

READ AND CONSIDERED

AUG 26 2008

DATE 8/27/08 BY [Signature]



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August 21, 2008

The Honorable Robert S. Boyd
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Sonoma
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa California 95403

RE: **Required Responses** (CA Penal Code 933c) to Grand Jury
Final Report – published July 12, 2008

Dear Judge Boyd:

The Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools, as an elected state constitutional officer, has the responsibility, pursuant to Section 914.1 of the California Penal Code, to submit comments within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court regarding the Grand Jury Final Report of 2007-2008.

The Final Report reflected the hard work and professional dedication of the members of the County Civil Grand Jury. Additionally, the Report demonstrates the important role of the Grand Jury to provide valued public oversight to ensure the integrity of local governmental agencies. I would like to commend Mr. Dennis O'Reilly, Foreperson of the Grand Jury, on his ability to build the capacity of the diverse Jury team resulting in an investigative process that was thoughtful and respectful.

There are three separate Reports of the Grand Jury that require responses by the County Superintendent of Schools. The first Report, "Disaster Will Strike! Are Schools Ready?" resulted in required responses to Recommendations R3, R4 and R6. The second Report, "Sonoma County Office of Education – Misuse of State Vocational Education Funds" requires responses to Findings F1, F3, F4, F5, F7, F8, F9 and F10 along with Recommendations R1 to R7 inclusive. The final Report, "Sonoma County Office of Education: An Overview" requires a response by the County Superintendent to Recommendations R1 and R2 and the County Board President to Recommendation R3.

Attached please find responses and attachments for findings and recommendations to the three reports: "Disaster Will Strike! Are Schools Ready?"; "Sonoma County Office of Education: Misuse of State Vocational Funds"; and "Sonoma County Office of Education – An Overview."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Wong".

Carl Wong, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

Carl Wong, Ed.D. ■ Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education ■ Karen Bosworth, Pat Hummel, Jill Kaufman, John Musilli, Ray Peterson, Kathleen Willbanks, David B. Wolf, Ph.D.

“Disaster Will Strike! Are Schools Ready”

R3: SCOE Should consider assigning personnel to be responsible for making sure our schools are in compliance with State regulations on school disaster preparedness.

For many years, the Sonoma County Office of Education has assigned and funded a director for Safe Schools. This office provides two trainings a year open to all county schools on developing safe school plans and developing school crisis response plans. This position assists individual districts as requested. The California Education Code Section 32281 (a) does not require the Sonoma County Office of Education to ensure that school districts have safe school plans. This code section requires that each school district and county office develop safe school plans for the schools sites they respectively operate.

R4: SCOE should act as facilitator for disaster preparedness for schools within the Sonoma County Region. This role should include financial help in providing funding for substitute teachers so that classroom teachers can participate in training programs.

During the three year period, 2004-05 through 2006-07, the Sonoma County Office of Education was the lead agency for a three year United States Department of Education project, *SchoolGuard*, which was designed to improve emergency preparedness and crisis response in Sonoma County Schools. The Sonoma County Office of Education worked cooperatively with the Redwood Empire Schools Insurance Group (RESIG) to accomplish the goals of the project. With the difficulties of the current State economy, SCOE is not in a position to provide financial assistance to districts for substitutes for classroom teacher training, nor is this a SCOE responsibility. As members of Redwood Empire School Insurance Group (RESIG) all districts are eligible to participate in the Emergency Services Program that RESIG provides. There is some funding available through the RESIG program for substitutes and/or overtime for any school employee to attend emergency preparedness training.

R6: SCOE, Superintendents and Principals must consider disaster preparedness a top priority.

The Sonoma County Office of Education, district superintendents and principals do consider disaster preparedness a top priority. School campus safety and security is a top priority of school board members, administrators, teachers, and classified staff across Sonoma County, as it is for the parents of the students in our schools. As members of the Redwood Empire School Insurance Group (RESIG), in May 2007, Sonoma County School Districts voted unanimously to add a surcharge to each district's property and liability insurance premium to fund the coordination of emergency preparedness activities. These activities are being coordinated through RESIG for all districts in the county.