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Marysville Unified Elementary Schools Safety and Security

Summary:

The duties of the Yuba County Grand Jury (YCGJ) involve the periodic review of all schools and school districts within the County. The 2012-13 Grand Jury conducted an investigation of the safety and security of high schools and middle schools in the Marysville Joint Unified School District (MJUSD). The Grand Jury elected to extend that investigation to include elementary schools.

Introduction and background:

Three MJUSD elementary schools were included in this investigation. Arboga and Covillaud Schools were not recipients of any of bond monies for upgrades, and Cedar Lane School had a considerable number of upgrades paid for with bond funds.

Methodology and Approach:

The Grand Jury tours were provided by site administrators. During the visits school staff answered questions, and documents requested by the Grand Jury were reviewed. The Grand Jury used self-designed guidelines to tour the schools, ensuring that the same areas were observed at each school site. All areas were observed that have relevance to students and staff safety and security. The Grand Jury also examined support services for students. The City of Marysville Public Works Department and Marysville Police Department were contacted regarding information relevant to Covillaud Elementary.

Documents consulted:

- California Streets and Highways Code, Section 5610-5618
- MJUSD's Facilities Project Summary

Discussion and Narrative:

Arboga Elementary School:

The Grand Jury visited Arboga School, located in a rural area close to new housing developments, on September 17, 2013. At that time there were 515 students from Kindergarten to Fifth Grade were enrolled, and 72 in the preschool. The preschool is separate from the main school and has been in operation for four years. The campus has twenty classrooms, most of which are portable. There are twenty-one teachers, including one Resource Specialist teacher. Tremendous growth has occurred in the last few years, requiring portables to be added as needed.

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Student support included:

- Two 3.75 hour paraprofessionals, one for Kindergarten, and one shared among all other grades
- A 3.75 hour librarian, four days a week
- A school psychologist, twice a week, who organizes and leads student success teams (SSTs)
- An after school program, called STARS, until 6PM
- An art docent program led by volunteers

A strict sign-in policy is in effect for all visitors to the school. No security cameras are on the premises. Existing access gates around the preschool are kept locked at all times. The entire campus is not adequately fenced. It was stated by school administration that it took several requests, through District channels, to get the preschool fenced. Monthly fire drills are conducted, as well as biannual intruder alerts.



Figure 1. *Two views of the barbed wire perimeter fence at the back of the Arboga Elementary School campus. The road is just south of the school grounds.*

Because of the growth, the school grounds conditions are changing. At the current time, portables form a large rectangle with play areas and a fenced garden in the center. Storage has become a problem, so several portable shipping containers are now utilized for that purpose. A large grassy area behind the portables is not utilized or maintained, and has only a barbed wire

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fence, in disrepair, that separates the school grounds from a gravel road and private property (see Figure 1). A few years ago the school's water and septic systems were changed to OPUD (Olivehurst Public Utilities Department), because the old systems were not adequate.

Due to efforts of parents presenting safety needs to the Board of Trustees, the bus loop and drop off area are being separated. The new bus loop will not be paved. There is also a renovated parking lot that took the school five years of requests to obtain.

The current cafeteria/multipurpose room has a capacity of 300 (see Figure 2, below). Lunches, assemblies and programs must be staggered, with only some of the students attending at a time. Due to insufficient Measure P bond funds, a new multipurpose room will not be built.



Figure 2. *The cafeteria at Arboga Elementary School.*

Covillaud Elementary School:

Covillaud Elementary School, one of the older schools in the district, was visited by the Grand Jury on October 29, 2013. Covillaud is located on G Street close to the downtown area. 7th Street is blocked off during school hours and serves as a playground and a crossing area to the upper grades' playing area. The enrollment at the time was about 500 students from Kindergarten to Fifth Grade with twenty-two teachers. At the time of the Grand Jury visit, all the

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lower grades were full and there were three openings in grades four and five. Covillaud was a California Distinguished School in 2006 and 2008.

Student support includes:

- School Psychologists twice weekly
- An after school program, called STARS, until 6pm
- Part-time librarian
- A clothing closet that distributes clothing for families in need
- Parent volunteers
- Resource specialists
- Special Day Class (SDC)
- Peach Tree Tooth Van from October thru December

A sign-in policy is in effect for all visitors to the school. According to the site administrator no security cameras are installed on the premises. A minimum of six strategically placed outside cameras would provide basic coverage. Due to the unique layout of the school, being divided by 7th Street, the school has its share of undesirable items found on the north playground including; alcohol, used hypodermic needles and used condoms, etc. Marysville Police officials meet with elementary schools within the city, including Covillaud Elementary School, on a monthly basis to discuss any issues relevant to the schools' safety. Monthly fire drills are conducted, as well as biannual intruder alerts. A rally point for drills or emergencies is located on the campus to the north, across 7th Street.

As previously stated, the school is separated by 7th Street, to the north. 7th Street is an asphalt paved street, blocked with yellow traffic gates during school hours, with numerous potholes, broken and sunken curbing, uneven sidewalks, and trees pushing through the concrete. This poses an immediate and ever present hazard for children playing or crossing on this surface.



Figure 3. *Broken Curbs on the part of 7th Street that traverses the Covillaud Elementary campus.*

Covillaud Elementary School is located in downtown Marysville. There are times when police activity occurs near the school, which is only a few blocks from the police station. There have been times when there has been police activity on or close to the streets bordering the school, but without the knowledge of the administrator, which is a matter of concern. Some of those situations would have necessitated a lockdown for maximum student and staff safety.

The school currently has nine portable buildings, eight student restrooms, and one staff restroom. All classrooms are single access, and the doors are kept locked. Should a student leave the classroom, a passkey is issued by the teacher. A 300-person capacity cafeteria/multi-purpose room serves a student body of 500. Currently, cafeteria storage space is inadequate for the student population.

Currently staff and parent parking are inadequate. Staff members usually park on a street away from the front of the school in order to leave areas for parents to drop-off and pick-up students. Grand Jurors observed parents parking illegally in places that appeared not to be safe for drop-off and pick-up. There had been plans to remedy this in The District Facilities Project Summary funded by Measures H and P. This project and others slated for this school were put on hold, as bond funds are depleted.

Cedar Lane Elementary:

The Grand Jury visited Cedar Lane Elementary School on November 15, 2013. At the time, 508 students were enrolled with 25 teachers. Forty percent of the students speak English as a second

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language. Cedar Lane Elementary is located in the western part of Yuba County in Linda, and offers classes in transitional Kindergarten (a two year program) through Sixth Grade. Measure H bond money was used to build a new front wing and update the playground, while a new fence surrounds the school grounds.

Student Support includes:

- Three special Education Teachers
- A Migrant education classroom
- A Physical Education teacher for 2nd through 6th grade
- Americorp English as Second Language (ESL) student support coordinator
- Translators for second language student meetings
- A school Psychologist 4 days a week
- An after school program, called STARS, until 6PM
- Peach Tree Tooth Van
- Family Resource center operated by Harmony Health
- Large community garden
- A large library with a Librarian working 3.75 hours daily
- Two satellite rooms that house books for the Accelerated Reading (AR) program
- Victim Witness Services
- Transportation services for homeless students
- Emotionally Disturbed (ED) classroom with a dedicated teacher

In the Spring of 2012, plans for a new security camera were submitted to the Division of the State Architect (DSA). The MJUSD Facilities Project summary dated January 15, 2014, states that security cameras are listed as “Master Planning Future Projects”. Currently, no security cameras are installed on the campus.

There is a modicum of gang activity in the area of Cedar Lane Elementary. Gang activities are discouraged by school administrators, who do not allow students to wear gang-connected clothing. Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) is a program administered by school officials to combat bullying and gang related issues. Problems of graffiti and bullying might be diminished by the use of security cameras. Regular meetings with Law Enforcement concerning student safety are held weekly.

The cafeteria can accommodate 390 students for both breakfast and lunch. The cafeteria doubles as a multi-purpose room and houses the STARS after school program. School staff initiated a play first, eat last lunch schedule to help minimize food waste and behavior problems.

Cedar Lane Elementary has a bus pickup/drop off area with no marked crosswalks or sidewalks. Children must utilize the roadside to arrive at and depart from school. Students walking or riding bicycles must cross streets that are not marked with crosswalks or designated crossing areas.

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Supervisory staff are on site while children are departing and arriving at the school. Members of the Grand Jury noted a lack of proper signage referring to school area crosswalks or designated bike paths (see Figure 4). In one instance, Jurors had to walk around a vehicle into the middle of the street to return to the campus.



Figure 4. Cedar Lane, showing the absence of marked school crossings or signage.

Findings:

Arboga School

- F1. Arboga School is comprised mainly of portable buildings as a result of population growth in that area.
- F2. The cafeteria/multipurpose room has a capacity of 300 occupants and is too small for the enrollment of Arboga School.
- F3. Bond funds are now depleted, so Arboga's projects that were on The MJUSD's Facilities Project Summary for updates to the campus, are now on hold.

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- F4. The entire campus is not adequately fenced. There is only barbed wire fencing on the Southeast corner behind some portable classrooms.
- F5. There are no security cameras installed on the campus.

Covillaud Elementary School:

- F6. There are no security cameras on campus.
- F7. The Street blocked off from city traffic (7th Street) during school hours is in hazardous disrepair with numerous potholes, broken and sunken curbs, uneven sidewalks and trees pushing through the concrete. Children cross and play in this street for recess activities, and physical education class. When there is an evacuation drill, the meeting area is in the playground on the north side of the Street.
- F8. There is inadequate parking for staff and parents.
- F9. Due to location, there is often police activity in the proximity of the school that has not been brought to the attention of the administrator so that proper action can be taken.
- F10. The cafeteria/multipurpose room with a capacity of 300 is not large enough for a student body of over 500, and has inadequate cafeteria storage space.

Cedar Lane Elementary:

- F11. There are no security cameras on the campus.
- F12. There are no marked crosswalks or sidewalks near the bus pickup/drop off area, nor proper signage referring to school area crosswalks or designated bike paths. This poses a safety issue as there are many pedestrians and bicycle riders.

Recommendations:

Arboga School:

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. When bond funds become available, Arboga's deferred projects, listed in the MJUSD Facilities Project Summary, receive priority consideration.
- R2. The District install adequate fencing around the entire campus.
- R3. Security cameras be installed in strategic outside locations.

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Covillaud Elementary School:

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R4. Security cameras be installed in strategic outside locations.
- R5. The District comply with California Streets and Highway Code, Section 5610, to repair their portion of the sidewalks and curbs on the section of 7th Street blocked off for use by Covillaud School.
- R6. The District complete the projects planned for Covillaud School listed in The District Project Summary.
- R7. The Administrator discuss with the Marysville Police Department, at their monthly safety meetings, an appropriate notification plan for potentially dangerous activity within its neighborhood.
- R8. The District provide funding for the construction or purchase of adequate cafeteria storage.

Cedar Lane Elementary School:

The Grand Jury recommends:

- R9. Security cameras be installed in strategic outside locations.
- R10. The District consult with the Public Works Department and install proper signage, sidewalks and crosswalks in the bus pickup/drop off locations.

Request for Responses:

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

- MJUSD Board of Trustees
- Superintendant, MJUSD
- Principal, Arboga Elementary R1-R3
- Principal, Covillaud Elementary R4-R8

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- Principal, Cedar Lane Elementary R9-R10

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted in accordance with Penal Code section 933(c) and subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

