



Liberty Union High School District

20 Oak Street

Brentwood, CA 94513

Phone: (925) 634-2166 Fax (925) 634-1687

Eric L. Volta, Superintendent

August 8, 2016

Michael Simmons, Foreperson
Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury
725 Court Street
P.O. Box 911
Martinez, Ca 94553-0091

Re: Response to the 2013-2014 Contra Costa Grand Jury Report #1615, "Truancy and Chronic Absence in Contra Costa County Schools?"

Dear Foreperson Conlin:

Pursuant to California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05 the President of the Governing Board of the Liberty Union School District files this comment with regard to the 2015-2016 Contra Costa County Grand Jury Report #1615

Finding #3

The SART and SARB programs help maintain and improve attendance rates, thereby increasing ADA funding for each school in the District and the COE.

Respondent agrees.

Finding #4

Not all County School districts comply with the requirement found in California EC section 15497 that each district collect, track and report its chronically absent rates in an annual LCAP.

Partially disagree. LUHSD complies with EC 15497 as part of its LCAP process.

Finding #6

To identify students with attendance issues and quickly address these issues, the school district needs complete and accurate data about attendance and a well-developed support structure.

Respondent agrees

Finding # 7

The School district has its own software system for collecting attendance information and its own process and standards for collecting, storing and utilizing the truancy attendance information gathered, which are not necessarily the same as other districts in the County

Respondent agrees

Finding #8

Without a centralized attendance system or compatible software among school districts, it is challenging to get a complete picture of a student's attendance profile and patterns of multiple years or across districts.

Respondent agrees

Finding #9

Some school districts have little communication with other school districts and the COE about best practices, common achievement goals, and best data systems regarding attendance.

Respondent agrees

Finding #10

The California Attorney General, Kamala Harris 2015 report, "In-School and on Track", indicates that over 80% of chronically absent students in kindergarten and 1st grade are unable to read at grade level by 3rd grade. These students are four times more likely to drop out than children when can read at grade level.

Given the information in the report and using no other sources, the respondent agrees

Finding #13

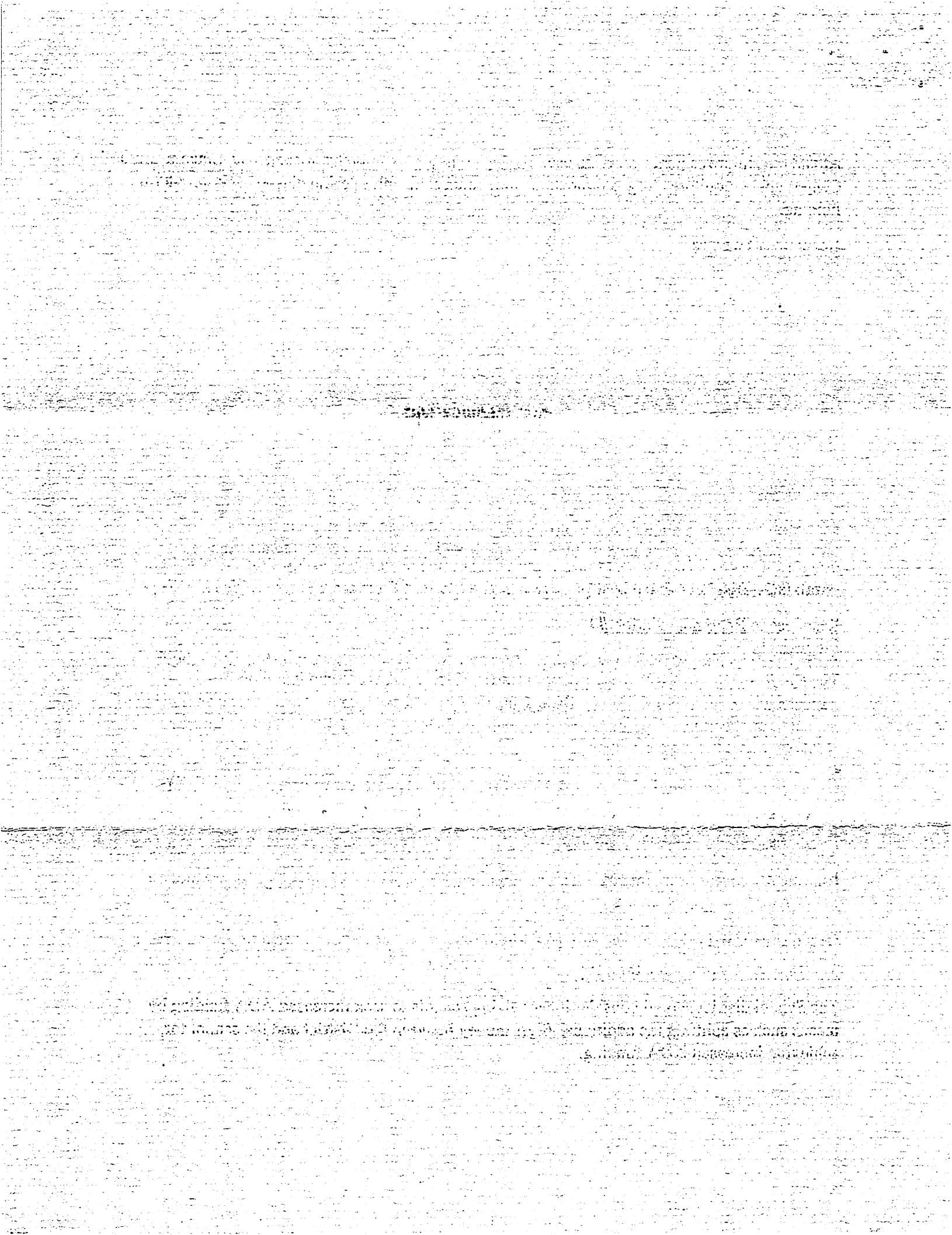
Chronically absent or truant students, who do not get back on track before age 18 are more likely to drop out of high school before graduation.

Given the information in the report and using no other sources, the respondent agrees

Finding #14

Parent and Truancy Courts offer attendance support and are one of the last opportunities to alter a student's attendance behavior.

Respondent agrees



Finding #15

Attendance improvement programs used by the County's Juvenile Courts, such as Lincoln Child Center, ankle monitors, drug and mental health counselors and tutoring classes lack long-term funding.

Respondent agrees

Finding #16

The school districts that have Truancy or Resource Officers who connect directly with students, help get chronically absent or truant students back on track.

Respondent agrees

Recommendations

Response to Recommendation #6

All school Districts should consider participating in the Attendance Works program.

The Recommendation requires further analysis. We are currently working with Aeries to look at their Aeries Analytics software for real time data. Additionally, contact has been made to iResult, LLC, to also look at their "dashboard" software that links all district databases. Districts share best practices at the Student Services County Office meetings.

Response to Recommendation #9

School District should raise parent awareness concerning how to prevent a student's school absence from affecting ADA funding or the student's truancy rate.

LUHSD has made efforts to implement this recommendation through the LCAP process of having additional parent meetings on our campuses. We have not linked attendance to ADA funding as our experience shows that parents' concerns for their students' academic progress outweighs their concern for district budgets. In fact, anecdotally some disgruntled parents have pulled their student out of school to "punish the district" financially.

Response to Recommendation #12

Each school district should consider designating staff to collect track and analyze attendance data in order to follow up on students that appear to be at risk and identifying funds to do so.

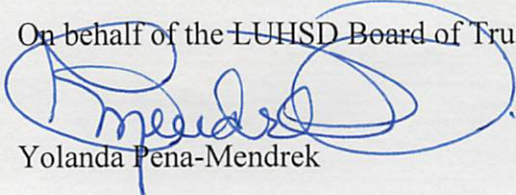
LUHSD has implemented this recommendation.

Response to Recommendation #14

The School district should consider incentivizing schools to seek increased ADA funding by means such as splitting the additional ADA money between the District and the school for achieving increased ADA funding.

LUHSD has made attempts to implement the recommendation by giving financial resources to the school sites to reward students for good attendance via the LCAP process. We have not considered motivating the school sites financially for higher ADA as we believe the impetus for improvement should be on academic achievement as opposed to financial gain.

On behalf of the LUHSD Board of Trustees,



Yolanda Pena-Mendrek

President