

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

El Dorado Union High School

Placerville

Reason for the Report

The Grand Jury selected El Dorado High School (EDUHS) for a general review.

Scope of the Investigation

The members of the Grand Jury:

- Interviewed the principal and the vice-principal;
- Toured the school, including the cafeteria, the library, the gymnasium and the computer laboratories.

Background

The Grand Jury met with and interviewed the principal and vice principal of the school on February 10, 2002. The current principal was appointed mid-year 2002. The vice-principal has been at the school in varying capacities for 31 years.

The school site was developed in 1905 and in 1928, the City of Placerville built the high school. The current physical plant includes 57 classrooms, 2 gyms, and several activity rooms. All of the buildings are permanent with the exception of 9 portables. A total of 345 storage lockers are available to students, but 84 of them are unassigned as many students do not want them. Lockers are assigned on a first come, first serve, basis.

Modernization funds have been helpful in bringing the buildings up to standard. School maintenance is excellent. The campus has the smallest acreage when compared with the other local schools. Maintenance is difficult due to the age of the buildings and the heavy use by the community. There are 5 daytime maintenance staff and 4.5 night staff. Swimming pool, gyms and athletic fields are all community shared.

At present, 1305 students are enrolled, this is down from 1600 students enrolled five years ago. There are 72 teachers, including a librarian. 47 teachers are classified. The student - teacher ratio is 30 - 1. In English/ Math the ratio is 20 to 1.

A Health Academy program is offered, in which students interested in the health fields are given special counseling. Another program, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), identifies 20 students each year who are given special attention to assure their success in high school.

A Sustained Silent Reading Program is well established on the campus. Every student has required reading for 20 minutes each day following announcements. This program is unique to the school and has been very rewarding. It encourages students to read for pleasure.

The school has three computer labs and one computer in every classroom. The labs appear to be fully used by the students.

Vista High School is a new on-site high school located on the campus of EDUHS which offers alternative education. This alternative education program allows staff to keep these students on site. The students are given individual education plans and work with certified teachers. A total of 30 students are currently enrolled.

The campus offers a full-time drama and full time music teacher, and drama costumes are created in the Home Economic classes.

Special Education students include 135 resource students, 17 special day classes, 10 students who are severely handicapped and 16 speech and language students. Special education students comprise about 20 percent of the student body, -- most are "mainstreamed." This figure is high according to the principal.

The school has a significant Title I population. (Title I students include low-achieving low-income, limited English, American Indian, migrants, neglected or delinquent, students with disabilities, and those who need reading assistance.) Test results show El Dorado HS to be doing well when compared to similar school populations. The State testing is important, but results need to be more timely to be helpful.

An assigned school nurse is shared with another school. A full-time health aide is on duty. Three full-time counselors are also on staff, along with the Healthy Start program. Healthy Start provides supplemental tutoring after school among other activities.

Art and music are important programs at the EDUHS. The campus currently has a large amphitheater and a small theatre. A school and community planning committee has been formed to help design and build a 500 seat theatre, with an art gallery, and an amphitheater to accommodate 300 permanent seats. Private gifts and bond funding are being explored. The proposed complex would be shared with the Placerville community.

The Assistant principal is responsible for unifying an evacuation and lock down plan. The District is currently developing a uniform plan.

A full-time police officer and a full-time probation officer are assigned to the school. Strong relationships have been established with the fire and sheriff's departments.

The school has a 7-period day. Buses are shared with other schools. Students attend from as far away as Kyburz.

To assist in student discipline problems, an In-house suspension room is used. When this is used, students are not sent home and therefore do not lose a day of school. Teachers say "lack of respect" and "poor language" (commonly used in TV shows) are problems in the classrooms. The campus has Safe School Ambassadors, selected from the student body, who work to prevent campus confrontations from occurring.

Drugs and alcohol are always a continuing problem. The prescription drugs Rytalin and Vitagen are being sold illegally to young students for \$5 to \$10 a pill. Attempts to control this are three campus monitors, police and a full-time probation officer who has authority to search students.

The usual after school programs are offered, in addition to yoga, art, and dancing. The school also offers ski and snowboard team sports.

Buildings, classrooms, and grounds appeared to be very well maintained and attractive. Elevators and ramps are available for handicapped.

No Findings or Recommendations