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# **Wheatland Elementary School**

## **Summary:**

The 2013-14 Grand Jury is conducting an investigation of the safety and security of elementary schools in the county. The Grand Jury elected to extend that investigation to include Wheatland School District (WSD) elementary schools.

## **Introduction and background:**

The Wheatland School District has three schools within their jurisdiction with approximately 1300 enrolled students. Wheatland Elementary School (WES) has an enrollment of 325 students. The Elementary School was re-opened in 2012 after having been closed in 2009 due to a low enrollment. Due to a high number of military dependents enrolled, WES receives impact aid from the federal government. This program is for military students whose families live and work on military installations.

## **Methodology and Approach:**

The Grand Jury conducted a tour of the school provided by the principal. During the visit school staff answered questions, and provided documents for review. The Grand Jury developed a school visitation plan for touring schools, ensuring that the same areas were observed at all schools visited in Yuba County. All areas were observed that had relevance to students and staff safety and security. The Grand Jury also inquired into support available for students.

## **Documents:**

- Wheatland Elementary School's website can be accessed at: <http://wes.wheatlandsd.com/index.html>
- The Wheatland School District Calendar is available at: <http://www.wheatlandsd.com/documents/Copy%20of%20District%20Calendar%202013-14%20with%20Dates.pdf>
- The free school breakfast program is described at: <http://www.wheatlandsd.com/documents/Free%20Breakfast%20Letter.pdf>
- A description and video of the door safety device used at Wheatland Elementary School can be found on the manufacture's website at: <http://globalinnovationsco.com/>

## **Site visits:**

The Grand Jury toured Wheatland Elementary School on February 13, 2014.

## Discussion and Narrative:

The Grand Jury visited Wheatland Elementary School on February 13, 2014. At the time of the visit there were 325 students enrolled with a waiting list for intra-district transfers. The school accommodates Kindergarten to Third grade students as well as a Special Day Class (SDC). A Kindergarten/First grade classroom had just been added in January 2014. Currently there are fifteen regular-education teachers and one SDC teacher. The school had just been reopened in 2012 due to overcrowding at Bear River School. It was decided to make Wheatland Elementary a K-3 campus, and Bear River a 4-8 campus.

There were the following student support staff and services:

- A Health Clerk is on campus from 10AM-1PM daily.
- A counselor is available on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- The large library has a full-time librarian.
- VICTOR (Victim Witness Program) supports students as needed.
- There is an after school program that includes a Homework Club until 6PM.
- Each child receives a daily free breakfast, with some of the cost absorbed by the district.
- A Family Resource Center (FRC).

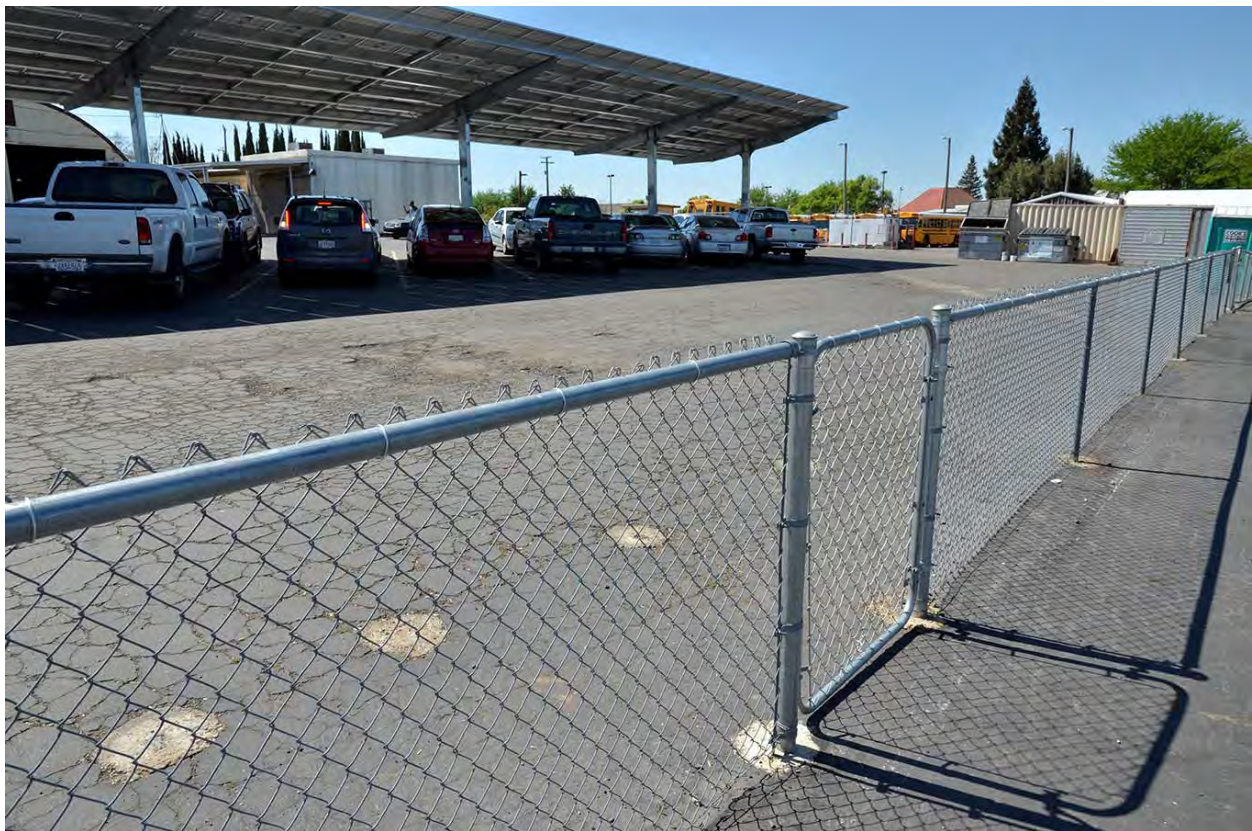


**Figure 1.** *The inexpensive door security device installed on Wheatland Elementary School's door jams. Most school doors open to the outside and can be locked with a key only from the outside, a risky action in the event of a school invasion emergency. To use this device, the door is kept locked from the outside. When the device is in the position shown on the left, the door, closing from the right, is held slightly ajar and, therefore, does not latch. When the device is flipped to the position shown on the right, the door can be pulled completely closed and latched.*

## Wheatland Elementary School

Upon entry to the school, each visitor must sign in. After a certain time all entrances are locked, except the office, requiring any visitors to come through that entrance. Each teacher has a key for the outside locks. Thirteen outside surveillance cameras are in operation, and there are plans to upgrade the system. Monthly fire drills are conducted, as well as yearly lock-down drills. Currently no inside window coverings are in the classrooms, but the windows are tinted. Tests have been done during lock-downs to see if students can be seen and they cannot. The principal has placed a seven-dollar device on every door to make it possible for the doors to be secured from the inside. (See figure 1, above.)

Wheatland Elementary places an emphasis on community relations through parent involvement. A large housing development is adjacent to the rear of the school campus. This provides the school with extra awareness from parents who regularly walk their children to and from school. The modernized kitchen serves balanced meals based on State of California nutritional guidelines. The large gymnasium/cafeteria, with a capacity of 500, also serves as a community meeting center.



**Figure 2.** *The low fence on the north side of the bus loop. Some of the school's solar panels are visible in the background.*

The Grand Jury observed solar panels that have recently been installed. Other upgrades were also observed, such as new wrought iron fencing around the entrance area. Upgraded play areas with new enclosures were installed on the playground. Although the grounds are completely fenced, some of the fences were of insufficient height to provide adequate security. (See figure 2, above.) It was stated that changes for safety are an ongoing process, and that there is complete support from the Wheatland School District.

### **Findings:**

- F1. The Grand Jury finds that Wheatland Elementary School is a pleasant and safe campus, and there is complete support from the Wheatland School District and its board of trustees.
- F2. The Grand Jury finds that there are on-going upgrades to the grounds in the form of solar panels, fencing and play areas. There are plans to upgrade the security cameras in the near future.
- F3. The Grand Jury found that all doors have an inexpensive device placed on them to ensure that the doors can be quickly secured from the inside.

### **Recommendations:**

- R1. The Grand Jury recommends that the low fence on the north side of the bus loop be replaced with a higher fence.

### **Commendations:**

- C1. The Grand Jury commends the Wheatland School District for its continuing support of its students, teachers and staff.

### **Request for Responses:**

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

- Wheatland School District

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.

