



NOVATO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Jim Hogeboom
Superintendent

August 16, 2016

The Honorable Kelly V. Simmons
Presiding Judge
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4900

John Mann, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room #275
San Rafael, CA 94903

Dear Judge Simmons and Mr. Mann,

Attached is the Novato Unified School District's response to the findings and recommendations of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury's report **Marin Public Schools Fail to Beat Bullies**. Similar to the work of the Grand Jury on head injuries, this report also raises an issue related to the health and safety of ALL students in our schools. As with prior reports of Grand Juries over the years, these investigations have resulted in improvements in policies and procedures in many of our school districts.

Consistent with the Grand Jury's report, our district is aware of and has done much to address the issue of bullying. This issue is one that impacts the entire community and, as such, any action should involve community partners. The Novato Unified School District (NUSD) stands ready to respond in such a manner to ensure that all students feel safe and comfortable in schools and beyond.

The attached responses will reflect that our highest priority is for ALL students to feel safe at school. The good news is that a vast majority of students, according to the **2013-2014 California Health Kids Survey: Marin County Secondary Main Report** reported feeling "safe or very safe" at school. It is our hope that the 2015-2016 report that is forthcoming will show an even higher level. We also acknowledge that if one student does not feel safe, that is one too many.

Again, thank you for being our partner in supporting the safety of the students in our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Hogeboom", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Hogeboom
Superintendent

Attachment: Response Form

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: Marin Public Schools Fail to Beat Bullies

Report Date: June 9, 2016

Agenda Date: August 16, 2016

Response by: Jim Hogeboom Title: Superintendent

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1
- I (we) disagree *partially* with the findings numbered: F2, F3
- I (we) disagree *wholly* with the findings numbered: _____

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefor.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered R1, R2, R3, R4, R6 have been implemented.

(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)

- Recommendations numbered R5 have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

- Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.

(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)

- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 8/16/2016

Signed: 

Number of pages attached 3

FINDINGS

F1: Bullying is a problem in Marin middle and high schools. Marin ranked above the State average overall in incidents for the 2011-13 school years and for two of the three grade levels surveyed in CHKS.

Response: Agree

F2: Marin County schools do not fully comply with California anti-bullying law.

Response: Partially disagree. Assuming the factual statements set forth in the Grand Jury's report are accurate for all Marin County schools, there may be some schools that need to update their policies in accordance with the law.

The Novato Unified School District complies with the California anti-bullying laws.

F3: Most schools do not have a direct link on their website home page to their anti-bullying policies and procedures.

Response: Partially agree. While a link to NUSD's anti-bullying policies and procedures are not on individual school website home pages, they are available through the District website as well as the Student Services webpage. As NUSD is transitioning to new websites, a direct link to anti-bullying policies and procedures will be on the Parent Page of each school website as well as the District and Student Services webpages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: Each school in the district should review its policies and procedures to ensure full compliance with the requirements of Seth's law.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented related to the Novato Unified School District operated programs and policies. Internal staff and legal review has verified compliance with the law. These policies and procedures are reviewed annually with administrators via trainings with legal counsel.

R2: Each school in the district should review its policies and procedures to ensure that complainants are protected from retaliation and that their identities remain confidential as appropriate.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented related to the Novato Unified School District operated programs and policies. Internal staff and legal review has verified compliance with the law. These policies and procedures are reviewed annually with administrators via trainings with legal counsel.

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- R3:** Each school in the district should adequately publicize its anti-bullying policies and procedures through its website, including a direct link on the website's home page to the information (not simply linking to a lengthy student handbook, but directly to the anti-bullying policy and procedures themselves).

Response:

Annually, parents receive a Parent Acknowledgement Form highlighting NUSD's policies including Bullying – Harassment BP 5131.2. While a link to NUSD's anti-bullying policies and procedures are not on individual school website home pages, they are available through the District website as well as the Student Services webpage. As NUSD is transitioning to new websites, a direct link to anti-bullying policies and procedures will be on the Parent Page of each school website as well as the District and Student Services webpages.

- R4:** All procedures and forms for filing a bullying complaint, including an anonymous complaint, should be available on the school's website.

Response:

The procedures and forms for filing a bullying complaint are available on the District website. As NUSD is transitioning to new websites, a direct link to anti-bullying policies and procedures will be on the Parent Page of each school website as well as the District and Student Services webpages.

- R5:** Each school in the district's website should provide the option to complete and submit bullying complaints online.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented at most NUSD schools. As the District and schools are transitioning to new websites, an online form will be developed as an option by December 2016.

- R6:** Each school in the district should review its student and parent education programs to ensure they are relevant and current. Schools should consider using the **No Bully Solution Team** process that has been reported to be highly successful, or another equivalent program.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented by the Novato Unified School District. NUSD has also publicized trainings offered by Novato Blue Ribbon Coalition for Youth, Healthy Novato, and by the Marin County Office of Education in collaboration with community partner organizations, agencies and individuals to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment.

NUSD uses No Bully Solution Teams at elementary and middle schools, Peer Court/Community Building Circles/Restorative Justice at all schools, and has

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school climate liaisons at all middle and high schools. School climate liaisons will be added to all elementary school in the 2016-17 school year. Additionally, NUSD works with North Bay Security Group to respond to incidents on campus as they arise as well as provide trainings on bullying and student safety to students, parents, staff and administrators.

The District publicizes and encourages staff participation in countywide professional development for educators. In addition, the District publicizes parent information and training workshops that are held several times a year by community partners dealing with topics such as teen sexting, digital abuse, student mental health, online behavior, best practices for serving transgender students, Marin Teen Girl Conference and other issues related to the of safety of our students.

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