



**SUPERINTENDENT**

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**Board of Education**

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Dr. Jose Paolo Magcalas

Date: August 16, 2023

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

Re: Anaheim Elementary School District's Response to the 2022-23 Orange County Grand Jury Report on *The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County*

To The Orange County Grand Jury:

The Anaheim Elementary School District (District) commends the Grand Jury for its time and attention devoted to studying this very important issue and publishing the Grand Jury Report dated May 25, 2023 titled: *The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County* (Report). The District is committed to serving all students, and recognizes that there are unique challenges facing children and families experiencing homelessness and challenges for our District and our school personnel devoted to identifying and serving these students and families.

The District has thoroughly reviewed and considered the Findings and Recommendations in the Report. In accordance with California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury has requested that the District respond to Findings and Recommendations made in the Report. The District responds to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations with the following:

**Finding 1**

**Many children experiencing homelessness are not identified as such, and therefore do not receive the support and benefits authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act.**

The District partially disagrees with the finding. The District cannot verify that "many" children experiencing homelessness in Orange County are not identified as such and therefore do not receive McKinney-Vento services. As it relates to children experiencing homelessness in our District, we provide training to all staff, and have posters up at each school in order to "advertise" our Success for All program that supports students and families living in homelessness. We also work with many community organizations so that they know what supports are available.

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The District partially agrees with the finding. The District recognizes that not all children eligible for McKinney-Vento services are identified and receive such services. The District has processes and procedures to identify and serve McKinney-Vento students but recognizes that the District can always improve our process to identify and serve more McKinney-Vento students.

### **Finding 2**

**The lack of mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training of school site office staff, counselors, and teachers contributes to a failure to identify children experiencing homelessness.**

The District partially disagrees with the finding. Our District has put in place mandatory training for all school staff prior to the beginning of each school year using the training materials provided by OCDE.

The District partially agrees with the finding. Increased access to and focus on training of school staff will likely increase the identification of children experiencing homelessness.

### **Finding 3**

**There is disparity in the application of McKinney-Vento regulations across Orange County public school districts which results in unequal access to educational benefits for children experiencing homelessness.**

The District partially disagrees with the finding. The District does not have firsthand information regarding whether there is a disparity across all districts in Orange County leading to unequal access to educational benefits. Therefore, the District cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding. As it relates to the City of Anaheim, we come together monthly as a homeless education committee to discuss best practices, and problem solve situations as a collective.

### **Finding 4**

**The majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons are in full-time positions, but because their work includes multiple non-McKinney-Vento responsibilities, most do not have sufficient time to do the work required by the McKinney-Vento Act.**

The District partially disagrees with the finding. The District does not have firsthand information regarding the workload of McKinney-Vento Liaisons throughout the county and, therefore, cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding. As it relates to the District, the District disagrees with this finding because in our District the McKinney-Vento Liaison is a full-time position and her duties are all McKinney-Vento related.

### **Finding 5**

**Many McKinney-Vento Liaisons lack needed experience due to a high turnover rate in those positions.**

The District partially disagrees with the finding. The District does not have firsthand information regarding the experience and turnover rate for McKinney-Vento Liaisons throughout the county and,

therefore, cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding. As it relates to the District, the District disagrees with this finding because our McKinney-Vento Liaison has been in her position for more than 20 years.

#### **Finding 6**

**McKinney-Vento Act training is not mandatory for the majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons.**

The District partially disagrees with the finding. The District does not have firsthand information regarding whether or not districts across Orange County mandate McKinney-Vento training and, therefore, cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding. As it relates to the District, training is mandatory for our McKinney-Vento Liaison and is provided by OCDE and CDE.

#### **Finding 7**

**Students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in an elementary district often do not continue to receive McKinney-Vento benefits when they move to a high school district because the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents the sharing of this information between districts.**

The District partially disagrees with the finding. The District does not have firsthand knowledge regarding this finding across all districts in Orange County and, therefore, cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding. However, as it relates to our District, we get permission from parents to share with our high school feeder district.

#### **Finding 8**

**McKinney-Vento funds depend on school districts submitting grant proposals, but not all districts have employees trained in writing grant applications, resulting in missed funding opportunities.**

The District agrees with this finding.

#### **Finding 9**

**School districts that do not apply for grants which fund programs benefitting children experiencing homelessness miss potential revenue opportunities.**

The District agrees with this finding.

#### **Finding 10**

**McKinney-Vento is an unfunded federally mandated program; however, school districts which qualify and apply for Title I, Part A funds may obtain revenues that can be used for children experiencing homelessness. These funds are insufficient to meet the needs of the school districts supporting children experiencing homelessness.**

The District agrees with this finding.

### **Finding 11**

**A lack of reliable transportation for children experiencing homelessness often results in chronic tardiness and absenteeism.**

The District agrees with this finding.

### **Finding 12**

**Chronic Absenteeism Rates of Homeless Students are disproportionately high in comparison with the Chronic Absenteeism Rates of All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.**

The District agrees with this finding.

### **Finding 13**

**Children experiencing homelessness in Orange County perform at a lower level on standardized tests and have a lower graduation rate than All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.**

The District agrees with this finding.

### **Finding 14**

**The percent of Homeless Students graduating who failed to meet state standards on English Language Arts and Math tests is significantly higher than it is for All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.**

The District wholly disagrees with the finding. We cannot respond to this finding since we are a PK-6 elementary school district and do not serve graduating high school students.

### **Finding 15**

**There is a tendency by school districts to operate in isolation, which prevents productive collaboration on addressing the issue of children experiencing homelessness and the challenges of their education.**

The District wholly disagrees with the finding. As it relates to our interaction with other school districts in Anaheim, the District disagrees with this finding because we come together as a collaborative monthly to address children experiencing homelessness and the challenges they face.

### **Finding 16**

**A significant lack of affordable permanent housing contributes to many families being caught in the cycle of homelessness.**

The District agrees with this finding.

### **Recommendation 1**

**All Orange County school districts should develop a “Back to School” plan which includes mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training for all district and school administrators, teachers, office staff, and counselors by December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter. (F1, F2, F3)**

The recommendation has been implemented since August 1, 2023.

### **Recommendation 2**

**Participation in Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) McKinney-Vento Act training programs for all Local Education Agencies (LEA) McKinney-Vento Liaisons should be mandated by October 1, 2023, and annually thereafter. (F1, F3, F5, F6)**

The recommendation has been implemented. AESD’s McKinney-Vento Liaison participates in OCDE’s training program annually.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Given that most LEA McKinney-Vento Liaisons are responsible for a number of other duties, and do not have sufficient time to do their McKinney-Vento required work, school districts should identify ways to increase support and/or staff to address the numerous tasks of the Liaisons by October 1, 2023. (F4)**

The recommendation has been implemented. In AESD the McKinney-Vento Liaison is a full-time position and her duties are all McKinney-Vento related. She also has an assistant to provide additional support.

### **Recommendation 4**

**By January 1, 2024, for children experiencing homelessness to receive uninterrupted McKinney-Vento benefits, Orange County school districts should add a section to their mandatory enrollment school form enabling parents/guardians to give permission for their school to share information regarding their child’s McKinney-Vento status with other districts that their child may be attending. (F7)**

The recommendation has been implemented since August 1, 2023.

### **Recommendation 5**

**By October 1, 2023, each Orange County school district should develop and maintain a centralized list of district employees with grant application writing capability so that they are prepared to apply for available grants to assist in educating children experiencing homelessness. (F8, F9, F10)**

The recommendation has been implemented. AESD has staff with grant writing capabilities and access to grant writers and grant writing support from other agencies and community partners.

### Recommendation 6

**By October 1, 2023, a joint task force should be formed by the OCDE comprised of a district-level administrator from each Orange County school district and leadership from non-profit organizations who serve homeless families, to address absenteeism, low test scores and low graduation rates of children experiencing homelessness. (F.11, F.12, F13, F14, F15)**

The recommendation has been implemented. AESD will participate in the OCDE sponsored joint task force (AKA: Steering Committee) beginning September 2023.

### Recommendation 8

**By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to lower the Absenteeism Rates of homeless students. (F11, F12)**

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. A plan will be developed and presented to the School Board by May 1, 2024

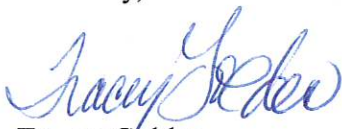
### Recommendation 9

**By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to improve the performance of homeless students in English Language Arts and Math. (F13, F14)**

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. A plan will be developed and presented to the School Board by May 1, 2024.

Please accept the information provided herein as the District's responses to the Orange County Grand Jury's Factual Findings and Recommendation in the Report. Once again, we appreciate the time and attention that the Grand Jury devoted to this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Tracey Golden  
Senior Director of School Safety and Operations  
Anaheim Elementary School District