



September 9, 2024

The Honorable Cynthia P. Smith
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Napa
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559

RE: Response to the 2023-24 Grand Jury Final Report, “Hitting the Reset Button: Addressing Gangs in Napa County”

We appreciate the Grand Jury’s Report and thank you for prioritizing this community concern. The findings and data provided in “*Hitting the Reset Button: Addressing Gangs in Napa County*” are of utmost importance and concern. As community members and co-founders of the Legacy Youth Project (LYP), we believe it is critical to address some key points made in the report.

Unfortunately, it comes as no surprise to learn of the increased gang activity as reported on page 2, especially “*Juvenile gang prosecutions increased by 60% from 2021–2023.*” We would like to note that this significant increase began one year after NVUSD dismantled LYP in 2020, at the height of a global pandemic. The following are some areas of the report that we have questions about, contain inconsistencies, and/or make erroneous claims:

- Page 2, *The Napa County Grand Jury recommendations that follow include:*
 - *Reestablishment of a youth intervention program like Legacy, starting with students in the 5th grade*

We agree and want to know how such a program will parallel the highly successful LYP model.

- Page 21, *Recommendations*
 - *R1-R9*

Given the recommendation on p. 2, why isn’t LYP included in this section (R1-R9)? Why weren’t LYP practitioners interviewed as part of this process, given their expertise?

- Page 3, *Background*
 - *...gang activity...became more evident when schools returned to full session after the Covid lockdown.*

While this is true and an important factor, there is no attribution of the dismantling of LYP as a factor in the recent increase in gang activity. It was well documented that LYP was an intervention program that eliminated the cycle of gangs (see [Napa Grand Jury Report 2015-16. GANG ACTIVITY IN NAPA COUNTY The Positive Impact of Pro-Active Measures](#)). When there are community-responsive programs, like LYP, that intervene and reduce gang activity, everyone benefits- families, communities, institutions, and even our economy. In California, the cost to incarcerate a child can be up to \$305,000 per year and only \$12,000 for public education (nokidsinprison.org).

- Page 4, *Methodology*
 - *Approximately 28 interviews were conducted, including Police Chiefs from Napa, Calistoga, and St. Helena, School Resource Officers, members of the Napa County District Attorney's office, individuals from the Napa County Probation Department, Napa Valley Unified School District administrators, principals, and assistant principals, and Napa County Office of Education personnel.*

Why weren't LYP staff, students, and/or families interviewed? Additionally, the LYP website would have been a great resource for information and evidence from the people who actually ran and participated in the program throughout its duration. None of the aforementioned parties had any significant and ongoing stake in the creation, execution, or management of the program.

- Page 19, *The Legacy Program*
 - *[Re]: The Legacy Youth Program...It was started in 2012 by an SRO at Vintage High School. "Camille Creek was [the] model used to develop the program."*
 - *After the SRO went back to patrol, they became less able to run the program, until they stopped completely.*

This is incorrect information. The LYP was co-founded by an SRO and NVC Ethnic Studies professor. Camille Creek was not the model; Ethnic Studies was the model for developing the program. (See LYP website <https://www.legacyyouthproject.org/>) The program did not become "less able to run" due to the SRO's return to patrolling. Upon his departure, the program did not stop. LYP ran for eight years, from 2012 to 2020. The SRO was part of the program for the first four years only, working minimal hours. LYP expanded four years after the SRO left, with its largest expansion to Vintage HS, Silverado MS, Redwood MS, Harvest MS, and NVLA.

Additionally, after its eighth successful year, LYP was defunded and "stopped" abruptly by NVUSD. The following are NVUSD leadership's reasons on record for dismantling us:

- In a bizarre claim, NVUSD Superintendent Mucetti, has stated numerous times that she "was shocked" to discover that LYP classes were facilitated by non-credentialed teachers. She has claimed that LYP staff ran an illegal program.
 - The truth is that non-credentialed teachers cannot be approved to teach classes during the school day in a regularly scheduled class without cooperation from site and district leadership. Knowing that they could use administrators as teachers of

record points to the truth that they know how to get things done. In 2018, Mucetti visited the LYP classroom and met with students who presented personal data about the program's impact. LYP staff shared they needed credentialed teachers. Mucetti's idea was to ensure that all credentialed teachers had a bilingual certificate to provide a safeguard to help find the right teachers to serve as LYP teachers. LYP has meeting minutes, notes, and photos of this visit. Over the next two years, Mucetti and other members of her cabinet continued to meet with LYP staff on numerous occasions to discuss future plans for our program, consistently expressing their support of LYP. Together, we recruited two teachers for the 2020-2021 school year. Unfortunately, we never got the opportunity to welcome them. There is absolutely no way a program of LYP's size and outreach could operate on school campuses for nearly a decade, with an office in the district building, without the district's knowledge, cooperation, and support. The truth is, NVUSD committed to supporting and developing LYP infrastructure. There are many cases in public education that teach us how to adopt community programs as district-led initiatives. NVUSD chose not to.

- Another justification Mucetti and her team had for dismantling LYP is that it was not scalable enough to serve the district's 15,000 students.
 - The truth: LYP was designed for students of diverse backgrounds who had historically been and continue to be inadequately served by NVUSD's programs. In K-12, it is widely known that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective. Some students need more or completely different opportunities and resources than others. LYP is an example of equity in action. The program was centered to the needs of the population it served. This is why LYP was incredibly successful. While the goal never was or should be to serve every student or even every Latino in NVUSD, the LYP program was scaled to meet the needs of this particular population in schools across the district.
- Another justification for dismantling the LYP was financial. For both 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, NVUSD had allocated \$244,000 per year. The NVUSD have alluded that a collection of individuals, including LYP Executive Director and co-founder, Carlos Hagedorn, financially profited.
 - The truth: All funds allocated to LYP were paid to six staff members, three of whom were full-time. No LYP staff was ever eligible for health or retirement benefits through the district, even though they worked alongside other teachers in their schools. Not only did staff coordinate seven sections at five school sites, but also offered a full wrap-around service program that went beyond school time, including programming every Spring Break. The financial numbers don't lie. All LYP staff were underpaid and exploited by NVUSD. They made less than a teacher's salary. NVUSD got a bargain, and LYP saved the district money. The LYP financially operated under the fiscal sponsorship of non-profits including the Napa Valley Education Foundation (NVEF), and received funding from NVUSD. LYP became an LLC only after NVUSD dismantled the program, and the NVEF had to dissolve its fiscal sponsorship with them. LYP has never, to date, profited from its services.
- After NVUSD dismantled LYP, they filed a complaint alleging that Executive Director and co-founder, Carlos Hagedorn, acted unscrupulously as a board member.

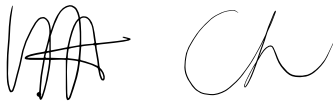
- The truth: Despite NVUSD's attempt to misconstrue the facts, on Nov. 19, 2020, the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) closed the claim without conducting an investigation. According to LYP attorney, "that complaint, filed by the Napa Unified School District, made numerous false allegations of conflicts of interest stemming from your service as a District Board Member from 2012 through 2016... the FPPC no doubt recognized, the 'evidence' submitted relied on untrue speculation to support the alleged conflicts of interest." As a first-term board member, district legal counsel never advised Hagedorn to recuse himself on items involving LYP contracts. Also, all the other board members knew of Hagedorn's involvement with LYP, and no one ever raised the question of conflict of interest. While Hagedorn did vote on LYP contracts for other staff, his vote would not have changed the outcome since LYP contracts were passed unanimously by all board members present.

The community deserves to know NVUSD's true motivations and intentions for shutting down LYP and Harvest Middle School. As stated in the Grand Jury Report, the closing of HMS has had a profound negative impact on our community, consequently increasing youth to engage in gang activity. The truth is that it was NVUSD leadership that made the decision to continue (and expand!) LYP year after year, from 2012-2020. LYP staff did not have the authority to make district leadership run the program or not.

Our intention in highlighting these concerns is for an opportunity to dialogue, to ensure community history is told correctly, and for LYP educators, youth, and families to be consulted in the development of any youth development program meant to mirror LYP, as they are the experts of their (lived) realities in our community. Rooted in equity, LYP served the unique needs of a specific group of students and their families, closing their opportunity/achievement gap and breaking the cycle of gang violence. The Legacy Youth Project became and, to date, has been Napa Valley's greatest educational equity achievement because of the demographic of youth and families we centered on and the quality of education they received.

We look forward to hearing from you and working in (comm)unity for the wellness and educational success of our Napa youth and, ultimately, our community as a whole.

Sincerely,



The Legacy Youth Project