



Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District

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October 1, 2004

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Judge Peter B. Foor
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Superior Court Executive Officer/Clerk of the Court
Hall of Justice
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

RE: RESPONSE TO THE ANNUAL GRAND JURY REPORT FROM
FAIRFIELD-SUISUN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, RODRIGUEZ HIGH,
BRANSFORD ELEMENTARY AND TOLENAS ELEMENTARY

To the Honorable Judge Peter B. Foor:

Enclosed are two (2) copies Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District's response to recommendations and findings issued in the 2003-2004 Solano County Annual Grand Jury Final Report. Specifically, school district's responses address those issues pertaining to Rodriguez High, Bransford Elementary, and Tolenas Elementary Schools that are presented in the Final Report.

If I can be of further assistance, please advise.

Sincerely,

William Luna
Director of Administrative Services

cc: Governing Board Members
Dr. Sharon Tucker, Superintendent
Kevin French, Principal, Rodriguez High School
Justine Turner, Principal, Bransford Elementary
Judi Honeychurch, Principal, Tolenas Elementary
John Stockton, Director of Secondary Education
Kim Carmichael, Director of Elementary Education

Grand Jury Report
Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District Response
September 2004

Findings and Recommendations, Rodriguez High School

1. **Finding:** Directional and access signs to the school's parking lots are insufficient and confusing.

- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District disagrees with the finding.

Recommendation: Post clearer directional and access signs for the school location and parking areas.

- Directional signs from the freeway off ramp to Red Top Road (which is the access road to Rodriguez High School) could be confusing as the road signs point in one direction, while in reality, the road goes in both directions. Upon reaching the school, access signs to the interior of the school are clear and legible. Directional signs to the parking lots are clearly marked.

2. **Finding:** During the Grand Jury visit, the library appeared to be underutilized. Staff indicates that hours of library access before and after school are insufficient for student needs.

- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District does not agree with the finding.

Recommendation: Create more opportunities for student access to the library before, during, and after school hours.

- Students have access to the library beginning at 7:30 a.m., which is ½ hour before the typical student school day. The library remains open to students until 4:00 p.m. The school day ends at 2:49 p.m.. Students access the library during the lunch hour, and often teachers will hold their classes in the library so that students can conduct research on classroom assignments. The library is open from 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

3. **Finding:** Although it is a new school with a “no gum” policy, the school walkways had numerous gum “spots.”

- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District agrees with the finding.

Recommendation: Enforce the “no gum” policy and de-gum or steam clean and hose down walkways frequently.

- The staff and administration have reminded students about the “no gum policy,” and have worked collectively to enforce it. The walkways were “power-washed” this past summer. Follow-up cleanings will occur as necessary.

4. **Finding:** Angelo Rodriguez High School does not offer Home Economics or shop-type vocational programs.

- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District agrees with the finding.

Recommendations: The Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District allow courses of study that encompass the Vocational Arts at all high schools or designate a high school as a Vocational Arts High School.

- Rodriguez High School does not offer Home Economics. Instead the school was built to emphasize the skills and knowledge needed by the market economy of the 21st century. One emphasis at Rodriguez is the field of multi-media. Studios, sound equipment, and graphic design are some components of the multi-media certification program that the District is establishing.
- Another program that is in its infancy is the Medical Science Certification program. This program will prepare students to transition into a medically related field or into a post-secondary institution offering additional training upon graduation.
- The School District offers a certificate program at Armijo High School for any student desiring skills, knowledge, and certification in the building trades, i.e., construction industry, plumbing, electrical, or cabling. The District has gone beyond merely offering shop-type classes to actually preparing students to transition into the workforce of the future. Habitat for Humanity is part of the District’s program, which allows students to participate in the construction of homes in the community. Many of our students have been offered jobs during the summer and after graduation because of the programs offered during the school year. The District has worked extensively, and was the first in Solano County, to develop full partnerships and a curriculum with local businesses leading to industry certification for students.
- Other programs offered for any student in the District include Automobile Emission (smog) Certification, the Culinary Academy, AFJROTC, and several computer certification programs.

Findings and Recommendations, Bransford Elementary School

- 1. Finding:** There are a large number of Spanish speaking students at Bransford Elementary School.

- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District agrees with the finding.

Recommendation: Continue the “Newcomer” program.

- The Newcomer Program will continue as long as funding and facility needs are available.

- 2. Finding:** The “Read 180” Program appears to be an effective program.

Recommendation: Continue the “Read 180” program.

- The Read 180 program is continuing at Bransford.

Findings and Recommendations, Tolenas Elementary School

- 1. Finding:** There are classrooms that do not conform to building codes.

- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District agrees with the finding.

Recommendation: These classrooms should be replaced forthwith.

- Local Bond Measure C was passed in March 2002, and proceeds from that funding source were specifically identified in the Bond Measure to be used in replacing all nonconforming rooms at Tolenas Elementary.
- Phase I of Measure C funds designated the replacement of the nonconforming rooms (during the summer 2004).
- All nonconforming rooms were removed during the summer of 2004 in accordance with Phase I and replaced with permanent classrooms.

- 2. Finding:** The decline in the API score is cause for concern.

- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District agrees with the finding.

Recommendation: The Principal should be reinforced in her efforts to raise the API score. A committee consisting of district personnel, parents and staff should be organized to work with the principal in pinpointing the problem and ensuring that action is taken to reverse the decline.

- In 2003-2004, the district and Tolenas Elementary School staff formed a data committee that worked with Action Learning Systems (ALS) to write a Single School Plan that addressed ways to raise test scores.
 - The school's Academic Performance Index (API) score for spring 2004 went up 15 points, to 791. The California Department of Education goal is to have all schools in the State achieve a score of 800 or better.
 - The 2004 API scores for the District indicate that Tolenas is in the top 17% of District schools: Mundy (837), Wilson (803), Suisun Valley (802), Oakbrook (792), and Tolenas (791).
 - For the 2004-05 school year, Tolenas Elementary has employed a full-time strategy coach who is coaching teachers on process writing and readers workshops. The strategy coach has also trained four Instructional Assistants to provide reading intervention within the school day for targeted students, grades 4th through 6th.
3. **Finding:** Traffic hazards threaten the safety of the entire student population and disrupt normal traffic flow in the surrounding neighborhood. Emergency vehicles would be prevented from entering school property during peak traffic periods.
- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District agrees with the finding.

Recommendation: The City of Fairfield and Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District should work together to develop solutions to correct these traffic hazards.

- School district personnel, specifically Jim Walker, Safety Technician, Rob Buoncristiani, Facilities Division, and Judi Honeychurch, Principal, have met on numerous occasions to assess viable solution options. They have met with the City, the County, and the California Highway Patrol.
- They are in the process of moving the pick up point in the upper parking lot from street side to the far end of the lot, including painting of red curbing in designated areas to allow for a better traffic flow. A student loading area, presently dirt, will be paved and two parking stalls will be removed to accommodate the new loading area.
- Trained staff will be monitoring all pickup and drop off areas.
- The City of Fairfield has extended the light at Tolenas and Tabor to allow for more passage of cars. The District has met with Trudy Ball, City Transportation; Jim Leitner, City Traffic; and Ed Gebing, City Police, in order to discuss other possible remedies.

- The California Highway Patrol, Sgt. Scott Reese, Officer Jeff Morrell, and Captain Susan Ward have granted the School District permission to regulate the flow of traffic in and out of the Tolenas parking lots on Tolenas Avenue (which is a Solano County road) to be directed by "trained" adult crossing guards.
- The School District is requesting that Solano County paint the curb yellow along the front school boundary to allow for more parent off-street loading and parking. We are awaiting a response.
- The District is diligently working to ensure safe access to and from the school site.