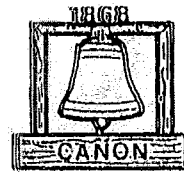


# ESPARTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Christina Goennier, Superintendent



"Serving Yolo County Since 1868"

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VIA EMAIL ([grandjury@yolocounty.org](mailto:grandjury@yolocounty.org))  
& U.S. MAIL

November 19, 2020

Grand Jury, County of Yolo  
P.O. Box 2142  
Woodland, CA 95776

**RE: 2019-2020 YOLO COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT**  
**Esparto Union School District Response to "Every School is Vulnerable: Staff and Students Must Feel Safe for Learning to Occur"**

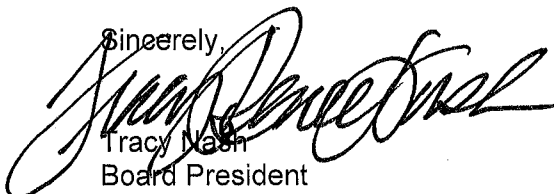
Dear Grand Jury Representatives:


The Board of Education of the Esparto Unified School District ("District") appreciates the time and effort taken by the Yolo County Grand Jury ("Grand Jury") to conduct its safety analysis of the District.

The District's responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations are set forth below in accordance with the format required by Penal Code section 933.05.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely,

  
Tracy Nash  
Board President  
Esparto Unified School District

  
Christina Goennier  
Superintendent  
Esparto Unified School District

cc: Honorable Sonia Cortés, Judge, Superior Court of California, Yolo County

Board of Trustees

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## Response to Findings

**Finding F-1:** The California Education Code requires, with the exception of small districts, that individual safety plans be developed for each school site. Esparto Unified School District qualifies as a small district, and has a single district-wide Comprehensive School Safety Plan (CSSP) that applies to all school sites in the district, not individual plans for each school site.

The District agrees with this finding.

**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 Esparto 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 Esparto 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 Esparto Unified School District. As a general matter, the District is unaware of how each other Yolo County school district tracks which employees have participated in safety training. However, the District's Human Resources Department centrally tracks which staff members have participated in the required training for each District school site.

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

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

**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 Esparto Unified School District.

**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 Esparto Unified School District. All District substitute teachers are informed that safety procedure instructions are readily available to them in substitute binders kept in District classrooms. All District substitute teachers are instructed to review all written safety information prior to beginning work and are expected to be knowledgeable of such information in the event of an emergency.

**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 Esparto 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.

**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 with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Esparto Unified School District.

### **Response to Recommendations**

**Recommendation R-1:**

Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year, Esparto Unified School District should develop individual safety plans tailored to each school site's particular needs and environment (as opposed to a district-wide Comprehensive School Safety Plan [CSSP]) to enhance the overall value of the CSSP.

The District appreciates this recommendation. However, it will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. As noted in Finding F-1, the California Education Code does not require the District to develop school-specific CSSPs because it qualifies as an exempt "small district." Nevertheless, the District has previously reviewed the necessity of separate CSSPs prior to receipt of this grand jury report and found that the CSSPs would contain duplicative and virtually identical information, particularly because the District only maintains four school sites that serve a combined total of 976 students in rural areas.

**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 already been implemented. The District updates its CSSP yearly and complies with all required parts of the CSSP. The District will identify additional approaches to harden access any vulnerable areas of its school sites to the extent it deems them necessary.

**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.

The District appreciates this recommendation. However, it will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. There is significant collaboration between District employees with regard to safety matters, particularly due to the District's small size, and each staff member is already required to participate in comprehensive safety training. Further training would provide limited benefit to the District with regard to ensuring District staff members are effectively able to respond to emergency situations.

**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 implemented. The District requires all staff, including those hired after the start of the school year, to participate in comprehensive on-demand safety training modules.

**Recommendation R-4:**

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.

The District appreciates this recommendation. However, it will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. As discussed in the District's response to Finding F-7, substitute teachers are provided with safety procedures and materials in each classroom that they are required to review and be knowledgeable of prior to beginning work. Moreover, because the District is located in a low-population rural area it already faces a shortage of available substitute teachers. Any further training requirements for substitute teachers will place a greater strain on the District's substitute teacher pool as the District expects not all substitute teachers within the District will be able and willing to participate in additional safety training.

**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. The District already reviews staff surveys after they complete required online safety training. The District also conducts an annual year-end general survey that the District will amend to include sections regarding the effectiveness of safety training.

**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.

The District appreciates this recommendation. However, it will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. The District's Human Resources Department centrally tracks participation in safety training for staff at all school sites. Due to the small number of employees and size of the District, requiring each school principal to also track safety training attendance is duplicative and would create additional administrative work that is already effectively being performed by the District's Human Resources Department.