



# Santa Ana Unified School District

Jane A. Russo, Superintendent

Via U.S. Mail and Fax

July 22, 2010

Dennis Evans, Foreman  
Orange County Grand Jury  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, California 92701

Dear Foreman Dennis Evans:

This letter is in response to the 2008-09 Orange County Grand Jury Report, entitled "Education of Parents in the Development of Strategies to Keep Their Children Out of Gangs."

## Findings

F.1: The early gang prevention and intervention efforts provided by the Probation Department, District Attorney's Office, and such collaborative efforts as Pio Pico Collaboration are extremely cost effective when compared to the growth of gangs in Orange County and the subject cost of prosecution and incarceration of gang members.

***Response:*** *The Santa Ana Unified School District maintains a collaborative relationship with Orange County Probation, the Orange County Deputy District Attorney, Juvenile Court and the Gang Enforcement and Special Supervision Unit.*

F.2: The most effective way to prevent children from joining gangs in most cases is to work with parents of youth children to teach them to spot the danger signs for gang activity and to help them develop effective strategies to keep their children from joining gangs.

***Response:*** *The Santa Ana Unified School District agrees that working with parents of young children to educate them about the perils of joining gangs is an effective prevention strategy.*

F.3: The most effective time to begin gang prevention efforts is when children are in elementary school.

***Response:*** *The Santa Ana Unified School District agrees that working with parents of young children to educate them about the perils of joining gangs is an effective prevention strategy.*

F.4: The most effective gang prevention and intervention programs are done by a collaboration of government agencies and private organizations and it is important for government agencies and private organizations and it is important for government entities to support such collaborations.

***Response:*** *The Santa Ana Unified School District agrees that successful gang prevention and intervention strategies involve community partnerships from a variety of agencies (public and private) to provide the critical resources to support our youth and their families.*

F.8: The Pio Pico Collaboration needs to gain certification so that it may be used as a model program for other cities and school districts throughout Orange County.

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**Response:** *The Santa Ana Unified School District agrees that the Pio Pico Elementary School's **Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Gang Diversion Initiative** should be held up as a model program and should be considered for replication throughout Orange County.*

**Recommendations**

- R.1: Provide funding and assistance for the certification of the Pio Pico Collaboration's Gang Intervention and Prevention Program so that it can be exported to other cities and school district through Orange County.

**Response:** *Although Santa Ana Unified School District agrees that the Pio Pico program is a model program that deserves certification for replication, the consequence of ever decreasing funding from the State of California limits what the school district is able to do financially to expand the program.*

- R.2: Provide funding to aid in the reproduction of the Pio Pico materials for export to other school districts and cities in areas of Orange County with heavy gang activity and to provide funding for coordination of this effort to export materials and technology.

**Response:** *Although Santa Ana Unified School District agrees that the Pio Pico program is a model program that deserves to be reproduced throughout Orange County, the consequence of ever decreasing funding from the State of California limits what SAUSD is able to do financially to expand the program.*

- R.5: Recommend that school districts with high numbers of at-risk children join forces and exchange information on how to begin gang prevention and intervention programs, how to expand existing programs by working cooperatively and how to export provide practices to other school district that would benefit from them.

**Response:** *The Santa Ana Unified School District maintains a collaborative relationship with Orange County Probation, the Orange County Deputy District Attorney, Juvenile Court, the Gang Enforcement and Special Supervision Unit, other Orange County School Districts, parent groups, and non-profit agencies throughout the County. In the spring of 2009, the Santa Ana Unified School District, through a partnership, hired a Santa Ana Police Department officer to serve as the Santa Ana Unified School District School Police Chief. With this partnership, the SAUSD PD and the SAPD have developed a much-needed, enhanced interagency relationship. This has been an especially important partnership for sharing information, investigations, training and sharing research-based gang prevention and intervention strategies and practices.*

If you need further clarification, please contact Cathie Olsky, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent, at (714) 558-5523.

Sincerely,



Jane Russo  
Superintendent

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