

This document is an extract of a larger publication.

civilgrandjury.org is a project of UnGovr.org, a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to government transparency and public accountability.



Contract Organizations

One innovative program available to Sacramento County elementary schools is run by Reading Partners. Reading Partners is a privately run, direct service that brings a “stand alone” reading program to participating schools. At chosen schools, Reading Partners houses a private library on site and provides a structured one-on-one reading program to students. Volunteers work with students selected by the school based on reading skill levels. In addition to housing the private library, students are given books to keep as they progress through some thirty tutoring sessions.

Schools apply to become a part of the program, and to be eligible a majority of the students enrolled at the schools must qualify for free/reduced lunch. Chosen schools pay a modest fee to Reading Partners to become enrolled in the program.

Volunteerism

According to the CDE, public K-12 school library funding for more than 50% percent of California public school libraries comes from fund-raising activities (parent groups, book fairs, etc.). Although direct volunteerism may be impractical on a large-scale basis, given the nature and scope of required vetting and liability issues, Districts should consider some forms of volunteerism and funding from non-traditional sources.

For example, last year, the Friends of the Sacramento Public Library System started a program called Book First. The program provides a complimentary book to first graders in economically disadvantaged schools. These books are often the first book that some children may be able to call their own. Last year, 118 schools were visited, and more than 8,000 students participated in the program.

Recommendations

The grand jury believes that the limited staffing levels of librarians in Sacramento County K-12 public schools are not likely to improve due to limited funding and competing priorities. This is expected to be particularly true for elementary schools, and to a lesser extent, middle schools.

We have pursued this review to inform the public of: (1) Recommendations for the breadth of library services and staffing for public K-12 schools in the state of California, (2) Examples of various entities that have provided enhanced library services beyond what's typical locally, and (3) How parents and students can be active in the LCAP process as well as with fundraising, to improve library services on behalf of their school or school district.

1. School Districts should adopt the recommendations of the 2010 Model School Library Standards to the fullest extent possible: The Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools (2010) are intended to provide students with “the skills and knowledge essential for students to be information literate.” This includes the skills to “effectively access, evaluate, use, and integrate information into their lives” and to “apply responsible research practices.” The standards also describe recommended educational standards for students at each grade level in addition to the level of library staffing and resources necessary for student achievement.
2. School Districts Should Collaborate with Public libraries: Districts should partner with Sacramento County's two public library systems, (the Sacramento Public Library System or the Folsom Public Library) to provide library services to schools within their district.
3. School Districts Should Review Use of Contract Organizations that Provide Library Services: Districts should continually identify and seek the supplementary support of Contract organizations for applicable services.
4. Districts Should Constantly Be Aware of Local Fund Raising and Volunteerism Opportunities: To the extent possible, School Districts should continue to make use of support and/or funding from private organizations and directly affected groups such as parents and students.