



Chualar Union School District

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March 14, 2024

Honorable, Stephanie Hulseley
Judge of the Superior Court
% Office of the County Counsel
168 W. Alisal Street, 3rd FL
Salinas, CA 93901

Dear Honorable Stephanie Hulseley,

My name is Ruben Pulido. I am the recently appointed Superintendent of Chualar Union School District. This letter is forwarded in response to your request for feedback pertaining to the 20-21 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report, "Excellence in Action: Monterey County's Educational Response to Covid-19." This letter also serves to forward an apology for the delayed response to your request.

Your request for a response to this report arrived at our district office during an administrative transition period and prior to my arrival as current Superintendent/Principal of the Chualar Union School District. Upon recent knowledge of your request, I immediately requested a copy of the report. I also scheduled a meeting with my school faculty and staff, who were present during that COVID-19 time period referred to in the report, and solicited their feedback and insight. Based on the comprehensive information I gained from their feedback to the report "Findings" and "Recommendations," I drafted the following responses. We respectfully ask the Honorable Judge to accept our response to the inquiries.

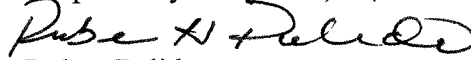
We understand we are responsible for submission of a formal response to the Findings Nos. F1, F5, F8-F13, and Recommendations R1-R2. We believe the following information will meet the requirement. Should you have questions and/or need additional information, please contact me at Chualar School District (831) 679-2313.

The collective responses from the district faculty and staff, indicate the extensive effort we went through to meet the needs of our school attendance community. Our capacity to fully engage our staff and students in the educational process was facilitated by the ongoing support provided by the MCOE, its Office of Emergency Services, their collaborative partners and their consistent,

ongoing communication. Having direct contact with the County Superintendent and our Superintendent colleagues brought comfort, reduced anxiety and feeling of high resiliency. Although our additional comments show our local effort, it mirrored the extent to which the MCOE modeled their responses, providing us with support and materials to enhance our emergency preparedness. The teachers were able to fulfill their required instructional responsibilities due largely to the SEL training provided by the MCOE.

Please accept our responses which we believe support and meet the conditions required by the Grand Jury. This response was formally agendaized and shared with the Board of Trustees of the Chualar Union School District (CUSD) at their March 13, 2024 meeting. The CUSD shared their approval of the required responses to the Grand Jury. Please let us know if further information is required.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruben Pulido", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ruben Pulido

The following includes the specific responses required by this report for each of the “Findings” and “Recommendations”

FINDINGS:

With respect to each finding, we were advised to indicate one of the following:

- 1) That the District agrees with the finding; or
- 2) That the District disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the District must specify the portion of the find that is disputed and shall include in the response an explanation of the reasons for the disagreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

With respect to each recommendation, the District was to report one of the following actions:

- 1) That the recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action;
- 2) That the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation; or
- 3) That the recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the District (this timeframe not to exceed six months from the date of publication).
- 4) The recommendations will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefore.

Finding - F1	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F1 Educators and classified staff in Monterey County are to be commended for their initiative and flexibility in meeting the challenges of COVID-19. From the MCOE Superintendent to the newest part-time classroom aide, county educational employees went beyond their job descriptions in meeting the needs of students and their families during the pandemic.	The District agrees with the finding.	MCOE’s support facilitated the District’s capacity to go beyond in meeting the needs of students and their families during the pandemic.

Further Justification

Per State and MCOE recommendation, Chualar Union School District (CUSD) officially closed school beginning on March 16, 2020 and remained closed during the 2019-20 school year. CUSD is a one school district, and serves approximately 300 students in TK/Kindergarten through 8th grade. Upon school closure on March 16, teachers immediately collaborated in their respective grade level teams and prepared enrichment opportunities packets for the next twelve days. Teachers also communicated via phone calls, text, or familiar online classroom platforms with their students at least once a week to provide social emotional check-ins and guidance. On April 1, teachers transitioned to distance learning pathways. All students were provided the opportunity to continue receiving direct instruction and a comprehensive learning experience through the engagement and participation of the following Learning Management Platforms: Google Meet, Google Classroom, Seesaw, and Zoom meetings. Along with virtual classroom meetings that focused on social emotional health and instruction, students were allowed to take instructional materials home such as library books, textbooks and/or workbooks, grade level work packets and/or individualized work packets, novels, notebooks, and tools for writing/coloring. Students also continued to have access to their online accounts through Google Classroom, Accelerated Reader, Get Epic, and other Science and Math curriculum student online accounts.

Finding - F5	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F5 Administrators, teachers, and information technology staff in Monterey County are to be commended for making great strides in providing remote learning devices and solving internet access problem during the COVID-19 pandemic	The District agrees with the finding.	All students were provided the opportunity to continue receiving direct instruction and a comprehensive learning experience through the engagement and participation of the following Learning Management Platforms: Google Meet, Google Classroom, Seesaw, and Zoom meetings. Students also continued to have access to their online accounts through Google Classroom, Accelerated Reader, Get Epic, and other Science and Math curriculum student online accounts.

Further Justification

On April 1, teachers transitioned to distance learning pathways. All students were provided the opportunity to continue receiving direct instruction and a comprehensive learning experience through the engagement and

participation of the following Learning Management Platforms: Google Meet, Google Classroom, Seesaw, and Zoom meetings. Along with virtual classroom meetings that focused on social emotional health and instruction, students were allowed to take instructional materials home such as library books, textbooks and/or workbooks, grade level work packets and/or individualized work packets, novels, notebooks, and tools for writing/coloring. Students also continued to have access to their online accounts through Google Classroom, Accelerated Reader, Get Epic, and other Science and Math curriculum student online accounts.

Through the assistance of our teaching and office staff, we immediately surveyed our families to determine whether they had access to technological devices at home such as a PC or Chromebook, as well as determining if families had internet (connectivity) access. Consequently, a Technology Checkout Form was developed to allow students/families to borrow a CUSD Chromebook. Over 145 devices were prepared and distributed to students in the span of two days. For students/families living in rural areas without internet access, a T Mobile Wi-Fi hotspot device was issued per family. A total of 55 devices were distributed and information on low-cost internet providers was provided via our school-community communication application "Remind" and posted on our school website: chualarusd.com.

Finding F8	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F8 Despite a lack of preparedness at many levels of government, MCOE, school districts, and staff responded to the impact of the pandemic in a timely manner.	The District agrees with the finding.	<u>Technology</u> - Students had access to Learning Management Platforms: Google Meet, Google Classroom, Seesaw, and Zoom meeting. Additionally, they had access to their online accounts through Google Classroom, Accelerated Reader, Get Epic, and other Science and Math curriculum student online accounts. <u>Food Services</u> - Distributed breakfast and lunch to students on a daily basis through a drive-up or walk-up method

Further Justification
After the school's closure, CUSD's Food Service Department began to immediately distribute breakfast and lunch to students on a daily basis through a drive-up or walk-up method, which has transitioned into our current meal distribution system. CUSD is currently distributing meals to Chualar families once a week each Monday morning, where families can pick up an entire week of meals for students (five breakfasts and five lunches). In addition, the district delivers the meals to those families who live outside of town.

Finding F9	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F9 Monterey County successfully expanded internet connectivity due to the efforts of MCOE, industry partners, grant institutions, the Digital Task Force, and school district investment in technology.	The District agrees with the finding.	After going through the MCOE SEL training, teachers were able to deliver high-quality distance learning opportunities to each of their students by maintaining personal and individualized contact with each child, and providing a comprehensive learning experience.

Further Justification
When the shelter-in-place order was enacted, CUSD worked collectively with teachers, site administrators, and the supporting staff to successfully transition to a distance learning platform for students in grades TK/K-8th grade. During the beginning stages of school closure, CUSD provided its teachers with a series of professional development focusing on using the various distant learning platforms available. After going through the MCOE SEL training, teachers were able to deliver high-quality distance learning opportunities to each of their students by maintaining personal and individualized contact with each child, and providing a comprehensive learning experience. Teachers quickly adapted to using technology for imparting instruction, providing blended educational activities, and continuously assessing and providing important feedback to their students. Each week, teachers created learning plans and assignments that were submitted by various distance learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Google Handout, Seesaw, and Class Dojo. These learning plans provided students and parents instructional learning links, instructional tasks, and platforms for work submission and feedback. Teachers monitored student engagement via Zoom conferencing, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Seesaw, and other supplemental programs

Finding F10	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F10 There is increased collaboration and coordination among agencies that provide services and support, including the MCOE, Monterey County Behavioral Health, support providers, and community groups.	The District agrees with the finding.	Our foster youth and low-income students also received counseling with our Harmony At Home Bullying Prevention Program specialist through class meetings that targeted emotional and social health issues. Teachers received professional development about Harmony At Home continued services available during distance learning in whole-class, small group, and individual settings and how to best utilize these services

		to meet their students' needs.
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Further Justification

CUSD met the needs of its students by providing access to the curriculum with support through Zoom video conferencing, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Class Dojo, emails, and phone calls by our teachers. Similarly, our foster youth and low-income students were given assistance and ensured classroom teacher instruction through hotspot devices and Chromebook access. Teachers ensured all students had access to their online curriculum, and whenever needed, provided written material packets to students in need. It should also be noted that if a teacher reported a student experiencing any anxiety during the school closure, our Harmony At Home therapist would provide support or prepare referrals for higher levels of service to support students with any social-emotional needs therapy. Our foster youth and low-income students also received counseling with our Harmony At Home Bullying Prevention Program specialist through class meetings that targeted emotional and social health issues. Teachers received professional development about Harmony At Home continued services available during distance learning in whole-class, small group, and individual settings and how to best utilize these services to meet their students' needs. Not only did the specialist share videos and resources with administrators and teachers to use with their students, but they also created a schedule document where teachers could sign up to have the specialist join a virtual class meeting to deliver social-emotional learning sessions directly to the class or group of students.

Finding F11	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F11 Administrators, teachers, parents, and students are all extremely concerned about students' social-emotional issues arising from COVID-19.	The District agrees with the finding.	Our foster youth and low-income students also received counseling with our Harmony At Home Bullying Prevention Program specialist through class meetings.

Further Justification

CUSD met the needs of its students by providing access to the curriculum with support through Zoom video conferencing, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Class Dojo, emails, and phone calls by our teachers. Similarly, our foster youth and low-income students were given assistance and ensured classroom teacher instruction through hotspot devices and Chromebook access. Teachers ensured all students had access to their online curriculum, and whenever needed, provided written material packets to students in need. It should also be noted that if a teacher reported a student experiencing any anxiety during the school closure, our Harmony At Home therapist would provide support or prepare referrals for higher levels of service to support students with any social-emotional needs therapy. Our foster youth and low-income students also received counseling with our Harmony At Home Bullying Prevention Program specialist through class meetings that targeted emotional and social health issues. Teachers received professional development about Harmony At Home continued services available during distance learning in whole-class, small group, and individual settings and how to best utilize these services to meet their students' needs. Not only did the specialist share videos and resources with administrators and teachers to use with their students, but they also created a schedule document where teachers could sign up to have the specialist join a virtual class meeting to deliver social-emotional learning sessions

directly to the class or group of students.

Finding F12	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F 12 Administrators, teachers, parents, and students are concerned about the learning loss that took place during the 2020-2021 school year. There is an urgent need for mitigation of such a loss.	The District agrees with the finding.	The district maintained the extended-day program through the pandemic period and instituted an Intervention Specialist position in order to provide supplemental support to students who suffered the most negative academic impact.

Further Justification

Students continued their daily learning via the extended-day program by their access to the curriculum with support through Zoom video conferencing, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Class Dojo, emails, and phone calls by our teachers. The District also instituted an Intervention Specialist position in order to provide supplemental support to students who suffered the most negative academic impact.

Finding F13	District Response to the Finding	Justification
F13 There is the potential for significant fiscal disruption with the continuing loss of ADA and the end of additional federal funding occurring at the same time.	The District agrees with the finding.	Without the support of COVID emergency funding, the District faced a fiscal challenge of trying to retain the intervention and extended wellness services

Further Justification

In our efforts to deliver high quality distant learning platforms and to strive to reduce learning loss, teachers observed the learning efficiency of all students throughout the use of these platforms, and willingly modified them if needed. Teachers reinforced concepts in core content areas by scaffolding, small group Zoom meetings, and individualized support. The means of communication between our teachers, supporting staff, and families amplified the efficiency of our distance learning platforms. Teachers effectively utilized Zoom conferencing, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Seesaw to deliver long distance learning. Additionally, teachers were encouraged to attend ongoing coaching sessions, webinars, and/or professional development opportunities being offered by the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) to continue developing and improving their distance learning instruction and best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation R1	District Response to the Finding	Justification
R1 School districts maintain a minimum level of one behavioral support staff member at each school site until the end of the 2025-2026 school year.	The District intends to maintain a minimum level of one behavioral support staff member at each school site until the end of the 2025-2026 school year.	The District is currently providing wellness counseling and bullying prevention opportunities via two professionals provided by the Harmony at Home programs.

Further Justification

It should also be noted that if a teacher reported a student experiencing any anxiety during the school closure, our Harmony At Home therapist would provide support or prepare referrals for higher levels of service to support students with any social-emotional needs therapy. Our foster youth and low-income students also received counseling with our Harmony At Home Bullying Prevention Program specialist through class meetings that targeted emotional and social health issues. Teachers received professional development about Harmony At Home continued services available during distance learning in whole-class, small group, and individual settings and how to best utilize these services to meet their students' needs.

Recommendation R2	District Response to the Finding	Justification
R2 School districts maintain learning loss mitigation programs and extended learning opportunities until the end of the 2025-2026 school year.	School district intends to maintain learning loss mitigation programs and extended learning opportunities until the end of the 2025-2026 school year.	Teachers effectively utilized Zoom conferencing, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Seesaw to deliver long distance learning. With the support of COVID funding, the District acquired a Literacy Specialist and established a comprehensive extended-day program that currently houses over one hundred students. The extended-day program is planned to go through the 2025-26 school year and beyond.

Further Justification

In our efforts to deliver high quality distant learning platforms and to strive to reduce learning loss, teachers observed the learning efficiency of all students throughout the use of these platforms, and willingly modified them if needed. Teachers reinforced concepts in core content areas by scaffolding, small group Zoom meetings, and individualized support. The means of communication between our teachers, supporting staff, and families amplified the efficiency of our distance learning platforms. Teachers effectively utilized Zoom conferencing, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Seesaw to deliver long distance learning. With the support of COVID funding, the District acquired a Literacy Specialist and established a comprehensive extended-day program that currently houses over one hundred students.

Teachers were scheduled to attend ongoing coaching sessions, webinars, and/or professional development opportunities being offered by the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) to continue developing and improving their distance learning instruction and best practices.