

November 2, 2020

The Honorable Sonia Cortés
Judge, Yolo County Superior Court
1000 Main Street
Woodland, CA 95776

Dear Judge Cortés:

On behalf of the Davis Joint Unified School District (“District”), this letter contains the Superintendent and Board of Education response to the 2020 Yolo County Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations issued on September 24, 2020. This response is submitted pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05.

While the District is committed to implement various recommendations as discussed below, we wish to emphasize the practical impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as it relates to the Grand Jury’s proposed deadlines. The pandemic has resulted in various “stay home” orders, including orders to physically close District school sites. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, it is not possible to predict when District school sites will reopen, including whether such sites will be permitted to open by the start of the 2021-2022 school year. The District will attempt to implement certain recommendations identified below prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year as noted. However, the District is unable to unequivocally guarantee when the Grand Jury’s recommendations will be implemented despite our stated estimates. Moreover, if the District’s school sites remain closed during the 2021-2022 school year, certain recommendations may be unnecessary to implement prior to the 2021-2022 school year despite the Grand Jury’s recommended deadlines.

Response to Findings

Finding F-2: Districts made safety improvements, including increased visitor signage and tighter check-in procedures, installed new fencing and locks, collaborated with first responders, engaged in after-action debrief sessions to further secure (i.e. “harden”) school campuses and facilities, and continue to plan for further actions.

The District agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District.

Finding F-3: Increased efforts to harden schools and direct visitors to the front office with improved signage creates additional responsibilities for those working this vital gateway and exposes them to more safety threats.

The District agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District.

Finding F-4: Tracking of who has or has not participated in safety training events is inconsistent in Yolo County schools.

The District disagrees partially with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. As a general matter, the District is unaware of how other Yolo County schools track which employees have participated in safety training. However, all school site employees in our District participate in emergency drills at least twice a year. These drills include shelter in place, lockdown, evacuation, and “teacher down” drills. Each site principal takes roll during safety training activities and documents which employees participated. However, the District does not provide “makeup” trainings for employees who may have been absent on the date of each drill.

In addition to performing safety drills, all District employees must complete online trainings regarding mandated child abuse reporting, sexual harassment prevention, and suicide prevention within the first six weeks of the school year. The online trainings are developed by the District’s joint powers authority insurance provider, North Bay Insurance Authority (“North Bay”), and the completion of the training is tracked by the District’s Personnel Services Department. District employees who have not completed the training by the seventh week of the school year, or within six weeks of their hire date, are removed from duties until they complete these trainings.

Finding F-5: Measures or approaches for assessing the quality or effectiveness of safety training are missing from the CSSPs.

The District disagrees partially with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. After employees receive the required employee online training for mandated child abuse reporting, sexual harassment prevention, and suicide prevention, all participating employees are surveyed regarding the quality and effectiveness of the safety training. However, the District does not currently have a mechanism to survey staff following emergency safety drill trainings.

Finding F-6: There is an expectation that all teachers and substitute teachers have a depth and breadth of safety training that enables them to respond to a variety of threats.

The District agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. Teachers are trained twice a year on the specifics of all emergency procedures, including participation in practical drills and completing online training modules. In addition, a majority of the District’s substitute teachers work at District school sites many days during the school year and are expected to participate in school site emergency drills when they occur. Likewise, substitute teachers are provided with the District’s safety procedures and are expected to be able to implement such procedures should a threat occur.

Finding F-7: Because substitute teachers and teachers hired after the start of the school year are not present for the launch of safety training, their ability to respond to emergency situations is compromised.

The District disagrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. All teachers must complete online training in mandated child abuse reporting, sexual harassment prevention and suicide prevention training within six weeks of their hire date. Substitute teachers must complete all three of these trainings before they are allowed to begin working for the District regardless of their initial hire date. Substitute teachers and teachers hired after the start of the school year also receive training and guidance (both written and verbal) from their site administrator prior to all planned emergency drills. The District has a system in place where front office staff communicate directly with substitutes via text messaging during an emergency to provide additional ongoing instruction and guidance as necessary. In addition, all safety procedure instructions are contained within substitute binders, and instructions are posted on the wall of every teaching space and office in all District buildings. All substitutes are instructed to review all written safety information prior to beginning work and are expected to be knowledgeable regarding such information.

As most District substitutes: (a) work at District school sites for several days each school year, including on days that include emergency drills; (b) are required to participate in online safety training; (c) are expected to be familiar with District safety procedures; and (d) receive additional guidance from front office staff during emergencies, the District's substitute teachers are able to respond to emergency situations that may arise.

Finding F-8: In the wake of past high-profile school shootings, school officials face great pressure to react to any threat of potential violence by locking down schools.

The District agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. Safety is the District's highest priority. As a result, the District stresses the importance of taking all potential threats seriously and requires all staff, teachers, and substitute teachers to immediately react accordingly. The District works closely with local law enforcement to assess potential threats and to only release school sites from lock downs when local law enforcement determines it is safe to do so.

Finding F-9: Increasing incidence of trauma-impacted students call on teachers and staff to shift focus from instruction mode to providing support they may not be fully trained to offer.

The District disagrees partially with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. Although teachers and staff are increasingly being called on to support students' social emotional learning, the District provides a number of trauma-informed care professional development trainings for staff. In addition, the District employs two full-time Managers of Prevention and Wellness, a full time Foster/Homeless Youth Liaison, and at least one full-time counselor at every school site (27 counselors). These employees provide ongoing training, consultation, and support to teachers and staff on a daily basis. In addition, the District has a well-developed postvention plan to assist and support staff, students, and families following a traumatic event that impacts the school environment.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation R-2: Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year, District officials should identify additional approaches in their CSSPs for hardening access to areas of schools that remain vulnerable.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year pending the District's review of its Comprehensive School Safety Plan ("CSSP"). The District updates its CSSPs yearly and complies with all required parts of the CSSP. The District will identify additional approaches to harden access to any vulnerable areas of its school sites to the extent it deems them necessary.

With the recent passage of a Facilities Bond, the District plans to implement additional strategic fencing, electronic locks, building alarms, and orientation of MPRs to improve safety. These improvements will come online between 2021 and 2026.

Recommendation R-3: Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year and each subsequent school year, District officials should identify administrative, certificated, and classified employees to engage in train-the-trainer classes to build internal capacity and share resources across districts.

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Associate Superintendent of Student Support Services, Managers of Prevention and Wellness, and the District Safety Coordinator meet monthly with District administrators and nurses to provide ongoing safety training and support. The site administrators are

responsible for training their staff and often invite the Associate Superintendent of Student Support Services, Managers of Prevention and Wellness, and the District Safety Coordinator to staff meetings to assist with safety training.

Recommendation R-4: Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year, District officials should require online, on-demand safety training modules be provided and completed by all staff, particularly those hired after the start of the school year, to assure consistency in and breadth of training in safety protocols and procedures.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. Recommendation R-4 is consistent with the District's current practice of working closely with our joint powers authority, North Bay, to provide online safety training modules to staff. The District has already implemented yearly online training for mandated child abuse reporting, sexual harassment prevention, and suicide prevention for all staff, including those hired after the start of the school year. The District is currently working with North Bay to develop additional online training modules for emergency responses such as lockdown, shelter-in place, evacuation, and "teacher down" drills.

Recommendation R-5: Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year and each subsequent school year, District officials should identify safety training that all substitute teachers must complete before reporting for work in any district.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. All substitute teachers must complete online training regarding mandated child abuse reporting, sexual harassment prevention, and suicide prevention before reporting to work in the District. The District is currently working with North Bay to identify and develop additional online safety training modules for emergency responses such as lockdown, shelter-in place, evacuation, and "teacher down" drills.

Recommendation R-6: Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year and each subsequent school year, District officials should identify a method and/or tool for measuring the effectiveness of safety training, including an annual survey of all staff.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. All District staff are required to complete an evaluation at the end of the online mandated child abuse reporting, sexual harassment prevention, and suicide prevention trainings to measure the effectiveness of the training. The District is currently working with North Bay to develop additional online safety training modules for emergency responses such as lockdown, shelter-in place, evacuation, and "teacher down" drills and will include an evaluative tool at the end of each training to measure the effectiveness of the safety training. Because the District is currently provided with immediate feedback from staff regarding the effectiveness of safety training, an additional annual survey is not warranted or reasonable at this time.

Recommendation R-7: Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year and for use in each subsequent school year, each school principal or designee should develop an attendance and tracking mechanism for determining who has or has not participated in safety training offerings.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented, and additional attendance and tracking mechanisms for safety drills are expected to be implemented prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year. Personnel Services Department tracks completion of the online mandated child abuse reporting, sexual harassment prevention, and suicide prevention training for all staff. Any staff members who have not completed the training within the first six weeks of the school year (or for new staff, within six weeks of their

November 12, 2020

Page 5

hire date) will be removed from work until the training is completed. The Associate Superintendent of Student Support Services will be working with all site leaders to develop an attendance and tracking mechanism to verify that all staff have participated in lockdown, shelter-in-place, evacuation, and “teacher down” drills.

As noted above, the safety of students and staff is paramount to the District. Accordingly, the District has taken significant measures to address safety concerns including, but not limited to, comprehensive safety assessments; implementing extensive safety policies and procedures; maintaining an updated safety plan; providing regular safety training to students and staff; working with local law enforcement officers on issues of safety; communicating with its school and public community; conducting yearly emergency communication drills, and undertaking further safety projects. The foregoing demonstrates the District’s continued commitment to school safety, and we are happy to address any further questions or concerns on the matter.

Sincerely,

John A. Bowes, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Joe DiNunzio
DJUSD Board of Education President

cc: Yolo County Grand Jury, via Email Only (grandjury@yolocounty.org)