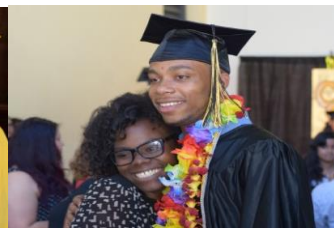




OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Community Schools, Thriving Students

Alameda County Civil Grand Jury Report regarding Castlemont High School



August 12, 2020

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Overview

- Report released on June 22, 2020
- OUSD has 90 days to respond (by August 21, 2020)
- District would like to thank Jurors for their work and their seriousness in studying use of APEX at Castlemont as well as their clear concern for Oakland students
- District welcomes the constructive feedback Report provides and opportunity to respond

Overview

- District provided all requested and subpoenaed documents and presented all requested and subpoenaed witnesses to testify
- District prepared additional summaries and information as requested by the Grand Jury in an attempt to clarify and explain the complexities of APEX to the Jurors
- District was not given chance to respond to or provide evidence regarding certain assertions in Report

Structure of Report and Response

- Permitted responses to each findings :
 - Agree
 - Disagree Wholly, with an explanation
 - Disagree Partially, with an explanation

Structure of Report and Response

- Permitted responses to each recommendation:
 - Has been implemented, with brief summary of implementation actions
 - Will be implemented, with implementation schedule
 - Requires further analysis, with explanation and scope and parameters of analysis or study, and completion date that is not more than 6 months
 - will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation

Limitations

- State law imposes limitations on Board discussion and staff responses
 - Personnel matters/employee discipline
 - Protected student educational records
 - Active or potential litigation
 - Privileged communications

Actions Prior to Grand Jury Report

- District received first complaint regarding APEX in June 2019
 - In accordance with protocols, District timely launched an investigation
- District subsequently received second complaint in July 2019
 - Same focus for both complaints

Retention vs. Promotion

- OUSD and its employees believe in capacity of **every OUSD student, regardless of present circumstance or past behavior**
- If student takes course and is initially not successful, OUSD is committed to helping find way for student to retake the course and properly demonstrate mastery

Retention vs. Promotion

- Ample research that keeping students from promoting to next grade does not necessarily improve their outcomes
- Important that student learn and master grade level content
- District has developed rigorous academic as well as social-emotional supports for students so that whether to retain student is not a question
 - Resource-rich teacher portal and robust PD with focus on working with struggling students

Conclusions of District's Investigation

- Did not find sufficient evidence that any teacher assigned improper grades to a student for an APEX course
 - California law: “grade . . . shall be the grade determined by the teacher of the course and the determination of the pupil’s grade by the teacher, in the absence of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith, or incompetency, shall be final”

Conclusions of District's Investigation

- Did not find sufficient evidence that any teacher assigned improper grades to a student for an APEX course
 - Board Policy 5121: “Grades should be based on impartial, consistent observation of the quality of the student's work and his/her mastery of course content and objectives. Students shall have the opportunity to demonstrate this mastery through a variety of methods such as classroom participation, homework, tests and portfolios”

Conclusions of District's Investigation

- Investigation concluded that length of time student spent on APEX—*by itself*—did not provide sufficient information to understand how a teacher utilized or how a student engaged with an APEX course
- Teachers used APEX in wide variety of ways
 - E.g., one teacher opted to download all content for APEX course and then taught content as if it was regular course; students would only log into APEX to complete the end-of-unit quizzes online

Conclusions of District's Investigation

- Initiated external evaluation of online credit recovery courses focused on whether OUSD needed to:
 - implement additional employee training regarding use of online credit recovery programs
 - revise OUSD guidelines and grading rubrics for online credit recovery programs
 - incorporate additional checks and balances prior to issuance of credits through online credit recovery program

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