



# SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Superintendent of Schools  
Randolph E. Ward, Ed.D.

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SAN DIEGO  
COUNTY GRAND JURY

August 11, 2008

Honorable Kenneth K. So  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
Presiding Department  
220 West Broadway  
San Diego CA 92101

Re: Response to the 2007-2008 Grand Jury Report: "Hope for Homeless Children – An Educational Success"

Dear Judge So:

Enclosed is our response to the Grand Jury Report of May 14, 2008, concerning how well the needs of homeless youths are being met by the Hope Region, a component of the San Diego County Office of Education Juvenile Court and Community Schools, and supporting agencies. A copy of the response is being provided to you in accordance with the Grand Jury's "Requirements and Instructions." In addition, our response to the report has been sent to Michael R. Letendre, Grand Jury Foreman.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Randolph E. Ward, Ed.D.  
County Superintendent of Schools

REW:CMI:CPA

Enclosure

## Board of Education

Nick Aguilar Susan Hartley Sharon C. Jones Robert J. Watkins John Witt

**SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP**

**SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
RESPONSES TO THE GRAND JURY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
REGARDING HOPE FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN—AN EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS**

**Finding:** The Hope Region provides schools for at-risk and homeless children.

**SDCOE Response:** SDCOE agrees with this finding.

Due to the social challenges that often accompany being homeless, i.e., gaps in school attendance, history of neglect, and emotional, physical or sexual abuse, the majority of children attending Hope Region schools are also considered at risk.

In the Hope Region, there are three schools whose purpose is to provide an education to at-risk and homeless children. Monarch School, the largest of the three sites, serves students in grades 2-12. Harbor Community School enrolls students in grade K-7. Toussaint Academy of Arts and Sciences serves students in grades 9-12.

**Finding:** The Hope Region is fulfilling the educational requirements of homeless children in San Diego County, and in some cases actually exceeding the test results obtained by some local comprehensive schools.

**SDCOE Response:** SDCOE agrees with this finding.

In June of 2008, the Hope Region held a graduation ceremony to recognize 13 Monarch School and Toussaint Academy graduates. Twelve students earned their diploma and one earned the General Educational Development (GED) certificate. All graduating seniors passed the California High School Exit Exam with the highest level of proficiency in at least one test section.

**Finding:** The Hope Region's success appears largely due to the efforts of the staff and support agencies.

**SDCOE Response:** SDCOE agrees with this finding.

The Hope Region is fortunate to have highly committed staff members. The corresponding partner agencies are also dedicated to ensure the success of each student.

**Finding:** Students within the Hope Region need to take additional classes at a community college or at available high schools out of the region if their opportunities to attend a four-year college are to be realized.

**SDCOE Response:** SDCOE agrees with this finding.

In order to fulfill the A-G course admission requirements set by the University of California and California State University systems, students in the Hope Region participate in the Dual Enrollment Program with San Diego City College. Students have also taken coursework through National University's Virtual High School.

**Finding:** A counselor within the Hope Region is trying to provide students with vocational training classes as well as job intern opportunities. In addition, many students receive part-time job opportunities because of supporting agencies, but more are needed.

**SDCOE Response:** SDCOE agrees with this finding.

The Hope Region will improve its collaboration with the Work Readiness Program and thus offer more vocational training, internship, and employment opportunities.

**Finding:** San Diego County Office of Education policy prevents the hiring of qualified Teacher Assistants who are not currently attending college.

**SDCOE Response:** SDCOE does not agree with this finding.

California Education Codes (10020, 44323, and 44926) require Teacher Assistants to be enrolled in college.

**Fact:** Of the four counties originally granted educational exceptions to the McKinney-Vento Act, San Diego is currently the only county in the nation to be successful in continuing its efforts to educate homeless children.

**SDCOE Response:** San Diego, Orange, and San Joaquin Counties are currently the three counties in the nation to be successful in continuing their efforts to educate homeless children.

**Recommendation 08-57:** Review the policy that prohibits hiring teacher's aids [sic] or classroom assistants if they hold college degrees but are not currently enrolled in college and consider giving the Hope Region schools an exemption from the requirement.

**SDCOE Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented.

Employment eligibility for Teacher Assistant assignments with the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) is prescribed by the California Education Codes 10020, 44323, and 44926 that require Teacher Assistants to be enrolled in college. SDCOE has no authority to grant an exemption from this eligibility requirement.

**Recommendation 08-58:** Consider introducing and funding vocational training programs into the Hope Region curriculum.

**SDCOE Response:** This recommendation will be implemented.

SDCOE Juvenile Court and Community Schools' Work Readiness Program is open to all JCCS students. The program is within walking distance to Monarch School and Toussaint Academy. Students from the Hope Region have taken advantage of driver's education, auto collision repair, and electrician courses to name a few. They have also taken advantage of the program's GED prep and internship opportunities with the center.

The Hope Region will improve collaboration with Work Readiness. Staff members from the program will visit Monarch School and Toussaint Academy and showcase the services offered.

**Recommendation 08-59:** Give as much assistance as possible to supporting agencies to help obtain, expand, and expedite new sites and/or remodel Monarch and Harbor Summit Schools.

**SDCOE Response:** This recommendation will be implemented.

SDCOE management, teaching, administrative, and support staff have been present at planning meetings for the new and remodeled school sites. Their input is invaluable, encouraged, and necessary to provide support and guidance to the partner agencies.