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OF  
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**RECEIVED**

August 14, 2024

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The Honorable Cynthia P. Smith  
Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, County of Napa  
825 Brown Street  
Napa, CA 94500

Napa Superior Court  
Court Executive Office

RE: Grand Jury Report, Hitting the Reset Button: *Addressing Gangs in Napa County*,  
April, 2024

Dear Judge Smith:

We appreciate the invitation for the Napa County Office of Education to respond to the Grand Jury report recommendations; specifically, R1, R2, R3, R4 and R7. We would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Grand Jury for the considerable time and effort that went into developing this report. Our response was prepared by a committee of staff responsible for Afterschool, Career and Technical Education, and Community Programs.

Sincerely,

Barbara Nemko, Ph.D,  
Napa County Superintendent of Schools

cc: Foreman, 2023-24 Grand Jury

**Recommendation 1 By December 31, 2024, Napa Valley Unified School District and Napa County Office of Education will implement programs that focus on elementary and middle schools with gang prevention and parental education programs.**

First, regarding Finding 5, we would like to note that the Napa County Office of Education (NCOE) has extensive programs in partnership with all five school districts in the county to provide and support after school/expanded learning programming. NCOE directly runs the current COOL School expanded learning programs at the following elementary schools: Alta Heights, Bel Aire Park, Northwood, Phillips Snow, Shearer, and Vichy. Programs are open every school day until 6PM and during winter and summer breaks. The program aligns with the school day curriculum and includes social-emotional learning, enrichment activities, STEAM, sports and active recess, and provides a healthy snack. The program also includes daily time for homework support and reading. The remainder of the elementary schools in the County have afterschool programs provided by the Boys and Girls Clubs and district-run programs. NCOE directly runs ACE programs at Silverado Middle School and Calistoga Junior/Senior High school as well as the middle school grades at Shearer; the remainder of middle schools are served by Boys and Girls Clubs. Additionally, there are Community School programs designed to provide wrap-around support services to those students most in need at McPherson, Phillips, Shearer, Snow, Silverado, Valley Oak, Calistoga Elementary and Junior/Senior High, Howell Mountain K-8, Pope Valley K-8, and Camille Creek.

Additionally, all middle and high schools are served by the Mariposa program, which is dedicated to addressing the needs of Napa's youth by offering essential social-emotional support in a safe environment that promotes growth and leadership. A majority of participants in Mariposa are Latinx girls with additional representation from students of color and those who identify as LGBTQ+. Over the last three years, interested students have also had the opportunity to participate in Ballet Folklorico, connecting with their heritage and culture.

While our programs target students who are most at risk of gang involvement, participation is voluntary, and we recognize that those students are not always as likely to attend. We have cultivated strong partnerships with school district administrators, nonprofit and community organizations, and we are redoubling our efforts to more effectively collaborate with law enforcement, SRO's, probation and other agencies that deal with gangs, to assist us in identifying the students most at risk and finding incentives to encourage their participation in our programs. To that end, we will be holding a meeting on September 5 with representatives of all relevant agencies, non-profits, school districts, and others who might be able to assist us in developing a strategic plan for expansion and improvement of gang prevention and parental education programs. As a result of this meeting, it is anticipated that a countywide strategic plan will be developed and circulated by the end of September 2024 and program implementation will begin by December 31, as recommended.

**Recommendation 2. By the Fall of 2025, Napa Valley Unified and Napa County Office of Education restore free high school vocational curriculums (CTE – Career and Technology Education,) and partner with local industries to align their course offerings with labor market needs.**

We want to note that Finding 4, indicating that “vocational curriculum has been eliminated” is not accurate. The Napa County Office of Education has traditionally operated a robust program of vocational or what is now termed Career Technology Education (CTE) classes, from the time that it was funded through the Regional Occupational Program (ROP) model in which NCOE was directly funded for these programs, to the current system under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) model in which the high school districts receive CTE funding from the State. Since the onset of LCFF in the 2013-14 fiscal year the three Napa County districts with high schools (NVUSD, St. Helena and Calistoga) have contracted with NCOE to operate some of these programs for them. CTE programs have always had a requirement to work with labor partner advisory groups and to ensure that our programs are meeting the needs of the current labor market. When the labor market shifts, courses that are not preparing students for increasing-demand jobs are eliminated, sometimes causing chagrin in the community when a favorite class is dropped. But we know that industries change, and the skills students need for success must keep up with the needs of the labor market.

During the 2023-24 school year, NVUSD indicated that they wished to directly operate the CTE programs in their district starting in 2024-25. NCOE has been designated by the California Department of Education as a Technical Assistance Center for this region, and we will continue to provide professional development and assistance to the CTE teachers and programs in NVUSD. The Napa County Office of Education’s College and Career Readiness Department provides Career Technical Education (CTE) support and work-based learning experiences to 24 career pathways in 10 industry sectors across Napa County and around the region. Pathways are taught by CTE credentialed teachers, meet the University of California ‘A-G’ requirements for admission, industry certification and/or earn college credit through articulation or College and Career Access Partnership (CCAP) agreements. Centers of Excellence Labor Market Information (LMI) data for the North and East Bay is used to determine needs in Napa County.

**Current Industry Sectors:**

1. Agriculture and Natural Resources
2. Arts, Media and Entertainment
3. Building and Construction Trades
4. Business and Finance
5. Education, Child Development and Family Services
6. Energy, Environment and Utilities
7. Engineering and Architecture
8. Health Science and Medical Technology
9. Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation
10. Manufacturing and Product Development

High school students throughout Napa County have had opportunities for paid internships in local business and industries for several years during the summer break, and there are plans to continue and expand internship options so that all students get the chance to work in a real business and observe and learn the skills they will need for success. Camille Creek, although it is the smallest of the high schools with the most students at-risk for gang involvement, offers 2 programs, Culinary and Welding, and students have the opportunity for paid internships. These programs provide students with real world experiences and a roadmap for how they can be prepared to be hired for entry-level jobs in the career area of their choice. They also learn about all aspects of the industry that they will need to know to get hired and to advance in their chosen field.

**Recommendation 3: By the fall of 2025, Napa Valley Unified School District and the Napa County Office of Education, to maximize OTS (out of school time,) partner with non-profit stakeholders to provide enriching experiences that provide lasting developmental benefits.**

As mentioned in response to Recommendation 1, the Napa County Office of Education partners with all school districts to provide Out of School time expanded learning programming (before, after, and intersession). NCOE provides programming to TK-8<sup>th</sup> grade students directly operating the COOL School and ACE programs at 10 school sites in Napa County. We partner with the Boys and Girls Club of Napa to support programming at 5 additional sites in Napa. We also partner with the Boys and Girls Club of Calistoga/ St Helena to provide programming at 5 Up Valley sites. Expanded Learning programs are offered until 6PM each day and are available to all students, regardless of family income level. Additionally, 30 days of intersession programming (during school breaks) are available and open from 8AM-6PM. Our programs offer a balance of academic intervention and enrichment plus physical activities throughout the regular school year and summer. We pride ourselves on delivering engaging programming that supports student growth by following the 12 after school quality standards.

There are numerous organized sports programs operated by groups outside the school system that include soccer, baseball, and tennis, among others. An issue with expanding these programs, or even keeping them alive, is the lack of available land for suitable fields. While the school districts may have suitable property, there are issues of safety, liability, school district priority, and supervision that make the districts reluctant to open them to outside groups after school, on weekends and in the summer. Purchasing land in Napa County is prohibitively expensive, and there is often resistance by nearby residents of any identified property to the additional noise, traffic, and litter that turning empty fields into sports arenas for children may bring. We hope that by gathering all relevant parties to a meeting on September 5 we can develop a plan to overcome the resistance. Additional opportunities for engagement in afterschool activities might take place in the public libraries, which may be able to offer programs that will bring more children to organized activities, and businesses may be willing to offer additional

internships, job shadows, or employment opportunities in the service of reducing the allure of gangs.

**R4. By December 31, 2024, Napa Valley Unified School District and Napa County Office of Education establish a bi-annual meeting between the Napa Valley Unified School District, Napa County Office of Education and business community organizations such as Rotary, Elks, Moose, Napa Chamber of Commerce, and the 9Napa County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to create job opportunities, internships, and training for credits.**

The Napa County Office of Education launched the Napa County Collaborative (NCC), in 2022, a regional partnership composed of K-12 partners, higher education, local government, business and community partners. The committee formed to align career readiness and workforce development with the goal of building a relationship infrastructure for ongoing work together. By braiding our approaches and combining resources we will meet the needs of our region and expand diverse opportunities for students. The NCC meets bi-monthly and hosts a yearly meeting to review CTE pathways and labor market information as well as make suggested changes to curriculum and equipment that meets labor market needs. We will continue to expand this work, incorporating additional community partners and ensuring we are addressing the needs of all students with engaging hands on opportunities and internships.

A new opportunity has become available to introduce middle school students to trade careers such as electrical, plumbing, HVAC, welding, and others. A non-profit established by former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson will provide field trips to eighth graders, so that they can learn about the opportunities in these careers, including apprenticeships, while they are studying to learn the trade so that they leave after completing their studies with a certification AND a bank account, instead of debt accrued during 4 or more years of college. This is an attractive option for many students and families, and an option they may not be aware of. We piloted this program in the spring by taking 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders from Howell Mountain and Pope Valley to the electrical apprenticeship program in Napa. The students were very excited about being there, and they left with a great deal of information about the program and the salaries earned by certified electricians! The directors of these apprenticeship programs have offered to speak to parent groups so that parents understand the economics of being certified in a trade, so that the parents don't automatically discourage their children who express interest in these career fields.

We appreciate this recommendation, as it will bring in employers of small businesses, who may not have been involved when we try to develop internships. This will open up a greater variety of career areas as well.

**Recommendation 7. By December 31, 2024, the Napa Valley Unified School District and the Napa County Office of Education strengthen the current stakeholder task force (law enforcement and schools) including non-profits which specialize in gang prevention and intervention and local industries.**

NCOE has created or is connected to several programs and coalitions that focus on prevention and intervention, but we agree with the recommendation and the need to expand and focus our efforts. To address school climate and safety, NCOE created a network called Napa Connection and Resilience to Empower Students (“CARES”) that unites non-profits, Local Education Agencies (“LEAs”), and Community-Based Organizations (“CBOs”) to address the needs of Napa’s youth through holistic, wraparound services. This initiative facilitates effective communication between the school districts and multiple agencies, resulting in streamlined and increased access to services for youth and their families. By providing individualized support through an intensive case management approach, Napa CARES enhances early intervention and violence prevention. This is achieved by offering youth and families facing challenges comprehensive services tailored to their unique situations.

NCOE has also brought the FOCUS Program to Napa County after seeing it’s success in other areas of the state. The Focusing On Children Under Stress (“FOCUS”) Program supports children who may have experienced trauma, including being victims or witnesses of violence such as gang-related incidents. This program enhances communication between law enforcement and other first responders, schools, and community-based organizations (“CBOs”). Law enforcement and other first responders initiate notifications that are sent to designated school officials and include only the name and school of the student, without disclosing specific details of the incident. This process enables the monitoring of any potential effects on the student and ensures that appropriate support is provided as needed, while maintaining student and family confidentiality.

Additionally, the CATALYST Coalition was formed in 2005 as an answer to the higher-than-average youth substance use rates in Napa County. CATALYST focuses on reducing and preventing underage alcohol, marijuana and tobacco use in Napa County with the collective strengths, expertise, and engagement of our broad collaborative of interested community members. Community members meet and collaborate on ways to prevent youth substance use in Napa County, including activities for Take Down Tobacco, Red Ribbon Week, Alcohol Awareness Month, student wellness fairs, Social Host Awareness campaigns, substance use treatment, counseling, parent support group and much more. We also partner closely with the UpValley Family Centers to do this work, as well as the Napa Opioid Safety Coalition to inform parents and students about the dangers of even casual drug use. As our work continues to evolve, we have developed two spin-off coalitions—Open Doors and Napa CARES. While focused on student wellness efforts, these groups are creating access to student and family support.

Napa County Office of education also has connections to several other groups who may be able to support these efforts. Although not directly related to gang involvement, a newly formed group called Pro-Inclusion Napa, whose aim is to reduce hate, is interested in becoming part of our task force. They have had students develop posters to counter the hate messages that have been seen around the county, and these posters were displayed in City Hall from July 2 through August 8<sup>th</sup>. Perhaps we can redirect

some students to join the “Kindness” gang, and work with students in our elementary and middle schools to develop anti-hate campaigns.

In conclusion, Napa County Office of Education has a longstanding commitment to addressing the issue of youth gang involvement and seeking ways of addressing it that are systemic and meaningful. We look forward to continuing this conversation with law enforcement, education partners, and the community because it will take all our collaborative efforts to disrupt the cycles that lead to the outcomes described in your report.

**NCOE Community Programs Department School Supports**

| School District                     | School Site                                     | Expanded Learning   | Mariposa  | Community Schools   | California Healthy Kids Survey  | TUPE Prevention Programming   | AmeriCorps Mentoring  | FOCUS   | Foster/McKinney-Vento Support   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                     |   | <a href="https://napacoe.org/ncoe-ex/">https://napacoe.org/ncoe-ex/</a> | <a href="https://napacoe.org/mariposa/">https://napacoe.org/mariposa/</a> | <a href="https://napacoe.org/ccsp/">https://napacoe.org/ccsp/</a> | <a href="https://napacoe.org/phw/c-hks/">https://napacoe.org/phw/c-hks/</a> | <a href="https://napacoe.org/phw/tupe/">https://napacoe.org/phw/tupe/</a> | <a href="https://napacoe.org/ameri-corps/expanded-learning/">https://napacoe.org/ameri-corps/expanded-learning/</a> | <a href="https://napacoe.org/focus-trauma-notifications/">https://napacoe.org/focus-trauma-notifications/</a> | <a href="https://napacoe.org/phw/foster-homeless/">https://napacoe.org/phw/foster-homeless/</a> |
| Calistoga Joint Unified School      | Calistoga Elementary<br>Calistoga Junior/Senior | X BGC<br>X ACE  |   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |
| Howell Mountain School District     | Howell Mountain Elementary                      | X BGC   |   | X   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   |
| Napa County Office of Education     | Camille Creek                                   | X ACE   | X   | X   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   |
| Napa Valley Unified School District | Alta Heights                                    | X COOL School   |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Bel Aire Park                                   | X COOL School   |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Browns Valley                                   | X BGC Napa  |   |   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Canyon Oaks                                     | X BGC Napa  |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Donaldson Way                                   | X BGC Napa  |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | McPherson                                       | X BGC Napa  |   | X   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Napa Junction                                   | X BGC Napa  |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | NVLA  | X BGC Napa  |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Northwood                                       | X COOL School   |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Phillips  | X COOL School   |   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Pueblo Vista                                    | X BGC Napa<br>X COOL  |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Shearer   | School/ACE  | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Snow  | X COOL School   |   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Vichy   | X COOL School   |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | West Park                                       | X BGC Napa  |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Willow  | X BGC Napa  |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | ACMS  | X BGC Napa  | X   |   |   | X   | X   |   | X   |
|                                     | Redwood   | X BGC Napa  | X   |   |   | X   | X   |   | X   |
|                                     | Silverado                                       | X ACE   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   | X   | X   |
|                                     | Unidos  | X BGC Napa  | X   |   |   | X   | X   |   | X   |
| American Canyon High School         |   |   | X   |   | X   | X   |   | X   |   |
| Napa High School                    |   |   | X   |   | X   | X   |   | X   |   |
| New Tech High School                |   |   | X   |   | X   | X   |   | X   |   |
| Valley Oak High School              |   |   | X   | X   | X   | X   |   | X   |   |
| Vintage High School                 |   |   | X   |   | X   | X   |   | X   |   |
| Pope Valley                         | Pope Valley Elementary                          | X   |   | X   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   |
| St Helena Unified School District   | St Helena Elementary                            | X BGC   |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | St Helena Primary                               | X BGC   |   |   | X   |   |   | X   | X   |
|                                     | RL Stevenson Middle<br>St Helena High           | X BGC   |   |   | X   | X   |   | X   | X   |

\*NCOE Subcontracts with Boys and Girls Clubs to provide expanded learning programs at some sites (BGC), COOL School & ACE programs are run directly through NCOE.