



DIXIE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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September 1, 2004

The Honorable Terrence R. Boren
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael CA 94913-4988

Betty J. Mattea, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 303
San Rafael CA 94903

Your Honor and Madam Foreperson:

On behalf of Dixie Elementary School District and our Board of Trustees, it is my pleasure to provide to you the following responses to the findings outlined in the 2003/04 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report "School Administration – Is the Cost Too High?" The question is an important one, and our Board and administration try to be constantly mindful of maximizing our resources and prioritizing students in all budget decisions.

Finding 1: The County Office of Education, while producing numerous statistical reports using the object codes, has produced no statistical reports using the function codes even though this information is available for each district.

Response: Dixie School District finds the reports and statistical bulletins produced by the Marin County Office of Education to be useful and reliable references, and helpful in providing context. It is certainly more efficient to have the County Office of Education prepare these reports than individual districts, and all of the administrators in our district office make special requests for information at times and/or utilize different types of reports from the County Office.

Finding 2: The number of students in a school district does not appear to affect the percentage of the budget spent on general administration because the Office of Education provided the administration for the smallest school districts.

Response: As a Marin County superintendent, I concur with the observation that inclusion of small rural districts in an analysis of county-wide administrative services could skew the results of the analysis. It makes sense that the Office of Education provide administrative services for small rural school districts.

Finding 3: Although consolidation of smaller districts is unlikely to produce administrative savings, unification appears to offer up to a 3% savings of the combined budgets.

Response: While it is theoretically possible that unification of two or more school districts could produce efficiencies and cost-savings, it is undeniably true that the unification process and all it entails is extremely complex and any resulting efficiencies and outcomes would need to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The Marin County Office of Education and Marin school districts are engaged in ongoing dialogue regarding consolidation of services, including consolidation with our city and county partners, and have already taken action in areas where it's clear we can be more most cost-effective without hurting students (for example, becoming increasingly paperless, sharing printing costs, bulk purchasing, etc.)

Finding 4: In any reorganization, savings in administrative costs may be offset by other costs of reorganization such as averaging up salaries.

Response: Absolutely true.

Recommendation: The County Office of Education should produce countywide statistical reports of functional classification of expenses as it does for object classifications.

Response: I support the implementation of this recommendation. Our district is also committed to ongoing self-examination with regard to implementing any cost-saving measures that do not diminish or take away from our students' education, safety, and well-being.

I'd like to thank the members of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury for their time and care in compiling this report. Please feel free to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Lohwasser, Ed.D.
Superintendent