



Alexander Valley Union School District

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Les Crawford  
Superintendent-Principal

NOV 9 2007

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To: The Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury

From: Les Crawford, Interim Superintendent-Principal  
Alexander Valley Elementary School District

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report "See Dick. See Jane. See Dick and Jane Go to School. Are they Safe?"

Date: November 3, 2007

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Grand Jury received Nov 20, 2007

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**Recommendation 1: Each public school district in Sonoma County should have at least one employee who is trained and authorized to access DOJ website within an official and specified schedule. This employee should fully understand the way in which information is to be communicated. Further, in the absence of this employee, a suitable alternate person or system should be in place to responsibly retrieve valuable information as it is posted. This system should also cover notices from the DOJ sent via U.S. Mail.**

At Alexander Valley Union School District, the Office Manager is authorized to access the DOJ website; she follows the procedure used by her predecessor, accessing the site within two days of receiving notice that a prospective employee has been fingerprinted and placing a signed statement of clearance in the appropriate personnel file. She has not, however, received formal training and she does not have an alternate for this assignment. *Alexander Valley Union School District will explore additional training options for the Office Manager and a suitable alternate person for this assignment by January 30, 2008.*

**Recommendation 4: School districts should consider changing their policies to require successful employee applicants to pay for their own fingerprinting and background responses from DOJ and FBI. There is at least \$65,000 in 2006-2007 school district budgets for fingerprinting. As costs are shifted to paid employees, districts could use savings to fund costs for volunteers.**

Alexander Valley is a small district with two dozen employees at least half of whom are classified employees on 1 mid to low pay scale. In the part-time positions where employee turnover is highest, it may be feasible to require the employee to carry the cost of fingerprinting. On the other hand, our Parent Club has a small endowment that might be used to cover fingerprinting costs for volunteers. This is a subject to be discussed with our Parent Club.

**Recommendation 5: School districts should amend their policies, if needed, to allow for volunteers' names to be public information and readily available so that a greater scrutiny is provided.**

Alexander Valley School District has no such policy restricting the publication of names of parent volunteers. Ours is a one school district with 120 pupils in Kindergarten through Sixth Grade. One of our strengths is the active involvement of parents at the school

through our Parent Club. Parents are known by sight and name in this small community, where they are often acknowledged in the Parent Club Minutes and in the Superintendent's weekly letter to parents. The names of most parents are also published in our annual school directory; the handful who choose not to have their names in the directory are often members of the Hispanic community and they, too, are well-known.

**Recommendation 6: Schools should routinely check out names of adult volunteers on Megan's Law website (a public posting of sexual predators) even if fingerprinting is scheduled, and always do so if no fingerprinting is scheduled for that volunteer.**

Alexander Valley School District does not currently check for the names of our volunteers on this website. We are a rural district, but the community is unusually stable and consists primarily of ranches and vineyards. The families who send their children here, whether from inside or outside of the district, have been doing so for years, sometimes for generations. It is not unusual for pupils to have siblings or first cousins at the school. Many of our new families are professionals who live outside the district.

*We fully agree with this finding, however, and will identify a key person and an alternate who will, beginning in January of 2008, routinely check out the names on this website, taking care to look for the names of volunteers who have not yet been fingerprinted. We will also include an information sheet about the Megan's Law website in our opening day packets at the beginning of the next school year.*

**Recommendation 7: School districts should request criminal activity records from the Sonoma County Superior Courts Records Division on any adult wanting to volunteer with students. This service is available at no cost to a district.**

We have recently become aware of this service through the Sonoma County Office of Education and the California School Boards Association. *The district will evaluate this process and if appropriate incorporate it into our volunteer program policies for the school year 2008-2009.*

**Recommendation 8: School districts should, individually and collectively, request that the DOJ implement a system to confirm school district receipt of Notices of Subsequent Arrest. A system that would require the DOJ to follow up if no confirmation was received and would at least give school districts some assurance that information trusted to the U.S. Mail or electronic mail services is actually being received.**

Alexander Valley School District agrees with this recommendation. *This item should be placed on the agenda for a future meeting of Superintendents for making a county-side request to the DOJ. We understand that the Sonoma County Office of Education is proposing to act as a clearinghouse for fingerprinting data; that office may also submit a request to the DOJ.*

**Recommendation 9: School districts should request FBI responses on all classified employees and volunteers that they do a DOJ response regardless of the time they have lived in California. The relatively small fee of \$24 to get prior criminal activity from a national database seems justifiable, reasonable and the right action to take.**

We agree with this recommendation. *We will begin requesting FBI responses for all new classified employees and volunteers. If the Sonoma County Office of Education acts as a clearinghouse for FBI data as well as clearances from the DOJ, we may access the information through that clearinghouse.*

**Recommendation 10: School districts should require fingerprinting for all adults (paid and volunteer) involved in athletic programs, overnight field trips, off-campus field trips,**

**and any school sponsored student activity that occurs outside of the normal school day or hours.**

The District will develop a plan for implementing a volunteer program policy requiring all volunteers engaged in the activities listed above to be fingerprinted. We hope to make this service free to all parents who volunteer by funding it through other sources, such as our Parent Club.

**Recommendation 11: School districts should implement provisions of Educational Code Section 33193 and 45125.2 requiring that certain independent contractors and employees of contractors undergo fingerprinting and background checks.**

We agree with this recommendation. The District strives whenever possible to schedule visits from contractors outside of school hours. When contractors do visit the school, they are required to sign in at the front desk. They are then accompanied by the head custodian while on campus. In addition, we require consultants to have fingerprint clearance if they work around our pupils.

**Recommendation 13: School districts should not allow new employees to begin work until all pre-employment requirements are met. Most specifically, this means all fingerprinting and criminal history responses that are required must have been completed and properly evaluated.**

This is standard practice at Alexander Valley School District, a practice we will continue to uphold .

**Recommendation 14: The Sheriff's Office should make available to all school districts information on how to access services available to them through the Sheriff's Office that would aid districts in determining if individuals should be approved to serve as volunteers in our schools and at school sponsored activities.**

We agree with this recommendation. We will continue to work with the local Police Department on this issue and we will put in place procedures for accessing Sonoma County court records on individuals who volunteer at our School whenever appropriate.

**Recommendation 15: School districts should require all volunteers to sign an agreement that outlines behavioral do's and don'ts and consequences if agreement terms are broken.**

Overall, many of our parents are well-educated when it comes to early childhood education and adult-child interactions. These are the very parents who are most actively engaged in volunteering at our school. We agree with your recommendation, however, and in the coming months, we will work with our Parent Club to update and expand our parent volunteer practices and policies in regard to student interaction.

Respectfully submitted,

Les Crawford  
Superintendent-Principal

Reviewed and approved by: