



Montecito Union School District

– A California Distinguished School –

Tammy Murphy, Superintendent *Dave Williams, Dean of Students*
Nick Bruski, Chief Academic Officer *Virginia Alvarez, Director of Business*

July 14, 2011

Honorable Arthur A. Garcia
Assistant Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
312 East Cook Street
P.O. Box 5369
Santa Maria, CA 93456-5369

Dear Honorable Arthur A. Garcia:

Re: Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County

On behalf of Montecito Union School District, I am enclosing my response in regards to “Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County? Truancy is Troubling...for Everyone.”

Enclosed you will find my response to Recommendations 1c, 1d and 2b, as requested.

Sincerely,

Tammy Murphy, Superintendent

Enclosures: Response to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations: “Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County?”

cc: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, attn. Honorable Joni Gray
Grand Jury, attn. Kathryn D. McKee, Foreperson (CD-ROM and copy)

Montecito Union School District

Response to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations:

"Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County?"

Finding 1

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

Recommendation 1c

That the Santa Barbara County Education Office in partnership with the Santa Barbara County 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.

Response

- The following section of this recommendation: "*immediately develop a countywide program to reduce truancy, by reinstating the School Attendance Review Boards*" causes the Montecito Union School District to partially disagree with this recommendation.
- This recommendation needs further study before being fully adopted and implemented. Specifically, this recommendation crosses multiple agencies that would need to work in coordination to implement a robust and effective system.

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.

Response

- The Montecito Union School District partially disagrees with the following section of this recommendation: "*implement truancy enforcement countywide for all Santa Barbara County schools.*"
- Again, it is felt that study of best practices nationwide should be analyzed before full implementation. Through collaboration with the many constituencies, clear expectations of roles and responsibility need to be jointly developed.
- A cost analysis of program components needs to be outlined and agreed to before implementing a "truancy enforcement" program countywide.

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.

Response

- The Montecito Union School District disagrees with this recommendation.
- Public schools in California have taken a disproportionate share of funding reductions to Revenue Limit and categorical programs since 2008.
- Funding for public schools in California is worse than it was in 2008 - 2009, as evidenced by the total number of school districts filing "qualified" or "negative" certifications in the current year. For example, there was an increase in schools filing "qualified" or "negative" of 30% from the first interim to the second interim in 2010 - 2011 (School Services of California, June 14, 2011). The schools in Santa Barbara County are also operating at critically low funding levels, resulting in severe effects to their primary mission: educating students. The recommendation to have schools divert funding away from already weakened classrooms is not reasonable at this time.
- The implementation of this recommendation cannot be implemented, as schools cannot find the resources needed to take over this County responsibility.
- The ADA for the 2010-2011 school year for Montecito Union School was 95%.

Tammy Murphy
Superintendent
Montecito Union School District