

August 11, 2011

**Cuyama Joint Unified School District**

**Response to Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations:**

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

**Recommendation 1a**

That the Santa Barbara County District Attorney immediately reinstate the initial letter portion of the prior truancy program for all secondary schools until a new program is developed.

Response:

- A. The Cuyama Joint Unified School District agrees with this recommendation.

**Recommendation 1b**

That the Santa Barbara County Office of the District Attorney report the results quarterly of the truancy intervention letters data, to the Santa Barbara County Education Office and all Santa Barbara County school districts.

Response:

- A. The Cuyama Joint Unified School District agrees with this recommendation.

**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:

- A. The Cuyama Joint Unified School District partially disagrees with the following section of this recommendation: *"immediately develop a countywide program to reduce truancy, by reinstating the School Attendance Review Boards."*

- a. First, this section of the recommendation is presented at cross-purposes. It recommends the development of a program (which implies the development of strategies to reduce truancy), while simultaneously imposing a solution (in the form of School Attendance Review Boards).

- b. Second, this recommendation needs further study before being fully adopted and implemented.

- B. The implementation of this recommendation is outside the scope of the Cuyama Joint Unified School District.

**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, implements truancy enforcement countywide for all Santa Barbara County schools.

Response:

A. The Cuyama Joint Unified School District partially disagrees with the following section of this recommendation: *"implement truancy enforcement countywide for all Santa Barbara County schools ...*

a. This recommendation needs further study before full implementation. Specifically, a clear plan of action regarding a proposed "truancy enforcement" program needs to be articulated, including the corresponding levels of accountability at each level (i.e. District Attorney, SBCEO, school district, and family) before implementation.

b. Additionally, cost estimates and budgetary decisions need to be firmly identified and adopted as part of the action plan before implementing a "truancy enforcement" program countywide. Without this crucial information, any new enforcement plan will cause confusion and ultimately fail.

B. The implementation of this recommendation is outside the scope of the Cuyama Joint Unified School District.

**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:

A. The Cuyama Joint Unified School District disagrees with this recommendation for the following reasons:

a. When compared to state cuts across all sectors, public schools in California have taken a disproportionate share of funding reductions to Revenue Limit and categorical programs since 2008.

b. The Board of Supervisors asked Santa Barbara County schools to contribute a Santa Barbara County District Attorney truancy intervention position in the 2008 - 2009 school year. School districts overwhelmingly declined the request, citing state-caused financial cuts.

c. 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. The schools in Santa Barbara County are also

operating at critically low funding levels, resulting in a negative impact to their primary mission: educating students. The recommendation to have schools divert funding away from already weakened classrooms is not reasonable at this time.

Roland Maier, Superintendent  
Cuyama Joint Unified School District