



Administration

5189 Verdugo Way
Camarillo, CA 93012
805-383-1902 • FAX: 805-383-1908
www.vcoe.org

VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Stanley C. Mantooth, County Superintendent of Schools

RECEIVED

May 15, 2014

MAY 21 2014

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

The Honorable Brian J. Back
Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California
County of Ventura
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

Re: ***Grand Jury Report Dated April 21, 2014***
"PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS PROCESSES"

Dear Judge Back:

Enclosed please find the Ventura County Office of Education's response to the Grand Jury report dated April 21, 2014, "*Public Charter Schools Processes.*" We trust that the document fully responds to both the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this response, please contact Dr. Roger Rice, Deputy Superintendent, Student Services, at 805-383-1920, or rrice@vcoe.org.

Sincerely,

Stanley C. Mantooth
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

CC: Foreperson, Ventura County Grand Jury, 2013-14 ✓
Ventura County Board of Education Trustees
Ventura County School District Superintendents

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Public Charter Schools Processes

Report Date: April 21, 2014

Response by: Stanley C. Mantooth Title: Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: FI-04; FI-05; FI-06; FI-07; FI-08; FI-09
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: FI-01; FI-02; FI-03
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered R-04 have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered R-01; R-02; R-03 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

Date: May 15, 2014

Signed: _____



Number of pages attached: 4



VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Stanley C. Mantooth, County Superintendent of Schools

Response to Grand Jury Report Form Statements to Findings and Recommendations

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS PROCESSES

April 21, 2014

FINDINGS WITH WHICH WE AGREE:

FI-04. Marketing of charter schools is very important to their growth, and websites are a primary means of communication. (FA-13)

We agree with this finding.

FI-05. The identification of County charters is inconsistent. (FA-09, FA-10, FA-11, FA-12).

We agree it can be confusing on the varying aspects of Charter petitions and multiple schools operated within one petition. The Academy of Arts and Sciences is a new charter school which had not been added to the Ventura County Office of Education webpage. The Ventura County Office of Education webpage contains a list of approved charter petitions. Several of the charter school petitions operate from multiple campuses; however, they are still considered one school. The list identifies each campus in an effort to facilitate the contacting of each discreet location.

FI-06. Charter school websites do not contain complete and/or accurate reporting of monies spent and programs offered for each student. Missing information makes it difficult for parents and families to make an informed choice. (FA-13, FA-14)

All local charter schools are invited to attend a collaborative charter network. This network will be used as a means to disseminate information. The Ventura County Office of Education will encourage all schools to update and maintain their website with financial reports being accurate and up to date.

FI-07. All but two charter school websites include some reference to SARC testing results. The format of the websites is inconsistent and the information provided is incomplete. (FA-14, FA-15)

We agree with this finding. All public schools are required to prepare and disseminate a SARC. LEAs are responsible for ensuring that locally-funded charter schools' SARCs are made available to the public. All local charter schools will be invited to attend a collaborative charter network and we will use this avenue as a means to remind all schools to update and maintain current SARC reports.

FI-08. At the four charter schools toured, there is low turnover of teaching staff despite the fact teachers are not tenured. (FA-07, FA-08)

We agree with this finding.

FI-09. Some charter schools do not aggressively pursue additional funding opportunities. (FA-17)

We agree with this finding.

FINDINGS WITH WHICH WE PARTIALLY AGREE:

FI-01. The VCBOE supports charter schools by policy and regulation. (FA-04, FA-05, FA-06)

We agree with FA-04. The Ventura County Board of Education does have a policy which encourages the establishment of charter schools. .

We partially agree with FA-05 and FA-06. The Ventura County Board of Education's administrative policy and regulations apply to charter schools authorized by the Ventura County Board of Education. The Ventura County Board of Education does not have the authority to enforce policy and regulations of charters authorized by other district offices.

FI-02. Charter schools have options when looking for a chartering entity and the form of the charter school. (FA-02, FA-19)

We agree with FA-02. A charter school has some options. A petition for a charter school may be approved by a school district, if the charter school will be located within the geographic boundaries of that district (California Education Code §47605 (a)(1). In addition, California Education Code §47605 (a)(5) states:

A charter school that is unable to locate within the jurisdiction of the chartering school district may establish one site outside the boundaries of the school district, but within the county in which that school district is located, if the school district within the jurisdiction of which the charter school proposes to operate is notified in advance of the charter petition approval, the county superintendent of schools and the superintendent are notified of the location of the charter school before it commences operations, and either of the following circumstances exists:

(A) The school has attempted to locate a single site or facility to house the entire program, but a site or facility is unavailable in the area in which the school chooses to locate.

(B) The site is needed for temporary use during a construction or expansion project.

Pursuant to California Education Code §47605(j)(1), if a school board denies a petition, a petitioner may submit a petition to the county board of education. If a county board denies a petition, the petitioner may elect to submit the petition to the State Board of Education.

A county office may also approve a petition for a countywide charter (California Education Code §47605.6).

We do not agree with FA-19. There are different forms of charter schools. There are classroom or site-based charter schools and non-classroom-based charter schools. The term Transition School is not a term used to define a charter school. A charter school can be a start-up charter or a conversion charter.

FI-03. Charter schools which include a strong parental element in their founding structure appear to achieve more traditional success. Parental involvement is critical to the charters' measured success. (FA-05, FA-18).

We partially agree with FA-05. The Ventura County Board of Education does have administrative policy that requires charter schools to provide a plan for parental involvement; this policy is only applicable to charter schools authorized by the Ventura County Board of Education. The Ventura County Board of Education does not have the authority to create policy for charter schools authorized by other school districts.

RECOMMENDATION THAT HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED:

R-04. The Grand Jury recommends that school districts in the County, as well as the Ventura County Office of Education, continue to offer and support charter schools as an educational option for students.

The Ventura County Office of Education will continue to provide support to districts and charter schools in an effort to provide quality educational opportunities for the students of Ventura County. The collaborative network of charter schools will continue to meet periodically to share best practices among the charter school directors.

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED, BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE:

R-01. The Grand Jury recommends that the Ventura County Office of Education, in cooperation with other chartering entities in the County, issue standards for the websites of all chartered schools in the County. Standards should include uniform reporting of the monies spent per student, and current and accurate SARC/API results. (FI-06, FI-07)

This recommendation will be implemented. Although the Ventura County Office of Education does not have jurisdiction to enforce uniform standards of reporting, in collaboration with districts, VCOE will create a template of uniform standards and recommend that charter schools implement them. We will use the established collaborative network of charters as a means to distribute the recommended standards.

R-02. The Grand Jury recommends that the chartering entity monitor each charter school's website for compliance and accuracy with the adopted standards. (FI-05, FI-06, FI-07)

The Ventura County Office of Education, in collaboration with local districts, will create recommendations as to the best authorizing practices which will be distribute to all districts within the County of Ventura. The Ventura County Office of Education will post these recommendations on its webpage and use the established collaborative network of charters as a means to distribute the recommended standards.

R-03. The Grand Jury recommends that all charter schools, especially those with historically low parental involvement, make every effort to encourage, define, and track parental involvement. (FI-03)

The Ventura County Office of Education, in collaboration with local districts, will create recommendations as to the best practices which will be distributed to all charter schools within the County of Ventura. We will use the established collaborative network of charters as a means to distribute the recommended best practices.