



Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District

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"Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District is a premier learning community that empowers each student to thrive in an ever-changing world."

July 20, 2015

Honorable Judge E. Bradley Nelson
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice
600 Union Ave.
Fairfield, CA 94533

Governing Board

David C. Isom
President

Judi Honeychurch
President-Elect

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Dear Honorable Presiding Judge Nelson,

Pursuant to Penal Code §933.05, the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District is providing the following response to the 2014-2015 Grand Jury Report entitled *Capturing Kid's Hearts*.

The Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District Governing Board and district administration has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to fiscal responsibility. The district has endured over \$33 million in budget cuts, representing over 19% of the yearly budget. While having to make exceptionally difficult decisions regarding areas to reduce funding, student achievement remained, and will continue to remain, the focus.

Even with significantly reduced revenue, as a result of intentional decisions focused on what is best for the students we serve, the following accomplishments have been realized in the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District:

- Increased Academic Performance Index from 750 (2010) to 790 (2013*); this 40 point gain represents the greatest growth of any district in Solano County.
- Increased the Graduation Rate from 78.9% (2010) to 91.1% (2014); this represents the 3rd highest 2014 District Graduation Rate in Solano County.
- Increased the annual attendance rate from 94.42% (2010) to 95.04% in 2015.
- Decreased the Cohort Dropout Rate from 17% (2010) to 5.9% (2014); this represents the 3rd lowest 2014 Cohort Dropout Rate in Solano County.
- Decreased the number of annual expulsions from 97 students (2010) to less than 50 students 2015.
- 81% of the elementary parents, 75% of the middle school parents, and 63% of the high school parents indicate they are satisfied with the education their children receive in FSUSD. Both middle school and high school satisfaction rates are higher than what was reported in prior years (2015 School Effectiveness Survey).
- 98% of the classified staff indicate they enjoy working in FSUSD (2015 School Effectiveness Survey).
- 95% of the certificated staff indicate they enjoy working in FSUSD (2015 School Effectiveness Survey).

The District is exceptionally proud of the growth that has been achieved over the last five years. Recognizing the need to provide continuous improvement to best support our students and community, we regularly monitor outcome data, celebrate the successes, and implement strategies to positively impact the areas of needed growth.

* With the shift to Common Core and the Smarter Balanced Assessments, 2013 is the most current Academic Performance Index score released by the California Department of Education.

Superintendent

Kris Corey

Finding 1: *Capturing Kids' Hearts is designed for global implementation into an education environment, and is not particularly conducive to individual professional development. Capturing Kids' Hearts website states the optimal outcome is an intentional culture shift, which requires a substantial buy-in of an entire group as opposed to random utilization.*

The District partially disagrees with the finding. While the District agrees that substantial buy-in is required for an intentional culture shift, the District's approach builds capacity and can better achieve "substantial buy-in."

Recognizing that some organizations might mandate change, FSUSD has found that mandated professional development does not change behavior. "Top-Down" management does not result in sustained change in the classrooms or school buildings. Rather, starting with volunteers and igniting the change brings about a more sustained impact. It is this combined "Top-Down" and "Bottom-Up" approach that has brought about the success in the indicators identified at the top of this response and the approach that is being followed with this implementation. In other words, during the 2014/2015 school year, the focus was on "building capacity" in our administrators and teacher-leaders.

Recommendation 1: *Professional development programs should be thoroughly vetted prior to the commitment of public funds in order to ensure that the purpose of the program is actually compatible with the structure of the district and schools.*

The District agrees with the recommendation that professional development programs should be thoroughly vetted prior to the commitment of public funds. The District fully vetted Capturing Kids' Hearts prior to entering into a contract with the Flippen Group.

In January 2014, Superintendent Corey attended the Association of California School Administrator's (ACSA) Superintendents' Symposium. During the conference, she participated in a Capturing Kids' Hearts workshop where she learned about the program features and potential impact the program could have on our District and students. It is important to note that the Flippen Group is an "ACSA Partner4Purpose" which means the organization was vetted by ACSA leadership to assure the value.

In February 2014, Superintendent Corey reviewed information about the Flippen Group, including the research that documented the positive impact the program has had on students, schools, and districts. At the time, FSUSD had just completed a qualitative data collection (WestEd Four Dimensional Study and LCAP community meetings) and found our students and community members felt unwelcomed or not valued.

In March 2014, Superintendent Corey and then Coordinator of Professional Development/PAR/BTSA Cara Mendoza conducted a teleconference with a representative from the Flippen Group. Based on the information gathered at ACSA, and the alignment with the Local Education Agency Plan goals and the Local Control and Accountability Plan goals, the decision was made to have a team from FSUSD (Board Members, administrators, teachers, and counselors) attend the summer conference.

In April 2014, Superintendent Corey and Dr. Mendoza met with Vern Hazzard from the Flippen Group. Superintendent Corey forwarded website links to the Governing Board so that they too could learn more about the program.

In June 2014, given the alignment of the District needs to the research-based, ACSA-vetted program, the District entered into a contract with the Flippen Group to bring Capturing Kids Hearts and Leadership Blueprint to FSUSD.

While the District is still in the early phase of implementation, staff has shared the impact, the "igniting change," that is taking place in the learning community. Here are a few examples:

- There is no hyperbole when I say that it was the best PD that I have ever attended! I just wanted to say thank you for bringing this to FSUSD and supporting it! My only regret was that more people didn't get the training. Phyllis was one of the most adept, positive, engaging, inspirational and knowledgeable presenters I have ever encountered! (I don't use superlatives freely!) She could turn the heart of even the most negative union lackey!
 - FSUSD Teacher with 22 years experience

- This will make your day. After only one day of Capturing Kids Hearts, one of my teachers came back to campus and cried (with an employee) about how she had treated her throughout the school year. (The employee) was shocked at her display of concern and her desire to get right. Thank you for having the foresight to bring this training to the district! This is exactly what we need right now. I have four teachers in the training and hope to put the whole staff through at some point. It's going to be a great year!!!
 - *FSUSD Elementary School Principal*

- The Leadership Blueprint workshop gave me an opportunity to see myself through the eyes of others. The profile provided insight into the strengths that others perceive in me. More importantly, it allowed me to identify areas for professional growth that will further strengthen my leadership skills. The presenter modeled many powerful strategies for building the positive, supportive relationships that are crucial to moving any "team" forward.
 - *FSUSD Alternative School Principal*

- Teachers and administrators (including myself) attended the "Capturing Kids Hearts" PD. I had teachers come back so impressed and influenced that they changed summer plans to make sure that they could attend the whole session. The staff also was very excited to share what they learned and experienced. I believe that as we move towards the Restorative Justice/PBIS model that the training will really help to pave the way. During the training you are reminded (or taught for some) that there is a personal story for all of us that has shaped who we are. If in fact we can learn about people (students, staff, community) - who they are - and apply that in our dealing with them the chance of a positive outcome is greater.
 - *FSUSD High School Principal*

The District will continue to closely monitor and support the implementation, as there is no question that Capturing Kids' Hearts and Leadership Blueprint have, and will continue to have, a positive impact on our learning community.

Finding 2: *There currently is no staff assigned to monitor and evaluate the success of Capturing Kids' Hearts and/or other PBIS programs within the FSUSD.*

The District agrees with the finding and took action six months ago, prior to receiving this finding from the Grand Jury, to develop and implement such a position.

Recommendation 2: *Assign a staff member to oversee the PBIS programs and continuously monitor effectiveness. PBIS.org has an assessment tool, which can be used.*

In July 2014, the Director of Student Services coordinated the professional development for the ten sites that were implementing PBIS. Recognizing the need to expand PBIS to an additional six schools during the 2015-2016 school year, the Board approved the addition of a PBIS coordinator on February 26, 2015. The job description responsibilities include planning PBIS training and support based on an annual assessment of need; collaborating with site administration regarding the development of PBIS site plans; and working with school PBIS teams and administrators to establish, review and enhance data collection, analysis, and evaluation processes. The program will be reviewed annually as part of the Local Control and Accountability Plan review. The District agrees with the recommendation and took action six months ago, prior to receiving this recommendation, to develop and implement such a position.

Respectfully submitted,



Sheila Barrett McCabe, Executive Director
Administrative Services and Community Engagement

"In a safe, welcoming, and supportive learning environment, we provide innovative educational opportunities to develop resilient students who are inspired to succeed"