

Youth Initiative Report: Sonoma Valley Fund

An Affiliate of Community Foundation Sonoma County

(December, 2009)



<http://www.sonomavalleyfund.org/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early 2009, the Sonoma Valley Fund established a Youth Initiative Committee to explore challenges facing Sonoma Valley's youth in light of the late October 2008 murder of a Hispanic youth in Maxwell Park, the perceived low numbers of local students going on to college or meaningful jobs directly from high school, continuing reports of significant drug and alcohol problems among Valley youth, and for some observers, disappointing levels of student academic performance versus comparable schools around the state. In short, many knowledgeable people feel we need to do much better. In their view, unless significant improvements are made, the outlook for the long term health of our community in coming generations is bleak.

In doing its work, the Committee met with more than sixty people all of whom are intimately involved with youth issues in Sonoma Valley. They included middle school and high school students, heads of youth oriented not-for-profits, school administrators and teachers, local experts, philanthropists, and others who have been involved with youth issues for years.

This report is the result of the Committee's work. It describes what the Committee members heard in interviews and meetings, as well as some of the additional work they did. It details the effort, what they learned, what they recommended -- and what the Sonoma Valley Fund Board adopted.

Among those recommendations is a call for the Sonoma Valley Fund to create a new Coordinating Council for Youth Development in Sonoma (CCYDS) consisting of seven to nine leaders of Valley youth efforts. It should be staffed with a qualified (and compensated) part time Council Executive, who with the Council, and its Chair will lead an initial 18 to 24 month effort to build a business plan and begin acting on the recommendations made in this report. While the recommendations encompass a broad range of efforts for Valley youth of all ages, the primary focus of CCYDS should be programs and activities directed at middle school and late elementary school kids.

On November 18, 2009, this report and its recommendations were adopted by the Sonoma Valley Fund Board, including, subject to the concurrence of the Coordinating Council, a commitment to fund the creation of a Youth Initiative Business Plan.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is divided into five sections.

- The first describes what we did Page 3
- The second, what we heard and learned Page 5
- The third, what we recommend Page 18
- The fourth, who we interviewed and spoke with Page 21
- The fifth, Exhibits and our sources for individual statements of fact or opinion Page 23

WHAT WE DID

- Our initial efforts arose from the October, 2008 murder of a Hispanic Youth at Maxwell Park and the gang issues associated with that tragedy.
 - The Sonoma Valley Fund provided financial and organizing support for a series of six community meetings to explore the facts behind the rise of gangs in Sonoma Valley,
 - And it sponsored a Latino community survey (incomplete).
- The Board then decided to focus its energies on a “Youth Initiative” - not simply to explore the issue of gangs but to organize a study of broader scope and consequence. It decided that apart from annual Ellman Fund grants, it would suspend its own program of relatively small grants to Sonoma Valley not-for-profit organizations while it studied the causes behind the seeming problems facing our youth, whose drop-out rates, academic performance, rates of entering and remaining in college through graduation, or finding meaningful technical jobs are of great concern and appear to be worsening.
- The Board formed a Committee consisting of Chairman, Dave Stollmeyer and members, Barbara Young and Steve Pease.
- That Committee first developed a matrix “for use in exploring which agencies are now doing what for our kids?”
- It obtained and developed statistical and other data describing Valley demographics, student test results, drop-out rates, and other information germane to its work.
- It hosted a series of meetings with 12 executive directors and other representatives of all, or nearly all, of the youth oriented agencies in the Valley.
- It met with eight school district officials and administrators, and in one of those meetings with two representatives of the Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance.
- It met with six high school students, all members of the school’s Leadership program, and with four Middle school students at Adele Harrison.
- It met with 15 mothers and teachers, all part of the District English Language Advisory Committee (DELAC) in which teachers and administrators meet and work with parents.
- And it hosted small group meetings and interviews with 17 community members known to be significantly involved with our youth and our educational environment. They represented many different constituencies and perspectives and all of them brought their own expertise and experience with the issues at hand.
- In total, the Committee talked with more than 60 people significantly involved with the Valley’s youth and the issues focused on by the Youth Initiative.
- After those series of meetings, the Committee developed a draft report synthesizing what they felt they had heard, and had been learned, and their initial recommendations.
- It then hosted “second round” meetings with those interviewed earlier to share with them a summary presentation of the work to date. In that effort, it solicited further thoughts and

critiques of its efforts. Hopefully from those meetings, the Committee may have also begun to develop a consensus in support of its work and recommendations.

- The Committee then revisited and further refined the “Draft” report and presentation.
- On November 18, 2009, the Committee made its report to the Board of Sonoma Valley Fund. The report was adopted, including all of its recommendations.

WHAT REMAINS

- Assist the Sonoma Valley Fund Board in: 1) Establishing the new Coordinating Council for Youth Development in Sonoma (CCYDS) and in hiring a part time Council Executive; and 2) communicating this report and the Fund’s efforts to the broader Sonoma Valley Community.

WHAT WE HEARD: Comments About Our Current Situation – The Good News and The Bad*

- Sonoma Valley is blessed with people who care about kids, with exemplary non-profit programs directed at kids, and with good public and non-profit facilities.
 - We have a large population of motivated adults who support Sonoma's youth. These include:
 - Educators and administrators, most of whom truly work hard, and genuinely care about helping kids.
 - Parents of most of our +/- 4,800 students¹ who care greatly about the welfare of their children.
 - Up to a thousand volunteers provide countless hours in support of our youth.
 - Among them, the Mentoring Alliance has 425 active adult mentors.²
 - More than 200 adult volunteers were recruited by the Teacher Support Network (TSN) to assist with senior projects, and numerous other volunteers provide in-classroom assistance to teachers and students.³
 - More than 100 adults serve on Boards or as advisors of youth oriented non-profits.⁴
 - Law enforcement is also committed to helping our kids. Though there are reported instances of over-reaction by individual officers, generally law enforcement is sensitive and very supportive. Among their programs, they sponsor the Gang Resistance and Training (GREAT) Program at the Boys and Girls Club, and support various forms of intervention at the high school to help at risk kids. They also support a youth officer at the high school campus.⁵
 - Generous philanthropists provide hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to finance youth oriented not-for-profits.
 - We have more than a dozen non-profit organizations with programs geared towards our kids.⁶ Among others:
 - The Boys and Girls Club is an excellent facility, well run, and popular with elementary age youth. At this writing it is also actively developing programs for older kids.
 - The Mentoring Alliance provides positive adult support for roughly one in ten Valley kids with even more awaiting the opportunity to have an adult mentor in their lives.
 - The Teacher Support Network provides in-classroom help to 24 percent⁷ of our high school teachers and with that, enhanced education for students. They also help with senior projects and are actively exploring two prospective new programs (discussed below) to counsel high school students regarding their college and career aspirations.
 - Operation Youth works directly with high school teens providing them with safe alternatives for creative, meaningful self expression and – in particular – a helping hand for those without adequate support.
 - Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) works to intervene in the lives of high school age kids to help them before (or even after) they join gangs, or get into trouble.
 - The Educational Foundation supports the Teacher Support Network, the innovative Visual Thinking Strategies program - using fine art images to develop vocabulary and literacy skills - and MERIT, a program that trains public school teachers in the use of technology in their classroom teaching.
 - The Teen Center provides some teens with a safe friendly environment where they can develop their confidence and self esteem through encouragement of their potential for becoming more productive citizens.
 - The Sonoma Ecology Center provides science education, in the form of classroom lessons, field trips, and real life restoration work for more than 1,100 Valley kids in the 2nd, 4th, 5th and 6th grades each year plus internships for those in high school.

*Note: The comments on pages 5 through 18 summarize what participants in interviews and focus groups told us about their perspective. In part, we have augmented these comments with data, mostly from California Department of Education Web sites. None of the comments are direct quotes. Instead they paraphrase what we were told, often by most or many of the participants. The names of those we spoke with are shown on page 22 and 23.

- La Luz/Vineyard Workers Services Community Services program connects Latinos with resources to meet essential needs like food, housing and work. Its Family Advocates program helps immigrants develop problem solving strategies while also facilitating communication with employers and landlords. Its education programs include English instruction, computer skills, and parenting and financial literacy training. La Luz encourages academic success in young people by presenting achievement awards to students in elementary and middle schools, and by providing college scholarships to immigrant students. Its Community Development program prepares immigrants to participate in community decision-making with voter education, leadership training, promotion of civic volunteerism, and neighborhood organization.
 - Sonoma Art Museum provides art education opportunities for Valley kids including the student art program, art classes on school sites and field trips for the Ed Foundation's Visual Thinking Strategies program.
 - Plein Air Foundation, like the Art Museum, is a major supporter of arts education. To date, several hundred thousand dollars has been donated to arts classes in schools.
 - Common Bond Foundation fosters cross-cultural appreciation and mutual respect among the neighboring cultures of Sonoma Valley. It offers educational and community service programs such as summer language immersion camps, after-school language enrichment, adult language classes, and local bilingual radio on KSVY 91.3 Sonoma.
 - Willmar Center serves bereaved children and teenagers who have experienced the death of a loved one from illness, accident, suicide or homicide.
 - And each year, Infineon's Speedway Charities raises and donates \$250,000 to \$500,000 in support of Sonoma County's youth.
 - The Valley has an infrastructure of schools, non-profit facilities, parks and other assets which can be used to enhance opportunities for kids:
 - Our school facilities are adequate to meet the Valley's needs. While nearly all classrooms are being used, apart from career technical facilities there is no shortage of teaching space and all schools have playgrounds. School District administrative offices are modern, and apart from a shortage of tennis courts, the absence of a pool, and the reliance on a public football field for the high school, athletic facilities are generally adequate.
 - A fleet of school buses operates an established morning and afternoon schedule for kids.
 - The Boys and Girls Club, Teen Center, La Luz facilities, Operation Youth facilities and others operate from modern attractive facilities.
 - Though some would argue for improved maintenance and the need for a Parks and Recreation Department, our system of local parks and playfields, including the Field of Dreams, Maxwell Park, and others is adequate, even if not all facilities are conveniently located for many of the Valley's youth, particularly those living in the Springs area.
- With all that said,
 - Quite simply, the outlook for many attending our schools is disappointing, particularly for a Valley with the financial wealth and richness of talented people who live here. We simply do more poorly than we should and we are losing ground as compared with our historic levels of literacy, high school and college graduation rates, family income, and other measures of accomplishment. (See Exhibit 1 for year 2000 Census Sonoma Valley demographic data.)
 - Though there are no hard statistics, it is generally believed that few Sonoma Valley High School kids go on to college. Some we talked with feel that perhaps 10 to 20 percent of the kids are predisposed to go to college when they enter high school, (and perhaps another 20 percent might be motivated with the right kind of adult support), but well more than half of our kids do not go on – even to a two year college. Others say the percentage of entering freshman that aspire to go to college is much higher than 10 to 20 percent, but over time, most of them lose interest, fail to take necessary steps, or otherwise become de-motivated. Moreover, the majority of kids who do not go on to college are thought to have insufficient vocational/technical

education to qualify for the jobs that are out there and thus they are foreclosed from going on to a career they would love to pursue or have interest in.

- Fewer than 35 percent of our high school graduates qualify for admission to the UC-CSU system. (Exhibit 2) Given the subsequent requirements to apply, be accepted, enter, and graduate from college, it is highly unlikely we can match the 30 percent college graduate status of the Valley's population in 2000. (See both Exhibits 1 and 2) The trend is going in the wrong direction.
- Exacerbating our situation is the decline in student enrollment and the changing mix of our student population. While the total population in the Valley has been slowly rising (to roughly 40,000 people today), student enrollment has declined from a peak of 5,303 in 1997-98 to 4,740 in 2008-09. (See Exhibit 3) At the same time the numbers of students that are "English Language Learners" is has climbed sharply from 644 in 1994-95 to 1,539 in 2008-09 (Exhibit 4). The result is that while the District had the added duty of English language instruction for 13.0% of its students in 1993-94, today the District must provide language instruction for 32.5% of its students. The need for English language skills as a predicate for learning in nearly every other academic domain places a substantial additional burden on a school system struggling for funding. Exhibit 5 shows the growth of English Language Learners by school 2000/01 to 2008/09.
- At 9.1% (the Dataquest derived four year rate, for 2007-08), Sonoma Valley's reported high school drop-out rate is below that of Sonoma County and the State of California, but it remains a concern, particularly in our generally affluent and literate community, and in comparison with the 6.6% average dropout rates from 1994 to 2001.⁸ (See Exhibit 6)
- Nationally, and in Sonoma Valley, the fact that between 2005 and 2008, fewer than half of our kids performed at grade level in the English Language Arts and Math AYP tests is alarming. (See Exhibit 7 and Exhibit 8)
- Similarly, though our API test scores have generally improved over time (See Exhibits 9 and 10) and compare favorably with State and County averages, (Exhibit 11) our scores are consistently lower than school districts the State of California Department of Education considers comparable to ours (also Exhibit 11). Typically we are ranked "3" on a scale of "1 to 10" where 10 would put you in the top 10% of your peer group. In 2007, our two best schools were ranked "4" (roughly 40% of comparable schools got worse scores than we did and 60% did better). The other eight were ranked "1" - the bottom 10 percent, (four schools), "2" (two schools) and "3" (two schools).
- Much of the above data points directly at the need to enhance education for the Hispanic kids in our schools. According to U.S. Census data (See Exhibit 1) the 40,000 people in Sonoma Valley are generally
 - Financially well off - median 2000 income level of \$61,000 versus the California figure of \$53,000 and the National figure of \$50,000.
 - Literate – 83.4% had high school degrees and 30.1% college degrees in 2000. These figures compare with 76.8% and 26.6% for the State and 80.4% and 24.4% for the Nation. Of those in the Valley, the proportion speaking a language other than English at home was 22.3 percent.
 - Older – The median age of the District was 42.0 years versus 33.3 for the State and 35.3 for the Nation.

Contrast the above figures with comparable data for Sonoma County Hispanics, also from Exhibit 1 (District data are not available from the Census Bureau). The County Hispanic population is:

- Significantly less well off – median income in 2000 was \$46,580 (versus the Valley average of \$61,000).
- Less literate – 48.1 percent had a high school degree (versus the Valley average of 83.4%). Only 9.6% were college graduates (versus the Valley average of 30.1%). Of Sonoma County's Hispanics, 66.8% spoke a language other than English at home.
- Younger – median age 24 (versus the Valley average of 42).

- These data, together with the fact that undocumented Hispanics are not likely to have been counted in the Census, helps explain why, even though Hispanics were only 18.5% of the population of Sonoma Valley in the 2000 Census, today they are roughly half of the elementary and middle school population and roughly 40 percent of the high school population. (See Exhibit 12)
 - The relative youth and larger family size of the Hispanic population means they are a significant and growing part of the Valley's student age population with the added duties that places on a District, for which current tight budgets only make the challenges greater.
 - Further, many kids from poorer homes in the Valley have no access to computers or the Internet at home and, apart for the school bus system, there is often no means of transportation for a mother (or father) to get kids to and from school, the Boys and Girls Club, the library, or another place where there is access to a computer, and a place to do their homework and then get home.
 - More than 200 local kids (perhaps as many as 240) are known to be gang members and another 240 plus are probably involved or very sympathetic⁹. In short, something approaching 10 percent of the Valley's 4,800 school age kids are in gangs or are significantly influenced by gang culture. Conversations with Middle School kids painted a discouraging picture of how pervasive the gangs are and the sense of powerlessness some kids feel about gangs ever losing their grip on so many kids, particularly Hispanics. "Don't cross them, don't disrespect them" is a message that runs through kids conscious sense of existing in a community with our present gang culture.
 - Finally, some told us that of the roughly 50 percent Latino kids in our schools¹⁰, perhaps half or more are undocumented. If accurate, this estimate means that about 25 percent of all Sonoma Valley's school age kids are undocumented. And if that is true, these kids may well conclude – correctly – that they have limited chances for higher education or a high paying job. The motivational consequences are serious and can be easily capitalized upon by the "social justice" arguments of criminal gang leaders in recruiting young gang members whose early years are often spent stealing for the benefit of the gang and its elder criminal leaders.¹¹
- Bottom line: While we have much to be proud of, our people, money, programs, and facilities are not creating the results we need and, in many respects, things are getting worse in terms of gangs, drugs, and development of a healthy productive next generation of adults.

WHAT WE HEARD: Comments About Causes and Possible Solutions

When to Intervene?

- For some of those we talked with, pre-schools, particularly for disadvantaged kids, are seen to be immensely helpful, particularly for those who speak only Spanish. They note that we need to reduce the risk these kids will be left behind from the very first day of school and never have a chance to catch up. Reports suggest Head Start and similar programs have made a big difference where kids have gone through them. Others point to apparent diminished benefits as these kids age and begin to lag behind their classmates in upper elementary grades. More recent data suggest that a brief (two week to three month) pre-school program must be augmented with robust ongoing programs - especially during the summer months – in order for these disadvantaged kids to keep up with their peers. In any case, the programs are typically expensive and money is short, particularly in the current economic environment.
- At the elementary school level, most interviewees believe our current system functions well. In those years – particularly ages 6 to 9 and grades 1 to 3 – kids are seen to be relatively malleable. They look to parents and teachers for support and guidance, take direction, and are eager to please. In addition, our Boys and Girls Club, the Mentoring Alliance, and other programs generally do a very good job at the elementary school level. Kids and families participate and like them. While there is always room for improvement, most see few major problems at this early stage of the process. Yet it is also true that between ages 10 to 12, approaches are already being made, especially to many Latino kids, encouraging them to think about joining a gang. This sets the stage for vulnerable kids to join gangs later, when in middle school they become somewhat disconnected with adults (through normal maturation, if for no other reason). Thus educators, parents, as well as some of the Middle School kids counseled us to think of the 4th and 5th grades as a particularly vulnerable time requiring more intervention than it now receives, particularly for those vulnerable to gangs.
- Middle school – ages 12 to 14 and grades 6 to 8 - is generally thought to be where significant problems first crop up. Early adolescence, changing body chemistry, ever more autonomy and independence are natural phenomenon. Parents and teachers are seen to lose ground to peers and media as the dominant influences in kids' lives during these years. And if the kids are multi-lingual in a home where parents speak only Spanish, the decline of parental influence is even worse. While the Sonoma Valley Mentoring program is excellent, these appear to be the years where some kids start to pull away from the program and “fire” their mentors. And for many, perhaps even most of these kids, the appeal of Boys and Girls club wanes when they don't find it “cool” to be around kids so much younger than they are. And the gang culture begins to be a much more significant influence in their lives, particularly among Hispanics and residents of the Springs.
- By high school – ages 15 to 19+ and grades 9 to 12 – problems first seen at middle school are magnified. Gangs and drugs are more prevalent, drop-out rates, particularly among Hispanics, are significant, teen pregnancies occur and many kids seem to have lost direction. There is a consensus that if you wait till troubled kids are high school age, many have simply fallen too far behind, Too set in their bad habits, negative in their outlook and seeing no positive options, they are far from the healthy mainstream and the ground they have lost cannot easily be regained. Peers and other influences dominate and efforts to shift motivations and values in positive directions take a great deal of time and money, and they often fail. There are notable exceptions to this line of thinking which are covered later in this report, but the general sense is that earlier intervention is wiser, less expensive, and more effective.
- In brief, there are no simple solutions and by itself, no one approach can solve every problem, but it is generally thought that intervention at late elementary and early middle school level is most likely have the greatest effect while requiring the fewest resources. And successful intervention at that stage averts the cumulative effect that makes later intervention more costly and less likely to be successful.

Alternative Schools of Thought About The Best Approach When Intervening During Middle School Years

- Grossly over simplified, there were two schools of thought about how to best intervene:

1. “One kid at a time” -- This approach says Kids need individual attention, individualized programs, adult help in thinking through their own goals and aspirations, plus support and mentoring as they go through this stage of growing up. It tries to help every kid develop a pathway. It endorses individual interests and tries to help kids to “know themselves.” One expert reports 25 percent of these kids do know themselves, 25 percent don’t - and maybe won’t - but, approached in the right way, the other 50 percent can develop aspirations and values that help them mature and flourish.¹² “Take a look at Sequoia schools and at Thrive Foundation,” they say, “as well as the work done by Russ Quaglia.” (The Quaglia approach - fostering self-worth, active engagement and purpose in kids - is said to impact all of the school’s teachers and staff, the students, and indirectly the student’s families. In effect, it changes the school’s culture for the better.)

In a sense the “one kid at a time” paradigm suggests that the educational environment needs to become personalized with many potential pathways open to kids. The approach is also compatible with notions of helping kids lay out and pursue individualized plans over a period of years (as long as five) in pursuit of their unique interests.

It is also compatible with the school of thought that academic skills are best learned in an applied way when they become tools needed to pursue individual interests. In essence this “project based learning” is said to be effective because the knowledge is relevant to the task at hand and is thus more interesting. For example, you must know some math, English, Internet, computer skills, and science to pursue a career in ecology. You must also know such subjects to become a skilled mechanic and run a garage repairing automobiles.

To support this overall approach, schools might consider working with the some of the existing non-profit youth agencies to provide additional mentor training covering how best work with kids in this age group, how to pair kids with mentors that share particular interests, and encourage activities, such as field trips, books, films and conversations, that are compatible with each kid’s unique interests.

In our interviews with high school kids, there was a strong sense that one-on-one intervention through counseling, mentoring, role models, and other kinds of support is very important - and the earlier the better. They also see this as vital to offset the lack of parental support in some circumstances, particularly where education is devalued and the push is for kids to get a job to support the family as early as possible.

2. “Healthy activities” -- Others counter, ‘don’t waste your time and the immense amount of money that the “one kid at a time” approach implies. Well meaning though it may be, most kids at that age have no idea what they want to do. Further, never underestimate how little influence adults can have on kids when they reach middle school age. ‘It is built into being adolescent and human.’ Most adolescents think adults are “retarded,” and these kids naturally rebel against adults and structure. They are developing their own sense of autonomy and for them, parents usually aren’t cool. Moreover, done the wrong way, such intervention can intimidate and turn off some kids who feel unworthy because they don’t yet know what they really want or care about. It is said to be much more practical to provide these kids with numerous worthwhile activities they can enjoy and which will keep them engaged, and away from less healthy influences. For this school of thought, the worthy notions advanced by the “one kid at a time” approach are better addressed when kids are older and more mature. “Healthy activities” advocates also point out that schools are already stretched thin by testing requirements and severely limited financial resources. They simply cannot establish such time consuming and expensive individualized programs at this point. One consequence, of course, is that most kids thus must walk a “narrow path” of specific classes in order to improve the odds they will score well on required standard tests, rather than having a broader all around education of the “one kid at a time” approach.

These two approaches are not nearly as black and white and diametrically opposed as the above write-up suggests. It is intended to clearly demarcate the distinctions, but most of those involved in the dialogue can see the benefits of the other perspective and there is lots of room for both to co-exist and be tested at some scale.

Inherent in the activities question is the strongly expressed view of the Valley kids with whom we spoke and some of the administrators that there is very little for kids to do here during the school year and over the summer months. There is a sense that we are an island, a small town isolated by winding two lane

roads. It is hard for kids to go to other larger communities in where they believe there are lots of interesting things to do. For many, we are a backwater. Our schools teach boring subjects to kids, many of whom have little interest in school. They report that many kids feel they have little to aspire to, or often, if they do have aspirations for academic excellence and college, those interests will likely be frustrated for financial, family, academic performance, or other reasons. As such, some students feel we need many more after school clubs and activities to supplement the academic curriculum, more athletics, an active parks and rec. program, and the provision of a variety of other activities kids would enjoy doing.

Going Year Round and Extending the School Day and Week

- Both those pursuing “one kid at a time” and those supporting organized “healthy activities” believe such efforts must go year round (or nearly year round). If keeping kids occupied with healthy and engaging and relevant activities is a priority, Valley kids should not face a three month vacuum where they are largely left to their own devices.
- Moreover, recent data suggest academic stimulation for all kids should continue year-round and perhaps the school year should be changed to a modified year round schedule - as already set forth in the school district’s strategic plan. The data suggest that advantaged kids continue to make progress during the summer months because their parents typically organize stimulating programs for them. Lacking equivalent opportunity (and stimulation), the disadvantaged kids forget part of what they learned during the prior school year and thus start of the next school year behind their more fortunate peers. This results in a knowledge gap that is likely to grow with each passing year. Some go further saying the original reason for a long break (families in agricultural America that needed their kids to help out on the farms during summer) no longer exists and America is losing ground to Asian and European school systems that keep their kids in school for more and longer school days each year. This same, longer school year approach has also been adopted by some U.S. charter schools that have turned in impressive records of academic achievement.
- As implied above, some also feel we should work to find ways to lengthen the school day and school week. Others opine that a longer school day and week would simply be beyond the Sonoma Valley School District’s current capacities unless substantially more funding was available. They suggest a charter school might better be able to pull it off, but even that approach would require strong support, a likely need to work with unions, and a good deal of creativity. Nonetheless, despite the obstacles, there are a significant and growing number of people who feel kids need more time in school. As has been the case with the extended school year, many have observed that successful education in U.S. charter schools and overseas often involves days that begin as early as 7:30 AM and go to 5:00 PM, as well as the 5 ½ day school week (or alternative Saturdays) Finding the money needed to make this change represents a major challenge.

Utilizing and Developing Role Models

- On the subject of role models, there is near universal consensus. Seeking out and utilizing existing Latino and Anglo role models, preferably only a few years older than the kids in question, is seen as very worthwhile. And that need extends from early ages through high school. In particular, those who have overcome disadvantaged backgrounds, quit gangs, or demonstrated notable success, are seen as powerful examples for others. Some go further. They suggest the power of video (even HD from small inexpensive cameras), the Internet (e-mail, Twitter, FaceBook, etc.), and broadcast media (such as YouTube) are ubiquitous and inexpensive tools that could be used to help a role model communicate from virtually anywhere in the world with his or her audience(s). Thus a Latino Harvard senior from Sonoma could quickly and easily reach out to touch many more lives in the Valley than ever before at nominal out-of-pocket cost.
- A different but related notion suggests the possibility of seeking out and developing prospective role models. This involves identifying kids believed to have great promise and intervening to help them develop with an understanding that, if successful, they will reciprocate by serving as role models for a number of years. Advocates for this approach note that it may allow limited amounts of time and money

to be best leveraged ultimately reaching many kids at low cost while serving up powerful examples for them of what they too might accomplish.

Alternative Schools of Thought About Working to Change Family Cultural Values

- Also overly simplified, are two schools of thought about intervening with parents and families versus working directly with kids:
 - Some feel that we should focus on working with parents/families. Their view is that we need to change the family culture, or at the least, inform and educate all families to understand the vital importance of education. Too often, they say, some families simply do not treasure education. Such parents want their kids to go to work as early as possible to help support the family, and some of them demean the importance of education for girls. A mother proud of her unwed pregnant teen age daughter was cited as an example of the kind of attitudes that must be changed. Advocates feel that in the long run, only by changing family values will the culture be shifted in a positive direction and in a way that will endure. They want parents involved with the schools and families to make education a priority. As an alternative (or compliment), some suggest the use of churches, house parties, and telephone trees to engage disadvantaged and apathetic parents, determine their needs, and provide them with the one-on-one support that will help them learn and practice what is expected of them with respect to their kids.
 - Others respond that approach will take too long or meet with only limited success. They feel that working directly with the kids will be more productive and they sometimes go further, pointing out that many parents are simply having a very difficult time making ends meet. They sometimes hold down two or three jobs, have little free time, often face a language barrier, may be illegal, and are intimidated by academia. They cannot make it to PTA meetings and any effort to mandate parental commitment will fail. Forcing such parents to make commitments they will be unable to meet is simply a waste of time. These people also cite anecdotal examples of kids from disadvantaged families who, with help, have gone on to great success. In turn, they say, those kids are more likely to raise successful kids of their own and the cycle will have changed for the better in a generation. Finally, some told us that family intervention is an activity best pursued through an organization such as La Luz, which is better geared to do it than those operating from an academic/youth orientation.

Observations On Initiatives At the High School Level (SVHS)

- While concerns were expressed about the efficacy and prospects for success in efforts directed at the high school level (too costly, too late, etc.), several interventions are notable and have reported success. Other prospective programs are intriguing.
 - Operation Youth allows students to operate the no name café at the high school. That café, provides a safe place for the kids to go and offers art classes and referrals to counseling
 - AVID (*Advancement Via Individual Determination*) is a college-readiness program designed to increase the number of students who enroll in four-year colleges. It focuses on those who would be the first generation in their family to go on to college and on those least served in the academic middle. The formula is simple - raise expectations of students and, with the AVID support system in place, kids will rise to the challenge. Writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading (WICR) form the basis of the AVID curriculum. It gives students the skills needed to succeed in college-preparatory classes, like Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate. The techniques turn students from passive learners into active classroom contributors and critical thinkers, an approach necessary for college admission and success
 - Sonoma Ecology Center – provides internships for high school students
 - Santa Rosa based Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) has offices on Broadway across from the high school campus where it employs two counselors and a tutor to work with at risk kids. SAY

operates the only 24 hour crises line for adolescents in Sonoma County and the only youth shelter near its Santa Rosa offices.

- Sonoma’s police support intervention to help at-risk kids (including those vulnerable to gang recruitment, or those who have already joined). Bob Flores, a former gang member who now teaches at junior college, has put together four courses which he has taught at the high school. Among his talents, Flores is considered to have great skill in identifying kids who need help and working with them to re-shape their views. With tight budgets the police expect to reach out for help in funding this effort in future years.
- Teacher Support Network (TSN) is only a few years old and is a nearly all-volunteer effort. It seeks to help classroom teachers and students by recruiting technical experts in particular fields (math, chemistry, etc.) to augment the teachers and provide more individual instruction in support of students studying that expert’s particular subject. To date, TSN is providing classroom support in 24 percent of SVHS classrooms. Volunteer interest is reported to remain high and over time, the program is expected to be used into ever more classrooms. Expanding the program into additional classrooms will, however, require ever more teachers to become comfortable with the notion that TSN volunteers are there to help them and not to pass judgment on them or their teaching skills.
- TSN also recently recruited some 200 adult volunteers to assist in reviewing the required senior projects. Selected adults attended sessions where seniors presented the purpose and results of their projects. That adult audience gave significance to the presentations and, as qualified reviewers, added credibility, including the expert feedback regarding the quality of the work. These volunteers thus enhanced the learning experience.
- TSN is now contemplating two new initiatives
 - One (which they are calling College Support Network – CSN) proposes to help kids who are giving thought to going on to college This is to be a hands-on, partially directive adult mentoring approach, starting as early as the freshman year. It is focused on helping kids think through and take the steps needed to qualify them for college. In the process, it seeks to help kids develop autonomy and self direction. It intends to teach them how to write an essay, pursue the kind of extracurricular activities that will help them grow and impress admissions staff, think through and pull off a first rate senior project, take the SAT test, find the right school, etc., etc.
 - (As an aside, some we talked with suggested the Valley would benefit from a small scholarship fund to help disadvantaged kids pay for SAT and AP tests. Though not particularly expensive - at \$35 and \$40 each - these costs can nonetheless be significant expenditures for kids in disadvantaged families.)
 - A proposed counterpart TSN effort would focus on vocational/technical career counseling, again perhaps starting as early as the freshman year. It is similar in approach to the proposed college bound program, intending to help those with vocational interests develop insight and maturity in those pursuits.

In a sense, both the college bound and vocational TSN efforts are geared towards a mentor styled intervention asking “What do you want to do?” supporting that aspiration, even if it changes over time. Both programs can provide “someone in that kid’s life that cares” while helping him or her pursue a worthwhile career hopes. In some senses this approach is something of a “one kid at a time” effort directed at high school kids. Both the proposed college bound and vocational programs respond to strongly held needs for counseling and mentoring raised by the High School kids we spoke with. Some of them also suggested that older students might successfully mentor and counsel kids a few years behind them in school.

- The Sonoma Valley High School Development Trust is reportedly performing a survey of “best practices” at high schools around the Country and is interested in implementing selected programs to improve the

high school. As part of that endeavor, its Board contemplates a major effort to build an endowment to support their efforts.

- Many people we spoke with argue Sonoma Valley also must develop a more robust curriculum for “career technical education” (which some would call a vocational school and others would call Voc-Tech). Such an approach must provide specific career paths for kids with no interest or aptitude for college, but who demonstrate capability for a vocation. Its absence is seen a major deficiency in our Valley’s educational regime. And while some of the required pieces are in place and we have some high quality programs - such as the one in culinary arts - there is no coherent well organized system of courses. We have limited and largely inadequate facilities. And we also lack qualified teachers to support a reasonably robust program covering the range of interests and careers offered by Valley and Bay Area employers, and careers which kids would like to pursue. We already have:
 - A superb video production and broadcasting lab
 - A great computer facility at the Boys and Girls Club and labs within the high school and at Altimira
 - A solid, small agriculture/viticulture/farming program which could be expanded
 - An outstanding culinary arts program
 - A woodshop, and a metal shop

As suggested above, what some believe is missing is a comprehensive approach with an organized curriculum. Many also feel an automotive training program would be very popular, as would a program in Design Arts

Other Thoughtful Observations and Suggestions We Heard

- Someone must collect and distribute information on ways to help undocumented kids pursue meaningful education and other opportunities. Some interviewees said that if one’s parents are undocumented and their child is brought into the U.S. there is no option to documentation unless the child turns himself or herself in. Others told stories of individual undocumented kids with promise who have been helped in finding ways to overcome their undocumented status and go on to college and careers. But these are often obscure, “one-off” stories which may or may not be replicated. We need an effort to pull together what is known about the alternatives that exist, the options being considered in new legislation, and all the known pathways that may exist to help kids who might otherwise have to “reinvent the wheel” as they struggle with the system and ultimately win or give up. A system of positive pathways with a likelihood of success could help overcome some of the de-motivation many undocumented kids endure.
- It was suggested that we encourage expansion of the Junior Achievement (JA) program now operating programs at Sassarini, Maxwell and Flowery. JA has done a remarkably effective job around the world in educating young kids not only in finance and money management, but also in entrepreneurship, the need to make rigorous plans, and work hard to accomplish a goal and become self sufficient.
- Several people saw possible opportunities to better coordinate existing non-profit, school district and other agency efforts to work with kids – to get more done with less and to better effect. They cited duplicative events, overlapping programs and opportunities to save money by sharing administrative support activities (overhead).
- The Valley was said to badly need an enhanced after school hours and summer transportation system for disadvantaged kids. While the school district has busses, qualified drivers, and an established transportation network, afternoon service is limited. As a result disadvantaged kids are often constrained from participating in after school activities and going to places like Boys and Girls Club where they could study, access computers and be involved in other activities. At home they sometimes have no access to a computer and are faced with distractions. Many must go home right after school because the bus leaves then and their parents want them home. The mother is there and the father is still working. There is no way to get them home from the club, athletic event, or other activity taking place after school hours. Some may take transportation to the Boys and Girls Club, but then they still need a way to get home later. At times this is solved by the father or mother picking them up on the way home from work, but if that option does not exist, the kids are unlikely to go to the Club. Many do not have bicycles, are

too young to drive, or, because they are undocumented, may not be able to get a driver's license. Still others fear being stopped by law enforcement, particularly if they are undocumented.

- Group or team mentoring is considered an interesting idea being explored by the Mentoring Alliance. It would serve as a vehicle for expanding the potential population of mentors - and thus mentees - by not requiring a single person to make an ongoing commitment to be with his or her mentee for an hour each week, or nearly every week. People with major commitments that demand their time could be combined with others of similar ilk so that a team of three or four people could help one or more kids. Hopefully over time the approach will be tested to see how it works and modified, as needed, to either make it work or move on. Like everything in mentoring, hopefully its effects will be measured. Almost no program is better suited to longitudinal studies of long term effects than Mentoring.
- As expressed elsewhere, some students encouraged the idea that selected high school students might be an excellent source of prospective mentors for younger kids, including those in middle school. This would provide a combined role model/mentor thus helping the mentee while serving as a worthwhile activity for the mentor. The current Link Crew program at Sonoma Valley High School pairs 60 juniors and seniors with freshman in an orientation/buddy system. Link Crew might be expanded upon in this endeavor and one senior, Sean Hammet, is reported to be writing his senior project on this approach to mentoring.
- Some charter schools (Santa Rosa's Roseland Academy, KIPP charter schools around the Country, San Diego's High Tech High, and others) are reportedly doing a superb job. They take high school freshman who have shown little promise in elementary and middle schools and quickly turn them into impressive young students. The kids commit to hard work, long hours and additional tasks in exchange for being part of a unique learning environment where the results are impressive. Sonoma Valley might develop a form of Roseland/KIPP charter school, perhaps starting small (even in Voc/Tech) and later expanding the reach, but it might be expensive, and could become controversial and divisive.
- We were told to never forget that there are significant environmental constraints to consider when making recommendations or acting on Youth Initiative ideas. For example, though Sonoma Valley may have some underutilized buildings, classrooms, school buses and other assets that might be manned by willing volunteers, there are insurance, administrative, and union issues surrounding such enhanced usage. People working with kids must be screened (including background checks and fingerprinting). Teachers are sometimes fearful of non-teachers in their classrooms (worrying they might make adverse reports about the teacher's work). Unions are responsible to their membership and turn away even qualified volunteers who will do work for free (libraries, garden enhancements, etc) and provide volunteered materials.
- Some said we need to encourage homework, and in so doing, create environments where the homework can be done without distractions of television and other activities. Study halls, access to labs before and after school hours, the Boys and Girls Club and other venues near student's home are important in that regard. It is felt we need more of them.
- Look at further expanding the AVID program and the "Summer Search" program.
- We were told there is something of a Latino caste system in the Valley. Vineyard workers are on the lowest rung. Landscapers one rung up. Then come the other manual laborers. White collar is much above all three. And all these groups tend to operate in isolation from one another and members of one group generally do not to have friends among those in the other groups. Latino groups often have little interaction with Anglos which also have their own demarcations between advantaged and disadvantaged kids and various other groupings.
- It was noted that as kids mature and advance in our schools they lose their continuing connection with a single teacher. In elementary school they generally have the same teacher year round for all or most of the day. When they get to middle school, they begin to have multiple teachers each day. And that shift continues through high school where they attend school on a campus styled environment. With those shifts, the opportunities for close personal relationships with individual teachers seem inevitably to diminish over time. And more recently, pressures on teachers to teach the test and get the needed scores may further impact their ability to provide personalized attention to students. For some this

process of ever less connection with a single important teacher in their lives is a major problem with the current approach to education.

- To some extent, our Nation's current focus on test scores forces all kids to follow the same academic regime (or "path" or "plank"). And perhaps as one result, today's curriculum tends to be "academic" and seen by some kids to have little practical application. Math for math's sake. Geography, reading, etc. Kids do not see the usefulness of their education. They get little pleasure from learning, and with ever fewer activities at school they miss out on the broader, more enriching experiences of art, culture, athletics, and other activities that can enhance their education and avert boredom and disinterest.
- We need to help kids treasure education and work to create expectations that college or Voc-Tech (some call it "career") education is a realistic possibility. For many disadvantaged kids, education is thought to be demeaned in their family environment. We must help them understand the difference education can make to their lives and help them pursue opportunities. Here, role models are probably the best single way to communicate this and motivate kids. These are success stories kids can relate to.
- We were told to 'never forget that every kid needs to do well at something --- Anything! Academics, hobbies, sports, performing, arts, anything. The demands of Federal and State mandates in terms of educating Valley kids make that difficult. Instead, open the kids up to opportunities. Provide them with as many alternative pathways as possible.'
- And further, 'intervene as early as possible with kids that are failing academically. Their self identification as poor students de-motivates them and they begin to seek other, less healthy, outlets for reassurance. They pull away from school, family and community. As that disaffection becomes cumulative it is ever more difficult to turn around and the kid becomes ever more vulnerable to drugs, gangs and similar influences. At the same time, the right person in their life at the right point can make an immense difference.'
- In a similar vein, some suggested the image of Sonoma Valley's summer schools should be altered to reduce the perception of being associated only with kids that are "losers." Instead they must be seen as engaging and a place to grow.
- A number of knowledgeable people suggest we consider doing something to augment the Boys and Girls club efforts to attract and serve older students (middle school and high school). They were complimentary of the Club's success with elementary kids and feel something similar is needed, but that the Club has to reckon with the unique needs of the older kids who often have little interest in facilities and programs they see focused on interests they have outgrown and kids younger than themselves. Most were unaware of current Boys and Girls Club efforts, such as College Bound, do move in that direction.
- We were reminded to not reinvent the wheel. Make sure to closely study other efforts going on all over the country. There is much to learn and time and money to be saved by copying initiatives that have proven to bear fruit elsewhere.
- Finally, we were told to be aware that the consequences of the current police regime of getting tough with gangs, while considered effective in reducing fighting and gang influence, may also result in negative consequences for kids on the periphery of gangs. They feel they are being unfairly singled out by cops for harsh questioning and presumptive guilt when they are not. The result is that some kids are reported to be alienated by cops and drawn to gangs for protection. They might better be co-opted by a different approach. Though it is a bad analogy, one is reminded of the feelings of Iraqis about American fighting men before the Surge changed the psychology to one of protection, rather than intimidation. In some sense we are dealing with a "gang insurgency" and may want to look at it in those terms.

WHAT WE HEARD - Final Advice For Sonoma Valley Fund and Others

- Among those with whom we spoke are some of the Valley's most experienced philanthropists who have long intervened for the public benefit. They offered up general advice for the Sonoma Valley Fund which applies equally well to every philanthropic effort:
 - Do not try to change the world in an afternoon. Most problems are quite specific and successful efforts to deal with problems focus narrowly on the single problem at hand and know it will take time. Avoid sweeping generalizations. The kids in this Valley come from a wide range of economic, cultural and academic backgrounds. One size fits all will not work. Not even all kids in the same classroom share the same problems.
 - No matter what you choose to support or encourage you must identify a strong, highly qualified leader for that effort. A great idea executed poorly is a waste of everyone's time and money and it is dispiriting – usually worse than doing nothing. A strong leader (and strong team) with a worthy goal not only brings the greatest chance of success, it motivates others to pursue similar objectives.
 - Anything you try must have specific measurable objectives and the organization must be held accountable for its results. Uplifting goals that have no tangible measures of success, or at best only anecdotal stories of success, tend over time, to prove ineffectual, face diminishing support, and are unlikely to survive the visionary leader who started them.
 - Cost (money) will always be a problem. And it is worse in the current economy. Nothing's free, least of all personal attention, and any effort directed to help a large portion of the Valley's 4,800 students will involve limited resources. In anything you do, the cost effectiveness of the effort must be demonstrable. All experiments must have answers and any longer term program needs long run funding sources.

And So, What Is To Be Done?

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Board of the Sonoma Valley Fund (SVF) should first recognize its unique potential for making a positive difference on youth issues. No organization is better positioned to work with the Valley's youth oriented non-profits, agencies, and the Sonoma Valley Unified School District. It has relationships with philanthropists active in Valley youth efforts and with the Community Foundation Sonoma County whose resources can be drawn upon. Over time, self directed Sonoma Valley legacy donations may well provide significant financial resources for youth and education issues. SVF can call upon its relationships with Community leaders and local media to educate and marshal community support for worthy initiatives, and it may be able to organize and add credibility to grant solicitations directed at major Foundations willing to support innovative new programs that might serve as models for other communities. In short, SVF is uniquely positioned to organize consortiums where combined resources can accomplish a common purpose to benefit Sonoma Valley youth.
- In broadest terms, the purpose of Sonoma Valley Fund's Youth Initiative efforts - and ultimately the measures of its effectiveness, and the effectiveness of those with whom it works - should be:
 - Improved academic performance,
 - Reduced teen drop-out rates, drug and alcohol abuse, gang incidence, and gang induced violence and crime,
 - Increased numbers of kids going on to college or pursuing meaningful careers directly from high school, and
 - Development of a next generation of citizens and leaders who will contribute to the well being of our Community.
- We recommend SVF plan on an initial \$35,000 to \$50,000, commitment over the next 18 to 24 months to develop a new Coordinating Council for Youth Development in Sonoma (CCYDS) and hire a paid part time Council Executive. The SVF Board should commit an initial \$14,000 over the first three months for hiring the Executive and preparation of a business plan in support of the Youth Initiative. If that plan is approved and funded, the Board should view the initial 18 to 24 months as a test of its own ability to perform.
- We recommend the Council not be a new 501(c)3, but simply be a replacement for the SVF Youth Initiative Committee. The Council would be the group to: 1) explore the initiatives suggested by this report; and 2) prepare, and if approved, begin executing the business plan.
- The Council should be composed of seven to nine voting members and be chaired by an acknowledged youth education/professional, a strong leader respected by the Sonoma Community and its local philanthropists. The Council's suggested composition should include, for example:
 - School District representation
 - Local Latino leadership
 - Executive Director(s) of one or more leading youth oriented non-profits
 - Philanthropist(s)
 - Educational expert(s)
 - Law Enforcement
 - Sonoma Valley Fund Board member(s)
- As suggested above, to support the Initiative, the bulk of its initial funding should be used to hire the part time (+/-two days a week) Council Executive who would do the bulk of the day to day work and, with the Council chair, serve as its principal spokesperson.
- While the Council should encourage and cooperate with other Valley agencies in support the full range of programs described in this report (See "Additional Recommendations" below), **its principal focus should be directed at upper elementary and middle school age kids (4th through 8th graders).** The primary emphasis should involve intervention at what most knowledgeable people feel is the critical point where kids can be pointed in a positive direction before they begin heading down a negative path that is ever harder to reverse.

- Among its initial steps, the Council and its Executive should work to develop many more healthy activities for Valley kids while also exploring national best practices data on “one kid at a time,” pointing toward testing and implementing proven programs.
 - First, create an inventory of school year and summer activities currently available for Valley youth and a counterpart list of needed additional activities/facilities. From that effort, map out a program to fill the holes, and continue to oversee/coordinate such efforts in future years. While the complete inventory will cover pre-school through high school age kids, the Initiative should focus its own efforts on developing a robust series of healthy, engaging activities and programs to serve kids in the 4th through the 8th grades, especially the earlier grades. In this endeavor, it should also address practical ways to enhance the transportation system to meet needs of kids who will participate in the programs and activities.
 - Second, thoroughly study “one kid at a time” programs now in place elsewhere which seek to enhance the cultural environment supporting kids’ individual aspirations. Speak with recognized national experts, review studies, seek out, visit, and talk with school districts and communities that have done this (or something like it.) Look for rigorous data on actual results to prove or disprove the long term efficacy of various approaches. And where programs have proven merit, and are relevant to our circumstances and demographics, think through the means to test them in our Community, including how to fund them.
- Among additional efforts where the Council (and the Sonoma Valley Fund Board) can play an important **supporting** role, it should:
 - Encourage development of a comprehensive program to provide role models from those who have gone on from Valley schools to meaningful careers, and high school students who might serve as role models (and perhaps mentors) for younger kids, particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable kids. The effort might arise from partnerships among existing youth agencies such as the Mentoring Alliance, the Boys and Girls Club, La Luz, the leadership classes in the schools, Link Crew, and others. It might also solicit support from men’s and women’s service clubs to provide financial support for purchasing today’s inexpensive technology for producing, distributing and promoting video, audio, images, and other materials to expose kids to role models who can inspire them. The point is to organize a comprehensive program to identify, recruit, train, equip, promote, and recognize role models for the benefit of Sonoma Valley youth.
 - Encourage, and with other agencies, assist any local philanthropist(s) who might wish to explore developing a small cadre of role models in conjunction with schools and youth oriented non-profits. These would be a few high potential kids that could grow to become leaders. As part of the arrangement, the kids would commit to future service as role models.
 - Support the Mentoring Alliance experimentation with group mentoring and other steps which can increase the number of Valley kids with mentors.
 - Support the Boys and Girls Club’s efforts to develop additional, perhaps separate, programs and facilities focused on late elementary, middle school, and high school aged kids.
 - Support Teacher Support Network in its two present and two proposed initiatives. In addition, the new College and Career Center at the High School reports encouraging progress which also deserves support. Stay close to results for TSN and the School. These efforts can be important in helping many more Valley kids to go on to college and to pursue successful vocational and technical careers. Similarly, support the AVID, Summer Search, and College Bound programs and encourage expansion of the Junior Achievement program beyond its current efforts at Sassarini, Maxwell and Flowery.
 - Encourage and assist the Sonoma Valley High School Development Trust in its exploration of “Best Practices” at the Country’s leading schools and programs.

- In conjunction with the above effort, encourage study of the Roseland Academy, San Diego High Tech High, and KIPP models for schools, including perhaps, the notion of a Voc/Tech “Academy” in Sonoma. In San Diego, what began as a focused high school (High Tech High) now encompasses 6th through 12th grades. Its broad curriculum combines vocational interests with high technology. Local Sonoma Valley companies, philanthropists, industry groups (such as Infineon, Vintners and Growers, and others) should be approached about possible interest in working together to create a first class Sonoma Voc/Tech academy that might use high school and/or Community Center facilities. A successful facility with attributes like San Diego’s High Tech High could be a “game changer” dramatically improving the entire youth and education culture of Sonoma Valley.
 - Similarly, encourage the longer school year and longer school day/week model discussed earlier in this report.
 - Promote a study of options for undocumented kids to pursue higher education and better jobs and encourage publication of any report that is prepared. Those doing the work should talk with kids known to have succeeded, appropriate government agencies and politicians, immigration attorneys and others expert in these matters. The goal would be to help undocumented kids successfully get through the maze without each of them having to constantly re-invent the wheel of how to do it – with many or most now failing to successfully negotiate the maze.
 - Talk with the Sheriff’s department about negative perceptions of cops among some Valley youth. These are said to arise from direct experience with law enforcement’s current “get tough” approaches to dealing with gangs and gang fights, where at-risk kids believe they are unfairly presumed to be doing something wrong when they were not.
- In connection with some of the initiatives described above, the Council may wish to explore whether Community Foundation Sonoma County might be able to steer the proposed Youth Initiative and other valley agencies toward self directed foundations focused on youth or education which might support Youth Initiative efforts through donations and grants.
 - In similar fashion, but only if support is needed to fund innovative programs for disadvantaged kids where Sonoma would serve as a test platform, consider approaching George Kaiser (a Tulsa philanthropist interested in disadvantaged kids at the pre-school level), the Bank of America Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and other major foundations focused on youth, minorities, and education). In this endeavor, the key is for Sonoma to be seen as a “model” for testing what a small community with a large and growing disadvantaged, often undocumented Latino population, can do to address the serious issues raised by this report. Sonoma could be a superb platform for testing alternative approaches.
 - After the SVF Board has acted on this Report, it should reach out to tell the Sonoma Valley Community about its work to date and its plans for moving forward. This serves two purposes: 1). hopefully building a consensus and community support for its efforts and 2) helping position the Sonoma Valley Fund as a leader working with the existing non-profits and educational institutions to address important youth issues in Sonoma Valley.

WHO WE SPOKE WITH

Interviews of Not-For-Profits and Other Organizations Focused on Youth

1. Boys and Girls Club: Executive Director Dave Pier
2. Education Foundation: Executive Director Fran Meininger
3. Mentoring Alliance: Executive Director Kathy Witkowicki
4. Law Enforcement: Sonoma Police Chief Brett Sackett
5. Infineon Speedway Charities: Infineon CEO Steve Page
6. Social Advocates for Youth: Executive Director, Tom Bieri
7. Teen Center: Board President, Osias Encarnacion
8. Operation Youth, Executive Directors (?) Kristen and John Randall
9. Sonoma Ecology Center: Executive Director, Richard Dale
10. La Luz: Martha Rosenblatt: Board Chairman
11. Teachers Support Network: Lynn Wirick Ross
12. Nuestra Voz (Our Voice): Executive Director (?) Zuli Baron

Meetings With Community Members Involved With Youth Issues

Mentoring Alliance, Teacher and Administrator Session

1. Louann Carlomango, Director Curriculum & Instruction
2. Kathleen Hawing, High School Spanish teacher and head of the Career Center
3. Kathy Witkowiki, Executive Director, Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance
4. Laura Zimmerman, Director of Development, Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance

School District Administration and Staff

1. Pamela Martens, Superintendent, Sonoma Valley Unified School District
2. Micaela Philpot, Principal, Sonoma Valley High School
3. Karla Conroy, Principal, Adele Harrison Middle School
4. Maite Iturri, Principal, El Verano Elementary School
5. Louann Carlomango (2nd meeting)
6. Justin Frese, Assistant Superintendent, Business

High School Students (all part of the High School Leadership program)

1. Kamryn Barker, Sophomore
2. Sean Hammett, Senior
3. Barbara Hodgkinson, Freshman
4. Mariam Magana, Senior
5. Christian Palominos, Senior
6. Jeremiah Zelaya, Junior

Adele Harrison Middle School Kids

1. Kaylene Barber, 8th grade
2. Shamus McDonagh, 8th grade
3. Habran Mena, 8th grade
4. Gabe Robles, 8th grade

Parent Teachers (DELAC) Meeting

1. Alita Matthews
2. Ana Byerly
3. Gennifer Caven

4. Elvira Barcenas
5. Judy Frey-Cohen
6. Camarino Hawing
7. Heather Zavaleta
8. Lulu Iacoviello
9. Krista Maestra
10. Maria Garcia
11. Maria Moreno
12. Mario Castillo
13. Krista McAtee
14. Eileen Pharo
15. Cruz Pilar
16. Rocio Rodriguez
17. Lauren Ryan
18. Sandra Macias
19. Zuli Baron
20. ? escapist@netscape.net

First Group of Knowledgeable Local Community Members

1. Camilla Switzer
2. Peter Haywood

Second Group

3. Dan Gustafson
4. Michael George
5. Karen Rathman

Third Group

6. Les Vadasz
7. John Brady
8. Tony Garcia

Fourth Group

9. Tim Wallace
10. Steve Page
11. Marcia Nelson

Others

12. Bob Stone
13. Camarino Hawing
14. Dick Drew
15. Dave Downey
16. Jim Lamb
17. Niels Chew

Exhibits

Exhibit 1

School Dist. Demographics (2000 Census)

	SVUSD Total	Sonoma County	Sonoma Cty. Hispanics	California	California Hispanics	United States
Population	38,754	458,614	79,511	33,871,648	10,966,556	281,421,906
Median Age	42.0	37.5	24	33.3	25.0	35.3
Median Age Hispanics (See note 2)	24.7	24.0	24	25.0	25.0	26.0
White %	87.1%	81.6%	0.0%	59.5%	0.0%	75.1%
Hispanic % (See note 3)	18.5%	17.3%	100.0%	32.4%	100.0%	12.5%
Foreign born %	16.3%	14.3%	15.6%	26.2%	43.9%	11.1%
Speak language other than English at home	22.3%	19.8%	66.8%	39.5%	70.0%	17.9%
Percent with high school degree	83.4%	84.9%	48.1%	76.8%	46.7%	80.4%
Percent with college degree	30.1%	28.5%	9.6%	26.6%	7.7%	24.4%
Median family income	\$60,936	\$61,921	\$46,580	\$53,025	\$35,980	\$50,046
% below poverty level	7.5%	8.1%	13.9%	14.2%	53.4%	12.4%

Exhibit 2

UC-CSU Requirements Met

12th Grade Graduates Completing all Courses Required for UC and/or CSU Entrance								
School or District	Hispanic or Latino		White (not Hispanic)		Others/No Response		Total	
	# of Grads	Grads w/ UC/CSU Required Courses	# of Grads	Grads w/ UC/CSU Required Courses	# of Grads	Grads w/ UC/CSU Required Courses	# of Grads	Grads w/ UC/CSU Required Courses
Creekside	6	0 (0.0 %)	9	0 (0.0 %)	0	0 (0.0 %)	15	0(0.0%)
Sonoma Valley High	67	14 (20.9 %)	224	92 (41.1 %)	13	5 (38.5 %)	304	111 (36.5 %)
District Total	73	14 (19.2 %)	233	92 (39.5 %)	13	5 (38.5 %)	319	111 (34.8 %)
County Total	1,003	135 (13.5 %)	3,192	953 (29.9 %)	482	134 (27.8 %)	4,677	1,222 (26.1 %)
State Total	143,476	214 (22.5 %)	141,344	318 (39.8 %)	8,088	620 (32.4 %)	376,393	127,594 (33.9 %)

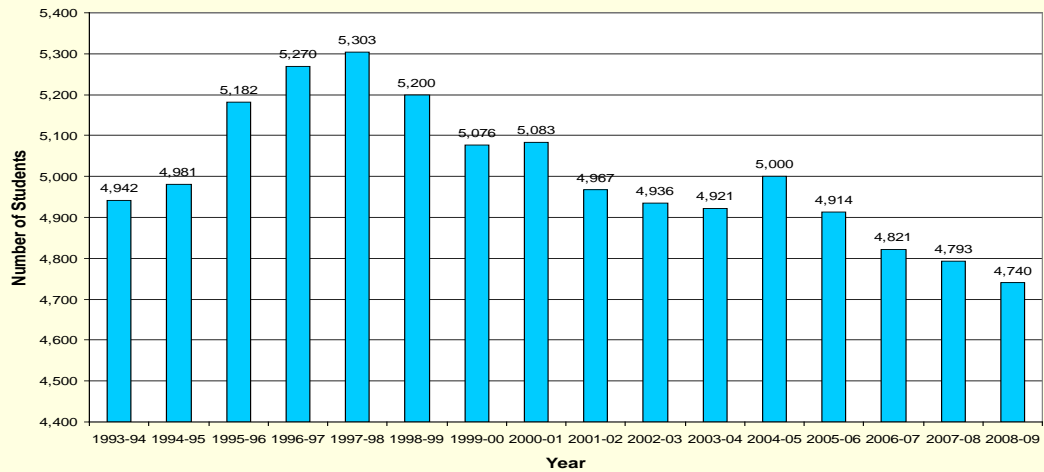
4970953 - Sonoma Valley Unified - - - For year 2007-08 - Report of Number of Grads and Grads with UC/CSU Required Courses (with school data)

Source: the California Department of Education Web site table 2007-08 data showing 34.5% of Sonoma Valley Grads (111 of 319 students) met requirements for potential admission to the UC/CSU system.

Exhibit 3

How does our Enrollment Look Over Time?

SVUSD Enrollment Over Time



8

Exhibit 4

How does our English Language Learner Enrollment Look Over Time?

English Language Learner Enrollment Over Time

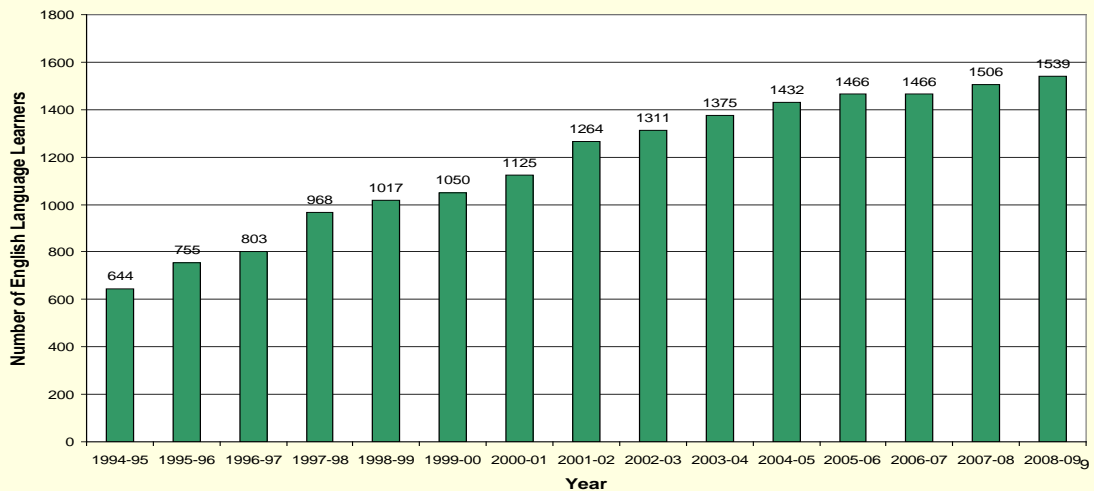


Exhibit 5

SVUSD 2009 Language Census (R30) Historical Perspective

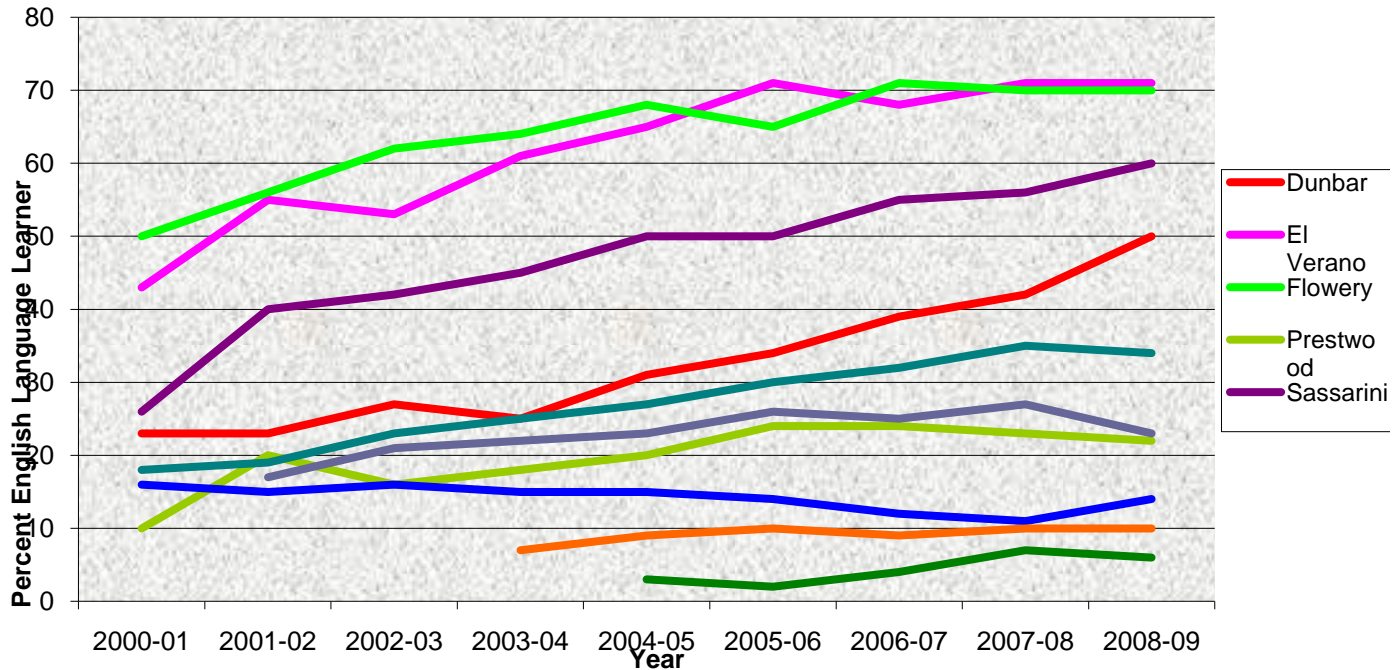


Exhibit 6

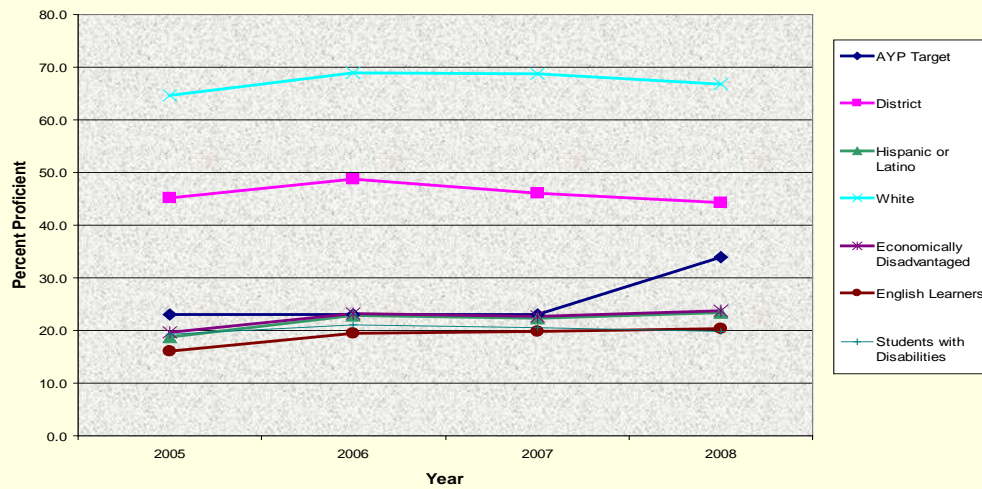
Drop Out Rates & Ethnic Mix

Year	4 Year Derived Rate of Dropouts Grades 9 to 12					Numbers of Students			Ethnic Mix	
	District Rate	White Rate	Hispanic Rate	County Rate	State Rate	District Total	White Total	Hispanic Total	White Percent	Hispanic Percent
1991-92	15.1%	10.1%	46.8%	12.6%	20.0%	1,195	1,028	135	86.0%	11.3%
1992-93	10.2%	5.0%	40.4%	13.9%	19.0%	1,234	1,051	162	85.2%	13.1%
1993-94	9.4%	4.7%	34.5%	11.6%	18.7%	1,258	1,040	183	82.7%	14.5%
1994-95	5.3%	2.6%	20.3%	11.7%	17.1%	1,243	1,012	192	81.4%	15.4%
1995-96	8.4%	6.2%	21.4%	11.3%	15.3%	1,374	1,105	213	80.4%	15.5%
1996-97	7.3%	1.0%	32.6%	10.8%	13.0%	1,426	1,114	251	78.1%	17.6%
1997-98	9.3%	6.7%	22.5%	12.9%	11.7%	1,527	1,210	261	79.2%	17.1%
1998-99	5.4%	3.0%	4.5%	10.2%	11.1%	1,558	1,187	314	76.2%	20.2%
1999-00	4.5%	3.2%	10.0%	11.4%	11.1%	1,477	1,114	318	75.4%	21.5%
2000-01	6.9%	4.1%	15.5%	7.8%	11.0%	1,594	1,145	392	71.8%	24.6%
2001-02	6.0%	4.5%	10.3%	4.8%	10.8%	1,668	1,175	447	70.4%	26.8%
2002-03	13.2%	7.2%	27.9%	9.9%	12.5%	1,629	1,135	441	69.7%	27.1%
2003-04	16.6%	13.1%	27.3%	9.9%	12.9%	1,685	1,168	457	69.3%	27.1%
2004-05	13.4%	9.2%	25.2%	7.9%	12.2%	1,627	1,092	460	67.1%	28.3%
2005-06	11.1%	10.5%	12.9%	13.2%	13.6%	1,615	1,036	514	64.1%	31.8%
2006-07	8.2%	4.7%	17.5%	25.7%	16.8%	1,599	974	551	60.9%	34.5%
2007-08	9.1%	3.2%	22.0%	16.6%	18.9%	1,540	911	565	59.2%	36.7%

Exhibits 7 - English AYP Scores (2005 – 2008)
 (Percent of Students Performing at Grade Level)

English Language Arts AYP

SVUSD English Language Arts AYP Results Over Time

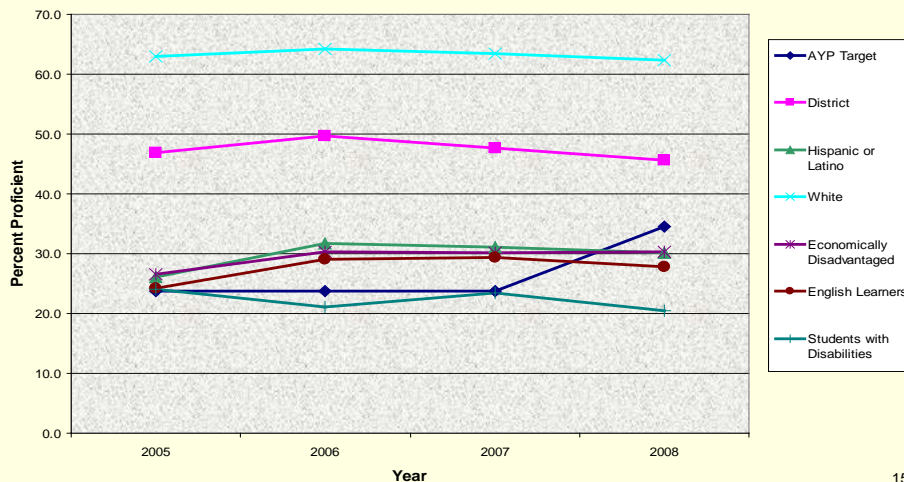


13

Exhibit 8 - Math AYP Scores (2005-2008)

Math AYP

SVUSD Math AYP Results Over Time



15

Exhibit 9

Sonoma Valley API Scores 2004-2009

School	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Dunbar	751	780	773	754	755	728
El Verano	657	689	700	706	693	719
Flowery	653	608	660	662	650	672
Prestwood	798	815	835	836	811	833
Sassarini	733	723	735	711	732	746
Adele Harrison Middle	714	742	743	766	753	760
Altimira Middle	718	745	741	724	696	707
Sonoma Valley High	652	714	731	732	735	735
Sonoma Charter	780	807	802	835	829	819
Woodland Star	n/a	658	715	723	726	722
All Schools	687	719	735	732	726	733

Note: Red cells are the year with the lowest score for that school. Green, the highest

Exhibit 10

Subgroup API Over Time

API "Hispanic" Subgroup Over Time

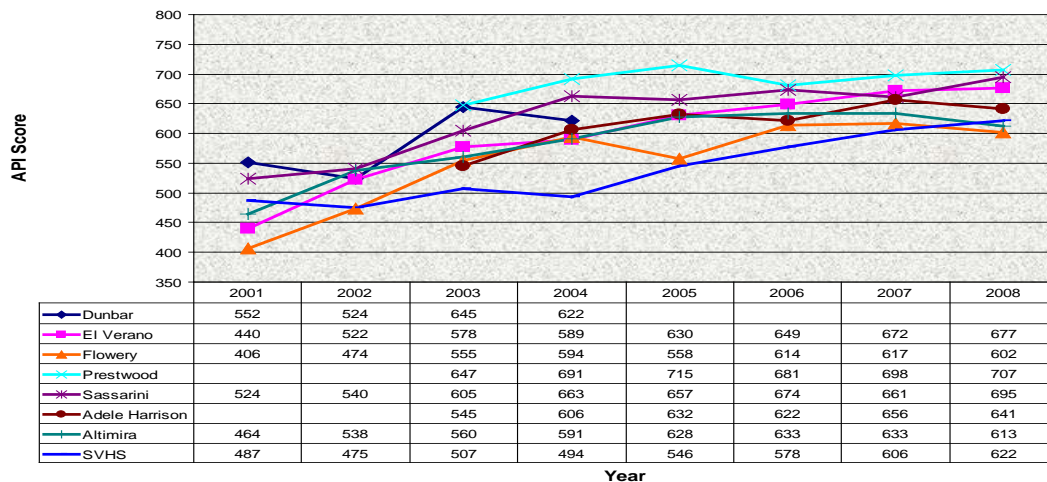


Exhibit 11

Academic Performance Index

Comparison of 2006 through 2007 API Base Statewide and Similar Schools Rankings

	2007 API Base Score	2006 Statewide Rank	2007 Statewide Rank	2006 Similar Schools Rank	2007 Similar Schools Rank	Percentage SED^	Percentage ELL^
Dunbar	754	6	5	2	1	35	31
El Verano	706	3	3	3	4	70	73
Flowery	662	2	1	1	1	78	78
Prestwood	836	8	8	2	3	24	22
Sassarini	711	4	3	2	1	58	50
Altimira	724	5	3	5	2	48	33
AHMS	766	6	7	3	3	36	24
SVHS	732	7	7	5	4	28	18
Sonoma Charter	835	7	8	2	2	2	8
Woodland Star	723	4	3	**	1	0	3

“**” Schools with fewer than 100 student scores don't receive a similar schools rank.

ELL = English Language Learner; SED = Socio-economically Disadvantaged

^ Representative of students in grades 2-11

21

Exhibit 12

School District Demographics based on 2008-09 API Reports

School	Whites		Hispanics/Latinos		Other Sub Groups(1)		Total Students		Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Dunbar	57	45.6%	67	53.6%	1	0.8%	125	100.0%	74	59.2%
El Verano	39	16.3%	195	81.6%	5	2.1%	239	100.0%	200	83.7%
Flowery	46	19.7%	185	79.4%	2	0.9%	233	100.0%	185	79.4%
Prestwood	211	69.6%	66	21.8%	26	8.6%	303	100.0%	108	35.6%
Sassarini	80	31.5%	164	64.6%	10	3.9%	254	100.0%	183	72.0%
Alta Mira Middle	163	36.9%	269	60.9%	10	2.3%	442	100.0%	293	66.3%
Adele Harrison Middle	254	56.8%	178	39.8%	15	3.4%	447	100.0%	200	44.7%
Sonoma Valley High	496	52.8%	415	44.2%	28	3.0%	939	100.0%	411	43.8%
Sonoma Charter	124	74.3%	30	18.0%	13	7.8%	167	100.0%	28	16.8%
Woodland Star	109	82.0%	14	10.5%	10	7.5%	133	100.0%	27	20.3%
District Totals	1579	48.1%	1583	48.2%	120	3.7%	3282	100.0%	1709	52.1%

End Notes

¹ The Great Schools program at www.greatschools.net/california/sonoma/Sonoma-Valley-Unified-School-District/ indicates the Sonoma Valley Unified School District includes 12 schools covering kindergarten through high school which serve 4,791 students. Some District data uses 4,740 students.

² Source: Kathy Witkowitz of The Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance

³ Source: Holly Kyle, Michael George, and Dr. Henry Graus of Teacher Support Network

⁴ Source: Web sites. The Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance currently has 14 directors and 20 advisors; Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, 10 directors; Speedway Charities, 23 trustees; Sonoma Valley Boys and Girls Club, 11 directors; Valley of the Moon Teen Center, 8 directors, Sonoma Valley High School Teachers Support Network, 8 directors; La Luz, 13 directors and 18 advisors; Willmar Center, 3 directors

⁵ Information provided by Sonoma Police Chief, Brett Sackett

⁶ These descriptions came from interviews with Executive Directors and others involved with these organizations as well as information available from their respective Web sites and the 990 Forms for 510(c)3 non-profits available at www.guidestar.com.

⁷ Among sources: Dr. Henry Graus, Michael George, and others

⁸ Source: Dataquest data (See Also, Exhibit 1)

⁹ Source: Sonoma Chief Brett Sackett

¹⁰ The 2008 API test results list 3,214 students, 1,542 Latinos (48 percent), 1,535 Whites (48 percent), 40 Asians, 27 Filipinos, 23 African Americans, 12 American Indians, 7 Pacific Islanders (all totaling 4 percent). A number of people commented on the level of undocumented Hispanic kids, among them Ana Byerly is considered an authoritative source.

¹¹ Both Police Chief Brett Sackett and Social Advocates for Youth Executive Director, Tom Bieri, provided helpful insights to the gang phenomenon in Sonoma Valley, the number of kids involved and the motivations both of the kids who join gangs and the criminal gang leaders who recruit them

¹² Among experts consulted on this notion were a number of the educators and administrators, Karen Rathman, a Senior Scholar at Stanford University Center on Adolescence has a Masters Degree in Philosophy of Education: Values in Education, and Committee member Barbara Young who has spent considerable time looking into such programs.