

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Final Report



The Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury

PO Box 5109 Santa Rosa, California 95402

(707) 565-6330

www.sonomagrandjury.org

I acknowledge having received 1 copy(ies), by hand delivery, of the 2016-2017 Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Final Report intended for reference and retention by the

Santa Rosa City Schools

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Agency/Department Name: _____

Date: _____

To be mailed back to the Grand Jury office at the address above after complete.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRUANCY

A Tale of Two Cities

SUMMARY

Truancy is defined in the California Education Code as missing thirty minutes or more of a school day without a valid excuse on three separate days during the school year. It is an expensive burden to any school district, costing an average of \$50 per student per day in state funding.

Sonoma County is composed of 40 independent school districts: 31 elementary school districts, three high school districts and six unified school districts. These 40 districts oversee 184 schools in the County with a total of 72,000 students. All of these schools must deal with the effects of student truancy.

State funding is based on how many students are in school, and stay there, on any given day. Dealing with truant students takes staff time and resources. Schools in Sonoma County have lost millions of dollars in state funding because of truancy.

The Civil Grand Jury chose to look at how the two largest unified school districts in the county deal with truancy in grades K-6. Truancy often starts in elementary school. Poor school attendance in the early school years, unlike truancy in secondary school, is largely under the control of the parents. Educating parents in the significance of daily school attendance in these early years has been identified by educators as an important issue.

We found significant variation in levels of truancy, intervention and programs for prevention when we looked at Petaluma elementary schools and Santa Rosa elementary schools. The levels of truancy in the Petaluma elementary schools have remained relatively constant over the last ten years. Petaluma developed a system-wide truancy prevention program during that time. In addition to adhering to the California Education Code, the Petaluma program engages the entire school staff and monitors student behavior and progress.

Santa Rosa elementary school truancy rates rose dramatically in 2011-12, jumped up again in 2013-2014 and stayed high in 2014-15. The Santa Rosa elementary schools appear to approach the issue after the student has already become a truant. This district adheres to the steps mandated by the California Education Code which requires that the school follow a specific process in dealing with a truant. Santa Rosa provides information to parents stressing the importance of getting the student to school and has also started a program that allows students to make up missed days.

BACKGROUND

This is a self-initiated investigation by the 2016-17 Civil Grand Jury.

Sonoma County has 184 schools, 40 school districts and 40 school boards.

Public schools in Sonoma County have lost more than \$30 million in funding in the last three years because of school truancy. They lost over \$11 million for the 2015-16 school year alone.

Average daily attendance (ADA) rate, the number of school days in the year that enrolled students attended school, largely determines funding for California schools. Local experts estimate a loss to a school system of between \$45 and \$50 per day per child not in attendance.

Experts agree that poor attendance and truancy in the early school years correlates with failure to achieve important educational milestones. According to the California Attorney General's Report on Truancy and Absenteeism in California Elementary Schools, truancy rates for kindergarten students average 30%.

Statewide nearly 9% of all first grade students miss 10% of the school year and are considered chronically absent. More than 6% are chronically absent in third grade. 83% of students who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are unable to read at their grade level. Third-grade students who were truant in first grade are unlikely to be able to read at a third-grade level. That problem will follow them through their years in school, and they are four times more likely to drop out of school than students who can read at their grade level.

Poverty increases the day-to-day difficulties in getting child care, food, clothing, housing and health care. All of this can contribute to poor school attendance. Minority populations experience higher rates of poverty and the data show that truancy and absenteeism are higher in these populations. Foster children and children with disabilities are also at greater risk of poor school attendance.

Truancy not only impacts a student's academic life negatively. It affects future earning power and society in general. Up to 75% of children who miss 18 days or more in a given school year drop out of high school. Children who drop out of high school are eight times more likely to go to jail or prison than those children who graduate. Nation-wide, 68% of prisoners are high school dropouts. Lifetime cost to society of dropping out of school is \$800,000 as estimated in the California Attorney General's Truancy Report.

According to several people interviewed for this report, every improvement of 1% in the truancy rate may mean up to an additional \$100,000 of ADA funding to a local school district.

METHODOLOGY

Because attendance in early school years is such a critical issue, the Civil Grand Jury limited its investigation to elementary school attendance and focused on schools in the County's two largest elementary school districts: Petaluma City Schools and Santa Rosa City Schools.

The Civil Grand Jury reviewed the following official documents:

- California Education Codes about attendance reporting requirements and truancy laws

- The California Department of Education’s recommendations about truancy and absenteeism
- The policies of the Sonoma County Department of Education
- Every Student Succeeds Act, passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law on December 10, 2015
- U.S. Department of Education’s 2016 Report on Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation’s Schools
- California Attorney General’s 2013, 2014 and 2015 Executive Reports on Truancy and Absenteeism in Elementary Schools in California.
- Data reported to the CDE (California Department of Education) for elementary schools in the Santa Rosa School District and Petaluma about truancy and absenteeism, demographics and funding

The Civil Grand Jury interviewed representatives of:

- The Sonoma County Office of Education
- The Sonoma County District Attorney’s Office
- SARB - School Attendance Review Board
- The Santa Rosa School Family Engagement Office/Child Welfare and Attendance Office (SAFE)
- The Santa Rosa City Schools District
- The Santa Rosa School Board
- The Petaluma City Schools District
- The Keeping Kids in School (KKIS) Program

DISCUSSION

Compulsory Education Laws

The first compulsory education law in America was passed in New England in 1642. The first compulsory education law in California, affecting children aged 8 to 14, was passed in 1874 and guaranteed State aid for each school based on the number of children in each district. California’s compulsory education laws today apply to minors aged 6 to 18.

Other mandates in the California Education Code are focused on early identification of truant behaviors and contain individualized approaches to addressing each student’s difficulties with complying with mandatory school attendance. (For details see the SARB Process, Appendix A.)

Reporting Requirements

California schools are required to track and report truancy rates and average daily attendance (ADA) rates, as well as suspension and expulsion rates. The Every Student Succeeds Act passed by Congress in 2015 mandates reporting of chronic absenteeism. Many educators think that this figure is more important than truancy rates for predicting student success. California only began collecting chronic absenteeism data in the 2016-17 school year.

State Mandates for Dealing with Truancy (see Appendix A for SARTs and SARBs)

The California Education Code sets up a step-by-step process for dealing with student truancy. The process includes local SARTs (School Attendance Review Teams) and SARBs (School Attendance Review Boards) and addresses truancy after it has become a problem. This process begins with letters to the student's parents and can end (if all else fails) in Juvenile Court.

Keeping Kids in School (KKIS) Program

The Sonoma County Probation Department received a three-year Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) to provide case management services for truant K-12 students in Sonoma County. The resulting program is Keeping Kids in School (KKIS).

KKIS case management services may involve spending time in the home helping parents develop parenting skills, making referrals to community providers of social services and health services or providing targeted financial support. Targeted financial support may be money for public transportation to school, or new tires for the car used to drive the student to school. The case managers develop close relationships with the students and families, fostering trust and cooperation.

KKIS began offering services in May 2015 and served over 170 families during the first year of funding. The grant now funds eight case managers serving students in 9 of the 40 school districts in Sonoma County.

The program contracts with Seneca Family Agencies for case management services. Seneca Family Agencies is a California-based nonprofit organization that provides wide-ranging services, including school-based and home-based case management. Referrals for KKIS services are also accepted from the Court. The total cost of a case manager in this program is \$70,000 per year. A single case manager can work with up to 15 families at a time.

The KKIS program is working to reduce truancy but it is only funded for a total of three years. Early indications are that the KKIS program is successful in both Petaluma City Schools and Santa Rosa City Schools.

Part of this grant is creating a lasting case management approach to dealing with truancy in Sonoma County Schools. Part of the emphasis of the program is to standardize how statistics about truancy and absenteeism are derived and reported.

Students in Sonoma County

There are 72,000 students enrolled in Sonoma County public schools. More than 50% of the students in Sonoma County qualify for free or reduced-cost school lunches, which is an indication of poverty. Many experts view poverty as a leading factor in truancy.

Petaluma Schools

The eight Petaluma elementary schools enrolled 2,409 students for the 2014-15 school year. 39% of these students were eligible to receive free or reduced-cost school lunches, an indication of poverty.

Petaluma has a program to improve attendance that includes all of the elements of the SARB process and SARTs (see Appendix A for details of this process).

The significant element in how the Petaluma elementary schools approach truancy is identifying truant-like behavior before it actually becomes truancy. Staff members at all of the schools are trained to spot and report, or deal with behavior that signals a problem with the student, before the truancy develops. Petaluma's KKIS case manager is not assigned to a specific school, but works with students in several elementary schools. The goal is to prevent truancy.

Petaluma uses a three tiered prevention, early intervention and intensive intervention program to monitor a student's position in the system. The student is continually monitored, and any change in behavior, grades or attendance triggers early intervention and prevention activities. The system-wide process is based on emphasis on attendance, targeted intervention and (if necessary) SARB meetings.

Petaluma schools also use the concept of an evidence-based triangle to monitor student progress and alert teachers and administrators to the need for intervention. The parts of the triangle are: attendance (no more than 5% excused absences), academic standing (grade-level equivalent skills), and behavior (no suspensions, or behavior problems). Weakness in any of these areas signals the site-staff to begin a prevention program.

These intervention and prevention activities have evolved over ten years and are followed by all schools within the district.

Petaluma's program proved to be successful in reducing truancy. The Petaluma City School's truancy prevention program and the training behind it are recommended by Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) staff as valuable to teachers and staff of other school districts.

Santa Rosa Schools

A total of 5,796 students were enrolled in the 14 elementary schools in the Santa Rosa City Schools District in the 2014-15 school year. In Santa Rosa 64% of these students were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, an indication of poverty. Santa Rosa elementary schools lost \$459,478 in funding because of truancy during the 2014-2015 school year.

Santa Rosa elementary schools have an uneven history of truancy. The truancy numbers reported to the California Office of Education vary dramatically over a period of 8 years. (See Table 1 for details.)

The Civil Grand Jury could not determine the cause for the sudden increase in truancy in Santa Rosa elementary schools. Several interviewees expressed theories about the increase:

1. The increase was caused by large turnover in staff. A significant number of new staff in the school district over a short period might overwhelm the district's ability to train them all in the protocol for dealing with truancy and truancy prevention.
2. According to Santa Rosa City Schools staff, they were not well equipped to respond to truancy when it occurred. Staff describes being overwhelmed by the number of students facing their School Attendance Review Teams (SARTs).
3. The Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) conducts training programs in preventing and changing truant behavior for school site-staff. Indications are that the Santa Rosa Schools District has not required staff to attend those programs.

Santa Rosa City Schools have just adopted a comprehensive program for improving attendance that includes all of the elements of the SART and SARB process. (see Appendix A for details about this process). Most of this approach deals with truancy after it has already happened.

The Santa Rosa program will also include staff training in developing a positive school climate, a program for students to make up for lost school days, and a campaign to alert parents about the critical role of attendance in predicting student success.

As part of the new approach to reducing truancy, the Santa Rosa City Schools District has created a short video to highlight the foundational nature of regular school attendance. This video presentation was prepared specifically for parents and is shown at the beginning and the end of Back-to-School Day.

KKIS case managers are assigned to specific schools and work with the students there. The district appears to have a critical shortage of staff who could address attendance problems. School Attendance Review Teams (SARTs) are only able to address the severe truancy cases and do not seem able to act on early signs of truant behavior in students as they do in Petaluma.

Table 1

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRUANCY					
TRUANCY RATES:	2010-11	2011-12	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Petaluma	9.23%	10.8%	8.7%	9.5%	10%
Santa Rosa	5.48%	32.1%	42.5%	41.1%	Not Avail.
Source of data: Sonoma County Office of Education					

Conclusions

5,793 students were enrolled in Santa Rosa elementary schools in the 2014-15 school year. In that year Santa Rosa had a truancy rate of 41.1%. That means that 2,381 Santa Rosa children did not get the education they need to compete in today's world.

The loss of ADA funds means that our community suffers. These truant children are more likely to drop out of school, commit crimes and live in poverty than those children who attend school regularly.

Santa Rosa Elementary schools will continue to lose ADA funding as long as the truancy rate remains high. The loss of money means fewer teachers and support staff and fewer programs designed to hold student attention and provide them with life skills.

FINDINGS

- F1. Petaluma City Schools has developed a comprehensive and successful truancy prevention program in their elementary schools.
- F2. Santa Rosa elementary schools have lost a substantial amount of ADA funding (\$459,478 in 2014-15 alone) because of high truancy rates.
- F3. The number of students living in poverty in Santa Rosa elementary schools is almost twice that of students in Petaluma elementary schools.
- F4. The Civil Grand Jury was unable to determine the cause for the sudden increase in truancy (from 5.48% to 32.1%) that began in the 2011-12 school year in Santa Rosa elementary schools.
- F5. Santa Rosa City Schools staff may not have been sufficiently trained in effective truancy prevention and reduction, possibly because of a high rate of staff turnover.
- F6. A case management approach to truancy used in the Keep Kids in School (KKIS) contract program has been successful for both Petaluma City Schools and Santa Rosa City Schools. The current grant expires in 2018.
- F7. A 1% reduction in the rate of truancy would result in additional ADA funding that could more than pay for one or more case managers for a school district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. The Santa Rosa City Schools' truancy program be modeled after the Petaluma City Schools' program to reflect an emphasis on truancy prevention. (F1 & F2)

- R2. A Santa Rosa City Schools' action plan for the implementation of these best practices used by Petaluma City Schools be completed by the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. (F1 & F2)
- R3. Santa Rosa City Schools require that all staff who interact with students attend the truancy training programs offered by Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE). Implementation of this recommendation should begin no later than the first semester of the 2017-18 school year.(F5)
- R4. The Petaluma and Santa Rosa City School Districts seek additional grants to continue the Keep Kids in School (or its equivalent) case management program in Sonoma County Schools. (F6)
- R5. Santa Rosa City Schools develop a budget and plan by the end of January 2018 to hire an adequate number of case managers to work with truants and their families. (F7)

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal code section 933.05, the Civil Grand Jury requires responses as follows:

R1-5. Santa Rosa City Schools superintendent

R4. Petaluma City Schools superintendent

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda, and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

APPENDIX A

School Attendance Review Board (SARB)

SARB is a State-sanctioned process created by legislation in California in 1975 to assist students with attendance and behavior problems. Section 48320 of the California Education Code was created to enhance the enforcement of compulsory education laws. The goal of the legislation is to divert students with school attendance or behavior problems from the Juvenile Justice system until all other available resources have been exhausted.

County SARBs are designed to reflect the community and must be composed of representatives of a variety of community organizations. A local SARB may be similarly composed.

SARB members are not paid for their services. They are acting within the scope of their roles in the community.

The SARB process is designed to enhance the ability of the school to intervene early when poor attendance occurs. SARB results show early intervention to be an effective strategy for improving attendance.

The Members Of A SARB: representatives of the following entities, as appropriate

- School districts
- County probation department
- County social services department
- Sonoma County Office of Education
- School superintendents
- Members from law enforcement
- Community-based youth service centers
- School guidance personnel
- Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA)
- School or County health care
- School, County or community mental health program
- County District Attorney's office
- County public defender's office
- A parent
- Other members as needed

The SARB Process

The SARB process consists of three distinct levels of intervention when truancy occurs:

1. Early Intervention: California law requires that parents be notified when a student has been truant on three occasions during the school year. The notification is usually made by a formal letter from the school that informs the parent of the truancy and of the parent's obligation to compel attendance. This letter must outline the resources available to the parent for accomplishing this. The letter also outlines the penalties for failure to compel the student's attendance.

Classifying the student as a truant does not occur unless this notification has taken place. This letter is the earliest intervention required by law.

A second letter is required if the student has another unexcused absence. In addition, the School Attendance Review Team (SART), attendance Supervisor or other authorized school official should meet with the student and a parent to determine the cause and possible solutions for addressing the truancy. The SART is a less formal process than a SARB. It can pull together resources from the community to address truant behavior.

A student is classified as a habitual truant if they have been reported as truant three or more times during the school year and the school has attempted to meet with the student and parents.

2. Referral to SARB: Every school in the County is served by one of eight SARBs and may refer a truancy case to its respective SARB. The SARB process is a legally structured process that provides the basis for a court referral if mediation is unsuccessful.

The SARB reviews the specific circumstances of each truancy case and determines the appropriate community resources that are necessary to support the student and the student's in order to improve attendance.

The SARB has the ability to address many of the issues that are involved in truant behavior. Students who are disruptive in the classroom or chronically absent may also be referred to the SARB.

3. Referral to the District Attorney: A student who has missed 10% or more of class time in a school year because of truancy may be deemed a chronic truant. The SARB may determine that community resources are not adequate to address this truant behavior. At that time the SARB may choose to refer the case to the District Attorney.

The District Attorney's office can compel parents to meet and attempt further interventions, or it may petition the court to intervene. The Judge in the Truancy Court has broad discretionary power to address truancy. The strategy is to avoid criminalizing the behavior. The goal is to address the causes of that behavior. Prosecution of the parents of truants is a last resort and virtually unheard of.

SCOE's Role in Preventing Truancy and Absenteeism

The Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) has established a Truancy Mediation Program and oversees the County SARB. The County SARB meets quarterly to:

- Promote interagency and community cooperation and communication in addressing serious attendance problems
- Identify resources and services to address attendance or behavior problems of students
- Recommend policies and strategies for truancy prevention, intervention and mediation/prosecution
- Promote public education regarding truancy
- Develop informational brochures, handbooks and forms to assist local SARBs
- Establish policies, criteria, forms and procedures for local SARB referral of cases to the District Attorney

GLOSSARY - Definitions Of Levels Of Students' Absence From School as Defined In The California Education Code

- Truant – misses thirty minutes or more of a school day without a valid excuse on 3 separate days during the school year
- Habitual Truant – five or more trancies occur in the school year
- Chronic Truant – trancies account for 10% or more of the school year
- Absentee – absences total 10% or more of the school year at any time of the current school year

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: Elementary School Truancy

Report Date: June 19, 2017

Response by: Diann Kitamura

Title: Superintendent

Agency/Department Name: Santa Rosa City Schools

FINDINGS: F2, F3, F4, F5, F6 and F7

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: _____

Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed with an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS: R1, R2, F3, F4 and R5

Recommendation (s) numbered: R3, R4, R5 See attached Summary

have been implemented. (Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

Recommendation(s) numbered: R1, R2 See attached Summary and Timeline

have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. (Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

Recommendation(s) numbered: _____

require(s) further analysis. (Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, an a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury report.)

Recommendation(s) numbered: _____

will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable. (Attach an explanation.)

Date: 8/23/17

Signed: 

Number of pages attached: 3

Response to Santa Rosa Grand Jury

Narrative Response

Santa Rosa City Schools is appreciative of the time and effort that the Grand Jury made during this last school year. The SRCS employees who participated in the interviews found the Grand Jury very sincerely interested in improving the attendance rates throughout Santa Rosa Schools. SRCS welcomes any support from the community to bring to the forefront the importance of school attendance.

For many years now, Santa Rosa City School Board of Education has recognized the importance of an emphasis on improved school attendance. Through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the School Board has allocated increased funds to support improved attendance. The Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) has incorporated this importance through the second LCAP goal: *"Increase student wellness and family engagement through the full-service community model."* Specifically, there has been allocations each year of over \$955,000.00 for a position titled Family Engagement Worker" at every school site. One of the duties of this position is to assist families that are having struggles coming to school.

Another example of the District's recognition of the importance of attendance has been a district "Truancy Intervention Committee." This committee was established in February 2016, and for the last two years has developed recommendations for attendance improvements. The committee has broad representation from staff members from throughout the organization. One of the activities that came from this committee was critical for the District when SRCS began its partnership with the Keeping Kids In School (KKIS). KKIS was implemented in 4 schools, and the District has worked to improve attendance at these pilot schools. In a report to the SRCS School Board on May 11, 2016, the program showed that the truancy rates at 161 days of school, decreased from 29.7% to 27.2% at Albert Biella Elementary, and from 33.9% to 25.2% at Steele Lane Elementary. Since this data was collected, KKIS is also partnering with Hilliard Comstock Middle school, and we expect the same positive results. SRCS appreciates the Grand Jury recognizing the importance of this type of partnership, and indeed it has become a case management model used in our upcoming Project SAIL.

Project SAIL (School Attendance Improves Learning), is the next step in SRCS' attendance improvements. SRCS was the only school district that received funding from the California Department of Education for a three-year grant to reduce the rates of chronic absenteeism. While the Grand Jury focused on truancy, nationwide the emphasis for the most effective use of resources is the shift from truancy to absenteeism in general. Truancies focus on just one subset of the overall student absenteeism picture. In fact, a truancy focus does not account for the overall picture that often occurs in schools. There are many reasons that students are absent from school, but not "truant." Some brief examples of this can be family vacations, family appointments. Despite not being considered "Truant," students are nevertheless missing valuable instructional time. Project SAIL is developed to address these concerns. Over the three years, a team of attendance experts will train schools sites on case management systems and processes to not only hold families accountable for school attendance but to also help them seek support for issues that may have that can prevent school attendance.

Attendance rates have risen in Santa Rosa City Schools, despite the figures for truancies, the latest attendance figures showed a 1.78% increase in 2016-17. Notwithstanding these improvements, we know the work ahead for SRCS is challenging. However, results have begun to demonstrate that SRCS is moving in the right direction. The Santa Rosa Grand Jury Report comes at an opportune time

when a spotlight needs to be shone on the need to improve “Chronic Absenteeism” which we believe will also improve truancy rates identified by the Grand Jury.

Response to Findings

F2: Santa Rosa elementary schools have lost a substantial amount of ADA funding (\$459,478 in 2014-15 alone) because of high truancy rates.

Certainly, the loss of ADA from all absences, not just truancy leaves districts with necessary improvements. Santa Rosa Elementary has certainly experienced lost ADA. Project SAIL will be a substantial step moving forward as SRCS addresses all “Chronic Absenteeism” which includes Truancies.

F3. The number of students living in poverty in Santa Rosa elementary schools is almost twice that of students in Petaluma elementary schools.

SRCS Elementary District has approximately 64% of our families determined as Socioeconomically Disadvantaged. This high level of demographics brings challenges to SRCS that is not prevalent in Petaluma. SRCS has designated resources to families through our LCAP including Family Engagement Facilitators, Elementary Counselors, and Restorative Specialist. The Project SAIL grant is also designed to support socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

F4. The Civil Grand Jury was unable to determine the cause of the sudden increase in truancy (from 5.48% to 32.1%) that began in the 2011-12 school year in Santa Rosa elementary schools.

SRCS pointed out this discrepancy when it met with the Grand Jury. Because this data is over four years old, we cannot be confident about the data.

F5. Santa Rosa City Schools staff may not have been sufficiently trained in effective truancy prevention and reduction, possibly because of a high rate of staff turnover.

This finding is made with anecdotal data from some employees “theories.” Training is always a key factor in any system. Staff “turnover” is a vague cause. In the last ten years in Child Welfare and Attendance, there has been a total of three Directors in that position. This does not suggest high “turnover.” The high rate of truancy has been an important system improvement that continues to be addressed through the LCAP and now through the Project SAIL Grant.

F6. A case management approach to truancy used in the Keeping Kids in School (KKIS) contract program has been successful for both Petaluma City Schools and Santa Rosa City Schools. The current grant expires in 2018.

The Keeping Kids in Schools (KKIS) grant and case management approach has been an important strategy to reduce truancy. Case Management is a foundation of the Project SAIL Grant. Case Management practices will be developed and outlined in the months ahead as the Grant develops.

F7. A 1% in the rate of truancy would result in additional ADA funding that could more than pay for one or more case managers for a school district.

ADA recovery through the Project SAIL Grant will certainly bring in more revenues to the District. After the life of the grant, these savings can be used for a continued program to assist school sites to manage all forms of Absenteeism including Truancies.

Recommendations

The civil grand Jury recommends that:

R1. The Santa Rosa City Schools' truancy program be modeled after the Petaluma City Schools' program to reflect an emphasis on truancy prevention. (F1 & F2)

As part of the Project SAIL Grant, there are resources to look at "model" programs identified by the California Department of Education. While Petaluma was not identified by C.D.E., the Project SAIL Team will add it to their upcoming visits as they review best practices to address Chronic Absenteeism. A visit from our *Director of Attendance* to Petaluma City Schools has been scheduled on 8/18/17 with Assistant Superintendent, Dave Rose. Also, our program will continue with monthly SARB hearings that were implemented in the spring of the 2016-2017 school year. When the Project SAIL Team is fully hired there will be two model school site visits, and Petaluma will be one of those locations. This will occur during before December 21, 2017.

R2. A Santa Rosa City Schools' action plan for the implementation of these best practices used by Petaluma City Schools be completed by the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. (F1 & F2)

Our newly assigned *Director of Attendance* is currently in the process of formulating an action plan based on the best practices used by Petaluma City Schools. The plan will be completed by December of 2017. Components of the plan are already being put into place such as community service announcements, and a YouTube video is being updated on the importance of attendance with a forward from our Superintendent Diane Kitamura which will be shown at all Santa Rosa City Schools during our Back to School Nights, and will also be available on our District website. The full implementation will occur after the Project Sail Team has been fully staffed by December 21, 2017.

R3. Santa Rosa City Schools require that all staff who interact with students attend the truancy training programs offered by Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE). Implementation of this recommendation should begin no later than the first semester of the 2017-18 school year. (F5)

The Director of Attendance will be fully trained (beginning with today's meeting, 8/11/17, with Lisa Valente, Program Manager for KKIS) to facilitate staff training for those who interact with students during the first semester of the 2017-18 school year.

R4. The Petaluma and Santa Rosa City School District seek additional grants to continue the Keeping Kids in School (or its equivalent) case management program in Sonoma County Schools. (F6)

SRCS has met this recommendation as a recipient of the SAIL grant. In fact, SRCS is the only school district in Sonoma County that has been awarded Grant money for the reduction of Chronic Absenteeism. The KKIS grant expires in December 2017 however, funding will continue by Sonoma County Probation through the 2017-18 school year.

R5. Santa Rosa City Schools develop a budget and plan by the end of January 2018 to hire an adequate number of case managers to work with truants and their families. (F7)

The Project SAIL program was approved by the SRCS School Board at its meeting on June 28, 2017. (Board Agenda available at <http://www.srcs.k12.ca.us/District/SB/Pages/default.aspx>)

Respectfully submitted by,
Steve Mizera
Assistant Superintendent, Student and Family Services
Submitted August 21, 2017

PROOF OF SERVICE

I declare that:

I am a citizen of the United States and a resident of the County of Sonoma. I am over the age of eighteen years and am not a party to the within action; my business address is 211 Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

On the date set forth below, I served the attached **Letter** addressed to the Foreperson of the Sonoma County Grand Jury and the interested parties in said action, by placing a true copy thereof as indicated below, addressed as follows:

Name: Foreperson
Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury

Address: P.O. Box 5109
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

☒ **By Mail:** I enclosed the document(s) in a sealed envelope/package addressed to the person(s) at the address listed above and placed the envelope for collection and mailing following our ordinary business practices.

☐ **By Fax Transmission:** I faxed a copy of the document(s) to the person(s) at the fax number listed above. No error was reported on the fax transmittal report.

☐ **By _____ Express Service:** I caused such envelope to be delivered to _____ Express for overnight courier service to the addressee(s), pursuant to CCP § 1013.

I declare under the penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on Date, August 23, 2017 at Santa Rosa, California.

Steve Mizera

PROOF OF SERVICE

I declare that:

I am a citizen of the United States and a resident of the County of Sonoma. I am over the age of eighteen years and am not a party to the within action; my business address is 211 Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

On the date set forth below, I served the attached **Letter** addressed to the Sonoma County Grand Jury and the interested parties in said action, by placing a true copy thereof as indicated below, addressed as follows:

Name: Honorable Raima Ballinger
Presiding Superior Court Judge

Address: Hall of Justice
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

(X) **By Mail:** I enclosed the document(s) in a sealed envelope/package addressed to the person(s) at the address listed above and placed the envelope for collection and mailing following our ordinary business practices.

() **By Fax Transmission:** I faxed a copy of the document(s) to the person(s) at the fax number listed above. No error was reported on the fax transmittal report.

() **By _____ Express Service:** I caused such envelope to be delivered to _____ Express for overnight courier service to the addressee(s), pursuant to CCP § 1013.

I declare under the penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on Date, August 23, 2017 at Santa Rosa, California.

Steve Mizera

Response Requirements

Following are pertinent excerpts from the California Penal Code concerning responses to Civil Grand Jury reports:

Section 933(c): "No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body, and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head and any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices. One copy shall be placed on file with the applicable grand jury final report by, and in control of the currently impaneled grand jury, where it shall be maintained for a minimum of five years."

Section 933.05(a): "For purposes of subdivision (b) of section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following: (1) The respondent agrees with the finding. (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reason therefor."

Section 933.05(b): "For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 033, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following actions: (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action. (2) The recommendation has not yet been implement4ed, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation. (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report. (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor."

Section 933.05©: "However, if a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only

those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.”

Section 933.05(f): “A grand jury shall provide to the affected agency a copy of the portion of the grand jury report relating to that person or entity two working days prior to its public release and after the approval of the presiding judge. No officer, agency, department, or governing body of a public agency shall disclose any contents of the report prior to the public release of the final report.”

Section 933(a) provides in part that “for 45 days at the end of the (grand jury) term, the foreperson and his or her designees shall, upon reasonable notice, be available to clarify the recommendations of the report.”