

SANTA CLARA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
20030 East Telegraph Road
Santa Paula, California 93060
Telephone (805) 525-4573 • Fax (805) 525-4985



June 28, 2011

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

RECEIVED
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VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

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

On June 1, 2011, the Grand Jury provided the Santa Clara Elementary School District with a copy of their report entitled, "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 within 90 days of the date of the report.

The Santa Clara Elementary School District has reviewed the Grand Jury report and submits its response on the attached specified form as required by your letter dated June 3, 2011.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this response, please contact Kari Skidmore, Principal/Superintendent, at 805-525-4573 or kskidmore@scesd.k12.ca.us.

Sincerely,

Kari Skidmore
Principal/ Superintendent

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

Santa Clara Elementary School District

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 disagree with this statement because of its implications that school districts do not maintain records in accordance with established law. Santa Clara Elementary does not have a student transportation program. The District contracts once a year with a bus company to transport students to a field trip. SCESD is not required to maintain and report specific statistics related to school bus accidents. That requirement resides with the California Highway Patrol.

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 disagree with this statement because of its implications that school districts do not maintain records in accordance with established law. The California Highway Patrol is required to investigate school bus accidents and has a database which tracks the accidents by county. The public is able to access this data. These reports could be used to determine the number of accidents per mile driven or per student served.

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 and VCOE are mandated to collect and report.

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.

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.

The State of California requires the California Highway Patrol to investigate all school bus accidents in the state. The accidents are reported by County in the CHP Database. Reporting the accidents in another database is not mandated by law, and therefore, would not provide the public with consistent and accurate information regarding school bus safety. Based on these reasons the Santa Clara Elementary School District does not plan to implement this recommendation at this time.

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: *School Bus Safety*

Report Date: *June 3, 2011*

Response by: *Kari Skidmore, Principal/Superintendent*

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered:
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: *FI-03, 04, 05*

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

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.)

- Recommendation numbered *R-03* will not be implemented because it is not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: *June 28, 2011* Signed: *Kari Skidmore*

Number of pages attached: