

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Indian Diggings Elementary School
Somerset

Reason for the Report

The Grand Jury selected Indian Diggings Elementary School for a general review:

Scope of the Investigation

Members of the Grand Jury:

- Visited the School on January 31, 2003;
- Were given on an extensive tour of the School by the Superintendent;
- Reviewed various school plans, including emergency procedures, funding, and staffing;
- Reviewed Grand Jury reports for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 and found no findings or recommendations pertaining to the school.

Background

Indian Diggings Elementary School, a two-room school with grades K - 8, has been in existence since 1856. The school burned down in 1958 and was rebuilt primarily with volunteer labor and materials. There are two classrooms, a multi-purpose room, small library, and office space. The school owns an acre of land that is not utilized. Suggestions for use of the land have included building a swimming pool and tennis courts for community use. However, the school is unable to fund these projects.

The facility consists of 4 full-time credentialed employees and one exchange teacher from Japan. The Superintendent functions as the principal and upper grade teacher. The faculty perform all positions necessary including yard duty attendant, Special Needs Instructor, school secretary, etc. The school building and grounds are well maintained by the part-time janitor.

Since the school population is small, special services are provided on a limited basis. A school nurse is available four days a year. The nurse tests vision, checks immunization records, tests hearing, and provides CPR training for the teachers. A music/dance instructor comes in to train the students for performances in performance arts. A karate teacher also comes in periodically to instruct the students and one teacher that continues the instruction and practices with the students.

The enrollment consists of 15 students in grades K - 3 and 21 students in grades 4 – 8. Of these total 36 students, 18 are inter-district transfers from Pioneer County and one from Amador

County. Only 2 students have transferred this year to another district. Enrollment throughout the years varies from the lowest figure of 24 to the high of 44 students.

Educational opportunities in this small school are impressive. All students may participate in cross-country skiing with boots and skis available for all students. Weeklong field trips, planned with parents, are available for the upper grades with the lower grades joining for part of the time.

A financial reward program has been developed to encourage students to demonstrate good behavior and earn good grades. The students earn "Ono Bucks" and are required to maintain records of "Ono Bucks" earned. When students spend "Ono Bucks" at the General Store, which is supplied through donations, they are required to record the transactions in their checkbooks.

The school has a large multipurpose room, which was built in 1996-97 with grant funds. This room contains a kitchen, a full stage with curtain for play productions, a large-screen television, gym, craft room, and an elevator for the disabled. The elevator, which was not operable at the time of Committee's visit, is being used for storage.

In the past seven years, the Superintendent applied for and received approximately \$750,000 in grant funds, part of which was used to build the multipurpose room. Other grants have provided for chain-link fencing (to keep bobcats out), water tanks (no public water), computers (each student has a computer), satellite dish, sets of classical literature, and grassed play areas and fields.

The Pioneer Lions Club of Somerset offers additional support to the school. Over the past seven years, the Club has donated funds for field trips, including Spring Camp Science Trip, a student store structure, provided picnic tables, and obtained a ball wall.

Findings

- F1. The school owns an acre of land that is not being utilized due to funding.
- F2. The elevator for disabled is not in working condition.

Recommendation

- R1. The elevator should be repaired.

Commendations

The Teaching Principal/Superintendent has obtained numerous grants to improve this unique school. He and his staff provide excellent opportunities for their students.

Responses to Findings

F1 and F2 Indian Diggings School Teaching Principal/Superintendent

Response to Recommendation

R1 Indian Diggings School Teaching Principal/Superintendent