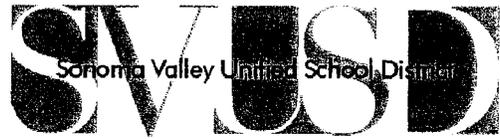


GRAND JURY

SEP 21 2007

RECEIVED



Superintendent: Barbara B. Young

Trustees:

Nicole Abaté Ducarroz
Daniel Gustafson
Camerino Hawing
Sandra Lowe
Helen Marsh

September 12, 2007

The Honorable Robert S. Boyd
Presiding Judge
Sonoma County Superior Court
Hall of Justice
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Dear Judge Boyd:

On behalf of the Sonoma Valley Unified School District and pursuant to the requirements of the California Penal Code Section 933C, I have enclosed our required responses to the 2006-2007 Final Report of the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury.

We appreciate the concern raised by the Grand Jury and the professional manner in which they have pursued the critical areas of school safety and security.

We have carefully reviewed the Grand Jury's findings, conclusions, commendations and recommendations in accordance with subdivision (b) of Section 933 and are pleased to enclose our response to recommendations R1, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R13, R 14, and R 15.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ashley Halliday'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Ashley Halliday
Director of Human Resources

Cc: ✓ Jerel Bagger, Grand Jury Foreperson
Barbara Young, Superintendent, Sonoma Valley Unified School District

September 12, 2007

Sonoma Valley Unified School District Response to Grand Jury Report "See Dick. See Jane. See Dick and Jane go to school. Are they Safe?"

Prepared by: Ashley Halliday, Director of Human Resources

R1: Each public school district in Sonoma County should have at least one employee who is trained and authorized to access DOJ website within an official and specified schedule. This employee should fully understand the way in which information is to be communicated. Further in the absence of this employee, a suitable alternate person or system should be in place to responsibly retrieve valuable information as it is posted. This system should also cover notices from the DOJ sent via U.S. Mail.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District agrees with the finding.

The recommendation has not yet been fully implemented, but is in the process of being implemented.

Detail: We have two such employees who access the DOJ website daily when we have reports pending. However, access does not take place on a specified schedule. The finding will be fully implemented in the 2007-2008 school year.

R4: School districts should consider changing their policies to require successful employee applicants to pay for their own fingerprinting and background responses from DOJ and FBI. There is at least \$65,000 in 06-07 school district budgets for fingerprinting. As costs are shifted to paid employees, districts could use savings to fund costs for volunteers.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District partially agrees with the finding. It is difficult to find highly qualified employees in certain categories; we do not wish to make the application process more costly or cumbersome to potential applicants than it is already. Additionally, employment costs are negotiable conditions of employment and as such any such change would require a negotiated agreement with exclusive representative of the affected union.

Currently, the district funds the costs of required Department of Justice background checks for Certificated employees, as well as TB clearance, and pre-employment physicals as required for all employees. Parent and classroom volunteers are supervised by appropriate employees while on-campus.

R5: School districts should amend their policies, if needed, to allow for volunteers names to be public information and readily available so that a greater scrutiny is provided.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District feels that recommendation requires further analysis to determine what, exactly, the recommendation entails and to determine if there may be a Public Records Act issue. In any case, we would not be providing address or telephone information to the public, other than in the district phone directory information that is made available via our website. Our volunteers are the parents of current students, other family members of current students, community volunteers and Mentors participating through the Stand By Me Mentoring Program. Stand By Me Mentors undergo fingerprinting and DOJ background checks prior to being assigned to students.

R6: School should routinely check out names of adult volunteers on Megan's Law website (a public posting of sexual predators) even if fingerprinting is scheduled, and always do so if no fingerprinting is scheduled for that volunteer.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District partially agrees with this finding and will encourage principals and teachers to check for the names of their volunteers on the website, whenever practical and always when they have any suspicion about a potential volunteer. Additionally, during the course of the 2007-2008 school year we will implement the practice of having clerical staff at each school conduct a regularly scheduled check of the Megan's Law website and review that information with the site administrator for appropriate action. Via home school communication including school newsletters, we will encourage our parents to check the Megan's Law website.

R7: School districts should request criminal activity record from the Sonoma County Superior Courts Records Division on any adult wanting to volunteer with students. This service is available at no cost to a district.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District partially agrees with this finding.

This recommendation seems somewhat impractical to implement with all individuals who provide volunteer service to the school district, and unnecessary as we have several hundred parents volunteering in various capacities. Volunteers are supervised by district employees. For most volunteers, this recommendation would be unnecessary.

R8: School districts should, individual and collectively, request that the DOJ implement a system to confirm school district receipt of Notices of Subsequent Arrest. A system that would require the DOJ to follow up if no confirmation was received and would at least give school districts some assurance that information trusted to the U.S. Mail or electronic mail services is actually being received.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District agrees with this finding and agrees to assist the County Superintendent, Dr. Wong, in writing such a letter to the DOJ on behalf of all districts. Currently, we are recipients of notices of subsequent arrest. SCOE also provides us with subsequent arrest notices on substitute teachers that work in our district.

R9: School districts should request FBI responses on all classified employees and volunteers that they do a DOJ response regardless of the time they have lived in California. The relatively small fee of \$24 to get prior criminal activity from a national database seems justifiable, reasonable and the right action to take.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District partially agrees with this finding. The FBI background check is routinely conducted, but only on those employees as required by Education Code 45125.

R10: School districts should require fingerprinting for all adults (paid and volunteer) involved in athletic programs, overnight field trips, off-campus field trips, and any school sponsored student activity that occurs outside of the normal school day or hours.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District partially agrees with this finding and has already implemented it for athletic coaches whose work takes them beyond line-of-sight supervision of district employees. The District will evaluate the full implementation of this recommendation during the 2007-2008 school year.

R11: School districts should implement provisions of Ed. Code Section 33193 and 45125.2 requiring that certain independent contractors and employees of contractors undergo fingerprinting and background checks.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District agrees with this finding and has implemented it in that we require contractors to confirm that their employees have undergone background checks. In the event that independent contractors are working in classrooms and directly supervised by district employees, such screening is not a requirement.

R13: School districts should not allow new employees to begin work until all pre-employment requirements are met. Most specifically, this means all fingerprinting and criminal history responses that are required must have been completed and properly evaluated.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District agrees to this finding and has already implemented the recommendation.

R14: The Sheriff's Office should make available to all school districts information on how to access services available to them through the Sheriff's Office that would aid districts in determining if individuals should be approved to serve as volunteers in our schools and at school sponsored activities.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District agrees to this finding and, if the Sheriff's Office agrees, would disseminate such information to all employees. (Our volunteers are parents or family members of current students, community volunteers, and Mentor Center volunteers.)

R15: School districts should require all volunteers to sign an agreement that outlines behavior do's and don'ts and consequences if agreement terms are broken.

The Sonoma Valley Unified School District agrees to this finding.

The recommendation has not yet been fully implemented. Currently, all parents receive the policy on volunteering within the Parent Annual Notification document that outlines expected behaviors and consequences, etc. Those who drive on field trips sign such forms and provide drivers licenses and proof of insurance. Some volunteers, such as Stand By Me Mentors and Art Docents, go through an extensive training. The District will evaluate the full implementation of this recommendation during the 2007-2008 school year.