



Los Alamitos Unified School District

10293 Bloomfield Street • Los Alamitos, California 90720-2200

(562) 799-4700 • Fax (562) 799-4711

*Carol A. Hart
Superintendent*

October 20, 2004

B. Lewis Avera, Jr., Foreman
2004-05 Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Mr. Avera:

On behalf of the Los Alamitos Unified School District, I wish to respond to the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury report, "Combating Truancy in Orange County."

Finding #7: Los Alamitos Unified School District does not explicitly encourage good attendance, and the district's expectation of good attendance is not directly communicated to the district's students.

Response: Since August 2003, Los Alamitos Unified School District at the beginning of each school year has sent a letter – signed by the Superintendent and President of the Board of Education – to every student and family promoting daily student attendance. The letter discusses the academic value of daily attendance and the effect of daily attendance on District finances. A copy of this year's letter is enclosed. Additionally, student handbooks and principals' newsletters discuss attendance policies, codes of conduct, programs that promote good attendance, and sanctions for poor attendance.

Finding #8, Regarding representation on the Orange County Department of Education School
Finding #15 Attendance Review Board (OC SAR Board).

Response: Los Alamitos Unified School District will have a representative on the Orange County SAR Board effective with the 2004-05 school year. We will pursue reimbursement of costs pursuant to Education Code 48323.

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Finding #19 Periodic training of school administrators in preparing SARB-referral documentation packages would be beneficial.

Response: The Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services meets formally with school principals on an annual to discuss the procedures to follow regarding the Student Attendance Review Board. The Assistant Superintendent will meet informally with the school principal on a case-by-case basis, as needed.

Recommendation #14: All Orange County school districts become aware of the opportunity for reimbursement through State or federal funding, afforded by *California Education Code §48323*, for participating on the County SAR Board.

Response: Los Alamitos Unified School District will pursue reimbursement of costs pursuant to Education Code 48323.

Thank you for the work of the 2003-04 Grand Jury in the area of combating truancy in Orange County, and for the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's findings.

Sincerely,

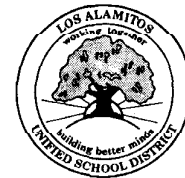


Carol A. Hart
Superintendent

CAH:ds
Enclosure

Los Alamitos Unified School District

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September 2004

Carol A. Hart
Superintendent

Dear Parents/Guardians,

On behalf of the Los Alamitos Unified School District, we are asking for your assistance in supporting daily student attendance. In our pursuit of academic excellence and with the reduction in state funding, we are seeking your help—as partners in education—in a campaign to generate greater daily student attendance for improved academic performance and for increased funding of schools.

THE ACADEMIC VALUE OF ATTENDANCE:

- With academic standards and high stakes testing, students need valuable classroom instruction.
- Students gain direct instruction from the teacher and can ask questions to ensure understanding.
- Students engage in interactive learning and first-hand learning experiences.
- Students and teachers are not burdened with added make-up or alternative work assignments.
- Regular attendance and punctuality teach work habits valued in school and in the workplace.

HOW DAILY ATTENDANCE AFFECTS SCHOOL FUNDING:

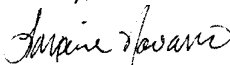
- Eighty percent (80%) of school budgets comes from Average Daily Attendance (ADA) – actual attendance, not enrollment.
- Schools receive state funds for each day that students are in attendance.
- **Schools do not receive funds when a student is ill or is out for full-day doctor appointments, on a religious holiday, or for any other reason—there is no funding for “excused absences.”**
- **Every absence is a loss of approximately \$40 per day per student.**
- LAUSD lost approximately \$1.5 million in state funding in 2003-04 due to student absences.
- Funds from ADA are used for textbooks, instructional materials, personnel, utilities, and other direct classroom expenses.

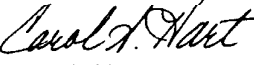
HOW PARENTS/GUARDIANS CAN HELP:

- **Students should not come to school sick, but we do stress that students come to school every day possible.**
- **Avoid scheduling absences for vacations, outings, family time, or full-day medical appointments during school hours. Students miss valuable classroom instruction and experiences that cannot be substituted.**
- **Should a family choose for a student to be absent for reasons other than illness, or should a student be truant, parents/guardians are encouraged to support the schools, if at all possible, by sending a check to LAUSD for \$40.00 per day of absence.**

Parents/Guardians have always been tremendous supporters of our schools. In these difficult days of budget cuts, the school community has given a financial boost to schools through fund-raising efforts. One of the most effective ways to positively impact academic performance and school funding is by promoting daily student attendance. Let us work together in making daily attendance at school a top priority so that students gain valuable classroom instruction and schools receive needed financial support. Most importantly, all students benefit from daily school attendance.

Sincerely,


Lorraine Navarro
President, Board of Education


Carol A. Hart
Superintendent

Board of Education: Marilyn Bates • Megan Cutuli • Lorraine Navarro • Virginia F. Wilson