



"100 Years of Excellence"

CYPRESS SCHOOL DISTRICT

9470 Moody Street • Cypress, California 90630

(714) 220-6900 • Fax (714) 828-6652

www.cypsd.k12.ca.us

October 26, 2004

Board of Trustees

Donna Erickson
Ellen Friedmann
David H. Giese
Donna McDougall
Valeri Peters Wagner

Superintendent

William D. Eller, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent

Linda Snell
Human
Resources/Instruction

Chief Business Officer

Carrie Delgado

Directors

Robert Daley
Maintenance &
Operations/Transportation/
Technology Support

Troy Hunt, Ed.D.
Instruction/Student
Services

Lenette Brown
Food Services

Principals

M.J. Beatty
Mark Brown
Carol Erbe
Denine Kelly
Donna Layne
Jeannette Lohrman
Sungnie Park Okino, Ed.D.
Jane Ann Snyder
Stephen P. Teschke, Ed.D.

Juvenile Services Committee
Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive, West
Santa Ana, California 92701

Subject: **Response to Additional Grand Jury Inquiries Based on the 2003/04 Report "Combating Truancy in Orange County"**

To Whom It May Concern:

If the Grand Jury will refer to my letter dated July 14, 2004, the Cypress School District has already responded to issues identified at that time. However, in the spirit of the good work done by the Grand Jury, and in an effort to improve our practices related to truancy in Orange County, I would respectfully offer the following comments.

Response to Finding Item 14

At the time of the issuance of the Grand Jury report, it is my opinion that the SAR Boards were ineffective. Specifically, as a former Child Welfare and Attendance Officer, there was not adequate person power or the will to prosecute truants. Particularly with the current definition of the term truants, which would qualify elementary age students, due to excessive tardies, as truants. The District, using its Student Information System, under contract with the San Diego County Office of Education, has a system in place for the 2004/05 school year, which tracks student attendance. On a more positive note, Cypress School District now has a representative attending county SAR Board meetings and is pleased to see a representative from the district attorney's office in attendance, providing assistance to participating districts for students who have been identified as chronic truants.

Response to Recommendation Item 11

As mentioned previously, for the 2004/05 school year, the District will utilize a feature offered to its clients by the San Diego County Office of Education Student Information System (SIS). Students will be tracked at their individual school sites and, when multiple tardies or unexcused absences are noted by the system, a letter will be sent to parents/guardians identifying their student as having attendance issues. It will be noted that truant behavior will be referred to a Student Study Team (SST) requiring parent participation in the development of strategies to remediate attendance behaviors. At the

**Response to Additional Grand Jury Inquiries Based on the 2003/04 Report
"Combating Truancy in Orange County"**

Page Two

October 26, 2004

elementary level, it is most often the lack of parent support for student attendance at school, not the lack of student will to attend, that is the problem. "Habitual truants" will be referred to District office for the potential convening of a local SAR Board to deal with truant behavior.

Response to Recommendation Item 14

The District is aware of Education Code 48323, which states, "Each of the departments or agencies authorized to participate in school attendance review boards may assign personnel to represent the department or agency on a continuing basis in accordance with the intent of this article. The duties, obligations, or responsibilities which may be imposed on local governmental entities by this act are such that the related costs are incurred as a part of their normal operating procedures. The minor costs of such services may be borne by each agency or department and each or all of the participants may apply for and utilize state or federal funds as may be available." As stated in our letter of July 14, 2004, school districts in Orange County and throughout the state have received no mandated cost reimbursement for either the 2003/04 school year or projected for the 2004/05 school year. The District, in 2003/04, had an estimated mandated reimbursement cost claim of \$183,000. Until mandated cost reimbursements are fully funded, there are no available district general funds to support personnel attendance at SAR Board meetings. Unfunded mandates, in essence, become a "general fund encroachment" and the state has issued an IOU to districts submitting mandated cost claims, with the prospect that the IOU will never be paid.

Response to Recommendation Item 20

In an effort to increase awareness among parents of the importance of regular attendance, the District's web site has been improved and includes information related to Board Policy and Administrative Procedures on student attendance.

If you have additional specific questions, please don't hesitate to contact me directly, 714-220-6910.

Respectfully submitted,



William D. Eller, Ed.D.
Superintendent

WDE:jb

cc: Board of Trustees