

HUENEME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DR. JERRY DANNENBERG
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ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

June 27, 2011

The Honorable Vincent O'Neill, Jr.
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Grand Jury Report Dated June 3, 2011 Concerning School Bus Safety

Dear Judge O'Neill:

The Grand Jury provided the Hueneme Elementary School District with a copy of their report titled, *School Bus Safety*, dated June 3, 2011. This report found that "the information provided to the Grand Jury by the districts appears to indicate that school bus travel in the County is safe," but that the information provided by the various districts in response to the Grand Jury inquiries was not comparable or consistent. The Grand Jury is requesting responses to the report's findings from the Hueneme School District within 90 days of the date of the report.

We have reviewed the Grand Jury report and are submitting a response on the attached specified form, as required by your letter dated June 3, 2011. The Hueneme School District agrees with the Grand Jury's finding that school bus travel in Ventura County is safe. However, we disagree with the Grand Jury's recommendations. State law gives the California Highway Patrol (CHP) responsibility for the supervision of school transportation systems, including investigating school bus accidents. To require the Ventura County Office of Education to set up additional reporting methods would add administrative burden to all education agencies at a time when state budget cuts are forcing us to reduce our administrative staff. Any changes in our reporting requirements should come from the CHP.

Findings with which we agree

FI-01. *School transportation systems have been studied extensively at the national level, and that information indicates that school buses are one of the safest modes of transportation. (FA-01 through FA-04)*

We agree, so much so that we wonder why the Grand Jury would waste taxpayer resources investigating this issue.

FI-02. *Nationally, the majority of people killed in school transportation-related crashes are not school-age bus riders, but are occupants of other vehicles involved or pedestrians. Students are safer as passengers on school buses than they are as passengers in cars involved in crashes with school buses, or as pedestrians in school bus crashes. (FA-02)*

Same as above

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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FI-06. *The efforts of the CHP, including certifying school bus drivers, investigating school bus accidents, and inspecting school buses, contribute significantly to ensuring school bus safety in California. However, the CHP does not collect information at the school district level.*

Same as above

FI-07 *The Grand Jury was unable to identify any single local agency responsible for collecting, collating, and reporting County school bus safety information on a countywide basis. (FA-14, FA-18, and FA-19)*

We are mandated to report to the CHP. If the Grand Jury wishes changes, they should request them of the CHP.

FI-08. *It is unclear whether seat belts on school buses significantly increase school bus safety. (FA-21, FI-25 through FA -28)*

We agree.

Findings with which we disagree

FI-03. *Not all districts maintain information on school bus safety statistics. Some districts do not track this information at all, while others rely on their contracted bus companies to do so.*

We cannot speak for all districts; however, the Hueneme School District complies with all current laws related to school transportation.

FI-04. *Due to the lack of comparable, consistent school bus safety statistics provided by the districts, it is not possible to determine objective measures of school bus safety, such as accident rates. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that school bus transportation in the County is safe, as previously demonstrated at the national level. It is only possible to infer that school bus transportation in the County is safe from the information provided by the districts.*

We believe that the CHP would have school bus safety statistics needed to make this determination.

FI-05. *School bus safety statistics, for districts or for individual schools, are not readily available to the public.*

We disagree with this statement. We believe that the public has access to and can obtain all the school bus accident and transportation program information that the CHP is mandated to collect and report.

Recommendations that will not be implemented

R-01 *The VCOE should assume responsibility for the collection, collating, and reporting of County school bus safety information.*

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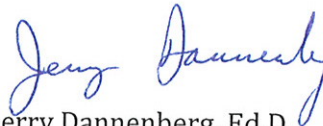
- R-02** *The VCOE should develop a standard form for the annual collection of school bus safety information from the districts. This information should include: the total number of students who ride the bus to and from school on a daily basis; the total number of students who are transported for field trips, special events, or athletic events; total miles ridden by students; and total number of school bus-related accidents and injuries resulting from those accidents.*
- R-03** *The Districts should use the VCOE standard form recommended in R-02, above, to collect school bus safety information, report this information to the VCOE, and post it on district websites.*
- R-04** *The VCOE should use the forms provided by the districts to collate school bus safety information for the County and post it on its website.*

Regarding all of the above, we feel that state laws already address these issues. Once again, we feel the Grand Jury is trying to set up a duplicate system that would waste taxpayer resources by requiring us to report to both the CHP and the VCOE.

Respectfully,



Darlene A. Bruno
Board President



Jerry Dannenberg, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Cc: Robert A. Peskay, Foreman, Ventura County Grand Jury ✓
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Hueneme Elementary School District Board of Education

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Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Hueneme
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JUL 06 2011
VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

Report Title: School Bus Safety

Report Date: June 3, 2011

Response By: Jerry Dannenberg

Title: Superintendent

FINDINGS

- We agree with the findings numbered: FI-01, FI-02, FI-06, FI-07, FI-08
- We disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: FI-03, FI-04, FI-05

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered R-01, R-02, R-03, R-04 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 6/27/11

Signed: Darlene A. Bruno
Darlene A. Bruno, Board President

Jerry Dannenberg
Jerry Dannenberg, Ed.D., Superintendent

Number of pages attached: 3

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