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July 5, 2018

The Honorable Dale Blea, Supervising Judge  
Grand Jury, Madera Superior Court  
200 South G Street  
Madera, CA 93638

Madera County Grand Jury  
P.O. Box 534  
Madera., CA 93639

Re: Golden Valley Unified School District's Response to Grand Jury Report  
Final Report 1718-06

Dear Judge Blea and Grand Jury:

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Board of Trustees for the Golden Valley Unified High School District ("Board" or "Trustees") hereby submits this formal response to the Madera County Grand Jury Report, Final Report 1718-06 ("Report").

### **OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT RESPONSE**

The Board of the Golden Valley Unified School District concurs in the Grand Jury's commitment to addressing issues of student safety and, in this case, issues of safety related primarily to student transportation. The Governing Board and Superintendent have duly considered the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations and offer the responses below.

We would also like to take this opportunity to point out that, while we acknowledge that it is always beneficial to receive input about ways to improve, the culture of the Governing Board and District management is continually directed to the safety of students, as well as members of staff.

Please also note that the responses to the Findings, below, are provided separately for Brian Freeman, the Governing Board President, and Kevin Hatch, District Interim Superintendent, as indicated in the text.

### **RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY'S FINDINGS**

**Finding F1.** Because senior management at MUSD and GVUSD was unaware of the requirement to provide written bus safety information for parents, there is a potential violation of Education Code section 39831.5(a)(A, B, C, D, and E)(2).

Response to Finding F1:

Superintendent: There was confusion about the inquiry related to this topic. Upon reflection, the District does provide this information to families in the notice of rights and obligations issued to parents annually, pursuant to Education Code section 48980.

**Finding F2. Because the Findings of the study done in 2014 and 2015 regarding Webster Elementary School have not been implemented, congestion problems continue and unsafe conditions persist.**

Response to Finding F2:

Superintendent and Board President: The District is aware that there are times of the school day when traffic and thus vehicle congestion occurs. It is an issue that District and site administration have always recognized must be monitored on a regular basis.

**Finding F3. There is a need for a crossing guard on Ruth Avenue at Webster Elementary School to enhance student safety.**

Response to Finding F3:

Superintendent and Board President: We recognize that a crossing guard is one way to address student safety. We are open to exploring this, as well as other modes of keeping students safe when crossing streets adjacent to Webster School.

**Finding F4. Because of the large number of breakdowns, the older, high-mileage buses need to be replaced.**

Response to Finding F4:

Superintendent: The use of the term “breakdowns” related to the District’s school buses is ambiguous but, in any event, maintenance and repair of school buses is a fact of life for most school districts and is not a symptom of a problem. Nevertheless, we are always exploring ways to update our fleet.

Board President: The Board is committed to having staff takes steps to update the District’s school buses and to explore funding sources to defray impacts on the District’s General Fund.

**Finding F5. Transporting special needs preschool students in a large yellow school bus with no seat belts creates a potential for danger even if a paraprofessional sits with the students.**

Response to Finding F5:

Superintendent and Board President: We are sensitive to issues related to the transportation of special needs students and will give this item priority.

**Finding F6. The use of three or more white vans instead of large buses to transport large groups could negatively impact student safety.**

Response to Finding F6:

Superintendent: The point in this finding is well-taken and we can remain cognizant of how a particular vehicle used for extracurricular activities may impact safety. However, we believe that we are able to observe safety standards by addressing the needs of various groups on a case-by-case basis.

**RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation R1. Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, MUSD and GVUSD provide parents with written information on bus emergency procedures and passenger safety pursuant to Education Code section 39831.5.**

Response to Recommendation R1:

The Board and Superintendent accept this recommendation with qualification (see response to Finding F1). Action consistent with this recommendation, specifically notification of bus safety information in the annual notice to parents, has been implemented and will continue in accordance with law.

**Recommendation R2. GVUSD Superintendent immediately meet with Madera County Public Works regarding two pick-up and drop-off locations at Webster Elementary School, one for parents at Ardath Avenue and one for buses at Ruth Avenue.**

Response to Recommendation R2:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but the District Superintendent will meet with Madera County Public Works by September 30, 2018, to discuss this issue.

**Recommendation R3. GVUSD immediately provide crossing guards for the crosswalk at Webster School.**

Response to Recommendation R3:

The recommendation requires further analysis. The District will work with its risk and insurance consultants, legal counsel, human resources department, and other interested persons, to determine the level of need for one or more crossing guards. The District's determination should be completed no later than December 31, 2018.

**Recommendation R4. GVUSD develop a school bus replacement schedule by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.**

Response to Recommendation R4:

The recommendation has not yet been fully implemented due to budget constraints. However, the Governing Board has approved a special reserve fund that could be used for the purchase of a bus, as necessary funds develop, and the District is in the process of completing a school bus replacement schedule. Further, in conjunction with the San Joaquin Valley Pollution Control District, the District has sought and continues to seek alternative funding for school bus replacement in order to defray the impact of such costs on the District's General Fund.

**Recommendation R5. GVUSD immediately utilize a white van, driven by a certified bus driver, to transport special needs pre-school students until a smaller special needs bus is obtained.**

Response to Recommendation R5:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented for the 2018-2019 school year and will continue until a smaller special needs bus is obtained.

**Recommendation R6. Whenever possible, GVUSD immediately use large buses for extra-curricular trips that require three or more white vans.**

Response to Recommendation R6:

The recommendation is generally acceptable but requires further analysis, as the nature and type of extra-curricular activity informs the type of vehicle that is best suited for the particular activity. Please note that the District is committed to providing the safest mode of transportation for student extracurricular activities while, at the same time, providing the flexibility that best accommodates the needs of the extracurricular group.

CONCLUSION

The Board of Trustees of the Golden Valley Unified School District and the Superintendent appreciate the time and dedication of the Grand Jury members in providing the District with the Report and recommendations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Brian Freeman, President, Governing Board of Trustees



Kevin Hatch, Interim Superintendent