



# SANTA PAULA UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pamela Martens, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

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Director of Educational Services

October 17, 2011

RECEIVED  
OCT 20 2011  
VENTURA COUNTY  
GRAND JURY

Ms. Donna Gaier, Chair,  
Grand Jury Review Committee  
Mr. Davie H. Gale, Foreman,  
2011-12 Ventura County Grand Jury  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

Re: Response to School Bus Safety Final Report

Dear Ms. Gaier and Mr. Gale:

We received a letter from you dated October 12, 2011, informing the Santa Paula Union High School District that you had not received our district's response to the above-mentioned report. Enclosed please find a copy of the district's response to the findings dated July 27, 2011, which was sent to the Honorable Vincent O'Neill, Jr., Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, County of Ventura.

If you should have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pamela Martens  
Superintendent

Enclosure



# SANTA PAULA UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent  
Dr. David A. Gomez

500 East Santa Barbara St.  
Santa Paula, CA 93060  
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Assistant Superintendent,  
Business and Classified Personnel  
Francine Torrigiani  
Director of Educational Services  
J. Antonio Gaitan

July 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 Bus Safety

The Santa Paula Union High School District's response to the findings is as follows:

## **AGREE**

**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.**

We agree that there is not one agency mandated to collect, collate and report school bus safety information on a countywide basis if the information being identified by the Grand Jury attempts to directly link student ridership with school bus accidents. Public K-12 school districts in California are required to submit basic transportation program information to the California Department of Education on the "Form TRANS" each year along with the district's unaudited financial information. School districts are not required to report accident information. The report states that the California Highway Patrol is required to investigate school bus accidents. We are aware that the CHP Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System includes school bus-involved collision data on a countywide basis, but does not identify individual information for each district or jurisdiction in the County. Perhaps the existing database can be expanded to include the school district or jurisdiction associated with the bus.

## **DISAGREE**

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

We disagree with this statement because of its broad implications that school districts do not maintain records in accordance with established law. SPUHSD was required to maintain and report specific information related to our student transportation program on the "Form TRANS." That form is included in the annual financial report available to the public and submitted to the California Department of Education. However, SPUHSD 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 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 incident 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 the statement because of its broad implications that school districts do not maintain records in accordance with established law. Each school in California is required by law submit annual transportation information to the California Department of Education on the "Form TRANS." The California Highway Patrol is required to investigate school bus accidents and has a database capable of tracking the accidents by county. Both sets of data are available to the public and could be used to make an educated conclusion of 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 SPUHSD are 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.**

The role and responsibility of the Ventura County Office of Education should not assume these responsibilities. The California Highway Patrol is required to investigate all school bus accidents in the State of California. The CHP databases reports those accidents by County.

**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 the 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 the total number of school bus-related accidents and injuries resulting from those accidents.**

Not feasible. It is not reasonable to place additional data collection requirement either on districts or VCOE. In addition, during this time of severe budget cut backs to SPUHSD and other districts, without specific legal mandates, it is not doable.

**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.**

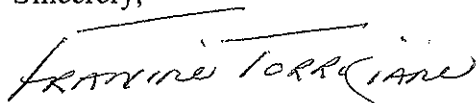
Based on the reasons identified in R-01, R-02, and R-04, the SPUHSD feels these recommendations are not warranted.

**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.**

This recommendation will increase the financial burden already placed on districts and the County Office of Education. Also, the VCOE does not have the authority over the public school districts and private schools in the County of Ventura to require the Local Education Agencies to report this type of statistical information.

Our recommendation is that the existing data collection system operated by the California Highway Patrol be modified to collect and report the LEA/jurisdiction operating a bus involved in an accident. Thus, this simple change to an existing data collections system would provide the public with specific information relating to a single LEA/jurisdiction without creating a redundant, unfunded task for school districts in Ventura County and the Ventura County Office of Education.

Sincerely,



Francine Torrigiani  
Assistant Superintendent

C: File