



PAJARO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT **NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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District responds to factual errors and misrepresentations in Grand Jury criticism of administration and leadership in PVUSD

(WATSONVILLE) – Administrators in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District submitted to the Board of Education today a draft response to the July 2007 report of the Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury criticizing district operations and financial oversight. The 53-page response rebutted most of the allegations and conclusions offered by the Grand Jury and raised serious objections to the investigative process used by Grand Jury members in reaching their conclusions. The district's Interim Superintendent, Dr. Mary Anne Mays, made the following statement in releasing the draft response for the school board's review:

“As stewards for the educational success of the children in southern Santa Cruz County we are disappointed and somewhat frustrated that the Grand Jury has issued a final report rife with factual errors. It failed to consider evidence at its disposal that did not seem to fit preconceived biases about PVUSD. The Grand Jury, instead, chose to rely on news media articles and the opinions of a limited number of self-selected district critics to formulate findings and recommendations about the management and operations of our school district.

“The public has invested considerable autonomy in the Grand Jury with the implicit understanding that it will exercise its authority thoroughly and responsibly. It should be held to the highest standards of accountability for the quality of its work products as well. The Grand Jury must not simply give voice to speculation or opinions; it must back up any of its conclusions, findings and recommendations with solid evidence and data. To do otherwise is a disservice to the citizens of Santa Cruz County.

It is unfortunate that we as a district have to explain why we are not doing what the Grand Jury alleges, instead of the Grand Jury having to clearly demonstrate and defend the accuracy of its allegations. Just because some newspapers or a scattering of individuals make an accusation doesn't make it valid or true. We ask for the patience and understanding of the residents of our district. We expect that they will not jump to conclusions based on innuendo, partial information or the personal agendas of a few individuals. Instead, we are confident that they will evaluate the facts and come to their own conclusions. Public education is facing very difficult times with many challenges. Certainly we can improve some of our practices. We are committed to doing things right and, more importantly, to doing the right things for our students. They deserve nothing less.”

Once the Board of Education has reviewed and approved the response document, it will be filed with the presiding judge of the Superior Court and the Grand Jury foreperson. A full copy of the draft district response is attached to this release.

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