

VALLEJO CITY

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Ramona E. Bishop, Ed.D., Superintendent

**VCUSD Governing
Board**

President
Hazel Wilson
Vice President
Dr. A. C. "Tony" Ubalde, Jr.
Trustee
Raymond Victor Mommsen
Trustee
Ward "Ace" Stewart
Trustee
Adrienne Waterman

August 7, 2013

The Honorable Paul Beeman
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

Dear Honorable Presiding Judge Beeman

The Vallejo City Unified School District ("The District") has received a copy of the 2012-2013 Grand Jury Report regarding "Safety at Vallejo High School." Pursuant to Penal Code section 933, subsection (c), this is the District's response to the Report. It should be clear that the District respects the function of the Grand Jury to investigate and report on the operations of local government agencies. The District has fully cooperated with Grand Jury requests, including production of documents and testimony of witnesses. The Grand Jury plays an important role as a check and a balance against abuses of authority and misuses of public funds. In this case, however, it appears that the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations suffer from factual and legal errors. Our responses to the Reports are set out below.

Finding 1

There are only a few teachers who have access to two-way radios to communicate directly with Campus Supervisors.

Recommendation 1

Vallejo City Unified School District provide all teachers with two-way radios to communicate directly with Campus Supervisors.

Response to Recommendation 1

Limiting access to two-way radios is necessary to prevent potential confusion caused by too many staff members having a radio. Additionally, radio traffic needs to remain minimal in order to aid staff in the event of an emergency. However, the administration will ensure that all staff has direct access to campus safety personnel.

Finding 2

There is currently no City of Vallejo Community Resource Officer or a County Probation Officer for Vallejo High School on the campus.

Recommendation 2

Vallejo City Unified School District provide a Vallejo Community Resource Officer and a County Probation Officer for the Vallejo High School campus.

Response to Recommendation 2

Vallejo High School, a Full Service Community School, will continue to improve collaboration/communication with the Solano County Probation Office through district Positive Youth Justice Initiative efforts

Positive Youth Justice Initiative (PYJI)

In 2012, the Vallejo City Unified School District received a \$75,000 implementation grant from the Sierra Health Foundation. The grant allowed for the school district as the lead agency to establish a collaborative with Solano County Probation, Solano County Office of Education, and Solano County Health and Social Services with the assistance of UC Davis Cress Center to improve life outcomes for “crossover youth”. “Crossover youth” are defined as students who are engaged in both the foster care system, and the juvenile justice system. Through this planning grant, the district has begun to build a system that will allow for crossover youth and other youth who have had some challenges in school, become positive contributing members of the Vallejo school communities and the community-at-large. Specific systems that will address the unique needs of Vallejo High are:

- Coordinated Student Success Team meetings with all relevant parties (including probation officers where appropriate) participating
- Positive Youth Justice Site Liaisons – dedicated point people at each comprehensive high school to case manage students that need intensive support and structure to successful at school

Full Service Community School Project Restore

Through the grant funding of the Elementary/Secondary Counseling Grant, also known as Project Restore we are able to provide Vallejo High School with a counselor and a social worker to provide the following support:

- Continued Professional Development with the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program, including the Restorative Justice Model which refocuses the emphasis within disciplinary processes from punishment to restoring relationships;
- Deployment of a team of support providers (a counselor and a social worker) to work with 9th grade students with multiple and intensive social-emotional/mental health needs;
- Culturally competent instruction and service delivery training.

The goals of Project Restore are as follows: to reduce discipline referrals, improve student, teacher, and parent perception of school climate and safety, and increase professional development training for teachers and administrators.

Site Safety Supervisors

Two additional Site Safety Supervisors have been added to the Vallejo High School campus.

Finding 3

There are several locations on Vallejo High School campus that are not secure and easily accessible by intruders.

Recommendation 3

Vallejo City Unified School District install adequate fencing on Vallejo High School campus to secure the campus.

Response to Recommendation 3

The Vallejo City Unified School District is finalizing plans that will complete the fencing project that began during the summer of 2012-13. Preliminary plans include gates between the science building and the commercial building; between the administration office and the music building; and between the music building and Corbus Field. Additional fencing with a gate is planned between the small gymnasium and the tennis courts. Repairs will be made to all existing fencing to prevent unauthorized access. This project will be paid through Measure A as previously approved by the Governing Board in May 2012.

The supervision schedule for Vallejo High School allows for high traffic areas and hidden areas to be monitored.

Finding 4

There are blind spots on Vallejo High School campus that the surveillance cameras cannot observe.

Recommendation 4

Vallejo City Unified School District upgrade the surveillance cameras on Vallejo High School campus.

Response to Recommendation 4

Vallejo High School Administration, and Vallejo City Unified School District cabinet members have discussed timelines for the cameras on the 9th grade campus as well as the additional cameras on the main campus. Cameras will be phased in during the course of the 2012/13 school year. Surveillance cameras were installed on the Vallejo High main campus in January 21, 2009. The removal of the temporary portables during the summer of 2013 has improved visibility throughout the campus.

The cameras have been useful as Vallejo High administrators investigate and handle issues on campus. Last year, there was a high profile issue brought to the attention of district from a Vallejo High staff member, where the staff member was apparently threatened by a student. The board asked the administration to respond to the matter, which the administration did by enlisting the support of a third party investigator. The board president has asked that the report as well as the video link be provided to, not only the grand jury but to the Positive Youth Justice Initiative leadership team for review and consideration.

Lastly, because of the advanced nature of our video surveillance efforts, the district has agreed to work with the Vallejo Police Department to coordinate location and monitoring of video footage. VCUSD video surveillance efforts are constantly being enhanced. The collaborative/cooperative work with the City of Vallejo and Vallejo Police Department began during the 2012/13 school year, and will continue in the 2013/14 school year.

Finding 5

Vallejo High School student handbook states that all students will visibly wear photo identification badges while on campus.

Recommendation 5

Vallejo High School Administration enforce the policy that all students must visibly wear their identification badges while on campus.

Response to Recommendation 5

Within the first two weeks of school, every student will have an identification card with a lanyard. Students with cell phones will be encouraged to take a picture of their identification cards as a backup to the original card. Students without cell phones can access replacement cards in the office.

Finding 6

In violation of the Vallejo High School Code of Conduct, students are not arriving to class on time.

Recommendation 6

Vallejo High School Administration enforce the policy that all students arrive to class on time.

Response to Recommendation 6

PBIS will continue to be utilized with a greater focus on attendance and incentives as well as referrals to SARB for those with chronic truancies. The Vallejo High PBIS team will meet regularly to review the effectiveness of it's processes and make the necessary adjustments. Specific goals, expected behaviors, and rewards for attendance will be added to the PBIS matrix and plan, and will be monitored on a regular basis. Additionally, systemic issues affecting student's ability to come to school on time will continue to be reviewed and addressed by the Vallejo High Administration in partnership with the Vallejo City Unified School District Executive Cabinet.

Finding 7

Vallejo High School Administration is not informing teachers of a student's prior criminal or disruptive conduct at the time a student is enrolled in their class.

Recommendation 7

Pursuant to California Education Code §49079, Vallejo High School Administration inform teachers at the time a student is enrolled in their class of a student's prior criminal or disruptive conduct.

Response to Recommendation 7

Education Code section 49079 requires that a school district inform a classroom teacher of a pupil in that teacher's classroom who has engaged in, or is reasonably believed to have engaged in, various prohibited behavior outlined in sections 48900, 48900.2, 48900.3, 48900.4, and 48900.7 of the Education Code. The reporting requirement, however, is strictly limited only to that information

contained in records maintained in the normal course of business by the District, or to information provided by a law enforcement agency.

Pursuant to section 49079, VHS has developed a process where teachers are being informed of these students in a confidential format. Through the Coordinated Student Success Team (CSST) process, to be implemented in 2013/14 students coming to Vallejo City Unified School District schools who have been on probation will participate in a CSST meeting, with the probation department and teachers of record sitting as a part of the team, to map out a plan for success on campus. The plans will be monitored by our PYJI Liaisons who will work in partnership with the Vallejo High Administration to establish strong relationships with the students and their families to ensure student success on campus.

The process will be reviewed at the mandatory Vallejo High School staff training which will take place on August 15, 2013.

Finding 8

Vallejo City Unified School District teachers' access to the student disciplinary portion of the Aeries system has been blocked by the District Administration.

Recommendation 8

Vallejo City Unified School District reinstate teachers' access to the Aeries student disciplinary portion of the system.

Response to Recommendation 8

Access to and dissemination of pupil educational records is regulated by the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. Part 99) and by the California Education Code section 49060 *et seq.* and Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations section 430 *et seq.* Educational records are defined as *any* information recorded in any way that directly relates to an identifiable student which is maintained by an educational agency or institution or party acting on behalf of that agency or institution. Only school employees with a *legitimate educational interest* are authorized by law to access pupil educational records. In compliance with FERPA, these confidential records are thus only accessible on a need to know basis.

During the 2011/12 school year, Vallejo City Unified School District managers participated in a training on FERPA and made relevant changes in access to student records for staff. There is an existing process for teachers, who are authorized to have the information under FERPA to review student records. Vallejo City Unified School District staff members have been responding to a grievance filed in the 2012/13 school year, by the Vallejo Education Association on this matter, and will continue to work within the grievance structure to address this issue.

At the mandatory Vallejo High School staff training on August 15, 2013, staff members will receive information on FERPA, and be trained on VCUSD Board policy regarding confidentiality.

Finding 9

The Positive Behavior Interventions and Support program may be an effective program to assist the teachers in controlling disruptive behavior on the campus. The program is not being implemented

effectively. Teachers at VHS informed the Grand Jury that this program has been unsuccessful because VHS administration is not holding the students accountable for their inappropriate behavior.

Recommendation 9a

Vallejo City Unified School District and Vallejo High School Administration provide a comprehensive explanation of the PBIS program.

Response to Recommendation 9a

The Grand Jury's findings with regard to staff training on the PBIS program are incorrect. Staff has received numerous trainings that includes behavior management and PBIS support interventions. In fact, the Vallejo High staff had an additional day of training (over and above what other schools received). At the beginning of May 2013, VHS conducted a survey of its teaching staff with regard to PBIS training. That results of that survey revealed that 41 of 52 staff members attended the one day PBIS training session at the beginning of the school year and only 11 staff members stated they did not have an understanding of PBIS. The Vallejo High School Design Team and PBIS teams will continue to work to implement PBIS and make adjustments to their plans and matrixes when there are systemic issues that need to be addressed.

Recommendation 9b

Vallejo City Unified School District and Vallejo High School Administration adhere to written policies regarding discipline.

Response to Recommendation 9b

The Parent/Teacher handbook outlines the disciplinary process and disciplinary referrals at VHS. VHS administration will review handbook with staff to clarify the process for teachers when dealing with disruptive students. The Vallejo High School PBIS matrix will be sent home to all families, as a part of the "welcome back" packet on the first day of school.

Finding 10

Vallejo High School Site Safety Plan is incomplete and only available on the Vallejo City Unified School District website.

Recommendation 10

Vallejo City Unified School District update their website to include all missing documentation regarding the Vallejo High School Site Safety Plan, and include the safety plan on the Vallejo High School website.

Response to Recommendation 10

VHS will review and revise the Site Safety Plan for the school year 2013-14 and include this on the website when complete.

Finding 11

There is a Bullying Section on the Vallejo City Unified School District website but is not included on the Vallejo High School's website.

Recommendation 11

Vallejo City Unified School District incorporate information on bullying currently included in their website and also include it on the Vallejo High School website.

Response to Recommendation 11

The Vallejo High School website has been updated to contain this information.

Finding 12

Vallejo High School website does not contain any information about the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, Restorative Justice.

Recommendation 12

Vallejo City Unified School District incorporate information on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support and the Restorative Justice Program be included on the Vallejo High School website.

Response to Recommendation 12

The Vallejo High School website has been updated to contain this information.

Finding 13

One of the major issues on Vallejo High School campus is the use of marijuana.

Recommendation 13

Vallejo High School Administration and Vallejo City Unified School District implement an effective plan to deal with the marijuana issue.

Response to Recommendation 13

VHS is continuously doing health and safety checks. As we move forward as a Full Service Community, there will be continued work in this area, including the implementation of support groups that will address substance abuse. Presently, Youth and Family Services include a comprehensive array of mental health and substance abuse prevention, education, intervention and treatment services. They also provide holistic and family-centered care focusing on health development, recovery-oriented psychotherapy, client advocacy, client self-sufficiency, and community development. They provide over 16 different education and counseling programs for children, high-risk youth, adults, families, and special populations such as children of incarcerated parents, foster and probation youth, pregnant women and teens.

Finding 14

Vallejo High School's daily detention is monitored in the Supervising Campus Supervisor's Office by individuals who may or may not be present.

Recommendation 14

Vallejo High School's daily detention be monitored in a classroom setting by a credentialed teacher.

Response to Recommendation 14

VHS administration has implemented policy that involves an administrator supervising the students during detention.

Finding 15

In-house suspension is "usually" held only once a week and may or may not be on the day the student was placed on suspension.

Recommendation 15

Vallejo High School Administration create in-house suspension on a daily basis monitored by a credentialed teacher.

Response to Recommendation 15

VHS administration has implemented a policy that involves a credentialed teacher and/or administration supervising the students

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Vallejo High School Grand Jury report and will continue our efforts to make all the Vallejo schools safe places for our students, staff, and community members.



Hazel Wilson, President
VCUSD Board of Education



Ramona Bishop Ed.D., Superintendent
VCUSD



Clarence Isadore, Principal
Vallejo High School