



NEWPORT-MESA Unified School District

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August 26, 2008

Honorable Nancy Wieben-Stock, Presiding Judge
Orange County Superior Court C1
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Responses to Orange County Grand Jury Report "Are Charter Schools Getting Passing Grades"

Dear Judge Wieben-Stock:

Below are the findings and responses required from the Newport-Mesa Unified School District.

FINDINGS

F - 1: Orange County charter schools meet the intent of the Education Code 47600-47664 by providing parents and pupils a choice in educational opportunities, emphasizing specific learning experiences, and aiding at-risk or academically low-achieving students.

Response: We agree with this finding. We are aware of the Education Code and its outlined purpose of charter schools.

F - 2: The number of charter schools in Orange County is not growing commensurate with the overall growth of charter schools in California.

Response: We agree with this finding. Newport-Mesa offers a variety of alternative education programs for our students as do many Orange County school districts. Parents continue to express satisfaction with their public schools which could be a factor counter balancing the growth of charters in some areas. Additionally, many Orange County schools are experiencing a decline in student enrollment in certain areas.

F - 3: The Orange County school districts' oversight costs, in some districts, exceed the authorized 1% reimbursement.

Response: We agree with this finding, however, there are no charter schools within Newport-Mesa's boundaries for us to properly gauge this issue with our own experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R-1: Orange County school districts and Orange County Superintendent of Schools continue to offer expanded choices for educational opportunities, as required in the State Education Code, by utilizing charter schools as an option to provide additional choices, especially for at-risk and academically low-achieving students.

Response: We agree with the finding. We uphold the provisions of the Education Code and individually evaluate every charter request against the approval criteria provided in state law, regulations and case law.

R-2: The chartering authorities should follow the intent of the legislature by encouraging the establishment of charter schools by granting more charter school petitions provided they meet the State requirements.

Response: We agree with the finding. We evaluate each charter petition against the approval criteria provided in state law, regulations and case law. To date, the charter proposals submitted to N-MUSD have not met the criteria necessary to obtain Board approval. One proposal was appealed to the Orange County Department of Education and the California Department of Education. Both agencies denied the petitioners appeal.

R-3: Local school districts provide adequate oversight of charter schools even though State law does not allow for full reimbursement for such oversight.

Response: We agree with this finding, however, there are no charter schools within Newport-Mesa's boundaries for us to properly gauge this issue with our own experiences.

A copy and an electronic format of these responses are being mailed separately to the Orange County Grand Jury.

Respectfully,



Jeffrey Hubbard, Ed.D.
Superintendent