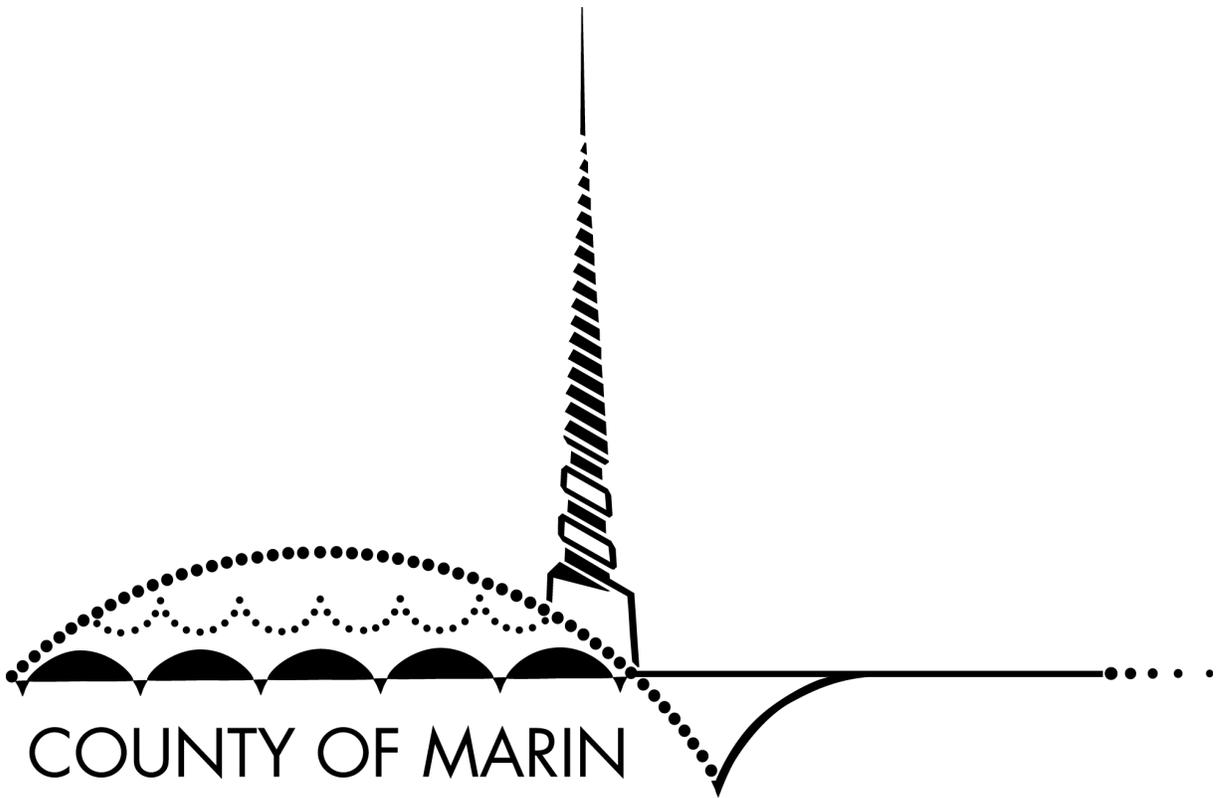


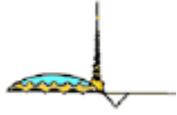
---

2012/2013 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

# Planning for Schools Emergencies

Report Date –June 20, 2013  
Public Release Date –June 26, 2013





## PLANNING FOR SCHOOLS EMERGENCIES

### SUMMARY

As events of the past few years have shown, providing emergency preparedness for Marin County public schools has proven to be a task that grows substantially. Each year, the national news reveals new risks. Administrators and teachers must be alert and prepared to take actions that protect our children.

The Grand Jury decided to measure the extent of readiness of our schools to respond to a variety of emergencies. We wanted to see whether the districts and schools have put into place the necessary preparations for ensuring safe and secure campuses.

#### **Schools Are Safe Places for Our Children**

In January 2013, the Grand Jury administered two separate surveys, one for school district superintendents and the other for school administrators, usually principals. The responses to the surveys, along with follow-up interviews with superintendents and school administrators, showed that most schools are committed to the goal of emergency preparedness. Generally, Marin public schools are prepared for a wide variety of potential dangers and have solid plans to implement quick and reasoned responses. Most have built safety communities with first responders and other local resources, and have involved parents in their plans.

#### **School Site Emergency Plans**

For public schools in Marin County, the School Site Emergency Plan is the basic preparedness reference for administration, staff and teachers. It describes, documents, and provides guidance on recommended responses to a wide variety of potential dangers. Almost all Marin County School Site Emergency Plans in place now are based on the Marin County Office of Education Model Plan. School Site Emergency Plans are necessary to provide a high level of emergency preparedness. Once the School Site Emergency Plans are put into place, they must be taught and practiced until the response/action needed to deal with a danger becomes second nature to classroom personnel and other school staff.

#### **Can We Improve the Safety of Our Schools?**

We believe Marin County schools are safe places for our children, yet improvements can always be made. Presently, most districts and schools act alone in the area of emergency preparedness. We conclude that with countywide cooperation and action, the level of emergency preparedness can be elevated. Essential training can be developed, and testing for results can both be better implemented at the County level. Other improvements, such as coordinated communications systems, can be derived from a countywide development of emergency preparedness for schools.

The Grand Jury proposes that the Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) take a larger, more active role in the management of countywide emergency preparedness. Up to now, the Marin County Office of Education has operated as a resource and consultant for the districts. The ideal vehicle for this more involved approach is the existing Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council.

## BACKGROUND

Marin County public schools are organized into 18 districts, a geographical structure that evolved from the 52 pre-World War II districts of rural one-room schoolhouses. The districts provide a variety of services to the schools under their purview, including group purchasing, personnel and benefits, and facilities management. For just 31,107 students<sup>1</sup> in the County, it may seem that 18 districts are too many, implying duplication of effort. However, present services provided through and by the districts support the current configuration.<sup>2</sup>



### **The Original Dixie School**

*This one-room Schoolhouse was built in 1864 on the Miller Ranch property and remained in operation as a school until 1954. Today its uses include educational museum, meeting hall and historical monument for visiting classes of school children.*

It's important, therefore, to see school preparedness in the context of the existing district structure, since the districts provide the leadership core and guidance for their schools. (See Appendix A for listing of districts and schools.)

Providing a safe learning experience for Marin students has always been a top priority. Many years ago, County residents were primarily worried about natural disasters like earthquakes, fires and floods. Then about 20 years ago, we started to see the growth of person-on-person dangers in the school environment. Today, even though statistically<sup>3</sup> we are more likely to encounter earthquakes, fires, and floods, we also worry that school violence may erupt at the place where our children go to learn.

<sup>1</sup> According to the California Department of Education, 2011-12.

<sup>2</sup> The Efficiency and Effectiveness Task Force of the Marin County School Districts – “Final Report, March 2011.”

<sup>3</sup> The Secret Service - “The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States,” May 2002.

The safety of our children while attending school in Marin County has been a focus of previous Grand Juries. Three key recommendations from the 1995 Grand Jury report entitled, “Emergency Preparedness in Marin County Public Schools,” were to:

- *Create a single, unified safety plan*
- *Establish the role of a full time safety coordinator*
- *Organize and monitor training*

Subsequently, the 2002 Marin County Grand Jury, in its report entitled, “Emergency Preparedness and Security on School Campuses in Marin County,” stated in the beginning of their report:

*Prompted by a series of school shootings across the country, the Grand Jury, in the summer of 2001, launched an inquiry into school safety and security in Marin’s public schools. The terrorist attacks of 9-11 broadened the scope of this investigation to include preparedness for terrorists attacks as well as devastation caused by accidents or natural catastrophes.*

Both the 1995 and the 2002 reports contain important recommendations that have contributed to the goal of safe and secure campuses for public schools in Marin County.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the MCOE developed and made available to the districts and schools the Marin County Office of Education Model Plan (hereafter referred to as the MCOE Model Plan). Following the lead of the MCOE, Marin schools, under the direction of their districts, developed School Site Emergency Plans as their reference and guide for emergency preparedness. It is not clear to the Grand Jury whether these written plans are matched with a level of practice and drills necessary for maintaining alertness and response skills among the classroom personnel.

This year’s Grand Jury decided that it was time once more to evaluate Marin County schools’ emergency preparedness. Sadly, mid-way through our investigation, school emergency preparedness took on even more importance for parents and their school-age children. We began our study about a month before the December 2012 shooting deaths of 20 children and six staff at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

## **APPROACH**

The Grand Jury prepared two questionnaires: a 19-question version for the districts (See Appendix B for the response tallies), and a 32-question version for the schools (See Appendix C for the response tallies). During the month of January 2013, we obtained completed surveys from all 14 districts and 68 schools surveyed.<sup>4</sup> District superintendents or their assignees responded to the district questionnaire, and principals or their assignees responded to the schools questionnaire.

<sup>4</sup> The few districts and schools not surveyed are special purpose entities with relatively few students.

The majority of the questions in our surveys focused on the characteristics of the local emergency preparedness plan. Those questions were built on the premise that an emergency preparedness plan needs to be in place at individual schools, and asked which staff members were responsible for implementing the plan and in what capacity. The survey also asked about the types of emergency preparedness in place, how districts and schools have anticipated possible emergencies, and steps they have taken to prepare teachers, staff, students, and parents. In addition, some questions about training, drills, and emergency supplies were included.

We also:

- Conducted 15 interviews with a randomly selected group of district and school survey participants.
- Conducted interviews with senior staff at the Marin County Office of Education.
- Studied the role of the Office of Education in school emergency preparedness.
- Reviewed school emergency preparedness plans in other counties and states.
- Interviewed a police Schools Resource Officer.<sup>5</sup>
- Attended meetings at the MCOE pertaining to emergency preparedness.
- Reviewed the Marin County Office of Education Model Plan.
- Reviewed a sample of district and school emergency preparedness plans.

## DISCUSSION

Campus security does not end at a school's boundaries. Police departments, fire departments, and the Sheriff's office are first responders who have a level of familiarity with the schools in their immediate area. Some have maps of the campuses; others participate in school drills, and most have up-to-date phone listings for school administrators. In some cases, district offices are nearby or next door to the schools themselves.

Some municipalities include schools in their emergency plans and treat them within their community emergency plans. The MCOE sponsors meetings to bring together school and law enforcement representatives to share experiences and discuss better practices in dealing with law breaking and school emergencies. Also, parents who participate in parent teacher groups lend support to their schools and provide another level of safety training for their own children. All these efforts address school safety issues in a tangential but important way.

**The focus of this report is the question:**

**How well prepared for emergencies are the districts and schools?**

---

<sup>5</sup> School Resource Officers in Marin County are police officers or deputy sheriffs who receive special training that prepares them to establish effective working relationships with students in all age groups. They share responsibility for identifying and preventing inappropriate juvenile behavior on school campuses and in the community, and they are a constant presence at the schools.

Ultimately, emergency preparedness is a problematic mandate because it needs an emergency for real validation. Unlike a science experiment, we can't readily examine the inputs and test the outcomes. To deal with this issue, districts and schools have developed copious documentation with an expectation that by recognizing and writing about a potential danger, they can enhance preparedness. Although there's much more to emergency preparedness than the plans themselves, we need to begin there. What follows is a brief discussion of the Marin County Office of Education Model Plan.

**The Marin County Office of Education Model Plan**

The Model Plan was developed by the MCOE (See Appendix D for more information about the Marin County Office of Education) as a guide for the districts and schools. The Model Plan is a complete template, and includes a variety of materials for school emergency preparedness education and planning, as well as sample forms for conducting drills and training. The entire Model Plan can be downloaded from <http://mcoeweb.marin.k12.ca.us/emerp/plan.html>.

In the area of school safety and emergency preparedness, the established roles of the Marin County Office of Education are currently advisory and consulting. As a result, school districts and individual schools are at liberty to use all or any part of the Model Plan.

**The MCOE Model Plan includes 4 areas:**

MITIGATION	PREPAREDNESS	RESPONSE	RECOVERY
Defined as proactive action taken to reduce or eliminate the adverse effects of natural and man-made hazards on people and property. The goal of mitigation is to decrease or eliminate the need for response as opposed to simply increasing response capability.	Focuses on the steps that can be taken to plan for various emergency scenarios. Preparedness involves the coordination of efforts between the school district, individual schools, local public safety agencies and the community at large. Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis actually occurs.	The process of implementing appropriate actions while an emergency situation is unfolding.	Refers to the follow-up measures taken after a disaster to return the affected site back to normal operating conditions.

*(From the MCOE Model Plan)*

The Model Plan is a complete and rich source of materials for devising emergency preparedness plans in the schools. The MCOE merits our thanks for creating and maintaining this valuable source of information.

**Survey and Interviews with Districts and Schools**

**District Surveys**

The respondents were the district superintendents. It's clear from the district survey responses that the districts provide a great deal of assistance to their schools in the preparation of each school's site emergency preparedness plans. What follows is a selection from that survey

spotlighting those questions and responses that shows the districts’ involvement with the emergency preparedness plans in their schools. (See Appendix B for survey questions and district response tallies.)

**The districts are very involved in the school site emergency plans of their schools.**

*Survey Question F: Is the school district involved in the preparation and / or review of emergency preparedness plans of the schools within the district?*

	Number of districts	%
Yes	13	93
No	0	0
Some, but not all schools	1	7

**The districts take responsibility for reviewing the school site emergency plans.**

*Survey Question H: If the school district reviews updated individual school site emergency plans, how often is it done?*

	Number of Districts	%
Does not review for updates	0	0
Monthly	0	0
Quarterly	1	7
Annually	12	86
Other:	1	1

**The districts exercise a variety of standards to evaluate school site emergency plans.**

*Survey Question I: Are there standards against which school site emergency plans are evaluated by the school district? Please check all that apply.*

	%
SEMS / NIMS <sup>6</sup>	100
Education Code	64
District-wide Criteria	71
Liability Insurer	43
Requirements of Funding Source	14
FEMA <sup>6</sup>	43
California Emergency Management Agency	43
Other:	29

<sup>6</sup> The Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) is the cornerstone of California’s emergency response system and the fundamental structure for the response phase of emergency management. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is within the department of Homeland Security and provides standardized resource management procedures for coordination among different jurisdictions and organizations. FEMA is the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

**The districts play a role in the maintenance of the schools’ emergency supplies.**

*Survey Question L: Does the school district ensure that individual schools actually do obtain and maintain such needed supplies?*

	Number of districts	%
Yes	13	93
No	0	0
Does not apply	1	7

**School Surveys**

The respondents were the school administrators. (See Appendix C for survey questions and school response tallies.)

**72% of schools have a School Site Emergency Preparedness Plan based on the MCOE Model Emergency Management Plan.**

We asked questions on the schools survey that were designed to elicit the extent to which School Site Emergency Plans in place mirrored the specifications within the MCOE Model Plan. We found that school responses to nine of the survey questions provided important insights. The chart below lists those questions, their responses tallies, and Grand Jury comments.

Schools Survey Questions	Percent YES	Comments
C) Does your School Site Emergency Plan include specific language stating how to communicate with students, teachers, parents, staff and first responders during an emergency?	69 %	Communications are a key component of emergency preparedness. Some work needs to be done in this area.
E) Is your School Site Emergency Plan available on-line (including publicly available school website)?	21 %	This low percent reflects that a majority of schools perceive that putting their emergency preparedness plans in a public forum may make them available to the “bad guys.”
H) Does your School Site Emergency Plan include contact points to local community agencies who play a role in emergency preparedness?	81 %	Creating and supporting contacts to the local community is essential
I) Does your School Site Emergency Plan include protocols to implement in case of an emergency?	99 %	Creating protocols for an emergency is the essence of an emergency preparedness plan.
J) Does your school conduct an inventory of the skills needed and/or possessed by school staff?	66 %	Being aware of internal resources among the school staff can be helpful.
L) Does your School Site Emergency Plan create teams that have specific and clear responsibilities for establishing protocols and implementing them in an emergency?	94 %	Creating school teams with assigned responsibilities is the mark of a good emergency preparedness plan.
M) Does your School Site Emergency Plan make assignments to the teams by name, and are replacements made immediately when team members leave your school?	78 %	Keeping team composition and responsibilities clear in the face of staff turn-over is a challenge for individual schools.

O) Does your School Site Emergency Plan require maintaining emergency school supplies on the school campus?	96 %	Maintaining emergency school supplies are seen as important by almost all schools.
S) Does your School Site Emergency Plan require emergency drills?	99 %	Drills in response to fire or earthquake emergencies are practically universal.

Responses to three of the schools survey questions, shown in the table below, hint at an important deficiency in school emergency preparedness - a lack of solid and consistent training.

Schools Survey Questions	Responses	Comments
W) How often does the school conduct “tabletop” drills?	Does not apply 62%	A tabletop drill simulates a real drill by means of interactions with models or illustrations on a flat surface such as a table. These drills have the potential of creating more efficient training.
X) Who receives formal training on the School Site Emergency Plan? Please check all that apply.	No formal training 19 %	The School Site Emergency Plan is a complete set of documents covering many aspects of school safety and emergency preparedness. Training therefore is important.
Y) How often does the school provide formal training on the School Site Emergency Plan? Please check one only.	There is no formal training on the School Site Emergency Plan 22 %	For the 22 % with no formal training, the School Site Emergency Plan is not an available source of information for emergency preparedness.

## Interviews

At the outset of our study, we surmised that most of our time during the interviews would be spent verifying districts and schools survey results. However, we didn’t bring up the subject of the surveys during the actual interviews and found that we gained additional information about the issues of emergency preparedness from talking directly to the district and school representatives.

## Emergency Preparedness

Good - The interviews revealed that Marin districts and schools have, for the most part, documented their individual emergency procedures in clear and accessible written form. We discovered that emergency protocols vary from school to school, and the information made available to teachers and staff is adapted according to the needs and topography of the school. We saw emergency plans consisting of almost a hundred pages, and some with just a few pages. With some exceptions, the schools emergency preparedness plans we saw have a common DNA, springing from the MCOE Model Plan.

**Needs Improvement** - Unfortunately, we got the impression some school administrators felt that the document itself was the goal, and that its place on the shelf provided a guarantee of emergency preparedness. When we asked about emergency response drills and training, we were usually told the drills are done on an ongoing basis. We were not made aware of ongoing evaluation programs for classroom personnel performance during an emergency simulation. Without some form of performance evaluation, existing weaknesses in emergency preparedness will be difficult to identify and improve.

## **Emergency Supplies**

**Good** - We found that each school we visited had addressed the need for maintaining emergency supplies in its own way. These supplies should consist of, at a minimum, food and water, shelter, first aid kits, and emergency lighting for a period of 72 hours. Since the cost for these supplies is not usually a budgeted item, the funds for purchasing, storing, and replenishing are not treated as a recurring expense. As a result, the schools that had benefitted from recent fund-raising for this purpose were the schools that had up-to-date supplies, some in weather-proof walk-in metal storage units located some 30 – 40 yards away from the main school buildings. There was evidence that a few schools were in good shape in storing and maintaining emergency supplies, with the majority of schools a notch or so below this level of preparedness.

**Needs Improvement** – Nonetheless, we did notice among some of the more prepared schools a confusion over the location of the keys, whether they worked properly and who was responsible for them, all critical in an actual event that required access to these materials. In one school, which apparently lacked funding due to the absence of an active parent-teachers association, the emergency supplies were in a plastic bin about the size of a small garbage can, in the hallway outside the principal's office. Some school administrators showed us Red Cross storage units on their property, and indicated these housed the emergency supplies for their school. However, none knew what the units contained, or have keys to these units. It was their expectation the Red Cross would come to the school in an emergency to open the units. In addition to presuming these supplies are exclusively for the school, it also presumes Red Cross would be able to get to the school in a disaster. To rely upon the Red Cross and the unknown contents of these units in a school emergency is inappropriate. The schools themselves need to take responsibility for having required supplies and to have ready access to them.

## **Electronic Emergency Communications**

**Good** - Every school had a system in place to send out mass emails/telephone calls to parents. Cell phones were seen as another way to communicate if power is down and phone landlines are compromised.

**Needs Improvement** - These systems all rely on continuing power supplies. In a true emergency, cell phone channels most likely would be overwhelmed. It makes sense to design and install redundant systems that provide a better chance of maintaining open communication channels during a schools emergency. An example of a redundant system is one which provides for at least 2 different ways to communicate between districts and schools, and so if one method fails, another is still available.

## **Are Marin County Schools Prepared to Deal With Emergencies?**

If we gauge preparedness on the basis of how well the emergency plans are put together, then the answer is a qualified “yes.” The districts and schools of Marin County have developed School Site Emergency Plans that detail emergency responses for a variety of dangers, and classroom personnel are made aware of the existence of these emergency plans on a consistent basis. The elements of good emergency preparedness are in place. We found evidence that evacuation and lock-down drills are done more in some places than in others.

## **Can Marin County Schools Become Better Prepared to Deal With Emergencies?**

Yes they can. Emergency preparedness plans are inadequate if classroom personnel are not properly trained and periodically tested on the best ways to safeguard students. There is no way to know how well classroom personnel will respond to an emergency until a valid simulation can be practiced; only by measuring response results can school administration and parents become aware of what, if any, improvements need to be made. The Grand Jury concludes that what is needed is the creation of innovative training and testing programs for staff and teachers that allow feedback from participants and collect measurements leading to desired improvements.

## **Performance Evaluations**

Written School Site Emergency Plans are the necessary planks to build a strong buttress for school emergency preparedness. But the task of true emergency preparedness does not end once the School Site Emergency Plans are put into place. The plan elements must be taught and practiced, and there should be some way to determine whether these plans have been sufficiently and properly understood by classroom personnel, who are on the front lines of emergency preparedness.

The 1995 Grand Jury report also recommended:

“...a performance/evaluation system established to gauge drills, training, supplies, communication functions on a regular basis.”

The children who were born in 1995 are now graduating from high school, and the recommendation for performance evaluations for teachers dealing with school safety is even more appropriate now than it was 18 years ago.

Performance evaluation systems for emergency preparedness drills appear to have great potential for strengthening school emergency preparedness and those who are not connected with the schools system could very well be puzzled by a lack of such performance evaluation, particularly since the concept is so common in other areas of our society.

There are three important factors that may account for the inattention to this issue by the districts and schools:

- There is a great deal of pressure to teach the curriculum.<sup>7</sup>
- Training of teachers in emergency preparedness costs money.
- There are large gaps in time between true emergencies.

Of course, the curriculum is very important, and yes, it costs money to pull teachers out of class to train them on emergency preparedness. And yes, since true emergencies are so infrequent, it's easy to minimize their importance. But the idea of preparing for an infrequent danger is a very common one to all of us. Example: automobile seatbelts.

An opportunity exists in Marin County to establish solid metrics that a school or district can use to measure how well they are doing compared to other schools or districts. In addition, these assessments could be used to:

- Monitor internal improvements
- Develop and communicate best practices
- Report to parents how well the schools are performing

### **Sharing Best Practices**

In speaking with representatives from schools and districts, we found that those spokespersons and their districts / schools are sources of good ideas for furthering school safety and managing the process. Clearly, one of the most important resources is school personnel - that is, the collective knowledge that the districts and the schools have accumulated over the years of planning emergency preparedness.

One example is the collection of short mini-videos available on the Mill Valley School District's public website on these topics:

- [Earthquake](#)
- [Using a Fire Extinguisher](#)
- [Applying First Aid](#)
- [Emergency Container Access](#)
- [Search and Rescue](#)
- [Student Release](#)

Each topic is presented in the video by a person who is brief and to the point. The idea is communicated without wasted time. (<http://www.mvschools.org/Page/1764>)

There may be hundreds of examples like these throughout Marin County districts and schools. In every area of emergency preparedness, we believe that there are "best practices" in operation somewhere in the county. Every innovative approach taken by a district or school can inspire other districts and schools to develop inventive ways to improve dealing with emergencies.

---

<sup>7</sup> The state-mandated Common Core Standards, a set of common standards and assessments for English language arts and mathematics. ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)), are a current focus.

## School System Communications

An important subset of school preparedness concerns the ways and means of providing audio connections during an emergency. There are eight different communication channels in Marin County schools needing coordination:

- MCOE to districts
- District to district
- District to school
- School to school
- School to fire and police
- School to campus
- School to parents
- Parents to school

It is time to consider the feasibility of modern communications systems to accommodate all of the various communication needs of Marin County schools.<sup>8</sup> This will not be easy because the County, especially in the west, has such a predominance of hills and canyons that are not friendly to radio waves. To create redundancy during an emergency, it makes sense to expect that a long-term solution is not any one system, but a combination of ways to keep communication channels open during a variety of events, among them loss of power, and cell phone failures due to overuse.

## Countywide Emergency Management in Marin

The Grand Jury believes that it is time for Marin County to move to a countywide approach for public school emergency preparedness. Up to now, we have become used to thinking of each district as the essential pivot point of all things pertaining to that district. Each district has its preferences when it comes to a variety of issues, and the ability to go its own way is one of the key features in maintaining separate districts. Nonetheless, the Grand Jury believes that the safety of our children is an issue that transcends the notion of the separation among districts. All parents of all children want the safest schools possible and they don't care where an idea came from if it contributes to that goal.

A good starting point for countywide emergency preparedness management is the four subjects mentioned earlier:

- Performance Evaluations
- Sharing Best Practices
- School System Communications
- Emergency Supplies

These areas are of common concern to the County and, even more, can be addressed by Marin-wide cooperation.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Grand Jury 2007-2008 report, "Emergency Communications at Marin Schools: A Tale of Catastrophe," and Grand Jury 2000-2001 report, "Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA)."

## Marin Countywide Cooperation is the Rule

This notion of a common action benefitting all the students of Marin is not a new one. Under the aegis of the MCOE, these organizations provide services to students in the districts:

- Schools Rule
- County Learning Cooperative
- School/Law Enforcement Partnership
- Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council
- Parents Disaster Advisory Council
- Joint Legislative Advisory Committee
- Marin County School Boards Association
- Marin County School Volunteers

Another advantage of countywide cooperation can be the sharing of resources and expenses. For instance, if performance evaluation can't get off the ground because the schools and districts can't individually expend the resources required to create a viable program, a countywide approach might be able to aggregate the resources necessary for such an effort.

### Examples of other areas of potential collaboration:

- Preparedness Training
- Site Visitation
- Safety Audits
- Grant writing
- Skills Development
- Emergency supplies
- Communications with parents.
- Annual report to the public

To bring the districts together in a shared and common purpose requires strong leadership backed by all elements of the public education community in Marin County. The leadership must possess the experience, the knowledge and connections to support and move forward an action plan for countywide school safety.

### **This leadership is now in place at the Marin County Office of Education.**

The aforementioned 1995 Grand Jury report entitled, "Emergency Preparedness in Marin County Public Schools," included this recommendation:

*1(d) A full time safety coordinator for MCOE, whose explicit responsibility is school safety preparedness, should be established. A communications system between this coordinator and the district's schools should be developed and implemented.*

The current Grand Jury, paraphrasing the 1995 suggestion, makes the following recommendation:

“A role within the MCOE for purposes of leading and coordinating countywide emergency preparedness for all the public schools should be implemented.”

The MCOE has the credibility to build a consensus that can benefit and prosper from a countywide perspective. Emergency preparedness should not be handled piece-meal, but treated as a Marin County issue of paramount importance. (See Appendix D for information about the Marin County Office of Education.)

### **Shared Emergency Preparedness**

The Marin County Office of Education is positioned to lead the process of schools emergency preparedness. Its many years as a source and reference for school emergency preparedness qualify it to pull the parties together in a cohesive working group for the benefit of the students of Marin County.

The MCOE currently hosts a group called the Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council. As presently constituted, this group includes district-based representatives in charge of logistics for their districts. Along with MCOE representatives, they meet quarterly to exchange information pertaining to schools emergency preparedness planning.

The Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council Vision Statement declares:

*All Marin County schools will have a unified School Emergency Plan, in cooperation with local safety agencies that provide for staff and student emergency response training, disaster simulation drills, storage of emergency medical/nutrition supplies and a coordinated system of emergency communications to deploy appropriate resources during an emergency.*

The Grand Jury believes this vision statement should become a true goal, complete with timelines, expectations and annual reporting. It's convenient that the Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council (MSEPC) already exists, with a viable vision statement. What remains now is for the MCOE to strengthen this group as the point of departure for unifying school emergency planning in Marin County.

In the past, MCOE has, in effect, made suggestions to the districts and schools about emergency preparedness. We don't expect the MCOE to change and issue mandates now. We do support them taking a leadership position consisting of issuing guidelines, suggesting standards, and drawing timelines. Naturally, the district representatives on the MSEPC would advise and consent as to the content of these guidelines and standards.

School safety officers representing each school should be the channel of communication between the MSEPC and the school. Subsequently, the MCOE would make annual reports to the citizens of Marin County, detailing how well each district and school has conformed to these guidelines.

In March of 2011, a final report was issued by the Efficiency and Effectiveness Task Force<sup>9</sup> convened to determine whether Marin County school district consolidation made sense. This effort arose out of a background of questioning the need for so many districts. In tandem, the effect of district collaboration through shared services was also investigated. (See Executive Summary in Appendix E.)

After some review, the idea of consolidation was tabled, and the focus of the analysis turned to the advantages of district collaboration. Later the same year, the State Legislative Analyst Office came to the same conclusion to leave districts as they are.<sup>10</sup>

In the Executive Summary of the Marin County report, the first two recommendations of the Task Force were that local school districts:

1. Develop shared services goals and accountability measures for ongoing countywide educational committees.
2. Include goals for shared services in district strategic plans.

In addition the report referred to a study by Deloitte Consulting LLP in which 7 benefits of Marin shared services were touted. One of these benefits is especially pertinent to our report:

### **BENEFIT #3: STANDARDIZE PROCESSES**

**The shared services model helps districts and schools standardize approaches to problems across the organization. When processes are consistent, performance is more likely to be predictable and improvements easier to implement. Moreover, when processes are transparent, staff and stakeholders have more realistic expectations.**

The Task Force report wanted to make it clear that the advantages of standardized processes are not valid reasons for district consolidation, since the “shared services model” is a part of the makeup of the current districts and nothing would be gained in any consolidation.

Countywide emergency planning is the ideal candidate for standardization. Consistency, predictable performance, implementation of improvements, and transparency are precisely what is needed for emergency preparedness.

Parents of Marin County students should expect that their schools and districts are part of an emergency preparedness partnership that includes all of the county public schools, under the review of a countywide group that reports how well emergency preparedness is progressing and what additional improvements are required.

---

<sup>9</sup> Task Force, Op. Cit.

<sup>10</sup> Legislative Analyst report entitled “An Analysis of School District Consolidation May 2, 2011”

## FINDINGS

- F1. Most Marin County schools have developed and written School Site Emergency Plans and provided for fire and earthquake drills on an ongoing basis. Provisions for emergency supplies are commonplace as are communication methods for contacting parents in the case of school emergencies.
- F2. Although most Marin County schools have School Site Emergency Plans, there are no countywide standards, and as a result, emergency preparedness means different things to different schools.
- F3. Marin County schools do not provide an established and consistent level of training for teachers and other classroom personnel as it pertains to the safety of children under their care.
- F4. Marin County schools do not practice consistent performance evaluation against established standards for comparing performance across schools and for measuring improvement within schools.
- F5. Marin County schools do not adequately report their level of emergency preparedness to parents and citizens.
- F6. Most Marin County schools have appropriate emergency supplies on their campus, but some schools have inadequate supplies or inadequate access to those supplies, and some other schools rely upon Red Cross for all such needs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. The Marin County Office of Education take a strong leadership role with the current Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council, whose aim in turn should be to manage emergency preparedness activities on a countywide basis.
- R2. The Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council create guidelines in the areas of school safety and emergency preparedness. Every school should name a school safety officer who interacts with the Council. The Council should be the decision-making body for all Marin public school safety and emergency preparedness issues.
- R3. The Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council develop countywide performance standards, goals, and testing in the areas of school safety and emergency preparedness.
- R4. The Marin Schools Emergency Preparedness Council report to the citizens of Marin County, on an annual basis, the state of emergency preparedness of all our districts and schools.
- R5. All Marin County schools must, independent of Red Cross or other non-school sources, purchase and maintain appropriate emergency supplies on their campus.

## REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal code section 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies:

- Marin County Office of Education to all Findings and Recommendations
- Bolinas-Stinson Union High School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Dixie School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Kentfield School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Lagunitas School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Larkspur-Corte Madera School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Marin County Office of Education to all Findings and Recommendations
- Mill Valley School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Novato Unified School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Reed Union School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Ross Valley School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- San Rafael Elem/High School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Sausalito Marin City School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Shoreline Unified School District to all Findings and Recommendations
- Tamalpais Union High School District to all Findings and Recommendations

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.

## Appendix A

*List of survey-participating districts and schools*

<u>District</u>	<u>School</u>
Bolinas-Stinson Union High School District	Bolinas Campus and Stinson Campus*
Dixie School District	Dixie School
	Mary E. Silveira School
	Miller Creek Middle School
	Vallecito School
Kentfield School District	Bacich School
	Kent Middle School
Laguna Joint School District**	Laguna Elementary
Lagunitas School District	Lagunitas, San Geronimo Valley Schools*
Larkspur-Corte Madera School District	Hall Middle School
	Neil Cummins
Lincoln School District**	Lincoln Elementary School
Marin County Office of Education	Braun
	County Community / Phoenix Academy
	Grant Grover
	Marindale / Magnolia Park / Granada
	Walker Creek Ranch
Mill Valley School District	Edna Maguire School
	Mill Valley Middle School
	Old Mill School
	Park Elementary School
	Strawberry Point School
	Tam Valley Elementary
Nicasio School District**	Nicasio School
Novato Unified School District	Hamilton School
	Hill Education Center
	Loma Verde Elementary
	Lu Sutton Elementary
	Lynwood Elementary
	Novato High School
	Olive Elementary
	Pleasant Valley Elementary
	Rancho Elementary
	San Jose Middle School
	San Marin High School
	San Ramon Elementary
	Sinaloa Middle School
Reed Union School District	Bel Aire School
	Del Mar School
	Reed School

Ross School District**	Ross School
Ross Valley School District	Brookside Elementary School
	Hidden Valley Elementary School
	Manor Elementary School
	Wade Thomas Elementary
	White Hill Middle School
San Rafael Elem/High School District	Bahia Vista Elementary
	Coleman Elementary
	Davidson Middle School
	Glenwood Elementary
	Laurel Dell Elementary
	Madrone High School
	San Pedro Elementary
	San Rafael High School
	Short School
	Sun Valley Elementary
	Terra Linda High School
	Venetia Valley K-8
Sausalito Marin City School District	Bayside Elementary
	Martin Luther King Jr. Academy
	Willow Creek Academy
Shoreline Unified School District	Bodega Bay and Tomales Elementary*
	Tomales High School
	West Marin and Inverness
Tamalpais Union High School District	Drake High School
	Redwood High School
	Tamalpais High School
Union Joint School District**	Union Elementary School

\* = Combined survey results for small schools in same district

\*\* = One-school districts not participating in district survey.

**APPENDIX B**

district\_sur\_053113

Marin County Schools Districts Emergency Preparedness Survey (14 districts)  
 January 14, 2013

A) Does this school district have a district-wide Emergency Preparedness Plan?

	Number of districts	%
Yes	14	100
No	0	0

B) Does this school district have a designated individual in charge of its Emergency Preparedness Plan?

	Number of districts	%
Yes	14	100
No	0	0

C) Is there a school district plan to activate an Emergency Operations Center that organizes information and responses to emergencies affecting its schools?

	Number of districts	%
Yes	14	100
No	0	0

D) Has the school district designated individuals to serve as the following Emergency Operations Center staff? Please check all that apply.

	Number of Districts	%
Does not apply	0	0
Emergency Operations Center Director	11	79
Public Information Officer	10	71
Agency Liaison	9	64
Safety Officer	8	57
Operations Section Chief	11	79
Planning Section Chief	10	71
Logistics Section Chief	9	64
Financial / Administration Section Chief	11	79
Specify Other:		

E) Does your district-wide Emergency Preparedness Plan establish personnel responsibilities for the following scenarios? Please check all that apply.

	%		%		%
Does Not Apply	0	Explosion	79	Poisoning	57
Animal Disturbance	50	Hazardous Substance	79	Utility Failure	71
Earthquake	93	Kidnapping	57	Criminal Acts	64
Death on Campus	71	Contagious Disease	64	Flood	86
Intruder on Campus	86	Terrorism	71	Hostage Event	64
Missing Student	71	Bus Accident	43	Assaults	57
Disabling Weather	79	Fire	93	Weapon On Campus	71
Bomb Threat	79	Medical Emergency	79	Specify Other:	14

F) Is the school district involved in the preparation and / or review of emergency preparedness plans of the schools within the district?

	Number of districts	%
Yes	13	93
No	0	0
Some, but not all schools	1	7

G) In what ways is the school district involved in the preparation and / or review of emergency preparedness plans of the schools within the district? Please check all that apply.

	%		%		%
Does Not Apply	0	School Site Inspections	100	Inventory of School Supplies	93
Training / Exercises	100	Interpretation of Applicable Law	79	Equipment / Supplies	93
Plan Review / Approval	100	Critical Incident Debriefing	93	After Incident Studies / Analysis	86
Application for Funds / Grants	43	Plan Development	93	Periodic Meetings	100
Information on District Website	71	Coordination of Resources	93	Specify Other:	14
Coordination with Other Districts	64	Written Materials	93		
Information Bulletins / Updates	93	Coordination with Other Agencies	100		

H) If the school district reviews updated individual school site emergency plans, how often is it done?

	Number of Districts	%
Does not review for updates	0	0
Monthly	0	0
Quarterly	1	7
Annually	12	86
Other:	1	7

I) Are there standards against which school site emergency plans are evaluated by the school district?  
Please check all that apply.

	%
SEMS / NIMS	100
Education Code	64
District-wide Criteria	71
Liability Insurer	43
Requirements of Funding Source	14
FEMA	43
California Emergency Management Agency	43
Other:	29

J) Does your district-wide **Emergency Preparedness Plan** require the schools to maintain emergency supplies on the school campus? Please check all that apply.

	%		%
Does Not Apply	0	Cots	36
Disaster First Aid	86	Flashlights	86
Food	93	Temporary Toilets	50
Batteries	86	Two-way radios	93
Blankets	93	Face Masks	86
Generator	36	Other:	36
Potable Water	93		

K) Does your district-wide Emergency Preparedness Plan identify supplies which are needed for the following scenarios? Please check all that apply.

	%		%		%
Does Not Apply	0	Explosion	79	Poisoning	57
Animal Disturbance	50	Hazardous Substance	79	Utility Failure	79
Earthquake	100	Kidnapping	50	Criminal Acts	64
Death on Campus	71	Contagious Disease	79	Flood	93
Intruder on Campus	100	Terrorism	71	Hostage Event	57
Missing Student	71	Bus Accident	50	Assaults	50
Disabling Weather	86	Fire	100	Weapon On Campus	79
Bomb Threat	86	Medical Emergency	86	Specify Other:	7

L) Does the school district ensure that individual schools actually do obtain and maintain such needed supplies?

	Number of districts	%
Yes	13	93
No	0	0
Does not apply	1	7

M) What is the biggest single constraint on your ability to plan for school emergencies? Please check one.

	%
<i>There are no constraints</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Limited Time</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Limited Funds</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Logistical Issues</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Supplies / Storage Space</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Predicting the Unknown</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Staffing / Personnel Issues</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Competing Priorities</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Other:</i>	<i>7</i>

Note: The District survey contained 19 questions, but only 13 are reported above. The missing 6 questions were used for collecting demographic data.

## Appendix C

school\_sur\_053113

***Marin County Schools Emergency Preparedness Survey (68 schools)  
January 14, 2013***

*A) Have you (or a designated person at your school) read the Marin County Schools Model Emergency Management Plan?*

	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>18</i>

*B) Does your school have a School Site Emergency Plan (based on the Marin County Schools Model Emergency Management Plan)?*

	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Yes, but not based on the Marin County Schools Model Emergency Management Plan.</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>27</i>

*C) Does your School Site Emergency Plan include specific language stating how to communicate with students, teachers, parents, staff and first responders during an emergency?*

	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>31</i>

*D) When new teachers or staff arrive at your school, how long is it before they are introduced to your School Site Emergency Plan? (Enter earliest time period.) Please check one only.*

	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Within the first day</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Within the first week</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Within the first month</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>After the first month</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Other or 'Never'</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>12</i>

*E) Is your School Site Emergency Plan available on-line (including publicly available school website)?*

	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>79</i>

*F) When was your School Site Emergency Plan last revised? Please check one only.*

	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>This year 2012</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>2010 – 2011</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>2008 – 2010</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>2004 – 2007</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Before 2004</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Has not been revised</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>

G) Who is responsible for your School Site Emergency Plan review and approval? Please check one only.

	Number of Schools	%
Principal Alone or With Others	24	36
School Administrators	10	15
District Office Staff	13	19
School Board	1	1
School Site Councils	11	16
Assistant Principal	2	3
Specify Other:	7	10

H) Does your School Site Emergency Plan include contact points to local community agencies who play a role in emergency preparedness?

	Number of schools	%
Yes	55	81
No	13	19

I) Does your School Site Emergency Plan include protocols to implement in case of an emergency?

	Number of schools	%
Yes	67	99
No	1	1

J) Does your school conduct an inventory of the skills needed and/or possessed by school staff?

	Number of schools	%
Yes	45	66
No	23	34

K) Have your school personnel been trained in the past 24 months on any of the following? Please check all that apply.

	%
No Training in the Last 24 Months	26
CPR	63
Basic First Aid	54
SERT(School Emergency Response Team)	18
Damage Assessment	10
Search and Rescue Techniques	31
School Emergency Management Team	29
School Incident Command System	34
National Incident Management System (NIMS IS-100.SCa)	31
Specify Other:	13

L) Does your School Site Emergency Plan create teams that have specific and clear responsibilities for establishing protocols and implementing them in an emergency?

	Number of schools	%
Yes	64	94
No	4	6

M) Does your School Site Emergency Plan make assignments to the teams by name, and are replacements made immediately when team members leave your school?

	Number of schools	%
Yes	53	78
No	15	22

N) Does your School Site Emergency Plan establish personnel responsibilities for the following scenarios? Please check all that apply.

	%		%		%
Does Not Apply	4	Explosion	40	Poisoning	31
Animal Disturbance	15	Hazardous Substance	40	Utility Failure	31
Earthquake	85	Kidnapping	9	Criminal Acts	24
Death on Campus	29	Contagious Disease	26	Flood	44
Intruder on Campus	74	Terrorism	16	Hostage Event	18
Missing Student	40	Bus Accident	6	Assaults	29
Disabling Weather	38	Fire	79	Weapon On Campus	43
Bomb Threat	54	Medical Emergency	62	Specify Other:	10

O) Does your School Site Emergency Plan require maintaining emergency school supplies on the school campus?

	Number of schools	%
Yes	65	96
No	3	4

P) Does your School Site Emergency Plan identify supplies which are needed for the following scenarios? Please check all that apply.

	%		%		%
Does Not Apply	10	Explosion	41	Poisoning	24
Animal Disturbance	19	Hazardous Substance	51	Utility Failure	37
Earthquake	85	Kidnapping	19	Criminal Acts	25
Death on Campus	29	Contagious Disease	22	Flood	43
Intruder on Campus	69	Terrorism	26	Hostage Event	22
Missing Student	38	Bus Accident	13	Assaults	25
Disabling Weather	44	Fire	79	Weapon On Campus	40
Bomb Threat	54	Medical Emergency	60	Specify Other:	9

Q) If your School Site Emergency Plan requires the school to maintain emergency supplies on campus, please check all that apply.

	%		%		%
Does Not Apply	3	Generator	29	Two-way radios	75
Disaster First Aid	93	Drinking Water	94	Face Masks	56
Food	90	Cots	37	Specify Other:	13
Batteries	88	Flashlights	93		
Blankets	82	Temporary Toilets	57		

R) To whom is your School Site Emergency Plan made available?  
Please check all that apply.

	%		%		%
<i>Does Not Apply</i>	0	<i>Parents</i>	68	<i>Fire Department</i>	43
<i>Teachers</i>	100	<i>Students</i>	34	<i>Marin County Office of Ed.</i>	46
<i>Teacher Aids</i>	84	<i>Local First Responders</i>	40	<i>School District Office</i>	76
<i>Non-teaching staff</i>	81	<i>Law Enforcement Agency</i>	43	<i>Specify Other:</i>	13

S) Does your School Site Emergency Plan require emergency drills?

	Number of schools	%
<i>Yes</i>	67	99
<i>No</i>	1	1

T) Who participates in the emergency drills?  
Please check all that apply.

	%
<i>Does Not Apply</i>	0
<i>Teaching Staff</i>	100
<i>Non-teaching Staff</i>	96
<i>Students</i>	100
<i>Administrators</i>	100
<i>Specify Other:</i>	29

U) How often does the school hold emergency drills?  
Please check one only.

	%
<i>Does Not Apply</i>	0
<i>Monthly</i>	68
<i>Quarterly</i>	18
<i>Annually</i>	4
<i>Specify Other:</i>	10

V) If your School Site Emergency Plan requires “tabletop” drills, who are the participants?  
Please check one only.

	%
<i>Does Not Apply</i>	60
<i>Teaching Staff</i>	15
<i>Non-teaching Staff</i>	0
<i>Students</i>	0
<i>Administrators</i>	10
<i>Specify Other:</i>	15

W) How often does the school conduct “tabletop” drills?  
Please check one only.

	%
<i>Does Not Apply</i>	62
<i>Monthly</i>	1
<i>Quarterly</i>	3
<i>Annually</i>	26
<i>Specify Other:</i>	7

X) Who receives formal training on the School Site Emergency Plan?  
Please check all that apply.

	%
<i>There is no formal training on the School Site Emergency Plan</i>	19
<i>Teaching Staff</i>	66
<i>Non-teaching Staff</i>	56
<i>Students</i>	26
<i>Administrators</i>	72
<i>Parents/Caretakers</i>	6
<i>Specify Other:</i>	3

Y) How often does the school provide formal training on the School Site Emergency Plan?  
Please check one only.

	%
<i>There is no formal training on the School Site Emergency Plan</i>	22
<i>Monthly</i>	0
<i>Quarterly</i>	0
<i>Annually</i>	63
<i>Specify Other:</i>	15

Note: The Schools survey contained 32 questions, but only 25 are reported above. The missing 7 questions were used for collecting demographic data.

**Appendix D** (from the Marin County Public Schools Service Program District Information, 2010-2011)**MARIN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION****Services and Programs**

The Marin County Office of Education exists to provide leadership and service as a community asset that earns and enjoys the respect and support of our students, parents and community taxpayers. One of 58 county offices which form the intermediate level of California's education system, the Marin County Office of Education actively and effectively links state policy to local programs and needs. This link is made in several ways by:

- providing programs and services to prepare students to be productive citizens;
- establishing tangible, measurable criteria for the evaluation of all Marin County Office of Education's programs and services;
- insuring the quality of Marin County Office of Education's programs and services by comparative and analytical evaluation of student achievement;
- demonstrating the cost-efficient utilization of available resources by monitoring the balance between commitment and results;
- providing effective, centralized services to the districts and schools in Marin County; and
- advancing technology and telecommunications for Marin's students and the community.

The public served by the Marin County Office of Education voices its educational priorities through the election of the County Superintendent, who is the chief administrative officer and educational leader of the agency. A seven-member County Board of Education is elected by Trustee Areas to serve as educational and financial stewards for county voters and their communities.

**County Office Chief Administrative Officer**

Mary Jane Burke, Marin County Superintendent of Schools

**County Programs and Services**

The Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) specializes in meeting the needs of local educators and students. In addition *to* offering a wide variety of services to meet the diversified needs of the county's school districts, the office also works closely with community groups and other educational agencies.

There are 19 public school districts in Marin County. Each district is governed by its own elected board of trustees, is supported by both local and state funds and is responsible for the policies and operations of the schools within its boundaries.

The Marin County Superintendent of Schools and the Marin County Office of Education work with the California Department of Education to assist Marin County school districts and students. This assistance is given through a variety of resources, support services and student programs. County Office of Education webpage is at <http://marinschools.org>.

## Appendix E

### Executive Summary

(Final Report of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Task Force of the Marin County School Districts, March 2011)

In fall 2009, a group of superintendents and school board trustees came together with the support of the Marin County Office of Education to review potential opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public school districts in Marin. The financial issues facing school districts compelled the need for immediate cost-saving solutions. Two basic paths emerged from the initial meetings:

1. To study district consolidation, and
2. To study district collaboration through shared services.

A common and recurring question from the community, especially during tough economic times, is “Why are there so many school districts in Marin?” One motive for the question is that consolidation (merging two or more elementary, or two or more high school districts) and/or unification (merging an elementary and a high school district) could be more cost effective, thus saving the taxpayers money. In researching Marin County school district organizational history, the Efficiency and Effectiveness (EE) Task Force discovered that during the most recent 20-year history there have been a few successful district consolidation efforts and many unsuccessful ones. Similarly, there are many successful shared services models and, as well, many possibilities for enhancing current efforts to maximize efficiencies. In Marin, school districts focus on local needs in the context of the unique communities they serve. Local control in each school district can be described as:

- Locally-elected school boards
- Attention to unique needs of the local student population
- Local funding support (parcel taxes, foundations, PTA’s)
- Strong local commitment and investment
- Accessibility to trustees and top staff

It is clear that in the community and among committee members there are strong and diverging views on school district consolidation. There is consensus, however, that many factors impede implementation and cost savings. The most salient of these is the existence of strong core values in support of local control in each diverse community in Marin. School district consolidation requires grassroots efforts, significant community planning and coordination, and local voter approval. Such efforts can take a decade or more to implement successfully. Given the short-term nature of the Task Force and due to state and local economic needs, the Task Force focused its efforts on recommendations for shared services that could be reasonably implemented in the next few years.

The Task Force developed an approach and a set of four recommendations to support ongoing collaborative efforts among local school districts:

1. Develop shared services goals and accountability measures for ongoing countywide educational committees.
2. Include goals for shared services in district strategic plans.
3. Institute collaborative purchasing programs.
4. Develop and refine consistent financial analysis reports.

These recommendations are aimed at ensuring the sustainability of quality educational programs and the maintenance of local control and community participation in schools.