

Rhonda E. Farber, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Trustees
Rick Costanzo
Matthew T. Dean
Diane T. Gordon
Pamela J. Parker
Royce L. Peterson



Campbell Union High School District

National Blue Ribbon School:
Westmont High School
California Distinguished Schools:
Branham High School
Del Mar High School
Leigh High School
Prospect High School
Westmont High School

September 18, 2009

FILED

SEP 25 2009

DAVID H. YAMASAKI
Chief Executive Officer/Clerk
Superior Court of CA County of Santa Clara
BY D. ALDYCKI

Don Kawashima, Foreperson
2008-2009 Civil Grand Jury
Superior Court Building
191 N. First Street
San Jose, California 95113

Re: Civil Grand Jury Report, "Who Really Benefits from Education Dollars?"

Dear Mr. Kawashima:

On behalf of the Campbell Union High School District, we have prepared the following responses to the questions in your letter to Ms. Royce Peterson on June 24, 2009.

Finding 1

Boards of Trustees approve overly generous benefits to themselves which include the following:

- *Fully paid health benefits for trustees and their families (often exceeding those of teachers and/or with no payment ceiling)*
- *Excessive travel and conference costs*
- *Pension contribution*

Campbell Union High School District disagrees with this finding. It does not consider its benefits to be overly generous. Government Code 53208.5 provides that elected officials for school districts are entitled to the same health and welfare benefits as provided to the employees of that district. The trustee stipend is quite small and health benefits are among the only avenues available to attract and retain competent and dedicated board members. Most Board members provide numerous hours beyond the time dedicated to Board meetings.

Travel and conference costs in the Campbell Union High School District have never been excessive and have only been approved where there is significant benefit to the district.

There are no pension contributions for the CUHSD Board Members.

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Boynton High School
M. Madalinski, Principal
626-3404

Branham High School
T. Utic, Principal
626-3407

Camden Community Day School
M. Madalinski, Principal
626-3409

Del Mar High School
J. Russell, Principal
626-3403

Leigh High School
D. Hope, Principal
626-3405

Prospect High School
D. Burbank, Principal
626-3408

Westmont High School
O. Hege, Principal
626-3406

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Recommendation 1

Boards of Trustees should carefully review the benefits listed in Finding 1 and:

- *Eliminate health benefits for Board Members*
 - *Minimize travel and conference costs*
 - *Eliminate pension contributions*
1. The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. Government Code 53208.5 provides that elected officials for school districts are entitled to health and welfare benefits as provided to the employees of that district. However, as a result of this report, the Board will further discuss the health and welfare benefits offered to the Board.
 2. The recommendation had previously been implemented. Before this report was issued, Campbell Union High School District, as well as its board members, had significantly reduced travel and conference costs as a result of the current budget crisis. However, travel and conference costs in the Campbell Union High School District have never been excessive and have only been approved where there is significant benefit to the district.
 3. The recommendation will not be implemented as it does not pertain to this district.

Finding 2

Boards of Trustees are approving overly generous benefits to Superintendents and Chancellors, including the following:

- *Auto allowances (auto leases/purchases, insurance, maintenance, etc.) to superintendents*
- *Housing allowances*
- *Million dollar housing loans at zero or below market interest rates*
- *Guaranteed annual step and/or longevity increases*
- *Signing bonuses*
- *Contract buyouts*
- *Excessive performance bonuses*
- *Per diem payments when out of the district*
- *Personal technology allowances*
- *Professional memberships and subscription allowances*
- *Excessive travel and entertainment expenses*
- *Salary increases automatically triggered by increases in teacher's salaries which are in addition to other guaranteed salary increases*
- *Pension allowances (in addition to regular STRS/PERS contributions)*
- *Advanced degree stipends*
- *Lifetime medical insurance benefits*
- *Annual physicals*

Campbell Union High School District disagrees with the finding. CUHSD, as well as other districts in Santa Clara County, faces considerable challenges in attracting and maintaining qualified applicants for administrative as well as teaching positions. The high cost of living in

the area, coupled with extreme demands and pressures of the position, have created a market in which compensation packages offering certain benefits are viewed as a necessity. The package provided to our superintendent is not overly generous and does not contain most of the benefits listed in the report

Recommendation 2

Boards of Trustees should carefully review and renegotiate the Superintendent/Chancellor benefits listed in Finding 2 for possible reduction and/or elimination.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Our Superintendent’s benefit package is not overly generous and the majority of benefits listed in the report are not applicable to this district. Of the few that are provided to the superintendent most are provided to all certificated personnel in the district.

The Board annually reviews the Superintendent’s contract as part of the Superintendent’s evaluation.

Finding 3

Superintendent salaries and increases appear to bear no relationship to the number of schools, students, and employees they oversee, nor their district’s academic improvement.

Campbell Union High School District disagrees partially with the finding. The superintendent’s evaluation conducted by the Board of Trustees does typically take student academic performance into consideration as well as the overall operations of the district. The Superintendent’s compensation is also affected by the negotiations of the certificated employees of the district. If any employee group receives a rollback because of financial difficulties, the superintendent and all other administrators will receive the same percent rollback.

Recommendation 3

The Board of Trustees should ensure that Superintendent/Chancellor salaries and increases take into account the number of schools, teachers, and students they oversee, and are tied to the district’s students’ progress and quantifiable metrics.

Part of the recommendation has been standard practice, in that the superintendent evaluation does take student academic performance into consideration. The remainder of the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Tying superintendent salaries to district size would be a counterproductive approach to finding and retaining district leaders who are best suited for the particular characteristics and challenges of Campbell Union High School District. The Superintendent’s expertise and experience in meeting the specific needs of all of our students are important factors when setting compensation.

Finding 4

Boards of Trustees hire costly search firms to recruit successors for retiring or dismissed Superintendents/Chancellors.

Campbell Union High School District disagrees with the finding CUHSD has been able to locate qualified candidates for the superintendent and senior positions using its own resources. There have been 4 superintendents since 1969 and three of them, including the current one, were administrators in the district when they were appointed Superintendent. However, the Board should have autonomy to decide on the means to identify acceptable superintendent candidates.

Recommendation 4

Boards of Trustees should conduct a preliminary search within the local area prior to hiring search firms.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. It has been able to locate qualified candidates for the superintendent and senior positions using its own resources. However, the Board should have autonomy to decide on **the best way** to identify acceptable superintendent candidates.

Finding 5

Boards of Trustees approve the hiring of multiple private attorneys, in some cases at tremendous expense.

Campbell Union High School District disagrees with the finding. It is incumbent for Boards to seek legal counsel based on qualifications, expertise and cost for services.

Recommendation 5

All Boards of Trustees should engage County Counsel whenever possible and leverage their buying power to negotiate lower fees with private law firms.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. School districts often are involved in complex legal issues that require legal expertise in sub-sections of the Education Code, requiring considerable specialized legal capacity, time and energy. It is also sometimes necessary to use firms other than the county counsel to prevent conflicts of interest in representation.

Finding 6

The operation of 34 K-12 school districts and four (4) community college districts creates excessively high management and administrative costs. Five K-12 school districts have excessively high Superintendent costs per student which is reflective of the district's having only one or two schools.

Campbell Union High School District disagrees with the finding as it applies to this district. CUHSD has seven school sites, including five large comprehensive sites.

Recommendation 6

A consolidation of districts should be considered to reduce the numbers and costs of Superintendents/Chancellors, Boards of Trustees, administrative staff and overhead.

The recommendation cannot be implemented by local boards because under the California education code, consolidation of school districts is relegated to the people who live in the school district. Should communities wish to join with other communities to create larger school or community college districts, the process is clearly spelled out in the Education Code, under which a vote of the electorate can change district organization.

Should you have any questions related to this matter please do not hesitate to contact me at (408) 371-0960.

Sincerely,



Rhonda E. Farber, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Att.

cc: Royce Peterson, Board President