

Rec 9-3-13

To: Honorable Judge S. O. Hedstrom  
Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of Lake County

From: Upper Lake Union Elementary School District  
Board of Education  
Valerie Gardner/ Superintendent/Principal

RE: Response to Grand Jury's Final Report

Date: August 29, 2013

**RESPONSE TO FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LAKE COUNTY  
GRAND JURY IN ITS REPORT ENTITLED  
"FINANCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM THE  
UNIFICATION OF LAKE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS"**

**FINDING:**

F1/F2. Based on the totality of the facts above, consolidation/unification of the seven Lake County school districts into one would be beneficial both financially and educationally to Lake County Schools.

**RESPONSE: disagree**

Unification may not be a cost savings if a unification takes place county-wide due to union contracts. There is not enough information to determine whether or not unification would be beneficial educationally.

**FINDING:**

F3. With the Internet, instant communication links and two-way electronic access to each individual school in Lake County, LCOE administrative staff stated they can adequately and cost effectively manage all of the Lake County's seven school district administrations.

**RESPONSE: disagree**

LCOE has stated they would need to hire additional staff in order to manage it effectively which would eliminate potential savings.

**FINDING:**

F4. There will be additional costs involved with the unification/consolidation process and the revising/upgrading of various systems upon the completion of consolidation. These costs are unknown at this time but they should not curtail the effort of consolidation/unification. The potential savings realizes could be funneled back to improve the education of Lake County students.

**RESPONSE: disagree**

The respondents agree that the costs associated with the unification process are unknown at this time and question if savings would be funneled back or just shifted to new costs associated with a County -Wide District operation. These costs should be known before process of unification takes place.

**FINDING:**

F5. Each of the seven Lake County school districts has their own unique identity and characteristics (sports and other competitive programs) which should remain unaffected by unification/consolidation. Students should not be required to relocate to different schools.

**RESPONSE: agree**

We agree with finding, students would not be required to relocate, but school choice under federal and state guidelines could become an additional cost to districts.

**FINDING:**

F6. After review of the LCBOE regular meeting minutes for the last twelve months, it appears that no business for the county committee has been conducted and no petitions for reorganization have been received.

**RESPONSE:** n/a

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

R1. Residents of Lake County review the Lake County Civil Grand Jury's report in its entirety (F1-F-6).

**RESPONSE:** agree

We agree with the recommendation and encourage the report be available on-line with an electronic response mechanism.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R2. The Boards of Trustees for all school districts in Lake County consult with all school districts to identify opportunities for consolidation with a view to petitioning the County Superintendent of Schools pursuant to Education Code 35700. (F1-F6)

**RESPONSE:** agree

The respondent already consolidates several services with the Upper Lake High School District, Lucerne School District and the Lake County Office of Education. An on-going effort is being made to find additional opportunities for consolidation of services.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R3. The Boards of Trustees for all Lake County school districts adopt and deliver to the CCSDO a resolution proposing consideration of consolidation of all districts in Lake County pursuant to Education Code 35721 (c). F1

**RESPONSE:**

The respondent believe more analysis needs to be done to determine the fiscal impact of unification county-wide.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R4. The County Committee on School District Organization (CCSDO) formulates plans for the consolidation of Lake County school Districts pursuant to Education Code Section 35720.

**RESPONSE:**

Respondent believes further analysis needs to be done to determine if this is fiscally beneficial.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R5. The Lake County Board of Supervisors adopt and deliver to the CCSDO a resolution proposing consideration of consolidation of local school districts in Lake County, pursuant to Education Code 35721 (c). F1

**RESPONSE:**

n/a

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R6. The County Committee convenes one more public hearing to gauge the electorate support for such unification/consolidation pursuant to Education Code 35700 (a). F1

**RESPONSE:**

n/a

**GRAND JURY REPORT**

**“OVERSIGHT OF EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION IN LAKE COUNTY”**

**FINDING:**

F1. The Various transportation departments are doing an excellent job considering the budgetary constraints under which they operate.

**RESPONSE:**

The respondent agrees with the finding.

**FINDING:**

F2. Each District handles purchasing according to their own needs.

**RESPONSE:**

The respondent agrees with the finding.

**FINDING:**

F3. The procedures are fairly uniform between districts.

**RESPONSE:**

The respondent agrees with the finding.

**FINDING:**

F4. Administrative savings could be realized with centralized Information Technology for record keeping and purchasing. This could eliminate the teaching staff, principals, et al. from being responsible for transportation needs of the students (see “The Educational and Financial Benefits Derived from the Unification of all Lake County School Districts” in the 2012-2013 Civil Gran Jury Report).

**RESPONSE: disagree**

Parents rely on the schools their students attend to address transportation issues. A centralized system would not eliminate the need for school sites to deal with transportation issues for their students.

**FINDING:**

F5. The inclusion of GPS transponders allows for real-time location reporting which enhances student safety and security

**RESPONSE:agree**

Cost to the districts was not disclosed. Our new buses have GPS incorporated into the camera systems onboard.

**FINDING:**

F6. Middletown bus barn security is in need of repairs.

**RESPONSE:**

n/a

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation:**

R1. The transportation departments of all districts be commended for their performance under difficult circumstances. (F1)

**RESPONSE:**

ULHS transportation department does an excellent job in providing services to the community and their students.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R2. The committee recommends coordination of administration and IT into one office with one director. This can facilitate better contracts, inventory control and record keeping and governmental reporting. The IT system can further facilitate performance measurement of staff and facilities. This could eliminate the teaching staff, principals, et al. from being responsible for transportation needs of the students. (F4)

**RESPONSE:**

ULHSD provides the lead for transportation of the students of ULUHSD and ULESB. Our system works well for these districts and we operate without a director as a single employed position. To have one director for all seven districts could compromise the needs of the smaller districts in particular the needs of students with special accommodations.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R3. All buses and white fleet in the county have GPS transponders installed. (F5)

**RESPONSE:**

We agree, cost undetermined.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

R4. Middletown School District repair their security fence to control theft

**RESPONSE:**

NA

Respectfully submitted,



Valerie Gardner

Superintendent/Principal

Upper Lake Union Elementary School District