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VIA EMAIL (grandjury@yolocounty.org) & U.S. MAIL

December 11, 2020

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

RE: 2019-2020 YOLO COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT
Washington Unified School District Response

Dear Grand Jury Representatives:

The Board of Education (“Board”) of the Washington 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 has given the Grand Jury’s findings serious consideration, and this response will identify several actions that will be implemented consistent with the Grand Jury’s recommendations.

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,

Preston Jackson, Board President
Washington Unified School District

Enclosure: Response to Findings/Response to Recommendations

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

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 Washington 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 partially agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Washington Unified School District. The District’s increased safety efforts, including directing visitors to the front office, could potentially create additional responsibilities for certain personnel. However, it is unlikely that directing visitors to the front office exposes them to additional safety threats due to those responsibilities.

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

The District does not know whether this finding is accurate as it is unaware of how other districts in Yolo County track participation in safety training. The District tracks participation in District-wide safety training and each school staff’s safety training. Safety training is also tracked for food services, custodial, transportation and maintenance services.

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 Washington Unified School District. However, assessment of the quality or effectiveness is not a required component of the CSSP.

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 Washington 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 Washington Unified School District. Staff members and substitute teachers are expected to be aware of the District's safety plans and their role in ensuring safe school environments, including responding to emergency situations. The District agrees that procedures can be implemented to better ensure all late-hire staff and substitute teachers are aware of the District's safety plans and their roles in ensuring a safe school environment.

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 Washington Unified School District.

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 Washington Unified School District. The District has staff trained professionals through certified Social Workers to offer counseling support in the event of trauma-filled experiences or exposure at our schools. The District also has on staff a certified Behavior Specialist and a Mental Health Support Specialist to provide direct services to students who qualify under these circumstances. Staff in Washington Unified School District have and continue to receive training in Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and other strategies to support the learning of a student while addressing the social and emotional needs.

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 will be implemented prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year. The District will continue to revise all school safety plans annually to identify specific concerns and additional approaches to harden access to vulnerable areas of its school sites as 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.

This recommendation will be reviewed for reasonable consideration. The District currently requires all staff members to participate in safety training and will implement procedures to more effectively track safety training participation among late hires and substitute teachers.

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 will be implemented prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year. Currently, Human Resources Department and School Site Administration provide safety training for school site staff. These trainings are provided at the beginning of the school year and as follow-ups throughout the school year. These trainings include practice drills at school sites. The District will identify additional online training modules to support these topics for staff to complete prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year and require that staff hired after the start of the school year complete such training prior to reporting to work.

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 will be implemented after further analysis regarding what training should be required and how to include such training in the onboarding process for both newly hired staff and substitute teachers.

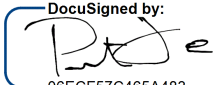
Recommendation R-6: Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year and each subsequent school year, District officials should identify a method and/or tool for measuring the effectiveness of safety training, including an annual survey of all staff.

This recommendation will be implemented following the District's review and development of a survey process to evaluate 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.

This recommendation will be implemented following the District's review of available online systems to track these metrics.

Grand Jury Report Response approved on: December 10, 2020

Signed: 
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Preston Jackson, President
Washington Unified School District, Board of Trustees