



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

**NAPA COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY 2024-2025**  
**April 23, 2025**  
**FINAL REPORT**

**Pope Valley Union Elementary School District:  
Overcoming a Troubled Past**

## SUMMARY

Located in northeastern Napa County, the Pope Valley Union Elementary School District (PVUESD) is a small, rural public school offering Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through eighth grades. With an enrollment of approximately 50 students, PVUESD faces unique challenges. Its remote location, small student population, staffing challenges, and a history of leadership struggles underscore the pressing need for transformative, sustainable solutions to secure the school district's future.

Last year, the community was impacted by the trial and conviction of a former school employee for sexual abuse, involving both current and former students. The abuse, which spanned over a decade, created significant rifts within school personnel and among student families. After receiving and evaluating a citizen complaint alleging discrimination and unequal treatment by the school administration against Hispanic or Spanish-speaking families, the 2024-2025 Napa County Civil Grand Jury conducted an 8-month investigation into the allegations which uncovered widespread issues with district leadership and school operations.

The Civil Grand Jury made several key findings and recommendations about PVUESD, related to systemic issues involving governance, management of school operations, and community engagement.

- PVUESD failed to provide a safe learning environment and requisite education for its students.
- The PVUESD Board of Trustees (School Board) failed to deliver the necessary oversight and direction for PVUESD operations and academic performance. At this time, the School Board appears to be focused on addressing past deficiencies and committed to providing the necessary oversight and direction to improve PVUESD operations and academic performance. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the School Board develop and implement a long-term strategy for the school district, prioritizing operational effectiveness and significant improvements in academic outcomes.
- Prior school superintendents/principals failed to ensure student safety, address academic instruction and student performance gaps, or manage the school and staff effectively. The Civil Grand Jury recommends the School Board ensure that school leadership possesses the necessary qualifications and experience to effectively prioritize student safety and educational excellence.
- The Superintendent/Principal, who held the position during this Civil Grand Jury investigation, implemented policies and procedures to stabilize and build sustainable long-term operations, enforce student safety protocols, and improve academic instruction and student performance. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Superintendent/Principal continue to monitor and refine these policies and procedures regularly to ensure their effectiveness.

- While the Civil Grand Jury investigation found no evidence of discrimination or unequal treatment by the school administration against Hispanic or Spanish-speaking families, the past lack of bilingual support revealed communication gaps, leaving Spanish-speaking parents and English Second Language learners feeling isolated and disconnected. The Civil Grand Jury strongly recommends continued school administration efforts to foster greater inclusivity within the community.
- Inadequate communication by district and school management following the trial and conviction of a former school employee for student sexual abuse left parents feeling disconnected and frustrated. The Civil Grand Jury recommends regular and consistent updates to inform the public, rebuild trust, promote inclusivity, and improve transparency in decision-making to strengthen the relationship between the school and the community.
- School bus transportation service was found to be inadequate to serve the district, with persistent equipment problems undermining reliability. The Civil Grand Jury recommends the School Board and Superintendent/Principal develop and execute a permanent solution to provide safe and reliable transportation for students.
- The school community is divided, with one group of parents and teachers supporting changes in the school and another favoring a return to prior practices and personnel. The Civil Grand Jury recommends that the School Board and Superintendent/Principal take deliberate steps to promote open and constructive dialogue among all stakeholders.

Pope Valley Union Elementary School has faced many challenges over the past decade, and district and school leadership have implemented changes to improve school operations and student outcomes. Increased involvement by parents and the community will increase School Board and Superintendent/Principal accountability regarding academic performance, measurable student development, and on-campus safety. The Civil Grand Jury believes this commitment, along with continuity and consistency in school operations, will promote long-term success for both the students and the community of Pope Valley.

## BACKGROUND

Napa County has five public school districts: Napa Valley Unified, St. Helena Unified, Calistoga Joint Unified, Howell Mountain Elementary, and Pope Valley Union Elementary. Among these, Howell Mountain and Pope Valley have the lowest enrollments, each with fewer than 100 students.

Pope Valley is a small, rural, unincorporated community in northeastern Napa County with a residential population of approximately 673 people.<sup>1</sup> The demographics are diverse, with approximately 49.8% of the population identifying as Hispanic and 43.4% as White. Many residents work in agriculture, particularly in vineyards and wineries. The average annual household income is \$102,242 with a median household income of \$71,250. Several families have deep, generational roots in the area.

According to the Napa County Historical Society, the first Pope Valley School was founded in 1859<sup>2</sup>. In the 1940's, five one-room schoolhouses were combined into the Pope Valley Union Elementary School District (PVUESD). PVUESD is now one campus, Pope Valley Elementary, serving TK through eighth grade.

The Pope Valley Union Elementary School District has received significant media attention in recent years due to the trial and conviction of a former employee for sexual abuse involving current and former students. This case has led to ongoing feelings of distrust towards school leadership and staff among some residents.

The Civil Grand Jury received a citizen complaint alleging instances of misconduct by teachers and staff at the school, unrelated to the resolved criminal abuse case. The complaint also alleged mistreatment of Spanish-speaking parents and students. In response, the Civil Grand Jury initiated a comprehensive investigation of the complaint and the school's overall operations. Although the criminal case is outside the scope of the Civil Grand Jury, the Civil Grand Jury noted the profound impacts of the conviction on the school staff and local community.

## METHODOLOGY

This report draws on comprehensive Civil Grand Jury interviews and reviews of school, state, federal, and local materials.

Civil Grand Jury interviews included management and staff from Pope Valley Union Elementary School District and Napa County Office of Education, management from Howell Mountain Elementary and St. Helena Unified school districts, and parents of students in Pope Valley Union Elementary School.

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<sup>1</sup> Point2Homes: [www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/CA/Pope-Valley-Demographics.html](http://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/CA/Pope-Valley-Demographics.html)

<sup>2</sup> Napa Historical Society: <https://napahistory.org/pope-valley-schools-a-primer/>

Documents from the following sources were reviewed:

- Pope Valley Unified Elementary School District
  - Website ([www.pvk8.org](http://www.pvk8.org))
  - Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)
  - Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)
  - School Accountability Report Card (SARC)
  - Audit reports
  - School Board meeting minutes
  - 2024 Revitalize and Rebuild Plan
- California Department of Education
  - California Education Code
  - California School Dashboard
  - District Profile
- US Department of Education
- Napa County Office of Education (NCOE)
- California School Board Association (CSBA)
- Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT)
- Press coverage
- Court transcripts

## **DISCUSSION**

### **School District**

Pope Valley Union Elementary School, located at 6200 Pope Valley Road, features three main buildings. The older building, constructed in 1969, includes the main school office for the Superintendent/Principal, and two rooms for small group work, a first aid room, and staff room. The newer building, completed in 1982, houses four classrooms: a Learning Center, TK-2 classroom, 3-5 classroom, and a 6-8 classroom. Additionally, there is a new Multipurpose Room (MPR) building, and a portable classroom used as the school library on the west side of the school. The MPR serves as a multi-purpose room for art, music, indoor physical education, and rainy-day lunches.

The California Department of Education School Dashboard provides historical information about the Pope Valley school demographics and performance. School enrollment has fluctuated over the years but generally has been about 50 students. About 70% of the students are of Hispanic heritage.

### Pope Valley Elementary School Enrollment by School Year<sup>3</sup>

	<u>2019-20</u>	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>
Students	50	46	50	57	55	48

Students are taught in small, mixed-grade classrooms with a student-to-teacher ratio of about 12:1. This high-touch learning environment allows for individualized attention and support.

### 2024-25 Pope Valley Elementary School Student Enrollment by Grade Level

GRADE LEVEL	NO. OF STUDENTS
Kindergarten	4
Grade 1	5
Grade 2	6
Grade 3	4
Grade 4	4
Grade 5	5
Grade 6	6
Grade 7	5
Grade 8	9
Total Enrollment	48

Pope Valley’s school district appears to have more funding than most California school districts. It is a basic aid district, meaning it retains revenue from local property taxes that exceed the state’s funding formula requirements. Additionally, it receives constitutionally guaranteed state basic aid funding. Property tax revenue accounts for approximately 80% of the district’s revenues. Per-pupil funding is \$33,092, compared to Napa Valley Unified School District per-pupil funding of \$10,328.<sup>4</sup>

At the start of the 2024-2025 school year, there were four full-time credentialed classroom teachers and a part-time Special Education teacher on the school payroll. Prior to the completion of this report, adjustments were made in the teaching staff, including shifts in grade assignments and the non-renewal of several teachers’ contracts for the 2025-26 school year due to performance issues.

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<sup>3</sup> California School Dashboard, <https://www.caschooldashboard.org>. Enrollment and financial data are from School Accountability Report Cards found at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/sa/index.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> NVUSD Financial Hub, <https://nvusdk12caus-25-us-west1-01.preview.finalsitecdn.com/about/departments/business-services/financial-hub>.

Positions at the school historically have been difficult to fill primarily due to its rural location. As a result, teacher and staff salaries are comparatively higher than other schools in California. A limited number of job applicants resulted in a small pool of candidates which contributed to the hiring of staff who were related by family. A number of past and present school employees are from two local families, which has raised concerns about conflicts of interest.

Student academic achievement data is evidence of poor performance in the Pope Valley district. Pope Valley student academic scores in math and reading are consistently below grade-level standards. PVUESD has an average math proficiency score of 25% (versus the California public elementary school average of 35%) and reading proficiency score of 15% (versus the 45% statewide average).

The school has a high percentage of socially disadvantaged students (95.8%) and English learners (39.6%), factors which have been shown to influence academic success. Overall, school class performance has been well below state standards and often rated as “red,” the lowest rating on the California School Dashboard. Records reinforcing low performance levels existed prior to and since impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Academic Performance by Year  
(point scores compared to standard)<sup>5</sup>**

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
English	-31.4	No data	Very Low	-103.3	-77.8	-81.5
Math	-36.4	No data	Low	-81.3	-62.1	-67.6

The school has faced challenges serving special needs students due to a lack of an appropriately credentialed teacher, resulting in difficulties executing statutory requirements such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs). In California, special needs students are those with disabilities that negatively impact their education and require special education services. An IEP is a written annual statement outlining a child's current performance levels, learning goals, school placement, and services.

Additionally, students often face difficulties securing reliable transportation due to the considerable distance between their homes and the school, as well as the work commitments of their parents and caregivers. To address this challenge, the school provides bus transportation for its students.

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<sup>5</sup> The California School Dashboard reports that state law suspended reporting of data for 2020-21, and allowed reporting of data using one of five status levels (ranging from Very High, High, Medium, Low, and Very Low) for 2021-22 due to COVID.

## School Board

The PVUESD Board of Trustees (School Board) consists of five elected officials, with one member newly elected in 2024. Many Board members have served multiple terms, with one trustee having served over 25 years. The current President, a former student of the school, has served for approximately two years, first as Secretary and then as President.

None of the trustees have prior experience in public education. They are generally long-term community members, some of whom have children or grandchildren who attend or have attended the school. Filling School Board positions has been challenging, as few community members have applied, and candidates often run unopposed.

The School Board appoints and evaluates the district Superintendent/Principal. It oversees the establishment of the district's budget, curriculum, policies, and academic achievement standards.

The School Board plays a critical role in student and district performance. The California School Board Association (CSBA) states that for a school board to operate effectively they must “maintain accountability for student learning by adopting the district curriculum and monitoring student progress” while involving the community, including parents, students and staff. CSBA<sup>6</sup> outlines the main functions of a School Board as follows:

- Setting Direction by establishing a long-term vision for the school district
- Establishing Structure with an effective and efficient organizational framework
- Providing Support for the superintendent and staff in demonstrating professional behavior, making informed decisions, and effectively allocating resources
- Ensuring Accountability to the public by monitoring and evaluating the district's performance
- Providing Community Leadership by advocating for children, the school district, and serving as leaders within the community

Based on interviews with the school staff and parents, the Civil Grand Jury concluded that before 2023, the Pope Valley School Board was inadequately performing these functions. The Board did not have a well-defined vision to guide the school's future direction. The Board had taken a hands-off approach to academic performance, failing to monitor or improve student outcomes. As a result, students graduating from Pope Valley were underprepared for high school and often required special attention to succeed in high school. The previous Superintendent/Principal was not held accountable by the School Board for the poor academic instruction and performance of

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<sup>6</sup> CSBA, “Roles and Responsibilities”, <https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/EffectiveGovernance/RoleandResponsibilitiesofSBMs.aspx>



the students and operated with almost complete autonomy from the Board. Although Board members stated that they raised concerns about academic performance with the previous Superintendent/Principal, no follow-up action appears to have been taken when improvements did not occur.

The Board stated that they were unaware of the ongoing abuse at the school until it became public knowledge with the indictment of an employee for child abuse including past and current PVUESD students. While it is understandable that legal confidentiality was necessary during the criminal investigation, parents reported that the overall communication from the Board was poorly managed. This has resulted in community distrust and division.

In 2023, the School Board hired a new Superintendent/Principal. She is a PhD candidate with a background in education and change management. The new Superintendent/Principal is receiving Board support for key initiatives to implement changes to the curriculum and school management. In interviews with the Civil Grand Jury, School Board members expressed a determination to improve academic performance and rebuild community trust.

Several critical areas are still to be addressed by the School Board. There is no district strategic plan to guide the long-term improvement of the school and ensure this progress is sustained. Additionally, the Board has yet to communicate a plan to rebuild community trust in the school following the abuse case and to enhance parent engagement moving forward.

The Civil Grand Jury learned from Board members that there are no training standards for Board members, even for the newly elected/appointed. Moreover, Board members claimed it had been years since they have taken any training. In California, new school district board members undergo specific training to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively oversee school operations and support student success. The CSBA offers many school board training programs including ethics, board orientation and governance, and fiscal responsibility.

## **Superintendent/Principal**

The District Superintendent/Principal undertakes broad leadership duties for the district, including managing budgets, formulating policies, collaborating with the Board and community, and providing comprehensive reporting, while also overseeing day-to-day operations of the school. This includes guiding curriculum development, supervising staff, ensuring student welfare, and fostering engagement within the community.

The Superintendent/Principal role for the Pope Valley Union Elementary School District is a combined position, a common practice for small school districts in California. The Superintendent/Principal reports to the School Board while teachers and classified staff report to the Superintendent/Principal.

Over the past five years, PVUESD has seen three different people in the Superintendent/Principal role. The former Superintendent/Principal served for over seven years, resigning in winter 2022 and officially departing in April 2022 to lead another district. Subsequently, a Napa County Board of Education (NCOE) employee was contracted by the School Board as interim Superintendent/Principal for one year (2022-2023) as they searched for a permanent replacement.

The Superintendent/Principal, as of this report, is in year two of a three-year contract with PVUESD.

Through interviews with PVUESD staff and parents, the Civil Grand Jury was told previous superintendents lacked focus on student academics and safety, demonstrated little accountability for the behavior of teachers and classified staff, and mismanaged school operations. The current Superintendent/Principal is focused on these critical areas, according to interviews with school staff and parents.

Some parents interviewed by the Civil Grand Jury expressed concerns regarding the quality of teaching, citing a need for educators to increase focus on student achievement, establish clear lesson plans, set measurable goals, and improve instructional techniques. These concerns align with the fact that student achievement scores have remained flat and below average.

Until recently, teachers operated independently, without a structured curriculum, policies, or goals to guide their activities. There were no measures in place to evaluate teacher performance or hold them accountable for poor academic outcomes. In at least one incident, a teacher engaged in corporal punishment without facing any consequences. Teachers and staff were not provided with clear guidelines on appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior, particularly regarding having one-on-one interactions with students. School staff also informed the Civil Grand Jury that the former Superintendent/Principal allowed the convicted former school employee to be alone with individual students in a manner that the school staff thought was concerning.

At this same period, all school employees were to complete their annual mandated reporter training on child abuse and neglect reporting and identification. This training is mandatory for all employees, including teachers, teacher's aides, and classified employees. However, the Civil Grand Jury learned that documentation of this training may have been falsified. The Civil Grand Jury found no reports by school employees of incidents of concern or suspected abuse, despite the activities occurring over many years.

Keeping the school premises secure is an expectation for all campuses. The Civil Grand Jury learned there was a lack of oversight regarding visitors on school property in the past. The campus was easily accessible, with no gate around the property, and parents and other visitors roamed the grounds unmonitored and unaccompanied.

Despite having an English learner population of 39.6%, there were no bilingual teachers on staff prior to January 2024. The school relied on a Spanish-speaking school secretary to communicate with Spanish-speaking parents, although the individual did not perform this function in an official capacity.

Special needs students were underserved with no certified special needs teacher on staff for several years.

The Civil Grand Jury acknowledges the current Superintendent/Principal commitment to restoring trust and ensuring accountability in the school community. Efforts are underway to establish foundational standards, policies, rules, and a curriculum aimed at enhancing academic achievement while strengthening overall school operations. These changes are outlined in the long-range Revitalize and Rebuild Plan for the school.

The school has experienced positive changes during the 2024-2025 academic year, marked by key personnel adjustments that indicate a commitment to holding teachers accountable for their performance and student outcomes.

- A bilingual teacher has been added to the staff, providing support for Spanish-speaking students.
- Teachers were reassigned to different teaching assignments to mitigate use of long-term substitute teachers with Grade 7/8 students and to ensure that the youngest students receive instruction from a bilingual teacher to help bridge cultural gaps and improve foundational learning and academic performance.
- A Learning Center model was established to enhance teaching and learning practices for both special and general education students by offering hands-on, personalized learning experiences that foster collaboration, independence, and academic growth.
- To better serve the school's Hispanic community members, the school offers a certified interpreter and on-demand access to the Language Line translation service.
- The school has a part-time Special Education teacher who holds a Master of Science in Special Education and is a former SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) director.

Beyond these changes, the current Superintendent/Principal has also increased financial reserves over the past two years. The school received positive certifications from NCOE and the California Department of Education in their Interim Financial Reports indicating that the school district is projected to meet its financial obligations for the current and the next two fiscal years. This evidences financial health and stability, showing that the district is managing its budget and resources.

To enhance communications, the school's website has been updated and improved, now providing content in Spanish, and expanded to include school reports, student events, board meeting information, as well as helpful resources for students, parents, and teachers. School announcements and updates also are available in Spanish.

Additionally, a contract has been signed to upgrade the student information system, providing real-time access to grades, attendance, and other student-related information for parents, students, and educators.

To enhance parental engagement within the school community, a Parent Advisory Council was established in October 2024. This council complements existing school-parent collaboration efforts, such as the Pope Valley English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting nights.

## **School Transportation**

The challenges involving the school's bus transportation system have impacted operations and community trust for an extended period. A driver shortage, persistent mechanical failures, extended repair times, and unreliable service have hindered the school's ability to maintain consistent transportation for students. Resolving this concern has become a top priority for the Superintendent/Principal and Board, reflecting their commitment to provide reliable, safe, and efficient transportation options for students.

The Civil Grand Jury learned the school district completed the legal process for the disposal of its two oldest buses during the 2024 calendar year.

Two propane buses purchased in 2021 have not solved the ongoing transportation challenges. The Civil Grand Jury learned that the buses have been frequently out of operation. Repair times are lengthy and frequently unsuccessful, leaving the school without bus service for extended periods of time. Negotiations with bus companies for repairs or leasing alternatives have proven unsuccessful, particularly due to complications related to propane bus designs and driver requirements. While regular maintenance costs over the past year have not been excessive at \$7,726, the disruptions have damaged community goodwill and trust.

The two current buses transport about 20 children, about half of the student population, during the school week. The Civil Grand Jury learned that one or both buses have been out of service for nearly one out of every four days. It is not uncommon for only a single bus to be available when two are required to cover the school geography. This results in extended travel times of up to one and a half hours for some students, as the single bus covers two routes before arriving at the campus destination.

The Board recently purchased a 14-passenger minibus equipped with a gas engine. Combined with an existing nine-passenger van, transportation operations comply with California school transportation regulations, meet field trip needs, and offer a cost-effective temporary solution.

California school districts are not required to provide transportation, but many like PVUESD provide bus service to offer students safe and reliable access to school.

Transportation must be provided for students with disabilities if it is necessary for them to benefit from special education.<sup>7</sup>

## **Community Relations**

The Pope Valley school community is small, comprised of between 20 to 30 families. Many working parents face schedules that start early, limiting their ability to attend school meetings or events. Monthly School Board meetings are typically sparsely attended by the public. Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings often have low parent participation. Some parents interviewed by the Civil Grand Jury expressed concerns about insufficient advance notice of meetings and activities, which has additionally hindered engagement.

The Civil Grand Jury interviewed PVUESD parents to gain an understanding of their perspectives on the school, its teachers, and staff. The Civil Grand Jury found no evidence to substantiate the original complaint's claims of mistreatment of students or disrespect toward family members based on their Hispanic heritage. Some examples of communication issues were raised, primarily stemming from errors in the electronic notification system. Despite this, Hispanic parents told the Civil Grand Jury that they and their children felt welcome at the school. Although the inconsistent translation services prior to 2023 may have caused Spanish-speaking families to feel excluded, translation issues appear to have been resolved under the current school leadership.

The Civil Grand Jury found general agreement among interviewees that the community is divided. Many parents have maintained personal relationships with teachers and staff over the years and do not wish to see personnel changes at the school. Some teaching staff have contacted parents directly to express their opposition to changes being made at the school. Some families appear resistant to additional changes at the school, such as the implementation of new safety protocols, adjustments to teaching staff, and curriculum enhancements aimed at improving student instruction and performance. Conversely, other parents embrace these changes and express a desire to collaborate more closely with the school to support students' success.

The School Board and the School Superintendent/Principal should proactively attempt to unite the community and rally them behind improving the school for the sake of the students. The Board should coordinate with the Supervisor/Principal to send out regular, bilingual notifications, both electronically and in writing, to the school community regarding dates, agendas, and announcements for all Board meetings. The Superintendent should enhance community trust and transparency by continuing to provide regular updates in a bilingual format about the school's progress, challenges, and the reasons behind decisions and staffing changes.

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<sup>7</sup> Federal Regulation "Individuals with Disabilities", 34 CFR §300.34 (c)(16)

## Resources for School Districts

Enhancing the overall management and performance of a school is a multi-faceted challenge. The Civil Grand Jury has identified several resources to offer PVUESD with meaningful support and guidance throughout this process:

- The Napa County Office of Education (NCOE). The NCOE's mission is to provide leadership to support the success of public education. Their responsibilities include assuring appropriate educational environments and curricula for students in Napa County. They provide direct oversight and approval of local school district budgets, but do not directly oversee school performance and operations. They do provide a wide variety of support services upon request, including student education programs, administrative services (district audits, attendance auditing, teacher credentialing), and instructional services (local educator professional development and assistance with curriculum development, student assessments, library and technology services). NCOE also provides student literacy and math programs, mental health services, and cultural diversity training.
- California's Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). Although its primary mission is to help resolve school district financial issues, it also can provide services such as management assistance, professional learning opportunities, intervention identifying specific district issues, strategic planning, and comprehensive school assessments. Civil Grand Jury members attended a FCMAT presentation and determined the services available are relevant to Pope Valley's needs.
- The California School Boards Association (CSBA) provides standard and customizable training programs for school boards and members, including hosting an annual educational symposium.

## FINDINGS

The Civil Grand Jury finds:

F1. The Pope Valley Union Elementary School District failed to provide a safe learning environment and requisite education for its students.

F2. The PVUESD Board of Trustees (School Board) failed to deliver the necessary oversight and direction for PVUESD operations and academic performance. At this time, the School Board appears to be focused on addressing past deficiencies and committed to providing the necessary oversight and direction to improve PVUESD operations and academic performance.

F3. Prior school superintendents/principals failed to ensure student safety, address academic instruction and student performance gaps, or manage the school and staff effectively.

F4. The Superintendent/Principal, who held the position during this Civil Grand Jury investigation, implemented policies and procedures to stabilize and build sustainable long-term operations, enforce student safety protocols, and improve academic instruction and student performance.

F5. While the Civil Grand Jury investigation found no evidence of discrimination or unequal treatment by the school administration against Hispanic or Spanish-speaking families, the past lack of bilingual support revealed communication gaps, leaving Spanish-speaking parents and English Second Language learners feeling isolated and disconnected.

F6. Inadequate communication by district and school management following the trial and conviction of a former school employee for student sexual abuse left parents feeling disconnected and frustrated.

F7. School bus transportation service was found to be inadequate to serve the district, with persistent equipment problems undermining reliability.

F8. The school community is divided, with one group of parents and teachers supporting changes in the school and another favoring a return to prior practices and personnel.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Civil Grand Jury recommends:

R1. The School Board develop and implement a long-term strategy for the school district, prioritizing policies and procedures to ensure academic performance and operational effectiveness, and do so by the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

R2. The School Board ensure that school leadership possesses the necessary qualifications and experience to effectively prioritize student safety and educational excellence and do so by the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

R3. The Superintendent/Principal continue the ongoing improvement process at Pope Valley Union Elementary School and ensure that changes instituted continue should school management change and do so by the 2025-2026 academic year.

R4. Regular updates by the School Board and Superintendent/Principal to inform the public, rebuild trust, promote inclusivity, and improve transparency in decision-making to strengthen the relationship between the school and the community, and do so by the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

R5. The Board of Trustees and Superintendent/Principal develop and execute a permanent solution to provide safe and reliable transportation for students by the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

R6. The Board of Trustees and the Superintendent/Principal use the various resources, training, and support opportunities available through the Napa County Office of Education (NCOE), Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), California School Board Association (CSBA) and other educational and leadership resources and implement plans by the start of 2025-2026 academic year.

## **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Pope Valley Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees is required to respond to F1-F8 and R1-R6, within 90 days of receipt of this report.

## **INVITED RESPONSES**

The Civil Grand Jury invites the Pope Valley Union Elementary School District Superintendent/Principal to respond to F4-F8 and R3-R6, within 60 days of receipt of this report.

The Civil Grand Jury invites the Napa County Superintendent of Schools to respond to F1-F8 and R1-R6, within 60 days of receipt of this report.