



## Santa Ana Unified School District

PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICES

Al Mijares, Ph.D., Superintendent

October 22, 2004

The Honorable Frederick P. Horn  
Presiding Judge, Orange County Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Response to 2003-2004 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Combating  
Truancy in Orange County."

Dear Judge Horn:

Pursuant to Penal Code 933 and 933.5, the Santa Ana Unified School District  
Superintendent and Board of Education hereby present the attached response to  
each of the findings and recommendations of the 2003-2004 Orange County  
Grand Jury Report, "Combating Truancy in Orange County."

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me at  
(714) 558-5724.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lewis Bratcher".

Lewis Bratcher, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent, SAUSD

SB:cvl

Attachment

Response to 2003-2004 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Combating  
Truancy in Orange County"

1601 East Chestnut Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92701-6322 (714) 558-5501

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Response to the Grand Jury report, "Combating Truancy in Orange County"

Finding #1

The SAUSD Web Site provides an inadequate treatment of attendance matters and lack explicit expectations for students' attendance.

***The District agrees in part with this finding.***

The Santa Ana Unified School District (hereinafter "SAUSD" or "the District") partially agrees with the Grand Jury finding regarding the district's website information on attendance. SAUSD is in the process of updating and enhancing our web page, which will certainly include specific and detailed attendance expectations.

Finding #8

Membership on the County SAR Board is open to all County school districts.

***This finding is not applicable to SAUSD.***

Santa Ana Unified School District is part of the Orange County Department of Education SAR Board and will continue to participate.

Finding #10

The percentage of habitual truants referred to a SAR Board is unacceptably low.

***SAUSD does not completely agree with this finding.***

The Santa Ana Unified School District has implemented a prevention process which greatly reduces the number of students referred to SAR Board. This is possible through the Notice of Truancy and the Habitual Truancy Letters sent to parents plus the District Attorney's meetings, with the parent and student, which are held every two weeks. .

Finding #15

School districts that limits or curtail their participation on the County SAR Board because of budgetary constraints may not be aware of the opportunity for reimbursement, through State Education Code 48323.

***The District does not agree with this finding.***

Santa Ana Unified School District has and continues to fully participate on the County SAR Board and is aware of the reimbursements afforded by Education Code § 48323.

Response to the Grand Jury report, "Combating Truancy in Orange County"

Finding #19

Periodic training of school administrators in preparing SARB –referral documentation packages would be beneficial.

***The District already complies with this finding.***

Santa Ana Unified School District provides annual and individual training for school administrators in preparing SARB referral documentation.

Finding #20

Santa Ana Unified School District's statement that periodic training of school administrators in preparing SARB-referral documentation packages is not necessary because clerical personnel do the work appears to underestimate the important and critical role that the school administrators play in the SARB process.

***SAUSD does not agree with the finding.***

This finding appears to be based on one person's comment who at the time was assigned to the Pupil Support Services Department as an Interim Administrator. The clerical staff is not responsible for compiling the SARB referral documentation. It is the site administrator's responsibility to gather the referral information as well as present it to the SAR Board. Santa Ana Unified School District administrators have and will continue to be trained annually and or on an individual basis in the preparation of SARB referral documentation.

Response to the Grand Jury report, "Combating Truancy in Orange County"

Recommendation #1

**The school district improves their respective Web sites with an enhanced treatment of attendance matters that includes explicit expectations for students' attendance.**

The Santa Ana Unified School District is in the process of updating our attendance web page. By February 2005, we will provide explicit comprehensive expectations for student's attendance.

Recommendation #9

**SAUSD formulate a corrective-action plan to improve its percentage of habitual truants referred to SAR Board**

SAUSD has implemented a prevention process which includes the Notice of Truancy and the Habitual Truancy letters mailed to parents. In addition, the District Attorney's meeting in which the parents and the student presence is required has assisted in students and parents acknowledging their responsibility. This process assists in the decreased number of referrals to SAR Board. Our action plan will result in involving the referring schools and the District Attendance Field Workers in the follow-up of the District Attorney meetings starting in November of 2004.

Recommendation #14

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

Santa Ana Unified School District is aware of the opportunity for reimbursement from the State funding and has been submitting for mandated reimbursement for several years.

Recommendation #19

**SAUSD ensure that school administrators are properly trained to prepare SARB-referral documentation.**

Santa Ana Unified School District administrators are currently and will continue to be trained annually and/or on an individual basis as needed or requested in the preparation of SARB referral documentation. We will continue to request that the Orange County Probation Department, District Attorney, Orange County Department of Education Coordinator of Student Services and SAUSD District Senior Director of Pupil Support Services provide periodic training of school administrators in preparing SARB-referral documentation packages.