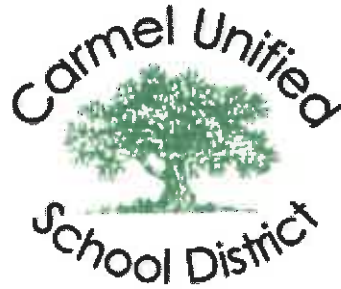


BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tess Arthur
Sara Hinds
Seaberry Nachbar
Karl Pallastrini
Anne-Marie Rosen

SUPERINTENDENT

Ted Knight, Ed.D.

**DISTRICT OFFICE:**

P.O. Box 222700
Carmel CA 93922

4380 Carmel Valley Road
Carmel, CA 93923

TEL: (831) 624-1546

FAX: (831) 624-1726

www.carmelunified.org

The Honorable Stephanie E. Hulse
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Office of the County Counsel
Attn: Sandra Ontiveros
168 W. Alisal Street, 3rd Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

June 22, 2022

RE: Response to the 2021-2022 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report
"Excellence in Action: Monterey County's Educational Response to COVID-19"

Dear Honorable Judge Hulse,

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees have reviewed and considered the findings and recommendations set forth in the 2021-2022 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report entitled, "Excellence in Action: Monterey County's Educational Response to COVID-19". This letter serves as the official response of our District and its Board to the report's findings and recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our responses.

Sincerely,

Sara Hinds
Carmel Unified School District Board President

Carmel Unified School District Responses to Findings and Recommendations

Findings

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.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agree with this finding. The personnel of all school districts, charter schools, and the county office of education have made extraordinary efforts to meet the needs of our students, fellow staff members and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the hard work and dedication of our COVID response team, CUSD was able to continue full, in-person learning for the duration of the 2021-22 school year, including activities and athletics. Our district invested tremendous resources in ensuring our students, staff and families were able to remain in-person and enjoy cherished celebrations while following our local and state guidance and mandates.

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 problems during the COVID-19 pandemic.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agree with this finding. Administrators, teachers, and support staff in Monterey County are to be commended for making great strides in providing remote learning devices and solving some of the internet access problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carmel Unified schools utilized innovative solutions to solve the digital divide problems and are continuing to work toward long term solutions that hopefully in the future will close the digital divide, especially for those in our outlying areas who are not able to be served by traditional internet providers.

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.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agree with this finding. MCOE, school districts, and staff worked diligently to respond appropriately and timely to each challenge the pandemic surfaced, including moving to remote learning in a matter of days and frequently adjusting to ever-changing guidance and mandates from state officials.

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.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agrees with this finding. MCOE worked with many partner agencies, granting institutions, vendors, technology experts, district superintendents, and elected officials to expand internet connectivity for students and families in need in many areas of the county. While additional efforts are needed to close the digital divide, the progress made during the pandemic is to be commended.

F10. There is increased collaboration and coordination among agencies that provide services and support, including the MCOE, Monterey County Behavioral Health, the Monterey County Health Department, internet partners, school districts, support providers, and community groups.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agrees with this finding. The increased collaboration and coordination among agencies is greatly appreciated as it allows for more efficient response and better coordination of services and support.

F11. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students are all extremely concerned about students' social-emotional issues arising from COVID-19.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agrees with this finding. Our district and site staff members, students and families have reported that they are seeing and experiencing many more behavioral challenges, as well as social and emotional health concerns over the last two years than in years past.

F12. 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.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agrees with this finding that staff, parents/families, and students are concerned about the learning loss that took place during both the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school year and that there is an urgent need for additional support for students who fell behind academically.

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.

☒ **AGREE**
☐ **PARTIALLY AGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees agrees with this finding. While loss of ADA does not impact Carmel Unified as a Basic Aid/Community Funded District, many districts throughout California, including those within Monterey County, are experiencing declining enrollment and increased absenteeism. With federal COVID relief funds ending, our school district must eliminate some of the additional staffing and programming offerings instituted over the last two years to manage the pandemic.

Recommendations

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.

☒ **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED**
☐ **HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**
☐ **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS**
☐ **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED**

Response:

The Carmel Unified School District and its Board of Trustees has implemented this recommendation. Both Carmel Middle School and Carmel High School have a Wellness Center with staff available on a full-time basis. The District has a school counselor at each school site. The elementary schools each have one school counselor, two school counselors at the middle school, and three school counselors at the high school. The school counselor plays an important role in our tiered support system. Additionally, the District has continuously partnered with Monterey County Behavioral Health to implement an expanded mental health support system for all students requiring more support, with each school site having access to a clinician through a referral process. We have also partnered with CARE SOLACE, an online resource with a live 24/7 concierge meant to assist individuals in finding high-quality, local mental health related and counseling services for students, families, and staff.

R2. School districts maintain learning loss mitigation programs and extended learning opportunities until the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

☒ **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED**
☐ **HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**
☐ **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS**
☐ **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED**

Response:

Learning loss mitigation is occurring in the Carmel Unified School District. We are continuing to grow our comprehensive continuum of support for all students academically, socially, and emotionally. We will be continuing our summer school program this June, expanding transitional kindergarten over the next few years, aligning and vertically articulating our curriculum, creating common formative assessments, and furthering our work on psychological and physical safety.

California districts are also currently assessing and planning for increased resources and implementation of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program. The California Department of Education defines expanded learning as, "learning programs that occur before school, after school, summer, or intersession that focus on developing the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs and interests of pupils through hands-on, engaging learning experiences and activities." This augmented support will increase access to expanded learning resources for students in grades TK-6 and will help to accelerate learning for students across the state. These opportunities will continue through the 2025-2026 school year and beyond, contingent upon funding and staffing availability. Our students will benefit from the expanded learning opportunities these programs provide.