



2009 – 2010
Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report
Liberty High School

Prepared By: Schools Committee

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Introduction:

Pursuant to California Penal Code section 925, on November 16, 2009, the Madera County Grand Jury visited Liberty High School of the Golden Valley Unified School District. The district superintendent and the principal gave a briefing covering the mission, staffing, operations, resources, and procedures of the school. The learning director later joined the briefing and participated in the tour of the campus.

Findings:

Liberty High School, a California Distinguished School, is the only secondary school in the district. The current enrollment is 575, distributed between grades 9 through 12. The current campus is 10 years old, very well maintained, and well equipped. When the communities comprising the district requested separation from Madera Unified School District, a bond measure was passed to support the initial construction; a further multi-million dollar bond measure was passed to complete construction as well as permit renovation of existing facilities. Plans exist for early construction of a new science building as well as completion of the football stadium.

The staff consists of 28 full time equivalent credentialed faculty, 4 administrators, and 2 office staff. The school nurse and psychologist are shared district assets with limited time on campus. Budget pressures, including an approximate 18% reduction in average daily attendance (ADA) funds resulted in a loss of a part-time teacher in home economics. The school has worked to augment the staffing with grants, cooperative agreements with community resources, and building on a strong relationship with parents and alumni. Class sizes are manageable with 28-30 students. Transportation is provided for students based upon distance from bus stops; parent volunteers provide safety patrols at the stops.

Campus security planning is well developed and enforced. It is a closed campus; all visitors must sign in with the administrative office. Security cameras are installed. Rooms not in use are locked. Safety and disaster plans are written and exercised, including a district wide drill conducted last May with the assistance of the Madera County Sheriff's Department and Fire Department, as well as the California Highway Patrol and the Pistoiresi Ambulance Service.

Student responsibilities for attendance, appearance, and deportment are spelled out in detail in the Student/Parent Handbook. The jury noted, during the tour, the overall positive appearance of the students. The school has created incentive programs for discipline, attendance, and academic performance. Working with local Army recruiters, the school has developed a program for students to learn how to deal with harassment and bullying.

The principal reported that all students passed the California High School Exit examination, and that students who remain in the school for the full four-year program uniformly graduate. In addition to the strong academic programs, evidenced by an API score of 821 (state goal is 800) on standardized state testing, the school offers a range of vocational and elective courses. The Sports Medicine Training class is one such program. There are courses related to agriculture; especially interesting is a cooperative effort being developed with the water resources board to develop student knowledge and interest in agricultural water issues. Application of technology was observed in the classroom, such as the use of interactive “Whiteboard” and on-line and computer aided courses. Electives in digital photography and design are offered. All students have access to a school email account, by which they can communicate with teachers, review lesson plans of classes missed, and generally maintain current with assigned homework.

As a result of the tragic death of a student, concerned parents in cooperation with the California Highway Patrol and the school have joined to develop a program aimed at inattentive driving. An online program at www.teamimpactive.com is available to all students.

Conclusions:

The Madera County Grand Jury found this school to be well run with a highly motivated staff. Faculty and administrators were observed to be knowledgeable about the students and genuinely concerned for their academic success.

The school is modern, well maintained, and well supported by the community.

Recommendations:

- None

Respondents: Written response required pursuant to PC933(c)

Golden Valley School District
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Respondents: Response optional

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