



El Dorado County Office of Education

June 18, 2008

Vicki L. Barber, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Francie Heim
Deputy Superintendent

Cathy Bean
Deputy Superintendent

El Dorado County Superior Court
Honorable Judge James R. Wagoner
Presiding Judge of the Grand Jury 2007-2008
495 Main Street
Placerville, CA 95667

Dear Judge Wagoner:

Enclosed please find the Response to the 2007-2008 Grand Jury Report prepared by the El Dorado County Sheriff, Office of Emergency Services, County Board of Education and the County Superintendent of Schools.

If you have any questions, or if I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to call me at (530) 295-2229.

Sincerely,

Vicki L. Barber, Ed.D., Superintendent
El Dorado County Office of Education

VB:jkm

Cc: Jeff Neves, El Dorado County Sheriff

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RESPONSE TO THE GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT, PART II
2007-2008

PREPARED BY THE EL DORADO COUNTY SHERIFF, OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES, COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

FINDINGS – School Safety (National Incident Management System)

- F1 *Other than fire drills and drop drills, not all school sites practice with regularity (a minimum of annually) crisis management procedures that include evacuations. Some schools stated they do "round table" practices, as opposed to actually conducting a physical practice. Some sites stated they did not want to scare the students, so, therefore, do not have practices. One school stated that they do summer practices that do not include the children.*

Response:

The respondent agrees with the finding.

Education Code requires that all schools do fire drills and that governing boards adopt policy regarding civil defense and disaster preparedness plans. Schools throughout El Dorado County adhere to these procedures and have adopted safe school plans for each school throughout the county. We appreciate the attention that the Grand Jury has focused on school safety and their encouragement for additional safety practices to be conducted.

- F2 *No evidence was found that schools include parents or the community in an educational component to inform them about the crisis plan adopted by the district and site.*

Response:

The respondent disagrees wholly or in part with the finding.

Schools throughout El Dorado County have developed and implemented safety plans at all sites. In addition, parents and the community are informed of issues as they arise through a variety of means. In recent years, most schools have put in place a telephone contact system that allows all parents to be notified almost simultaneously of issues or situations that have occurred and how the school is addressing the concern.

- F3 *Although considered a work in progress, the Office of Emergency Services has not actually walked the grounds of every school site. Therefore, OES does not have a digital image of the sites not visited, nor indication of possible unique or special needs in their BowMac computer system should a crisis occur. Also in progress is the*

development of live school-site images which can be viewed in law enforcement vehicles – to be used as events are unfolding and as units are rushing to the scene.

Response:

The respondent agrees with the finding.

The Office of Emergency Services has undertaken an ambitious and cutting edge project to ensure that school site images are available in law enforcement vehicles should an issue arise that necessitates law enforcement being able to respond in an emergency. All schools have also provided detailed information on site specific issues, such as where electric and gas connections are located. This information has been entered into the system on the BowMac computer website.

F4 Not all schools have conducted, or been a part of, an integrated evacuation which includes OES and/or other response units.

Response:

The respondent agrees with the finding.

F5 Neither OES nor EDCOE keeps records of site visits by OES with regard to training for crisis management.

Response:

The respondent agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS – School Safety (National Incident Management System)

R1 *In order to alleviate natural parental panic that arises when parents are separated from their children during perceived danger, it is recommended that OES and EDCOE collaborate on the creation of a video, presented by the Sheriff and the Superintendent of Schools. It is further recommended that the video be completed and ready to share with parents by the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. The DVD and related printed material would outline generic safety plans as well as law enforcement codes designed to protect not only the victims, but also concerned and well-meaning parents/community members. It is also strongly recommended that the video be a mandated parent presentation in all schools, to be viewed as school sites see most efficient, i.e. Back to School Night, district web-sites, CDs included in Parent Handbooks, etc.*

Response:

Part of the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

Part of the recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The Sheriff and the County Superintendent of Schools concur with the recommendation to prepare a video that would be made available to schools for use with parents and community groups explaining generic safety plans. The Sheriff and the County Superintendent of Schools intend to have the video completed prior to the beginning of the 2008-09 school year and will post the video on the County Office of Education website with links from school district websites. Copies of the video will also be made available for all schools, in order that they may utilize the material at appropriate parent meetings. However, there is no legal basis to mandate parents to observe the video, and as such the further recommendation set forth by the Grand Jury is not reasonable.

- R2** *As another educational effort designed to further alleviate parental panic both before and during an incident, the Grand Jury recommends that every Parent Handbook include a section on Emergency Crisis Management which informs parents of the school plan should an incident occur. This book would be on hand as a ready reference in time of need.*

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The County Superintendent of Schools with the advice and counsel of the Sheriff has prepared information to be included in Parent Handbooks that are utilized by school sites. The generic safety information has been distributed to all school districts, with a recommendation that it be included in the Parent Handbooks beginning in the 2008-09 school year. In addition, material has been included in the Parent Rights Notice, referencing that school safety plans are in effect at all schools, which will be distributed to all parents at the beginning of the next school year. The following information has been added to the Parents' Rights Notice: "Emergency Preparedness is addressed through the school district's [county office's] comprehensive school safety plan which includes: disaster procedures and plans, routines, emergency response measures, staff training programs, procedures for the use of public buildings and notification

procedures. A copy of the plan is available at district administrative offices. [E.C. 32282]"

- R3** *The Grand Jury recommends that at least one full evacuation and practice of the REDI II emergency plan – a system which applies the Incident Commander concept providing for multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary coordination and cooperation, and which also allows school leaders the ability to network with emergency response teams – be conducted annually at each site. The practice should include all staff and students as well as OES and/or other emergency response units.*

Response:

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The recommendation, while admirable and noteworthy, exceeds the authority of both the Sheriff and the County Superintendent to mandate such an action. There are no statutory provisions which mandate such an action, nor are there adequate resources for either the OES or all schools to undertake such an effort. Many schools throughout the county voluntarily implement a practice session in a variety of ways. However, this recommendation as set forth which calls for the inclusion of all staff and all students, is excessive and beyond the reasonable limits of public agencies in a time of dire financial resources.

- R4** *The Grand Jury recommends that OES survey and photograph the physical grounds of every school site – to be included in their BowMac emergency database (software used by law enforcement). Also included in this information would be any unique and possibly problematic features which would require additional support or resources, i.e. ingress and egress.*

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented.

Site maps have been completed for all schools sites and the OES has made these available through the BowMac emergency database. Photographs have also been completed on the majority of school sites and these are available to emergency personnel. It is the goal of schools and OES to complete this by September 2008.

RS *The Grand Jury recommends that both OES and EDCOE, as well as individual school sites and districts, keep emergency response records that include dates of training and practice - to be maintained and supervised by EDCOE.*

Response:

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The recommendation, while admirable and noteworthy, exceeds the authority of both the Sheriff and the County Superintendent to mandate such an action. There are no statutory provisions which mandate such an action, nor are there adequate resources for the OES, EDCOE, school districts, or all schools to undertake such a data collection and data maintenance effort. However, OES will make every effort to maintain records on their work with the schools regarding emergency planning.

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