



SIMI VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Kathryn S. Scroggin, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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RECEIVED

September 14, 2011

SEP 22 2011

VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY

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

On June 3, 2011, the Grand Jury provided the Simi Valley Unified 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 was not comparable or consistent. The Grand Jury requested responses to the findings in the report.

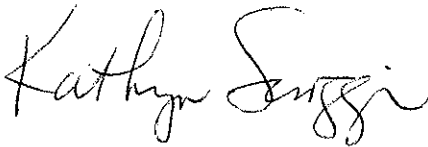
The Simi Valley Unified School District has reviewed the Grand Jury report and submits its response on the attached specified forms as required. SVUSD is in agreement with the finding that school bus travel in Simi Valley is safe. Based on national statistics referenced in the report, school bus travel is the safest method of transportation when compared to trains, commercial aviation and private passenger vehicles. The report also noted the California Highway Patrol is the governmental agency responsible for the supervision of the school pupil transportation industry, including investigating school bus accidents. Data concerning all school bus accidents occurring within Ventura County is available from the CHP Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System, as stated in the report. That system does not identify individual LEAs specifically operating the bus.

Even though the Grand Jury report states that school bus travel is one of the safest methods of public transportation and that a database already exists to collect information about school bus accidents, it recommends that another data collection and reporting system be established for reporting school bus transportation statistics. The Simi Valley Unified School District respectfully disagrees with the Grand Jury's recommendation and would instead recommend that the existing data collection system operated by the CHP be modified to collect and report the LEA/jurisdiction operating a bus involved in an

accident. That simple change to an existing data collection system would provide the public with specific information relating to a single LEA/jurisdiction without creating a redundant, unfunded task for SVUSD.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this response, please contact Mr. Lowell Schultze, Associate Superintendent, at 805-306-4510 or lschultz@simi.k12.ca.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn Scroggin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathryn Scroggin, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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

**Response to Grand Jury Report
Statements to Findings and Recommendations
School Bus Safety**

Simi Valley Unified School District

FINDINGS WITH WHICH WE AGREE:

F1-07 The Grand Jury was unable to identify any single local agency responsible for collecting, collating, and reporting County school bus safety on a countrywide basis.

We agree that there is not one agency mandated to collect, collate and report school bus safety information on a district or 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 districts unaudited financial information. This public information includes the average number of students transported daily and total miles driven to/from school. School districts are not required to report accident information. However, as the report states, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) is required to investigate school bus accidents. The report also states 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. We recommend that the Grand Jury request that the CHP database be expanded with a field to include the school district or jurisdiction associated with the bus. This simple change to an existing data collection system would provide the public with specific information relating to a single jurisdiction. When combined with the current available data from the "Form TRANS", an interested party could obtain more specific information on the operation of a public school transportation program.

FINDINGS WITH WHICH WE DISAGREE

F1-03 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.

SVUSD is required to maintain and report specific information related to our student transportation program on the "Form TRANS" which is submitted to the Ventura County Office of Education. That form is included in the annual unaudited financial report available to the public and submitted to the California Department of Education. However, SVUSD is not required to maintain and report specific statistics related to

school bus accidents. That requirement is the responsibility of the California Highway Patrol.

F1-04 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 the implication that school districts do not maintain records in accordance with established law. SVUSD complies with all laws and submits annual transportation information to the California Department of Education on the "Form TRANS." The CHP is required to investigate school bus accidents and has a data base 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.

F1-05 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, SVUSD and the VCOE 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.

SVUSD is in agreement with the response from VCOE because the CHP is required to investigate all school bus accidents in the State of California. The CHP database reports those accidents by County. We also do not believe establishing another database would provide the public with better information regarding school bus safety. This has not been mandated and there is no funding to implement this.

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.

The Ventura County Office of Education does not have the authority over the public school districts in the county to require reporting this type of statistical information. In addition, during this time of severe budget cuts, without specific mandates, it is not

reasonable or fiscally feasible to place additional data collection requirements on the district or the county office.

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-02, R-02 and R-04, Simi Valley Unified School District supports and agrees with the Ventura County Office of Education's decision not to implement this recommendation at this time.

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.

The Ventura County Office of Education does not have the authority over the public school districts in the county to require this type of statistical information be reported. Without specific authority mandating a data collection process, individual districts could choose not to report, which would result in data being incomplete and not suitable for comparison purposes. SVUSD supports and agrees with the VCOE and their decision not 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: Kathryn Scroggin, Ed.D

Title: Superintendent, Simi Valley Unified School District

FINDINGS

- * I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1-07 (see statement attached)
- * I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F1-03,04,05
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefore.)

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, 02, 03, 04 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: September 14, 2011

Signed 