

Report of the Community Advisory Group for the Stockton Unified School District

September 10, 2019

What is the Community Advisory Group (CAG)?

CAG is an important component of a formal, court-approved, five-year agreement (Agreement) between the Stockton Unified School District (District) and the California Department of Justice (DOJ). It is intended to provide members of the community with an opportunity to review and comment on changes made by the District and approved by DOJ as they comply with mandates intended to better serve the needs of its students. The CAG is required to meet on a quarterly basis with a written overview of the meeting being published within 45 days. The report is intended to be reviewed by the DOJ appointed monitor, School Superintendent, the Chief of the school police department, and the public.

How was the CAG formed?

Per the DOJ Agreement, members of the CAG represent various stakeholders concerned with how the District provides education and safety to its students. They include School Board member appointees, educators, administrators, parents, students, and members of affected community organizations.

What is the primary purpose of the CAG?

The CAG provides comment on District changes in policy, practice, and procedures intended to accomplish the following:

- Reduce student referrals to law enforcement
- Reduce disproportionality of any referrals to law enforcement
- Reduce the amount of citations and bookings by law enforcement, and any disproportionalities within these classifications

To accomplish the above, 74 specific and measurable tasks have been established by the Agreement and these are to be accomplished within a five-year period. As the District completes these tasks, and after review by the Monitor and approval by DOJ, the CAG is provided the opportunity to review and comment on what changes have been made to comply with DOJ mandates. Feedback from CAG is then reviewed and given consideration by the District Superintendent and the Chief of the school police department.

How are the meetings conducted?

The first CAG meeting was held on August 14, 2019. Subsequent formal meetings are required to be held quarterly, and dates are currently being selected. The results of the quarterly meetings are to be published within 45 days. The quarterly CAG meetings are currently expected to be facilitated by a consultant hired by the District per the DOJ Agreement. The role of the consultant is to serve as a bridge between the District (primarily the District's school police department) and the CAG, to ensure the timely and accurate flow of information. If desired, The CAG may choose to meet on a more frequent basis and to structure meetings to meet their needs.

*What took place at the first CAG meeting? **

School Superintendent Dr. John Deasy introduced to members of the newly formed CAG an overview of the DOJ Agreement and its intended effect on District policy, procedures, and practices. He emphasized that CAG members will need to work together to determine how to organize itself; he clarified that the District wishes to promote the group's autonomy while providing logistic support as needed. He said neither he nor the Chief of the SUSDPD will be involved with running the meetings, though he is happy to serve as a liaison between the group and the Board of Trustees to whom he reports. CAG members should determine for themselves how often and where to meet but Dr. Deasy said that if needed the District will help CAG with communication support and meeting room logistics.

Dr. Deasy was asked if school board members would share their chosen CAG representatives. He replied it would be at their discretion and not something he controlled. He suggested for those interested to ask the Board members directly. Some Board members in attendance were happy to share their choices. Dr. Deasy was asked to comment on the role and influence of the Board of Trustees, given that they were not designated as CAG members in the Agreement. He responded that the meeting is open to the public, which would obviously include the members. However, if more than 4 attends, it creates a quorum, which is why some Board Trustees had not come to the meeting to avoid that situation.

Superintendent Deasy closed his comments by saying that, upon his arrival in the District just over a year ago, his attitude toward the litigation was "Let's move to resolution." Though he could not speak to the problems of the past, he believed that continued friction was not serving youth and families. He wanted to embrace an agreement as a commitment to doing better. The Superintendent said he and Chief Johnston are highly aligned on what is appropriate behavior now and he has a respectful, collaborative relationship with both DOJ and the appointed Monitor. He added that there is no level of hostility and stress around these issues on the District side. The mantra he has emphasized is "Do good and be good" and constantly get better at the work of serving children and families in the district.

School Police Chief Anne Johnston followed and expressed the police department's commitment to complying with all terms of the Agreement and noted that progress is already being made. She stated her current team is 75% different than when she started, and she believes that the current policing approach is consistent with the goals of the Agreement. She said she was looking forward to sharing information about how the Department works, and she welcomes the feedback and constructive criticism that she anticipates from CAG.

The DOJ monitoring team, led by Mr. Michael Gennaco of the OIR Group, provided a presentation that further explained the role of the CAG to review District progress in achieving the goals of the Agreement and ensuring ongoing compliance by the District throughout the five-year reporting period. He suggested that the CAG develop mechanisms for regular communication to ensure that the formal meetings are as productive and efficient as possible. Mr. Gennaco then described the OIR Group's initial involvement as consultants to the DOJ investigation back in 2017. He described some of the issues that had given rise to the DOJ's review. For example, cases that could be handled by school administrators were being turned over to police, and these situations resulted in citations and arrests that put young people into the criminal justice system.

Mr. Gennaco then responded to questions from the group. He was asked about the current status of several Agreement requirements for which the initial due dates have already passed. Mr. Gennaco stated that neither the School District nor the Monitoring Team had anything to report out today, and that the initial deadlines for each task to be completed by the District and/or Police Department are

subject to additional discussion and revision by the parties and the monitor before documents are ready for consideration by the CAG. Mr. Gennaco was asked if CAG would merely be “lip service” if things were finalized without its input. He mentioned items that the Board is formally responsible to vote on/approve (there are 12 within the Agreement) and wanted to be sure that the CAG could be heard before this happened. Mr. Gennaco reiterated that the CAG is certainly intended to have a voice, especially in those areas for which its feedback is stipulated. Mr. Gennaco further noted that any changes requiring changes in Board policy would need to be placed on its agenda and that the CAG would be provided notice of such so that it could weigh in on any proposed changes.

Additional questions about the CAG role revolved around how it would become informed of those elements it was supposed to be assessing. There was significant interest in data acquisition, and how the mechanics will be effectuated as the different processes are refined. Members expressed an interest in having an email thread and beginning to address other structural and procedural questions, such as the formation of subcommittees to look at specific issues. Other procedural issues that emerged before the end of the meeting included: whether proxies could attend (tentatively yes, provided the missing party is from an entity stipulated in the Agreement), what the role/influence of non-member attendees should be, and how often people should meet (there was discussion about holding additional meetings monthly), whether the CAG should reach out to the Board to make its presence known more formally and directly (it is certainly welcome to and reference to the Board members in attendance), and the role of the Court in the Agreement (to resolve disputes among the parties). Mr. Gennaco was asked about the CAG’s ability to make recommendations on best practices and he said they are welcome to do so. If for some reason its suggestions were inconsistent with relevant codes or laws, that would be identified by the parties. Mr. Gennaco reiterated the full access that OIR Group had to underlying materials, and its ability to actively monitor the Department’s performance in various ways.

A CAG member expressed his insistence that “zip ties” not be used against the students. The Board Trustees in attendance said that they would not tolerate such a practice, and that the one incident in which it happened occurred years ago. The member also expressed the importance of protecting undocumented community members; he received assurances that families in Stockton are safe and that the District does not collaborate with ICE. Board Trustee Vargas mentioned that all are welcome to attend the “Student Safety and Conduct Committee” of the Board, which is addressing several relevant and related issues. (The next meeting was scheduled for August 15, at 5:30 pm). Ms. Vargas noted that one item to be discussed would be the selection of a restorative justice coordinator.

What happens next?

The next CAG meeting is expected to be held in November 2019 and CAG members have been asked to approve formal dates for quarterly meetings. CAG members are encouraged to select a chairperson to help organize their structure, coordinate their meetings and activities, and to enhance communication.

What if I have questions about the CAG?

Inquiries about the Community Advisory Group can be sent via email to consultant Alan Caddell at AlanCaddell@gmail.com or to the monitoring team at michael.gennaco@oirgroup.com.

Report prepared by Alan Caddell.

*Accounts of the meeting prepared from notes taken by OIR staff during the meeting.