



August 23, 2023

The Honorable Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge
Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: Fountain Valley School District's Response to the 2022-23 Orange County Grand Jury Report on The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County

To the Honorable Maria D. Hernandez:

The Fountain Valley School District commends the Grand Jury for its time and attention devoted to studying this very important issue and publishing the Grand Jury Report dated May 25, 2023 entitled: The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County (Report). Fountain Valley School District is committed to serving all students, and recognizes that there are unique challenges facing children and families experiencing homelessness and challenges for the Fountain Valley School District and our school personnel devoted to identifying and serving these students and families. Fountain Valley School District has thoroughly reviewed and considered the Findings and Recommendations in the Report. In accordance with California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury has requested that the Fountain Valley School District respond to Findings and Recommendations made in the Report. FVSD responds to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations with the following:

Finding 1

Many children experiencing homelessness are not identified as such, and therefore, do not receive the support and benefits authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act.

Fountain Valley School District agrees with the finding.

Finding 2

The lack of mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training of school site office staff, counselors, and teachers contributes to a failure to identify children experiencing homelessness.

Fountain Valley School District partially disagrees that a lack of “mandatory” training necessarily contributes to a failure to identify children experiencing homelessness for the following reason: Many families do not identify, or see themselves as “homeless.” However, the District partially agrees with the finding for the following reasons: An increased access to and focus on training of school staff will likely increase the identification of children experiencing homelessness.

Finding 3

There is disparity in the application of McKinney-Vento regulations across Orange County public school districts which results in unequal access to educational benefits for children experiencing homelessness.

Fountain Valley School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 4

The majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons are in full-time positions, but because their work includes multiple non-McKinney-Vento responsibilities, most do not have sufficient time to do the work required by the McKinney-Vento Act.

Fountain Valley School District does not have firsthand information regarding the workload of McKinney-Vento Liaisons throughout the county and, therefore, cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding. As it relates to Fountain Valley School District, FVSD disagrees with this finding for the following reason: The size of our district, 10 school sites, allows the liaison to work and train our schools.

Finding 5

Many McKinney-Vento Liaisons lack needed experience due to a high turnover rate in those positions.

Fountain Valley School District does not have firsthand information regarding the experience and turnover rate for McKinney-Vento Liaisons throughout the county and, therefore, cannot wholly agree or disagree with this finding. As it relates to FVSD, the District disagrees with this finding for the following reasons: We recently divided the duties of Support Services and now have one director for Special Education and one for Student Services allowing for a larger focus on homeless students and the training of our staff.

Finding 6

McKinney-Vento Act training is not mandatory for the majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons.

Fountain Valley School District partially disagrees with the finding. Fountain Valley School District does not have firsthand information regarding whether or not districts across Orange County mandate McKinney-Vento training and, therefore, cannot agree or disagree with this finding. As it relates to the

Fountain Valley School District, the District partially agrees with this finding for the following reasons: Liaisons are trained at OCDE and provide training and support for our 10 school sites.

Finding 7

Students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in an elementary district often do not continue to receive McKinney-Vento benefits when they move to a high school district because the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents the sharing of this information between districts.

Fountain Valley School District partially disagrees with the finding. FVSD does not have firsthand knowledge regarding this finding across all districts in Orange County. However, as an elementary district, FVSD partially disagrees with this finding for the following reasons: Parents have the opportunity to notify our high schools of their living status when they register.

Finding 8

McKinney-Vento funds depend on school districts submitting grant proposals, but not all districts have employees trained in writing grant applications, resulting in missed funding opportunities.

Fountain Valley School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 9

School districts that do not apply for grants which fund programs benefitting children experiencing homelessness miss potential revenue opportunities.

Fountain Valley School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 10

McKinney-Vento is an unfunded federally mandated program; however, school districts which qualify and apply for Title I, Part A funds may obtain revenues that can be used for children experiencing homelessness. These funds are insufficient to meet the needs of the school districts supporting children experiencing homelessness.

Fountain Valley School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 11

A lack of reliable transportation for children experiencing homelessness often results in chronic tardiness and absenteeism.

Fountain Valley School District partially disagrees with this finding for the following reasons: When meeting with families, it is not only transportation that causes chronic tardiness and absenteeism. Many factors contribute including parental work schedules.

Finding 12

Chronic Absenteeism Rates of Homeless Students are disproportionately high in comparison with the Chronic Absenteeism Rates of All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.

Fountain Valley School District agrees with this finding.

Finding 13

Children experiencing homelessness in Orange County perform at a lower level on standardized tests and have a lower graduation rate than All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.

Fountain Valley School District is a TK-8 School District that does not collect graduation rates.

Finding 14

The percent of Homeless Students graduating who failed to meet state standards on English Language Arts and Math tests is significantly higher than it is for All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.

Fountain Valley School District partially agrees with this finding for the following reasons:

2021-22 SBAC %	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Percent of Students Met/Exceeded Standard
ELA - All Stu	10%	15%	31%	44%	75%
ELA - SED	16%	22%	29%	33%	62%
ELA - Homeless	25%	25%	38%	13%	50%
Math - All Stu	11%	18%	27%	44%	71%
Math - SED	18%	23%	27%	32%	59%
Math - Homeless	25%	38%	25%	13%	38%

2022-23 SBAC %	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Percent of Students Met/Exceeded Standard
ELA - All Stu	10%	14%	31%	45%	76%
ELA - SED	15%	19%	32%	33%	65%
ELA - Homeless		33%	67%		67%
Math - All Stu	10%	17%	25%	48%	73%
Math - SED	15%	22%	27%	36%	63%
Math - Homeless	33%		33%	33%	67%

Finding 15

There is a tendency by school districts to operate in isolation, which prevents productive collaboration on addressing the issue of children experiencing homelessness and the challenges of their education.

Fountain Valley School District wholly disagrees with the finding. As it relates to our interaction with other school districts, Fountain Valley School District wholly disagrees with this finding for the

following reasons: We have consistent, planned meetings where districts collaborate and hear from County personnel as to how we can best serve our homeless population.

Finding 16

A significant lack of affordable permanent housing contributes to many families being caught in the cycle of homelessness.

Fountain Valley School District agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 1

All Orange County school districts should develop a “Back to School” plan which includes mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training for all district and school administrators, teachers, office staff, and counselors by December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter. (F1, F2, F3)

Fountain Valley School District partially implemented this recommendation. We held a training for office managers and office assistants. A Principal/Staff training was also added to our school calendar.

Recommendation 2

Participation in Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) McKinney-Vento Act training programs for all Local Education Agencies (LEA) McKinney-Vento Liaisons should be mandated by October 1, 2023, and annually thereafter. (F1, F3, F5, F6)

Fountain Valley School District has implemented this recommendation as follows: The FVSD Liaison has registered for all future meetings at OCDE.

Recommendation 3

Given that most LEA McKinney-Vento Liaisons are responsible for a number of other duties, and do not have sufficient time to do their McKinney-Vento required work, school districts should identify ways to increase support and/or staff to address the numerous tasks of the Liaisons by October 1, 2023. (F4)

The recommendation has been implemented. Fountain Valley School District has implemented this recommendation as follows: allowing time to attend county meetings as well as meet with school sites for added support.

Recommendation 4

By January 1, 2024, for children experiencing homelessness to receive

uninterrupted McKinney-Vento benefits, Orange County school districts should add a section to their mandatory enrollment school form enabling parents/guardians to give permission for their school to share information regarding their child's McKinney-Vento status with other districts that their child may be attending. (F7)

The recommendation has been implemented. Fountain Valley School District has implemented this recommendation as follows: Housing status is included with our online registration/Parent Portal. Office staff follows up with families.

Recommendation 5

By October 1, 2023, each Orange County school district should develop and maintain a centralized list of district employees with grant application writing capability so that they are prepared to apply for available grants to assist in educating children experiencing homelessness. (F8, F9, F10)

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Fountain Valley School District has not yet implemented this recommendation but will implement this recommendation by October 1, 2023 with the following action plan: Seek grant writers through staff and community members to assist in funding our homeless youth.

Recommendation 6

By October 1, 2023, a joint task force should be formed by the OCDE comprised of a district-level administrator from each Orange County school district and leadership from non-profit organizations who serve homeless families, to address absenteeism, low test scores and low graduation rates of children experiencing homelessness. (F.11, F.12, F13, F14, F15)

The recommendation has been implemented. Fountain Valley School District has implemented this recommendation as follows: Attend all CWA meetings at the county level both in person and via Zoom.

Recommendation 8

By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to lower the Absenteeism Rates of homeless students. (F11, F12)

Fountain Valley School District has not yet implemented this recommendation but will implement this recommendation by April, 2024 with the following action plan: gather data and absenteeism rates to share with the board as well as supports that are in place with administrators, staff, counselors, and guidance technicians.

Recommendation 9

By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to improve the performance of homeless students in English Language Arts and Math.

(F13, F14)

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
Example: Fountain Valley School District has not yet implemented this recommendation but will implement this recommendation by April, 2024 with the following action plan: gather data and assessment scores to share with the board as well as supports that are in place with administrators, staff, counselors, and guidance technicians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Di C. Bains". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Director, Student Services & Safety