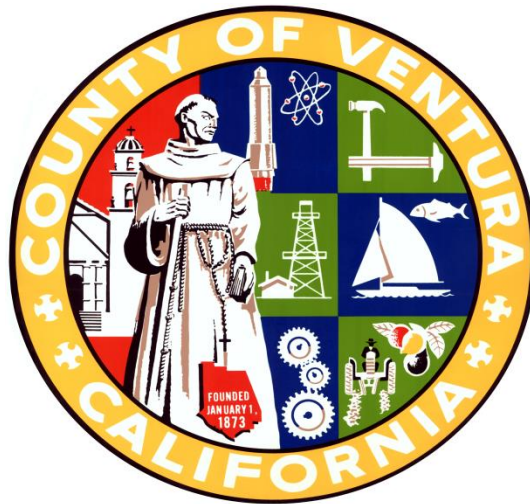


2019 - 2020 Ventura County Grand Jury



Oversight of Charter Schools Authorized by Ventura County School Districts and the Ventura County Office of Education

April 6, 2020

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Oversight of Charter Schools Authorized by Ventura County School Districts and the Ventura County Office of Education

Summary

The 2019-2020 Ventura County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated five chartering school districts within Ventura County (County) and the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) regarding their policies, practices and procedures in providing oversight of charter schools authorized by each authorizing district or VCOE.

The Grand Jury concluded that, while the authorizing districts in the County and VCOE are following state law in reporting fiscal and administrative information, there is no consistency in report monitoring and oversight of charter schools.

The Grand Jury concluded that, while the VCOE is providing training opportunities to charter school staff, no ongoing training is being offered to the authorizing school districts in the County.

The Grand Jury concluded that comprehensive guidelines for monitoring of charter schools have been developed by a California advisory organization, Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) and VCOE. These guidelines would be of benefit in developing charter school operations and procedures, however they have not been adopted by any County school district.

The Grand Jury concluded that each charter school's operation would benefit by having an official representative of the authorizing district or VCOE on its governing board.

The Grand Jury recommends that VCOE, in conjunction with charter schools and district authorizers, collaborate to review and enhance the current VCOE oversight checklist/timeline utilizing the FCMAT suggested guidelines for oversight.

The Grand Jury further recommends that VCOE consult with each authorizing school district, or provide a seminar to be attended by all authorizing school districts in the County, for the purpose of establishing a common set of oversight guidelines such as those found in the VCOE charter school checklist or FCMAT format.

The Grand Jury recommends that each existing charter school have on its governing board at least one official representative from the authorizing district or VCOE.

The Grand Jury recommends that charter school authorizing entities within the County require that future charter school petitions for authorization include an agreement that the charter school will have a representative from the authorizing school district and/or VCOE on its governing board.

Background

The Charter Schools Act of 1992 became effective January 1, 1993. California Education Code Section 47604.32 requires the school district, county office of education or California Department of Education authorizing the charter school to provide oversight of each charter school under its authority, and to require that the charter school comply with the following:

- Identify at least one staff member as a contact person
- Visit each charter school at least annually
- Ensure that each charter school provides all reports required by law
- Monitor the fiscal condition of the charter school
- Notify the California Department of Education if a charter is renewed or revoked or the school closes (Ref-01)

The monitoring process by the authorizing school district or county office of education and the county superintendent of schools requires each charter school to provide the following fiscal reports to the authorizing entity:

- A preliminary budget on or before July 1
- An interim financial report by December 15 reflecting all changes through October 31
- A second interim financial report by March 15 reflecting all changes through January 31
- A final unaudited report for the year by September 15 (Ref-01)

The authorizing entity is required to use the financial information provided to assess the fiscal condition of the charter school. (Ref-01)

The county superintendent of schools pursuant to Education Code Section 47604.4, may, on its own initiative or based on a written complaint from a parent, monitor the operations of each charter school operating within that county. (Ref-01)

Each charter school must provide its operational location(s) to the local county superintendent of schools. (Ref-01)

Some charter schools located within the County are authorized by a school district outside the County. The Grand Jury did not conduct investigations of such schools.

Methodology

The Grand Jury interviewed VCOE and County school district representatives between October 2019 and January 2020 regarding their oversight and monitoring procedures for authorized charter schools. (Ref-02)

- VCOE
- Oxnard Union High School District
- Mesa Union School District
- Moorpark Unified School District
- Ojai Unified School District
- Pleasant Valley School District

The Grand Jury also conducted inspections and interviews from December 2019 through February 2020 with a sampling of charter schools authorized by County school districts. (Ref-02)

- Golden Valley Charter School
- Ivy Tech Charter School
- Architecture, Construction and Engineering(ACE) Charter High School

The Grand Jury reviewed the following:

- California statutes concerning charter school creation and oversight. (Ref-01)
- Articles on charter school oversight. (Ref-03, Ref-04, Ref-05, Ref-06, Ref-07, Ref-08)
- Recent legislation modifying oversight of charter schools. (Ref-09, Ref-10, Ref-11, Ref-12, Ref-13)
- The FCMAT suggested guidelines for oversight of charter schools by their authorizing school districts. (Ref-14)
- Board membership of each charter school. (Ref-15)

The Grand Jury appreciates the cooperation provided by representatives of VCOE, the County charter schools and the County school districts interviewed in the course of the investigation.

Facts

FA-01. Charter schools in the County utilize a variety of procedures to formulate their legally required reports to their authorizing district. Charter school authorizers reported that the following formats are utilized:

- The California Charter School Annual Oversight Check List-FCMAT (Ref-14)
- VCOE Charter School Reporting Timeline (App-01)

- FA-02.** Two charter school authorizers in the County reported during interviews the importance of having a representative from the district included on their respective charter school's governing board.
- FA-03.** Six of the 12 County authorized charter schools do not have a representative from their authorizing districts or VCOE on their governing board. (Ref-15)
- FA-04.** Charter school authorizers reported during interviews that VCOE does not provide training to district school authorizers but will provide assistance when requested.
- FA-05.** A representative of VCOE stated that VCOE has provided training seminars and workshops to charter school staff.

Conclusions

- C-01.** The Grand Jury concluded that, while the authorizing districts in the County and VCOE are following state law in reporting fiscal and administrative information, there is a lack of consistency in report monitoring and oversight of charter schools. (FA-01)
- C-02.** The Grand Jury concluded that, while VCOE is providing training opportunities to charter school staff, no training is being offered to the authorizing school districts. (FA-04, FA-05)
- C-03.** The Grand Jury concluded that best practice guidelines for monitoring charter schools by authorizing school districts have been developed by FCMAT and VCOE. These guidelines have not been adopted by all County authorizing districts. (FA-01)
- C-04.** The Grand Jury concluded that a benefit would accrue to each charter school's operations by having an official representative of the authorizing district or VCOE on its governing board. (FA-02, FA-03)

Recommendations

- R-01.** The Grand Jury recommends that VCOE, in conjunction with charter schools and district authorizers, collaborate to review and enhance the current VCOE oversight checklist/timeline utilizing the FCMAT suggested guidelines for oversight. (C-01, C-03)
- R-02.** The Grand Jury recommends that VCOE, in conjunction with charter schools and authorizing districts, develop a consistent, comprehensive and regularly scheduled oversight process for all County charter schools. (C-01, C-03)

- R-03.** The Grand Jury recommends that VCOE periodically conduct meetings to be attended by all charter school authorizers in the County. These meetings are to collaborate and provide training, review new education legislation, share best practices and highlight successes. (C-02)
- R-04.** The Grand Jury recommends that each existing charter school’s governing board have at least one official representative from the authorizing district or VCOE. (C-04)
- R-05.** The Grand Jury recommends that charter school authorizing entities within the County require future charter school petitions for authorization to include an agreement that the charter school will have a representative from the authorizing school district and/or VCOE on its governing board. (C-04)

Responses

Responses Required From:

Ventura County Office of Education (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04) (R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04, R-05)

Oxnard Union High School District (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04) (R-01, R-02, R-04, R-05)

Mesa Union School District (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04) (R-01, R-02, R-04, R-05)

Moorpark Unified School District (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04) (R-01, R-02, R-04, R-05)

Ojai Unified School District (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04) (R-01, R-02, R-04, R-05)

Pleasant Valley School District (C-01, C-02, C-03, C-04) (R-01, R-02, R-04, R-05)

Responses Requested From:

Meadows Arts and Technology Elementary School (MATES) (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

River Oaks Academy (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

Ventura Charter School of Arts and Global Education (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

Vista Real Charter High School (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

Golden Valley Charter School (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

Ivy Tech Charter School (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

Valley Oak Charter School (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) Charter High School (C-04)
(R-01, R-04, R-05)

Camarillo Academy of Progressive Education (CAPE) (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

University Preparation Charter School at CSU at Channel Islands (C-04) (R-01,
R-04, R-05)

PEAK Prep Pleasant Valley (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

Bridges Charter School (C-04) (R-01, R-04, R-05)

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Attachments

Att-01. VCOE Charter School Reporting Timeline

Glossary

TERM

DEFINITION

Authorizing district

A district that approves applications to open new charter schools, monitors existing charter schools and decides to renew or close charter schools.

Charter school

Ventura County charter school

Charter schools authorizers

VCOE and authorizing districts

County

Ventura County

FCMAT

Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team Ventura County

Grand Jury

2019-2020 Ventura County Grand Jury

VCOE

Ventura County Office of Education

Attachment 01

VCOE Charter School Reporting Timeline

Ventura County Office of Education
Charter School Reporting Timeline

| Category | Report/Activity | Send to | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|----------------|---|-------------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Administrative | Programmatic Audit to VCBE - Presentations Fall-Winter Annually | VCOE | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | |
| Administrative | SARC (School Accountability Report Card): Publish annual update on school website. Provide web link to VCOE. Annual notification to parents per CDE guidelines. Due Feb. 1 (to CDE) | CDE VCOE | | | | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Administrative | Comprehensive School Safety Plan - Approved by charter governing board March 1st and electronically provided to VCOE | VCOE | | | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| Administrative | Parent/Student Handbook & Employee Handbooks: Due Aug 30 (and when modified) | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Administrative | Scheduled Charter School Director Meetings: Fall and Spring | N/A | | | X | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Administrative | Site Lease Agreements: Due Aug. 30 (and when modified) | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Administrative | Staff Information: Site Administrator's signed statement that background checks, fingerprinting and TB Test clearance have been completed for all staff, including Credential Audit. Due one (1) week prior to first day of school. | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Administrative | Provide student information list | VCOE | | | | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Administrative | Staff Information Lists (Certificated and non-certificated) and Master Schedule indicating course and/or grade level taught. Due August 30 | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Attendance | Instructional Calendar and Bell Schedules: Send Final Board approved calendars and bell schedules by Aug 30 . Be sure to include: minimum days & the testing windows for CAASPP, ELPAC & PFT (as applicable). | VCOE | X | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fiscal | Final, unaudited actual data of the prior year: Due on or before August 15, 2016 (Ed Code 42100(b)). | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fiscal | First Interim Financial Report: Due Dec 15 (Ed Code 47604.33) | VCOE | | | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Fiscal | Independent Annual Audit Report: Due Dec 15 (Ed Code 41020(h)). | CDE/VCOE | | | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Fiscal | Proof of Insurance and Additional Insured Certificate (Worker's Comp., Comp. Bodily Injury & Property Damage Liability, Director's and Officer's Liability): Annually | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fiscal | Second Interim Financial Report: Due March 15 (Ed Code 47604.33) | VCOE | | | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Fiscal | Adopted Budget: Due June 30 | VCOE | | | | | | | | | | | | X | |
| Governance | Local Control Accountability Plan: Due June 30 | VCOE | | | | | | | | | | | | X | |
| Governance | Governing Board List of Members, Officers, and Contact Info: Due Aug. 30 (and within 10 days of any changes) | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Governance | Bylaws: First Submission due Aug 30 and thereafter, within 10 days of any changes | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Governance | Governing Board Meeting Schedule: Due Aug. 30 (and when modified) | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Governance | Charter Board of Director Regular and Special Board Meeting Agenda and Supporting Documents: Send electronically when posted pursuant to Brown Act requirements | VCOE | X | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Governance | All Board Policies: Including but not limited to, Fiscal, Suspension/Expulsion, UCP, Admissions, Board Governance, Conflict of Interest, Grievance and Dispute, Special Education, Attendance, Title IX and Personnel. First submission due Aug. 30 and when modified thereafter | VCOE | | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Instruc-EL | WASC: Accreditation timeline/report, if applicable. | VCOE | X | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Site Visit | Site Visit Per EC 47604.32 (TBD) | N/A | X | | | | | | | | | | | | X |

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