

San Mateo Union High School District

Kevin Skelly, Ph.D., Superintendent

Kirk Black, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent, Human Resources and Student Services

Yancy Hawkins, CPA, Associate Superintendent and Chief Business Officer

Julia Kempkey, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction



October 20, 2021

The Honorable Amarra A. Lee
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Jenarda Dubois
Hall of Justice
400 County Center; 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: Response to the 2020-2021 Grand Jury Report entitled “Building a Racially & Ethnically Diverse Teaching Workforce: A Challenge for Our Schools.”

Dear Judge Lee:

The San Mateo Union High School District (the “District”) has received and reviewed the 2020-2021 Grand Jury Report entitled “Building a Racially & Ethnically Diverse Teaching Workforce: A Challenge for Our Schools.” We appreciate the Grand Jury’s interest in this matter. Having reviewed and considered the Grand Jury’s Findings and Recommendations, the District responds below pursuant to section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

Please be advised that the District presented the Grand Jury Report to its Board of Trustees, and the District’s Board approved these responses, on October 28, 2021.

Findings:

- 1. In San Mateo County, the ethnic diversity of teachers does not closely mirror that of the students they teach. A countywide demographic report, generated by the San Mateo County Office of Education, including teacher/student ethnicity, would be of value to all school districts in their recruitment efforts.**

With respect to the statement that “[i]n San Mateo County, the ethnic diversity of teachers does not closely mirror that of the students they teach[,]” the District lacks information to fully agree or disagree with this Finding given that it did not conduct the research related to this Report. However, the District accepts the Grand Jury’s Finding for the purposes of this response.

With respect to the statement that “[a] countywide demographic report, generated by the San Mateo County Office of Education, including teacher/student ethnicity, would be of value to all school districts in their recruitment efforts, the District agrees with this Finding.

- 2. Teachers frequently leave schools in San Mateo County for higher pay in other districts, to the detriment of the students being taught.**

The District agrees with the Finding that teachers leave schools for higher pay. The District lacks information that this is necessarily detrimental to students.

3. School districts in San Mateo County compete nationally for a limited pool of teacher candidates; those diminishing candidate pools result in limited-teacher diversity.

The District lacks information to fully agree or disagree with this Finding

4. Cost of living and housing affordability in San Mateo County are two major barriers which continue to impede our school districts' ability to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse teacher workforce.

The District agrees with this finding.

5. Public-school districts in the County are not permitted by State law to consider race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in hiring. It is common practice for districts to interview all candidates who meet the qualifications for an open teaching position, further complicating hiring to meet diversity goals.

The District agrees that all candidates who qualify for an open teaching position are considered. Not all are interviewed as paper screening is employed to fairly and legally rank the qualified candidates for interviews.

6. The San Mateo County Office of Education has an opportunity to articulate and guide an educational vision for the entire County to the benefit of school districts and without direct involvement in individual school district staffing and policy decisions.

The District agrees with this finding.

7. Teacher residency and internship programs take time to produce results but school districts could benefit by increased participation in these programs.

The District agrees with this finding.

8. School districts invest varying degrees of effort into the process of recruiting a diverse teaching pool. While some rely on traditional strategies, others have found creative solutions to increase diversity in the teaching workforce.

The District lacks information to fully agree or disagree with this finding given that it did not conduct the research related to this Report. However, SMUHSD does invest varying degrees of effort into the process of recruiting a diverse teaching pool.

9. The San Mateo County School Boards Association Equity Network, created in 2019-20, has been, for much of its existence, restricted to meeting online due to the pandemic. As a result, the group has had limited opportunities to work collaboratively to help build capacity for thoughtful, equity-driven decisions. Consequently, as of January 2021, their ability to both identify and deliver on stated outcomes has been limited.

The District lacks information to fully agree or disagree with this Finding given that it did not conduct the research related to this Report. However, the District accepts the Grand Jury's Finding for the purposes of this response.

10. School district superintendents and human resource personnel in San Mateo County agree that students of color benefit from having educators who look like them but are not always certain how to recruit or retain teachers of color.

The District agrees with this finding.

11. A majority of school district strategic plans and other aspirational documents do not address teacher diversity nor are those plans easily accessible by the community.

The District lacks information to fully agree or disagree with this Finding given that it did not conduct the research related to this Report. However, SMUHSD's aspirational documents (the District does not have a formal strategic plan) do address teacher and staff diversity goals and are easily accessible by the community.

Recommendations:

[NOTE: In responding to each Recommendation, the District must indicate that either: (1) the Recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action, (2) the Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation; (3) that the Recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame (not to exceed six months) for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the governing body of the public agency when applicable; or (4) the Recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable, with an explanation therefore.]

- 1. By June 30, 2022, school districts should include a commitment to teacher diversity in strategic plan, goals and/or objectives, using the strategic plan developed by the San Mateo County Office of Education as a guide. These aspirational documents should be publicly and prominently displayed on their websites.**

The District has implemented this Recommendation several times in recent years through aspirational documents and committee recommendations (the District does not have a formal strategic plan). Both the District's annual goals and LCAP has teacher diversity goals contained within and are accessible on the District website.

District Goals: <https://www.smuhsd.org/Page/14084>

District LCAP: <https://www.smuhsd.org/Page/3584>

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Kevin Skelly, Ph.D.
Superintendent
San Mateo Union High School District