

## Response to Solano County Civil Grand Jury School Safety Report

Vacaville Unified School District (VUSD) takes the safety of students, staff, and facilities very seriously. For many years, VUSD has embraced advancements in technology, best-practices, and leveraging community partnerships with the goal of creating the safest possible environment, so our students have the greatest academic opportunities and successes possible. VUSD is currently working with a broad coalition of community partners to renew a bond measure to meet those needs which are not covered by state funding and continue our safety work.

VUSD has a strong partnership with the Vacaville Police Department, which has a nationally recognized Youth Services Section. Vacaville PD provides four officers and one sergeant who are solely responsible for VUSD schools, as well as mental health clinicians and interns who provide additional mental health support for students. Additionally, VUSD has partnered with a former Vacaville PD sergeant and Youth Services supervisor turned school safety consultant to identify areas in which VUSD can improve campus safety.

VUSD also employs 13 mental health clinicians on our staff that are critical in supporting students and assisting in assessments for students who are struggling.

VUSD appreciates the efforts of the Solano County Civil Grand Jury by providing an unbiased lens through which we can improve the safety of our schools.

**Finding One:** Although districts have an explicit locked door policy to ensure student security, it is not uniformly enforced.

**Response:** VUSD recognizes the value of creating time barriers with locked doors, and how quick action by students or staff can save lives. VUSD is actively pursuing complete uniformity amongst all sites to ensure doors remain in a state that allows staff to quickly move into a protective posture, such as a lockdown.

**Finding Two:** Schools should obtain more cameras to increase the scope of coverage to increase students' safety.

**Response:** VUSD formed a safety committee that consisted of staff members, community members, and additional safety experts. The committee formed a list of desired improvements, which included improved camera coverage and to utilize recent technology upgrades to camera systems. From those recommendations, numerous cameras were added to Vacaville High

School to address immediate safety concerns. VUSD has continued this effort and is in the process of adding an additional 133 cameras district-wide.

**Finding Three:** The majority of schools have a “single point of entry” process which benefits the safety of the community and students.

**Response:** Many of the school sites in Vacaville were built in a time well before current safety strategies were in place. For example, Vacaville High School’s current site was first opened in 1952. The layout of Vacaville High School makes it very challenging and prohibitively costly to add fencing and barriers to accomplish a single entry point. While single entry points can be an effective strategy for bringing everyone through a small but managed area, it can also create dangerous choke points that can be exploited by an active shooter. If using a single entry point, campuses must also employ multiple avenues of escape from a variety of hazards. For example, recent site renovations at Markham Elementary have utilized a single entry concept with multiple avenues of escape. The layout of Markham Elementary, along with significant expenditures, made those modifications possible. Also, VUSD is in the process of moving the front office of Will C. Wood to the front of the school, eliminating visitors walking through a main quad to get to the office. This should be complete by the beginning of the 24-25 school year. VUSD, through its partnership with our safety consultant, has completed numerous site safety and vulnerability assessments. One of the assessed items includes territorial reinforcement, with specific recommendations that are unique to the site. VUSD will continue to look for strategies that improve the observations of site users, reduce dangerous choke points, while maintaining avenues of escape.

**Finding Four:** RAPTOR and Envoy systems are used to identify any person entering schools and to notify staff. These programs are limited to a few schools.

**Response:** VUSD utilizes a system called Catapult EMS, which is a robust platform for incident notifications, emergency management, staff and student accountability, drill management, and integration with first responders. Along with Catapult EMS, VUSD utilizes a partner platform called WeTip, which is another robust platform for anonymous reporting that feeds directly to site safety teams 24 hours a day. RAPTOR has many similar features as Catapult EMS, which is already in-place.

Envoy is an attractive sign-in solution, and we will investigate its possible implementation. We have concerns about its use, for example, at sports activities that are a frequent presence on campus. It is not reasonable to employ such a system at a high school football game, requiring visitors to both check-in and check-out.

**Finding Five:** Some schools have areas such as a wellness center/quiet/calming corners for students to access where they can regain focus and composure.

**Response:** Vacaville PD received national recognition for partnering with VUSD for many years to place licensed mental health clinicians (PD employees) and counseling interns on school sites, some of whom are co-located with SRO's. Each year, Vacaville PD provides 15-20 counseling interns. The intent of the program is to provide additional mental health support for students, including over summer break. Any staff member can make a referral to PD mental health clinicians or intern counselors.

VUSD provides the space for PD counselors to provide much needed support, which also serves as a refuge for students in crisis. Students often come into the SRO offices to take a break, cool off, and receive a snack; all of which provides engagement opportunities between SROs and counselors. VUSD also maintains policies of providing support and accommodations for students in moments of stress or crisis, such as a "hot pass" to immediately see a counselor.

As an added measure of student support, VUSD maintains numerous converted classrooms that serve as a quiet resting area while also providing new clothing, backpacks, school supplies, and personal hygiene items. VUSD also reaches out to our homeless and foster youth population to provide additional support.

With regards to SCOE Mobile Crisis, VUSD utilizes their support along with VUSD academic counselors, VUSD mental health clinicians, Vacaville PD mental health clinicians and interns. VUSD consistently works to remove barriers to learning by engaging with the diverse needs of our students.

Thank you for your interest in safety at our schools.



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