

Sept. 21, 2009

Don Kawashima, Foreperson  
2008-2009 Civil Grand Jury  
C/O The Honorable Jamie Jacobs-May  
Presiding Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court  
191 North First Street  
San Jose, CA 95113

Dear Mr. Kawashima:

I am responding to your June 24, 2009 letter to the Santa Clara County Board of Education and the Santa Clara County Office of Education, regarding the Grand Jury Report, "Who Really Benefits?"

As required, our responses are submitted in compliance with California Penal Code 933.05. However, as you review our submission, please keep in mind that the County Office of Education and the county's 31 school districts are separate entities, and in many cases operate differently from district to district.

As a preface to the response, I feel it is important to point out that the Grand Jury's report, "Who Really Benefits from Education Dollars?" really centers on the issue of school district leadership. Experts in the education field widely agree that effective leadership is perhaps the most crucial aspect of a school district's ability to offer quality education to its students.

At the same time, districts face a considerable handicap in their ability to attract and retain quality leadership. Members of boards of education are expected to possess expertise in a wide range of complex educational issues, devote considerable time to attending board and committee meetings, and withstand considerable public pressure in one of the most sensitive areas of community life.

Similarly, top administrators oversee districts that in Santa Clara County employ thousands of staff and manage millions of dollars in revenues and expenditures, while at the same time facing those same public pressures. It is not surprising that the average tenure of an urban district superintendent is only about three years.

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Everyone wants the best and the brightest people making important decisions for their schools. At the same time, especially given budget constraints in California, attracting those people is extremely difficult. News media and education data analysis centers have studied the situation and documented the shortage of qualified candidates to fill these positions.

Each of the responses to your findings and recommendations is guided by these overriding issues of leadership, and districts' continuing quest to place excellent leaders in our community's schools.

Should you have any questions related to this matter please do not hesitate to contact me at (408) 453-6511.

Sincerely,



Charles Weis, Ph.D.  
County Superintendent of Schools

Enclosure