to the reputation of the students and staff of Sonora High School. It was strangely biased, poorly informed and contained little information of use for improvement of Sonora High School.

Submitted by _____

Date August 12, 2010


Michael L. McCoy Ph.D
Superintendent
Sonora Union High School District