**Grand Jurors' Teacher's Guide**

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| T h e   C a l i f o r n i a  G r a n d  J u r y  S y s t e m |

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| image of people and judge in a courtroom | **Unit of Study** Particulars for Middle and High School Teachers and Students  In Memory of  **Angelo J. Carmassi**  1929-2011  Retired South San Francisco Unified School District Secondary Principal 1969-1992 Former San Mateo County Grand Juror 1998 | image of scales of justice |

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| |  | | --- | | **FORWARD**  The events and destiny of our country in the future will be in the hands of our youth of today. Therefore, it is imperative that the core values of our society, our traditional institutions and our rules of law be perpetuated from one generation to another in order to sustain the democracy our citizens enjoy today. The goal of this unit of study is to provide students and teachers with basic information about the grand jury system in California. We are hoping that they will delve further into the workings of county juries when they discover how important this service is to them and all the residents in their county. Some of the information found in this unit of study can also be reviewed in length at <www.cgja.org>. The following information is a summation that outlines the basic knowledge necessary to understand the composition, functions, purpose and responsibilities of grand jurors. It has been developed by educators and citizens who have served as grand jurors in **San Mateo County**. | |

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| **LEARNING, INFORMATIONAL AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES**  **STUDENTS WILL:**   1. Learn the difference between a Civil Grand Jury and a Criminal Grand Jury. 2. Differentiate between a Petit Jury and a Grand Jury. 3. Be encouraged to visit other web sites to obtain additional Grand Jury data. 4. Be provided with a cut out bookmark which outlines the composition, functions, duties and responsibilities of grand jurors. 5. Have access to a list of questions and suggestions that will encourage and motivate further study. 6. Become familiar with the *Cast of Characters* usually associated with the California Civil Grand Juries. 7. Develop research skills necessary to enhance any body of work.   **TEACHERS WILL BECOME AWARE OF THE:**   1. Importance of the California Grand Jury System. 2. The need to expose students to the fundamentals of the Grand Jury. 3. Existence of an organized body of citizens who volunteer to investigate or inquire into County matters of civil concern. 4. Functions and composition of the [San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury](https://www.sanmateocourt.org/court_divisions/grand_jury/). |

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| **BASIC INFORMATION**  The following information describes the typical California Civil Grand Jury. Please note: Several county civil grand juries in California may differ in number of members, service time, method of selection, administration of duties and how [final reports](http://www.sanmateocourt.org/court_divisions/grand_jury/index.php#final_reports) are addressed. Logging on internet search engines or local grand jury web sites will provide more information about how various counties operate in the state of California.  **CAST OF CHARACTERS**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Superior Court Presiding Judge:  image of judge holding a gavel | Elected by peers on the Superior Court Bench. This position is rotated between the entire Bench. Any Superior Court Judge can request the position. Every judge is a potential for this position and judges take their turn. The presiding judge does not act without suggestion and assistance from colleagues. The presiding judge strives to achieve as much consensus as possible. The operation of Superior Court Judges is truly a team effort. | | | Foreperson/Foreperson Pro Tempore: | Appointed by the presiding superior court judge or selected by the members of the Grand Jury.  Can be appointed for more than one term.  When the foreperson is absent, the foreperson is replaced by the Foreperson Pro Tempore. | | | County Counsel/Executive Secretary: | Employees of the County |  | | 19 Grand Jurors: | Selected by ballot box drawing of names. | | Committee Chairpersons: | Assigned by the Foreperson | | Term of Service: | One year, from July 1 - June 30 | | Holdovers or carryovers: | Some grand jurors may be selected by the presiding judge to serve an additional year. | |  |  | | --- | | image of lady of justice**MAJOR FUNCTION**  The major function of the County Civil Grand Jury is to serve as the public "watchdog" of county government, cities and special districts. The word "watchdog" connotes close scrutiny. The Grand Juror while performing sundry duties, learns to seek, analyze and protect.  **ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**  Grand Jurors are the conscience of the community. They are an arm of the court and provide government oversight. They protect the citizens of their county from unscrupulous government wastes, unacceptable government management, misconduct of government officials and employees, audit county spending, and inquire in the conditions and management of county jails.  **SKILLS REQUIRED OR LEARNED**  Investigation techniques, the art of questioning, proving and substantiating findings, writing [final reports](http://www.sanmateocourt.org/court_divisions/grand_jury/index.php#final_reports), editing reports, and learning the functions of government will be some of the end results expected of grand jurors.  [Back to Top](http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smcagj/teachers.html#top) |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Where to find Information About the Grand Jury System**  **GENERAL SITES**   1. **Download and read the e-book** [***The California Grand Jury System, Fourth Edition***](https://cgja.org/sites/default/files/californias_civil_grand_juries_edition4.pdf)***.*** 2. Invite a former grand juror to speak to your class. You can also contact the President of County Grand Jurors’ Association who may function in your county or write to the President of the California Grand Jurors Association via email: [www.cgja.org](http://www.cgja.org/). | | | **QUESTIONS THAT WILL REQUIRE THE STUDENT TO SEARCH FOR THE ANSWERS**   1. How can a citizen apply to serve on a civil grand jury? 2. What is the difference between a criminal grand jury and a civil grand jury? Petit jury? 3. What is the role of the Foreperson? 4. What areas of government can be investigated by the civil grand jury? 5. Write a valid letter of complaint. 6. What are the functions of the Grand Jury? 7. What are the responsibilities and powers of the Grand Jurors? 8. Explain the meaning of "conflicts of interest." 9. Explain the conduct of grand jurors. 10. When can a grand jury be dissolved?  Who has the authority to do this? Name one county in California in which this has happened. | | | A group of people looking at something  Description automatically generated with medium confidence**RELIABLE OUT OF CLASS TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS**   1. Extra credit projects 2. Current event reports 3. Library research options 4. Term Paper 5. Debate topic 6. Role playing |  |  |  | | --- | | **DIFFERENTIATING GRAND JURIES**  In most counties, the oversight body is called the **Civil Grand Jury**. Its primary role is to assess the performance of local governmental agencies and officials and to publish findings and recommendations. It also investigates complaints concerning agencies and officials. In rare instances, it issues Accusations when it finds willful or corrupt misconduct in office. ***The Civil Grand Jury does not have legislative, administrative, or police powers.***  In most counties, weighing allegations of misconduct against public officials and determining whether to present formal Accusations requesting their removal from office or weighing criminal charges and determine if indictments should be returned, is the responsibility of the County District Attorney. However, the County District Attorney has the authority to empanel a **Criminal Grand Jury.** The County District Attorney has two options in the manner by which the Criminal Grand Jury is empanelled. The District Attorney may empanel the existing **Civil Grand Jury** or he/she may choose to empanel a **Criminal Grand Jury** by selecting jurors from the regular **petit court jury pool**. In essence, it is possible to have two Grand Juries empanelled- Civil and Criminal - at the same time having different functions.  **THERE ARE THREE GRAND JURIES IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA** 1) The Civil Grand Jury 2) The Criminal Grand Jury and 3) The Federal Grand Jury ([www.ca9.uscourts.gov](http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/)).  Grand Jurors do not convene as "Trial Jurors". County Grand Jurors and Federal Grand Jurors are an investigative body of jurors and an arm of the law.  Civil Grand Jurors make recommendations to improve county and city governments; Criminal and Federal Grand Jurors indict alleged citizens who are accused of violating state or federal laws.  Trials of citizens who have been indicted by County Criminal Grand Jurors, are tried in County Petit Courts.   Trials of citizens who have been indicted by the Federal Grand Jurors are tried in District Courts. |  |  | | --- | | **Selection of Grand Jurors Makes a Difference**  In California, civil grand jurors may be recommended or volunteer to serve. They are interviewed by the Presiding Grand Jury Judge. The final selection of grand jurors is done by a random drawing of names from a ballot box. In most counties nineteen jurors plus alternates are selected.  The selection of petit court juries is quite different. They are selected at random by the jury commissioner from the voter registration rolls, and are summoned to report to the courthouse to determine if they will be selected to serve the court. Petit jurors’ terms on the jury varies. They may serve one day or longer depending on the offense of the accused. Crimes can range from robbery to homicide. Typically, the more serious the crime, the longer the petit jury may serve. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **BOOKMARK** **CALIFORNIA COUNTY GRAND JURIES** |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **COMPOSITION:** | 19 Members | | **HOW SELECTED:** | Randomly from volunteers and nominees selected by the Presiding Judge | | **PURPOSE: image of man with computer on top of world** | Primary aim is to remove the veils of secrecy from government, to expose governmental process and decision-making to public scrutiny | | **TERMS OF SERVICE:** | One year | | **DUTIES:** | Recommend actions to improve the functions of government, audits, issues [final reports](http://www.sanmateocourt.org/court_divisions/grand_jury/index.php#final_reports) record keeping, interviewing and investigating | | **COMPENSATION:** | Yes | | **TIME REQUIRED:** | **Minimum** of 15 hours a week | | | |  | | --- | | ***T H A N K   Y O U***  Thank you for taking the time to review the SMCGJA succinct unit of study.  We highly recommend to all students and teachers to research additional material about the California Grand Jury System. It will prove to be an interesting and intriguing adventure.  **San Mateo County Association of  Grand Jurors** | | |