

**RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT
ON SPECIAL EDUCATION IN MARIN
from the
DIXIE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

June 12, 2002

FINDINGS:

- #1:** Agree
#2: Agree
#4: Agree
#5: Disagree – Explanation:
- (1) It is not clear on what legal authority the ombudsman would be able to interact on behalf of the district or students.
 - (2) Any additional cost to the SELPA is a cost to the districts and many districts, including the Dixie School District, experience a huge impact on the general fund.
 - (3) One of the goals of the SELPA is to provide for alternative dispute resolution, and at this time it would be worthwhile to try to use what has been established.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- #1:** The MCOE and all school districts should inform the general public about the role of Special Education in the public schools, the range of services available to children with special needs, and the dedication of the teachers to those children.

Response: The Dixie School District uses many avenues to inform the public about the role of Special Education in our schools. Information regarding programs is annually provided in written form to families of all students. School site plans and School Accountability Report Cards also include such information.

- #2:** The MCOE and all school districts should inform the public that federal and state funding is inadequate, and that the shortfall forces school districts to divert money intended for mainstream education into federal and state mandated Special Education.

Response: The Dixie School District governing board is very aware of the complications of Special Education funding and its impact on all programs. The board has appointed two representatives to the Marin County Schools Legislative Advisory Committee, and those representatives keep the board informed and make recommendations to the board with regard to Special Education funding. During the budget process and at other public opportunities, the board openly discusses Special Education funding issues.

Response to Grand Jury Report on Special Education
 Dixie School District Board of Trustees
 June 12, 2002
 Page 2

- #3:** The Marin County Schools Legislative Advisory Committee, in coordination with all school districts, should continue and intensify its lobbying efforts in Sacramento and Washington for adequate funding for Special Education and, as a result, mainstream education as well.

Response: As mentioned in #2 above, the Dixie board has two active members on the Marin County Schools Legislative Advisory Committee. The district continues to be aware of and supports the actions of that committee, especially as they relate to providing adequate funding for Special Education.

- #4:** SELPA and all school districts should give serious consideration to centralizing the assessment process as much as possible, while still maintaining the personal touch necessary for good assessments. At the very least there should be, as one of our respondents described it, “an organizing principal” behind every assessment.

Response: In particular instances, there would be advantages for centralized assessments; however, it is most important that consistent standardized assessments are provided that can be used by families in any district where their children attend school in Marin County. Training of all Special Education staff on these standards is essential.

- #6:** The Grand Jury urges all school districts to give the new SELPA Director and his staff all the help it can offer to complete the proposed Five Year Strategic Plan as scheduled.

Response: The Dixie School District is active in the SELPA and will continue to support the SELPA Strategic Plan.