

H. CARL McCALL  
STATE COMPTROLLER



A.E. SMITH STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12236

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April 10, 1998

Mr. Rudolph F. Crew, Ed. D.  
Chancellor  
New York City Board of Education  
110 Livingston Street  
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Re: Report 97-F-41

Dear Chancellor Crew:

According to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article X, Section 5 of the State Constitution, we reviewed the actions taken by officials of the NYC Board of Education as of October 27, 1997 to implement the recommendations included in our prior audit report A-7-95. This report, which was issued October 9, 1995 examined the adequacy of the system the Board had in place to track the number of school safety incidents.

**Background**

The New York City Board of Education's Division of School Safety (Division) is responsible for maintaining a safe and secure environment to ensure that schools are free from disruption. The Division's 1997-98 operating budget is approximately \$83 million. It deploys approximately 3,200 school safety officers (officers) in the Board's 176 high schools, 184 middle schools, and 576 of the 651 elementary schools. The Division is also responsible for collecting and reporting data on school safety incidents, and has an administrative and support staff of 159.

The Division uses a computer database to capture the number of school safety incidents that occur at schools. Statistics from this database are reported to the Chancellor and used by the Board to publicly report twice a year on school safety. The Division produces a midyear report summarizing, by school, the incidents that occurred during the first half of the school year, July 1, through December 31, and a year-end report, covering the full school year, July 1 through June 30. The Board issues these reports, which are the only measures the public has of the extent of school safety incidents in the schools.

## **Summary Conclusions**

In our prior audit report, we found that the 1994-95 midyear report presented by the Board to the public was misleading because it understated the extent of school safety incidents actually occurring in the schools. We found that the information in the Division's database significantly understated the number of school safety incidents that occurred at seven sampled schools, and believed that this under-reporting was indicative of a systemic problem.

We made six recommendations to improve the accuracy of the Board's school safety incident reporting system. In its response the Board indicated that it was in general agreement with our recommendations and that it had already taken steps to implement many of them.

In our follow-up review, we found that the New York City Board of Education's Division of School Safety installed a comprehensive computerized reporting system which captures incident data from a number of different sources. All reports and safety alerts are centralized at a newly established Command and Control Center which collects and monitors incident data on a real time basis. With this system in place, the Board is able to capture school safety incidents more accurately. In addition, we noted that there may still be several schools where the principal is not reporting safety incidents. However, the computerized reporting system should be able to obtain such information from other sources such as the Office of Student Information Services. This follow-up review did not include a test of the accuracy of the data in the system or an evaluation of the Division's effectiveness in resolving reported incidents.

## **Summary of Status of Implementation**

Of the six prior audit recommendations, four have been fully implemented, one has been partially implemented and one is no longer applicable.

## **Follow-up Observations**

### **Recommendation 1**

*The Chancellor should: Issue a memorandum to all school principals restating their responsibility for reporting all school safety incidents occurring at their schools to the Division of School Safety. The memorandum should include specific guidelines and examples of school safety incidents that require Incident Reports.*

Status - Fully Implemented

Agency Action - The Board revised the Chancellor's Regulation A-412 , Security in the School, on November 22, 1996. This regulation sets forth the responsibilities of school officials and central staff for maintaining security in the schools. It holds the principal responsible for maintaining security, safety and discipline in the schools. To meet this responsibility, principals must develop plans,

programs and systems which provide for the good order and safety of the schools.

In addition, a "School Safety Packet" approved by the Chancellor and by the Executive Director of the Division was distributed to all schools prior to the start of the 1996-97 school year. The "School Safety Packet" included the following: (1) the Chancellor's Memo, emphasizing that school safety is a top priority of his administration, (2) a revised School Safety Report Form, (3) a revised Superintendent/Principal Suspension Form, and (4) two copies of the Board's Citywide Standards of Conduct and Uniform Disciplinary Measures, which encompasses specific guidelines and examples of school safety incidents which require incident reports and levels of priority.

### **Recommendation 2**

*The Division of School Safety should: Establish a mechanism to monitor the submission of the Incident Reports by principals by utilizing suspension information available from the Office of Student Information Services, as well as Operations Reports that have been filed.*

Status - Fully Implemented

Agency Action - Suspension Reports include a clearly identified space where principals enter the School Safety Report preassigned number, thereby establishing not only a matching of these two documents, but also a control mechanism for ensuring that Safety Reports are coordinated with suspension reports and are properly submitted. In addition, the Division obtains suspension data from the Office of Student Information Services, as well as incident information from Student Security Officers in the field which is downloaded into the Division's database. Information from these different sources can be matched by the Division. The Division prepares a reconciliation report which matches the information on the suspension list to the listing of Incident Reports.

### **Recommendation 3**

*The Division of School Safety should: Ensure that future reports on school safety incidents include incidents resulting in student suspensions.*

Status - Partially Implemented

Agency Action - The various mechanisms discussed above serve to ensure that incident reports include incidents resulting in suspensions. However, there may be several schools where the principal is not submitting incident reports. If the incident is not observed by a School Safety Officer, the Division would be unaware of the incident until completing their reconciliation with suspension reports submitted to the Office of Student Information Services.

Auditors' Comments - Officials at the Division indicated that they are developing an exception report which will identify the schools that are not complying with incident reporting instructions. The Division also plans to follow up with any schools that require or request assistance or training with

the process or mechanics of incident reporting.

#### **Recommendation 4**

*The Division of School Safety should: Ensure that all Scanning Reports are submitted by the school safety officers, and that the information from these reports is entered into its data base and reconciled to suspension information.*

Status - Fully Implemented

Agency Action - The Division includes scanning data in its database and prepares an annual incident report based on scanning findings. This report matches the Office of Student Information Services identification number with the identification number of the school safety officer's report. The information is further reconciled with incident reports submitted to the Division.

#### **Recommendation 5**

*The Division of School Safety should: Issue a memorandum reiterating the requirement that school officers must report all known school safety incidents so that Operations Reports can be prepared.*

Status - Fully Implemented

Agency Action - The Division issued Operations Order 94/5 023 on February 16, 1995, which reiterated the requirement that School Safety Officers report all safety related incidents to the Division as well as to their respective principal. All commands were instructed to re-issue Operations Order 94/S 023 on October 2, 1995, and to include this information in the next scheduled Group Leaders meetings. The training Academy was instructed to stress this requirement in all upcoming new recruit training classes and to include it in the terms in-service curriculum.

#### **Recommendation 6**

*The Division of School Safety should: Periodically reconcile the Operations Reports in the borough offices' log books to those in the Division data base.*

Status - No Longer Applicable

Agency Action - Operations Reports are currently submitted directly to the Division and not to the borough offices. Therefore, there is no information that has to be reconciled.

Major contributors to this report were William Challice, Frank Russo, Aaron Fruchter , James Pugliese, Leota Bernard and Frank Torres.

We would appreciate your response to this report within 30 days, including any action planned or taken to address the unresolved matters discussed in this report. We also thank the management and staff of the Board for the courtesies extended to our auditors during this review.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carmen Maldonado".

Carmen Maldonado  
Audit Director

cc: Len Davis, Auditor General  
Michael King, Project Manager  
Ramon Garcia, Chief of Command Control  
Robert L. King, DOB