

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

Introduction:

Pursuant to California Penal Code section 925, on January 14, 2010, the Madera County Grand Jury visited Madera South High School, Madera Unified School District. The Principal discussed the history of the school as well as its staffing, resources, and procedures. The Assistant Principal for Arts and Humanities later led a tour of the campus.

Findings:

Madera South High School is the second high school in the district; it became independent in 2006 and will graduate its first full four-year class in spring 2010. The current enrollment is about 2700. The campus occupies 87 acres and began as a satellite campus of Madera High School. While some of the buildings date to that earlier period, a bond measure has permitted the full build-out of the school. Buildings and grounds were observed to be well maintained and well equipped. The high school is organized into 4 “schools”, each having a special emphasis although all provide the basic core academic subjects necessary for graduation. The areas of emphasis are agriculture, business, health sciences, and arts and humanities.

The staff consists of 113 full time equivalent credentialed faculty. In addition to the principal, each area of emphasis is led by a vice principal. There also is a classified staff of between 35-40. Due to budget pressures, classified positions have been lost with more forecasted. Maximum class size, as a result of collective bargaining, has been set at 38. However, many elective classes are smaller. Also, core classes in freshman English and math are targeted at a 20 to 1 ratio. Transportation is provided for students based upon distance from bus stops. Full food service for students is available as well as several snack bars.

Campus security planning is well thought-out and enforced. It is a closed campus; all visitors must sign-in with the administrative office. Security cameras are installed; while not monitored, recorded video is available for review as needed. A security staff is on campus, monitoring gates as well as conducting routine campus patrols. Rooms not in use are locked. Safety and disaster plans are written and exercised. The school district has a standard dress code, which is campus-enforced. The Grand Jury noted during the visit the overall positive appearance of the students. The principal expressed satisfaction with the level of student behavior and discipline; despite the

size of the campus, he believed that the staff knew the students and were effective in intervening at appropriate times to preclude major problems.

The Principal reported the most recent 2008-09 Academic Performance Index (API) score was 676 and reflected some improvement from the base year API of 674. The API ranges between 200 and 1000, with 800 as the statewide goal for all schools. He noted that the student population included about 300 special education students and 900 students lacking the expected English language proficiency. Federal Title I monies have been augmented with Education Improvement Act funding to address the language problem.

As a new school, Madera South has a limited accreditation; it is in the process of seeking a full six year accreditation within the coming year. A Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) visit is scheduled for March.

The school offers a range of vocational and elective courses. Organization along areas of academic/career emphasis offers students the opportunity to pursue career interests early. A student may change that election yearly, but once achieving junior class standing, he/she must continue on that path. While the district has a policy of expecting all students to be prepared for college, elective courses give students with vocational interests many opportunities.

Community sponsorships are many, especially in the agriculture area. Booster clubs for extracurricular activities, such as athletics and band are very active. There is, however, no active parent organization supporting the school as a whole. The Principal was concerned about this lack of support, but thought that the nature of the community population served was a root cause.

Conclusions:

The Madera County Grand Jury found this school to be modern, well equipped, and uniquely organized. Faculty and administrators were observed to be knowledgeable and genuinely interested in the academic success of the student population.

Recommendations:

- Continue efforts to build an involved parent organization to support the school as a whole.
- Continue efforts to raise the API to meet state goals.

Respondents: Written response required pursuant to PC 933(c)

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Respondents: (Response optional)

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