

Vaca Peña Middle School 2002-2003 Grand Jury Report

Reason for Investigation

Each year the Grand Jury visits a random selection of schools in the County.

Procedure

The Grand Jury:

- Toured school facilities
- Talked with administrators, teachers, and students
- Observed students in classes, and moving from class to class
- Observed libraries, computer labs, gymnasiums, cafeterias and classrooms
- Reviewed health and safety procedures

Background

1. Vaca Peña Middle School is located in a residential neighborhood in Vacaville. It is an open (no fences) campus located on the corner of two streets. The site is twenty years old and well maintained. There are approximately 1200 7th & 8th grade students.
2. Vaca Peña's mission is to foster a healthy, safe learning environment conducive to developing essential skills, attitudes, knowledge and respect. This is achieved by utilizing a strong instructional program with a dedicated long-term staff. Only two teachers out of 65 are on emergency credentials and those two are working on their credentials. Vaca Peña received a grant to establish language and reading labs. This enables teachers to develop more individualized programs. The school is committed to learning through technology. Teachers wired the school for Internet access in all rooms on their own time.
3. Vaca Peña's Parent Teacher Club is active and provides student planners to every student at the beginning of the year. They installed the marquee and completed the outside track.
4. The after school programs vary and appeal to a variety of interests. They include, but are not limited to, chess club, art club, speech and drama, student leadership, soccer, basketball, volleyball, flag football, wrestling, and track. Vaca Peña's music program is strong in orchestra, band, and jazz. The students participate in fundraisers during the year.
5. Vaca Peña is innovative in preventing vandalism. A video monitoring system for the outside was installed with safety grants. This addition has greatly reduced vandalism and provides an extra safety measure for the school. At present there is no central phone system; however plans exist to install one.

Findings and Recommendations

Each paragraph is referenced to the background paragraph numbers

Finding #1 – Vaca Peña is innovative in preventing vandalism. (5)

Recommendation #1 – Other schools should look into safety grants and model Vaca Peña's program.

Finding #2 – At present there is not central phone system, however plans exist to install one. (5)

Recommendation #2 – Central phone system plans should remain a priority in getting installed.

Affected Agencies

- Solano County Office of Education
 - Vacaville Unified School District
 - Vaca Peña Middle School
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