



INSPIRE CHARTER SCHOOL-KERN

5060 California Avenue #420, Bakersfield, California 93309

Phone (616) 525-1176 * Fax (616) 465-4544

July 25, 2018

Dr. Scott Meier

Maricopa Unified School District

Re: Response to questions from Ventura County Office of Education

Dear Dr Meier:

Your questions are highlighted in yellow, and my responses our below.

1. The initial complaint, regarding territorial limits violations, we believe revolves around the application of Education Code Section 47605.1(c) which reads:

(c) Notwithstanding any other law, a charter school may establish a resource center, meeting space, or other satellite facility located in a county adjacent to that in which the charter school is authorized if the following conditions are met:

(1) The facility is used exclusively for the educational support of pupils who are enrolled in nonclassroom-based independent study of the charter school.

(2) The charter school provides its primary educational services in, and a majority of the pupils it serves are residents of, the county in which the charter school is authorized.

While it would appear that the first requirement, exclusive use by independent study students, is met, we require confirmation that the identified locations are not used for any other purpose.

Yes, that is correct these locations were only used for students enrolled in nonclassroom-based independent study. Tense of “were” – the locations ceased to be used on the following dates and no locations will be opened to replace them:

1. Simi Valley – April 16th, 2019
2. Thousand Oaks – April 11th, 2019
3. Ventura – April 11th, 2019
4. Camarillo Office – July 5th, 2019

We need to review your student residence data and other records reflecting that the majority of student in the school reside and receive services in Kern County. VCOE asserts the Ventura County locations serve over 1,000 Inspire students, comprising about 24% of the Inspire population. Please confirm or refute these figures, while demonstrating the majority of Inspire students are Kern County residents. In so doing, please demonstrate compliance with the above Education Code.

Yes, the 1,000 Ventura students represent about 24%, with the 2,200 Kern students representing compliance with the above education code.

If it is your intent to justify these “enrichment” centers as being something other than an Inspire facility, please provide a detailed explanation of such justification. Additionally, please confirm or refute the VCOE allegation that Inspire is meeting with parents and students in these facilities, in addition to enrichment activities.

Of the four locations identified, three were for enrichment activities and was an office for parents to pick up curriculum and text books. The three locations were not used for meeting with parents/students, they provided enrichment activities for students. The one office was used for parents to pick up materials for their students to use in their learning, not for meeting with parents.

2. VCOE alleges Inspire was obligated by Section 47604.4(b) to give notice to VCOE before Inspire opened any of these facilities. That section reads:

“(b) A charter school shall notify the county superintendent of schools of the county in which it is located of the location of the charter school, including the location of each site, if applicable, prior to commencing operations.”

Please confirm whether this VCOE assertion is legally accurate, or provide your legal arguments as to why it does not apply to Inspire or present an immediate remedied to comply with all applicable laws. Typically this language is applied to site based charters, who need a temporary location; not to non-classroom based charters.

3. VCOE asserts Section 47605.1 permits only a single facility in a county adjacent to the county of authorization. Please confirm whether this VCOE assertion is legally accurate, or provide your legal arguments as to why it does not apply to Inspire or present an immediate remedied to comply with all applicable laws.

There has been a debate about the proper interpretation of Section 47605.1 since the Shasta decision. Regardless of what view is correct, the facilities identified are no longer operating, which has resolved the question as a practical matter.

4. An argument related to the distance of the Ventura facilities from Kern County is the argument that proper resource center activities are to be ancillary to the primary educational services to be provided in the county of authorization. Please confirm the primary educational services within Inspire are provided within Kern County.

Yes the primary educational services are provided within Kern County.

5. VCOE’s complaints include allegations that Inspire is producing student results significantly below state standards. While production of great student results is always the goal, at a minimum Inspire should generate student results sufficient to justify renewal of its charter, or higher. Please defend your dashboard results and, to the extent you agree they are accurate, please detail a comprehensive plan to bring the student results up to renewal standards by the renewal timeline.

Our comprehensive plan includes the following:

- We have implemented a PLC protocol in which teachers examine student work and test scores.
- We have engaged in a contract with the National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University to have a team of experts work with us on a root cause analysis and examination of our data.
- Our single subject content teachers spend every Friday examining pass rates, assignment completion, and conducting progress monitoring to ensure students make it through the curriculum in the semester time frame.
- We have significantly expanded the opportunities for weekly live online sessions for additional support and assistance in which high school teachers model scaffolding strategies, review racing guides, and answer questions.
- We use STAR 360 internal benchmark testing to monitor student progress and provide interventions to support academic success.
- We have implemented MTSS in the areas of academics and behaviors.
- We conduct SST meetings with Tier 2 and Tier 3 students to identify student struggles and have been able to help fill gaps in learning. This often includes personalizing the students’ curriculum to be inclusive of evidence-based curriculum.
- In 2019-2020, we are launching an intervention program with direct instruction through a virtual platform in which interventions do weekly check-ins with the referred students.
- Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year Inspire students will be taking only a-g courses in all core subject areas. This will dramatically increase the number of students who graduate with all a-g requirements met over the next four years.
- A-G NGSS science courses have been submitted for approval with asynchronous labs so students can complete a-g science requirements in a virtual setting.

In examining our quantitative and qualitative data, we will continue to focus on building systems and supports to promote student achievement of all students and subgroups, especially in the areas of mathematics and writing across the curriculum. Our staff is made up of a community of highly professional people. These committed individuals are independent, self-motivated, high energy people who speak for themselves. They work to create a positive, challenging environment that is centered on teaching and learning. In addition, we have increased the number of A-G and CTE course offerings and selection of elective courses to ensure further every child is becoming college and career ready. We have increased the number of students participating in concurrent enrollment in community college courses. We have implemented interventions such as Pathblazer, Reading Horizons, designated ELD, and English in a Flash so that all students have the critical thinking skills to be successful in college and career pathways. We have learned students' academic growth increases dramatically in relation to the time that students are enrolled at ICS-Kern based on "Distance from Standard"

6. VCOE also asserts your student-teacher ratio exceeds the permissible standard of 25:1. Please demonstrate your ratio compliance with the state standard, along with legal arguments to support any interpretation that your ratio meets the state standard.

Our student-teacher ratio is always 25:1 or even lower. VCOE's staff member indicated that she believed that it is not an average, but an absolute – that is no teacher can ever help more than 25 students. We believe that VCOE's staff member is mistaken and that it is an average, some teachers have more than 25 and some have less. Our teachers become full-time once they have 20 students.

7. Please provide a reasonably comprehensive description of your plan to comply with the meal requirements of AB 1871 beginning this school year. We note the rules apply to your educational program if students are receiving educational activities lasting at least two hours in any day. If you dispute that enrichment activities are educational activities, please provide legal arguments to support that dispute.

Since all enrichment activities ceased in April 2019, no meals will be needed.

Sincerely,

Hollie Smith

Hollie Smith, Principal/CEO
Inspire Charter School – Kern