

Laguna Beach Unified School District

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Our Mission: Each student gains the knowledge, experience, world perspectives, and skills needed to become a lifelong learner and producer in a competitive and interconnected world.



Board of Education

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Date: July 27, 2012

The Honorable Thomas J. Borris
Presiding Judge
Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Laguna Beach Unified School District's Response to 2011-12 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Anti-Bullying Programs in Orange County Schools"

To the Honorable Thomas J. Borris:

In accordance with California Penal Code section 933.05, the Orange County Grand Jury has requested that the Laguna Beach Unified School District respond to Findings 1-4 and Recommendations 1-3, 6-7 in the 2011-12 Orange County Grand Jury Report entitled, "Anti-Bullying Programs in Orange County Schools."¹

Finding 1: Not all Orange County schools use the same technology, procedures and codes to record bullying or harassment incidents.

Response to Finding 1: The District agrees partially with this finding. The District agrees that not all Orange County schools use the same technology and procedures to record bullying or harassment incidents. Different districts use different databases and internal procedures to track bullying complaints. With regard to the codes used to record bullying or harassment incidents, prior to July 1, 2012, Education Code section 48900(r) defined bullying by reference to sexual harassment (Education Code section 48900.2), hate violence (Education Code section 48900.3), and harassment, threats and intimidation (Education Code section 48900.4). The law did not contain a stand-alone definition of bullying. However, as of July 1, 2012, Education Code section 48900(r) provides a stand-alone definition of the term "bullying." (AB 1156.) School districts throughout California are bound by this statute.

Finding 2: New legislation takes effect July 1, 2012, and broadens the definition of "Bullying."

Response to Finding 2: The District agrees that AB 1156 provides a broader definition of "bullying" than was contained in prior law.

¹ The Orange County Superintendent of Schools has been directed to respond to Recommendations 4 and 5.

Finding 3: Education Code section 234.1 requiring posting of anti-bullying/anti-harassment policies in prescribed areas was not evident in all schools visited.

Response to Finding 3: The District cannot comment on what policies are posted in all schools throughout Orange County, but can respond only on behalf of the District itself. Finding 3 combines the requirement to post anti-discrimination/anti-harassment policies in prescribed areas with the requirement to post anti-bullying policies. The requirement for school districts to post their anti-bullying policy in all schools and offices, including staff lounges and pupil government meeting rooms, is new as of July 1, 2012.² Thus, the District disagrees with Finding 3 to the extent it reflects on the District's practice in regard to posting its anti-bullying policy in prescribed areas prior to July 1, 2012.

In regard to the finding that the District failed to post its anti-harassment policies in prescribed areas, the District disagrees with this finding. Anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies are posted in all schools and offices, including staff lounges and pupil government meeting rooms.

Finding 4: Based on witness testimony, confidentiality was not maintained in a bullying incident as prescribed in California Education Code section 234.1

Response to Finding 4: The Grand Jury report does not contain sufficient information to enable the District to respond to this finding nor does it identify which school district was involved in the alleged breach of confidentiality; therefore, the District disagrees wholly with this finding.

Recommendation 1: Recommend a county-wide compatible information system for reporting incidents of bullying be explored by all school districts.

Response to Recommendation 1: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. The District tracks incidents of bullying as follows: As part of the District's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support approach, the schools of the District maintain a data base of student behaviors, including bullying, using the School Wide Information System as well as Aeries. The data are reviewed regularly at each school site. Different districts use different technology and procedures that reflect the unique needs of each district. While all districts will comply with State-mandated reporting, such as the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), it is not necessary that each district use the same internal procedures and technology to track reported incidents of bullying.

Recommendation 2: Recommend all county-wide schools agree upon the same definition of bullying.

Response to Recommendation 2: The District will not implement this policy because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. The District has no legal authority to obligate other school districts. However, it should be noted that the District is required by law to apply the

² Educ. Code § 234.1(d).

definition of “bullying” contained in Education Code section 48900(r) in suspending and expelling students. The District also intends to use this definition of “bullying” in tracking complaints of bullying that are sustained.

Recommendation 3: Each district review standardized procedures to protect a bully victim and bystanders’ confidentiality as stated in Education Code section 234.1

Response to Recommendation 3: The District has substantially completed this recommendation through adoption and dissemination of Anti-Bullying Board Policy 5044 on April 24, 2012, which addresses confidentiality protections as required by Education Code section 234.1. The District has adopted Uniform Complaint Board Policy 6009, which also addresses issues of retaliation and confidentiality.

Those policies state:

Board Policy 5044 Section VIII. *Confidentiality: The identity of a complainant alleging discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall remain confidential as appropriate within the dual contexts of the District’s legal obligation to ensure a learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation and bullying, and the right of the accused to be informed of the allegations. Some level of disclosure may be necessary to ensure a complete and fair investigation, although the District will comply with requests for confidentiality to the extent possible.*

Board Policy 6009 *The Superintendent or designee shall ensure confidentiality of the complainant in instances where disclosure would cause retaliation against the complainant.*

The District intends to remind its employees of these policies as follows by September 30, 2012 through postings and information disseminated and discussed at staff meetings:

Per Board Policy 5044 Anti-Bullying, *X. Notifications: The District shall publicize this policy, including information about the manner in which to file a complaint to pupils, parents, employees, agents of the governing board and the general public. The information shall be posted in all schools and offices, including staff lounges and pupil government meeting rooms.*

Recommendation 6: Recommend each district explore the development of a county-wide standard information system for recording incidents of bullying.

Response to Recommendation 6: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted and is not reasonable. The District tracks incidents of bullying as follows: Formal complaints regarding violations of Board Policy 5044 Anti-Bullying shall be made pursuant to the District’s Uniform Complaint Procedure as described in Board Policy 5044

The Nondiscrimination Officer is responsible for ensuring the District’s compliance with nondiscrimination laws impacting California public school districts. The Nondiscrimination Officer shall notify the parents of the reported victim and the alleged perpetrator of the complaint, and, if appropriate, law enforcement officials. The Nondiscrimination Officer may refer the victim, perpetrator and others to counseling and mental and other health services, as appropriate. The Nondiscrimination Officer shall maintain documentation of complaints and their resolution for a minimum of one CPM review cycle.

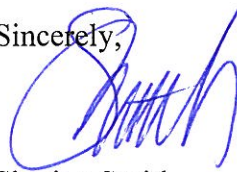
Different districts use different technology and procedures that reflect the unique needs of each district. While all districts will comply with State-mandated reporting, such as the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), it is not necessary that each district use the same internal procedures and technology to track reported incidents of bullying.

Recommendation 7: All schools post anti-bullying/anti-harassment policy in offices, staff lounges and student government meeting areas as prescribed in Education Code section 234.1

Response to Recommendation 7: The District implemented this recommendation on April 24, 2012. Continued compliance with Education Code section 234.1(d) is required by District Board Policy 5044 Anti-Bullying.

If you have any further questions or need additional information, please contact Assistant Superintendent Deni Christensen at (949) 497-7700, extension 5231.

Sincerely,



Sherine Smith
Superintendent

cc: Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701