

January 11, 2021

The Honorable Judge Andrew Sweet
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Lucy Dilworth, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room #275
San Rafael, CA 94903

Re: Response to Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report: *Reading, Writing, and Therapy: Mental Health Challenges in Our Schools*.

Dear Judge Sweet and Foreperson Dilworth:

San Rafael City Schools has received the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report *Reading, Writing, and Therapy: Mental Health Challenges in Our Schools* dated October 23, 2020. The Grand Jury has requested a response to Findings 1-5 (F1-F5). Enclosed please find a copy of the completed *Response Form* and a detailed summary of San Rafael City Schools' responses.

Thank you for your interest in and support of the current and ongoing mental health needs of our Marin County youth.

Sincerely,

Linda M. Jackson
Board President

Jim Hogeboom
Superintendent

Enclosures:

Marin Civil Grand Jury Response Form
Marin County office of Education Wellness and Professional Development Trainings

Report Findings and Response

- F1:** Many mental health issues result from social and cultural factors that lie outside the schools, but affect the ability of students to learn and schools to teach. This is a complex problem that the community must help address.

Response: Agree.

Schools are one element within a network of support that is necessary for a comprehensive approach to student wellness. San Rafael City Schools (SRCS) supports the community approach to wellness identified in the Marin County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan. SRCS values its partnerships with all of our community-based organizations, many of which promote positive mental health and wellbeing. We look forward to continuing these partnerships and expanding our ability to create a community-wide network of social-emotional support.

- F2:** Strategy 6 of the Marin County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, which includes a promise of support by the county and designates the Marin Schools Wellness Collaborative with responsibility for leading its implementation, presents an especially appropriate opportunity for addressing mental health needs.

Response: Agree.

The Marin County Schools Wellness Collaborative is well equipped to effectively support the implementation of Strategy 6 of the Marin County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan. The expertise of the group coupled with their shared knowledge and understanding of how school systems operate will work to enhance student wellness across all of Marin County's schools. We are grateful SRCS is a participant in this valuable collaborative, and our students will greatly benefit from these efforts.

- F3:** To help provide therapeutic counselors at affordable costs, most districts need assistance from licensed therapists who have the time and skills to recruit, train, and supervise interns from local graduate school programs.

Response: Agree.

The need for additional mental health support in schools is real and one that is even more heightened in the current COVID-19 environment. Utilizing mental health interns can be an effective strategy to bolster mental health staffing, but as noted in the report, the approach does come with additional responsibilities related to training and supervision. Additionally, the use of interns does not work to meet our permanent staffing needs, as internships do not typically evolve into a permanent position. More solutions to this pervasive problem are necessary. For example, SRCS is currently examining our existing systems of support to determine where services can be enhanced to reduce the number of students that require direct support from mental health professionals on an ongoing basis. Such systems include Trauma Informed Practices with a Trauma Consultant, Restorative Practices, Peer Court, Peer Solution Teams, and counseling groups for newcomer students through partnerships with community-based organizations.

Marin County Office of Education Response:
Reading, Writing, and Therapy: Mental Health Challenges in Our Schools

F4: Most districts need staffing help to identify, arrange, and maintain relationships with community mental health resources.

Response: *Disagree Partially*

While SRCS staff could benefit from receiving assistance related to how to best navigate the system of mental health resources and services available within the community, dedicated staffing may not be necessary to meet this need. SRCS has explored other ways to meet this need. The provision of ongoing training and updates from public and/or private agencies, as needed, would be most beneficial to our students and families. SRCS has appreciated and valued the regular updates and support from MCOE and the Marin Wellness Collaborative, of which several SRCS staff are involved, and will continue to partner with these groups to provide ongoing wellness support to the SRCS community. Furthermore, we have recently entered into an agreement with a group named CareSolace, which provides a direct link to staff, students, and families to mental health support in the community. This service offers support in a variety of languages and provides a much needed link to mental health care.

F5: The Grand Jury recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has severely strained resources at all levels of government. However, the mental health concerns for students will remain. It is appropriate to expand teacher and staff training and parent education even while funding is sought for more costly programs.

Response: *Agree.*

Now more than ever, the need for proactive and targeted training and education related to wellness is paramount. SRCS believes that all students, families and staff can benefit from education and training that focuses on proven strategies to support wellness and increase coping skills and resilience. Please find attached a listing of training and education opportunities available to the SRCS community during the 2020-2021 school year.