



New Hope School District
"Excellence in Education for Children"

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August 9, 2023

Honorable Judge Michael D. Coughlan
Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court
180 E. Weber Avenue, Suite 1306J
Stockton, CA 95202

RE: Grand Jury Report: "School Safety: A Shared Responsibility": Case No. 0322

Dear Judge Coughlan:

The New Hope Elementary School District ("District") has reviewed the Facts, Findings and Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report "*School Safety: A Shared Responsibility*" filed on June 13, 2023. Pursuant to California Penal Code section 933(c), the following constitutes the response of the District and its Governing Board ("Board") to the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the District.

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS 2.0: COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

F2.1. A review of CSSPs demonstrated many districts have failed to create a CSSP that addresses safety issues unique to the individual school sites, and rather use a template and/or boilerplate language, leaving the school site unprepared in an emergency.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. At New Hope we are a single site district and we have written our CSSP based on law and recommended actions from various agencies.

F2.2. Many districts have not involved teachers, support staff, students, and parents/guardians when updating each school site's CSSP, missing an opportunity to create a culture of school safety.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We solicit and collect information from our stakeholders through surveys and various community and staff meetings.

F2.3. Many districts have not collaborated with local law enforcement and other first responders during the annual process to update the CSSP, which could result in a prolonged and inefficient emergency response.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. The District did collaborate with local law enforcement and first responders.

F2.4. Many district CSSPs show a lack of meaningful collaboration between districts and local law enforcement agencies, causing confusion and chaos during an emergency.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. This district had met with and had meaningful conversations with law enforcement and first responders in which their advice was added to our CSSP.

F2.5. Many districts do not offer an opportunity for public input during the drafting or approval stages of the annual CSSP, which renders the Districts out of compliance with State law.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. This district has shared the CSSP with the public during regular meetings throughout the year soliciting feedback.

F2.6. Most districts do not include an assessment of the status of crime at the school and school related functions in their CSSPs, which renders the Districts out of compliance with State law and causes potential harm and liability.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The CSSP Committee meets regularly to assess campus safety and any crime that may relate to the CSSP as well as school suspensions and expulsion data, campus policies and procedures and site safety concerns including facility conditions.

F2.7. Many districts do not adequately address the unique needs of students with disabilities during emergencies. The lack of planning for the most vulnerable students can cause harm during a time of confusion and crisis.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. The District considered and supported students with disabilities while writing the CSSP.

F2.8. A few districts do not make any part of the CSSPs available to the public, withholding important information about steps taken by the District to reduce the probability and impact of safety risks. Other districts post the CSSPs in their entirety, failing to keep confidential information about tactical responses, potentially revealing sensitive information to the public.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. The District's CSSP is posted on our webpage. The District Confidential CSSP is only available to staff, local law enforcement, and emergency services.

F2.9. Many districts have CSSPs that fail to identify incident command roles and the individuals who are to perform those roles in case of an emergency, exposing students and staff to the potential for confusion and increased risks during an emergency.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. The District has identified incident command roles and responsibilities.

F2.10. Many districts have CSSPs that fail to describe the system to reunite parents/guardians with their children in the event of a campus wide evacuation, creating confusion and additional anxiety in the event of a safety emergency.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The district disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. We do have systems in place to communicate with parents/guardians as well as an outline explaining the reunification process.

F2.11. Many schoolsite CSSPs do not account for specific dangers unique to the school site (e.g., train tracks, flooding, freeways).

Response: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. We do have systems in place to communicate with parents/guardians as well as an outline explaining the reunification process

Explanation: The District disagrees partially with this finding. We do not have information to speak about other districts. The District's CSSP does outline a plethora of specific dangers that could occur specific to our community.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS 2.0: COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

R2.1. By March 1, 2024, the annual updates for each school site's CSSP address safety issues unique to the site.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

R2.2 By December 15, 2023, while updating the school's CSSP, each school site collaborate and receive input from representatives of teachers, support staff, students, and parents/guardians.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The district will collaborate with all stakeholders by the required Board approval date.

R2.3. By December 15, 2023, while updating the school's CSSP, each school site collaborates and receives input from the appropriate emergency response agencies.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The District will collaborate with all stakeholders by the required Board approval date.

R2.5. By February 1, 2024, each school site council or safety planning committee hold an advertised public meeting at the school site to allow members of the community an opportunity to express an opinion about the school's proposed CSSP as required by California Education Code Sections 32288(b)(1) and (2).

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

Explanation: The District will implement the recommendation by the stated deadline.

R2.6. By March 1, 2024, each school site's CSSP includes the State mandated assessment of the status of crime at the school and school-related functions.

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

Explanation: The District will continue to assess all crime and safety as it pertains to the CSSP and update the CSSP accordingly in which it will be submitted for board approval to meet the states deadline.

R2.7. By March 1, 2024, each school site will consult with the appropriate professionals to address the unique needs of students with disabilities when updating the CSSP.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The District will implement the recommendation by the stated deadline. The District will meet with stakeholders who are responsible for students with special needs and adapt accordingly.

R2.8. By March 1, 2024, each school site's CSSP be available to the public with the exception of confidential information about tactical responses.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The District will continue to comply with this deadline.

R2.9 By March 1, 2024, each school site's CSSP identify the incident command roles and the individuals who are to perform those roles and their alternate in cases of an emergency.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The District will continue the practice of identifying all roles relevant to the CSSP.

R2.10 By March 1, 2024, each school site's CSSP describe the system to reunify parents/guardians with their student in the event of a campus-wide evacuation, including how parents/guardians are informed of reunification details.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The District will continue to communicate with its stakeholders the process of reunification when pertinent.

R2.11 By March 1, 2024, each school site's CSSPs account for dangers unique to the specific school site (e.g., train tracks, flooding, freeways).

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The District will continue to account for dangers specific to our school.

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS 3.0: TRAINING

F3.2 Some of the Districts failed to send representatives to the 2022 School Safety Summit, thereby missing an opportunity to work together to make schools safer.

Response: The District agrees with this finding. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

F3.3 The Grand Jury learned through interviews, surveys, and site tours that many districts fail to include safety topics during regular meetings with teachers and support staff throughout the school year, minimizing the importance of safety.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: This district will have safety topics recurring on the agenda for staff meetings.

F3.4 The Grand Jury learned through interviews, surveys, and site tours that many school sites fail to assure substitute staff receive the information they will need in the case of a school safety emergency, leaving the substitute staff ill-prepared for an emergency

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: The District has, and will continue to, provide safety information to substitute employees

F3.5 Many districts fail to include the utilization of communication and incident command protocols (ICS-100) during safety drills throughout the school year, causing miscommunication in an emergency.

The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: The District will continue to utilize the incident command protocols.

F3.6 Many district cabinet-level positions (e.g., Superintendent, Chief Business Officer) are not trained in ICS protocols (ICS-402), causing a lack of unified response to districtwide emergencies

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: Although the District Superintendent/Principal is not trained in ICS protocols (ICS-402), this does not cause a lack of a unified response to districtwide emergencies because there is only one cabinet-level position in the District and only one school site.

- F3.7 Many school sites do not vary the time of day when routine safety drills are conducted or when students are not in classrooms, making drills predictable and leaving students unprepared for emergencies that may occur at any time.**

The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District varies the time and day of drills.

- F3.8 Many school sites fail to include support staff (classified personnel) in probable real-life roles during safety drills, leaving them unprepared to assist students in emergencies.**

The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District includes classified staff in safety drills.

- F.3.9 Most school sites fail to conduct a post-incident report after drills analyzing what went well, what went wrong, and what needs to be changed in the future to improve plans and drills, undermining the effectiveness of drills.**

The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District conducts a post-incident report after safety drills.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS 3.0: TRAINING

- R3.2 By December 1, 2023, each school district will send one or more representatives to the annual School Safety Summit hosted by the San Joaquin County Office of Education.**

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

Explanation: The district will send one or more participants to the School Safety Summit for the 2023-2024 school year.

R3.3 By September 1, 2023, safety topics be an agenda item at all school site staff meetings with teachers and support staff throughout the school year.

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(4).)

Explanation: Safety topics will be recurring on staff meeting agendas to support all staff members.

R3.4 By September 1, 2023, districts develop, adopt, and implement written procedures for school sites to provide substitute staff with the information they will need in case of a school emergency.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

R3.5 By October 1, 2023, personnel identified in the school CSSP for incident command roles be trained and certified in ICS-100 protocols.

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

R3.6 By October 1, 2023, ICS-402 training be completed for all district-level executive leadership.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(3).)

Explanation: We have been unsuccessful in locating and scheduling training to be completed October 1, 2023. The District's trainings are traditionally coordinated and scheduled through our liability insurer, but we have been informed by our insurer that Level 400 ICS trainings are not being offered anywhere right now, so the District will work on locating and securing ICS-402 training by December 13, 2023.

R3.7 By October 1, 2023, scheduled safety drills be conducted on different days throughout the school year and at various times throughout the school day, including when students are not normally in their classrooms.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: All drills will be scheduled by October 1, 2023.

R3.8 By October 1, 2023, scheduled safety drills include support staff (classified) in probable emergency roles during the year and document their participation.

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

Explanation: All District staff will participate in these drills.

R3.9 By October 1, 2023, administrators create a post-incident report after all safety drills.

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS 4.0: SCHOOL SITE VISITS

F4.1 Not all school sites have check-in procedures in place that were followed consistently, posing serious security threats.

Response: The District disagrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: All guests have to be let in the doors through a buzzer system and they have to sign in and sign out.

F4.2 Perimeter fencing or an “open” campus each pose security challenges and require careful consideration to mitigate security shortcomings.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: The District maintains a perimeter fence.

F4.3 Evacuation maps that are posted inconsistently or do not adequately illustrate evacuation routes cause confusion and prolonged evacuation times, making staff and students vulnerable to harm in both classrooms and common areas.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: We have evacuation maps in all classrooms but not all common areas. They will be posted in common areas with “You Are Here” indicators included.

F4.4 Inconsistent door-locking policies and failure to follow policies create opportunities for perpetrators to enter classrooms and common areas.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(2).)

Explanation: The District locks doors as appropriate based on the educational and safety needs of the teachers and students.

F4.5 Most school sites utilized flip charts that identify steps to be taken in case of emergencies, however, none of the sites posted them in all rooms used by students, staff, parents/guardians, and the general public.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: Binders/charts are in all classrooms used by students, not necessarily all buildings.

F4.6 Insufficient window coverings give perpetrators a clear line of sight, creating risk for students and staff.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: We balance out the use of window coverings. We have blinds that are sometimes closed as well as magnets that cover the door windows. Having a dark classroom with no natural light is not always best for students.

F4.7 Most school sites, regardless of age, were well maintained and showed school pride. One school site demonstrated multiple maintenance shortcomings, which can negatively impact safety.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: The District will continue to maintain its campus.

F4.8 Good relationships among administrators, certificated and classified staff, parents, and students are vital to promptly identify and address areas of concern, particularly regarding student behavior. Relationships varied greatly from campus to campus.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: Relationships are the cornerstone of our success in our district.

F4.9 The culture of safety is best developed by public transparency and involvement by all parties. Few of the school sites visited by the Grand Jury demonstrated meaningful public engagement in safety planning.

Response: The District agrees with this finding as it applies to the District. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(a)(1).)

Explanation: Our District can always improve in public transparency, we will continue to involve our stakeholders accordingly.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS 4.0: SCHOOL SITE VISITS

- R4.1 By October 1, 2023, each school site implements an access control program that consistently includes verifying visitors' identity and collection of any issued badge before the visitor leaves the school site.**

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

- R4.2 By March 1, 2024, districts develop, adopt, and implement a plan for effective perimeter control of access at all school sites.**

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: Our perimeter is fully controlled.

- R4.3 By September 1, 2023, all school sites post evacuation maps clearly showing routes from the "You Are Here" perspective be prominently posted at each entry or exit door location in both classrooms and common areas.**

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

- R4.4 By March 1, 2024, districts develop, adopt, and implement a plan for door-locking policies to secure classroom and common area doors.**

Response: This recommendation was implemented at all times prior to the Grand Jury Report and will continue to be implemented in the future. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(1).)

Explanation: The District's current policy and practice is that the administrator and teachers have discretion with regard to locking doors consistent with the educational and safety needs of the class and school.

- R4.5 By March 1, 2024, all school sites post flip charts or similar summaries of emergency procedures be posted in all classrooms and common areas.**

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

- R4.6 By March 1, 2024, all school sites ensure window coverings are provided for all windows, thereby not allowing a perpetrator a clear line of sight into a classroom or common area.**

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(4).)

Explanation: Window coverings are available for use on all windows such as mini blinds and magnets to cover the door windows, this does not mean they are necessarily closed at all times. The policy and practice for window coverings in each room, like the door locking policy, is left to the administrator and teachers on a case-by-case basis consistent with educational and safety needs of the class and school.

R4.7 By October 1, 2023, the Board of Trustees, during a public meeting, review and discuss the findings and recommendations of the 2022-2023 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury report, Case #0322 – School Safety in San Joaquin County: Developing a Culture of Safety.


Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented. (Pen. Code, § 933.05(b)(2).)

Explanation: The Grand Jury report will be discussed with the Board at a public meeting by October 1, 2023.

CONCLUSION

On behalf of the Board of Education of the New Hope Elementary School District, we appreciate your concern for our District.

Sincerely,



Clint Johnson
Superintendent/Principal