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May 14, 2009

Kim Dunning
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Honorable Judge Dunning:

Attached is the Orange County Department of Education's response to each of the findings and recommendations of the 2008-2009 Orange County Grand Jury report, "Education of Parents in the Development of Strategies to Keep Their children Out of Gangs."

If you have further questions, please contact my office at 714.966.4003.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Habermehl".

William M. Habermehl
County Superintendent of Schools

WMH:ja

Enclosure

cc: Orange County Grand Jury

Orange County Department of Education
RESPONSE TO THE
2008-2009 ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT
“Education of Parents in the Development of Strategies
to Keep Their Children Out of Gangs”

FINDINGS

Grand Jury Finding F.1

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

Response to Finding F.1

The Orange County Department of Education maintains a collaborative relationship with the Probation Department and the District Attorney’s Office in the effort to provide gang prevention and intervention practices.

Grand Jury Finding F.2

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

Response to Finding F.2

The Orange County Department of Education agrees that working with parents of young children to educate them about the perils of joining gangs is an effective prevention strategy.

Grand Jury Finding F.3

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

Response to Finding F.3

The Orange County Department of Education agrees that early intervention regarding gang membership is effective for elementary age youth.

Grand Jury Finding 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 governmental entities to support such collaboratives.

Response to Finding F.4

The Orange County Department of Education agrees that successful gang prevention and intervention strategies involve community partnerships that marshal critical resources to support parents and youth.

Grand Jury Finding 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.

Response to Finding F.8

The Orange County Department of Education agrees that researched-based gang prevention and intervention programs should be considered as model programs for replication throughout the county.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grand Jury Recommendation R.1

Provide funding and assistance for certification of the Pio Pico Collaboration's Gang Intervention and Prevention Program so that it can be exported to other cities and school districts throughout Orange County.

Response to Recommendation R.1

The Orange County Department of Education is currently reviewing funding for all prevention and intervention programs. Due to the State's deteriorating financial condition, the budget forecast is unclear and available dollars are uncertain at this time. Each district's Board determines how to spend their scarce resources.

Grand Jury Recommendation R.2

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

Response to Recommendation R.2

The Orange County Department of Education is currently reviewing funding for all prevention and intervention programs. Due to the State's deteriorating financial condition, the budget forecast is unclear and available dollars are uncertain at this time. Each district's Board determines how to spend their scarce resources.

Grand Jury Recommendation 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 proven practices to other districts that would benefit from them.

Response to Recommendation R.5

The Orange County Department of Education maintains a collaborative relationship with the Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office, local law enforcement, school districts, and parents in the effort to provide research-based gang prevention and intervention practices.