

RECEIVED

JUN 30 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Briggs School District

12465 Foothill Rd., Santa Paula, CA 93060 (805) 525-7540 FAX (805) 933-1111

Ronald J Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

June 25, 2009

Dear Mr. Zenone:

First of all I'd like to thank you for the work that the Ventura County Grand Jury does on behalf of the residents of Ventura County. The Grand Jury does in fact provide an independent voice for the identification and investigation of issues affecting Ventura County. On May 18, 2009, the Grand Jury issued its report titled: School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High? In that report, the Grand Jury required a response from the Briggs Elementary School District to recommendation R-01 and R-02. I came into the Briggs School District as the Interim Superintendent on November 18, 2009 and will be serving in that capacity through June 30, 2009. I will be the one responding for the Briggs School District to your recommendation R-01 and R-02. We have reviewed the report and the following responses are provided as you require.

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The personnel in the Briggs School District certainly supports efforts to maximize educational resources and to seek the most efficient means of providing high quality educational opportunities for all students. I personally have spoken to this issue on a number of occasions. However, we do not believe that the entire consolidation of school districts will necessarily benefit the education of all students in Ventura County, nor do we believe it would produce the estimated cost savings detailed in the report.

As we know, the Educational Code allows for several methods of school district reorganization known as territory transfers and /or unifications. There are a number of democratic processes to allow citizens, communities, and School Districts to pursue consolidation concepts and to find the means to produce the best possible opportunities for students through the most efficient structures. There are a number of ways to initiate the process to unify school districts or transfer territory. Some of these methods are: residents, District Governing Boards, the County Board of Supervisors, City Councils, the County Committee on School District Organization and I believe a local Organization Committee. I believe that regardless of the group initiating the

Dr. Kenneth Moffett, Superintendent

Trustees: Charles E. Alvarez, Karen Schilbrack, Zahid Shah, Mindee Stekkinger, Colleen Garmon-Campbell

process, the final decision is in the hands of the voters within the affected areas before a reorganization plan can be finalized.

Our District supports current democratic processes that allow communities to determine the appropriate structure for the education of its students. There certainly appears to be a place for the Community voice as shown by the recent example of the Pleasant Valley Elementary School Districts experience in attempted unification. We do have a history of working with other districts and organizations within the greater group of districts throughout the county. At this time, Recommendation R-01 will not be specifically pursued by the Briggs Elementary School District.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The Briggs School District is continually trying to locate fiscal efficiencies in all organizational areas. Within this approach the District currently works with the Ventura County Office of Education as a provider of consolidated services. Some of the services utilized are:

- Migrant Education
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
- Student Management System Hosting
- School Health Services Standards and Practices
- Special Education Transportation
- Testing and Assessment Support
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Countywide Internet Access
- Countywide Wireless Network
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
- Sight evaluation and testing

In addition to these services the Briggs District joins other joint services entities for the purpose of cost savings and consolidating efficiencies, including

- Coastal Schools Employee Benefits Organization
- Special Education Local Plan Area
- Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
- Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

The Briggs School District will continue to strive to provide high quality educational opportunities while working with all local, county and state agencies to seek the most cost effective strategies possible. Therefore, I can report that Recommendation R-02 has been and will continue to be implemented and expanded whenever possible by the Briggs School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kenneth L. Moffett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Kenneth L. Moffett, Ed.D
Superintendent

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
P.O. Box 6489, Ventura, CA. 93006



Conejo Valley Unified School District

1400 East Janss Road, Thousand Oaks, California 91362
Telephone (805) 497-9511 Ext. 203 • Fax (805) 371-9170

SUPERINTENDENT
Mario V. Contini

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Dr. Timothy G. Stephens, President
Pat Phelps, Vice President
Michael A. Dunn, Clerk
Peggy Buckles, Member
Dr. Betsy Connolly, Member

July 8, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Response to Grand Jury Report (2008-09)

Dear Ventura County Grand Jury:

Please find attached the responses by the Conejo Valley Unified School District to recommendations R-01 and R-02 from the May 18, 2009 release of the Ventura County Grand Jury report entitled: *School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?*. At its regular meeting on June 16, 2009, the CVUSD Board of Education discussed the report and on July 7, 2009, the Board took action to submit the attached response.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Timothy Stephens
President, Board of Education

RECEIVED

JUL 13 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

July 8, 2009

CONEJO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY 2008-09 REPORT

The Conejo Valley Unified School District Board of Education provides the following response to the Grand Jury 2008-09 Report entitled, School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High? This response does not address the accuracy or inaccuracy of the findings in the report and focuses solely on the two recommendations directly involving CVUSD.

R-01: Consolidate Conejo Valley Unified School and Oak Park Unified School Districts

The Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) Board of Education supports the Ventura County Grand Jury's conclusion that the achievement of greater efficiencies in the delivery of public education is a worthy goal. However, CVUSD does not intend to pursue the Grand Jury's recommendation for consolidation with Oak Park Unified School District (OPUSD). The Board believes that, in this case, consolidation would be in conflict with our obligation to remain responsive to local community concerns while meeting the learning needs of our student population.

The public expects school districts to operate under local community control. Larger districts across the state and nation have focused on decentralization and increased school site autonomy in answer to community concerns. In Ventura County, efforts to create greater efficiencies through neighborhood school closures and unification have been rejected by the public. Communities are endeared to their local schools and districts for good reason. Over the years, parents and students have participated in the creation of local school district policies, traditions and values, thereby contributing to the unique settings in which students thrive. In addition, CVUSD and OPUSD, at \$643 and \$880 respectively, are two of the lowest per student administrative cost districts among the twenty studied by the Grand Jury. Both are high performing and efficiently operated. CVUSD is unwilling to risk losing the benefits of local control for what could likely be minimal improvements in operational efficiency.

Recommendation R-01 will not be pursued.

R-02: Consolidation of support services with the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) (technology, purchasing, facilities, transportation)

The Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) intends to pursue the Grand Jury's recommendation for consolidation of support services with VCOE.

At present, CVUSD, like other districts throughout Ventura County, works collaboratively with the VCOE to consolidate the aforementioned support services. With respect to technology, we work in tandem on administrative and instructional software selection, infrastructure design and installation, staff development, business and student data systems support, and much more. Similarly, CVUSD works closely with VCOE on purchasing systems, support for facility construction and shared use of facilities for staff development and special needs student classrooms. Finally, CVUSD and VCOE work cooperatively on the transportation of special needs students. In the future, CVUSD will continue existing collaborations while exploring opportunities for additional consolidations of support services.

Recommendation R-02 will be pursued.



Fillmore Unified School District

Office of the Superintendent

627 Sespe Avenue • Fillmore, CA 93015
Phone (805) 524- 6038 • Fax (805) 524-6060

July 8, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED

JUL 14 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Dear Mr. Zenone:

On May 18, 2009, the Grand Jury issued its report entitled: *School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?*. In that report, the Grand Jury required a response from the Fillmore Unified School District (FUSD) to recommendations R-01 and R-02. I have reviewed the report with the FUSD Board of Education on June 16, 2009 and per the requirement, I am submitting the following response:

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

FUSD supports the Grand Jury's concept of saving educational resources by reducing costs where possible. When the Grand Jury's report was discussed with the FUSD Board of Education, the data presented was invaluable as we compared our administrative costs with other similar Districts. Our analysis found that our costs were appropriate for a District our size with the same demographics.

The Board considered the potential consolidation with other Districts in Heritage Valley and the potential savings that could occur if such a consolidation occurred. The Board does not wish to pursue consolidation with the Districts recommended in the document. Fillmore is a unique city, established in 1888 and incorporated in 1914, and possesses tremendous community pride. The Board believes that any benefit from consolidating our Districts would be diminished in the loss of identity and would diminish the community pride that already exists. Further, the Board expressed that the local control of the Fillmore/Piru community to make decisions in our small district would be lost in the consolidation into a larger District. Our small size allows us to make decisive, timely changes when needed, which we believe provides greater support for the unique characteristics of the community we serve.

Therefore, Recommendation R-01 will not be implemented for the reasons cited above.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

FUSD supports the Grand Jury's concept of saving educational resources by reducing costs where possible by consolidating support services. We believe the Ventura County Office of Education already does this in a variety of ways. Some of those services include:

Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
Bilingual Teacher Training Program
Cal-Safe/Teen Parent Program
Career & Technical Education
Countywide Foster Youth Services Program
Countywide Internet Access, e-mail, and web hosting services
Countywide Wireless Network
Countywide Student Academic Competitions
Gateway Community School – serving students from throughout Ventura County
Graphics Reproduction Services
Migrant Education
Specialized Services for Special Education Students
Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
Student Management System Hosting
Student Assessment Management System Hosting
Regional Occupational Program serving students throughout Ventura County
School Health Services Standards and Practices
Special Education Transportation
Special Populations Educational Support
Testing and Assessment Support

In addition to this sample of services provided by the Ventura County Office of Education, school districts in Ventura County have joined together and formed several “economy of scale” joint services organizations, including:

Coastal Schools Employee Benefits Organization
Special Education Local Plan Area
Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

These are just a few of the consolidated support services provided to school districts in Ventura County. As you can see, the Ventura County Office of Education is committed to providing the leadership to create cost saving services and support to all local educational agencies. Fillmore believes that Recommendation R-02 has been, and will continue to be, implemented and expanded in Ventura County.

Respectfully,



Jeff Sweeney
Superintendent

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
Fillmore Unified School District Board of Education

HUENEME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

205 N. Ventura Road

(805) 488-3588

Port Hueneme, CA 93041-3065

JERRY DANNENBERG, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT

DEBORAH DESMETH
ASSISTANT SUPT.-HUMAN RESOURCES

ROBIN I. FREEMAN
ASSISTANT SUPT.-ED. SERVICES

DEBRA B. REEVES
CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICIAL

June 12, 2009

CERTIFIED MAIL, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. Ronald J. Zenone
Grand Jury Foreman
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

Subject: Grand Jury Report, School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?

Dear Mr. Zenone:

On behalf of the Hueneme Elementary School District Board of Trustees, I am writing to you in response to the subject Grand Jury Report dated May 18, 2009.

Before responding to specific recommendations, I would like to make a few observations regarding your study of school district administrative costs.

In looking at your study, it became apparent to me that you were not comparing apples to apples. Depending on the size of the schools in each district, some support staff cost assigned to a district office (such as to the Hueneme Elementary School District Office) is charged to the school site. For example, in the Oxnard Union High School District, a nurse and a psychologist are assigned to each school site, thus lowering the cost assigned to the district office. To get a more accurate picture of the costs of operating our local schools, I would refer you to the Ventura County Office of Education website: www.vcoe.org. In the *Administrative Services Division*, click on *School Business and Advisory Services*, then on *Forms and Reports*. The VCOE has a series of books for *Selected Pupil Enrollment*. This data will give you a clear picture of which districts are putting more money into the classrooms.

Using this data, you will clearly see that the Hueneme Elementary School District puts more money into instruction and instruction-related areas (pages 17 and 18) than any other district in the county. On pages 21 and 22, you will see that we have the second lowest cost, countywide, for General Administration. Finally, on pages 28 and 29, you will see that we spend more money for teachers' salaries than any other Ventura County district.

Your study did not look at the long-term health of each school district's financial situation. It did not consider the issue of unfunded obligations in the future. The question I would ask the Grand Jury is: *Why should the children of the Hueneme Elementary School District have funds diverted from their classrooms to help the Oxnard Union High School District pay for its unfunded liability for lifetime medical benefits for 496 former employees, at an estimated cost of \$230,000,000?*

RECEIVED

JUN 16 2009

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

SHALA J. GUIDINO, PRESIDENT • DARLENE A. BRUNO, CLERK • ELAINE K. GARBER, TRUSTEE • DONNA L. BRANSTROM, TRUSTEE • RAFAEL (RALPH) RAMOS, TRUSTEE

Another issue that would be of concern is that, in the Oxnard Union High School District's contract with their teacher association, they have a formula that gives a percentage of any new general fund money to teachers in the form of a salary increase. Any savings generated by the Grand Jury recommendations would have no benefit to the children in the Hueneme Elementary School District.

From the example above, it is clear that one cannot look at a single aspect of a school district's budget. The entire budget, services offered, salary schedules, and present and future financial obligations must be considered to get the total picture of the health of a school district.

Response to Grand Jury Recommendations

R-01. The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs. Some suggestions are as follows:

- consolidate/unify Briggs Elementary, Mupu Elementary, Santa Paula Elementary, Santa Paula Union High, and Santa Clara Elementary
- consolidate Ojai Unified and Ventura Unified
- consolidate/unify Hueneme Elementary, Ocean View Elementary, Oxnard Elementary, Oxnard Union High, and Rio Elementary
- consolidate/unify Mesa Union Elementary, Pleasant Valley Elementary, and Somis Union Elementary
- consolidate Conejo Valley Unified and Oak Park Unified
- consolidate Moorpark Unified and Simi Valley Unified

Different consolidations or unifications could achieve similar savings.

Response

While we might agree that some savings could be generated by some consolidation of very small school districts, it would be important to make sure that those savings are not going to add pay to teachers without adding any services for students. One thing the Grand Jury did not look at was the difference in salary schedules in different districts. Any potential savings would be used to raise the salaries for teachers in lower-paid districts and/or pay for life-time medical benefits for retirees. Therefore, regarding a consolidation of the Hueneme Elementary, Ocean View Elementary, Oxnard Elementary, Oxnard Union High, and Rio Elementary School Districts, we reject the idea that potential savings would be of benefit to the students of the Hueneme Elementary School District.

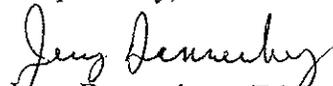
R-02. The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services, such as, Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

Response

The fact of the matter is that the VCOE already coordinates efforts to consolidate support services for districts. They provide services for districts that cannot operate them economically by themselves. They regularly offer support.

In summary, I would like the Grand Jury to understand that school finance in California is very complicated. To look at a school district budget, one must study the entire budget, including short-term and long-term obligations. Public schools have a low overhead compared to many businesses and other public institutions. To look at administrative costs in isolation paints an unrealistic picture for the public.

Respectfully,


Jerry Dannenberg, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Copy: Hueneme Elementary Board of Education

Honorable Kevin S. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
P.O. Box 6489
Ventura, CA 93006

June 16, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED
JUN 19 2009
VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Dear Mr. Zenone:

Thank you for the services provided by the Ventura County Grand Jury through identification and investigation of issues impacting our County. On May 18, 2009, the Grand Jury issued its report entitled: School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?. In that report, the Grand Jury required a response from the Mesa Union School District to recommendations R-01 and R-02. The report has been reviewed and the following responses are provided as required:

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The Mesa Union School District supports all efforts to maximize educational resources and to seek the most efficient means to providing high quality educational opportunities for all students. However, we do not concur that consolidation of school districts necessarily benefits the education of all students in Ventura County or produces the cost savings suggested in the grand jury report.

Existing educational code and democratic processes allow citizens, communities, and school Districts to pursue consolidation concepts and to find the means to produce the best possible educational opportunities for students through the most efficient structures. California has a history of varied school District sizes, including many small school Districts that operate at the highest academic and democratic levels while maintaining great efficiency and stability in fiscal and organizational domains.

The District supports current democratic processes that allow communities to determine the appropriate structure for the education of their students. As a District, Mesa has a long history of operating with outstanding results as regards academic, community, and fiscal domains and we continue to work closely with the broader community of Districts and organizations in Ventura County. Therefore, Recommendation R-01 will not be specifically pursued by the Mesa Union School District.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The Mesa Union School District works to find fiscal efficiencies in all possible organizational areas. Along these lines, the District works with the Ventura County Office of Education as a provider of consolidated services. Among the services utilized by the District are:

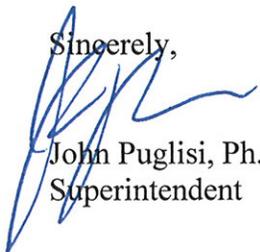
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Countywide Internet Access
- Countywide Wireless Network
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
- Migrant Education
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
- Student Management System Hosting
- Student Assessment Management System Hosting
- School Health Services Standards and Practices
- Special Education Transportation
- Special Populations Educational Support
- Testing and Assessment Support

In addition the District joins other entities for cost savings and consolidating efficiencies. These include:

- Coastal Schools Employee Benefits Organization
- Special Education Local Plan Area
- Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
- Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

The Mesa Union School District will continue to provide high quality educational opportunities while working with all local and state agencies to seek the most cost effective strategies possible. Therefore, we can report that Recommendation R-02 has been, and will continue to be, implemented by the Mesa Union School District.

Sincerely,



John Puglisi, Ph.D.
Superintendent

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County

TRUSTEES:
Tim Shield
Chuck Teague
Bryan Garibay

Mupu Elementary School District

4410 N. Ojai Road Santa Paula, CA 93060
(805) 525-6111 • Fax (805) 525-2871

Jeanine Gore
Superintendent/Principal
(805) 525-0422
igore@mupu.k12.ca.us

June 24, 2009

Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Avenue, L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

To the Members of the Grand Jury:

RE: Grand Jury Report "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?"

The Governing Board of the Mupu Elementary School District has received and reviewed the Grand Jury's Report entitled "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?"

The Mupu district was omitted from the Required Responses List, but we are assuming that the Grand Jury would like to hear the district's response to the report.

The Governing Board would like to express its appreciation to the Grand Jury for developing the report.

Response to Findings:

F-05: The district accepts these findings with this correction: Trustees do not receive any compensation for serving on the governing board. The district would like to note that it did not perform any calculations that verify or contradict the monetary amounts listed in F-05.

Response to Recommendations

R-01: The governing board does not agree with the recommendation to unify or consolidate with other districts for the following reasons:

- A. An action or decision of this nature should be a part of the democratic voting process.
- B. Many families move into the Mupu Elementary School District for the specific reason that they want their children to attend a small

RECEIVED

JUN 29 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

school. Realtors frequently use “in the Mupu District” to attract home buyers. It provides choice to families who don’t like the bureaucracy of a larger district and prefer the attention that the small school environment provides to their children. Employees of the Mupu District have worked hard to develop a reputation of high academic standards in a unique and nurturing setting—a place where parents have direct and regular contact with the Superintendent/Principal and all staff members.

- C. The district’s small size allows it to make critical educational and policy decisions without weeks, months, or years of negotiations. Each member of the 13-member staff is accountable for the safety, well-being, and academic preparedness of the students and participates in decisions that affect these areas. In addition, parents are an integral part of the learning community and know that their input counts.
- D. Research supports that small school environments provide improved student learning.
- E. Unification may lead to the elimination of our small school. If the defining “bottom line” is dollars, it wouldn’t make sense for a district to keep a school of 127 students open. Districts in Ventura County are closing schools that are much larger than Mupu School in order to save money. These closures haven’t always resulted in the hoped-for savings. In at least three instances, parent/staff response to the school closings have been to convert these schools to charters. People on the “calculator end” of running a district can easily forget that the bottom line for parents is the education of their children, not how much money a district can save by closing schools and absorbing those children into a larger system.
- F. The Mupu District’s “bottom line” is service to our students and families. As long as our community supports our efforts, we will continue to provide this very critical small school district alternative.

R-02: The Mupu School District has coordinated with the following agencies to consolidate support services:

Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority. This has resulted in substantial savings for the district. The VCSBSA handles all of the fiscal responsibilities of the district, such as budget development, financial accounting, payroll, accounts payable and receivable, and purchasing. In addition to the financial benefit, the district members of the BSA meet regularly to share and discuss best professional practice in the

areas of curriculum development, facilities management, technology, professional development, among other items that directly affect the well-being of our students, staffs, and families.

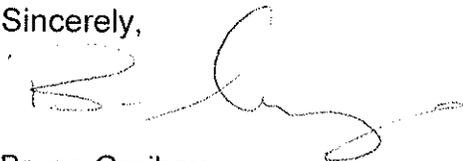
Ventura County Office of Education: technology support; professional development; internet service; facilities management support; safety trainings; business services support; curriculum and instructional materials support

Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority for Workers
Compensation and other insurance

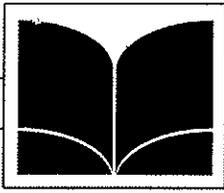
Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) for support in Special Education

This concludes the response of the Mupu Elementary School District to the Grand Jury's report. If you have further questions, please contact the district by mail, phone (525-0422), or email (jgore@mupu.k12.ca.us).

Sincerely,

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

Bryan Garibay
Clerk, Governing Board of Trustees



Learning Today to Lead Tomorrow

MOORPARK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

5297 Maureen Lane, Moorpark, California 93021

(805) 378-6300

June 24, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Avenue., L#3751
Ventura, California 93009

RECEIVED

JUL - 7 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Dear Mr. Zenone:

Please accept this communication as the Moorpark Unified School District's response to the Ventura County Grand Jury's report entitled: School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?. The Board of Education approved the response at its regular meeting June 23, 2009.

We appreciate the efforts of the Grand Jury to seek ways to streamline and reduce operating costs of public agencies. As the state education budget allocation has continued to shrink dramatically over the last two years, our school district has been actively reviewing operations and designing further efficiency strategies. Our goal is to focus our drastically diminished resources on core educational programs.

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The Moorpark Unified School District encompasses the entire incorporated area of the City of Moorpark plus various unincorporated areas, serving approximately 7,200 students and their families with eleven schools. In 1980, the elementary and high school districts serving Moorpark students unified as a result of a ballot measure approved by the community. Over the years, as the Moorpark Unified District has grown, it has re-organized its district administrative and support staff to be fiscally and operationally efficient and to be responsive to the schools, students and families served. In fact, the District Cost Comparisons calculated in the Grand Jury's Report, Moorpark Unified is shown to have one of the lowest district costs per students of the twenty school districts compared.

While Moorpark is smaller than Simi Valley, both are considered medium-sized districts according to state definitions. Generally speaking, medium-sized districts are optimal for efficiently handling central office operations and for being responsive to community constituents. The size and composition of district office staffs correspond to the size of

BOARD OF EDUCATION: Bruce Thomas, President
Ute Van Dam, Member

Greg Barker, Vice President
David Pollock, Member

Ron LaGuardia, Clerk
Ellen Smith, District Superintendent¹

An Equal Opportunity Employer

the workload, specifically for Information and Technology services, Facilities and Operations, Purchasing and Transportation. So, a merger between Simi Valley and Moorpark Unified would not reduce the need for many of the classified support salaries included in the Grand Jury's report, nor would it necessarily make operations more efficient.

Finally, Moorpark Unified School District values the ability to establish the mission and vision for our education programs locally by the Board of Education and the collaborative process of our Strategic Plan Team which involves parents, students, staff and community members. Strong partnerships with parents, PTA's, the City of Moorpark, local service organizations and businesses in the community help ensure the implementation and support of locally developed strategies for continually improving education for our students.

If the communities of Moorpark and Simi Valley were to decide to pursue Recommendation R-01, there is a legislative process to be followed. However, there has been no indication that such consolidation is an issue at this point and the District does not concur that Recommendation R-01 would necessarily be beneficial and cost effective. Therefore, this recommendation will not be specifically pursued by the Moorpark Unified School District.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The Moorpark Unified School District concurs with the Grand Jury's concept of saving educational resources by reducing costs where possible by coordinating and consolidating support services.

Moorpark Unified School District coordinates with other districts to save duplication of effort as well a time and money. Examples include:

- utilization of the "piggyback" bid process when purchasing equipment/supplies and
- contracts with Simi Valley Unified and the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) for specialized student programs that Moorpark does not offer.

Moorpark Unified is also a member of the following joint service organizations that save member districts money by pooling together to purchase services such as employee health benefits and liability insurance: Coastal Schools Employee Benefits Organization, Special Education Local Plan Area, Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority, and Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

Currently, the VCOE consolidates a great variety of services for school districts throughout Ventura County which results in cumulative savings in the millions of dollars. Some of the services that Moorpark Unified utilizes include:

Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
Cal-Safe/Teen Parent Program
Career & Technical Education
Countywide Internet Access, e-mail, and web hosting services
Countywide Student Academic Competitions
Gateway Community School – serving students from throughout Ventura County
Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
Learning Resource Display Center
Migrant Education
School District Financial and Payroll Systems
Specialized Services for Special Education Students
IT Student Management System Hosting
Regional Occupational Program serving students throughout Ventura County
School Health Services Standards and Practices
Testing and Assessment Support

Finally, the VCOE provides opportunities for collaboration and exchange of ideas. The VCOE holds regular meetings for the County's Superintendents, Chief Business Officials, Program Directors and a variety of other staff. These meetings provide a forum for the exchange of strategies and ideas which often result in options for reducing expenses and/or consolidating services.

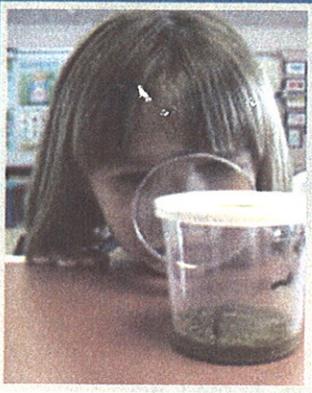
Recommendation R-02 has been, and will continue to be, implemented by Moorpark Unified School District in conjunction with Ventura County Office of Education and other school districts in Ventura County.

Sincerely,



Ellen Smith
District Superintendent
Secretary to the Board of Education

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County



EDUCATING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Anthony W. Knight, Ed.D., Superintendent

www.opusd.k12.ca.us

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Jan Iceland
Barbara Laifman
Marie Panec
Mary Rees
Cindy Vinson

June 22, 2009

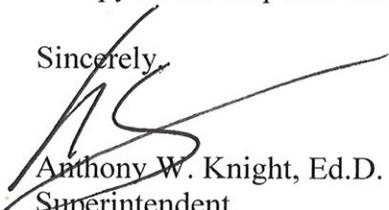
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Avenue, L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Sirs:

Attached please find our Response to the Grand Jury Report "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?" that was approved by the Oak Park Unified School District Board of Education at a Special Board Meeting held on June 19, 2009.

A copy of our response has also been sent to the Honorable Kevin J. McGee as per your request.

Sincerely,


Anthony W. Knight, Ed.D.
Superintendent

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee
Stan Mantooth, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

RECEIVED

JUN 24 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY REPORT

School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?

DISAGREE WITH FINDINGS

The Oak Park Unified School District (hereinafter referred to as "OPUSD") disagrees in part with finding F-10 of The Grand Jury Report entitled, "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High" as well as findings within Attachment 7 to The Grand Jury Report.

REASONS FOR DISAGREEMENT WITH FINDINGS

OPUSD disagrees in part with finding F-10 of The Grand Jury Report as well as findings within Attachment 7 to The Grand Jury Report for the following reasons:

- 1) During the time period from when The Grand Jury requested information from the districts concerning personnel and related costs of administering their districts until the present, OPUSD has reorganized its district office with an elimination of one administrative position, a significant reduction in a second administrative position, and an elimination of a clerical support position. The projected savings to the district from the reorganization is \$241,594.00. Thus, the numbers stated in The Grand Jury Report in regard to the number of administrators and the respective costs, as well as the administrators to students ratio (%) in the Grand Jury Report, as it applies to OPUSD are not accurate.
- 2) The Grand Jury Report assumes that if OPUSD and Conejo are combined, the administrators and support staff from one district can be eliminated. OPUSD does not believe that it is reasonable to assume that a school district can function properly if it experiences a significant increase in size while also experiencing an elimination of the entire administrative positions and support staff from one of the districts.

RECOMMENDATION R-1 WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED

OPUSD disagrees with Recommendation R-01 of The Grand Jury Report as it pertains to the suggested consolidation of OPUSD and Conejo, and as it pertains to the consolidation of OPUSD with any other school district within Ventura County specified in The Grand Jury Report, for the reasons that follow. OPUSD is working on the premise that The Grand Jury believes the, "Criteria For Approval of Reorganization Proposals" on page 41 of The Grand Jury Report has been met and that is why The Grand Jury is recommending reorganization. OPUSD disagrees with this assumption. To further substantiate the reasons why OPUSD disagrees with Recommendation R-01 of The Grand Jury Report, OPUSD's reasons specify which criteria within the "Criteria For Approval of Reorganization Proposals" would be adversely affected if consolidation with Conejo or with any other school district within Ventura County specified in The Grand Jury Report were to occur.

- The identity of the Oak Park Community would be adversely affected by Recommendation R-01. The identity of Oak Park and its residents is largely based around the schools. Many people moved to Oak Park because of OPUSD and specifically because it is a small district with very local control. The Oak Park community values small schools with individual attention to students. The community has a shared value of the importance of a high quality education, many people's daily lives are centered around the schools, and the identity of themselves and their children

has its basis in the focus on OPUSD's small school district encapsulated in a tight-knit community. The Oak Park community has demonstrated that it values its local schools and believes strongly in local control of the schools. This is demonstrated through the recent passage of the Measure C Parcel Tax (82% YES) and the Measure R School Bond (57% YES). There are active and functioning Citizens Oversight Committees for each of these measures. Additionally, parents in OPUSD demonstrate ownership of the schools through active Parent Teacher Organizations, Friends of Oak Park Schools, our educational foundation, and by volunteering on a daily basis. The community of Oak Park does the same, for example, through the Oak Park Community Foundation which is actively involved in the support of the schools. (Criteria #2 would be adversely affected by The Grand Jury Report Recommendation R-01).

- The proposed reorganization would significantly disrupt the educational programs in OPUSD, would hinder the educational performance in OPUSD and would severely compromise the level of education that OPUSD students receive. OPUSD is one of the most successful public school districts in California and the nation. All of our schools are California Distinguished Schools and four are nationally recognized. Our API scores are the highest of any unified or K-12 district in the County. Additionally, research shows that smaller schools translate into higher levels of student achievement. Consolidation of school systems often leads to consolidation of schools, making them larger entities. OPUSD takes pride in the attention that is paid to each student and works to meet the needs of every student, including his or her social and emotional needs. (Criteria #6 would be adversely affected by The Grand Jury Report Recommendation R-01)
- The proposed reorganization would result in a significant decrease to the property values in Oak Park. The property values in Oak Park are elevated because being a resident in Oak Park guarantees access to the high quality of education offered by OPUSD. The proposed reorganization would be an inequity to the homeowners who purchased knowing they were buying specifically within OPUSD and who paid a premium for purchasing within OPUSD. (Criteria #8 would be adversely affected in an inverse manner by The Grand Jury Report Recommendation R-01)
- The proposed reorganization would cause a substantial adverse effect on the fiscal management or fiscal status of OPUSD. OPUSD is financially sound, recently earning a Aa3 rating by Moody's Investor Services prior to issuance of Measure R and Measure C6 bonds. OPUSD has one of the leanest administrative structures of any district in the County. We have compared our organizational chart to those of similar sized districts in Los Angeles County and we rank at the bottom in terms of number of administrators and administrator to teacher and administrator to student ratios. Also, the parcel tax and bond monies, described above, were voted for by Oak Park residents to be used only in Oak Park. It would create an injustice if these funds were spent elsewhere. The district's adopted budgets and interim reports have always been certified *positive* by the OPUSD Board of Education and by the County Office of Education, indicating that we are able to meet our obligations and expect to in the coming years (three year projection). (Criteria #9 would be adversely affected by The Grand Jury Recommendation R-01)

In summary, OPUSD values its autonomy and self-determination through local control. Our moral imperatives and goals reflect the values of our community and there is an understanding of

accountability to our community for the education of the children of Oak Park. Our community demands local control.

RECOMMENDATION R-02 HAS ALREADY BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN PART, WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN PART OVER TIME (OPUSD IS NOT IN A POSITION TO GIVE AN EXPECTED DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION), AND WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTD IN PART

The Oak Park Unified School District already works closely with the Ventura County Office of Education and other local school districts for support services. These include printing, purchasing, and some special education services. We would like to see more opportunities in the area of special education made available to our students by neighboring districts. For example, we are also looking forward to working with Ventura County Office of Education in the development of an RFP (Request for Proposals) for potential solar power projects under the ARRA.

ADMINISTRATION

NANCY J. CARROLL, Ph.D.
Superintendent

CRAIG W. HELMSTEDTER, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent

WILLIAM C. YOUNG
Assistant Superintendent – Business
Services

MARCIA TURNER
Assistant Superintendent-Curriculum,
Instruction, and Assessment



Quality Education for Student Success

4200 OLDS ROAD, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA 93033
(805) 488-4441 FAX (805) 986-6797

GOVERNING BOARD

PAUL H. CHATMAN
ELLEN M. FITTS
RICHARD KENNEDY
SUSAN LUCKEY
JAMES A. MERRILL

June 25, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED

JUN 29 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Dear Mr. Zenone:

As per Penal Code &933(c), the Ocean View School District Governing Board submits its response to the 2008-2009 Ventura County Grand Jury Report titled "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?"

R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs:

- **Consolidate/unify Hueneme Elementary, Ocean View Elementary, Oxnard Elementary, Oxnard Union High, and Rio Elementary**

The Ocean View Governing Board disagrees with the Grand Jury's finding. The reasons include the following:

1. Several recent research studies indicate that the economic benefits of increasing school district size do not yield the fiscal benefits expected. Two recent studies are cited below:
 - "Several recent studies have concluded, however, that the economic benefits of increasing district size diminish as the size of the district grows, and that there is an optimal size of a school district beyond which per-pupil expenditures begin to rise. William Duncombe and John Yinger's 2003 study of 12 actual consolidations in New York state concluded that doubling the enrollment of a 300-student district is likely to produce a net 22.8 percent savings; that doubling the enrollment of a 1,500-student district is likely to yield a 3.2 percent savings; and that little or no savings are to be expected for mergers of districts already enrolling more than 1,500 students. A good recent summary of the scholarly literature on this topic by Matthew Andrews, Duncombe and Yinger reached the same conclusion, finding, "Sizeable potential cost savings may exist by moving from a very small district (500 or less (sic) pupils) to a district with approximately

2,000 to 4,000 pupils," but the authors noted that per-pupil spending actually starts to go up again when district size reaches 6,000 students." **School District Consolidation, Size and Spending: an Evaluation** By Mr. Andrew J. Coulson /Mackinac Center for Public Policy, May 2007

- In 2002, a research team led by William Ouchi, a professor at UCLA's Anderson School of Management, examined nine different school systems, including the United States' three largest districts. The research team found that the centralized management of schools brought about by consolidation actually led to administrative bloat, not streamlining. For example, in the highly centralized Los Angeles Unified School District, only 45 percent of education dollars were spent in the classroom (p. 59). Education expert Mike Antonucci explains, "Paradoxically, the larger a school district gets, the more resources it devotes to secondary or even nonessential activities." He refers to this phenomenon as "mission creep," in which secondary administrative support services subvert a district's primary purpose of educating students (p. 60). Focusing on theoretical economies of scale, consolidation proponents overlook the negative constraints of large school districts. Former Clinton Administration assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and Education Commission of the States senior education analyst Kent McGuire cautions that such "negative mechanisms" include shifting resources away from core educational activities (p.61). Policy Report Jan. 2004 Competition or Consolidation? The School District Consolidation Debate Revisited by Vicki Murray, Ph.D., Education Analyst, Goldwater Institute, and Ross Groen, Education Researcher
2. The cost to consolidate school districts as recommended was not included in the Grand Jury's report. Considering the evidence of the cost associated with the recent attempt to move just one high school from one school district into another district, the costs of the recommendations in the Grand Jury report seem astronomical and could possibly offset any potential savings for many years to come. Some potential costs would include legal fees, election fees, buyouts of personnel under contract, fair hearings, mediations, contract negotiations with labor groups, etc.
 3. The Grand Jury's recommendation to consolidate/unify Hueneme, Ocean View, Oxnard Elementary, Oxnard Union High School and Rio school districts does not include a sound educational reason for creating larger school districts that support the best interests of the students currently served by each school district. In contrast, Ocean View suggests that the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Oakland Unified School District are models which clearly demonstrate how large school districts are detriments to the academic and social-emotional progress of the children served. These are models that the Ocean View Governing Board does not wish to replicate or emulate.

4. The Grand Jury suggests that Ocean View School District should consolidate with the school districts in the Oxnard plain. However, all of these school districts, except Ocean View, are designated as “Program Improvement” school districts by the State of California because many of their schools have not met the minimum academic achievement levels designated by the state. The Ocean View Governing Board specifically implemented several programs to ensure the academic progress of its students. Maintaining low class size and preserving high academic standards for promotion were, and will continue to be, key mandates for the school district. These governance decisions are fundamentally different from the other school districts. Therefore, the Ocean View Governing Board suggests that Ocean View’s schools have distinctly different educational needs and its community would not want to be represented by trustees residing outside of this community.
5. The current public education governance model requires elected Board members to reside in the community served by their school district. Any consolidation of school districts would potentially erode this protection of fair representation.

The Grand Jury recommendation under R-01 will not be implemented for the reasons listed above.

R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services, such as, Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The Ocean View Governing Board agrees with the Grand Jury’s finding to coordinate efforts with individual districts to provide services. VCOE currently provides many services to all of the school districts throughout Ventura County and serves as the lead agency for many committees and services. In addition, several school districts have agreements that allow for a coordination of services dependent upon the specific needs of each district.

Recommendation R-02 is already under implementation.

Please feel free to contact me at (805) 488-4441 if you have any additional questions.

Respectfully submitted,


Nancy J. Carroll, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Ocean View School District



Ojai Unified School District

414 East Ojai Avenue, P.O. Box 878, Ojai, CA 93024
(805) 640-4300 • Fax (805) 640-4419 • www.ojai.k12.ca.us

June 16, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave. L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Mr. Zenone:

This letter is written in response to the Grand Jury report titled, "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?" This letter is written to meet our district's obligation to respond to the report within sixty days of its publication. The following constitutes Ojai Unified School District's responses to the findings of the report:

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

Although I appreciate the Grand Jury's creativity in trying to reduce educational costs, this recommendation is an overly simplistic approach to the issue. The recommendation also over estimates the amount of savings that would be accrued through the mergers.

My primary objection to the recommendation is that the proposed merger of smaller districts into larger districts has the potential to reduce local control over the public school system. I can speak for my own local community, Ojai, and tell you that this community would never vote to have their local district absorbed and controlled by Ventura. Even if Ojai were guaranteed a trustee position on the newly created board, this community would not accept this as a legitimate alternative to controlling their own local schools.

The report also makes the assumption that larger districts operate more efficiently than smaller districts. This is not always the case. The situation in Los Angeles Unified is a good example of this. They have had numerous issues in recent years relating to inefficiency of operation, business errors, and poor accountability primarily because they are so large. As a smaller district, we operate very efficiently. Your report makes the assumption that the newly created larger district would not have to hire additional administration to operate and also would not pay administrators more for the additional work. This is a huge oversight in the report. When these factors are adjusted according to real administrative costs associated with the changes that you recommend, the savings that you quote in the report are nonexistent.

School district reorganization is a difficult and complex task. Although changes do take place, they are normally based upon legitimate concerns of the electorate involved. Ultimately, school districts, like cities, counties, and other public districts exist to serve their community.

Administration

Timothy Baird, Ed.D., Superintendent
Dannielle Pusatere, Assistant Superintendent Business and Administrative Services

RECEIVED

JUN 26 2009

Board of Education

Linda Taylor, President
Kathi Smith, Vice President
Rikki Horne, Clerk
Steve Fields, Member
Pauline Mercado, Ph.D., Member

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY
Connecting students to futures

This recommendation is impossible to implement without the concurrence of the Ojai and Ventura community. Our district has no resources to put toward this effort since the possibility of making this change is extremely slight and not in the best interests of the Ojai community.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

This is a valid goal and one that the Ojai Unified already has already implemented. Some of the services that we already coordinate with VCOE include:

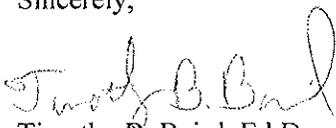
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Bilingual Teacher Training Program
- Career and Technical Education
- County Foster Youth Services Program
- Internet Access, e-mail, and web hosting
- Wireless support
- Student Academic Competitions
- Community Day School
- Graphics Reproduction Services
- Migrant Education
- Financial and Payroll System Support
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Student Database Management System Support
- Special Education Student Information System Support
- Regional Occupational Program
- Health Services Support
- Staff Development Support
- Testing and Administrative Support
- State and Federal Program Management Support
- Administrative Support Meetings for Various Positions

In addition, we participate with other Districts in the County and State in the following joint services organizations:

- Special Education Local Plan Area
- Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
- Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority
- Self Insured Schools of California
- Declining Schools Consortium
- School Services of California

As you can see, our district has already taken steps to work collaboratively with our County Office of Education and other school districts to conserve resources and coordinate efforts. Recommendation R-02 has already been implemented.

Sincerely,



Timothy B. Baird, Ed.D.
Superintendent



OXNARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

1051 South "A" Street | Oxnard, California 93030 | 805/487-3918 | www.oxnardsd.org

July 15, 2009

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

DENIS O'LEARY
President

DEBORAH De VRIES, Ed.D.
Clerk

ALBERT DUFF SR.
ARTHUR JOE LOPEZ
ANA DEL RIO-BARBA

ADMINISTRATION

JANIS DURAN
Interim Superintendent

SEAN GOLDMAN
Assistant Superintendent
Human Resources and
Support Services

CATHERINE KAWAGUCHI
Assistant Superintendent
Chief Academic Officer

GLENSTON THOMPSON
Assistant Superintendent
Business and Fiscal Services

Ventura County Grand Jury
Attention: Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
800 South Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: Ventura 2008-2009 Grand Jury Report: "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?"

Dear Ventura County Grand Jury:

We thank you for providing the Oxnard School District ("District") with a copy of the Grand Jury Report entitled *School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?* The report indicates that a response is required from the District. In accordance with this requirement, the following responses to the Grand Jury recommendations were approved by our Board of Education at its regular meeting held on Wednesday, July 15, 2009.

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The District supports the Grand Jury's aim of saving educational resources by reducing costs wherever possible. At present, however, we do not agree that a broad policy of consolidating the District with Hueneme Elementary School District, Ocean View Elementary School District, Oxnard Union High School District, and Rio Elementary School District will necessarily benefit the educational needs of our students, the governance needs of our community, and produce the estimated cost savings detailed in the report.

Generally, the consolidation of school districts should only be pursued if such consolidation will meet the needs of the community that each district serves. The District currently maintains an effective and efficient district office operation which meets the needs of the community that it serves. The size of the administrative and support staff at the District is appropriate for operations that support the students and schools of the District. Conversely, we believe consolidating the District with Hueneme Elementary School District, Ocean View Elementary School District, Oxnard Union High School District, and Rio Elementary School District would most likely not result in the administrative and cost efficiencies that the Grand Jury suggests. For example, consolidation would

RECEIVED

JUL 21 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Mission: "We guarantee that each student is academically competitive and inspired to perseverant hope."

not necessarily eliminate the need for administrative or support staff as is suggested in the Grand Jury Report. Based on available information, the 5 districts in question currently maintain staffing which corresponds to the size of the workload generated by the number of students who attend their schools. The same type of support would be necessary regardless of whether the districts are operated independent of one another or as a larger consolidated district. And, experience has shown that the consolidation of districts itself often results in large administrative costs and increased staff size to accommodate the needs entailed by creating, expanding, and serving the new districts.

Moreover, any incremental benefits to administrative efficiency and costs have to be weighed against the reduced access that parents, students, and the community will have to local educational officials that are more directly and closely responsive to their needs. Indeed, the power and ability to effect changes and to be responsive to community concerns would be concentrated in far fewer elected officials thereby reducing public access and opportunities for public participation in influencing policy decisions. In addition, fewer people in the area will have the opportunity to become involved in the governance of public education by becoming elected school board members themselves, and most likely, fewer people from within the boundaries of the District would ultimately be elected as school board members in a consolidated district.

Indeed, the District, like many other school districts, values the ability to maintain local input and control over educational programs, utilization of resources, identification of student needs, and the establishing of goals which our District will pursue. To this end, the District has fostered good communications and a close partnership with our PTA and other parent groups. We also enjoy strong input and support from local businesses and community leaders through our collaborative relationship with the City of Oxnard, the Oxnard School District Educational Foundation, and other organizations and entities. Such a close partnership with our local community would be diluted in a large consolidated district.

In the end, the California Education Code sets forth several means of school district reorganization, sometimes called territory transfers or unifications. A variety of entities and persons, including residents and school district governing boards, can initiate the process to transfer territory or unify school districts. This statutorily prescribed process allows individual communities to make important decisions about the organization of their school districts. The District supports this democratic process. Therefore, any drive for consolidation, if any, should most likely come from residents of the District or be driven by District needs. At present, no such effort or need has been established.

Thus, for the foregoing reasons, Grand Jury Recommendation R-01 will not be pursued further by the District at this time because it is not in the best interests of our students, our families or the needs of the local community to pursue such consolidation with the other districts. Should the District's current position no longer represent the best interests of our stakeholders, we will initiate further study of the issue and follow the process as provided in the Education Code for school district reorganization.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as information and technology, purchasing, facilities, and transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The District is engaged in an ongoing mission to find fiscal efficiencies in all possible organizational areas. Along these lines, the District has worked cooperatively with the Ventura County Office of Education as a provider of consolidated services. Among the services utilized by the District are:

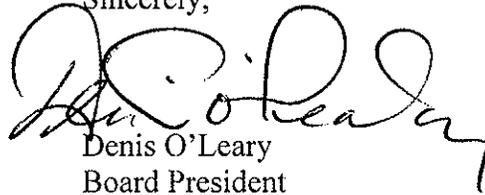
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Countywide Internet Access
- Countywide Wireless Network
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
- Migrant Education
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
- Student Management System Hosting
- Student Assessment Management System Hosting
- School Health Services Standards and Practices
- Special Education Transportation
- Special Populations Educational Support
- Testing and Assessment Support

In addition, the District joins with other entities in the region to secure cost savings and to consolidate efficiencies. These include:

- Coastal Schools Employees Benefits Organization
- Special Education Local Plan Area
- Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
- Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

The District will continue to provide high quality educational opportunities while working with all local and state agencies to seek the most cost effective strategies possible. With regard to the Grand Jury's Recommendation R-02, we can report that it has been, and will continue to be, implemented by the District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. O'Leary", written in a cursive style.

Denis O'Leary
Board President
Oxnard School District

cc: Honorable Colleen Toy White, Presiding Judge
Ventura County Superior Court
Oxnard School District Board Trustees



**Oxnard Union
High School District**

309 South K Street • Oxnard, California 93030 • (805) 385-2527 • FAX (805) 247-9001

July 8, 2009

Board of Trustees

STEVE W. STOCKS
President

ROBERT Q. VALLES
Vice President

SOCORRO LÓPEZ HANSON
Clerk

KEN BENEFIELD
Member

DICK JAQUEZ
Member

Administration

BOB CARTER, Ed.D.
Superintendent

ROBERT "ROCKY" VALLES, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Human Resources

MARTHA MUTZ
Assistant Superintendent
Educational Services

RANDY WINTON
Assistant Superintendent
Business Services

*Visit our Website at
www.ouhsd.k12.ca.us*

Mr. Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY
800 South Victoria Avenue, L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED
JUL 14 2009
VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Subject: Grand Jury Report "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?"

Dear Mr. Zenone:

Thank you for providing the Oxnard Union High School District with a copy of the above mentioned 2008-2009 Ventura County Grand Jury Report. We are pleased to submit these comments for the consideration of the Grand Jury and the Presiding Judge.

First, we wish to support the conclusions expressed by Stanley C. Mantooth the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools. We believe that Mr. Mantooth's comments and recommendations are well taken and we appreciate the leadership his office has provided the districts of the County not only in school district reorganization matters but in both formal and informal efforts to help districts maintain the greatest level of efficiency consistent with their educational missions.

Second, also as stated by Mr. Mantooth, the District strongly supports the recommendation of the Grand Jury that continuing examination be made of ways whereby the districts can achieve cost savings in their operations.

Third, it is fairly clear that some cost savings would accrue if the recommendations for consolidation of districts suggested by the Grand Jury were actually accomplished. These savings, however, are difficult to quantify but are less than a reading of the Grand Jury recommendations would lead one to believe. We note, for example, that the cost stated for the Superintendent of the Oxnard Union High School District is more than the actual salary for the Superintendent. While some cost savings would undoubtedly occur through a consolidation of Hueneme Elementary, Ocean View Elementary, Oxnard Elementary, Rio Elementary and Oxnard Union High, the cost of administering a district that large needs to be studied carefully. In consultation with the parents and voters of each community. The actual savings from such a consolidation would be fairly minimal.

Fourth, there is a long history in California and Ventura County in particular of "local control" of school districts. Under state law, the unification of districts was on the ballot at least three times in the 1950's and failed each time. More recently, the unification of Pleasant Valley School District with the Adolpho Camarillo High School attendance area was rejected by the voters. The issue in such a consolidation election is not merely whether the proposal would save money. The driving question is whether the proposed reorganization promises to produce a better educational product for children and whether any cost savings in forming a larger district is worth the sacrifice of the local control of the electorate over the schools in their community.

Fifth, from an educational point of view, there is no evidence that larger districts or consolidated districts produce a better educational program than smaller districts. When the State Department of Education predicts test scores for a school, it is totally irrelevant whether the school is a part of an elementary, a high school or a unified school district. The education of high school students is inherently more expensive than the education of elementary students, a fact reflected in the state financing of public schools. The division of education into elementary school districts and high school districts, both of which have been successful for over one hundred years, allows the parents, the boards of trustees and the administration of both districts to focus on the needs of their particular students. The consolidation of districts may well dilute this focus resulting in a lower educational program for children.

Sixth, one can argue about the optimum size of school districts. The Grand Jury's recommendation, if carried to a logical extreme, would dictate a single countywide unified school district. This would achieve the greatest degree of savings from the elimination of school boards and superintendents, but such a school district would hardly be efficient. The largest school district in the state, Los Angeles Unified School District, is hardly the model of either economic efficiency or educational excellence. In the last analysis it is better to let the current process respond to proposals for reorganization from school districts and tax payers themselves. This process is administered by the Ventura County Committee on School District Organization and allows a study of the application of state criteria to reorganizations proposed locally. The Oxnard Union High School District will cooperate and participate in any such study.

With respect to recommendation R-02, the District supports efforts of the County Office of Education to provide consolidated services and even education programs where such services and programs can more effectively be provided at a centralized level. The superintendents and other administrators of the county continue to meet on a regular basis with the County Superintendent and his staff to identify ways of achieving such economies. We appreciate the leadership that the County Office has shown in this regard and we will continue to participate in these efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Grand Jury recommendations.

Sincerely,



Steve Stocks, President
Board of Trustees
Oxnard Union High School District

c: Honorable Colleen Toy White, Presiding Judge
Ventura County Superior Court



PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of the Superintendent

600 Temple Ave. Camarillo, CA 93010
Phone: (805) 445-8601 FAX: (805) 987-5511
www.pvsd.k12.ca.us

Superintendent

June 18, 2009

Mr. Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 Victoria Avenue L#3751
Ventura CA 93009

Re: Grand Jury Report "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?"

Dear Mr. Zenone,

The Pleasant Valley School District, Board of Trustees and Administrative Staff appreciate the detail and in depth reporting of fact included in your May 18, 2009 Report.

As required by your report the Pleasant Valley School District response to R-01 and R-02 follows:

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The Pleasant Valley School District Board majority has supported the unification of the Pleasant Valley school system to include Camarillo High School and students that reside in the City of Camarillo that attend Rio Mesa High School. To that end, after years of work, Measure U was placed on the November 4, 2008 ballot. Measure U was defeated by a little under 2,000 votes in a district wide election including all of the Oxnard Union High School District. However, it is important to note that approximately 64% of the voters in Camarillo and Somis voted in favor of unification. At this point in time, the District does not envision an effort to consolidate/unify being initiated in the near future.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services, such as, information and

RECEIVED

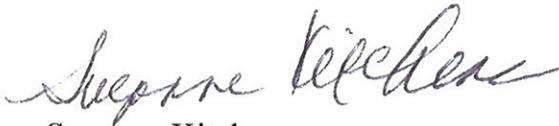
JUL - 2 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

technology, purchasing, facilities and transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The Pleasant Valley School District concurs with this recommendation and must acknowledge the Ventura County Office of Education's excellent level of service provided to Ventura County School Districts. In addition, The VCOE is in the forefront as a service provider to county districts that is a model to other county offices of education in the state.

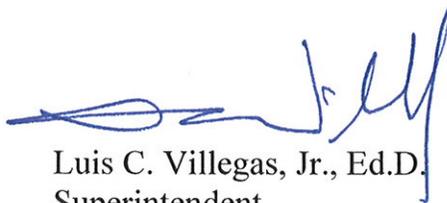
Sincerely,



Suzanne Kitchens
President, Board of Trustees



Patty Lerner
Clerk, Board of Trustees



Luis C. Villegas, Jr., Ed.D.
Superintendent

cc: Honorable Colleen Toy White, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County



Rio

School District

Sherianne Cotterell

Superintendent

June 22, 2009

Ron Zenone, Foreman
Ventura Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave. L3751
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Mr. Zenone,

Thank you for the work provided by the Ventura County Grand Jury. On May 18, 2009, the Grand Jury issued a report entitled: School District Administrators: Is the Cost Too High? Enclosed please find Rio School Districts response to recommendation R-01 and R-02.

Response to Recommendation R-01:

Please be advised that while the Rio Elementary School District supports the concept of saving money in order to maintain (and improve) educational programs and teachers, it is not convinced that the negative impacts to the various local communities from unification would outweigh any potential savings.

Since it's beginning as a one-room schoolhouse in 1885, the Rio School District has been the center of the community for all the families it serves. Through close working relationships and community partnerships, the Rio School District has made significant strides in community pride and parent involvement. Parents and the community appreciate Rio's efforts to promote small school communities.

At its current size (approximately 4,300 students) it is able to ascertain, serve and meet the needs of the community. It has been able to garner local community and business support for many of its student-based initiatives and programs. Unification with Hueneme Elementary, Ocean View Elementary, Oxnard Elementary and Oxnard Union High School would eliminate all of the progress Rio has made over the past three years to connect with its students, their families and the community. The community would lose its current connection with the schools as well as District governance. Instead of a common interest arising from its surrounding neighborhoods and community cultures, unification would require governance and attention to be spread out over 22 more miles and 42,320 thousand more students. The community would lose its sense of partnership with the District which is committed to strong connections and relationships with students and families. The loss of local control is yet another factor that weighs heavily against any potential savings.

Embracing hearts, inspiring minds

RECEIVED
JUL - 2 2009
VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY



Rio

School District

Sherianne Cotterell

Superintendent

In conclusion, at this time, recommendation R-01 will not be pursued by the District because it believes it is not in the best interests of its students, their families or the needs of the local community. Should the District become convinced at some time in the future, that its current position no longer represents the best interests of its stakeholders, it may initiate further study of the issue and follow the process as provided in the Education Code which allows several methods for school district reorganization.

Response to Recommendation R-02:

The Rio School District is not opposed to the coordination of certain services with the Ventura County Office of Education as a means of reducing costs for the districts. In fact, currently, the district does work closely with the County in several areas, as well as benefit from several joint service organizations. However, in areas the structure does not currently exist, it appears that the cost to study, design, coordinate, purchase, install and implement the programs specifically described, would be prohibitive, especially in these times of drastic budget cuts. Nevertheless, implementation of this recommendation as specifically described is dictated by the position of VCOE on the issue, not each local District. Were VCOE to propose the consolidation of additional support services, the District would promptly entertain that proposal and initiate further inquiry and study to determine whether such consolidation would result in a reduction of its costs. In conclusion, should the VCOE create or initiate a program whereby certain support services could be consolidated which would have the result of saving the District costs without sacrificing services, it would participate with the VCOE in that program.

I believe that the Ventura County Office of Education is committed to providing cost effective services and support, therefore our response will reflect that R-02 has been and will continue to be implemented and expanded in Ventura County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherianne Cotterell".

Sherianne Cotterell
Superintendent

Cc: Honorable Colleen Toy White
Presiding Judge Superior Court of California, Ventura County

SANTA CLARA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
20030 East Telegraph Road
Santa Paula, California 93060
Telephone (805) 525-4573 • Fax (805) 525-4985



June 16, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Mr. Zenone:

Thank you for the services provided to residents of Ventura County by the Ventura County Grand Jury by identifying and investigating pertinent issues. On May 18, 2009, the Grand Jury issued its report entitled: School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?. The Grand Jury required a response from the Santa Clara Elementary School District to recommendations R-01 and R-02 of that report. The report has been reviewed by the Santa Clara Elementary Board of Trustees and the following responses are provided as required:

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The Santa Clara Elementary School District supports the idea of maximizing educational dollars in order to find the most efficient means in educating all students of Ventura County. However, we do not agree that the consolidation of school districts will accomplish the mission of providing high quality educational opportunities for all students in Ventura County. Further, without careful investigation of the actual numbers, we cannot reach the conclusion that the consolidation would lead to the estimated cost savings suggested in the report.

The Education Code allows for a process of school district reorganization. Community members, district representatives, and local officials can initiate the process of a unification study. The voters have the final say as to the best means for the education of the students within their attendance boundaries.

The Santa Clara Elementary School District supports the current democratic processes that allow decisions to be made at the local level in terms of school district reorganization. We believe that our community is best equipped to make the decisions as to the educational structure that will best meet the needs of the community. Santa Clara Elementary has a long history of achieving high academic standards and maintaining fiscal solvency. Therefore, Recommendation R-01 will not be specifically pursued by the Santa Clara Elementary School District.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The Santa Clara Elementary School District strives to seek cost saving strategies in all possible areas. The District utilizes the support of the Ventura County Office of Education as a provider of many consolidated and contracted services. Some of the services include:

- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Countywide Internet Access
- Countywide Wireless Network
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
- Student Management System Hosting
- Student Assessment Management System Hosting
- School Health Services Standards and Practices
- Special Populations Educational Support
- Testing and Assessment Support

In addition the District and other Ventura County Districts join together to form many joint services organizations for cost savings. These include:

- Coastal Schools Employee Benefits Organization
- Special Education Local Plan Area
- Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
- Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

The Santa Clara Elementary School District will continue to explore and utilize services from all local and state agencies to seek the most cost effective strategies possible. We remain committed to providing high quality educational opportunity to all of our students. It is our belief that Recommendation R-02 has been, and will continue to be, implemented by the Santa Clara Elementary School District.

Sincerely,



Kari Skidmore
Superintendent

RECEIVED

JUN 22 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY



SANTA PAULA UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent
Dr. David A. Gomez

500 East Santa Barbara St.
Santa Paula, CA 93060
(805) 525-0988
Fax (805) 525-6128

Assistant Superintendent,
Business and Classified Personnel
Francine Torrigiani
Director of Educational Services
J. Antonio Gaitan

June 26, 2009

Ventura County Grand Jury
Attention: Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
800 South Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, California 93009

Re: Ventura 2008-2009 Grand Jury Report: "School District Administration: Is the Cost too High?"

Dear Ventura County Grand Jury:

The Governing Board and Administration of the Santa Paula Union High School District ("the District") has received the above-referenced Grand Jury Report. This letter constitutes the District's response to the Report in accordance of the requirements of Penal Code section 933.05(a) through (c).

I. RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

The District has reviewed Findings F-01 through and including F-26, and has generally determined that it does not possess requisite knowledge or information to respond to the majority of these findings with the exception of Findings F-08 and, in part, F-23 and F-25. As required by Penal Code section 933.05 (a), the District responds to the Findings as follows:

A. Response to Finding F-08

The District agrees that there are two schools in the District, and has a total of 1,661 students enrolled within the District for the 2008-2009 school year.

The District is governed by a Board of five Trustees. However, the District is uncertain as to the monetary figure of \$55,000 attributed to the Trustees, how it was calculated and what costs are included in this calculation.

The District does have one Superintendent. However, the District is uncertain as to the monetary figure of \$190,000 attributed to the Superintendent, how it was calculated and what costs are included in the calculation.

The District does have one Assistant Superintendent. However, the District is uncertain as to the monetary figure of \$115,000 attributed to the Assistant Superintendent, how it was calculated and what costs are included in the calculation.

RECEIVED

JUL - 2 2009

Dedicated to Excellence

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

The District agrees that it has two Directors. However, the District is uncertain as to the monetary figure of \$180,000 is attributed to the Directors, how it was calculated and what costs are included in the calculation.

The District has four, not five, Managers/Supervisors. The District is uncertain how the monetary figure of \$290,000 is attributed to the Managers/Supervisors, how it was calculated and what costs are included in the calculation.

The District is uncertain as to how the Grand Jury arrived at a total of eight support staff members and what positions were included. The methodology section of the report suggests these would include such positions "working for, or charged to the district office," however, the District has four non-management classified employees, zero non-management certificated employees, and a combined six classified and certificated managers and supervisors, working at or charged to the District office budget. Similarly, the District is uncertain of the monetary figure of \$470,000 and how it is attributed to the eight support staff, how it was calculated and what costs are included in the calculation.

The District is uncertain as to the finding that non-salary compensation and benefits are of approximately a monetary figure of \$420,000. More specifically, the District is uncertain whether this figure pertains to all district employees or only administrators, managers, and supervisors. Similarly, the District is uncertain whether these costs were already calculated, attributed, and accounted for in the representative costs for each position referenced in the findings.

With regard to Findings pertaining to "miscellaneous expenses," the District is uncertain of the monetary figure of \$200,000 and how it was calculated and/or what costs were used in making that calculation.

The District is uncertain as to the Grand Jury's approximate costs of administration per student, being \$1,159 per student, per year. The District believes there may be a flaw in the assumptions made by the Grand Jury in determining that the general fund revenues are \$9,296 per student, per year. The calculation does not seem to be limited to actual general fund revenue received.

B. Finding F-23

With regard to the Grand Jury's findings of average cost per student for all districts, the District is uncertain as to the monetary calculations and estimated costs per student shown in the District Comparisons Table as reflected for the Santa Paula Union High School District. More specifically, while the student enrollment of 1,661 is correct, the District is uncertain about how the total figure of \$1,924,541 was reached and similarly how the estimated cost of \$1,159 per student was derived. One concern with this calculation is that it is possible that the total cost would reflect inclusion of categorical funding which is not part of the general fund limit, the latter which more accurately reflects the unrestricted revenue stream received by the District.

C. Finding F-25

With regards to this Finding pertaining to the use of the Ventura County Office of Education (“VCOE”), the District acknowledges it has utilized Information and Technology Services, as well as Transportation Services provided by VCOE, among other services. (See response to Recommendation R-02 below).

II. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

A. R-01

The Grand Jury generally recommends that the VCOE and districts within the county, including Santa Paula Union High School District, investigate ways to consolidate or unify, assuming there will be a potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs. The Grand Jury further suggests that the Santa Paula Union High School District consolidate or unify with the following group of districts: Briggs Elementary, Mupu Elementary, Santa Paula Elementary, and Santa Clara Elementary School Districts.

As required by Penal Code section 933.05(b), the District responds that in or about February 2003, and again in August 2006, the Santa Paula Union High School District considered whether consolidation or unification of surrounding school districts was possible, thus, implementing the Grand Jury’s recommendation.

It should be noted that on both occasions in 2003 and in 2006, due to a lack of interest by other school districts to pursue further discussions or efforts, no other steps were taken to pursue the unification process. Further, the Santa Paula Union High School District’s prior inquiries to explore unification were not driven entirely by a desire to reduce administrative costs; the impetus for the recommendations in the Grand Jury Report. The reduction of administrative costs is but one factor that should be considered when proceeding with a recommendation to consolidate or unify the school districts. However, if neighboring school districts and/or the community are interested in exploring unification, the Santa Paula Union High School District would be happy to engage in these discussions.

B. R-02

The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE coordinate efforts with individual school districts to consolidate support services as a means for reducing costs to the districts and VCOE.

In responding to this recommendation, the District states that the recommendation has already been implemented. In addition to the support services used by the District that are provided by the VCOE as noted in response to Finding F-25, the District also uses the following services:

- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium;
- Bilingual Teacher Training Program;

- Cal-Safe-Teen Parent Program;
- Career and Technical Education;
- Countywide Internet Access, Email, and Web hosting services;
- Countywide Wireless Network;
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions;
- Gateway Community School;
- Graphics Reproduction Services;
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation;
- Learning Resource Display Center;
- Migrant Education;
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems;
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students;
- Special Education Programs;
- Student Management System Hosting;
- Student Assessment Management System Hosting;
- Regional Occupational Program;
- School Health Services Standards and Practices;
- Special Education Transportation;
- Special Populations Educational Support;
- Testing and Assessment Support;

The Grand Jury can rest assured the District will continue to identify other services which the VCOE can provide to the District to minimize costs.

III. CONCLUSION

Once again, the Santa Paula Union High School District thanks the Grand Jury for bringing to light the need for further discussion amongst the County Office of Education and school districts

about the possibility of consolidating or unifying the school districts. Certainly investigation of the subject is but the first step in the process which will ultimately rest in the hands of the voting public. In closing, we trust that the responses set forth herein comply with the Penal Code requirements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David A. Gomez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. David A. Gomez, Superintendent

cc: Governing Board, Santa Paula Union High School District
Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge



SIMI VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT
Kathryn S. Scroggin, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Board of Education
Rob Collins
Jeanne Davis
Janice DiFatta
Eric Lundstrom
Debbie Sandland

July 9, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Avenue, L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED

JUL 13 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Dear Mr. Zenone:

Thank you for providing the Simi Valley Unified School District with a copy of the Grand Jury report entitled *School District Administration: Is the Cost too High?* The report indicates that a response is required from the Simi Valley Unified School District Board of Education. In accordance with this requirement, the responses to the Grand Jury recommendations included in this communication were approved by our Board of Education at its regular meeting held on June 30, 2009.

The Simi Valley Unified School District appreciates the efforts of the Grand Jury on behalf of public education in Ventura County. These are indeed challenging times, and we must all work together to be fiscally prudent while maintaining quality education for our students.

Finding F-19

The Simi Valley Unified School District disagrees in part with Finding F-19. The points in question are as follows:

- The District has thirty (30) schools, not twenty-nine (29). These schools include Monte Vista, our independent study school.
- The District has one (1) Associate Superintendent and one (1) Assistant Superintendent.
- The staffing report submitted to the Grand Jury (as requested) includes all positions which are listed or assigned out of the district office. Many of these individuals actually work in the schools or in the field. These positions include some Teachers on Special Assignment, Nurses, Psychologists, Bus Drivers, Adaptive P.E. Teacher, Maintenance Workers and others.

- Many of the positions listed as District Office support staff are not paid out of the general fund. For example, the Title I Coordinator is paid out of Title I. Four (4) of the Teachers on Special Assignment are paid out of Title II and one (1) is paid by the County. The Energy Education Manager's salary is offset by the cost avoidance realized through our Energy Education program. Bond Program managers are paid from bond funds.
- According to the most recent School Services of California's Comparative Analysis of District Income and Expenditure (CADIE) Report, the cost of administration for the Simi Valley Unified School District is \$345.23 per ADA or 4.63% of the District's general fund expenditures.

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

Recommendation R-01 will not be pursued by the District.

Education Code addresses several methods of school district reorganization, sometimes called territory transfers or unifications. A variety of entities, including Residents and District Governing Boards, can initiate the process to transfer territory or unify school districts. Regardless of who initiates the process for such reorganization, the final decision is made by the voters in the communities considering such territory transfers or unification. This is the democratic process which allows communities to make important decisions about the organization of their school districts. This is a process which is supported by the Simi Valley Unified School District.

Generally speaking, the consolidation of school districts would logically be pursued to meet the needs of the community each district serves. The Simi Valley Unified School District currently maintains an effective and efficient district office operation which meets the needs of our community. The size of the administrative and support staff at the district office is appropriate for the operations that support the more than 20,000 students and thirty (30) schools in the Simi Valley Unified School District.

Consolidating the Simi Valley Unified School District with the Moorpark Unified School District would not necessarily eliminate the need for administrative or support staff as is suggested in the Grand Jury Report. Both districts maintain staffing which corresponds directly to the size of the workload generated by the number of students who attend their schools. The same type of support would be necessary regardless of whether the districts operated independent of one another or as a consolidated larger district.

In addition the Simi Valley Unified School District, like many other districts, values the ability to maintain local control over educational programs, utilization of resources, establishment of the vision and mission for our students' education and identification of the goals our district will pursue. Simi Valley has a strong parent partnership through our PTA and other parent groups. We also enjoy strong support from local businesses and community leaders through our collaborative relationship with the City of Simi Valley and through the Simi Valley Education Foundation and other organizations/entities.

Finally, the Simi Valley Unified School District has worked hard to maintain strong fiscal health and has been diligent about maintaining administrative ratios which have been traditionally low. According to the most recent School Services of California's Comparative Analysis of District Income and Expenditure (CADIE) Report, the Simi Valley Unified School District's total administrative expenses were 4.75% of the district's total expenditures. The expense per ADA for district office administration was 4.63% of the district's general fund expenditures.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the districts and the VCOE.

Recommendation R-02 has been implemented in a variety of ways. The District will continue to pursue opportunities to consolidate support services whenever this is feasible. There is no "timeline" for the implementation of any future opportunities for the consolidation of such services, but we can assure the Grand Jury and our community that we will remain alert to collaborative, money-saving prospects.

Like most other districts in Ventura County, the Simi Valley Unified School District utilizes the "piggyback" bid process for the purchase of certain equipment and supplies. Our district has also used this type of process for certain construction projects, thus decreasing the cost of the projects.

Our district also accepts students with low-incidence disabilities to programs which we run that other districts may not offer. The Moorpark Unified School District is one of the districts that sends students to us. This arrangement helps the sending districts defray the costs of implementing a new program of their own to serve a small number students.

The Simi Valley Unified School District already works closely with the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE). Some of the consolidated services provided by the VCOE which are used by the Simi Valley Unified School District include:

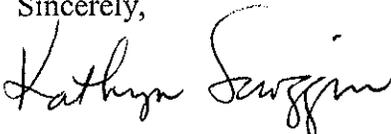
Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
Career and Technical Education Program
Countywide Internet Access, e-mail and web hosting services
Countywide Wireless Network
Countywide Student Academic Competitions
Gateway Community School
Specialized Services/Programs for Special Education Students
School District Financial and Payroll Systems
Regional Occupational Programs
School Attendance Review Board
School Health Services Standards and Practices

In addition, our district also participates in several joint service organizations made available through the VCOE including the Special Education Local Plan Area, Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority and the Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority.

Finally, the VCOE provides opportunities for district office and school site staffs to collaborate and exchange ideas. The VCOE holds regular meetings for the County's Superintendents, Chief Business Officials, Program Directors and a variety of other staff. These meetings provide a forum for the exchange of strategies and ideas which often results in options for reducing expenses and/or consolidating services.

Again, the Simi Valley Unified School District thanks the Grand Jury for your efforts on behalf of all Ventura County residents.

Sincerely,



Kathryn S. Scroggin, Ed.D.
Superintendent

*Attachment: Board Approval June 30, 2009
Board/Administration, Consent #1*

TITLE: APPROVAL OF THE RESPONSE TO THE VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY

Board/Administration
Consent #1

June 30, 2009
Page 1 of 2

Prepared by: Dr. Kathryn Scroggin, Superintendent

Background Information

On May 18, 2009, the Ventura County Grand Jury issued a report titled, *School District Administration: Is the Cost too High?* This report was provided to each district along with a set of recommendations. Simi Valley Unified School District (SVUSD) has 90 days within which to respond to the recommendations. It is further required that the district submit with its response to the recommendations the minutes of the meeting at which the response was approved by the Board of Education. A complete copy of the report is on file at the District office and on line at <http://grandjury.countyofventura.org/>. A copy of the response will be available from the Office of the Superintendent after Board approval tonight.

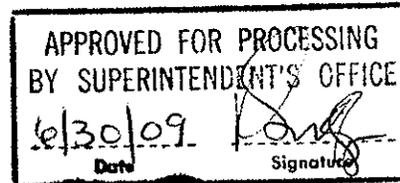
Educational Analysis

With recent state budget problems and their impact on the funding of our schools, the SVUSD remains committed to providing each student with outstanding educational opportunities. SVUSD also holds firm to the belief that education is an alliance of parents, community, students and the school district. SVUSD currently maintains an effective and efficient district office operation which both supports its educational programs and is responsive to the community.

Fiscal Analysis

The Grand Jury report indicates that the consolidation of school districts would reduce administrative costs and recommends that districts and the VCCSDO investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs. This recommendation will not be pursued by the SVUSD. Specifically, SVUSD will not pursue the recommendation that the district consolidate with the Moorpark Unified School District (MUSD). The process for any such consolidation is governed by Education Code and is not necessarily a union which would generate significant savings.

On the motion of Trustee Sandland, seconded by Trustee Davis, and carried by a vote of 5/0, the Board of Education approved the response to the Ventura County Grand Jury.

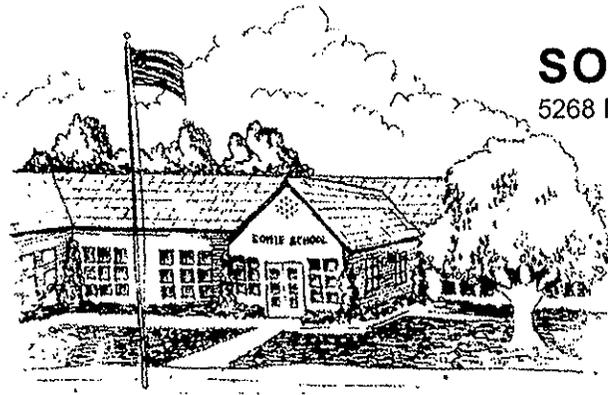


The recommendation that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the districts and the VCOE has already been implemented in part and will continue to be pursued.

The SVUSD disagrees in part with the Finding that reports administrative costs for the District.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the response to the Ventura County Grand Jury report, "School District Administration – Is the Cost too High?" be approved.



SOMIS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

5268 NORTH STREET – POST OFFICE BOX 900 – SOMIS, CA 93066

805/386-8258 – 805/386-2324 (FAX)

Board of Education

Jim Bushong

Patricia Ehrhardt

Bob Fulkerson

Jane Ogne

Mark Smith

Mary H. McKee, Ed.D. Superintendent

June 16, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Mr. Zenone:

Thank you for the services provided by the Ventura County Grand Jury. The efforts to identify and investigate issues impacting our County provide important information for the citizens of this County to consider. On May 18, 2009, the Grand Jury issued its report entitled: *School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?*. In that report, the Grand Jury required a response from the Somis Union School District to recommendations R-01 and R-02. The report has been reviewed and the following responses are provided as required:

Findings F-18

- 2 schools
Correction: Somis Union School District operates **one** school on a single campus (K-8) and provides oversight for **one** dependent charter school.
- 310 students – Concur
- 5 trustees (compensation not reported)
Correction: Compensation for the five elected trustees was reported as \$0.00. The trustees receive no compensation or any financial benefits
- 1 Superintendent /principal
Correction: The District has one part-time superintendent. The school has a full time principal
- 5 Support staff at approximately \$150,000
Correction: The 5 support staff serves both the school and the District and should not be considered as 100% District support. The District has one support staff member that serves as Administrative Assistant and Transportation Director and one support staff that serves district/school site maintenance and facilities.
- Non-salary compensation
Correction: these data are based on staff. See comments above
- Miscellaneous expenses
- Approximate cost of administration per student
Correction: Somis believes this figured is inaccurate and does not reflect the consolidated

RECEIVED

JUN 17 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The Somis Union School District supports all efforts to maximize educational resources and to seek the most efficient means to providing high quality educational opportunities for all students. However, we do not concur that consolidation of school districts necessarily benefits the education of all students in Ventura County or produces the cost savings suggested in the grand jury report.

Existing educational code and democratic processes allow citizens, communities, and school Districts to pursue consolidation concepts and to find the means to produce the best possible educational opportunities for students through the most efficient structures. California has a history of varied school District sizes, including many small school Districts that operate at the highest academic and democratic levels while maintaining great efficiency and stability in fiscal and organizational domains.

The District supports current democratic processes that allow communities to determine the appropriate structure for the education of their students. The current school district reorganization process allows for the public review of a proposed reorganization plan, and final authorization of any plan is approved or disapproved by the affected voters. A recent example of this process was the unification effort initiated by Pleasant Valley School District. The community of Somis Union School District clearly identified the needs of students and chose to maintain independent status.

There are many reasons for the possible reorganization of school districts. As a District, Somis has a long history of operating with outstanding results as regards academic, community, and fiscal domains and we continue to work closely with the broader community of Districts and organizations in Ventura County. Reorganization is not indicated at this time, and for that reason, Recommendation R-01 will not be pursued by this District at this time.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The Somis Union School District works to find fiscal efficiencies in all possible organizational areas. Along these lines, the District works with the Ventura County Office of Education as a provider of consolidated services. Among the services utilized by the District are:

- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Bilingual Teacher Training Program
- Countywide Internet Access
- Countywide Wireless Network
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions
- Graphics Reproduction Services
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
- Migrant Education
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
- School Health Services Standards and Practices
- Special Education Transportation
- Special Populations Educational Support
- Testing and Assessment Support

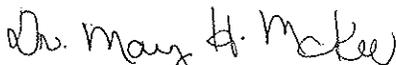
In addition the District joins other entities for cost savings and consolidating efficiencies. These include:

Coastal Schools Employee Benefits Organization
Special Education Local Plan Area
Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

Somis Union School District also works with a variety of consortia to improve efficiencies in food service, management of commodities, management of stores and inventories.

The Somis Union School District will continue to provide high quality educational opportunities while working with all local and state agencies to seek the most cost effective strategies possible. Therefore, we report that Recommendation R-02 has been, and will continue to be, implemented by the Somis Union School District.

Sincerely,



Mary H. McKee, Ed.D
Superintendent

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
P.O box 6489
Ventura, CA 93006

VENTURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Education Service Center



255 W. Stanley Avenue
Ventura, California 93001
(805) 641-5000 x1013
FAX (805) 653-7855

THE POINSETTIA CITY BY THE SEA

Trudy Tuttle Arriaga, Ed.D.
Superintendent

July 8, 2009

Ventura County Grand Jury
Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
2008-2009 Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Avenue, L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED
JUL 13 2009
VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

**Re: Response to Ventura County 2008-2009
Grand Jury Report entitled "School District Administration:
Is the Cost Too High?"**

Dear Mr. Zenone:

The Board of Trustees and the Administration of the Ventura Unified School District (hereinafter "District") have received and reviewed the above-referenced Grand Jury Report. Pursuant to Penal Code §933 et seq. and the Grand Jury's request for responses to Recommendations 01 and 02, below are Ventura Unified School District's ("District") responses to the recommendations stated in the above-referenced report. As for the Grand Jury's findings F-01 through and including F-26, the District has reviewed these findings and has determined that it does not possess the information necessary to respond with the exception of F-21, F-23 and F-25.

I. RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

A. Response to Finding F-21

The District disagrees that there are 29 schools within the Ventura Unified School District. There are 31 schools within the Ventura Unified School District 18 elementary schools, 12 secondary schools, and 1 adult education school.

The District agrees that there were approximately 17,428 students for the 2008-2009 school year.

The District is governed by a Board of five trustees. The approximate costs listed in the report are budgeted estimates that include a \$400.00 per month stipend for each trustee, plus statutory benefits, and the cost of health insurance. The actual costs may vary depending upon meeting attendance and the Trustee's election to participate in the District's health insurance program.

The District does have one Superintendent. However, the District is uncertain as to the monetary figure of \$204,000 attributed to the Superintendent, how it was calculated, and what costs are included in the calculation.

The District does have three Assistant Superintendents. However, the District is uncertain as to the monetary figure of \$430,000 attributed to the Assistant Superintendents, how it was calculated, and what costs are included in the calculation.

The District is uncertain as to how the Grand Jury arrived at a total of five Administrators at an approximate cost of \$500,000; 19 Directors at an approximate cost of \$1,600,000; and 275 support staff at an approximate cost of \$11,000,000.

The District is uncertain as to the finding of non-salary compensation and benefits at an approximate cost of \$5,260,000.

In reference to "miscellaneous expenses," the District is uncertain of the monetary figure of \$1,825,000, how it was calculated, and what costs are included in the calculation.

The District is uncertain as to how the Grand Jury calculated the administration cost per student, the general fund percentage, and the general fund revenues per Student ADA.

B. Response to Finding F-23

The District is uncertain as to how the Grand Jury arrived at the monetary figures in its District Cost Comparisons with regards to the Grand jury's findings of Total Cost, 2008-2009 Enrollment and Cost per Student. Although the approximate student enrollment figure is correct, the District is uncertain as to how the total cost of \$21,248,215 for Ventura USD was calculated, and what costs were used in making that calculation.

C. Response to Finding F-25

The District agrees with this finding.

II. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

A. R-01. The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the District, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

While the District supports the Grand Jury's concept of saving educational resources by reducing costs, the District does not agree that consolidation of school districts will necessarily promote

the primary mission of school districts or have the necessary cost savings posited in the report - the primary purpose being the education of students.

There are many reasons for the possible reorganization of school districts. One of the most important reasons must be to meet the needs of the community the school district services. The District supports the current electoral process that allows communities to determine the appropriate structure for the education of their students. Therefore, this specific recommendation will not be pursued by the District.

B. R-02. The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The District, in response to this recommendation, states that this recommendation is being implemented. The District utilizes the following services provided by the VCOE:

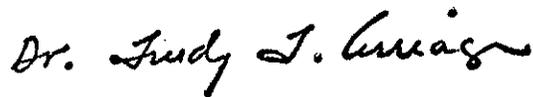
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Bilingual Teacher Training Program
- Career & Technical Education
- Countywide Foster Youth Services Program
- Countywide Internet Access, E-mail, and Web Hosting Services
- Countywide Wireless Network
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions
- Gateway Community School – serving students throughout Ventura County
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
- Learning Resource Display Center
- Migrant Education
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
- Student Management System Hosting
- Student Assessment Management System Hosting
- Regional Occupational Program – serving students throughout Ventura County
- School Health Services Standards and Practices
- Special Education Transportation
- Special Populations Educational Support
- Testing and Assessment Support

Not only does the VCOE provide services, the District also provides services to other Ventura County school districts, such as services for deaf and hard of hearing students, transportation services, food services, etc. In addition, the District participates in various joint power authorities in Ventura County to benefit from economy of scale savings such as:

Special Education Local Plan Area
Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority
Gold Coast Joint Benefits Trust
Ventura County Schools Public Facilities Financing Corporation
Ventura County Fast Action School Transit

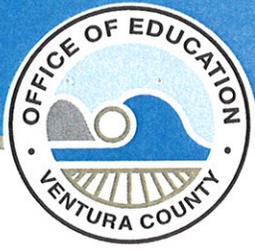
Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above-referenced contact information.

Respectfully submitted,



Trudy Tuttle Arriaga, Ed.D.
Superintendent

cc: Ventura USD Governing Board
Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County



VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Stanley C. Mantooth, County Superintendent of Schools

June 11, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Mr. Zenone:

Thank you for the work that the Ventura County Grand Jury does on behalf of the residents of Ventura County. The Grand Jury provides an independent voice for the identification and investigation of various issues affecting Ventura County. On May 18, 2009, the Grand Jury issued its report entitled: *School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?*. In that report, the Grand Jury required a response from the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools to recommendations R-01 and R-02. I have reviewed the report and per the requirement, I am submitting the following response:

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The Ventura County Superintendent of Schools supports the Grand Jury's concept of saving educational resources by reducing costs where possible. However, I do not concur that the wholesale consolidation of school districts will necessarily benefit the education of our students in Ventura County and produce the estimated cost savings detailed in the report.

Education code currently allows for several methods of school district reorganization, known in the Education Code as territory transfers and/or unifications. Residents, District Governing Boards, the County Board of Supervisors, City Councils, the Local Agency Formation Commission, and the County Committee on School District Organization can initiate the process to transfer territory and/or unify school districts. In almost all territory transfers and/or unifications, regardless of the group initiating the process, the final decision is in the hands of the voters within the affected areas.

The current school district reorganization process allows for the public review of proposed reorganization plans, specific guidelines for the approval or disapproval of the plan, and final authorization by the affected voters before a reorganization plan can be finalized.

RECEIVED

JUN 17 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

There are many reasons for the possible reorganization of school districts. One of the most important reasons must be to meet the needs of the community the school district serves. I support the current electoral process that allows those communities to determine the appropriate structure for the education of their students. As a result, Recommendation R-01 will not be specifically pursued by this office, but would require further study by each affected school district/community.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

As stated in my response to Recommendation R-01, I support the Grand Jury's concept of saving educational resources by reducing costs where possible by consolidating support services. In fact, the Ventura County Office of Education already does this in a variety of ways. As a service organization, we currently provide many consolidated support services to school districts throughout Ventura County which result in cumulative savings of millions of dollars. Some of those services include:

- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Consortium
- Bilingual Teacher Training Program
- Cal-Safe/Teen Parent Program
- Career & Technical Education
- Countywide Foster Youth Services Program
- Countywide Internet Access, e-mail, and web hosting services
- Countywide Wireless Network
- Countywide Student Academic Competitions
- Curriculum & Instruction Services
- Gateway Community School – serving students from throughout Ventura County
- Graphics Reproduction Services
- Hearing Conservation Testing and Evaluation
- Health Programs
- Learning Resource Display Center
- Migrant Education
- School District Financial and Payroll Systems
- Specialized Services for Special Education Students
- Special Education Programs serving students throughout Ventura County
- Student Management System Hosting
- Student Assessment Management System Hosting
- Regional Occupational Program serving students throughout Ventura County
- Regional Support Programs for other County Education Offices
- School Health Services Standards and Practices
- Special Education Transportation
- Special Populations Educational Support – Foster Programs, Cal Safe, etc.

Grand Jury Response
June 11, 2009

In addition to this sample of services provided by the Ventura County Office of Education, school districts in Ventura County have joined together and formed several "economy of scale" joint services organizations, including:

- Coastal Schools Employee Benefits Organization
- Special Education Local Plan Area
- Ventura County Schools Business Services Authority
- Ventura County Schools Self-Funding Authority

These are just a few of the consolidated support services provided to school districts in Ventura County. As you can see, the Ventura County Office of Education is committed to providing cost effective services and support to all local educational agencies. Therefore, I can report with confidence that Recommendation R-02 has been, and will continue to be, implemented and expanded in Ventura County.

Sincerely,



Stanley C. Mantooth
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

CC: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County



July 10, 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED

JUL 14 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Dear Mr. Zenone:

On Wednesday, May 13, 2009, the Ventura County Board of Education President received a copy of the 2008-09 Grand Jury report entitled: School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?. In that report, the Grand Jury required a response from the Ventura County Board of Education to recommendations R-01 and R-02. The County Board has reviewed the report and per the requirement, is submitting the following response.

Recommendation R-01: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

The Ventura County Board of Education supports the Grand Jury's concept of saving educational resources by reducing costs where possible. However, the consolidation/unification of school districts is not within the purview of the County Board of Education. Education Code currently provides several methods of school district reorganization, known as territory transfers and/or unifications. The decision to initiate and ultimately approve the consolidation/unification of multiple districts appropriately lies with the local communities. As a result, Recommendation R-01 will not be specifically pursued by the County Board of Education.

Recommendation R-02: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE should coordinate efforts with individual districts to consolidate support services such as Information and Technology, Purchasing, Facilities, and Transportation to help reduce costs for all of the Districts and the VCOE.

The purpose of the Ventura County Office of Education is to provide cost effective services and support to all local educational agencies. As a service organization, the Ventura County Office of Education currently provides many consolidated support services to school districts throughout Ventura County which result in cumulative savings of millions of dollars. The Ventura County Board of Education is confident that the Ventura County Office of Education is committed to providing cost effective services and support to all local educational agencies. We believe that Recommendation R-02 has been met, and will continue to be pursued as the future unfolds.

Sincerely,



Mary Louise Peterson, President
Ventura County Board of Education

CC: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County

Ventura County Committee on School District Organization

5189 Verdugo Way
Camarillo, CA 93012
Doyllenne Johnson, Chairperson

July 1, 2009

RECEIVED

JUL - 7 2009

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Ave., L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Dear Mr. Zenone:

On May 18, 2009, the Ventura County Grand Jury released its report entitled: School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High? In that report, the Grand Jury required a response from the Ventura County Committee on School District Organization (VCCSDO). Specifically, the Grand Jury asked for a response from the VCCSDO to Recommendation R-01, which stated: The Grand Jury recommends that the VCOE, the Districts, and the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the 20 public school districts with the potential to save millions of dollars in administrative costs.

As you may know, the County Committee on School District Organization plays a major role in the review and approval of proposals to reorganize school districts in the county. In some counties, the duties of the County Committee are performed by the County Board of Education. In Ventura County, the County Committee is separate from the County Board of Education. The VCCSDO is comprised of 11 members selected at an Annual Meeting by a vote of school district trustee representatives. Two members are selected from each of the five County Supervisorial Districts with one selected at large. Members serve four year terms.

The Education Code allows for several methods of school district reorganization. Local residents, School District Boards, City Councils, the County Board of Supervisors, the Local Agency Formation Commission, and the local County Committee can initiate a reorganization. However, in almost all reorganizations, the final decision is in the hands of the voters within the affected areas. Without the support of the local electorate, a reorganization proposal cannot be completed.

The VCCSDO sees its role as an independent body charged with the critical review of school district organization proposals. Education Code provides for a careful review of specific guidelines before a reorganization plan can be finalized. Because the VCCSDO is independent, this review can be conducted without political influence.

Ronald J. Zenone, Foreman
July 1, 2009
Page 2

School District organization is a complex, costly and emotional process and should not be undertaken lightly. The needs of the local community must be one of the most important reasons to change the way its children are educated. While saving limited educational dollars is critical in today's economic climate, wholesale reorganization would not necessarily be in the best interest of each community. Because of the review and approval responsibilities of the VCSSDO, we disagree with the Grand Jury's recommendation R-01 that the VCCSDO should investigate ways to consolidate or unify some of the districts in Ventura County. It is our position that representatives of the local communities should initiate proposals for reorganization; and, therefore, Recommendation R-01 will not be specifically pursued by this Committee but would require further study by the affected communities.

Sincerely,



Doyleenne Johnson, Chairperson
Ventura County Committee on School District Organization

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County

Stanley C. Mantoath, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
Ventura County Board of Education

Education Committee

*Connie Tushla, Chair
John Blanchard
Rob Corley
Marcia Edwards
Ginger Gherardi
Bob Gonzales
Carmen Guerrero
Al Guilin
Mike Johnson
Alan Teague*



*200 N. 10th Street
Santa Paula, CA 93060*

June 5, 2009

Grand Jury of Ventura County
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

RECEIVED

JUN - 9 2009

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

To the Members of the Grand Jury:

As members of the *Unification Study Committee*, we want to thank you for your Report of May 18, 2009, recommending that Ventura County's School Districts consider unification to reduce administrative costs. We appreciate both the question you asked, "School District Administration: Is the Cost Too High?" and the considerable work you undertook to present the data to support your recommendations. Because *The Education Committee* is currently engaged in a comprehensive study of education for this community that includes a study of the feasibility and desirability of unification in Santa Paula, we are particularly grateful for your study.

At this time, we are not including the Fillmore Unified School District in our study, nor do we wish to dissolve or disrupt those rural districts that are academically successful and financially self-sustaining and may wish to maintain their independence. However, we plan to explore the merits of unifying the Santa Paula Elementary School District, the Santa Paula Union High School District and those outlying districts that may choose to become part of a larger unified district.

Currently, our committee is gathering information related to programs, facilities, personnel costs and operational expenses to examine the financial and educational pros and cons of unification. We have no particular bias concerning unification; our primary goal is to support our schools and improve our educational system. We understand from your study that unification would reduce administrative costs per ADA and make funds available for other purposes. However, we also understand that just unifying districts and having more money per ADA would not necessarily guarantee improved performance of our students.

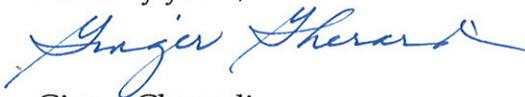
Mission Statement:

To work with interested members of the Community, the Schools and the City Council to promote and support education in Santa Paula and to improve the perception and the reality of Santa Paula's educational system

The Education Committee supports the idea that good schools that serve all members of the community are essential to attract people (and new businesses) to Santa Paula, to educate a workforce and thus to expand and enhance the city's economic base. Therefore, in order to support our citizens and to enhance the economic viability of Santa Paula, the *Education Committee's* mission is: To work with interested members of the Community, the Schools and the City Council to promote and support education in Santa Paula and thereby improve the perception and the reality of Santa Paula's schools.

Again, we thank you for your timely report and for the valuable information your investigation has provided to our current study of unification and other issues affecting education for our community.

Sincerely yours,



Ginger Gherardi

Unification Study Committee

Ginger Gherardi, Chair ggherardi@verizon.net

Rob Corley

Marcia Edwards

Connie Tushla

Cc:

Sam Hishmeh, President, Santa Paula Chamber of Commerce
Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager, City of Santa Paula
Dr. Winston A. Braham, Superintendent & CEO, Santa Paula Elementary School District
Dr. David A. Gomez, Superintendent, Santa Paula Union High School District
Kari Skidmore, Principal/Teacher, Santa Clara Elementary School District
Dr. Kenneth L. Moffett, Ed.D., Superintendent, Briggs School District
Jeanine Gore, Superintendent/Principal, Mupu Elementary School District
Jeff Sweeney, Superintendent, Fillmore Unified School District

Mission Statement:

To work with interested members of the Community, the Schools and the City Council to promote and support education in Santa Paula and to improve the perception and the reality of Santa Paula's educational system