

# ORANGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Education Center

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## ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT

### ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS: ARE THEY PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES?

#### RESPONSE SUMMARY FROM THE ORANGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

July 28, 2011

##### **Finding 1:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District agrees with this finding. The Orange Unified School District is currently able to support enhancing our emergency planning and preparation because of support from a federal grant. Unfortunately, future funding for this federal grant program has not been approved.

##### **Finding 2:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District agrees with this finding. Grants from governmental agencies provide local education agencies with the resources necessary to develop and maintain adequate emergency preparedness.

##### **Finding 3:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District does not possess sufficient information regarding the preparation of other school districts to agree or disagree with this finding. The Orange Unified School District takes an all hazards approach in emergency planning and preparation so as to maintain the ability to respond to any type emergency.

**Finding 4:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District agrees with this finding. In developing school safety plans and emergency operations capabilities the District has found little serious conflict among the various codes, regulations and standards governing the development and implementation of these plans. It is the District's experience that the Incident Command System (ICS), SEMS and NIMS achieve the objective of creating standardized responses to emergencies which are followed by the multiplicity of agencies that could be involved in a single incident.

**Finding 5:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District does not possess sufficient information regarding the preparation of other school districts to agree or disagree with this finding. The Orange Unified School District has plans for such contingencies and is working on refining them as part of our ongoing emergency planning and preparation.

**Finding 6:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District agrees with this finding. Districts with state or federal grants will have access to different resources. Some resources that should be county wide, such as the school district radio system, may not be available to some districts due to lack of adequate funding.

**Finding 7:**

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

The Orange Unified School District does not possess sufficient information regarding the preparation of other school districts to agree or disagree with this finding. Our District has not prepared emergency information in languages other than English, but is our intention to do so in the near future.

**Recommendation 1:**

**Those districts which have yet to identify disaster grant opportunities, especially from governmental agencies, investigate the availability of potential resources. Forming interdistrict 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.**

The Orange Unified School District has a current federal grant for emergency preparedness. At the conclusion of the grant our District intends to implement Recommendation 1 by identifying other grants and means by which we may continue our work in this area.

**Recommendation 2:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District regularly reviews its emergency plans. Each school site has a written comprehensive safe school plan which is reviewed and updated no later than March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**Recommendation 3:**

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

The Orange Unified School District has implemented this recommendation by developing a comprehensive safe school plan at each of its schools and working with other appropriate government agencies in the area of emergency planning and preparation. The District maintains sufficient liability insurance with respect to emergency preparedness.

**Recommendation 4:**

**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.**

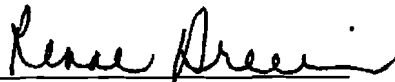
The Orange Unified School District has plans for such contingencies and is working on refining them as part of our ongoing emergency planning and preparation.

**Recommendation 5:**

**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.**

The Orange Unified School District maintains data on the threshold languages spoken by families in our district and intends to publish the above described information in those languages.

Respectfully submitted,



Renae Dreier, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Orange Unified School District