

# SEBASTOPOL UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

7611 Huntley Street, Sebastopol, California 95472

Phone: (707) 829-4570 Fax: (707) 829-7427

David R. Wheeler, Superintendent



"Growing Quality"

## GRAND JURY

SEP 27 2007

## RECEIVED

September 20, 2007

Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury  
Attn: Dennis O'Reilly, Foreperson  
P.O. Box 5109  
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

RE: Grand Jury Final Report – June 28, 2007

Dear Mr. O'Reilly:

In regard to your request for responses to the recommendations in the above-referenced report, the responses from Sebastopol Union School District are attached.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David R. Wheeler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David R. Wheeler  
Superintendent

Att.

cc: Carl Wong, Ed.D.

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**BROOK HAVEN SCHOOL**  
Kent Cromwell, Principal  
7905 Valentine Avenue  
Sebastopol, CA 95472  
(707) 829-4590

**PARK SIDE SCHOOL**  
Ceasar R. Camarillo, Principal  
7450 Bodega Avenue  
Sebastopol, CA 95472  
(707) 829-7400

**PINE CREST SCHOOL**  
Michael J. McBride, Principal  
7285 Hayden Avenue  
Sebastopol, CA 95472  
(707) 829-7411

SEBASTOPOL UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Office of the Superintendent

September 20, 2007

TO: Dennis O'Reilly  
Foreperson, Sonoma County Grand Jury

FROM: David Wheeler  
Superintendent, Sebastopol Union School District

RE: Sebastopol School District Response to 2006/2007 Grand Jury Report

**R1: 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 communicated. Further in the absence of this employee, a suitable alternative 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.**

The Sebastopol Union School District has two employees who are trained to access the DOJ site. Both employees fully understand the manner in which information is communicated to the schools.

**R4: School districts should consider changing their policies to require successful employee applicants to pay for their own fingerprinting and background responses from DOJ and the FBI. There is at least \$65,000 in the 06-07 school district budgets for fingerprinting. As costs are shifted to paid employees, districts could use savings to fund costs for volunteers.**

The Sebastopol Union School District appreciates the recommendation but we have concerns with this concept. For many school districts the employees being fingerprinted are applying for part-time, lower pay employment. It can be a hardship to people to pay for these clearances. Though \$65,000 may seem like a substantial sum, this is spread across 40 school districts. Smaller districts such as Sebastopol may have up to \$1,000 in their budget, but may have hundreds of volunteers. Districts will need to identify a funding source that will support any higher level of fingerprinting.

Classroom volunteers and field trip volunteers are supervised by fingerprinted school staff.

Our district is studying the concept of fingerprinting all volunteers involved with overnight trips.

**R5: 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.**

If approved by counsel, the school district will develop a master list of volunteers at each school site twice a year to be posted and available for parents.

**R6: School should routinely check out names of adult volunteers on Megan's Law website even if fingerprinting is scheduled, and always do so if no fingerprinting is scheduled for that volunteer.**

The school district agrees with this recommendation and will work to implement it during the 2007-2008 school year.

**R7: 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.**

Though the district understands the intent, it does question the reality of this recommendation. The records division, as we understand it, deals with Sonoma County cases. We live in a very mobile society. How many county superior court records divisions would a district need to contact? Additionally, the hundreds and hundreds, if thousands, of volunteers are generally supervised by school personnel.

**R8: 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.**

The Sebastopol School District receives these notices during the school year. We have no reason to believe at this time that the system is not working. We will be glad to offer our concurrence to Dr. Wong to write such a letter on behalf of the districts. It is also important to determine what subsequent arrests a district wants to be advised of. Are districts interested in further complicating the system by having misdemeanor offenses that may not relate to job responsibilities or volunteer ability included?

**R9: 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.**

The district agrees with this recommendation and this is currently a practice for all fingerprint requests.

**R10: School districts should require fingerprinting for all adults (paid and volunteer) involved in athletic programs, overnight field trips, off-campus trips and any school sponsored student activity that occurs outside of the normal school day or hours.**

The district and Board of Education will be working with its PTSA and booster groups to analyze the impact and the procedures for implementing such a widespread recommendation.

**R11: School districts should implement provisions of Ed Code Section 33193 and 45125.2 requiring that certain independent contractors and employees of contractors undergo fingerprinting and background checks.**

Contractors or their employees who work on campus at the time that students are present must verify that these checks have taken place. The district strives to schedule contractor services and work at times other than during or on school days. Consultants are also required to have a fingerprint clearance in the event they are working around students.

**R13: 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 be completed and properly evaluated.**

This is a standard practice in the Sebastopol Union School District.

**R14: 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.**

The Sebastopol Union School District has a very strong working relationship with the Sebastopol Police Department. Appropriately communications of this nature take place between the school district and the Sebastopol Police Department.

**R15: School districts should require all volunteers to sign an agreement that outlines behavior do's and don'ts and consequences if agreement terms are broken.**

This recommendation will be a priority over for the year for development and refinement with legal counsel review. We will be working to collect samples of volunteer agreements to create an appropriate district agreement.