

**HOWELL MOUNTAIN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

Final Report

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A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

NAPA COUNTY GRAND JURY
P.O. BOX 5397
NAPA, CALIFORNIA 94581

April 7, 2009

The Honorable Raymond A. Guadagni
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of the State of California
County of Napa
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559

Dear Judge Guadagni,

Pursuant to Section 933(a) of the California Penal Code, the 2008-2009 Napa County Grand Jury submits to you its Final Report on the Howell Mountain Elementary School District. Our investigation of this subject was conducted in a manner consistent with the California Penal Code, this Court's Charge, and the historic role of the Grand Jury – to protect the interests of the citizens of Napa County.

This is the sixth in a series of final reports we will be issuing before our term ends. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Grand Jury which our report reflects. It is a privilege and a pleasure to work with them.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Trautman", is written over a horizontal line.

William E. Trautman
Foreperson
2008-2009 Napa County Grand Jury



NAPA COUNTY GRAND JURY

P.O. BOX 5397

NAPA, CALIFORNIA 94581

A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

To the Citizens of Napa County:

The 2008-2009 Napa County Grand Jury, charged with investigating and reporting on local governmental agencies and districts, conducted an investigation of the Howell Mountain Elementary School District (HMESD). The School District was last investigated by the Grand Jury in 2000.

The HMESD is a Basic Aid district and therefore receives funding from the Angwin property tax base. In 2000, the HMESD declared bankruptcy. The District is now solvent and currently holds a special reserve of \$635,463.13.

A recent and total renovation of the school campus has allowed for moderate student growth. However, a recent unexpected increase in enrollment has led HMESD to plan to add a modular classroom and an additional teacher for the academic year 2009.

With expenses increasing, the District must plan now how it will cover a budgetary shortfall in the likely event that property tax revenue will no longer increase at the present rate. The District must determine if its reserve funds are sufficient to carry it through the economic downturn.

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury commends the HMESD for the resolution of its financial crisis and for establishing sufficient reserves to insure that the District is able to maintain financial stability. It also commends the District for providing a new and up-to-date campus which is utilized by students and the Angwin community as well. In addition, the teachers, staff, HMEF and local community are to be commended for their support of the HMESD.

Respectfully submitted,

The 2008-2009 Napa County Grand Jury

HOWELL MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUMMARY

The 2008-2009 Napa County Grand Jury, charged with investigating and reporting on local governmental agencies and districts, conducted an investigation of the Howell Mountain Elementary School District (HMESD). The School District was last investigated by the Grand Jury in 2000.

The HMESD is a Basic Aid district and therefore receives funding from the Angwin property tax base. In 2000, the HMESD declared bankruptcy. The District is now solvent and currently holds a special reserve of \$635,463.13.

A recent and total renovation of the school campus has allowed for moderate student growth. However, a recent unexpected increase in enrollment has led HMESD to plan to add a modular classroom and an additional teacher for the academic year 2009. A planned community development, the Eco-Village, now under consideration by the Napa County Board of Supervisors, will substantially impact the District if approved, necessitating additional teachers/staff and classroom space.

With expenses increasing, the District must plan now how it will cover a budgetary shortfall in the likely event that property tax revenue will no longer increase at the present rate. The District must determine if its reserve funds are sufficient to carry it through the economic downturn.

BACKGROUND

HMESD is a small, rural school district located in the town of Angwin. According to the 2000 census, Angwin has a population of 3,148, with 811 households (30 percent) having children under the age of eighteen. Angwin is located between St. Helena and Pope Valley on the crest of Howell Mountain and is also home to the Pacific Union College (PUC), a Seventh-day Adventist privately owned Liberal Arts College.

Elementary school children attend one of two elementary schools, either Pacific Union Elementary, a private school near PUC, or Howell Mountain Elementary School (HMES), a public school, which is a fifteen minute walk from the town center. Recently the District has seen an increase in enrollment attributed to several factors. One factor is because of the economy; parents are removing students from private schools and enrolling them at HMES. Another is that other school districts in the area are denying

inter-district transfers due to lack of reimbursement. In addition, HMES has a reputation for providing an excellent education.

METHODOLOGY

Over a period of several months the Grand Jury conducted an investigation of the HMESD. The Grand Jury toured the campus and met with District representatives.

Documents Reviewed

- Howell Mountain School Mission Statement
- Howell Mountain Elementary Actuals, 2005-2006
- Howell Mountain Elementary, Second Interim Report, 2006-2007
- Howell Mountain Elementary Unaudited Actuals, 2006-2007
- Howell Mountain Elementary First Interim Report, 2006-2007
- Howell Mountain Elementary Actuals, 2006-2007
- Howell Mountain Elementary First Interim, 2007-2008
- Howell Mountain Elementary Second Interim, 2007-2008
- Howell Mountain Elementary Budget, 2008-2009
- Howell Mountain School District Annual Financial Audit Report – Goodell, Porter and Fredericks, June 30, 2005
- Howell Mountain School District Annual Financial Audit Report – Goodell, Porter and Fredericks, June 30, 2006
- Howell Mountain School District Annual Performance Audit Report – Goodell, Porter and Fredericks, December 31, 2006
- Howell Mountain School District Annual Financial Audit – Goodell, Porter and Fredericks, June 30, 2007
- Howell Mountain School District Annual Performance Audit Report– Goodell, Porter and Fredericks, April 30, 2008
- Howell Mountain School District Annual Financial Audit – Goodell, Porter and Fredericks, June 30, 2008
- Fire Inspection Report/Fire Drills, Napa County Fire Department, Fire Marshall's Office, Fire and Life Safety Compliance
- Howell Mountain School Parent-Student Handbook and Calendar, 2008-2009
- Howell Mountain Elementary School 2007-2008 Emergency Phone Tree
- Howell Mountain Elementary School Application and Permit for use of facilities form
- Howell Mountain School District, Superintendent Responsibilities and Duties
- A sampling of Howell Mountain Elementary School District personnel evaluations
- Howell Mountain Elementary School District Superintendent Governance Standards, BP 2111 (a), BP 2111 (b)
- Howell Mountain Elementary School District policy: Community Relations, Soliciting Funds from and by School Personnel, 1314, 4/8/82

- Howell Mountain School District Board of Education meeting agenda and minutes, December 12, 2008
- Howell Mountain School District Board of Education meeting agenda and minutes, September 18, 2008
- Napa County Department of Environmental Management, Food Facility Inspection Report, 09/28/2005
- Napa County Department of Environmental Management, Food Facility Inspection Report 09/21/2006, expires 06/22/2008
- Napa County Department of Environmental Management, Food Facility Inspection Report, 09/02/2008
- Letter from McKim Design Group to Howell Mountain School District, October 17, 2008, re: ADA compliance issues
- Emergency Operation Plan for Howell Mountain School District, Incident Commander Manual
- Project PREPARED, Napa County Office of Education
- Developer Fee Justification Study (LEVEL 1 FEE) for Howell Mountain School District, SCHOOL FACILITIES PLANNING & MANAGEMENT, INC., April 2005
- St. Helena Star, *Schools brace for 'eco-village' impact*, January 17, 2008
- Napa Valley Register, *Letters to Editor, In school funding beef, law is not on St. Helena's side*, November 17, 2008
- Napa Valley Register, *Classes bulge in Howell Mountain*, March 6, 2009
- Howell Mountain Elementary School District, 2008-2009 School Calendar
- Howell Mountain Elementary School Improvement Program (7394,7395), School Improvement Plan (SIP) Budget, October, 2008
- Howell Mountain Elementary School Improvement Program (7394,7395), School Improvement Plan (SIP) Budget, September, 2008
- Howell Mountain School Parent Community Council meeting agenda, November 20, 2008
- Howell Mountain School P/CC Contact Information, 2008-2009
- Howell Mountain Elementary School District Board of Trustees with Howell Mountain Education Foundation 2008-2009, Request Draft
- Howell Mountain Elementary School District Board of Trustees AGREEMENT with Howell Mountain Education Foundation, 2008-2009
- Howell Mountain Elementary School District Board of Trustees AGREEMENT with Howell Mountain Education Foundation, 2007-2008
- Howell Mountain Education Foundation meeting minutes, September 8, 2008
- Howell Mountain Education Foundation meeting minutes, November 2006
- Howell Mountain Education Foundation meeting minutes, October 2007
- Howell Mountain Education Foundation Balance Sheet, 2008
- Howell Mountain Education Foundation Articles of Incorporation, October 17, 1997
- Howell Mountain Elementary School SUMMARY OF REQUIRED CONTENTS FOR THE SINGLE PLAN FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, April 2008
- http://www.publicschoolreview.com/school_ov/school_id/7916

- <http://california.schooltree.org/district/Howell-Mountain-Elementary-001592.html>
- <http://www.hmesd.k12.ca.us/>
- <http://api.cde.ca.gov/AcntRpt2008/2008GrthSchDem.aspx?allcs=28-66258-6026751>
- <http://www.angwin-ecovillage.com/whyangwin.html>
- <http://projects.latimes.com/schools/school/angwin/howell-mountain-elementary/>

Interviews Conducted

- Members and representatives of the HMESD

Facilities Inspected

- Howell Mountain Elementary School campus

DISCUSSION

The HMESD is a one school, K-8 District, which has provided public school education for more than 125 years. The mission of the HMESD is to provide an integrated system of education for students in kindergarten through eighth grade that embraces and accomplishes the following:

- Educating, enriching and motivating students to achieve their fullest potential and become lifelong learners
- Providing and further developing a positive, safe and enriching environment
- Providing and supporting students in academic challenges that foster and nurture problem solving and self esteem
- Effectively utilizing the talents, services and support of the staff, parents and community
- Preparing students to be citizens of good character who will move successfully into subsequent academic programs with the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills for leading healthy, productive and rewarding lives

Facilities

The original Howell Mountain School (currently the Art Room) was constructed in 1876, and replaced in 1957. In 1964, two other classrooms were constructed, which now house the Library/Media Center. More remodeling was done three years later, and in 1975, the gymnasium, with a stage, and a full kitchen were built. Three years later the office and more classrooms were added; and again in 1986, when a portable classroom was moved onto the campus. In 1994, a new building was constructed, which houses five classrooms, a resource room and storage. The District plans to add an additional modular classroom in the summer of 2009.

In 2005, the Angwin community passed a general obligation bond to renovate/modernize the entire HMES campus. The HMES school buildings were totally renovated in 2006-08, at a cost of \$2.1 million representing the District's share of this project. The school

includes five classrooms, a Title I resource classroom, a library, an art room complete with electric kiln and drying racks for student artwork, administrative offices and a multi-purpose gym with stage and cafeteria/kitchen. A mural by local artists, the Baker Sisters, graces the stage's proscenium arch. The buildings are in excellent condition and the classrooms adequate in size. Restrooms are clean and in excellent repair.



Multi-purpose gym with stage and cafeteria
Mural by local artists the Baker Sisters graces the stage's proscenium arch

As of December 2008, the Measure C Oversight Committee for the Capital Improvement/Renovation Project held its final meeting and has been disbanded. However several renovation projects remain, including resurfacing the blacktop of the upper playground, completion of a covered walkway between the cafeteria and upper buildings and painting the portable buildings to match the rest of the school.

The campus appears to meet the requirements of The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) with ramps connecting all areas of the school, however an official inspection has not been done since completion of the capital improvement/renovation. The architectural firm, McKim Design Group, affirms "the modernization project recently completed at Howell Mountain Elementary School incorporated most of the ADA compliance issues identified in the District's Barrier Removal Plan as part of the work."

The renovation included new roofs and a new water system. Replacement of the aging water distribution system and the installation of a new well system with water filtration ensures the availability of safe drinking water for the school.

New capital improvements not LEED certified

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), provides a suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction. Recent renovations did not include solar photo-voltaic panels or other "green" elements. The District stated that to do so would be too expensive. The Grand Jury noted that solar passive sky lights were installed in the Art Room.

The school administration and Parent Community Council (P/CC) recently decided to spearhead a recycling effort, by ordering half-size dumpsters on campus for the purpose of capturing the “recycle-able” materials generated at the school.

Demographics

The school enrollment has grown from fifty-four students in 2002, to 126 in 2009. There are no fewer than twenty or more than twenty-five students in any of the classes. The current ethnic breakdown for HMESD is 37 percent Hispanic, 58 percent Caucasian, 1 percent African American, 1 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 3 percent Pacific Islander. Fifty-five percent of the student population participate in the Free or Reduced Lunch Program (NSLP); 15 percent in the Gifted and Talented Education Program (GATE); 4 percent are English Language Learners (ELL); and 8 percent of the student body are disabled.

School Schedules

The HMESD academic year contains 180 student days, with a three week winter break and a one week spring break. Holidays and minimum schools days are listed in the HMESD calendar on the District website. This information is also given to students and parents at the beginning of each academic year in the student handbook.

School Administration

The HMESD Superintendent serves as the principal of the school, and this year also teaches history to the 7th - 8th grade class.

Staff/faculty include: one District Executive Secretary, and one multifunction individual (Technology Coordinator/Safety Coordinator/Standardized Testing Coordinator/School Board Secretary), and seven Certificated Teaching Staff, five of whom are teaching ‘blended’ classes, K through 8th grade. The District plans to add one more teacher in the fall of 2009 in order to accommodate the recent increase in enrollment. The secretary, custodian, a long-term substitute teacher and an instructional assistant are bilingual and are used in an as-needed translation situation. The certificated staff includes a Title I Coordinator and a Special Education Resource Teacher. Classified staff includes a Food Services Director, a Librarian, and an English Language Development (ELD) Coordinator.

School Nurse

Napa County Schools do not have access to regular visits from a school nurse; rather they all share the services of one nurse. HMESD works with the Pope Valley Unified Elementary School District (PVUESD) to provide some health testing/screening. The nurse provides teacher and staff training in CPR, First Aid and the use of Epi-pens.

Psychologist

HMES teachers are trained to be cognizant of student psychological problems. The School has had students with psychological problems and those students were referred to

the psychologist provided by the Napa County Office of Education (NCOE), or the parents were encouraged to take their student to a private psychologist.

Board of Trustees

A five member Board of Trustees oversees the District. School Board members are elected by registered voters within the boundaries of the District. Members serve four years, with an election held every two years in conjunction with the statewide November elections. A policy was approved by the Trustees (April 1982) stating there will be no fundraisers unless approved by the Board.

Budget/Finances

The HMESD is a Basic Aid district, thereby receiving money generated from the Angwin property tax base. In 2000, the HMESD declared bankruptcy. NCOE took over management of the District for several years and restored it to solvency. HMESD now operates in the black with a sizeable special reserve fund of \$635,463.13. The reserve acts as a hedge in the event of a reduction in property tax revenues. The District uses the special reserve for general operating purposes.

In addition, as of June 30, 2008, the General Fund unrestricted expenditures and other uses exceeded revenue and other sources by \$76,000, ending the year with available General Fund reserves of \$319,091. This is higher than the State recommended level of \$77,468.

As a Basic Aid district, HMESD expenditure per student is \$12,007. St. Helena Unified School District (SHUSD) expenditure per student is \$15,957. Napa Valley Unified School District is funded at about the State average of \$7,666 per student. HMESD graduates usually go on to St. Helena High School, and the HMESD Basic Aid monies do not follow them. SHUSD believes this is money to which it is entitled and has requested that it be compensated for students attending St. Helena High School from this District. The Superintendent of NCOE has responded by stating, “fortunately, high school students in Angwin and Pope Valley ... [are] protected by the California Education Code, which state that residents of an elementary school district not affiliated with a high school district may enroll their children in any high school in the state.” (*Napa Register, November 17, 2008*)

From 2004 to 2008 the District’s total revenue increased from \$991,233 to \$2,422,870. This includes an increase in program revenue of \$816,791 in 2007-08. The taxes levied portion of revenue over the same period increased from \$643,597 to \$1,001,796. Expenses over the same period increased from \$866,296 to \$1,824,241. The instruction portion of expenses increased from \$473,514 to \$986,693.

The increase in Property Taxes for general purposes from 2006-07 to 2007-08 was \$114,253 or 13 percent compared with an increase of \$96,018 or 12 percent between 2005-06 and 2006-07. As Howell Mountain is a Basic Aid District, property taxes comprise 67 percent of the District’s General Fund revenue. For example, local property taxes financed \$1,093,024 of the \$1,824,241 total expenses in 2007-08. The increase in property tax revenue each year, over the past five years has averaged 11 percent.

However, the property taxes are likely to decrease over at least the next few years. Please refer to the Appendix for more detailed budget information.

At June 30, 2008, the District had \$2,979,398 outstanding in long-term debt. This is an increase from 2006-07 of \$1,235,363 due to the 2007 General Obligation Bonds used for capital improvements.

Factors Bearing on the District's Future

- *With a health cap in place, an increase in premiums will have a mild impact*
- *The outcome of collective bargaining with both certified and classified employees will likely impact expenditures*
- *The District has taken back the special education program from SHUSD and did not renew the MOU related to special education. This has increased the District's costs for resource teachers and other services. The District oversees PVUESD special education program*
- *The School District enrollment over the past several years has more than doubled. The District will need to hire additional teachers and incur the additional instructional materials and facilities costs*

(June 30, 2008, Annual Financial Report, Goodell, Porter & Fredericks, LLP)

Eco-Village

According to preliminary calculations, the proposed Eco-village could result in 43 to 123 new students at HMES. Other estimates calculate that 320 new homes equates to 400 new students. Revenue generated for HMES could come from state-mandated developer fees and increased property tax values. It will be difficult for the District to accurately calculate the actual number of new students that would enroll at HMES as a consequence of the project, however it is guaranteed that the project, if approved, will impact the District financially and necessitate additional teachers, staff, classrooms and perhaps a new site and larger campus.

Howell Mountain Parent Community Council

The Howell Mountain Parent Community Council or P/CC, known as the School Site Council, is made up of an equal number of staff, community and parents, serving on committee assignments for "Safety, Policy, Plan, GATE, Curriculum Adoption, and hiring." According to the HMESD website, "The P/CC is charged with making recommendations to the Board, the Local Educational Agency Plan, the Coordinated Compliance review, allocation of School Improvement Program funds as well as many other items integral to making the school function."

School Site Improvement

The P/CC works with the Superintendent to determine the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and expenditure of SIP funds for a teaching aide, the computer lab, one-half Librarian, and one-half the expenses of the school van.

Howell Mountain Education Foundation

The Howell Mountain Education Foundation (HMEF) was founded in 1997, as a nonprofit corporation, organized for charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. HMEF working in conjunction with the Howell Mountain Vintners Association provides money to the District.

During the third week in June each year, the HMEF partners with the Howell Mountain Vintners Association in hosting an annual fundraiser at Krug Winery in St. Helena. The event features a live and silent wine auction. Proceeds from the event benefit the HMESD, Foothills Elementary and PUC Elementary at the discretion of HMEF.

The established process for requesting funds is that HMES makes a request to the P/CC; the P/CC considers the request of needs expressed by HMES teachers and principal; the P/CC discusses and decides which projects/items will be included in the formal request to HMEF, then makes the formal request. An agreement is reached between the HMEF and the HMESD Board of Trustees as to funded items. The agreement stipulates:

- HMESD Board of Trustees will maintain a dedicated school account entitled “Education Foundation”
- All donations to the District from HMEF will be deposited directly into this account and expended through purchase orders to vendors
- This Agreement includes the following requests from HMESD to HMEF...with a list of items

Items granted on November 15, 2008, and subsequently funded for a total of \$53,996, include payroll for a part-time Library Clerk, a part-time Art Consultant, a part-time Music Instructor, and discretionary for the Principal, as well as:

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Contracted Assemblies | \$ 3,600 |
| Art Room Supplies | 8,600 |
| Library Books | 4,000 |
| Field Trips | 12,214 |
| Field Trip Transportation Fund | 3,000 |
| Winter & Spring Production | 1,500 |
| Alpha-Smart laptop computers | 4,964 |

The HMEF keeps a buffer account of approximately \$70,000 in reserve towards coordination expenses of the next year’s event.

Proposition 98

HMESD receives annual Art & Music Block Grant Funding provided under Proposition 98 which is spent on the music program and all-day “Art on Fridays.” Proposition 98 funding is received by the District from the State’s Arts in Education support of the Visual and Performing Art Framework for California Public Schools.

2007-2008 funds were spent on the School Band and art supplies. The band meets to practice every day for approximately forty-five minutes and is directed/ instructed by a credentialed teacher/PUC music instructor.

- \$1500 instructor fee
- \$1066 thirty music stands and cart
- \$2029 art books, art supplies, clay

Computers

All of the computers used by the students at HMES were purchased by the HMEF. There are ten laptop computers for use by the upper grades. These are housed in a computer cart, which can be rolled into the classrooms. The cart is stored in the computer lab in the library for safekeeping.

In 2007, Alpha-Smart laptop computers were purchased for the lower grades. These laptops are specifically designed for use in the classroom to assist the teachers in providing differentiated instruction.

Differentiated instruction recognizes individual students varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning and interests. The intent of differentiated instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, and assisting in the learning process.

During the 2008-09 school year time was set aside each month so "teachers can review student learning...and discuss research-based practices that are proven to work in the classroom and improve student learning."

Testing

In accordance with the California Public Schools Accountability Act, the California Department of Education implements standardized tests to ensure compliance with curriculum guidelines. The tests measure academic progress in public schools. There are three areas under standardized testing; the California Progress Reporting (APR), the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), and the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a federally Mandated Accountability Program.

The APR includes a school's state Academic Performance Index (API), the AYP, and Program Improvement (PI). The California Department of Education 2007-08 Glossary defines Growth API in this way: "This item indicates whether or not the numerically significant subgroup met its growth target." It further states, "The 2008 Growth API summarizes a school's...or the state's performance on the 2008 Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program." According to the latest California Department of Education report, dated November 18, 2008, there was a negative one score for the HMES 2007-08 School-wide Growth API Targets. However, this is an improvement over the prior years.

STAR testing measures student learning in grades two through eleven. According to the latest performance review for HMES, 52.7 percent of the students are scoring proficient, or above in math, and 59.5 percent are scoring proficient, or above in English.

The AYP is a statewide mandated system by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, ensuring all schools and districts make adequate progress when educating their students. HMES met five of five of the AYP criteria.

Special Education

Special Education provides individually planned and systematically monitored educational instruction for students with disabilities or behavioral problems. The program uses adaptive equipment and materials designed to help learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school than is normally available in a typical classroom.

Two years ago, the District took over the Special Education Program that had been previously provided either by the NCOE and/or the Up-Valley consortium consisting of the SHUSD, Calistoga Joint Unified School District (CJUSD), and the Pope Valley Union Elementary School District (PVUESD).

Through a Memorandum of Understanding with PVUESD, the HMESD now provides and oversees the Special Education Program for both Districts. Special Education staff includes a part-time aide that is shared with the PVUSD.

Enrichment Programs

The Gifted and Talented Education program (GATE) is:

authorized by Education Code (EC) sections 52200-52212 (Outside Source), provides funding for local educational agencies (LEAs) to develop unique education opportunities for high-achieving and underachieving pupils in California public elementary and secondary schools who have been identified as gifted and talented. Special efforts are made to ensure that pupils from economically disadvantaged and varying cultural backgrounds are provided with full participation in these unique opportunities.

HMES has identified nine GATE students identified this year. HMES uses differentiated instruction and curriculum in order to challenge these bright students. HMES also provides an after-school science class, a before-school music program, and field trips to places of interest in the area.

Art on Fridays

The entire student body has Art on Fridays. The school receives funds from the Art, Music and PE Grants to purchase supplies for the program. The dedicated Art Room includes space for artistic creation, a large electric kiln, and drying shelves for student work. The instructor is a professional artist.

Student Safety/Campus Security

The District is considering the installation of cameras around campus as there was a recent, reported break-in to the storage shed with theft of a mower, blower and other equipment.

The HMES is a closed campus, parental permission is required for students to leave the campus. Visitors are required to check in at the main office to receive a visitor pass. Overall, the school campus appears to be relatively safe. The Angwin Volunteer Fire Department is one-half mile away should an urgent situation arise.

School Discipline

HMES Positive Discipline Plan states that it is believed the best way to encourage students to exhibit perfect academic and social behavior is to accentuate the positive. Positive reinforcement comprises 99 percent of the discipline rules established at HMES with stated positive and negative consequences.

The school community welcomes each day with a school-wide gathering led by Student Council members, during which the Pledge of Allegiance is recited, birthdays are recognized and a song is sung. The favorite is "Hello, Bonjour, Buenos Dias," with patriotic songs holding a close second.

At monthly assemblies, students are recognized by: Principal's Awards, Students of the Month, most Improved Students, "No Tardies" or Perfect Attendance Students and Personal Best Achievers. At the first assembly each year, students who achieved grade level expectations on STAR or multiple measures are recognized and a gold star with each name is posted on the assembly room bulletin board.

Beyond providing a warm ambience, the school promotes positive character traits through the implementation of the "Trying It All Together" character education curriculum. The program is enhanced with "Character Counts" certificates given to students for exemplifying any of the character trait listed on posters in each room, and by the "Here's Looking at You" prevention education K-8 curriculum.

Students have opportunities to see themselves in a new light while meeting the ten-hour community services requirement for graduation and while assisting with lunch service and emergency drills. An active Student Council develops and implements a variety of initiatives including Principal for a Day and school spirit days such as Backward P.J. and Crazy Hair Days.

(June 30, 2008, Annual Financial Report, Goodell, Porter & Fredericks, LLP)

Dress Code

HMES has a "Student Dress and Grooming" policy that states that gang-related apparel is prohibited. However, there is no prohibition of colors as related to gangs. There is awareness at HMES of today's gang-related issues, and there have been some incidents,

but it is believed they were isolated. The policy further states if a student is wearing inappropriate clothing, the parent/ guardian is to be called. The District believes parents are responsible for dressing their children.

The HMEF donates a T-shirt and sweatshirt for each student which features the school mascot “Howling Dog” logo. Students are encouraged to wear these at spirit day assemblies.

There are no regular drug or weapons searches, and there is no history of drugs on campus. No student has been expelled in the past 30 years school history, however there have been several disciplinary suspensions.

Substance Abuse and Drug Education Programs

Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) is:

a police officer-led series of classroom lessons taught from Kindergarten through 12th grade. The D.A.R.E. program is more than just drug prevention education; it teaches students good decision making skills to help them avoid high-risk behavior to ensure they grow up healthy, safe and secure.

The D.A.R.E. program is taught by a retired teacher/policeman on an alternate-year basis. In addition, a program called “Too Good for Drugs” is taught annually in all classrooms.

It was acknowledged there is some evidence of drug usage by older brothers and sisters but there have been no reported incidents at the school. School representatives believe the campus is relatively safe.

The school participates with law enforcement and fire safety organizations in on-going safety reviews and instruction of students and staff “in responding effectively to security and safety crises” through education and drills. Once a year the Napa County Sheriff comes to speak with the students. It was noted there was a scare recently regarding a paintball incident on a nearby property. The school locked down, but law enforcement response was slow. The average response time to HMES, depending on the whereabouts of the Napa County Sheriff, can be anywhere from fifteen minutes to two hours.

Bullying Program

HMES displays posters in every classroom to define “bullying.” Each classroom develops individual “incentives and consequences” and there are school-wide incentives, given weekly, to reward students for “Caught Being Good.” The school discipline plan is outlined in the Parent/Student Handbook, which is published annually for parents and given to new enrollees.

Buses/Transportation

HMESD does not operate or provide school bus transportation, however it owns a school van that is used for field trips. The Angwin area is rural, with few sidewalks for safe routes to/from the campus. The current sidewalks are inadequate. After school students

frequently walk down and through a remote short-cut, “the gully,” to get to the Teen Center in Angwin where after-school activities are provided.

District Disaster Plan

The HMES participates in the Standard Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). As of September 2008, the School Site Emergency Operations plans were updated and are compliant with the SEMS and NIMS programs. All faculty members have received mandatory federal introductory training on these emergency programs and the school site emergency management team commanders have received additional training. The Safety Coordinator is responsible for coordinating and scheduling emergency and disaster training and fire drills with the Napa County Fire Department (NCFD). The NCFD makes routine and complete assessments of the fire alarm system and checks for earthquake safety.

FINDINGS

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury found:

1. The HMESD is a Basic Aid district, thereby receiving money generated from the Angwin property tax base.
2. In 2000, the HMESD declared bankruptcy.
3. HMESD now operates in the black with a sizeable special reserve fund of \$635,463.13 and a General Fund reserve of \$319,097. The reserve acts as a hedge in the event of a reduction in property tax revenue.
4. A recent and total renovation of the school campus has allowed for moderate student growth. However, a planned community development, the Eco-Village, if approved, will substantially impact the District, necessitating additional teachers/staff and classroom space and possibly a new campus.
5. There is no safe pathway between the HMES and the Angwin Teen Center which is utilized for after-school activities.
6. Response time by the Napa County Sheriff’s Department to HMES is between fifteen minutes and two hours.
7. The D.A.R.E. program is taught by a retired teacher/policeman on an alternate-year basis .

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury recommends:

1. HMESD closely monitor and maintain reserve accounts as a hedge in the current economic downturn.
2. Plans be made to accommodate an increase in student population in anticipation of the development of the Eco-Village community.
3. A safe walkway be established between the HMES and the Angwin Teen Center
4. The Napa County Sheriff’s Department improve response time to situations involving the safety of the student population in emergency situations.

5. HMESD continue to present the D.A.R.E. program and develop a consistent drug education program to be incorporated into the curriculum each school year.

COMMENDATION

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury commends the HMESD for the resolution of their financial crisis and for establishing sufficient reserves to insure that the District is able to maintain financial stability. It also commends the District for providing a new and up-to-date campus which is utilized by students and the Angwin community as well. In addition, the teachers, staff, HMEF and local community are to be commended for their support of the HMESD.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

The 2008-2009 Grand Jury requests responses the following responses:

1. The Superintendent of the HMESD and Board of Trustees to Recommendations 1,2,3,5.
2. The Napa County Sheriff's Department to Recommendation 4.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 |
| API | Academic Performance Index |
| APR | California Progress Reporting |
| AYP | Adequate Yearly Progress |
| CJUSD | Calistoga Joint Unified School District |
| DARE | Drug Abuse Resistance Education |
| ELL | English Language Learner |
| GASB | Governmental Accounting Standards Board |
| GATE | Gifted and Talented Education Program |
| HMEF | Howell Mountain Education Foundation |
| HMES | Howell Mountain Elementary School |
| HMESD | Howell Mountain Elementary School District |
| LEAs | Local Education Agencies |
| LEED | Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design |
| NCOE | Napa County Office of Education |
| NCFD | Napa County Fire Department |
| NSLP | National Student Lunch Program (Free/Reduced Lunch Program) |
| P/CC | Parent Community Council |
| PI | Program Improvement |
| PUC | Pacific Union College |
| PVES | Pope Valley Elementary School |
| PVUESD | Pope Valley Union Elementary School District |
| NIMS | National Incident Management Systems |
| SAT | Standardized Achievement Test |

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------------|
| SEMS | Standardized Emergency Management System |
| SHUSD | St. Helena Unified School District |
| SIP | School Improvement Plan |
| STAR | Standardized Testing and Reporting |

APPENDIX

Howell Mountain Elementary School District

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| General Revenue | 991,233 | 1,098,913 | 1,275,522 | 1,512,748 | 2,422,870 |
| Taxes levied* | 643,597 | 716,348 | 791,524 | 887,544 | 1,001,796 |
| Expense | 866,296 | 1,067,747 | 1,098,725 | 1,223,672 | 1,824,241 |
| Increased Net Assets** | 124,937 | 31,166 | 176,797 | 289,076 | 598,629 |

Increase in Property Taxes (Property Taxes are 67percent of Revenue)

| | | |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|
| 2002/03 - 2003/04 | 59,094 | 10percent |
| 2003/04 - 2004/05 | 72,751 | 11percent |
| 2004-/05 - 2005/06 | 72,751 | 11percent |
| 2005/06 - 2006/07 | 75,177 | 10percent |
| 2004/05 - 2005/06 | 75,177 | 10percent |
| 2005/06 - 2006/07 | 96,018 | 12percent |
| 2005-06 - 2006/07 | 96,018 | 12percent |
| 2006/07 - 2007/08 | 114,253 | 13percent |

* Does not include taxes levied for debt service

** Increases or decreases in net assets over time are indicators of whether financial position is improving or deteriorating, respectively

Source: Comparative Statement of Changes in Net Assets under Government-Wide Statements of Audited Financial Statements 2002 – 2008, Goodell, Porter & Fredericks, LLP