



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

NAPA COUNTY GRAND JURY

2010-2011

Final Report on

**KEEPING TRACK OF NAPA
COUNTY NON-TRADITIONAL OR
ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS**

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NAPA COUNTY GRAND JURY

P.O. BOX 5397

NAPA, CALIFORNIA 94581

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Stephen T. Kroyer
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of the State of California
County of Napa
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94459

Re: Keeping Track of Napa County Non-Traditional or Alternative High School Students

Dear Judge Kroyer,

Pursuant to Sections 933(a) of the California Penal Code, the 2010 -2011 Napa County Grand Jury submits to you its final report on the Juvenile Court and Community School options in Napa County. Our investigation of this subject was conducted in a manner consistent with the California Penal Code, this Court's Charge, and the historic role of the Grand Jury, to protect the interests of the residents of Napa County.

This is the fifth in a series of final reports we will be issuing before the term ends. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Grand Jurors, which our report reflects. It is a privilege and pleasure to work with them.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Bernat".

Judith Bernat
Forewoman
2010-2011 Napa County Grand Jury



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To the Residents of Napa County:

In order to fulfill the Grand Jury's mandate to investigate all local government agencies, to assure they are being administered efficiently, honestly, and in the best interest of Napa County residents, the 2010-2011 Grand Jury investigated the Napa County Office of Education Juvenile Court and Community Schools, sometimes known as alternative schools or non-traditional schools.

The Grand Jury has carefully investigated this matter and developed a set of findings and recommendations with the objective of representing the public interest.

The first is that Napa County school districts provide alternative educational options for high school students. The second finding is that individual schools within a district, as well as the Napa County Office of Education only have access to their own district's databases of student records.

Recommendation number one of the Grand Jury is for all school districts in Napa County provide the Napa County Office of Education with "read only" access to their individual on-line student database. The second recommendation is for the Napa County Office of Education provides "read only" access to all school districts in Napa County to their on-lines student databases.

This would provide a cost effective and efficient way for the schools to find out where a student is in his classroom work without the student losing time and falling behind academically.

The Napa County Office of County Counsel has reviewed this final report and the Napa County Superior Court Presiding Judge has certified the report complies with Title 4 of the California Penal Code. This report has been accepted and filed as a public document by the County Clerk.

Copies of this report are available for review in the Napa City-County Library and online at www.napa.courts.ca.gov. Follow the link to Grand Jury.

We hope you find this report informative.

It is an honor and privilege to serve on the 2010-2011 Grand Jury.

Respectfully submitted,

The 2010-2011 Napa County Grand Jury

Keeping Track of Napa County Non-Traditional or Alternative High School Students

SUMMARY

A small percentage of Napa County public high school students attend Napa County Office of Education (NCOE) Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS). A student who is expelled from his original high school or convicted of a crime outside of school hours will be required to attend one of these schools. Other students may choose to attend an alternative school due to their individual needs. The Grand Jury report investigates whether or not students who attend JCCS are monitored until they achieve a Certificate of Completion (COC) or a High School Diploma (HSD).

The Grand Jury has found that the students are adequately monitored and recommends that all school districts in Napa County provide each other with “read only” access to their student’s on-line academic records when they transfer into another school within the County.

BACKGROUND

California law mandates that students under the age of 18 attend school unless they graduate early. Expelled students or students placed under the jurisdiction of the Court are required to attend school. The NCOE and Napa County school districts provide numerous alternative school options for these students. There are multiple schools and districts that coordinate with NCOE in order to provide alternative educational programs. However, a student’s school of residence maintains responsibility for developing a rehabilitation plan and monitors the student’s progress toward a COC or HSD. The school refers a student to an appropriate educational setting and ensures that an educational program is provided that meets their needs. The NCOE, through its JCCS program, is the provider of educational services for most of the expelled students in Napa County.

The following are NCOE administered alternative schools:

- Community Schools: Liberty High School; Chamberlain High School (operated cooperatively by the NCOE and Juvenile Probation Department)
- Court Schools: Crossroads School (located in Juvenile Hall and serves youth incarcerated in Juvenile Hall); Creekside Middle School (not included in this report).
- Wolfe High School
- Independent Study

The following are other alternative school options:

Napa Valley Unified School District

- Valley Oak High School
- Independent Study

Calistoga Joint Unified School District

- Palisades High School

DISCUSSION

The four school districts, including the NCOE and multiple high schools in Napa County provide a wide range of educational opportunities for high school students. It is critical that educators and administrators communicate efficiently with each other so students have immediate continuation of curriculum when transfers occur.

The Grand Jury examined a relatively small segment of high school students who have been expelled or who have chosen an alternative program to complete their high school education. When students show unacceptable behaviors or poor academic performance, they sometimes need alternative programs and settings to help them complete their high school education. In addition, students under the jurisdiction of the Court will attend one of these schools.

Crossroads School, located in the Napa County Juvenile Hall (NCJH) serves youth under the age of 18, who are incarcerated in NCJH. Some students in NCJH are permitted to leave to attend classes at their school of residence and then return to NCJH at the end of the school day. The decision to allow students to attend their school of residence is based on the seriousness of the student's crime and their behavior while at NCJH. NCJH administrators, supervisors and probation officers make this decision.

Expelled students are sometimes placed in an NCOE Independent Study Program (ISP) while waiting for space to open at an NCOE alternative school. In the past, this program was overcrowded. When NVUSD informally altered its expulsion policy, fewer students were expelled and therefore the number of students in the NCOE Independent Study Program decreased significantly. The ISP is an individualized learning contract between students, their parents, and the District. The school of residence continues to maintain responsibility for developing an educational plan for expelled students.

Napa County Office of Education's Juvenile Court and Community Schools provide individualized, self-contained classroom settings. Students are evaluated upon admission and learning plans are written based on the student's academic placement, behavior, social or emotional needs.

There is considerable student turnover in alternative schools. In order for a student to return to his school of residence, he must meet certain educational and behavioral criteria in the prior semester. Expelled students must present pertinent evidence to the School Board to have their expulsion lifted. Students who are close to graduation or students who are functioning better in NCOE schools may be allowed to stay in the alternative school setting.

NCOE requires fewer credits to graduate because electives are not offered. Students graduating from an NCOE school can receive a Certificate of Completion or a high school diploma. If they earn the required credits and pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), they receive a high school diploma. NCOE reported an 80-85% graduation rate for their students.

KEEPING TRACK OF STUDENTS

Statewide Student Identifier Numbers

Since 2003-2004, NVUSD has been assigning a unique Statewide Student Identifier (SSID) number, also known as a CALPADS number, supplied by the State, in addition to a unique internal student ID number for every student. The SSID number is permanent and follows a student throughout any California school enrollment.

When an NVUSD student transfers from one school within NVUSD to another, the receiving school requests the student's NVUSD identification number and all academic and personal records from their previous school. The receiving school must request that student's SSID number from the California Department of Education (CDOE).

Initially students entering kindergarten, transferring from a private school, or enrolling from out of State, the District is required to request a new and unique SSID number from the CDOE for that student.

Incoming students to NVUSD from another district in California are assigned an NVUSD identification number at the time of registration. In addition, the District is responsible for acquiring the student's SSID number from the CDOE. To eliminate confusion concerning identification, the State sends a list of matching names that NVUSD reviews to ascertain the correct SSID number for the student.

When a student transfers to an NCOE Juvenile Court or Community School or to any other school district in the State, the same process is initiated by the receiving school. Upon registering in an alternative school, a copy of the student's transcript is sent to the alternative school to enable a smooth transition into the new school.

If a student leaves the District and enrolls in another district in California, the SSID number follows the student. Any student who previously attended NVUSD, but moved away and then re-enters NVUSD, will use their previously assigned NVUSD identification number.

The SSID number is supposed to enable districts to access a student's profile, language status, special program participation status, test results, and personal information.

Each district in Napa County maintains individual student databases through programs known as *Aeries* or *PowerSchool*. Calistoga is the only district that uses *PowerSchool*. The student databases contain comprehensive information about each student. It is an integrated web portal used by students, parents, teachers and administrators. Within each district each school has its own database unique to that school. School administrators or parents may not access any other schools' database. Therefore, when a student transfers to a new school, the registrar must request transcripts by phone, letter or email. NCOE uses the *Aeries* program for all of its juvenile court and community schools. The juvenile court school has access to NCOE's database.

Our educational system is responsible for preparing our children for success and leadership. It is essential that NCOE and the other school districts in Napa County work together to ensure educational excellence for all students.

FINDINGS

The 2010-2011 Grand Jury finds that:

- F1. Napa County school districts provide alternative educational options for high school students.
- F2. Individual schools within a district, as well as NCOE, only have access to their own district's on-line databases of student records.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2010-2011 Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. All school districts in Napa County provide NCOE with "read-only" access to their individual on-line student databases.
- R2. NCOE provide "read only" access to all school districts in Napa County to their on-line student databases.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following individuals:

- Superintendent, Napa County Office of Education F1, F2; R2
- Superintendent, Calistoga Joint Unified School District F1, F2, R1
- Superintendent, Napa Valley Unified School District F1, F2; R1
- Superintendent, St. Helena Unified School District F1, F2, R1

GLOSSARY

Alternative schools – In the context of this report, “alternative” is used in a broad way to describe any non-traditional school environment and not a reference to a specific school.

Aeries – The *Aeries Student Information System* is a fully integrated web portal for teachers, parents, students, and school administrators. It provides secure web access to student information, including attendance, grades, assignments, test scores, assessment standards, and more.

CAHSEE – California High School Exit Exam

CALPADS – The California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System is used to maintain individual-level data including student demographics, course data, discipline, assessments, staff assignments, and other data for state and federal reporting.

CDOE – California Department of Education

COC - Certificate of Completion – Indicates completion of the required credits, but failed the CASHEE test

Expulsion – The process of removing a student from a school, usually due to disciplinary actions or truancy.

HSD - High School Diploma – Awarded to students who complete the State of California required credits and pass the State of California High School Exit Exam.

ISP - Independent Study Program– Independent study students work independently, according to a written agreement and under the general supervision of a credentialed teacher or teachers. While independent study students follow the district-adopted curriculum and meet the district graduation requirements, independent study offers flexibility to meet individual student needs, interests, and styles of learning.

JCCS - Juvenile Court and Community Schools – Schools run by the Napa County Office of Education

Monitor – To oversee, follow, or track

NCJH – Napa County Juvenile Hall

NCOE – Napa County Office of Education

NVUSD – Napa Valley Unified School District

PowerSchool – The *PowerSchool Student Information System* is a fully integrated web portal for teachers, parents, students, and school administrators. It provides secure web access to student information, including attendance, grades, assignments, test scores, assessment standards, and more.

School of Residence – The school assigned to a student upon enrolling in the district, also known as the home school.

SSID – Statewide Student Identification

Student databases – informational programs that contain pertinent academic information

METHODOLOGY

Information for this investigation was gathered through numerous interviews, document analysis, Internet research, e-mail communications, and on-site visits. Documentation was obtained from several interviewees.

Interviews Conducted:

- Napa County Office of Education personnel
- Napa Valley Unified School District personnel

Documents and Websites Reviewed:

- CALPADS Background/History
- Napa County Plan for Serving Expelled Youth, July 1, 2009 -2012
- NCOE Action Plan: Juvenile Court and Community Schools, December 1, 2009
- NCOE Independent Contracts

- NCOE Juvenile Court and Community Schools Goals, Accomplishments and Challenges
- NCOE Juvenile Court and Community Schools; Juvenile Hall – Crossroads School, Yearly Report for 2009-2010
- NCOE Organizational Chart
- NCOE: Criteria to Return NVUSD Student to NVUSD
- NCOE Suspension Policy and Use of the Time-Out Room
- NCOE Suspension Reports, October 1, 2010 – November 4, 2010
- NVUSD: Criteria to for NCOE to Return NVUSD Student to District
- NVUSD High School Action To Be Taken Re Behavior
- www.cde.ca.gov
- www.ncoe.k12.ca.us
- www.nvUSD.k12.ca.us