



NAPA COUNTY OFFICE
OF
EDUCATION

707.253.6810
info@napacoe.org
www.napacoe.org
@NapaCOE

August 1, 2022

Hon. Victoria Wood
Superior Court of Napa County
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559

Dear Judge Wood,

Attached is the response of the Napa County Office of Education to recommendations R2, R5, R6, and R7 of the Grand Jury Report on Juvenile Hall. Please feel free to contact me at 707-253-6823 or bnemko@napacoe.org if you have any questions about our responses.

Sincerely,

Barbara Nemko, Ph.D.
Napa County Superintendent of Schools

Response of the Napa County Office of Education to Grand Jury Recommendations on Juvenile Hall

Recommendation R2

To insure oversight and transparency the Napa County Board of Supervisors should direct the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) to report to the Board of Supervisors on a regular schedule at public meetings of the BOS. The JJCC should add more public members, meet regularly as required by law, provide timely public notice of meetings with agendas, provide minutes, recorded video, and follow the requirements of the Brown Act.

Response to Recommendation 2

The Napa County Superintendent of Schools is a member of the JJCC, which is administered by the Probation Department and chaired by the Chief Probation Officer. Should the Board of Supervisors implement the recommendation to have the JJCC report on a regular schedule to the BOS, our office will be happy to participate in these presentations with the other members of the JJCC. Alternatively, the meetings of the JJCC are held regularly, have agendas and minutes, and welcome any members of the Board of Supervisors and/or the public to attend the meetings.

Recommendation R5

The Chief Probation Officer should engage the JJCC, the Commission, and NCOE in the design, creation, and implementation of the New Horizons Academy as a way to address excess Juvenile Hall capacity and the needs of a broader range of youth. The design should focus on the provision of additional services to probationary youth not requiring detention in a secure facility, but who would benefit from a supervised residential program with easy access to a comprehensive educational program and mental health services. Some of these needy youth may be homeless. The design should also focus on the beneficial features offered by the JH's audio studio.

Response to Recommendation 5

The excess capacity at Juvenile Hall is the result of a major change in the state's philosophy and procedures regarding juvenile offenders from the time the new Juvenile Hall was planned for and built until the present day. At the time the facility was planned, the old Juvenile Hall's capacity was insufficient for the number of students housed there;

today's policy of not incarcerating the vast majority of juvenile offenders has left the Hall with a very limited population of students, thus creating excess capacity. There is a plan for rebuilding capacity in the Hall which includes re-visioning the New Horizons Academy into a Probation-Camp activity for gang-related youth. The program would feature preparing for successful living through a combination of focus on vocational education and college access. The Probation Department is also working in collaboration with NCOE and Breaking Barriers, a non-profit organization which is developing plans for how to better serve youth with special needs through earlier identification of at-risk factors behaviors which lead to difficulties in learning to read and earlier interventions to try to overcome the identified factors.

Recommendation R6

Leaders from the Office of Probation, from NCOE, and from the Napa County Library should meet to study programs in other counties and to develop an informal memo of understanding to outline how youth in JH will have full access to robust library services. The library program in Contra Costa County should be one of those studied.

Response to Recommendation R6

NCOE initiated contact with the Contra Costa County Office of Education, which reports that the program is entirely run by the library, not the CCCOE. We have also contacted Marin, Alameda, Solano and San Mateo COE's to determine how (if?) they are providing students in JH with full access to library services. Could a dedicated computer that only connects with the library be an option? Who oversees what books students check out? How is the Grand Jury defining "full access to library services?"

Recommendation R7

The NCOE should recognize the Crossroads classroom as a unique planning unit within Camille Creek School and allow the Crossroads teacher the discretion to identify appropriate instructional programs, especially those for language literacy. NCOE should also provide the Crossroads classroom with necessary budgetary resources for the chosen programs, especially for language literacy.

Response to Recommendation 7

We appreciate the Grand Jury's advocacy to provide the Crossroad's teacher with the discretion to identify appropriate instruction programs, especially for language literacy. Our JH teachers have always had input into the instructional materials selected for our students, but it is within the constraints that the State requires for grade-level books, which means that the books selected must be recommended for the students' age/grade level, regardless of the student's reading ability. Our students arrive in our program at reading levels that range from second grade up, making it nearly impossible to select books that will be appropriate for all.

One of the digital programs that we currently use, Beable World of Work, was developed specifically for at-risk students, and allows for each student to read the same material, but at his/her individual reading lexile level on their own device. This creates the opportunity for class and student-to-student discussions, as all the information is the same and has been made accessible to each student in the appropriate reading level.

Beable takes it a step further, by assessing each student's interest in potential areas of work, and it provides academic and vocational content to the student in these areas. Thus, students are getting career exposure and exploration at the same time as they are improving their literacy skills core content mastery.

Another program, Reading with Relevance, uses culturally relevant literature that connects to students and allows them multiple ways to engage socially and emotionally to the content through speaking and writing opportunities. The program creates windows and mirrors which allows students to relate to characters and self-reflect, while promoting awareness and respect for cultural diversity.

The NCOE was awarded a state reading grant, *Lead to Literacy*, which is providing us funding to research how we can intervene early in a child's life if they are at-risk of not learning to read in a timely manner. We are working with Chartwell School, which specializes in teaching dyslexic students to read, and UCSF, which is looking at the activity of the brain during the reading process to determine if the brains of good readers and poor readers function in the same way, so that we can create new and better ways to teach reading. Research suggests that there is a sequence of reading skills, beginning with phonics, that must be taught to all students, and a reading "screener" has been developed that will identify variables in a young child's life that may lead to difficulty in learning to read. The speculation is that early intervention can disrupt the pattern of a child becoming frustrated and angry because s/he is not learning to read as quickly as peers are, which then expands into a dislike of reading and possibly of school altogether.

Response to Recommendation 7 (continued)

Through our *Lead to Literacy* grant, two of our JCCS staff were trained by Chartwell School personnel in June about how to teach seriously deficient readers so that they will achieve greater success. Chartwell School coaches will work with our teachers throughout the next three years to monitor and improve the teachers' skills and the students' progress.