



September 5, 2023

The Honorable Daniel M. Wolk
Advising Judge
Yolo County Superior Court
1000 Main Street
Woodland, CA 95695

Yolo County Grand Jury Foreperson
PO Box 2142
Woodland, CA 95776

Dear Judge Wolk:

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 8, 2023 in the report titled, "ARE WE THERE YET? On the Road to School Safety." This response is submitted pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05.

Response to Findings:

***Finding F-1:** Each school district has implemented school hardening measures to some degree in addition to those discussed in the 2019-20 Yolo County Grand Jury report. The measures in place at school sites vary and can be improved. While some schools in each district have their sites enclosed or have security cameras, others do not. Fences may not be high enough to prevent students or intruders from jumping over them. In addition, gates at schools are sometimes not closed, locked or are in disrepair.*

The District partially agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. The District acknowledges its campuses are not fully enclosed and do not have security cameras. To maintain security during school hours, the District has implemented adequate policies and continues to work closely with local law enforcement agencies. The public bike trails and parks adjacent to school campuses are distinctive of the city of Davis, and the District's school site councils consider 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 legitimate community interests. The safety policies put in place reflect that assessment. Additionally, since 2019, 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. Lastly, rather than implement perimeter fencing around all campuses, the District has prioritized \$3 million from our Capital Bond fund beginning with the 2023-2024 school year to implement strategic fencing projects on multiple school sites to enclose greater sections of the school campuses over the next three years.

***Finding F-2:** Each school district conducts California Healthy Kids Surveys, while some use additional methods for assessing student mental health. The response rate of students completing such surveys, however, may not be enough to generate reliable conclusions about student mental health.*

The District disagrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. In 2023-2024, 86.9% of surveyed students completed the YouthTruth survey. The District believes this response rate allows the District to make accurate and reliable conclusions regarding student mental health.

In addition, mental health is assessed formatively across the District by teachers who implement social-emotional learning (SEL) and by School Counselors who deliver explicit SEL curriculum. In our secondary schools, student clubs perform outreach and survey their peers on their well-being. Health classes taught in 7th and 9th grade offer curriculum on healthy coping skills and allow students to share about their own mental health. To address student concerns, staff throughout the District make mental health referrals to trained support staff.

All School Counselors, School Psychologists, Health staff, and Mental Health Clinicians are trained annually to administer the DJUSD Suicide Risk Screener. Students can self-report and are also referred by staff, families, and peers whenever suicidal ideation is present. A range of in-school and out-of-school referrals often result from a Suicide Risk Screener tool. All site administrators are trained annually to administer the DJUSD Threat Assessment any time a student threatens potential harm to others. In addition to a range of potential discipline responses, one common response to a threat assessment is to offer counseling support to those who made the threat as well as to those who were impacted by the threat.

***Finding F-3:** California Education Code mandates that all school districts require visitors to go to a school's office upon arrival and wear identification while on site. At some Yolo County schools, however, the location of the school's office is not clear. Better signage is needed to direct visitors to the office. This is particularly important for schools, such as in the Davis, Winters and Woodland school districts, where sharing open space or parking lots can make clear signage and prevention of intruders from entering school grounds more challenging.*

The District agrees 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 at all school sites, all visitors are expected to check in at the office, and all visitors receive a visitor badge. In addition to its usual check-in procedures, the District implemented the RAPTOR visitor management system, which compares a visitor's license information against a database of known sex offenders.

The District acknowledges that some sites can benefit from additional signage directing visitors to check in at the office.

***Finding F-4:** Each school district appropriately uses a web-based third-party provider for safety training modules. Annual training related to violent threats, such as active shooter, is not required at this time by the Davis, Esparto, Washington, and Woodland school districts, although Esparto and Woodland plan to add such training at the start of the 2023-24 school year. Ensuring staff are trained in how to respond appropriately to threats of violence would lessen the chances of another tragedy similar to that in Uvalde, Texas.*

The District disagrees wholly with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. All staff are trained annually, at the beginning of each school year, on safety procedures, which includes training related to violent threats. In addition, at least twice a year, District students participate in lockdown/shelter and various evacuation drills. Although not called "Active Shooter" drills at most campuses, the policies and procedures for a lockdown due to a shooter are exactly the same as those for other violent threats and do not require the title of "Active Shooter" to be an effective training, especially for young students. The foregoing practices inform staff and students of the importance of safety plan compliance and their role in ensuring a safe school environment.

***Finding F-5:** The Esparto and Woodland school districts have assessed the effectiveness of their school safety training through surveys, as recommended by the 2019-20 Yolo County Grand Jury, while Davis, Washington and Winters districts have not. Assessing effectiveness based on quantifiable data can provide more accurate guidance for decisions about training.*

The District partially agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. Monthly Climate & Safety Meetings with school principals and vice principals include a standing agenda item on safety to receive feedback from school sites and provide ongoing safety training to administrators. School sites survey their staff after biannual safety weeks to identify strengths and areas for growth. Site Crisis Teams have been trained annually on how to conduct safety weeks and how to respond to emergencies on campus. They have been informally surveyed to offer feedback and request further training or information.

***Finding F-6:** Each school district has contracted with a web-based third-party provider to notify parents of emergencies. The providers report on how many parents or guardians were reached per technology (e.g., email, text, app, or voice/phone). All school districts' providers, except*

Washington, reach 90% or more of their students' parents or guardians. Ensuring that virtually all parents or guardians can be reached when needed is desirable.

The District agrees with this finding as it relates to the operations of the Davis Joint Unified School District. Each year, DJUSD performs a test of the Emergency Communication System. The school district sends out a TEST of our Emergency Communication System to the phone numbers, emails and mobile numbers (via text) to parent/guardian contacts for each of our students. The purpose of the "Test Message" is to ensure our parent community understands how, and in what form, they will receive messages in the event of a real emergency and to identify potential gaps in emergency data that can then be addressed in advance of a possible urgent event. The District then analyzes the data to determine the percentage of parents and guardians who were reached.

Further, we communicate often about the importance of parents and guardians "Opting-In" to receive emergency text messages from the District.

Finding F-7: Some high school students in the Davis, Esparto, Winters and Woodland school districts are allowed to go off campus during lunch break. Should an emergency arise on campus, it is not possible for the schools to know how safe those students are, and the students may not receive timely emergency notifications if their school is on lockdown or evacuated.

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

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation R-1: *The Grand Jury recommends that, prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year, each school district identify additional hardening approaches and develop a plan to further protect areas of its schools that remain vulnerable.*

This recommendation will be implemented in that Davis Joint Unified School District will continue to identify and implement strategic fencing projects on our campuses by utilizing the \$3 million identified from our Capital Bond fund.

Recommendation R-2: *Prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year, each school district should develop a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) plan to encourage all students to complete the California Healthy Kids Survey and similar surveys to produce meaningful data. Each school district should act on survey findings, especially those related to potentially violent actions.*

This recommendation has already been implemented. As discussed in F-2, the Davis Joint Unified School District continues to have high participation rates on student perception surveys. In addition, School Site Councils, and Site and District Administrators review the data yearly and

implement continuous improvement measures to address student mental health, especially related to potentially violent actions.

Recommendation R-3: Prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year, each school district should evaluate and improve signage for all of its schools, so that visitors can easily find the school's office to register upon their arrival.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. Since the 2019 Grand Jury Report, the Davis Joint Unified School District has improved signage for all of its schools, directing visitors to the school's office to register when coming on campus. The District will continue to evaluate and improve signage.

Recommendation R-4: Prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year, each school district should require and document that training related to threats of violence is completed by its teachers (regular and substitute), staff and administrators every year.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented in that Davis Joint Unified School District already requires that all regular staff and administrators be trained in lockdown, shelter in place, and evacuation procedures on a yearly basis. All site administrators are trained annually to follow the DJUSD Threat Assessment Protocol any time a student threatens potential harm to others. The requirement for all school staff to report threats to law enforcement, in compliance with Senate Bill 906, has been added to the annual training for all staff for the 2023-2024 school year.

Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, attendance documentation will be required, and all staff who miss the training will be required to complete a make-up training. In addition, all substitutes will receive yearly training prior to beginning work for the District.

Recommendation R-5: Prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year and each subsequent school year, Davis, Washington and Winters school districts should identify and document a statistically reliable method or tool for measuring the effectiveness of school safety training, including an annual survey of teachers, staff and administrators.

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. Monthly Climate & Safety Meetings include a standing agenda item on safety to receive feedback from school sites and provide ongoing safety training to administrators. School sites survey their staff after biannual safety weeks to identify strengths and areas for growth. Site Crisis Teams have been trained annually on how to conduct safety weeks and how to respond to emergencies on campus. They have been surveyed to offer feedback and request further training or information.

In addition, in the 2023-2024 school year, all school staff will view an annual safety training presentation that will include a survey to determine whether the training was relevant, useful and an improvement of their understanding of district safety protocols.

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Recommendation R-6: Prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year and each subsequent school year, each district should achieve and maintain an emergency notification contact rate of at least 95% with parents or guardians, as verified by their third-party emergency notification providers.

This recommendation has already been implemented. Data from the district's yearly Emergency Communication drill shows that 99% of parents/guardians are reached during emergency notifications.

Recommendation R-7: Prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year, Davis, Esparto, Winters, and Woodland school districts should develop, implement and maintain a plan for contacting at least 95% of students who may be off-site if an emergency occurs during regular school hours.

This recommendation has already been implemented in that the Davis Joint Unified School District sends emergency notifications to students via email to their Learning Management System (Canvas) which the majority of students can access via their smartphone. The District will continue to explore additional options to notify students who are off campus during an emergency.

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, 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,



Matt Best
Superintendent



Lea Darrah
President, Board of Education