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**At Promise Student Opportunities
in Madera County**

**Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report 1920-03
December 21, 2020**

20 **SUMMARY**

1 The Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) investigated programs and facilities which support “At-
2 Risk” youth. The essential question the MCGJ considered is, *What does the education system*
3 *within the County of Madera do with ‘at-risk youth’ to prevent them from becoming adults with*
4 *similar problems?* What preventative educational programs and training do the districts within
5 Madera County provide to school-aged students who need additional help to prepare to navigate
6 the adult world. The base concern being students becoming homeless or incarcerated adults. The
7 MCGJ reviewed each school district throughout Madera County and how their programs fit to
8 serve the needs of the student.
9

10 The first problem the MCGJ encountered was a misunderstanding in terminology. At the outset
11 of the investigation, the MCGJ was referring to the student population under consideration as
12 “At-Risk Youth.” The term “at-risk” had been used to describe students coming from precarious
13 situations or circumstances that increase their chances of academic failure. The term was often
14 used to refer to those from disadvantaged backgrounds, which can include those in low-income
15 communities, English learners, and children in foster care, among others. However, the MCGJ
16 was quickly and politely corrected that the current term is “At-Promise Youth.” In October of
17 2019, the California Governor, through Assembly Bill No. 413, officially changed the term from
18 “At-Risk Youth” to “At-Promise Youth.” The reasoning behind this name change was to create a
19 more positive, “promising” image of students.
20

21 **BACKGROUND**

22 Dr. David Satcher, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated,
23 *If you can give young people a reason to believe that they can change their future, then it is*
24 *much easier to deal with violence and substance abuse and teenage pregnancy...*” According to
25 Dr. Satcher, violence, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy are not the problem but the
26 symptoms of a lack of hope in the future, *When young people don’t have any hope for the future,*
27 *they’ll do anything.*
28

29 For students who are at-promise, their key to success in high school lies in convincing them that
30 a satisfying future is within their reach by showing them how education relates to their future
31 goals. For the mainstream student in any school, the valued outcome from the school’s
32 perspective is to have as many students graduate as possible and to go on to college. However,
33 for many of the students, their immediate concern is to make money. Students may not want to
34 pursue an academic college education but may wish to pursue a career technical education.
35 Those who do not expect to attend college, however, are often confused as to why they should
36 care about getting a good grade in English, or even finishing high school at all. Students focused
37 on making money have limited their concerns to skill oriented education.
38

39 *Student who don’t see a connection between high school and future success are doomed to spend*
40 *their school years in a ‘neutral position.’ The way to turn on turned-off students is to help them*
41 *understand the role of high school achievement in reaching their goals in life as well as in*
42 *education and employment.*
43

44 In the wake of significant concern and frustration surrounding current public-school systems,
45 forms of alternative education continue to thrive. Many parents are dissatisfied with the quality

1 and focus of the education their children receive in the public-school system. Others may have
2 religious or political reasons to seek alternative schools. Others simply believe their students are
3 unsafe in the public-school system and seek out alternative, nontraditional schools. Students
4 themselves may find that the traditional forms of teaching and learning do not fit their needs.

5
6 Types of Non-traditional Schools: The Education Code, sections 58500-58512, provides that
7 school districts may establish and maintain alternative schools and programs of choice. The
8 premise behind alternative schools of choice is that “one size doesn’t fit all.” In other words, not
9 all students will thrive or reach their full potential in the traditional comprehensive school. The
10 following is a list of the different types of alternative educational programs available throughout
11 California including Madera County.

12
13 Alternative-Non-traditional Schools: a form of alternative education with non-traditional
14 methods. Non-traditional schools base their curriculum and methods on individual philosophies
15 of education. Non-traditional schools often teach in radically different manners, sometimes not
16 using grades, or typical teaching strategies such as lesson plans, rubrics, worksheets, and
17 standard type tests.

18 *The purpose of alternative schools and programs of choice is to provide different means*
19 *of achieving grade-level standards and meeting students' needs. Alternative Schools and*
20 *Programs of Choice are voluntary for districts, teachers, students, and their*
21 *parents/guardians/caregivers.*

22
23 *These schools and programs are often characterized by responsiveness to learning and*
24 *instructional style differences and small unit size. The effective use of such instructional*
25 *strategies as independent study, community-based education, focused or thematic*
26 *education, and flexible scheduling increases attendance and improves performance.*

27
28 Independent Schools: a form of alternative education, often referred to as “independent” schools,
29 are often more traditional in their methods. Students often work at their own pace with standard
30 curriculum and teacher resources. Often times, independent schools provided students an
31 opportunity to catch up on missing credits.

32 Charter Schools: a form of alternative education which is publicly funded but have more freedom
33 and choice in policies and curriculum. In return for academic freedom, charter schools are
34 required to produce better results than the public-school system.

35 Continuation High Schools: Continuation high school is primarily for students who are
36 considered at risk for not graduating at the normal pace. Continuation education provides a high
37 school diploma program that meets the needs of students of ages 16 to 18 who have not
38 graduated from high school, are not exempt from compulsory school attendance, and are deemed
39 at risk of not completing their education. Students enrolled in continuation education programs
40 often are behind in high school credits. They may need a flexible educational environment
41 because they are employed or fulfilling family obligations. Minimum attendance in the program
42 is 15 hours per week or 180 minutes daily.

43 Community Day Schools: Community day schools are schools for students who have been
44 expelled from school or who have had problems with attendance or behavior. They are run by

1 school districts. These schools serve troubled students in many ways. They offer challenging
2 classes and teach important skills. They have counselors and other professionals who assist
3 students. The California Department of Education is involved in the funding and management of
4 community day schools.

6 **METHODOLOGY**

7 Interviews

- 8 • Superintendents
- 9 • Correctional Officers
- 10 • Social Workers
- 11 • CEOs of private facilities

12 Document Research

- 14 • Multiple newspaper articles from the Madera Tribune and *Webelieve Madera Unified*
15 newspaper covering positive aspects of the various At-Promise programs
- 16 • Local Control Accountability Plan and Annual Update (LCAP) 2017-2018 Plan
17 Summary
- 18 • Madera County Plan for Providing Education Service to Expelled Youth June 30, 2018
- 19 • Prior Grand Jury Reports
- 20 • Madera County Probation Parent Handbook
- 21 • Madera County Comprehensive Multi-Agency Juvenile Justice Plan 2019-2020
- 22 • Madera County School District's LCAPs
- 23 • Education Codes
- 24 • State Assembly Bills
- 25 • Legislative Counsel's Digest

26 Site Visitations

28 **DISCUSSION**

30 **Madera County Superintendent of Schools**

31
32 The office of the Madera County Superintendent of Schools provides leadership and support to
33 school districts to ensure continuous improvement of curriculum development, instructional
34 delivery, student assessment, teacher preparation and ongoing professional development to both
35 certificated and classified employees.

36
37 The Madera County Office of Education includes the following school districts:
38 Alview-Dairyland Unified School District (ADUSC), Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School
39 District (BLJUESD), Chawanakee Unified School District (CUSD), Chowchilla Elementary
40 School District (CEUSD), Chowchilla Union High School District (CUHSD), Golden Valley
41 School District (GVUSD), Madera Unified School District (MUSD), Raymond-Knowles Union
42 Elementary School District (RKUSD), Yosemite Unified School District (YUSD).

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Madera County Alternative Education Programs

In addition, the office of the Madera County Superintendent of Schools operates career and technical education, childcare and childcare development programs. The following list are the schools administered by the office of the Madera County Superintendent of Schools:

Charter Schools

- Madera County Independent Academy (MCIA)
- Pioneer Technical Center (PTC)
- Pioneer Technical Center Chowchilla (PTCC)

Both Madera County Independent Academy (MCIA) and Pioneer Technical Centers (PTC and PTCC) are chartered by the Madera County Board of Education. MCIA serves students K-12. All charter schools serve students 9-12 including special education students with learning disabilities which require resource specialist services. These charter schools provide Pregnant and Parenting Teen program which identifies teen parents and pregnant minors who have not yet graduated from high school. Expelled students are placed in this program on an “as needed” basis.

Madera County Independent Academy

Madera County Independent Academy accepts applications for enrollment from any student qualified by the State Charter School Law. The targeted student population consists of educationally disadvantaged students in grades kindergarten through twelve. Two distinct student populations will be served: K-12 home school students and K-12 independent study students. Students who attend Madera County Independent Academy are in search of an alternative educational model that provides opportunities for greater flexibility in terms of time and delivery of instruction.

The mission of the Madera County Independent Academy is to broaden the educational choices and opportunities for students and families who live in Madera County and surrounding areas. The instructional method will emphasize the whole child and frame its academic components within an artistic, creative, and imaginative context allowing each child's full potential to unfold.

Pioneer Technical Center

Located in Madera, California, Pioneer Technical Center (PTC) serves students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12. Students have the opportunity to participate in many school activities including sports, field trips and community involvement. The school offers student’s both academic courses and career technical education. All students are enrolled in academic subjects as well as technical education including a choice in the following areas: Construction, Child Development, and Career in Education.

Pioneer Technical Center-Chowchilla

1 Pioneer Technical Center Chowchilla is a public charter high school and is accredited by the
2 Accrediting Commission of Western Association of Schools and Colleges. It is a second school
3 site to Pioneer Technical Center located in Madera, California.

4
5 **MADERA COUNTY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS FOR INCARCERATED YOUTH**

6
7 **Juvenile Hall and Correctional Academy Program**

8 Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility and Correctional Academy both provide educational
9 services through the Madera County Office of Education (MCOE). Student placement into these
10 programs is determined by the juvenile court. Probation officers serving individual students may
11 make recommendations to the court for any of these placements.

12
13 **Juvenile Hall Endeavor and Voyager Secondary School**

14 In keeping with the At-Promise legislative intent the schools within Juvenile Hall are referred to
15 as Endeavor/Voyager.

16
17 The goal of Endeavor/Voyager schools within the juvenile justice system in Madera County
18 provides incarcerated students with the structure and support they need to succeed both
19 academically and as citizens. Students receive curriculum which is aligned with California State
20 Standards. The schools include a community service component which allows for rehabilitation
21 through giving back to the community by becoming a positive influence.

22
23 **Correctional Academy Program (CAP)**

24 The presiding Juvenile Court judge orders wards (an individual) to be committed to this in-
25 house, residential program. This decision is a collaboration between 1. Madera County
26 Probation Department, 2. Madera County Office of Education, 3. Madera County Behavioral
27 Health Services, 4. Volunteers. The Correctional Academy Program consists of 12, 18, or 24-
28 month commitment, which include residential detention and aftercare phases. The Program was
29 developed from a correctional model for defiant youth based in part on a military protocol. The
30 youth ordered to this program are referred to as “Cadets.” Graduation of Cadets occurs after
31 successful completion of the program, which is followed by the custody phase into an aftercare
32 phase.

33
34 Madera County Office of Education provides educational services to both Madera County
35 Juvenile Detention Facility and Correctional Academy. Title 15 and State of California
36 Department of Education standards are followed. Positive youth development occurs through the
37 following programs:

38 Alternative Education:

39 Career Technical Alternative Education Services (CTAES) and Live Well Madera
40 Programs

41 Additional funding from the Governor, Supplemental and Concentration funds; \$3,000
42 per year for student attendance. Categories include English Learners, Low
43 income, and Foster Youth.

44
45 **Madera County School Districts**

46 **Alview-Dairyland Union School District**

1 Alview-Dairyland Union School District (ADUSD) is a small, k-8 school district which was
2 founded in 1915. The name, Alview-Dairyland refers to the two campuses within the district.
3 The Alview campus houses students k-3rd; Dairyland campus is for 4th – 8th grade students.
4 Dairyland School’s population of students consists of 70% free and reduced lunches, and 40%
5 English language learners.

6
7 Expulsions are rare because Alview-Dairyland has established community and parent
8 involvement through a variety of programs, committees, and activities:
9 Alview School supports a Parent-Teacher Club (PTC), School Site Council, De Lac Committee,
10 ESL Class, and they host a Back to School BBQ.

11
12 Dairyland School supports the Dairyland Band, GATE classes, STEM science instruction, 4H,
13 and school sponsored sports. One other notable highlight is Dairyland School’s additional
14 intervention instruction for intervention of at-risk students.

15
16 **Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District**

17 Bass Lake Joint Union School District (BLJUESD) is made up of the following four schools
18 with approximately 890 students: Wasuma Elementary (K-8), Oakhurst Elementary (K-5), Oak
19 Creek Intermediate (6-8) and Fresno Flats Community Day School.

20
21 The 2018-2019 school year saw an increase of after school activities such as homework clubs,
22 after-school tutoring, chess club, sewing club, California Cadet Corps and Eagle Academy.

23
24 Expulsions at BLJUESD are rare. Typically, expulsions are suspended and an individual
25 rehabilitation plan is developed, and excluded students are transferred to Fresno Flats
26 Community Day School (FFCDS). If a student continues to experience difficulties, the student is
27 placed on home studies.

28
29 Fresno Flats Community Day School is located on a site adjacent to Wasuma Elementary School
30 and functions in a multi-graded capacity to meet the individual needs of its student population.
31 The FFCDS is quite successful because it provides the opportunity for students to succeed in a
32 smaller, highly structured environment. The development of positive social skills is a primary
33 goal for students at FFCDS.

34
35 **Chawanakee Unified School District**

36 The Chawanakee Unified School District has approximately 740 students in the following
37 schools: North Fork Elementary (TK-8), Hillside School (TK-8), Spring Valley (TK-8), Minarets
38 High School, Mountain Oaks High School, and Manzanita Community Day School (4-12).

39
40 The standard procedure for Chawanakee Unified School District is to suspend an expulsion
41 decision unless a weapon is involved. Students are assigned a rehabilitation plan assigned to the
42 Community Day School or to the Madera County Superintendent of Schools’ Community School
43 in Madera.

44
45 **Chowchilla Elementary School District**

1 All expulsions that are mandated by law, such as weapons and drug violations, are brought
2 before the Board of Trustees for consideration and action. Cases which are recommended for
3 expulsion but not mandated by law, are appraised by the Trustees and are dealt with through
4 school counseling, probationary periods of behavior, and other rehabilitative measures.

5
6 When students are expelled, parents are provided information about schools and educational
7 services throughout the County of Madera. Parent options include: Pioneer Technical Center
8 Chowchilla as well as Madera County Superintendent of School Community Day School in
9 Madera.

10
11 **Chowchilla Union High School District**

12 Chowchilla Union High School District (CUHSD) has one traditional high school and one
13 alternative high school.

14
15 Starting in the 2014-2015 school year, CUHSD changed its policy from suspended expulsions to
16 implementing behavior contracts for first time drug offenders and other serious but not
17 expellable offenses. These behavior contracts consist of individual rehabilitation plans which
18 include stipulated conditions which must be met. Individual behavior contracts include a
19 community service component. Students who are first time drug offenders must enter the Drug
20 Opportunity Class and adhere to mandatory drug counseling. Students with mandated expulsions
21 or who have violated the terms of their individual behavior contract are assigned to Pioneer
22 Technical Center Chowchilla.

23
24 **Golden Valley School District**

25 The Golden Valley Unified School District (GVUSD) has two elementary schools, a middle
26 school, a high school, and an educational options program. For the past nine years, GVUSD
27 student population has remained under 2000 students. Beyond GVUSD's mainstream students,
28 GVUSD also provides opportunities for court placed foster youth to excel and get back on track
29 to graduate in the most appropriate setting with staff support. Two Educational Options are
30 Lincoln Community Day School and Independence High School. Educational Options principal
31 and the Director of Student Services attend Foster Youth meetings at the office of SOS to ensure
32 they have current information needed to serve this group of students.

33
34 Lincoln Community Day School serves 13 to 18-year-old students in grades seven through
35 twelve. It provides a small class size, which does not exceed 14 students. The classroom is self-
36 contained with a six-hour school day. Lincoln Community Day School meets the Instructional
37 and Assessment goal in the District's Strategic Plan: "To provided alternative education
38 opportunities for students who do not benefit from traditional school..."

39
40 Program Requirements, Placement, and Enrollment. Students are assigned to Lincoln
41 Community Day School when they meet the following conditions:

42 The student is placed on a suspended expulsion*

43 The student is referred by probation

44 The student is referred to by the School Attendance Review Board (SARB)

45 *Students awaiting a scheduled expulsion hearing are given priority enrollment. A student on
46 suspended expulsion has no other educational options following repeated expulsions.

1
2 Independence High School serves students between the ages of 16 and 18. The program is
3 designed to meet the individual needs of each student and includes direct instruction,
4 independent, and web-based instructional components. Independence High School meets the
5 Instructional and Assessment goal in the District’s Strategic Plan: “To provided alternative
6 education opportunities for students who do not benefit from traditional school...”
7

8 Program Requirements, Placement, and Enrollment.

9 Students must be between 16 and 18 years of age

10 Students may voluntarily enroll in Independence High School in order to receive
11 individualized instruction and participate in a credit recovery.

12 Students may also be involuntary transferred to Independence for violating Ed. Code
13 Section 48900 (acts to suspension or expulsion) and/or the student is habitually truant.
14

15 **Madera Unified School District**

16 Madera Unified School District (MUSD) is located in the geographic center of California among
17 a growing community of 65,000. The District serves 20,000 students and employs 2000
18 individual staff members. MUSD is comprised of 27 schools and, at the time of this writing, is in
19 the process of building a new high school. The district serves federal preschool and K-12
20 students at: one preschool, 18 elementary schools, three middle schools, three comprehensive
21 high schools, and three alternative high schools.

22 The MUSD traditionally processed expulsions by conducting hearings before Administrative
23 Hearing Panels. However, because of statutory timelines and other procedural delays, students
24 were often out of school for several weeks. Beginning in the 2003-2004 school year, the District
25 implemented a “stipulated expulsion” whereby parents of the expelled student agreed to the facts
26 of the case, agreed with the recommendation of expulsion, and waived the right to appeal. With
27 assurances in place, the Administration of Madera County District of Schools and Pioneer
28 Technical Center agreed to place those students who have entered into a stipulated agreement
29 while the Board of Education rectification is pending. This acceleration of timelines has greatly
30 benefited students with stipulated expulsions because students are rarely out of school for more
31 than one or two weeks.
32

33 When students in K-8 grade are expelled, their orders are usually suspended, and, in most cases,
34 students are placed at an alternate site. In extreme cases, where there is danger to self or others,
35 the student is referred to Madera County Superintendent of Schools programs.
36

37 High school students, who are placed on suspended orders, are usually referred to alternative
38 programs, which include Mountain Vista Continuation, Ripperdan Community Day School,
39 Furman High School (independent study) or Pioneer Technical Center. High school students, for
40 whom expulsion orders are not suspended, are referred to MCSOS Community Day School.
41

42 **Raymond-Knowles Union Elementary School District (RKUESD)**

43 Raymond-Knowles Unified School District, located in the foothills of Madera, is a small school
44 that serves 80 to 90 students. Expulsions of a student are rare due to effective intervention
45 practices. Intervention practices include positive behavior interventions, individualized behavior
46 plans, frequent communication with care givers, and counseling services.

1
2 On the rare occasion of expulsion, the expulsion would be suspended and the parents would have
3 the option of enrolling the student in independent study, be placed by MCSOS, or partner with a
4 neighboring district to enroll the student into one of their expelled youth programs.

5
6 **Yosemite Unified School District (YUSD)**

7 YUSD provides intervention to ensure that students have access to other means of correction
8 when possible and views expulsion as a last resort. YUSD utilizes the California Department of
9 Education Administrator Recommendation of Expulsion Matrix to determine when expulsion is
10 mandated, expected, or discretionary. If a student is recommended for expulsion, the district
11 meets with the family and designs a rehabilitation plan, effectively suspending the expulsion.
12 The individual rehabilitation plan specifies behavioral and performance expectations as well as
13 district support.

14
15 YUSD also provides two programs for expelled students: Meadowbrook Community Day School
16 for grades 5-8, and Campbell Community Day High School, grades 9-12. Both programs provide
17 instruction through a seat-based model where students are given assignments on a daily basis and
18 progress is determined by completion of work and monitored by the teacher.

19
20
21 **FINDINGS**

22 **F1.** The MCGJ finds that the Madera County Office of Education and Madera County School
23 Districts are in compliance with California State mandates for At-Promise students.

24 **F2.** The MCGJ finds the Madera County Office of Education and Madera County School
25 Districts are addressing At Promise youth through their Strategic Plan.

26 **F3.** The MCGJ finds throughout Madera County, all school districts seek to maintain At-Promise
27 students' connection to a relevant and Career Technical Alternative Education Services program.
28 (CTAES).

29
30
31 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

32 **R1.** The MCGJ recommends that the Madera County Office of Education and Madera County
33 School Districts continue to follow State mandates for At-Promise students.

34 **R2.** The MCGJ recommends Madera County Office of Education and Madera County School
35 Districts continue to address At Promise youth in their Strategic Plan.

36 **R3.** The MCGJ recommends Madera County Office of Education and Madera County School
37 Districts continue to connect At-Promise students to Career Technical Alternative Education
38 Service program.

39
40 **Required Responses**

41 Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

42 From the following officials within 60 days:

43 Dr. Cecilia Massetti
44 Madera County Superintendent of Schools

1 105 S. Madera Avenue
2 Madera, CA 93637
3
4 **Invited responses**
5 Ms. Shelia Perry
6 Superintendent Alview-Dairyland Union Elementary School District
7 12861 Avenue 18-1/2
8 Chowchilla, CA 93610
9
10 Mr. Randall Seals
11 Superintendent Bass Lake Joint Union School District
12 40096 Indian Springs Road
13 Oakhurst, CA 93644
14
15 Mr. Darren Q. Silva
16 Superintendent Chawanakee Unified School District
17 26065 Outback Industrial Way
18 O'Neals, CA 93645
19 Mailing Address: PO Box 400
20 North Fork, CA 93643
21
22 Dr. Charles Martin
23 Superintendent Chowchilla Elementary School
24 355 North Fifth Street
25 Chowchilla, CA 93610
26
27 Mr. Ron Seals
28 Superintendent Chowchilla Union High School District
29 805 Humboldt Street
30 Chowchilla, CA 93610
31
32 Mr. Rodney Wallace
33 Superintendent Golden Valley Unified School District
34 37479 Avenue 12
35 Madera, CA 93636
36
37 Mr. Todd Lile
38 Superintendent Madera Unified School District
39 1902 Howard
40 Madera, CA 93637
41
42 Michelle Townsend
43 Superintendent/Principal Raymond-Knowles Union Elementary School District
44 31828 Road 600
45 Raymond, CA 93653
46

1 Mr. Glen Billington
2 Superintendent Yosemite Unified School District
3 50200 Road 427
4 Oakhurst, CA 93644

5
6 Mr. Chris Childers
7 Madera County Chief Probation Officer
8 200 Yosemite Avenue
9 Madera, CA 93637

10
11 Board of State Community Corrections
12 2590 Venture Oaks Way Suite 200
13 Sacramento, 95833
14 Attention: Beth Gong

15

16 Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section
17 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading
18 to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

19

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25

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28

29 **APPENDIX**

30 Golden Valley Unified School District Plan Goals

31 Instruction and Assessment:

32 To develop, provide and maintain a culture of achievement and personal character at all levels
33 through the use of innovative and effective standards-based curriculum driven by frequent
34 assessments.

35