



GARRY T. EAGLES, Ph.D., Superintendent

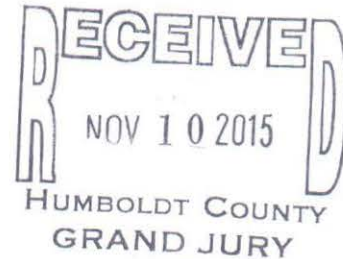
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July 8, 2015



The Honorable Judge Joyce Hinrichs
Humboldt County Courthouse
825 5th Street
Eureka, CA 95501

SUBJECT: "Schools, Communication and the Brown Act" Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations

Dear Judge Hinrichs:

The Humboldt County Board of Education and the Humboldt County Superintendent of Schools agree with the Humboldt County Grand Jury's expression regarding the importance of adherence to the spirit and letter of the Brown Act in the conduct of all public meetings. However, we respectfully disagree with the findings and recommendations pertaining to this matter as outlined in the 2014-15 Final Report regarding both the legal role of the Humboldt County Office of Education in this important area and the reported lack of Board trainings provided and/or made available on this subject matter.

First, Humboldt County has 31 local school districts, as well as multiple independent state-recognized charter schools. Each of these separate governmental organizations has their own elected governing body. As independent self-governing entities the legal responsibility to adhere to the requirements of the Brown Act, as well as to all other state and federal laws, rests solely and exclusively with each of their respective governing boards. The county office can neither mandate board member participation in Brown Act training nor monitor the compliance to the Act when these entities conduct an estimated 500 board meetings every year.

Second, as to the availability for trainings regarding Brown Act requirements, the Humboldt County Office of Education has expended significant resources over the years to insure the availability of training for both new and experienced local school board members. As an example, during 2014-15 alone and at a cost exceeding \$80,000, the county office sponsored the entire California School Board Association's Masters in Governance series and provided free tuition for board members and superintendents to attend these sessions in Eureka. The Brown Act was a subject covered in this series and this was the second time in the past 12 years that the office has provided this comprehensive training opportunity for all local district school board members and superintendents. Additionally, every two years following the regular election cycle for school board members, the county office has conducted board governance workshops which

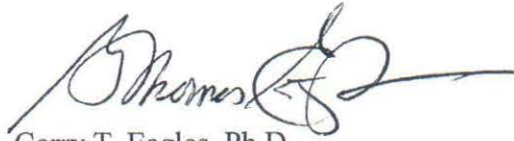
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always feature a review of Brown Act legal requirements. Furthermore, in his role of stewardship to local school districts the county superintendent personally offers and conducts on request, individually-tailored workshops on school governance matters for local districts. Each year, one or more local districts has invited the superintendent to provide such trainings. Generally, though not always, these trainings involve some discussion/review of the Brown Act. The county superintendent estimates that he has personally provided over 100 trainings on Brown Act requirements over the past 30 years. Lastly, all 31 school districts and most of the charter schools are members of the North Coast Schools Legal Consortium/School and College Legal Service, which makes available complete, up-to-date, free Brown Act training materials accessible on its website and offers workshops on this subject for a nominal fee every year.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mary G. Scott, President
Humboldt County Board of Education



Garry T. Eagles, Ph.D.
Humboldt County Superintendent of Schools