



Lowell Joint School District

A Tradition of Excellence Since 1906



"Home of Scholars and Champions"

July 20, 2023

Hon. Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Orange
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: SCHOOL SHOOTINGS: HOW PREPARED ARE OC PUBLIC SCHOOLS ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY 2022 - 2023

Dear Honorable Judge Hernandez:

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the 2022-2023 Grand Jury requires (or, as noted, requests) responses from the Lowell Joint School District (LJSD). They are enclosed, in bold, regarding the Findings (F1 - F12) and Recommendations (R1 - R13) based on the investigation titled School Shootings: How Prepared Are Orange County Public Schools?

F1: Law enforcement, first responders, and other stakeholders have demonstrated a strong interest in working cooperatively with Orange County public schools to mitigate the risk of an active shooter incident; establishment of MOUs between law enforcement and school districts would strengthen this cooperation. "A cohesive and supportive school environment is key to preventing school shootings." (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia-CVP)

LJSD disagrees with the finding partially, as the District cannot say definitively that an establishment of an MOU between schools and law enforcement would strengthen cooperation. The District has a strong and collaborative rapport with law enforcement currently.

F2: All Orange County public schools studied by the Grand Jury stated that they conducted or have scheduled drills within the current school year on emergency procedures addressing intruders on campus, but not all have done so specifically regarding armed assailants.

Superintendent of Schools: Jim Coombs

Board of Trustees: Melissa A. Salinas, Karen L. Shaw Anastasia M. Shackelford, Anthony Zegarra

LJSD disagrees with the finding as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's scheduled drills or emergency procedures regarding intruders/armed assailants.

F3: While all districts prioritize the safety of students and staff, the attention and resources devoted to active shooter preparedness and response vary from district to district.

LJSD agrees with the finding

F4: Safety and security plans for on-campus before and after-school programs are not adequately addressed by school districts.

LJSD disagrees with the finding as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's safety and security plans for on-campus before and after school programs.

F5: While many Orange County public schools have installed fences, cameras, and other methods to address the issue of active shooters on a campus, there are still opportunities for improvement.

LJSD agrees with the finding

F6: Not all schools utilize a system for monitoring campus visitors.

LJSD disagrees with the finding as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's systems for monitoring campus visitors.

F7: While there is an increased awareness of the benefits of mental health counseling, not all school districts have implemented these programs in all schools.

LJSD disagrees with the finding as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's mental health counseling programs.

F8: School Resource Officers (SROs) are a valuable asset for school safety, yet many cities/districts do not allocate sufficient funds to hire needed officers.

LJSD disagrees with the finding as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's, cities and county law enforcement funding allocation for SROs.

F9: Not all classrooms have window shades, tinted glass, or film to obstruct the interior view from the outside.

LJSD agrees with the finding



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F10: The camera surveillance systems utilized on many campuses require repairs, replacement, or additions.

LJSD disagrees with the finding as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's camera surveillance systems and their condition.

F11: Many schools do not have perimeter fencing completely enclosing their campus.

LJSD agrees with the finding

F12: A number of school districts have school site administrative offices that remain unlocked on a daily basis.

LJSD agrees with the finding

R1: Each Orange County school district should arrange for local law enforcement to do an annual safety inspection of each school. The written safety checklist should include an audit of the integrity of site boundaries and a review of safety plans and policies. This annual safety audit should commence with the 2023-24 school year by October 1, 2023, and annually thereafter. (F1, F10, F11)

LJSD disagrees with the recommendation, while LJSD agrees with collaboration with law enforcement in a review of a school site safety plans; however not all law enforcement agencies and school districts have staff who have expertise, competencies and specific training to provide an annual safety inspections of all sites especially in light of the timeline stated. The District currently works with local law enforcement regarding its safety plans and policies.

R2: All Orange County school districts should establish a threat identification and assessment system for all school sites to monitor social media, screen for messages of concern, and manage information received in coordination with local law enforcement using MOUs, if necessary, by July 1, 2024. (F1, F3)

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LJSD disagrees with the recommendation, while LJSD agrees with collaboration with law enforcement and the merit of social media monitoring, not all law enforcement agencies and school districts have staff who have expertise, competencies and specific training to provide this; especially in light of the timeline stated. The District cannot say definitively that an establishment of an MOU between schools and law enforcement would provide benefit. The District currently works with local law enforcement regarding coordination and threat assessment.

R3: Each Orange County school district, in conjunction with law enforcement, should develop and implement tabletop exercises to be conducted in district schools by December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter. (F2)

LJSD disagrees with the recommendation, while LJSD agrees with collaboration with law enforcement and the merit of training exercises not all law enforcement agencies and school districts have staff who have expertise, competencies and specific training to provide this; especially in light of the timeline stated.

R4: Each Orange County school district should work with local law enforcement to plan and conduct a district-wide active shooter drill by July 1, 2024, and at least every other year thereafter. (F2)

LJSD disagrees with the recommendation, while LJSD agrees with collaboration with law enforcement and the merit of training drills not all law enforcement agencies and school districts have staff who have expertise, competencies and specific training to provide this; especially in light of the timeline stated.

R5: All Orange County school districts should develop a casualty care training program for each school in their district, to be in place by the end of the first semester of the 2023-24 school year and provided annually thereafter. (F3)

LJSD disagrees with the recommendation, not all districts have staff who have expertise, competencies and specific training to incorporate this; especially in light of the timeline stated.

R6: Safety and security plans for on-campus before and after-school programs need to be addressed more thoroughly by school districts, by July 1, 2024. (F4)

LJSD disagrees with the recommendation as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's safety and security plans for on-campus before and after school programs. The District currently works with local law enforcement regarding safety and security plans at sites.



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R7: Each Orange County school district should obtain and incorporate perimeter camera systems in all district schools by July 1, 2024, or earlier if financially able to do so, and investigate the potential use of cameras that incorporate Artificial Intelligence to enhance threat detection and prevention. (F5, F10)

LJSD disagrees with the recommendation as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's camera surveillance systems and their condition. Given that Artificial Intelligence and its application or in its infancy the full ramifications of implementing or incorporating this have yet to be prudently explored; especially given the timeline stated. The District currently incorporates camera systems on site.

R8: All Orange County school districts should review entry procedures on all campuses with an eye toward the use of perimeter fencing, the use of single point entry, and the use of a buzzer and camera system for entry into the main/administrative offices. (F5, F12)

LJSD disagrees with the recommendation as the District is not aware of all Orange County public school's site layout and footprint regarding perimeter fencing and feasibility of single point entry or egress. The District currently incorporates entry procedures on site.

R9: Each Orange County school district should Identify and implement a parent and visitor management system for each school site within the school district. This is to include identified access points, badges, or a similar identification procedure to be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F6, F11, F12)

LJSD agrees with the partial recommendation that Districts should identify a parent and visitor management system for all sites. The District currently implements a parent and visitor management system on site.

R10: Each Orange County school district should implement training for all staff to identify threat-related behaviors and provide a procedure for reporting the behavior by the beginning of the 2024-25 school year. (F7)

LJSD agrees with the recommendation that Districts should provide a procedure for reporting threat-related behaviors.

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R11: All Orange County school districts should develop a plan to implement or enhance mental health counseling for all schools by December 31, 2024. (F7)

LJSD agrees with the recommendation that Districts should develop a plan to implement or enhance mental health counseling in schools.

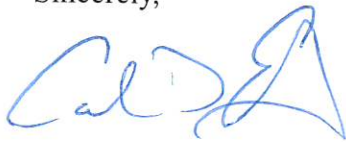
R12: Each Orange County School District should assess the need for SROs or additional SROs, reaching out to appropriate community partners to facilitate funding by July 1, 2024.(F8)

LJSD agrees with the recommendation that Districts should assess the need for SROs or additional SROs and any funding mechanisms to support this.

R13: All Orange County school districts should investigate and consider bullet resistant or tinted film covering for school windows by December 31, 2023. (F9)

LJSD agrees with the partial recommendation that Districts should consider the feasibility of bullet resistant or tinted film coverings for school windows.

Sincerely,



Carl D. Erickson

Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services