



# ORANGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Education Center

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*Serving the  
Communities of the  
Orange Unified School  
District for over Fifty Years  
— Unified July 1953 —*

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September 30, 2004

Grand Jury  
Attn: Able Barboza  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, 92701

Re: Responses to the Grand Jury Findings on Obesity

Dear Mr. Barboza,

The following are responses to the Orange County Grand Jury findings as discussed in the report Childhood and Adolescent Obesity: Making the Orange County Schools Part of the Solution (O.C. Grand Jury, 2004).

**1. Finding:** *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.*

**Response:** Beginning in school year 2002-03, the Orange Unified School District created the Nutrition Advisory Committee at the request of Board Member Kimberlee Nichols. The committee is comprised of parents, students, district administrators (including the Coordinator of Health Services, the Director of Nutrition Services, the Director of Athletics, and the Assistant Superintendent of Business) and school site personnel, such as cafeteria managers, athletic directors, and activity directors. The committee meets regularly to discuss current issues related to school food services, including food and beverages supplied in vending machines and outside sales. In its first year, the committee reviewed current literature related to the epidemic of childhood and adolescent obesity. Through the use of a survey tool developed and administered by a high school student representative, data was gathered which showed student reaction to proposed changes in food sales. The committee then developed specific recommendations, which were presented to the school board at the June 2003 school board meeting by the Director of Nutrition Services. These changes included prohibiting the sale of soda at the elementary and middle school level, in

accordance with state law, and limiting the carbonated beverage choices at the high school level. Vending machines would offer more water and sports-type drinks and far fewer carbonated beverage than in the past. The committee's recommendations were adopted and implemented.

The committee's next step will be to review all ala carte food and beverage sales at the high school level both from nutrition services as well as other entities. After this review, the committee will make recommendations to the Board of Education for the implementation of new Board policies. During the 2004-05 school year, the committee will also expand its efforts to include discussions about physical activity programs.

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

**Response:** Orange Unified School District complies with all Federal and State laws related to the sale of food and beverages on school campuses. In addition, the two- year-old Nutrition Advisory Committee reviews and makes recommendations to the Board of Education regarding ala carte sales at each school site.

**3. Finding:** *Orange County school districts appoint nutrition and physical education specialists who can train classroom teachers in the essentials of their specialties.*

**Response:** The Orange Unified School District employs state credentialed and certificated physical education instructors that work to meet or exceed the state's established curriculum and framework. The Coordinated Compliance Review just completed for the Orange Unified schools had no non-compliant issues dealing with physical education. The districts Director of Athletics works to establish a level of support for the Physical Education and Athletic Programs offered in Orange Unified. Physical Education classes are mapped and aligned at the high school and middle school levels and the minimum minutes and proficiencies are met at the elementary level.

**5. Finding:** *Various government grants are available to the schools to help finance and improve the schools' nutrition and physical education programs.*

**Response:** In October 2002, the Orange Unified School District was awarded a contract with the state Nutrition Network Program. This program distributes federal funds from the Department of Agriculture, which allows community agencies to provide nutrition and physical activity education to children and their families. Orange Unified has sponsored a myriad of activities promoting nutrition and physical education which include a yearly dental clinic and health fair, healthy cooking classes for parents, student breakfast clubs,


gardening instruction, and a walking campaign. Orange Unified was honored by the sponsors of the walking campaign, "Healthy Steps to Healthy Living", as having the highest number of participants in all of the school districts in Orange County. The Nutrition Network grant provides funding for additional staff, including a school nurse and a nutritionist. They work with teacher liaisons at each eligible school site to promote healthy eating and physical activity. They also work in collaboration with the Director of Nutrition Services to encourage participation in the school meal program for both breakfast and lunch.

**8. Finding:** *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.*

**Response:** The district school nurses include Body Mass Index (BMI) calculations in all routine health screenings for students. This year, 2004-05, the nurses plan to expand the use of this screening to all 5<sup>th</sup> grade students as part of the yearly physical fitness testing done in this grade level. Students and their families will receive notification of height, weight and BMI measurements. An explanation of the measurement and its implications will also be included. The district Nutrition Advisory Committee and the Nutrition Network staff will also be asked for input on ways to increase the use of BMI measurement, such as teaching students to calculate their own.

If you need additional information from our office, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Robert L. French, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

RLF/vw

c: Presiding Judge Fred Horn  
Superior court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, 92701

Board of Education