



Irvine Unified School District

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from judge

August 15, 2011

Honorable Thomas J. Borris
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, California 92701

Your Honor:

Enclosed is the required response to the recommendations of the 2010-2011 Orange County Grand Jury report, "Orange County Public Schools: Are They Prepared for Emergencies?" California Penal Code 933 (c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. The following are responses from the Irvine Unified School District.

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

F1: With respect to reported constraints on emergency planning and preparation, over half of schools and almost three quarters of districts identified either limited time or funds.

Irvine Unified School District (IUSD) agrees with this finding. In addition to insufficient resources for emergency preparation supplies, our schools do not have the needed personnel or necessary time to coordinate planning and preparation.

F2: Six (of 17) school districts have managed to apply for and receive relatively large grants from governmental agencies to greatly enhance their emergency planning efforts, while others have not.

IUSD agrees with this finding. We were able to apply for and receive a large federal REMS grant several years ago that helped to advance our emergency preparation efforts. Attempts to solicit additional grants in recent years have been unsuccessful. We will continue our efforts to identify funding sources.

F3: Some schools anticipate responding to only a few emergency situations (e.g. earthquake and fire), while others have developed plans to respond to over a dozen different threatening situations.

IUSD agrees with this finding. IUSD schools have developed plans to respond to other threatening situations, including lockdown scenarios. They also refer to written protocols for various emergency response scenarios, such as swarming bees, airplane crashes and toxic fumes.

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IUSD . . . providing the highest quality educational experience we can envision.

F4: School districts develop plans with respect to a number of different but overlapping regulations and standards, including those required by the county, state, and the federal government.

IUSD agrees with this finding. IUSD schools are required to address regulations per the California Education Code and to satisfy county, state, and federal standards in the process.

F5: Some schools reported they have not adequately anticipated the needs of students taking prescription medications, or with specialized medical needs, in the event of some emergencies, such as an extended lockdown.

IUSD agrees with this finding. Some of our schools have worked to address the special needs of different groups of students into their emergency preparedness plans, but others have not sufficiently addressed this need.

F6: School districts are in communication with a variety of local and county departments, agencies, and systems to help them prepare for and respond to disasters or emergencies; not all districts access the same resources.

IUSD agrees with this finding. Our district is in communication with the Orange County Department of Education, American Red Cross, the City of Irvine, county fire and emergency preparedness agencies, as well as other schools and agencies in the county.

F7: Few schools have plans or emergency preparation information available in languages other than English.

IUSD agrees with this finding. Limited resources in funding and bilingual staff have prevented expanding written communication in all the languages significantly represented across IUSD. Some schools do incorporate translation into other languages as a part of their emergency response protocol, especially in the area of student/parent reunification.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: Those districts which have yet to identify disaster grant opportunities, especially from governmental agencies, investigate the availability of potential resources. Forming inter-district collaboratives, learning from districts in the county that have been successful, pooling resources, and asking for consultation from the Orange County Superintendent of Schools/OCDE may help in these efforts.

This recommendation has been implemented. IUSD received a federal REMS grant in 2007. The district schools received supplies and training through this grant. We have been informed that we do not qualify to reapply under the new guidelines. However, IUSD will continue to work with OCDE to investigate other potential resources. IUSD has also been involved with OCDE, Tustin, Santa Ana, and Garden Grove school districts in a collaborative effort to improve emergency communication through a radio network. We will continue to work in this OCERS (Orange County Emergency Radio System) cooperative, pooling our resources to increase our ability to communicate in the event of an emergency.

R2: Districts review their plans, and the plans specific to each of their campuses, with respect to emergencies or possible disaster situations they have not anticipated.

This recommendation has been implemented. IUSD has involved all schools in additional lockdown training in conjunction with the Irvine Police Department over the past two years. Schools have been encouraged to practice tabletop drills with their leadership teams regarding various emergency scenarios. In the fall of each new school year, schools are required to revise and update their School Safety Plans, which include multiple emergency responses. These plans are then reviewed by district office personnel. This practice will continue this fall and in subsequent years.

R3: Districts review their level of compliance with various existing codes, regulations, and liability insurance issues that pertain to emergency preparedness in public schools.

This recommendation has been implemented. IUSD has made it a practice to review their level of compliance with existing codes, regulations and liability insurance issues on a yearly basis. This practice will continue in conjunction with OCDE, Keenan and Associates (Insurance Carrier), OCERS (Orange County Emergency Radio System), and another of our district collaborative groups, EPIC (Emergency Preparedness Interagency Committee).

R4: Districts review their plans, and the plans specific to each of their campuses, to ascertain whether the special medical and/or prescription medication needs of all students are adequately anticipated, especially during an extended disaster situation.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but is in the process of being implemented in the current 2011/12 school year. Each school site will be asked to include steps in their Safe School Emergency Plans to meet the special needs of their students with regard to medical and/or prescription medication during extended emergency situations beginning with the 2011-12 school year. District personnel will check plans for inclusion upon submission in the fall.

R5: Districts survey their campuses with respect to the needs of non- or limited English-speaking parents and guardians, and develop outlines or summaries of critical emergency planning information in Spanish, Vietnamese, and other threshold languages prevalent in their local communities.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. IUSD will coordinate the efforts of Language Minority Programs staff and school sites in developing outlines or summaries of emergency planning information in key languages (Korean, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, Farsi, and Arabic) to facilitate communication with our community members. Effective home/school communication documents will be created and translated during the 2011-2012 school year, and will be made available to each site by the beginning of the 2012-13 school year.

Sincerely,



Keith Tuominen, Ed.D.
Director of Secondary Education

c: Terry Walker, Superintendent
Cassie Parham, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services
Lisa Howell, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services