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*"Preparing every student for success by cultivating personal excellence"*

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September 28, 2023

**Sonora Union High School District Superintendent Ed Pelfrey Response Attachment to Grand Jury Report dated June 30, 2023: Tuolumne County School Safety Report**

Sonora Union High School District extends its gratitude for the insights provided in the Grand Jury report. We are heartened by the acknowledgment of our proactive measures to safeguard our students and staff. Ensuring school safety remains our utmost priority.

**The District does not dispute the findings of the Grand Jury.**

**Responses to Recommendations:**

**R1: Regular ALICE Training and Drills - Conduct ALICE training for staff and students more frequently to ensure they are well-prepared for potential active shooter situations. Maintain an updated log of all drills and trainings. Regularly practicing different scenarios can help build confidence and familiarity with emergency response procedures.**

Sonora Union High School District recognizes the significance of regular ALICE training. Starting in the 23-24 school year, we will conduct biannual all-school ALICE training sessions: one in the Fall semester and another in the Spring. In August 2023, several district administrators completed an ALICE Certified Instructor Training at Sonora High School, facilitated by the Sonora Police Department. These administrators are now qualified to lead ALICE training within our community. This 2-Day Instructor training course taught participants the skills and strategies to increase survivability during the gap between the time a violent event occurs, and law enforcement arrives.

All staff members undergo mandatory annual safety training, which includes both workplace and student safety protocols, within their first six weeks of employment. This training is monitored and logged by the District.

Additionally, student safety is a regular topic for discussion at District Superintendent meetings. During the past year, several collaborative meetings with law enforcement and school districts have been held to discuss best practices, as well as innovative technologies to update and improve school safety.

The District's schools have maintained a log of emergency drills. At the grand jury's recommendation, the District will maintain an updated log of all emergency drills and training for all District schools.

**R2: Assess and Update Safety Plans - Regularly review and update the school safety plan to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Include input from staff, students, parents, and law enforcement agencies in the review process to ensure all perspectives are considered and the plan reflects best practices in school safety.**

The Sonora Union High School District diligently adheres to the California Education Code in updating the District Comprehensive School Safety Plan. Following the Grand Jury's recommendation for regular review, the plan will be reviewed by the District management team on a monthly basis. Collaborating closely with the Sonora Police and Fire Departments, we set annual safety goals, which are then adopted by the Board each November.

All staff members are required to review the District safety plan as a part of our mandatory annual notifications and training.

Responding to the Grand Jury's recommendation for enhanced transparency, we will introduce a recurring school safety topic to our School Site Council's monthly meetings. This council represents a diverse mix of staff, students, and parents. Additionally, the District Comprehensive School Safety Plan is publicly accessible on the District website under Administrative Regulations, Board Policies & Plans.

**R3: Implement an enhanced access control system to control access to offices and other campus areas. This may include using electronic access cards or keypads that require a code for entry. Regular audits of access permissions can help maintain the security of restricted areas.**

The District is examining a range of options, including electronic access cards, keypads, and other access control systems that are in line with the Grand Jury's recommendations. Our primary aim is to adopt a system that is not only robust and secure but also user-friendly, facilitating smooth access for authorized personnel.

Concurrently, the District is researching various funding sources and grants to facilitate the procurement and execution of this proposed system. Recognizing the significance of routine access permission audits, the District is poised to incorporate this measure into our security procedures once the enhanced access control system becomes operational.

Moreover, the District is progressing with the introduction of a digital card reader system for students to register their entry and exit on school buses. This innovative system, equipped with GPS tracking, will enable parents to monitor the location of the buses in real-time. Consequently,

parents will have the capability to track their child's journey and predict their arrival times at respective bus stops with greater accuracy.

**R4: Consider increasing the fencing perimeter in order to reduce the risk of unauthorized entry. In addition, consider installing more surveillance cameras and lighting around the school grounds, especially in the back parking lot, to deter potential threats and improve overall safety.**

The District acknowledges the importance of a fenced perimeter to prevent unauthorized entries. The District is pleased that the fencing around Cassina High School is nearing its completion. Sonora High School, however, presents a distinct layout challenge, spanning a city street with integrated parking and students traversing the street hourly for class transitions. Given this structure and following consultations with law enforcement and current ALICE protocols, our focus shifts to enabling swift student evacuations during emergencies. Instead of expansive fencing, the District has strategically stationed campus security at vital access points to oversee and manage movement.

Additionally, the District is amplifying its surveillance capabilities at Sonora High School by introducing eight cutting-edge cameras equipped with advanced people analytics. These devices not only facilitate intelligent people and face detection but also allow for easy identification through facial matches or uploaded images. With capabilities to filter by attributes like clothing color and gender, and an automated notification system for detected matches, they are a significant step forward in campus security. These cameras also come equipped with similar analytics for vehicle detection and identification.

The District concurs with the need for enhanced lighting and broader surveillance, particularly in regions like the rear parking lot. Notably, the parking zone to the southeast of the campus is leased from the City of Sonora. The District will collaborate with the City to discuss and implement augmented security measures in this area.

**R5: Continue collaborating with local law enforcement agencies to foster a healthy relationship. Regularly involve them in safety drills, training, and planning. Continue use of searches, dogs, and other means to ensure that unsafe items are not being brought on campus**

The District deeply values its collaboration with local law enforcement agencies, recognizing the importance of maintaining a strong relationship to ensure the safety and security of our school



communities. The District is proud of our robust ties with both the Sonora Police Department and the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office.

These relationships are further strengthened by our monthly 'Ed Law' meetings, where the superintendents of the county's school districts come together with law enforcement agencies to discuss and strategize on pressing concerns and operational procedures.

Last year, superintendents from the districts within the county engaged in a comprehensive meeting with law enforcement and fire agencies to review and refine our safety plans. Such collaborations underscore our collective commitment to the welfare of our students and staff. The District doesn't just restrict our interactions to planning; the District places equal importance on debriefing post joint operations, ensuring that we learn, adapt, and improve with every collaboration. Just last week, the Sonora High School District's Transportation Director orchestrated a pivotal meeting. This gathering included representatives from the Sonora Police Department, Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department, the California Highway Patrol, district superintendents, and directors of transportation. The primary focus of this assembly was to discuss and devise collaborative strategies for effective school evacuations, especially in the face of threats like wildfires.

The District is committed to continuing our practices of involving law enforcement in safety drills, training, and planning, and remain vigilant in our security measures, including the use of searches, canine contraband searches, and other methods to ensure the safety of our campuses. The District appreciates the Grand Jury's acknowledgment and support of these essential collaborations and remain steadfast in our dedication to the safety and security of all members of our educational community.

**R6: Monitor Student Movement on and off Campus - Develop a system for tracking and regulating students who leave the campus for classes at Columbia College or for other reasons. This may include a sign-in/sign-out sheet or app, ID scanning, or other methods to ensure the school is aware of students' whereabouts during school hours.**

The District fully recognizes the importance of closely monitoring student movement on and off the campus, especially for those attending classes at Columbia College or participating in work experiences. To streamline this process and ensure precise tracking, the District is implementing a digital tool specifically designed for this purpose. As the District emphasized in a previous response, our entry and exit points are diligently patrolled by our campus security team. Any student wishing to leave or return to campus during school hours will be required to check in with a Campus Supervisor. Using the digital tool, the Campus Supervisor can promptly verify if a student is authorized to leave, ensuring that the process remains both efficient and secure. This

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tool will also automatically log the time of the student's departure or arrival, maintaining an accurate record for reference. Looking ahead, our aim is to expand the capabilities of this system to enable automatic notifications to parents each time their child checks in or out of campus. The District believes this added layer of communication will further bolster trust and transparency between the school and our parent community. It's essential to highlight that parents have already provided consent for their students to leave campus for activities like attending Columbia College or work experiences. This new tracking system merely enhances our commitment to student safety and accountability during these off-campus ventures. The District is confident that the new system aligns well with the spirit of the Grand Jury's recommendation ensuring the utmost safety and accountability for our students.

Thank you for your time in investigating this important area of school safety. The District greatly appreciates your findings and recommendations. Sonora Union High School District is committed to ensuring the safety of our students and staff.