



FREMONT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

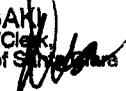
Cupertino, Fremont, Homestead, Lynbrook, Monta Vista High Schools and Adult/Community Education

Polly M. Bove, *Superintendent of Schools*

FILED

September 22, 2010

SEP 28 2010

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

Honorable Jamie Jacobs-May
Presiding Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court
191 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95113

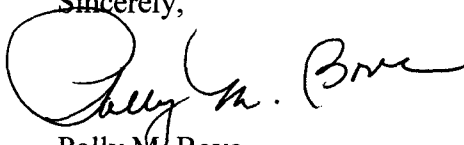
Dear Judge Jacobs-May:

RE: Response to the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Report: *Achieving School District Efficiency Through Consolidation*

The Fremont Union High School District appreciates the opportunity to respond to Findings and Recommendations of the 2009-2010 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury's Final Report, "*Achieving School District Efficiency Through Consolidation*." The District provides its response in accordance with Penal Code section 933.05(a,b).

Should you have questions or need further clarification, I may be reached at (408)522-2201.

Sincerely,



Polly M. Bove
Superintendent of Schools

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Nancy A. Newton, Barbara F. Nunes, Homer H.C. Tong, Hung Wei, Bill Wilson

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**Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations:
Achieving School District Efficiency Through Consolidation**

Finding 1

Education and financial benefits can be achieved by consolidation and unification of certain county school districts.

Response: The Fremont Union High School District respectfully disagrees with the general intent of this finding.

While the Fremont Union High School District agrees that there may be districts in Santa Clara County and other counties where consolidation and unification may provide opportunities for improvements to educational and financial programs, the argument that FUHSD should consolidate with its feeder districts was made without doing any research on the specifics of funding or programs in these particular districts. We question the assumption that consolidation would provide automatic cost savings and improved student performance. The details and complexities of individual district budgets, revenue and student performance must be studied to know the impact of consolidation in a particular community.

Recommendation 1c

The Boards of Trustees should unify Cupertino Union School District and Sunnyvale School District with Fremont Union High School District.

Response: The Fremont Union High School District respectfully declines to implement this recommendation because it is not warranted or reasonable.

The Grand Jury indicated that a unified school district can become too large, the threshold defined by this report as “too large” was 32,000 students. Given this definition, the recommendation for the unification of the Cupertino Union School District, the Sunnyvale Elementary School District and the Fremont Union High School District is of concern, since the resulting unified district would include over 34,000 students for the 2010-11 school year, with significant increases in enrollment predicted in the years to come. It appears that by the Grand Jury’s own definition the suggested consolidation would result in a unified district that is already “too large.”

The Fremont Union High School District Board of Trustees does not agree that the proposed consolidation and unification would offer financial and education benefits to the students, residents, and parents of the District.

The Fremont Union High School District has taken the time to do some investigation of the Grand Jury’s suggestion. The primary reason cited for unification by the Grand Jury is cost savings. However, after examining the revenue limit calculations for the three districts involved, it has been determined that such a consolidation of the Sunnyvale Elementary School District, the Cupertino Union School District and the Fremont Union High School District would result in a **loss of approximately \$13 million in annual revenue**. Fremont Union High School District and the Sunnyvale Elementary School District are basic aid districts, meaning that virtually all of their revenue comes from local property taxes. The Cupertino Union School District is a revenue limit district where a majority of its dollars comes from the state. The uniting of these two funding models **results in a dramatic loss of revenue to all**, not the seven percent savings estimated by the Grand Jury Report. In addition, our District Counsel has advised that the parcel taxes currently collected by the Cupertino Union School District and the Fremont Union High School District would

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not easily or automatically be distributed to a new unified school district. The likely **loss of these community supported measures would result in an additional annual reduction to revenue of approximately nine million dollars to the students of the two districts** currently benefiting from this local money.

The Grand Jury also indicated that savings would result from a reduction in the number of administrators needed. However, given that all three districts have been making significant cuts in administrative positions and budgets over the last three years such savings seem unlikely. The number of administrators for the Fremont Union High School District stated in Table One of the Grand Jury's Final Report is 3.5 full time employees greater than the number of administrators currently employed by the District. In addition, two of the positions counted in this total are funded through our Facilities Bond program that is implementing our 198 million dollar bond passed by our community in 2008. These positions are not part of the District's ongoing administrative structure and will not be needed once our bond work is complete. Since similar reductions have also been made by the elementary feeder districts, the Fremont Union High School District believes it unlikely that meaningful additional savings in administrative expenses could be achieved through consolidation and unification of the three school districts.

The Grand Jury indicates that there would be significant savings from consolidation of departments, most notably transportation. Since Fremont Union High School District does not provide transportation for our general education students, there would be no transportation savings through unification.

The Grand Jury report notes six educational benefits for consolidation. While we are always striving to improve our programs and communication for all our students, we believe that we are already successfully accomplishing the benefits listed:

A. Enhanced communication between the high schools, middle and elementary schools.

The Sunnyvale Elementary School District, the Cupertino Union School District and the Fremont Union High School District have a strong and long-standing articulation between eighth and ninth grades. Multiple meetings are held annually between high school and feeder middle school administrators and core-curriculum staff. Freshman orientation and summer transition classes and programs for incoming ninth-grade students are all a part of the robust articulation. Course recommendations and sharing of student data from the middle schools add to the work that helps students effectively enter high school with a plan for success.

B. Make temporary assignments of high school teachers and middle school students to facilitate exceptional student learning opportunities, and

C. Design middle school configurations (e.g. K-8, or 5-8, or 7-12) in recognition of the varied maturation rates of middle school age students

The Fremont Union High School District already works with the Sunnyvale Elementary District and the Cupertino Union School District to enroll advanced middle school students in high school level classes and to ensure that students who take high school course work in middle school make a seamless transition to advanced coursework once they get to high school. We know of no research that different grade configurations would serve students better than our current ones.

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D. Move students having difficulty into a new school to improve their educational experience and performance

Fremont Union High School District offers 13 different alternative programs to serve students who struggle within our comprehensive high schools. Consolidation would not increase these options.

E. Deploy the newly available financial resources to enable counselors and librarians as well as teachers to be retained

Through collaborative work with our teachers' organization we have been able to maintain librarians and library support staff and to continue to fund the increased number of counselors hired in 2007 with the state counseling funds. FUHSD's current counselor/student ratio remains lower than most high schools in California. There have been no teacher layoffs and no furlough days in the Fremont Union High School District and none are anticipated. However, should the consolidation occur, the loss of revenue would likely result in the reduction of guidance and library services and the loss of other teaching staff.

F. Enhance program choices and restore previously cancelled or scaled back programs

Again, given the drop in revenue that consolidation would cause, no enhanced program choices or restoration could be anticipated.

Concluding Statements

The discussion of consolidation is not new to the Fremont Union High School District community. In the early seventies, a brief discussion occurred at a board study session where the community strongly advocated for the continuance of a three district model. In the late nineties, a discussion between Cupertino Union, Sunnyvale Elementary and Fremont Union High School District administrators and board members and City officials from the cities represented in the district was convened to discuss ways to more effectively unify the community. In the course of this meeting, the idea to consolidate the three school districts was discussed and again, the strong community preference to maintain three medium sized districts over a large unified district was voiced. The consensus was that three districts could focus on the unique needs of elementary and secondary students more effectively than one very large district of K-12 students.

The District believes that it has already been able to successfully manage limited financial resources while continuing to offer students high-quality educational programs. The Fremont Union High School District works diligently with the Cupertino Union District and the Sunnyvale Elementary District to improve articulation, collaboration and communication.

FUHSD has taken a serious look at the fiscal and programmatic consequences of unification in the specific circumstances of the communities we serve. Given that consolidation would result in such significant financial losses to our students and not yield significant educational benefit, the Fremont Union High School District joins Cupertino Union School District and Sunnyvale Elementary School District in respectfully choosing to decline to implement the Grand Jury's recommendation.