



Irvine Unified School District

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September 1, 2004

Frederick P. Horn
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Sir:

While the Irvine Unified School District wishes to be cooperative with the Orange County Grand Jury and respond to its findings, the Irvine Unified School District believes that the Grand Jury lacks jurisdiction over the issues of truancy and obesity as indicated by the California Attorney General in a 1995 opinion. See, 78 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen 290 (1995).

Enclosed you will find the Irvine Unified School District's response to the Orange County Grand Jury's request.

Sincerely,

Leah Laule
Assistant Superintendent, Education Services

LL:mb
Enclosure

c: Orange County Grand Jury

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**GRAND JURY RESPONSE TO “CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT OBESITY:
MAKING THE ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOLS PART OF THE SOLUTION”
Submitted by IRVINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

FINDING 1. State Senate Bill 19, partly amended by the California Childhood Obesity Prevention Act, authorized school districts to establish a Child Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee to help coordinate functions and activities that address students’ obesity problems.

Recommendation 1. Each Orange County school district establish a Child Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee to help coordinate functions and activities that address students’ obesity problems.

Response

In February, 2004, Irvine Unified School District Superintendent, Dean Waldfogel, convened a meeting between the City of Irvine and the Irvine Unified School District to look at fitness and nutrition. The stated goals were for both entities to focus on support for students to become physically healthy individuals by adopting lifelong personal fitness practices, and by making good personal choices about nutrition. In addition, the recommendation was made to form a broad-based committee for the purpose of recommending best practices on fitness and nutrition at school and at home. Key areas for discussion include:

- *Physical Education and Fitness at School*
 - Assure elementary schools provide 200 minutes of Physical Education every 10 days.
 - Analyze fitness test results for grades 5, 7, and 9, and modify physical education instruction accordingly.
 - Arrange for each student to have frequent access to comparative data on their personal fitness levels.
 - Increase the opportunities for a range of fitness activities on each school campus and at city parks.
- *Physical Education and Fitness Outside of School*
 - Encourage and develop physical activities for school age children between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.
 - Coordinate efforts among elementary school childcare providers and community agencies to provide opportunities for children to engage in aerobic activities.
 - Encourage charting of daily exercise activities.
- *Nutrition at School*
 - Teach about nutrition and exercise, and the relationship between exercise and nutrition on fitness.
 - Encourage the modeling of good nutrition choices among school staff members.
 - Minimize the use of non-nutritional options in celebrations, as fund-raisers, or as rewards.
 - Follow state and federal guidelines in the preparation of lunches and snacks, as well as the foods and beverages that can be sold or provided on campus before, during, and after school.
- *Nutrition Outside of School*
 - Support parents in making healthy nutritional choices for their children, both at home and at school, and for school snacks and lunch.
 - Encourage the modeling of good nutrition choices among parents.
 - Provide access to lists of healthy snacks and beverages.

- *Communication*
 - Provide parent access to information about city-wide physical activities for youths.
 - Provide nutrition and fitness information to parents through websites and links to health information.
 - Encourage local health care providers to collaborate in the provision of information to families.

FINDING 2. All food and beverages prepared by school food services in Orange County schools, or supplied under contract by outside vendors and served on the school campuses, are regulated by federal and state requirements.

Recommendation 2. School districts in Orange County continue to ensure that food and beverages served on school campuses meet federal and state requirements.

Response

Irvine Unified School District schools will continue to meet and / or exceed all federal and state requirements. In addition to the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, schools will be encouraged to offer more nutritious selections in vending machines, in school stores, for fund-raisers, and for student rewards.

FINDING 3. A study in Poway has shown that the greatest improvement in the physical fitness of students occurred when the physical education program was supervised by a Physical Education Specialist.

Recommendation 3.

Orange County school districts appoint nutrition and physical education specialists who can train classroom teachers in the essentials of their specialities.

Response

In support of nutrition education, the district's school nurses, as health specialists, have assumed the role of nutrition / wellness educators at elementary and middle schools. A nutrition curriculum, specifically targeted at middle school student needs, was developed and piloted during the 2003-04 school year and is currently being revised. A nutrition and walking program was implemented at five elementary sites and received positive response and enthusiasm from both students and teachers alike. From the initial programs, changes will be made in the 2004-05 year, and the program will be introduced at several more interested schools.

During the past five years, the Irvine School District has cut personnel and programs amounting to more than 8 million dollars due to lack of adequate school funding. The financial shortfall has meant increases in class sizes in grades 4-12 as well. Insufficient funding at the local, state, or federal level has prevented IUSD from hiring specialists in physical education and nutrition to supplement classroom teachers and nurses. Nevertheless, the Irvine Unified School District has selected a Physical Education mentor teacher, paid for with categorical state funds, to work with elementary teachers to increase their understanding of techniques and strategies to improve the fitness levels of elementary students. Currently, we are in the process of finding a mentor teacher to support the training of middle and high school Physical Educators in the same way.

FINDING 5. Various government grants are available to the schools to help finance and improve the school's nutrition and physical education programs.

Recommendation 5. Orange County school districts apply for state and federal grants available for improving physical education and nutrition programs.

Response

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.

The Irvine Unified School District is planning to apply for appropriate state and / or federal grants to enhance physical education and nutrition programs. However, many current state and federal grant opportunities have limiting characteristics, including:

- a. Limited to schools with 50% or more low income students, which is not a characteristic of Irvine;
- b. Limited amounts, short time periods, with considerable matching and sustainability requirements;
- c. Limited numbers of grants awarded through a competitive process.

FINDING 6. Most school districts, faced with budgetary cuts and greater priority on higher academic standards, have gradually decreased their emphasis on physical education.

Recommendation 6. Orange County school districts make available their playgrounds and outdoor facilities before and after school hours for their students under the supervision of interested faculty members and parents.

Response

The Irvine Unified School District cooperates with the City of Irvine through a joint use agreement to make playgrounds and outdoor facilities available to City and community groups.

FINDING 7. Food items provided by the schools' food services are not labeled with their caloric values and nutritional composition; nor is such information posted in the food-serving area.

Recommendation 7. Orange County school districts ensure that food items sold on their campuses either be labeled with the caloric values and nutritional composition or that such information be posted in the food-serving areas.

Response

The Irvine Unified School District plans menus using nutrient analysis. Beginning in September, 2004, the nutrient summary will be included on the menus posted on the district's web site and will be printed on the menus distributed to schools for posting. At this time, approximately 80% of the 600 food items sold / served have a nutrition label. It is impractical and ineffective to label the rest (apple, orange, banana, dinner roll, spaghetti) and posting it on a wall somewhere in the serving area is an inefficient use of labor hours. Students and adults need to learn how to read nutrition labels before they will be useful.

FINDING 8. Body Mass Index is not fully utilized as an assessment tool by schools' nutrition and physical education programs, but is used as appropriate by school nurses for clinical purposes.

Recommendation 8. Orange County school districts incorporate instruction on the Body Mass Index into the nutrition and physical education programs and encourage students to share this information with their families.

Response

The school nurses utilize BMI in assessing student's health and wellness status and in providing education, referrals, and follow-up to appropriate students and their families. Body Mass Index has been utilized as a teaching tool in some of our middle and high school health and / or physical education classes, but has not been an established part of the curriculum.

A new health text was adopted and will be implemented in all middle schools in the 2004-05 school year. *Teen Health*, published by Glencoe, includes a chapter on food choices in which BMI is discussed in detail. Students will learn about healthy weight, BMI ranges, eating disorders, making healthy nutrition choices, and the importance of nutrition and physical activity. They will have the opportunity to calculate their BMI and understand what that means to them personally. This information will also cross over to the physical education class as they transfer learning from health to personal physical activity needs in developing the program that is right for them individually.

At the high school level, the district is evaluating methods of measuring body mass for students. This may occur in physical education or health classes. The options being investigated include calipers, body mass scales, or BMI math calculation. This assessment will become a part of the curriculum in the 2004-05 school year. The high school *Health* text by Glencoe also has extensive coverage of nutrition and weight management including calculation of the BMI and the relationship of that knowledge to making healthy choices for life.

All middle and high school teachers will be receiving training in this area in Fall, 2004.

The BMI will be used more in the coming years than it has been used previously as more educators become aware of its value in communicating critical information about body composition to students and their parents. For the first time this year, Irvine schools mailed home to parents of grade 5, 7, and 9 students, California fitness test results including individual BMI results. These results, as well as a good nutrition / fitness brochure, provided students and parents with individual student profiles to help them see and compare their fitness levels and BMI ranges. Future utilization of BMI will be expanded to the elementary, middle, and high school levels during fitness and nutrition lessons, and a link providing a BMI calculator will be on the IUSD website.