

August 2, 2017

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The Honorable Mark E. Hood
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Monterey
240 Church Street
Salinas, CA 93901

**RE: Response to the 2016-17 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report
- "The Impact of Second Language Learners from Low Income Families
on Elementary School Education in Salinas"**

Honorable Judge Hood:

The 2016-17 Civil Grand Jury Final Report - "The Impact of Second Language Learners from Low Income Families on Elementary School Education in Salinas" - focuses on the need for English Learners to attain proficiency which is a top priority for Monterey County.

Findings and Recommendations

F2. The three elementary school districts in Salinas are not meeting statewide averages for English and math test scores.

The Salinas City Elementary School District Superintendent and the Salinas City Elementary School District Board of Education agree with this finding.

F3. The K-3 class sizes exceed the 20 students per teacher that was mandated by the California Department of Education in 1996.

The Salinas City Elementary School District Superintendent and Salinas City Elementary School District Board of Education disagrees partially with this finding.

The K-3 Class Size Reduction (CSR) Program (Senate Bill 1777, Chapter 163, Statutes of 1996) was established in 1996 for kindergarten through third grade. This program provided funds to school districts and charter schools that reduced class size to 20 pupils or fewer per certificated teacher. The program ended at the conclusion of the 2012-13 school year.

However, currently California Education Code (EC) sections 41376 and 41378 prescribe the maximum class sizes and penalties for districts with any classes that exceed the following limits:

- Kindergarten – average class size not to exceed 31 students; no class larger than 33 students
- Grades one through three – average class size not to exceed 30 students; no class larger than 32 students

F4. The general goals for the progress of ELL students set by the California Department of Education for teaching ELL students are not specific or quantifiable, and do not provide a standard against which actual results could be compared.

The Salinas City Elementary School District Superintendent and Salinas City Elementary School District Board of Education disagrees partially with this finding.

We agree the California Department of Education (CDE) goals for the progress of English Learner students are not specific or quantifiable. Research indicates it takes between five to seven years for a child to acquire the academic language that is needed to be on a level with native speakers. (Hakuta, K., Goto Butler, Y. & Witt, D. (2000), How Long Does It Take English Learners to Attain Proficiency?, Stanford, CA: The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute). English Learners enter school at different stages of English language development and with varied linguistic and experiential backgrounds. A student's background knowledge and level of proficiency in their primary language affects the pace at which a student will attain English proficiency.

The California Department of Education's *English Language Arts, English Language Development Framework* provides a standard for the progress of all English Learners which specifically defines the stages of progress of English language development. English Learners take the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) annually in order to measure their progress. This test assesses four language domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In addition, the CELDT measures five levels of proficiency: beginning, early intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. The CELDT Performance Descriptors define the specific English proficiencies at each level. The CDE expects that, "English learners acquire full proficiency in English as rapidly and effectively as possible and attain parity with native speakers of English," and, "within a reasonable period, achieve the same rigorous grade level academic standards that are expected of all students."

Additionally, each district's Local Control and Accountability Plan must include baseline data and defined goals for English Learner progress toward English proficiency as measured by CELDT progress and Reclassification data.

Further, the CDE's new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) has an evaluation rubric that includes the expectation that English learners will move up at least one CELDT level until they are reclassified.

F5. It is unlikely that the low amount of funding per student ADA, the disparity between the cost of living in Salinas, and starting teachers' salaries will be solved in the foreseeable future.

The Salinas City Elementary School District Superintendent and Salinas City Elementary School District Board of Education agree with this finding. The amount of state funds per student ADA is the same regardless of where your district is located (except for basic aid districts). Therefore, in a high cost area, the funding is the same as in a low cost area.

F6. The new CSUMB/Hartnell College joint venture, the "Professional Teacher Pathway," in South Monterey County provides a blueprint for similar programs and would contribute to a long-term solution to the shortage of qualified teachers in the Salinas elementary schools.

The Salinas City Elementary School District Superintendent and Salinas City Elementary School District Board of Education agree with this finding. The new CSUMB/Hartnell College joint venture to create a professional teacher pathway could indeed help the greater Salinas area grow local talent and produce teachers who are from the community and want to teach in or near their home towns in the future.

F7. Cooperation and coordination between the elementary school districts and the Salinas middle schools within the Salinas Union High School District is not adequate to ensure that all students entering middle schools are equally prepared.

The Salinas City Elementary School District Superintendent and Salinas City Elementary School District Board of Education disagrees partially with this finding.

Salinas City Elementary School District has worked collaboratively with the Salinas Union High School District (SUHSD) to articulate our programs for the successful matriculation of our sixth grade students into middle school. However, it is agreed that additional collaboration would strengthen our students' readiness for middle school.

R1. The Salinas elementary school districts should adopt specific goals for the number of years it should take for ELL students to achieve proficiency.

This recommendation has been implemented. Goals 2 of the Salinas City Elementary School District 2017-2020 Local Control and Accountability Plan (approved by our Board of Trustees on June 26, 2017) states, "English Learners will progress one proficiency level each year and reach reclassification criteria within five years."

R2. The three Salinas school districts should establish and use a uniform ELL curriculum to ensure that all students are equally prepared when entering middle school.

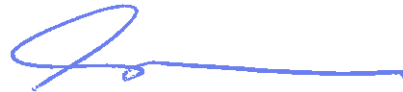
This recommendation will not be implemented. All Salinas districts have followed mandated curriculum adoption processes and have adopted standards-based curriculum approved by the California State Board of Education.

We thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations of the 2016-2017 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report – "The Impact of Second Language Learners from Low Income Families on Elementary School Education in Salinas."

Sincerely,



Martha L. Martinez,
Superintendent
Salinas City Elementary School District



Stephen Kim,
Board President
Salinas City Elementary School District