



Guadalupe Union School District

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Ed Cora
District Superintendent

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September 22, 2011

The Honorable Arthur A. Garcia
Assistant Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
312 East Cook Street
Post Office Box 5369
Santa Maria, California 93456-5369

Honorable Joni Gray, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
County Administrative Building
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, California 93101

Response to Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury

“Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County?”

Truancy is Troubling...for Everyone”

Finding 1

The only truancy program in use today in the County of Santa Barbara are those independently developed and managed by individual districts and schools.

Recommendation 1c

That the Santa Barbara County Education Office of the District Attorney, Santa Barbara County elementary, secondary and unified school districts, immediately develop a countywide program to reduce truancy, by reinstating the School Attendance Review Boards.

GUSD Response

The Guadalupe Union School District (GUSD) agrees with the recommendation. A county-wide truancy program would benefit the schools of Santa Barbara County. However, the program would need to be supported by the District Attorney's Office.

The GUSD is in the process of organizing an informal process similar to SARB. Parents with children who are chronically absent from school need to understand potentially there are severe consequences if they do not have their children attend school. This is where the District Attorney's Office can assist. Schools can make phone calls to parents, send letters home, and even schedule meetings with the principal, school resource office, and even the superintendent in small school districts like Guadalupe. However, school districts with their own SARBs need the support of the District Attorney's Office to assign consequences that will help parents fully understand the importance of compulsory education.

In conclusion, while the GUSD agrees with the recommendation, there needs to be a coordinated effort and further analysis conducted in order for the best outcome to serve the students of Santa Barbara County.

Recommendation 1d

That the Santa Barbara County Office of the District Attorney, working with the Santa Barbara County Education Office, and the Santa Barbara County school districts implement truancy enforcement countywide for all Santa Barbara County schools.

GUSD Response

The GUSD agrees that countywide truancy enforcement would assist school districts and ultimately decrease the number of students who are chronically absent from school. This recommendation also needs coordination and further analysis. The District Attorney's Office is truly the one entity that can make an impact with parents by delivering consequences that would make a difference in the parents complying with the law and sending their children to school.

The recommendation needs further analysis to answer questions such as, 1) Who would oversee the countywide truancy program? 2) How many employees could the program afford to hire to cover the many school districts in Santa Barbara County? 3) How would small districts in out of the way areas be served? 4) How would the program be funded with districts short on funding cash and with mid-year state budget cuts looming for schools?

In conclusion, while the GUSD agrees countywide enforcement for chronic truants and their families would be of great support to districts in our county, many questions need to be answered. The GUSD is willing to participate in discussions to consider this recommendation.

Finding 2

There currently is no available federal or state funding for truancy programs.

Recommendation 2b

That each Santa Barbara County school district provide in its budget a proportional share, based on the number of students, to the Santa Barbara County Office of the District Attorney to assist in funding an enforceable truancy program for all Santa Barbara County schools.

GUSD Response

The GUSD disagrees with this recommendation. School districts across the state have incurred a disproportionate share of state budget cuts over the past several years. GUSD does not have funding to support this recommendation. Each month, we carefully review our financial status looking for ways to save money and planning for a positive cash flow to stay fiscally solvent. In addition, the possibility of additional mid-year state budget cuts is looming for all districts.

In conclusion, the GUSD disagrees with this recommendation due to the financial situation school districts are in. We also respectfully disagree because it is not the responsibility of districts to financially support what has always been funded by state and federal dollars.

Sincerely,



Ed Cora
District Superintendent