



Joseph M. Farley, Ed.D.
Superintendent

July 23, 2008

Nancy Wieben Stock
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, California 92701

Dear Judge Wieben Stock,

Regarding: Orange County Grand Jury report, "Are Charter Schools Getting Passing Grades?"

You have requested that superintendents of Orange County school districts respond to the findings and recommendations of the Orange County Grand Jury report which is entitled, "Are Charter Schools Getting Passing Grades?" As superintendent of the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD), I respectfully submit the following responses:

Finding 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: Although the AUHSD does not oversee any charter schools, I believe that such schools provide parents and pupils with educational options, opportunities, and experiences that may aid at-risk or academically low-achieving students.

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

Response: I do not have data to substantiate this finding. If this statement is correct, there may be a number of explanations for the discrepancy in growth rates of charter schools throughout California. As an example, rural zones of California may create greater opportunities for the development of charter schools, while urban zones have more traditional school options for students.

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

Response: I do not have data to substantiate this finding. However, my experience with oversight of several charter schools in another district suggests that the actual cost of providing oversight to charter schools exceeds the authorized 1% reimbursement.

Recommendation 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 academically and low-achieving students.

Response: While there is agreement that charter schools may offer additional educational options and opportunities for students, this recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted now, or in the near future. The AUHSD is implementing a variety of other programs and approaches to address the educational needs of its students.

Recommendation 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: I partially agree with this finding. There is agreement that chartering authorities should follow the intent of the legislature by actively considering any charter school petitions that are submitted, provided that they meet the state requirements. However, there is disagreement on the statement concerning the active encouragement of charter schools. Except for district-initiated charter schools, it is not the role of a district to encourage the formation of independent charters that would ultimately be overseen by the district.

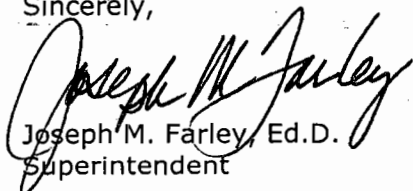
Recommendation 3: Local school districts provide adequate oversight of charter schools even though State law does not allow for full reimbursement for such oversight.

Response: I would agree that most local school districts would provide adequate oversight of charter schools, even though state law does not allow for full reimbursement for such oversight. It would be difficult to declare that all districts would provide such oversight; however, as I am not familiar with the skills, interests, commitments, conflicts, and other conditions that potentially impact oversight of charters in other school systems.

I hope that these responses provide you, and the Orange County Grand Jury, with the background data and perspective that you sought in regard to charter schools in Orange County.

Please contact me at 714-999-3501, if you need additional information.

Sincerely,


Joseph M. Farley, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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