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CLASSROOM BENEATH THE STARS

BACKGROUND:

Charles Rich was a man who loved nature and was deeply committed to conserving and protecting natural resources. He believed all youngsters should be taught about science and nature and should learn to respect and preserve our natural resources. He felt the best way for students to learn about the environment and its protection should come not from a classroom and books, but from the environment itself. Mr. Rich wanted to take students out-of-doors where they could experience nature and see it at work. But where could the students go? Most importantly, from where was the funding going to come?

Mr. Rich found the perfect spot in Bear Creek Valley, a mile and a half off the old Balch Park Road, near the point where the Rancheria and Bear Creeks meet. The land was part of a 67,000 acre cattle ranch and belonged to Clemmie Gill. In 1958, Mr. Rich met with Mrs. Gill and explained to her how important an environmental education would be for students and how it would impact their lives. Mrs. Gill was impressed with the ideas presented to her and donated 35 acres to the Tulare County Schools for educational purposes. SCICON had a home and Mr. Rich's dream became a reality.

Dr. Rudolph Weyland, music coordinator for the Tulare County Department of Education, donated a water-cooled generator to SCICON. The generator was put to immediate use by trading it to Clemmie Gill's son-in-law for five acres that were attached to the acreage donated by Mrs. Gill.

In 1972, an organization named "The Friends of SCICON" sponsored a successful fund drive, "Acres for SCICON," and purchased 1,100 acres previously intended for development. This purchase ensured an environmental classroom for future generations.

School districts, communities and dedicated individuals rolled up their sleeves and went to work building student cabins, roads, hiking trails, instructional areas and a dining facility.

SCICON is located eight miles above Springville in the foothills east of Porterville at elevations between 2,000 and 3,500 feet. There are many miles of hiking trails, a museum of natural history, a planetarium, an observatory, a raptor center, and an amphitheater for evening activities. There are more than twenty cabins for students, teachers, and staff. Meals are served in a community dining hall.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The 2010-2011 Tulare County Grand Jury published a report titled *SCICON: A NATURE EXPERIENCE*. Because of recent growth and expansion at SCICON the Grand Jury decided to issue this additional report.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED:

1. Some information in the "**BACKGROUND**" in this report was taken from the book *SCICON MEMORIES, "An anecdotal history of THE CLEMMIE GILL SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION"*, Compiled by *THE FRIENDS of SCICON*.
2. Toured SCICON
3. Interviewed relevant witnesses

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4. The 2010-2011 Grand Jury Report on SCICON was reviewed.

FACTS:

1. The Tulare County Board of Education and Tulare County Superintendent of Schools operate and manage SCICON.
2. SCICON has two advisory boards made up of educators and citizens of Tulare County; these boards are the SCICON Administrative Board and The Friends of SCICON Board of Directors.
3. A SCICON Program Administrator oversees the programs with the assistance of approximately thirty additional on-site staff, which includes instructional, clerical, maintenance and food service personnel.
4. The Lead Teacher is a fully credentialed professional who specializes in outdoor education. This teacher provides leadership to the SCICON instructional team, conducts environmental studies and provides curriculum and program organization.
5. SCICON has a ten month internship program that assists students from Tulare County, other counties, states and countries in completing their conservation degrees.
6. A full time nurse is on site at all times. Medications brought by students are kept in a secured area and dispensed as prescribed. In the event that major illness or injury occurs, an ambulance may be dispatched from Springville, approximately fifteen miles away.
7. The Department of Forestry has a facility located on site. In addition, members of the department who are trained paramedics are available for medical emergencies.
8. Between August and June of each school year, Tulare County fifth graders attend SCICON for one school day; additionally, sixth graders attend SCICON for five school days.
9. Whenever necessary and within an hour's notice, buses from Springville can evacuate all the students and personnel from SCICON.
10. There are a number of student safety measures at SCICON:
 - a. Locking and unlocking the entrance/exit gate
 - b. Students travel in pairs using the "buddy system"
 - c. Student groups hike designated trails accompanied by an assigned counselor.
 - d. All students are accounted for at meals. This is accomplished through assigned table and designated seating.
 - e. Students are accounted for at the start of and at the conclusion of all activities.
11. SCICON is located in a wilderness area and has a gate at the front entrance (left open during the day). It does not have cameras on the premises and does not have a safety officer. All SCICON staff personnel communicate with each other by using a hand held communication device.
12. Cabins have a designated number of students and an assigned cabin counselor for accountability. Cabins may house up to eleven students

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13. The Cabin Counselors are selected high school students from throughout the County. They are instructed in rules of conduct and safety for the students. Counselors sleep in the student cabins and accompany them on all trail walks.
14. There are two cabins specifically designed for physically disabled students. In addition, there is a wheelchair accessible nature walk.
15. SCICON has only one building that was built as a result of a financial grant. All of the remaining buildings, i.e. cabins, cafeteria, etc., were built from donated supplies, labor, and fundraisers. Additional funds are generated from weekend and summer use by organizations such as church groups or activities such as weddings.
16. "Friends of SCICON" are in charge of all fundraising activities. An annual fundraising barbeque lunch is hosted every April.
17. Large arbors were donated and built by various service clubs. These arbors are equipped with sound systems, bench tables, fans and a cooking area. During bad weather, heavy tarps are used to enclose the arbors. An installed heating system keeps the students warm on cold days and evenings.
18. Presently, SCICON accommodates up to three-hundred students.
19. With an ever increasing population of children within Tulare County, SCICON needed to expand. An anonymous donor gave SCICON \$800,000. Construction on a new facility, named Eagle Point, began east of the present facility. Once completed, it will be a mirror image of the original facility. The two sites combined will accommodate six-hundred students.
20. During meal time, the students learn table manners such as asking politely to pass an item to them and saying "Please" or "Thank You." There are two crystal table awards given to the students showing the best behavior.
21. Select students, both boys and girls, are taught how to clean up after meals. Cleanup consists of table clearing, cleaning the tables and washing the dishes. Cleanup activities are rotated so both boys and girls learn proper cleaning procedures.
22. As part of the students' participation at SCICON, they learn to socialize with students from other communities.
23. SCICON students learn about nature from nature itself. They are taught about a variety of subjects from composting to the mating habits of salamanders.
24. A recently expanded museum has wild animals preserved in their natural state by a taxidermist, in addition to natural stones/rocks, Native American displays, live insects and reptiles, and more. The museum houses a small planetarium that rotates the stars and planets. Students are able to use telescopes to study the night sky.
25. At one time, SCICON had a rehabilitation program for injured or sick wildlife. This program is no longer available; however, a birds of prey sanctuary continues to be maintained for those birds unable to be released back into the wild. Birds from this program are used to educate the students and are taken for visits to various schools.

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FINDINGS:

1. School districts, communities and dedicated individuals rolled up their sleeves and went to work building student cabins, roads, hiking trails, instructional areas and a dining facility. Learning not from a book but from nature itself gives students a better understanding of the importance of nature, their environment and their world.
2. Students from Tulare County not only learn about nature; they learn to socialize and interact with students from other communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends SCICON's organizations, directors and volunteers continue their extraordinary programs and activities on behalf of the youth of Tulare County.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends SCICON implement additional safety measures such as cameras within the village and security personnel.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

1. SCICON
2. Tulare County Office of Education

SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

BACKGROUND:

Education is the backbone of the United States. A well educated population can only be to the benefit of any country or entity. Education of youth is a critical responsibility of American society. In its attempt to meet this responsibility, society has organized education into many diverse components: curriculum, grade levels, textbooks, teacher education and credentialing, physical education, etc. The intricacies of education are nearly limitless.

The Tulare County Office of Education exists to serve, support, encourage, develop and consistently improve educational opportunities for over 90,000 students in the forty-five school districts of Tulare County.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The Tulare County Grand Juries have over the years, written several reports on the large school districts in Tulare County. The 2013-2014 Grand Jury chose to investigate and report on the small school districts of Tulare County. Frequently attention is centered on larger and therefore noticeable schools and school districts. In this report, the Tulare County Grand Jury will examine some important aspects of the education phenomenon and will inquire into and report on small school districts.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury decided to focus on those school districts with an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of from one to one-thousand students. There are thirty-three school districts in Tulare County meeting that criteria.
2. In order to achieve a random sample, the names of the school districts were printed on slips of paper. The Grand Jury then randomly selected fifteen of the thirty-three school districts.
3. The Grand Jury organized into teams of two members each. These teams each investigated three schools by attending board meetings and visiting school campuses.
4. Reviewed relevant documents
5. Interviewed relevant personnel

FACTS:

1. There are thirty-three schools in Tulare County with Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of between one and one thousand students.
2. Average Daily Attendance figures were obtained from the 2014 Tulare County Schools Directory.
3. The small school districts in Tulare County along with their reported ADA as of 2014 are as follows:
 - a. Allensworth School District – ADA 77
 - b. Alpaugh Unified School District – ADA 539
 - c. Alta Vista School District – ADA 526
 - d. Buena Vista School District – ADA 189

- e. Citrus South Tule School District – ADA 47
 - f. Columbine School District – ADA 176
 - g. Ducor Union School District – ADA 177
 - h. Hope School District – ADA 198
 - i. Hot Springs School District – ADA 13
 - j. Kings River Union School District – ADA 433
 - k. Liberty School District – ADA 312
 - l. Monson-Sultana Joint Union School District – ADA 433
 - m. Oak Valley Union School District – ADA 433
 - n. Outside Creek School District – ADA 103
 - o. Palo Verde Union School District – ADA 512
 - p. Pleasant View School District – ADA 546
 - q. Richgrove School District – ADA 660
 - r. Rockford School District – ADA 388
 - s. Saucelito School District – ADA 83
 - t. Sequoia Union School District – ADA 296
 - u. Springville Union School District – ADA 305
 - v. Stone Corral School District – ADA 130
 - w. Strathmore Union School District – ADA 806
 - x. Sundale Union School District – ADA 771
 - y. Sunnyside Union School District – ADA 349
 - z. Terra Bella Union School District – ADA 902
 - aa. Three Rivers Union School District – ADA 137
 - bb. Tipton School District – ADA 581
 - cc. Traver Joint School District – ADA 215
 - dd. Waukena Joint Union School District – ADA 253
 - ee. Woodville Union School District – ADA 478
4. Schools randomly chosen for this investigation are as follows:
- a. Buena Vista School District
 - b. Citrus South Tule School District
 - c. Columbine School District
 - d. Liberty School District
 - e. Monson-Sultana Joint Union School District
 - f. Palo Verde Union School District
 - g. Rockford School District
 - h. Stone Corral School District
 - i. Sundale Union School District
 - j. Terra Bella Union School District
 - k. Three Rivers Union School District
 - l. Tipton School District
 - m. Traver Joint School District
 - n. Waukena Joint Union School District
 - o. Woodville Union School District
5. “Common Core” is a federal mandated, state overseen program of Educational Standards. Each school district develops individual programs to meet the needs of their students. The designers of Common Core Standards state it is to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn at each grade level

so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them learn. These Federal standards are designed to be relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that young people need for success. Full implementation of Common Core Standards may take several years, but all school districts are endeavoring to develop programs that will benefit all students.

6. The Academic Performance Index is a measurement of academic performance and progress of individual schools. The Academic Performance Index range is 200 – 1000. The target for schools in California is 800.
7. The Revenue Limit is a formula developed by the state to fund school districts based on the number of students attending school.

BUENA VISTA SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Buena Vista School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are nine certificated teachers with an ADA of 193.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 785.
4. The Revenue Limit per pupil is \$6,418 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$971,908.
5. Board meetings are scheduled for the second Wednesday of each month.
6. Student handbooks are available in English and Spanish.
7. The school utilizes solar power which accounts for about a third of their electricity.
8. Buena Vista School has a safety plan in place and works closely with the Sheriff's Department in the event of an emergency.
9. There is a surveillance system with cameras on the playgrounds, outside of the buildings and in the hallways of the school.
10. A tall chain-linked fence surrounds the school, but the entrance gate remains open during school hours.
11. The school has gone to an outside source for its water needs as the well is contaminated.
12. The School District spends approximately \$7,000 annually of General Fund monies for bottled water.

FINDINGS:

1. General Funds are being used to purchase bottled water.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends that all gates be locked during the day in order to further insure the safety of students and faculty.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Buena Vista School District apply for funding under Prop 84, Safe Drinking Water Bond Act, for a new well as other school districts have done.

RESPONSES:

1. Buena Vista School District

CITRUS SOUTH TULE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Citrus South Tule School District has one school serving grades K– 6.
2. There are four certificated teachers, one of whom is the lead teacher and an ADA of 48.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 620, an increase of fifty-six points from the previous year.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$7,430 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$351,460.
5. Board meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of each month.
6. The Student handbook was available only in English.
7. The majority of students live on the Tule River Indian Reservation.
8. The District provides transportation to and from school to the Towanits Education Center on the Tule River Indian Reservation.
9. A Safe School Plan is available.
10. Citrus South Tule School District does not have the financial means to maintain adequate technology resources needed for the students. They have minimal and outdated computers available which are inadequate for taking the common core assessment tests.
11. The School does not have an after school program; however, the school does work closely with the Towanits Education Center Staff to assist the students with extra help, homework and school projects.

FINDINGS:

1. Citrus South Tule School District is in need of new technology equipment, but lacks the financial resources for computers and materials.
2. The school district does not have an after school program for the students.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends the Citrus South Tule School District look for community volunteers to assist with an after school program.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends the Citrus South Tule School District solicit grant writing services from the Tulare County Office of Education to seek funding for improvements in technology.

RESPONSES:

1. Citrus South Tule School District

COLUMBINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Columbine School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are nine certificated teachers and an ADA of 184 students.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 868, a decrease of twenty-four points from the previous year.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,404 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$993,947.
5. School Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month.
6. The student handbook is available only in English.
7. The District has one large bus and one small back-up bus for transportation.
8. Fifty-Three percent of Students qualify for the National Free or Reduced Lunch Program.
9. Ten percent of students are English Language Learners.
10. A Safe Schools Plan is available.
11. Columbine School does not have an after school program; however, a volunteer teacher is available after school hours.
12. The school administration office did not have an office sign posted.
13. The school participates in Odyssey of the Mind, an international academic competition, and has a Science Olympiad Team, which participates in a science, oriented national competition.
14. The school has a sports team that competes against other small schools.
15. Columbine School District has new classroom computers available that are pending installation and are required for the Common Core testing.

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16. The Columbine School District lacks sufficient funds to satisfy both computer and textbook needs.

FINDINGS:

1. Installation of classroom computers is pending.
2. Finding the school administration office was difficult because no office sign was posted.
3. The School does not provide an after school program, but allows students to stay after school to get onsite tutoring by a teacher for a short period of time.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Columbine School District work collaboratively with the Tulare County Office of Education on an action plan that will help provide the District with the ability to receive funding for supplemental textbook resources.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Columbine School District contract with the Tulare County Office of Education to obtain an Information Technology Technician to provide services to the District.
3. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Columbine School District post a visible “office” sign that will let visitors or parents know where the office is located.
4. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Columbine School District solicit for volunteers to create an after school program that is designed to not only help students with homework but to help students with club activities or provide an after school activity in general for the students.
5. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Columbine School District provide their Student Handbook in both English and Spanish.

RESPONSES:

1. Columbine School District

LIBERTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. The Liberty School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are sixteen certificated teachers and an ADA of 325.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 741, a decrease of nineteen points from the previous year.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,492 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$1,580,709.
5. Board meetings are scheduled on the second Tuesday of each month.

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6. The Student Handbook is available only in English.
7. A Safe Schools Plan is available.
8. The School District does not have a Special Education Program.
9. Computers are located in a computer lab and in the library; additionally, there are three to four in each classroom.
10. The Liberty School District moved from Ave 264 in the City of Visalia to Pacific Avenue to the City of Tulare in 2013.
11. The School District utilized Prop 39 funding (The Clean Air Act) for a solar project.
12. The School District participates in the National Free or Reduced Lunch Program.
13. The School District is contracted with the Visalia Unified School District for its lunch services.
14. City of Tulare water services are not linked to the School District.
15. There is a Liberty Parent Teacher Club which plans a variety of extracurricular activities for the students and fundraising projects for the school.

FINDINGS:

1. The School District continues to use Visalia Unified School District for its lunch program after its move to the City of Tulare.
2. The City of Tulare has not linked the School District to the City water supply forcing the School District to use costly well water.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Liberty School District contract with the Tulare City School District lunch services when the Visalia Unified School District contract is completed.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Liberty School District continue to pursue linking their water supply to the City of Tulare and discontinuing the use of well water.

RESPONSES:

1. Liberty School District

MONSON SULTANA JOINT UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. The Monson Sultana Joint Union Elementary School District has one school serving grades K – 8.

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2. There are nineteen certificated teachers and an ADA of 435.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 787, an increase of twenty-two points from the previous year.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,490 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$2,224,539.
5. The school board meeting is scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month.
6. Student and Parent Handbooks are available in English and Spanish.
7. A Safe School Plan is available.
8. There are computers in the science lab.
9. Monson Sultana School has implemented a SMART Program. This program promotes the following five basic core values for digital learning:
 - a. Safety and Security Online
 - b. Manners and Cyber-citizenship
 - c. Authentic Learning and Creativity
 - d. Research and Information Fluency
 - e. Twenty-First Century Challenges
10. Much of the infrastructure relating to technology hardware was relocated from the main office to a server room specially constructed to house electrical components.
11. During the 2012 - 2013 school-year, significant upgrades to campus security were completed.
12. The School District has an award winning music program consisting of the following choral activities:
 - a. Men's chorus
 - b. Women's chorus
 - c. Tone Chime Choir

FINDINGS:

1. The implementation of the SMART Program and improved teaching has paved the way for an increase in the digital fluency of the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

None

RESPONSES:

None

PALO VERDE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Palo Verde School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are twenty-four certificated teachers and an ADA of 520.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 809.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,088 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$2,130,481.
5. School board meetings are scheduled for the second Wednesday of each month.
6. Student Handbooks are available in English and Spanish.
7. School technology is increasing with the addition of two new computer labs with twenty-five computers in each lab.
8. The Palo Verde School District is committed to spending \$106,000 on technology in the next two years.
9. The School has a new building entitled the East Wing, which houses the computer lab and science lab.
10. The Palo Verde School District purchased 9.55 adjacent acres of land for new athletic facilities.
11. A new 13,000 square foot gymnasium/multipurpose room is being built with a completion date of May 2014.
12. The School has an asbestos and lead problem in the office and in some of the older classrooms.
13. The School Accountability Report Card is available on the Palo Verde School District website.

FINDINGS:

1. One building with asbestos and lead is being repaired with several more to be done.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Palo Verde Union School District continue to secure modernization funds to improve school buildings and infrastructure including asbestos abatement.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Palo Verde Union School District continue to work closely with the Tulare County Office of Education for services that are beneficial to the School's needs.

RESPONSES:

1. Palo Verde Union School District

ROCKFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Rockford School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. Rockford School District has eighteen certificated teachers and an ADA of 409.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 837.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,396 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$1,944,452.
5. Board meetings are scheduled at 6:00 a.m. on the second Thursday of each month.
6. Student Handbooks are available in English and Spanish.
7. The school utilizes solar power which accounts for about one-third of its electricity.
8. A Safe School Plan is available.
9. Students are not allowed on campus until 8:00 am because school grounds are not supervised until that time.
10. There are several computers in each classroom and a computer lab on campus.
11. Independent study programs are available upon request for 4th – 8th grade students who may have to miss school for an extended length of time.
12. The school offers a Child Abuse Primary Prevention Program with parents having the right of refusal to send their children to the class.
13. The school provides information regarding Type 2 Diabetes to the parents or guardians of incoming 7th grade students.
14. The School Site Council is comprised of the administration, teachers, parents, and community members; it helps develop programs responsive to the needs of every student.
15. Sixty percent of Rockford's students are inter-district transfers.
16. Rockford School is one of three schools in Tulare County to be selected by the State Department of Education as a California 2010 Distinguished School.
17. A three way pledge is signed by the parents, teachers and students as a commitment to work together to help the students do their best academically.
18. As an annual fundraiser for SCICON and for other student needs, parents, students and staff all work together in sponsoring the annual Spring Chicken Dinner. The dinner serves as a bridge to unite the school and community.

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FINDINGS:

1. Parents are actively involved with school activities and functions throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Rockford School District change the time of the board meetings from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to afford more parents the opportunity to attend meetings.

RESPONSES:

1. Rockford School District

STONE CORRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Stone Corral School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are sixteen certificated teachers and an ADA of 130.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 561, a decrease of sixty-eight points from the previous year.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,474 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$675,099.
5. Parent and Student Handbooks are available only in English.
6. A Safe School Plan is available.
7. Instructions in preparation for the Common Core curriculum were posted in classrooms.
8. There is a computer lab and at least three additional computers in each classroom.
9. There are several combination grade level classes.
10. The school Superintendent teaches class all day and has no time for management duties.
11. The Library is well organized with ongoing student use.
12. Students must drink bottle water due to high levels of nitrate in the school's well water.
13. Stone Corral District Policy requires daily learning objectives be posted in classrooms.
14. The school board meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of each month.
15. Stone Corral has three members on its school board.

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16. For the last 23 board meetings, one particular board member was physically present four meetings (17.4%), attended via speaker phone for ten meetings (43.5%), and was physically absent for eighteen meetings (78.3%).
17. The Stone Corral board meetings are not being conducted in compliance with the Roberts Rules of Order and the Brown Act, including inadequate posting of school board agendas and minutes being unavailable.
18. Board minutes indicated that some school board meetings involved parent controversy with the school board members.

FINDINGS:

1. Stone Corral School students are limited in computers and internet access is needed for Common Core testing.
2. Stone Corral could benefit from more service support from the Tulare County Office of Education.
3. Stone Corral has a major school board attendance problem.
4. Even though learning was taking place during the Grand Jury visit, daily lesson objectives, in some cases, were not posted as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Stone Corral Elementary School District continue to solicit support services from Tulare County Office of Education.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Parent and Student Handbooks be available in both English and Spanish.
3. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Stone Corral Elementary School District School Board review the terms of the Superintendents contract to allow more time for school management.
4. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Stone Corral Elementary School District solicit more parent support relative to raising the Academic Performance Index scores.
5. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Stone Corral Elementary School District solicit the support of the Tulare County Office of Education to create an action plan that would help improve the Academic Performance Index score.
6. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends all Stone Corral Elementary School District Board agendas and minutes be typed and available to the public.
7. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends all Stone Corral Elementary School District Board members physically attend all board meetings.
8. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends all Stone Corral Elementary School District Board meetings be tape recorded for accountability and transparency.
9. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends all Stone Corral Elementary School District Board members receive additional training in the Brown Act and Robert's Rules of Order.

RESPONSES:

1. Stone Corral Elementary School District

SUNDALE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. The Sundale School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are thirty-one teachers and an ADA of 771.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 860.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,414 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$3,914,881.
5. Board meetings are scheduled for the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.
6. Student Handbooks are available in English and Spanish.
7. A Safe School Plan and Emergency Preparedness Plan are available.
8. The Sundale Union School District pays for a Special Education Specialist, a Resource Specialist and two Instructional Aides.
9. There is an agreement with the Tulare County Office of Education to provide the services of a psychologist and a social worker during school hours.
10. A School Board Meeting was attended by Grand Jurors and was found to be on time and Brown Act procedures were followed.
11. A School Board agenda is available on its web site.
12. Instruction in preparation for the Common Core curriculum were posted in the classrooms.
13. Student were observed participating in numerous school activities.
14. The Sundale School District is financially able to meet school obligations.
15. The school has thirty-five computers in each of two computer labs, 120 laptops in the middle school, and 250 I-pads in grades K – 8.
16. There are two science labs for grades K – 5 and one science lab for grades 6 – 8.
17. Sundale School offers a ceramics program which includes four potter's wheels and three kilns.
18. In grades 6 – 8, a different career development program is offered every trimester to aid the students in examining a variety of future prospects.

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19. The school has a gymnasium with fold-out tables and it doubles as the cafeteria. The gymnasium has two basketball hoops and a full size stage with overhead lighting.
20. The school has a music program consisting of the history of music for grades 3 – 5 and the marching band for grades 5 – 8.
21. Sundale School has a Gifted and Talented Education Program for grades 3 – 8. To enter the program all applicants must pass a complex intelligence test. Approximately 3% of the school's population is in the program.
22. Sundale School has an Agricultural Science Program which consists of the following:
 - a. A Farmer's Market Program
 - b. Work in the School's Farmer's Market Store on campus
 - c. Herb garden products and garden flowers for arrangements are sold in the Farmer's Market Store.
 - d. Students raise chickens and rabbits. Eggs are sold in the Farmer's Market Store.
 - e. A garden section for grades K – 3
 - f. A garden section for grades 3 – 8
 - g. The cafeteria uses oranges, pomegranates, and persimmons as well as the vegetables grown in the garden.
 - h. During the Annual Farm Show in Tulare, the agricultural students work each day selling what they have raised at the school. Their profit averages \$50,000 to \$60,000 each year.
 - i. A portion of the profits from the Farm Show go to support the Band, the Art Program, and scholarships in Agricultural Science. The balance of the profits go to the Sundale Foundation, an after school and childcare program.

FINDINGS:

1. An Academic Performance Index test score of 860 indicates students are meeting grade level expectations and teachers are providing a high quality educational program.
2. Sundale Union School District has several extraordinary programs for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

None

RESPONSES:

None

TERRA BELLA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. The Terra Bella Union School District has two schools. The Terra Bella Elementary School serves grades K – 5, and Carl F. Smith Middle School serves grades 6 – 8.
2. There are thirty-three full time certificated teachers at Terra Bella Elementary School and eleven full time certificated teachers at Carl F. Smith Middle School, and a combined ADA of 901.

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3. The Terra Bella Elementary School Academic Performance Index is 692, a decrease of twenty-one points from the previous year.
4. The Carl Smith Middle School Academic Performance Index is 685, a decrease of forty-six points from the previous year.
5. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,418 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$4,559,484.
6. Board meetings are scheduled on the second Thursday of each month.
7. Student Handbooks are available in English and Spanish.
8. A Safe School Plan is available.
9. Curriculum and instruction which prepare students for the Common Core was observed in classrooms.
10. There are computers in most classrooms.
11. Terra Bella Elementary School has a new computer science lab that provides state of the art lab programs.
12. The School District contracts with the Family Health Care Network to provide low cost health and dental care to students.
13. The Terra Bella School District is financially able to meet school obligations.
14. Ninety-three percent of students in the District are part of the National Free or Reduced School Lunch Program.
15. The Terra Bella School District has a District Technology Plan in place that brings members of the community in to help shape the school's future and provides technology integrated with core curriculum.

FINDINGS:

1. Terra Bella School District contracted with Family Healthcare for a community health clinic.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Terra Bella Union School solicit the Tulare County Office of Education for an action plan that would help improve the Academic Performance Index of Terra Bella School.

RESPONSES:

1. Terra Bella Union School District

THREE RIVERS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Three Rivers School District has one school serving grades K – 8.

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2. There are six certificated teachers and an ADA of 137.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 806, a decrease of thirty two points from the previous year.
4. The Revenue Limit per pupil is \$ 6,404 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$685,661.
5. School board meetings are scheduled for the first Wednesday of each month.
6. Student handbooks are available in English only.
7. Independent study is offered to students who will be unavailable for class for five or more days.
8. The Three Rivers School is an open campus.
9. For the past nine years the school has had a Visiting Artist Program for all students. It has been coordinated by a volunteer every year.
10. Every classroom at the Three Rivers School is equipped with at least one computer with internet access.
11. There is an after school child care program named the Latch-key Program.
12. Students in grades 4 – 8 participate in student council activities.
13. The Three Rivers Recreation Committee is a group of individuals who work to provide seasonal after hours sports activities for the youth and adults in the community.

FINDINGS:

1. Open campuses are a potential safety issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Three Rivers Union School District review their open campus policy.
2. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Three Rivers Union School District have the Student Handbook in both English and Spanish.
3. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends the Three Rivers Union School District solicit the Tulare County Office of Education for an action plan that would resist additional loss of Academic Performance Index points.

RESPONSES:

1. Three Rivers Union School District

TIPTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Tipton School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are thirty-six credentialed teachers and an ADA of 630.
3. The school Academic Performance Index is 790.
4. The Revenue Limit per pupil is \$6,406 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$3,075,757.
5. Board Meetings are scheduled on the first Tuesday of each month.
6. A Student Handbook is available in English and Spanish.
7. The District utilizes both personal computer (PC) and Apple based products. The District also has portable iPads available on rolling carts for various activities.
8. School Board agendas are available at the board meetings and on the website, as well as a variety of other documentation.
9. A plan for Solar Power using Prop 39 funding is in the works with groundbreaking to take place within the next five years.
10. The Tipton School District is financially sound and able to meet all obligations.
11. The school has a student dress and appearance code.
12. School safety and security is a priority. All visitors prior to entering the campus are buzzed in through a gate after proper identification.
13. Each hallway in Tipton School is named for one of the Character Counts Pillars, which are based on the following six ethical values: respect, responsibility, caring, trustworthiness, fairness, and citizenship.
14. The school holds a barbecue each month to recognize students that excel academically and in the Character Counts program.
15. There is a parent partnership program in place designed to aid parents in working with their children at home, and it encourages parents to be more active in school related activities.

FINDINGS:

1. Parents are active and supportive of the school staff and administration.
2. The school district takes advantage of funds available to better equip the needs of the district.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Tipton Elementary School District perform regular updates of the school website.

RESPONSES:

1. Tipton Elementary School District

TRAVER JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Traver School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are twelve certificated teachers and an ADA of 215.
3. The Academic Performance Index is 749.
4. The Revenue Limit per ADA is \$6,414 and there is a Total Revenue Limit of \$1,087,380.
5. Board meetings are scheduled on the second Tuesday of each month.
6. The Student Handbooks are written in English and Spanish.
7. A Safe School Plan is available.
8. Instructions in preparation for the Common Core curriculum were posted in classrooms.
9. Every classroom has at least six computers, but no computer lab is available at this time.
10. There is student involvement in school activities such as sports and a band program.
11. The School District is financially solvent to carry out its responsibilities.
12. The School has a Red Wagon Program. During the first fifteen minutes of each day a red wagon is dispatched to classrooms to provide breakfast to students.
13. All teachers participate in the athletic programs at Traver School.
14. The Gymnasium has 8,000 square feet with bleachers and a full size stage with overhead stage lighting. The stage retracts for regulation high school basketball court size.
15. The Mustang logo matches the type and quality used by universities and pro teams. The logo on the outside of the building can be seen from Highway 99.
16. The District provides a free yearbook for every student each year. Many sponsors support the yearbook project.

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17. The District has a 1st Five Program which has been in operation for ten years. Currently there are twelve – three year olds and fifteen – four year olds enrolled.
18. Traver School has both Transitional and Regular Kindergarten classes.
19. Traver School lacks sidewalks around the school perimeter. Funding is needed for safe sidewalks.
20. Traver School at this time does not have funding to provide for after school tutoring program.
21. Traver School at this time does not have funding to provide facilities for a computer lab.
22. Traver School has a Performing Band consisting of the following:
 - a. There are eighty-two students from the 7th and 8th grades.
 - b. There are only twelve students in the 7th and 8th grades that are not in the band.
 - c. Students are given a brand new instrument when they start the program, with the agreement that when they leave Traver School, they get to keep the instrument and continue to provide some assistance to the band as student teachers.
 - d. The School raises \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year for the band program with a portion going for scholarships.
 - e. The Traver Performing Band is a nationally award winning program.

FINDINGS:

1. The school performing band and afterschool sports programs motivate students to do well in school academically.
2. The school needs funding for an after school tutorial program.
3. The school needs facilities and funding for a computer lab.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Tulare County Grand Jury recommends Traver Joint School District pursue Measure R funds for construction of sidewalks around the school perimeter.

RESPONSES:

1. Traver Joint School District

WAUKENA JOINT UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

FACTS:

1. Waukena School District has one school serving grades K – 8.
2. There are twelve certificated teachers and an ADA of 253.