



# JOHN SWETT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Charles Miller, Ed. D.  
*Superintendent*

June 27th, 2018

Civil Grand Jury - Foreperson  
725 Court Street  
P. O. Box 431  
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

To Whom It May Concern:

The John Swett Unified School District is in receipt of your letter dated June 12, 2018 and a copy of Grand Jury Report No. 1810, "Chronic Absenteeism and West Contra Costa County School District" by the 2017-2018 Contra Costa Grand Jury.

Listed below are the responses to your findings and recommendations:

## FINDINGS

**Finding #1:** The public does not have access to monthly attendance and chronic absenteeism data because districts do not consistently post this data on their websites.

**JSUSD Response:** The respondent agrees with the finding.

**Finding #2:** ADA rates do not adequately indicate chronic absentee levels. Although the school districts in West County maintain ADA rates of around 95%, individual school chronic absenteeism rates range from 2.3% to 30.1%, with an average of 14.6%.

**JSUSD Response:** The respondent agrees with the finding.

**Finding #3:** Average daily attendance is used to calculate funding for school districts in California. School districts can increase their future ADA funds by reducing their chronic absenteeism rates.

**JSUSD Response:** The respondent agrees with the finding.

**Finding #4:** The school districts in West County have had success improving attendance rates by building relationships with students and families.

**JSUSD Response:** The respondent agrees with the finding.

**Finding #6:** School administrators in West County believe that incentives such as gifts, awards, and school-wide recognition motivate students to come to school.



**JSUSD Response:** The respondent agrees with the finding.

**Finding #7:** Communities are generally not aware of the CCCOE Attendance Awareness Every School Day Counts campaign slogan because it is not broadly advertised on school marquees, school websites, and district websites.

**JSUSD Response:** The respondent disagrees with the finding. The CCCOE Attendance Awareness Every School Day Counts campaign slogan is broadly advertised on school marquees, school websites, and district websites. There are times where other events will take occupy the same space on school marquees and websites. However, the CCCOE Attendance Awareness Every School Day Counts campaign slogan is usually the default content on school marquees and websites.

**Finding #8:** . One of the barriers faced by West County districts in increasing kindergarten attendance is the belief held by some parents and guardians that kindergarten is not educationally important because it is not compulsory.

**JSUSD Response:** The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. Not as many parents are aware of the non-compulsory nature of kindergarten attendance as we may think. We have had parents express surprise when they learn that kindergarten is not compulsory. In many cases, where there are concerns about chronic absences for kindergarten students, we learn that the issue of compulsory attendance is not the overriding factor impacting the child's attendance. Usually other factors are at play.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation #1:** The Governing Boards of the WCCUSD and the JSUSD should consider including previous year baseline rates, in addition to improvement goals, for attendance and chronic absenteeism in their LCAP Goal 4 by the next LCAP summary deadline.

**JSUSD Response:** The recommendation has been implemented. John Swett Unified School District's 2018-19 LCAP now contains baseline data integrated into Goal 4, page 77.

**Recommendation #2:** The Governing Boards of the WCCUSD and the JSUSD should consider requesting the district superintendents to post monthly attendance data on their websites by the beginning of the 2018 fall semester.

**JSUSD Response:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented. We are in the process of switching over to a new website provider and will be determining a way to post monthly attendance data. We will spend the first half (until December 2018) of the 2018-19 school year identifying what data sources to use and the best format for highlighting the data.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Respectfully,



**Charles Miller, Ed.D.**

Superintendent, John Swett Unified School District