



Santa Barbara Unified School District

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August 12, 2011

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

Dear Judge Garcia:

Enclosed is the response to the findings and recommendations of the 2010-2011 report titled "Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County? Truancy is Troubling...for Everyone."

The Santa Barbara Unified School District's Governing Board approved the response on August 9, 2011. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

David E. Cash, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Enclosure

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

**SANTA BARBARA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
“Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County?”**

INTRODUCTION

The Santa Barbara Unified School District recognizes and appreciates the 2010-11 Civil Grand Jury for their efforts to reduce truancy rates in Santa Barbara County. The Grand Jury’s report, *Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County? Truancy is Troubling...for Everyone*, concludes that “The original Truancy Intervention and Parent Accountability Program managed by the District Attorney was a successful program in containing the level of truancy experienced in the Santa Barbara County school districts,” and that “There needs to be a way to fund an effective truancy program...” The Santa Barbara Unified School District agrees with the Grand Jury conclusion.

The following is the Santa Barbara Unified School District’s response to the findings and recommendations of the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury’s report, *Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County? Truancy is Troubling...for Everyone*.

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:

The Santa Barbara Unified School District agrees with this recommendation.

This recommendation can be implemented beginning fall of the 2011/2012 school year in conjunction with the Santa Barbara County District Attorney’s Office.

Recommendation 1b

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

Response:

The Santa Barbara Unified School District agrees with this recommendation.

The implementation of this recommendation is outside the scope of the Santa Barbara Unified School District.

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 Santa Barbara Unified School District partially disagrees with this recommendation. Particularly: “immediately develop a countywide program to reduce truancy, by reinstating the School Attendance Review Boards”.

This recommendation seems to imply the development of strategies to reduce truancy at the same time that it imposes a solution. More study and discussion are needed to identify accountability responsibilities (Probation Department, District Attorney, etc.) while establishing who is responsible for implementation of the various aspects of the truancy program. Additional study is needed to determine the financial responsibility of each agency (local school district, SBCEO, and District Attorney). Recognition that SARBs have not been effective without the support of the District Attorney and the Probation Department is also needed.

The implementation of this recommendation is outside the scope of the Santa Barbara Unified School District.

Recommendation 1d

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

Response:

The Santa Barbara Unified School District partially disagrees with this recommendation. Particularly: “implement truancy enforcement countywide for all Santa Barbara County schools.”

Identification of levels of accountability for each agency (District Attorney, SBCEO, school districts, parents) needs to be established prior to implementation of truancy enforcement. A clearly established action plan needs to be developed and articulated to each responsible agency, including budgetary decisions and estimated cost of implementation.

The implementation of this recommendation is outside the scope of the Santa Barbara 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:

The Santa Barbara Unified School District disagrees with this recommendation.

Funding for California schools is worse than it has ever been in recent memory. State-caused financial cuts to school districts has resulted in massive cuts to district budgets, impacting critical programs that are key to accomplishing the primary purpose of schools: to educate their students. It is not feasible to recommend that school districts redirect their funding from the classroom, where funding is already at a critically low point.

The implementation of this recommendation will not be implemented at this time because it is not feasible.