

Marin County Office of Education
Responses to the 2021-2022 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report
Marin Schools: A Prescription for COVID Recovery

Recommendation:

R1:	By August 1, 2022 the Marin County Superintendent of Schools and all Marin public school districts should convene a countywide Lost Learning Task Force to rapidly develop lost learning recovery models that are available for implementation by all of Marin's public school districts.
Response:	This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. There are currently multiple existing groups and structures in place that have been in place before the pandemic and have developed and implemented plans for learning loss mitigation to some degree throughout the pandemic, with the clear understanding that remote learning is not effective or accessible for many students. The Marin County Superintendent of Schools convenes a monthly meeting of Marin County School District Superintendents to coordinate efforts and share best practices for supporting student learning and success. The frequency of these meetings was increased to weekly through a majority of the pandemic, including regular participation of the Marin County Public Health Office and/or Deputy Public Health Officer. A central priority of the Superintendents group through the past two years is to share best practices to address learning loss, and to implement robust student and staff mental health and wellness supports. All Marin County school districts applied for and were recipients of Learning Loss Mitigation Funding (LLMF) to support pupil academic achievement and mitigate learning loss related to COVID-19 school closures. As such all school districts were required to create learning continuity and attendance plans, which have been adopted and submitted to the California Department of Education. In addition to monthly Superintendents meetings, other countywide groups that meet on a regular basis with representatives from all school districts who have been addressing learning loss mitigation through the pandemic include the Innovative Learning Team (ILT), District Business Officials (DBOs), Elementary and Middle School Principals Networks, and the Marin County Schools Wellness Collaborative. For the purposes of this recommendation the ILT, under the leadership of the Marin County Office of Education, will serve as the <i>Lost Learning Task Force</i>, and will agendize learning loss mitigation to rapidly develop lost learning recovery models that are available for implementation by all of Marin's public

	school districts, and provide updates on best practices to the Superintendents. Timeline: The Innovative Learning Team (ILT) is a currently existing countywide school committee, thus meeting the August 1, 2022 recommended convening date. They will perform the learning loss task force functions as our schools continue to address the learning loss issue. Their work commences with their first meeting scheduled on September 8, 2022 and will continue at monthly meeting throughout the school year and at additional meetings as needed.
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Recommendation:

R2:	By August 1, 2022 the Marin County Superintendent of Schools and all Marin public school districts should also call on the Lost Learning Task Force, as a second but vital priority, to develop and recommend protocols and policies for minimizing the length of emergency school closures during future disruptions.
Response:	This recommendation has been implemented. This recommendation has been implemented, although not in the name of a <i>Lost Learning Task Force</i>. There is recognition that this work is ongoing. Prior to COVID there was strong consensus among all Marin County Public School leaders that continuity of school operations and in person learning is a critical priority. Tools to support this priority through recent experiences with wildfire, air quality and winter storms have been developed in collaboration with Marin County Public Health and the Office of Emergency Services. Tools include an air quality chart that identifies appropriate indoor and outdoor activities at school to support health and safety depending on changing air quality indicators, systems of communication and planning for potential closures, and many districts taking the step of adding additional potential instructional days (similar to snow days in the mountainous areas) in the event of a closure. When the first shelter in place and suspension of classroom activity was ordered in the Spring of 2020, immediate steps were taken in conjunction with Public Health to develop protocols and procedures for a safe return to site based classroom instruction, resulting in the development of the Marin County School Guidelines (30 Point Plan) first issued June 18, 2020. With the fundamental goal of keeping students in site based classroom instruction these guidelines have been revised and updated eleven times through May 3, 2022, including an update to a 32 Point Plan on August 18, 2021, and more recently

	an update to the Marin County SMARTER Schools Plan on March 24, 2022. Public Health is currently working with all Marin County public, private, independent and parochial schools in planning for the 2022-23 school year including the development of a COVID mitigation strategies chart, similar to the air quality chart, to help schools continue implement best practices and procedures aligned with changing COVID-19 transmission levels and risks due to future variants and uncertainties, with the central and agreed upon priority of keeping students in site based classroom instructions. This work is ongoing.
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DRAFT Responses to the 2021-2022 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report
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Finding

F1	Excellent collaboration between Marin County Public Health officers and Marin's public school administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic produced science-based and demonstrably workable guidelines for reopening Marin County's public schools safely early in the 2020-21 school year.
	I (we) agree with the finding.

Finding

F2	Since experts agree that in-person classroom instruction is best for students, putting students first by keeping schools open as much as possible should be an imperative for all of Marin's educators.
	I (we) agree with the finding.

Finding

F3	Because labor negotiations over resuming in-person classroom instruction added to the complexity and delays in public school reopenings, Marin's public school districts would benefit by developing standard practices and models for resolving staff concerns.
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	I (we) <i>partially</i> disagree with the finding. It is true that labor negotiations added to the complexity and delays in public school reopenings, for good reason. We disagree that standard practices and models should be developed for resolving staff concerns. The structure and nature of labor units, negotiations, and collective bargaining agreements appropriately are designed to address a wide variety of individualized and localized concerns and circumstances that must be addressed to reach agreement in each respective district. Marin County public school teachers and school staff (labor) should be commended for their efforts to help Marin County public schools to be among the first in the state to return to and sustain in person classroom instruction.
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Finding

F4	Marin's Public schools would benefit from studying the private and public schools that demonstrated an ability to fully reopen early in the 2020-21 school year while complying with Marin's Public Health requirements.
	I (we) <i>partially</i> disagree with the finding. While it is beneficial to review best practices and resources that were developed by schools during the pandemic, we disagree that additional study is needed regarding how private and some public schools were able to reopen early in the 2020-21 school year. Private and public schools worked collaboratively and directly with Public Health to develop the 30-point plan that allowed Marin schools to reopen complying with Marin's Public Health requirements, and to continually adjust to conditions and changing guidance to remain open during the biggest surges of COVID-19 in our community.

Finding

F5	As a consequence of significant differences in the amount of in-person instruction time offered by Marin County's 18 public school districts during the 2020-21 school year, Marin's public school students experienced wide disparities in educational instruction.
	I (we) agree with the finding.

Finding

F6	A shortage of in-person instruction during the 2020-21 school year slowed measurable learning progress for many Marin public school students, resulting in deficits that should be addressed over the long-term with a concerted recovery program.
	I (we) agree with the finding.

Finding

F7	Slow in-person school reopenings undermined confidence in public schools and contributed to an enrollment decline, potentially weakening long-term financial support for Marin's districts that rely on attendance for state funding.
	I (we) agree with the finding.

Finding

F8	The Marin County Superintendent of Schools and Office of Education are best positioned to take a leadership role in enabling school districts to coordinate and implement a focused pandemic recovery plan that addresses students' academic, social, and emotional needs.
	I (we) agree with the finding.