



## VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Stanley C. Mantooth, County Superintendent of Schools

July 3, 2019

Delivered via Email and US Mail

Dr. Scott Meier, District Superintendent  
Maricopa Unified School District  
955 Stanislaus St  
Maricopa CA 93252

**RE: Notice of Violation Concerning Inspire Charter School - Kern**

Dear Dr. Meier:

It is our understanding that Maricopa Unified School District (MUSD) is the authorizer for Inspire Charter School – Kern (Inspire). The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) has received several complaints that Inspire is operating multiple “resource centers, meeting spaces, or other satellite facilities” in violation of Education Code 47605.1. The VCOE takes these allegations seriously and launched an investigation to ascertain the legitimacy of these claims.

Our investigation was conducted pursuant to Education Code 47604.4 (a) which permits the following authority, *“In addition to the authority granted by Sections 1241.5 and 47604.3, a county superintendent of schools may, based upon written complaints by parents or other information that justifies the investigation, monitor the operations of a charter school located within that county and conduct an investigation into the operations of that charter school.”*

Further, Education Code 47605 (a)(1) states that *“A petition for the establishment of a charter school shall identify a single charter school that will operate within the geographic boundaries of that school district.”*

In addition, Education Code 47605.1 (c) states, *“Notwithstanding any other provision, 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 non-classroom 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 school is authorized.”*

We have confirmed through emails and conversations with Dr. Nick Nichols, Inspire Charter School Executive Director, site visits and a meeting with Ms. Hollie Smith, Inspire Charter School Senior Director that Inspire is operating in four locations within Ventura County.

**Notice of Violation Concerning Inspire Charter School - Kern  
Page 2**

Through our investigation, we have discovered that Inspire is conducting charter school business, meeting with parents and students, and providing enrichment programs at the following sites:

Simi Valley:  
Lighthouse Bible Church  
4910 Cochran St., Simi Valley 93063

Thousand Oaks:  
Newbury Park First Christian Church  
801 Knollwood Dr., Newbury Park, CA 91320

Camarillo:  
333 N. Lantana St., Camarillo, CA

Ventura:  
Crosspoint Church Ventura  
5415 Ralston St., Ventura, CA 93003

Education Code 47604.4 (b) requires that, “*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.*” The VCOE was never provided with prior notice that Inspire was planning to establish multiple locations throughout Ventura County. Based on the information we have received and analysis of education code, it is our position that the Inspire facilities in Ventura County are operating in violation of the law and we hereby respectfully request that MUSD immediately ensure that Inspire cease operation of these Inspire sites.

In addition, the very limited exception of Education Code 47605.1 only allows a *single* facility in an adjacent county rather than multiple sites as is the case with Inspire. In addition, the law clearly intends that this type of limited location will be ancillary and that the primary location of the charter school, where it provides “its primary educational services” and where “a majority of the pupils it serves are residents of, the county in which the school is authorized,” which in this case is Kern County. (Education Code 47605.1)

The logical intent behind requiring the charter school to operate within the boundaries of its authorizer and to only allow a single site in an adjacent county is to maintain the ability of the authorizer to provide proper oversight to the charter school. As the authorizer, MUSD is more than eighty-five miles away from the four Inspire sites located in Ventura County and according to Dr. Nichols, the Ventura County locations serve a considerable population consisting of 1001 Ventura County students or 24% of the entire Inspire enrollment. The difficulty in providing proper oversight to remote locations increases significantly. A review of Inspire’s performance on the California Schools Dashboard reveals dismal results with every indicator performing below the State of California, providing an even more urgent need for proper oversight of remote locations:

**Notice of Violation Concerning Inspire Charter School - Kern**  
**Page 3**

<b>Inspire/State Average</b>	<b>ELA – Points above or below standard</b>	<b>MATH - Points above or below standard</b>	<b>Graduation Percentage Rate</b>	<b>College/Career Readiness Percentage Rate</b>
<b>Inspire</b>	37.9 points below	92 points below	76.6%	9.4%
<b>California</b>	6 points below	36.4 points below	83.5%	42.2%

Based on the foregoing, Inspire does not have the legal authority to operate its facilities within Ventura County. In the absence of further clarification citing such legal authority to operate, it is VCOE’s position that Inspire must cease and desist operation at these locations immediately or this matter may be referred for legal action.

In addition, on June 24, 2019 during a site visit of the Camarillo Inspire location, VCOE’s Director of Charter School Support and Oversight, Ms. Marlo Hartsuyker, met with Ms. Smith, and other concerns were raised which require further oversight from MUSD in its authorizer capacity. Based on conversations with Ms. Smith, it is our understanding that Inspire’s pupil to teacher ratio is in excess of the legally allowed ratio of 25:1 pursuant to Education Code 51745.6 (d). Ms. Smith intimated that Inspire teachers have up to 35 students on their roster which exceeds the permissible ratio. Further, it also appeared that Inspire does not have plans in place to comply with AB 1871 which requires charter schools “to provide for each needy pupil one nutritionally adequate free or reduced-price meal during each school day.” Ms. Smith stated that Inspire students spend three hours daily at the sites which would trigger the requirement for providing a meal. Based on our conversation, it appears that the sites have not applied for health permits required for serving meals and are not prepared to comply by the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, as required by AB 1871. We request that these issues be investigated further and immediately remedied to comply with all applicable laws.

If you have any questions, or need further information, please contact Marlo Hartsuyker, Director, Charter School Support and Oversight, at (805) 383-1931 or mhartsuyker@vcoe.org.

Sincerely,



Stanley C. Mantooth  
 Ventura County Superintendent of Schools

CC:

Dr. Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
 Lisa Constancio, Director, Charter Schools Division, CDE  
 Mr. Michael Fine, FCMAT Chief Executive Officer  
 Dr. Mark Lisagor, President, Ventura County Board of Education  
 Rene Adamo, President, MUSD Board of Education  
 Dr. Nick Nichols, Executive Director, Inspire Charter School (Kern)  
 Hollie Smith, Senior Director, Inspire Charter School (Kern & LA)

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