

September 7, 2017

The Honorable David W. Reed
Advising Judge
Yolo County Superior Court
1000 Main Street
Woodland, CA 95695

Dear Judge Reed:

On behalf of the Davis Joint Unified School District (“District”) the following is the Superintendent’s and Board of Education’s response to the Grand Jury’s findings and recommendations issued on June 19, 2017. This response is submitted pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05.

Response to Findings

Finding F-1: With the exception of Winters Unified School District, all Districts are in compliance with the yearly update and reporting per the Education Code Requirements for Comprehensive School Safety Plans.

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

Finding F-2: School Districts regularly conduct safety training for all school employees, usually at the beginning of the school year. Some Districts provide more comprehensive training throughout the school year.

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

Finding F-4: There is a lack of regular and on-going communication among the five Yolo County School Districts regarding School Safety Plan issues that would affect all Districts. Meeting regularly and discussing shared concerns would allow ideas and solutions to be presented.

The District disagrees with this finding. The superintendents of the Yolo County School Districts meet on a monthly basis at the Yolo County Office of Education, at which time safety concerns may be raised and discussed collectively to determine effective resolutions.

Finding F-5: Access to many campuses within some districts is not restricted by fencing. Public walkways/bike paths run directly through some campuses. Gates at some campuses are not secured during school hours.

The District disagrees partially with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. Although the District acknowledges its campuses' proximity to public bike trails and city parks, it has implemented adequate policies and continues to work closely with local law enforcement agencies to maintain security during school hours. The public bike trails and parks are distinctive of the city of Davis, and the District's school site councils considers this characteristic in drafting their comprehensive safety plans. The lack of perimeter fencing around some District campuses is consistent with the purposes provided in the Civic Center Act, which requires the District to make school facilities and grounds available to citizens and community groups after school hours. While the District prioritizes school safety and takes seriously the rare tragedies of school violence, it must also balance such concerns with valid community interests. The safety policies put in place reflect that assessment. Additionally, according to the District's 2015 comprehensive safety assessment conducted by expert consultants, the lack of perimeter fencing was found to be reasonable given the city's low crime rate and the District's initiative to implement property line demarcations and additional signage, discussed in more detail below. Lastly, rather than implement perimeter fencing around all campuses, the District has completed strategic fencing projects on several school sites by implementing higher fencing around playground areas occupied by kindergarten and other young children.

Finding F-6: Visitors to campuses are not properly instructed to safety procedures to be followed. Check-in procedures for visitors are often not adequately clarified at some campuses.

The District disagrees partially with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. The District's Board Policy/Administrative Regulation 1250 clearly delineates the check-in procedures for visitors as all school sites. A visitor shall, upon request, furnish the principal or designee with his/her name, his/her purpose for entering school grounds, proof of identity, if necessary, and other information consistent with the provisions of law. Additionally, visitors are made aware of safety procedures. As discussed in F-10 below, the District displays a one page 11x17 card on the wall of every classroom and workspace, which details proper safety procedures. Visitors are also typically accompanied by school personnel who are well-informed in the use of the emergency card and safety procedures. Although not all sites currently have visible signage directing visitors to check in at the main office before entering campus, the District is currently rectifying this and expects to have proper signage implemented on all school sites within 18-24 months from September 1, 2017.

Finding F-7: Students are not made aware of the importance of safety plan compliance and their role in assuring a safe school environment.

The District disagrees wholly with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. At least twice a year, District students participate in lockdown/shelter and various evacuation drills. Additionally, the District distributes information about school site emergency procedures to students and parents/guardians annually. The foregoing practices inform students of the importance of safety plan compliance and their role in assuring a safe school environment.

Finding F-8: Access allowed only to the office area of campuses with all other areas secured within fencing is not provided at many campuses within the districts. Campus offices are not always located at the main entrance to campuses.

The District disagrees partially with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. As previously stated in F-5, the lack of perimeter fencing around some District campuses is not only consistent with the purposes provided in the Civic Center Act, but is also reasonable given the city's low crime rate and the District's initiative to implement strategic fencing, property line demarcations and additional signage. Although not surrounded by perimeter fencing, all campus offices are located at the main entrance to the District school sites.

Finding F-9: Appropriate signage directing visitors to the office areas is lacking at several district campuses.

The District agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. Most District school sites display proper signage to direct visitors to the main office prior to accessing the campuses. However, the District acknowledges that some sites are missing the proper signage while other campuses lack signs that are large enough for visitors to easily identify. The District is currently rectifying this and expects to have proper signage implemented on all school sites within 18-24 months from September 1, 2017.

Finding F-10: Washington Unified School District utilizes an organized emergency procedures flip chart that was designed by the District Safety Committee. The flip chart features easy-to-follow safety directives as well as a format that can be modified without recreating the entire flip chart. Although costly to produce at the outset, the flip chart's versatility represents a dedication to school safety with the added bonus of long term cost savings.

No response is required. To highlight the practices of Davis Joint Unified School District, the District displays a one page 11x17 card on the wall of every classroom and workspace on neon red paper, which is easier to follow in an emergency situation than the flip chart (which the District previously used). An emergency folder is also placed in every classroom of every school site, which consists of the same information as the card, as well as the class roster, emergency numbers, school map, and first aid procedures. Teachers are well versed in the use of these folders and know to bring them with them (along with the emergency backpack) in an evacuation situation.

Finding F-12: Current use of alternate communication devices, for example walkie-talkies, for selected staff improves the safety of all campuses when other forms of communication such as phones, the internet, and intercoms are not functioning.

The District agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. The District deploys walkie-talkies to every campus. The devices allow staff to communicate within the campus as well as within the entire District. All front office and administrative staff are trained on the emergency features of this system.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation R-1: By December 2018, all schools that do not have perimeter fencing will complete feasibility studies for the installation of appropriate fencing around school property to

prevent access to the public. In compliance with California State Building Codes, gate hardware should have locked access from the entry side and unlockable (panic hardware) from the exit side.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and unreasonable. The District hired expert safety consultants in the fall of 2015 to conduct a comprehensive safety assessment. The report recognized that perimeter fencing around all school property does not fit with the overall character of the Davis community nor is it reasonable given the city's low crime rate. Instead, the District adopted the experts' alternative recommendations to implement property line demarcations and additional signage—projects which are currently in progress. The District has also completed strategic fencing projects on several school sites by implementing higher fencing around playground areas occupied by kindergarten and other young children. Additionally, consistent with the purposes provided in the Civic Center Act, the District balances its safety priorities with valid community interests by implementing industry-standard safety policies and working closely with local law enforcement agencies to maintain security during school hours. Lastly, in addition to its usual check-in procedures (detailed in R-3), the District implemented the RAPTOR visitor management system, which compares a visitor's license information against a database of known sex offenders. Based on the foregoing, feasibility studies and the installation of perimeter fencing and panic hardware would result in unreasonable costs to the District, which has already taken ample measures to ensure school safety.

Recommendation R-2: By October 1, 2017, all schools will keep existing fencing and gates locked during school hours.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and unreasonable. In the event of an emergency, keeping existing gates locked would impede the function of the school and could put students and staff at risk because they cannot exit quickly. As discussed above, converting all existing gates into panic hardware would result in unreasonable costs to the District.

Recommendation R-3: By October 1, 2017, all schools will limit access to the campus. All visitors will be required to check in at each school's main office; all other areas are to be secured.

This recommendation has already been implemented. Pursuant to the District's Board Policy/Administrative Regulation 1250, a visitor shall, upon request, furnish the principal or designee with his/her name, his/her purpose for entering school grounds, proof of identity, if necessary, and other information consistent with the provisions of law. Additionally, the District implemented the RAPTOR visitor management system, which compares a visitor's license information against a database of known sex offenders.

Recommendation R-4: By October 1, 2017, all schools will display permanent signage and entry instructions at all schools that provides instruction to all visitors directing them to report to the main office to obtain a Visitor's Badge or ID prior to entry of the campus.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. Pursuant to the District's Board Policy/Administrative Regulation 1250, the Superintendent or designee shall post at every entrance to each school and school grounds a notice describing registration requirements, school hours or hours which registration is required, the registration location, the route to take to that location, and the penalties for violation of registration requirements. Additionally, a visitor shall wear a visitor's badge after checking in at each school's main office. With respect to signage, the

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District is currently in the process of implementing proper signage on all school sites and expects completion within 18-24 months from September 1, 2017.

Recommendation R-5: By October 1, 2017, when school is in session and children are present, all sites will use identifiable adult monitors where fencing and gates are open and unsecured.

This recommendation has already been implemented. An extensive number of adult monitors are already present at all District school sites before, during and immediately after school hours. Campus supervisors at the secondary sites are identifiable by wearing polo shirts of the school colors and jackets during the winter season that display the name of the school. Additionally, pursuant to Board Policy/Administrative Regulation 5142, supervision zones are clearly identified on playgrounds with adult supervisors placed in locations from which they can observe their entire zone of supervision.

Recommendation R-6: By October 1, 2017, provide training and increase safety awareness among District personnel and students.

This recommendation has already been implemented. All District personnel are provided training on safety and emergency procedures annually. The District will continue to work with its administrators in providing clear messages to its students to ensure safety awareness.

Recommendation R-7: By October 1, 2017, all Districts will comply with the California Education Code concerning school safety.

This recommendation has already been implemented. The District updates its comprehensive safety plan yearly and complies with all parts of the plan.

Recommendation R-8: By October 1, 2017, Yolo County Districts should consider networking with each other on a regular basis to discuss and share ideas on the most effective ways to construct, initiate and utilize school safety plans.

This recommendation has already been implemented. As described above, monthly meetings are held among all Yolo County District Superintendents. These meetings serve as the appropriate time and place to discuss various concerns, including safety-related issues, which affect all districts in the county. However, Davis Joint Unified School District is willing to participate in additional networking measures to discuss safety plans in conjunction with the Yolo County Office of Education.

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, conducting a comprehensive safety assessment; implementing extensive safety policies and procedures; maintaining an updated safety plan; providing regular training to students and staff; working with local law enforcement officers; communicating with its school and public community; 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,

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John A. Bowes, Ed. D.
Superintendent

Barbara Archer
President, Board of Education