

Winters Joint Unified School District
Response of the Board of Trustees and the Acting Superintendent
August 18, 2022
to Yolo County 2021-22 Grand Jury Report:
“Help! I Need Somebody - Getting an Education: The Winters Joint Unified School District”

Response to Findings

Finding F-1: The district does not have a published step-by-step guide for parents/guardians seeking educational support services for struggling students, making it difficult for parents/guardians to advocate for a child to obtain the support to which they are legally entitled.

The Acting Superintendent partially agrees with this finding. Respondent agrees that such a guide can be helpful to parents/guardians in advocating for their child; and, such a handbook now does exist, as representatives of the Grand Jury were informed.

The District had previously completed a Special Education Handbook for families which was shared with representatives of the Grand Jury on April 4, 2022 and again on May 13, 2022. Staff explained that this comprehensive handbook would be shared with all families during the 2022-2023 school year. The Special Education Handbook, which is posted in English and Spanish on District’s website and is also linked below, explains the process by which our schools provide help and intervention to all struggling students, how to request an educational evaluation for Special Education services, and ways in which families can and should advocate for and partner with educators to get appropriate support for their child. WJUSD agrees that our publishing and making available this proactive document supports families in understanding and accessing available services; this will greatly benefit our community. It is a shared priority that all students, including those who struggle academically or who qualify for special education, receive the support they need to succeed in school and life. Given this context, and the absence of a requirement in the Education Code or other statute for school districts to publish such a guide, WJUSD is proud to publish this Special Education Handbook in 2022-2023 as aligned with existing District plans.

Link to Special Education Handbook: <https://wintersjUSD.org/en-US/special-education-f94f93be>

Finding F-2: The most recently available data from the 2018-19 literacy testing at Shirley Rominger Intermediate and the comments in the School Plan for Student Achievement’s Note 2, indicate the district struggles with literacy with their third through fifth grade students.

The Acting Superintendent partially agrees with this finding. The most recently available data is not the 2018-19 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) data cited in this finding; and, while there is still improvement to be achieved, the more recent literacy results show significant progress.

The most recently available literacy testing data that was available when the Grand Jury authored their report, was the February 2022 i-Ready diagnostic data in Reading. This data was provided to the Grand Jury in the form of a presentation that was made to the Board of Trustees on February 3, 2022.

The CAASPP is a suite of statewide summative assessments which test the sum of what a student learns each school year. While the CAASPP is a mandated annual assessment, the test was suspended by the California Department of Education (CDE) in the Spring of 2020 when schools closed due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, in the Spring of 2021, when Winters JUSD schools had reopened for hybrid learning and an abbreviated in-person school day, federal education officials and the State Board of Education afforded California School Districts with the option to implement alternative local assessments. These assessments were required to be aligned with Common Core state standards, to be available to assess students in grades 3-8 and 11, to be uniformly administered, and to provide results including demographic subgroup data for parents, educators and the public.

Winters JUSD implemented the local alternative as all students in the required grade spans participate in research-supported, standards-aligned diagnostic assessments. In grades K-8, Winters JUSD students take the i-Ready diagnostic in Reading and Mathematics three times annually. Winters JUSD staff provided the Grand Jury with i-Ready diagnostic assessment data on May 13th, 2022. This information included Reading assessment outcomes for students at Shirley Rominger Intermediate School from the Spring and Fall of 2021, and the Winter of 2022. Additionally, as the Grand Jury was informed at the time Winters JUSD, in compliance with State requirements, was implementing the CAASPP in the Spring of 2022. While the most recent CAASPP data has not yet been reported to the public, i-Ready data as of May 2022 demonstrates significant progress for Shirley Rominger students. Schoolwide outcomes show that 46% of students are reading on or above grade level, 27% of students are approaching grade level in reading, and 28% of students are below grade level in reading.

Additionally, the median percent progress toward typical grade level growth in reading was 135%. This means that a student at the midpoint of the data sample exceeded their typical growth goal by 35%. It is worthy of note that 34% of students who attend Shirley Rominger are classified as English Learners. Research shows that it takes five to seven years to become competent in a second language, and English Learner students are still developing fluency in Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. See additional information below in the Response to Finding 3.

Finding 3: The district has been unable to clarify, in publicly available data, the percentage of students who are underperforming in literacy skills.

The Acting Superintendent disagrees with this finding. The District places a high value on communicating student achievement results to families and the community. As such, diagnostic and summative assessment results are routinely agendaized and discussed at public meetings of the Board. On May 13, 2022, District staff provided a written document to the Grand Jury outlining recent presentations and publicly available literacy data. This information is outlined below including an additional presentation that has occurred since the District met with the Grand Jury.

Data Presentations/Meeting dates ([Link to Board Meeting Minutes via the WJUSD Website](#)):

- *June 18, 2020 – SPSA presentation*
- *October 15, 2020 - Presentation on 3-Year Focus Plans*
- *November 19, 2020 – i-Ready Data Presentation*
- *December 17, 2020 – Educational Services Update; How the District is addressing EL assessment data*
- *February 4, 2021 – Presentation on revisions to reclassification forms/how the District assesses English Learners*
- *February 18, 2021 – Presentation on 3-Year Focus Plans*
- *May 6, 2021 – i-Ready Data Presentation*
- *June 3, 2021 – 3-Year Focus Plans and End of Year Data Presentations*
- *October 7, 2021 – Presentation on ESSER III Expenditure Plan and how the District plans to mitigate learning loss*

- *November 4, 2021 - i-Ready Data Presentation*
- *December 16, 2021 – SPSA and 3-Year Focus Plans presentations*
- *February 3, 2022 – i-Ready Data and SARC presentations*
- *June 23, 2022 - i-Ready Data presentation*

Winters Express:

- [February 8, 2018](#) – *Student data shows more consistent growth*
- [June 28, 2018](#) – *Middle School test data causes concern*
- [July 20, 2020](#) – *How the District will prepare for distance learning*
- [January 6, 2022](#) – *Update on schools’ 3-year focus plans*

Other Publicly Available Data

These documents denote when the Board receives formative and summative data presentations and is accessible on the District website.

- [2021-2022 Board Governance Calendar](#)
- [2022-2023 Board Governance Calendar](#)

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The district create a Parent Handbook for Special Education with the goal of providing a transparent process for parents/guardians and district staff to follow. Provide this document to the grand jury by October 1, 2022, and to families enrolled in the district.

This recommendation has been implemented as follows. The District has posted on its public website the Special Education Handbook that had already been drafted at the time of the Grand Jury’s inquiry. The District’s 49-page “Special Education Handbook for Families of Children with Special Needs and Others Who Advocate on their Behalf” is publicly available in English and Spanish at:

Link to Special Education Handbook: <https://wintersjUSD.org/en-US/special-education-f94f93be>

This document is also available on the individual school websites and is available in school offices. Additionally, the handbook will be provided to all parents and guardians at every Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. In subsequent school years, the handbook will be provided to parents and guardians at every initial IEP meeting. While neither the Education Code nor other statute require school districts to publish such a guide, the District has implemented all of these actions. We agree that proactive and transparent communication with families regarding all educational matters is a priority.

Recommendation 2: The district provide a graphic in a publicly accessible office in each school which clearly outlines the steps required to (a) evaluate a child for disabilities and (b) obtain special education services or classroom accommodations for a child by October 1, 2022.

This recommendation has been partially implemented by the District, having already made publicly available the Special Education Handbook described and linked elsewhere in this Response. The Handbook includes graphic presentations on these subjects in the form of charts, Q&A’s, and other materials. In addition, as was shared with the Grand Jury on April 4, and May 13, 2022, a Student Support Team (SST) Roadmap graphic outlining the District’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), see draft linked below, further meets this recommendation. An MTSS is a framework used to provide intervention at

the lowest level possible and ensure all students have access to timely assistance and targeted instruction. The Roadmap is a pictorial representation of the District's MTSS process which includes tiers of support up to and including a referral for Special Education assessment. This Roadmap will be finalized and made available in each school no later than October 1, 2022. While school districts are not required by the Education Code or other statute to post a publicly accessible graphic of this nature, we agree that offering graphic guidance for families and aligned processes for staff regarding struggling student identification and support is a best practice.

[SST Roadmap](#)

Recommendation 3: The district complete the CAASPP testing for the 2021-22 school year for grades three through five and report these literacy scores to the Grand Jury by October 1, 2022. Additionally, this grand jury recommends an annual reporting of these literacy scores to grand juries through the 2024-25 school year.

This recommendation has already been partially completed, and the balance of the recommendation will be implemented as well over the next few months for the 2021-22 data, with reporting over the succeeding years as recommended. The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) includes the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments in English Language Arts and Math. These exams must be administered in grades three through eight and grade eleven. Winters JUSD implements state testing in accordance with California Department of Education (CDE) directives each year and did so in the Spring of 2022. Results within the CAASPP system are to be reported for two key purposes:

- to communicate students' progress in achieving the state's academic standards to students, parents/guardians, and teachers
- to inform decisions that teachers and administrators make about improving the educational program

In continuation of our historical practice, Winters JUSD will report these results to parents, guardians, and the Board of Trustees in the coming months to provide information about how students are progressing in their education across all tested grades. This information will also be made publicly available and shared with the Grand Jury as requested.

Recommendation 4: The district review the English Language Arts student performance data provided in the School Plan for Student Achievement to ensure the information is clear to a lay public and mathematically accurate.

This recommendation is implemented in an ongoing way, as follows. The School Plan for Student Achievement is provided in a template that meets state requirements for reporting a school's data, goals, actions, and expenditures to improve programs and enhance student achievement. The CAASPP data as reported in school SPSAs is automatically populated from the District's Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment data and complies with CDE mandates. The District views the English Language Arts student performance data as reported in the SPSA template as providing the information in a clear way to a lay public, and as being mathematically accurate as well. The data includes students' overall participation, overall performance, and performance across domains such as Reading, Writing, and Listening. The District will continue to utilize a compliant template including all required data. The District shares the priority to provide information to families and the community in accessible and accurate ways.

[Waggoner Elementary School SPSA](#)

[Rominger SPSA](#)

[WMS SPSA](#)

[WHS SPSA](#)