



RUSS CURTIS

SCHOOL CRIME REPORT CARD: The push to control campus crime prompted a crackdown on educators who fail to report incidents to the state.

Over School Crime Reports

Legislature Wants To Punish Principals

BY SIGRID BATHEN
RECORDER CAPITAL CORRESPONDENT

SACRAMENTO — Legislation making school principals subject to misdemeanor prosecution if they fail to report crimes on their campuses is expected to be introduced this week as the California Legislature returned for its 1988 session.

The bill, AB 2583, by Assemblyman Larry Stirling, R-San Diego, chairman of the Assembly Committee on Public Safety, drafted the measure in response to a comprehensive survey on school crime recently released by the state Department of Education.

The survey found that 162,734 incidents of crime and violence occurred on public school campuses from July 1, 1985, through June 30, 1986, including 15 homicides and property crimes causing \$23.3 million in losses to school districts.

But as disturbing as those statistics might be, they are not complete. According to the report, 50 of California's 1,026 school districts failed to

provide the required information.

Of the 50 districts that failed to report statistics for one or both six-month reporting periods, several are in the Bay Area, including:

- Emery Unified School District in Alameda County.
- Oakley Union Elementary in Contra Costa County.
- Dixie, Kentfield and Laguna Joint Elementary districts in Marin County.
- Ravenswood City Elementary in San Mateo County.
- Montebello Elementary in Santa Clara County.
- Harmony Union and Horicon Elementary districts in Sonoma County.

Several districts said they since have brought their reporting up to date. Others said the reporting requirement places an unnecessary burden on the mostly small elementary districts. One was even unaware the reports were ever required.

Linda Levasseur, administrative assistant at the 28-student rural

SEE BILL, PAGE 7

Bill Could Force Principals to Report Crimes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Montebello Elementary School in the hills overlooking Cupertino, said the required reports have been filed for subsequent periods. Basically, she said, there is nothing to report.

"It's a really long, ridiculous report," she said. "It's unnecessary for us."

Jennifer Hansell, secretary to the business manager of the Dixie Elementary School District — a 1,085-student district with two elementary schools and one middle school in San Rafael — said the district is now current with its reports. "We basically don't have that much to report, besides one or two busted windows," she said.

Robert Vafa, business manager for the 3,230-student, seven-school Ravenswood City Elementary District in San Mateo, was unaware of the reporting requirement but said he could check on the missing report for the first six months of 1986.

"This is the first I've heard of it," he said.

But state officials told a different story.

"This lack of reporting occurred despite repeated efforts on the part of the department in contacting delinquent districts," the report states. "Enforcement is a problem because no penalties can be applied against non-reporting districts."

Department officials recommended enforcement legislation to sanction districts that do not comply with the mandate in the law, which was passed in 1984 (Penal Code Sections 628, 628.1 and 628.2) and incorporates portions of the so-called Victims' Bill of Rights initiative passed by voters in 1982.

Susan Shaw Goodman, counsel to the Public Safety Committee, said the proposed legislation would make it a misdemeanor for school principals intentionally to withhold information on school crime. Maximum penalties would be six months in jail or a \$1,000 fine.

SCHOOL CRIME REPORT

FOR JULY 1, 1985 TO JUNE 30, 1986

Rank	County	Enrollment	Assault/ Menace	Assault With a Weapon	Homicide	Sex Offenses	Robbery	Extortion	Substance Abuse	Weapons	Property Crimes	Totals	Dollar Loss
1	Los Angeles	1,269,877	8,360	562	4	599	429	75	3,460	1,687	19,332	34,508	\$11,564,719
2	San Bernardino	201,056	4,967	79	2	105	45	31	1,402	700	3,887	11,218	400,536
3	Sacramento	148,231	4,085	43	0	73	49	41	947	415	4,077	9,730	275,376
4	San Diego	303,723	2,597	98	1	103	122	29	965	442	4,895	9,252	1,034,491
5	Santa Clara	254,914	2,356	137	0	178	48	32	1,316	377	4,509	8,953	3,608,653
6	Alameda	175,310	2,765	118	5	110	106	26	966	466	3,682	8,244	483,753
7	Orange	333,404	1,448	43	0	99	36	19	1,196	371	4,742	7,954	649,854
8	Riverside	145,187	3,303	61	0	143	26	25	1,135	450	2,157	7,300	293,392
9	Kern	92,834	3,315	48	0	40	22	26	532	190	1,699	5,872	201,450
10	Contra Costa	113,220	2,351	41	0	52	121	18	660	224	2,038	5,505	1,611,383
14	San Mateo	74,888	458	83	0	41	17	14	428	123	2,677	3,841	156,569
18	San Francisco	64,734	668	56	0	45	111	23	110	127	938	2,078	109,043
33	Marin	25,468	172	16	0	8	2	1	115	24	419	757	52,059
37	Napa	13,678	134	0	0	4	1	1	126	56	212	534	19,434

Source: State Department of Education

the best way to go about it."

He said state officials would be more helpful to districts attempting to combat school crime by providing information on proven anti-crime programs in local districts — "so we don't have 1,000 school districts each reinventing the wheel."

Wells said legislators are not especially sensitive to the demands placed on school administrators. "It's tough for legislators to realize how few administrative staff people there are and how many tasks they are asked to do," Wells said.

Goodman, a former teacher and local prosecutor in Los Angeles, Yolo and Sacramento counties before becoming the committee's top legal counsel, said committee hearings will be held to examine other possible solutions to violence and crime on California public school campuses.

"We've heard from so many people with so many ideas," she said. "The suggestions have run the gamut."

Joseph McGhee, a consultant in the education department's Office of School Climate who coordinated the study, said many of the districts that failed to report are small districts concerned about the cost and clerical burden of the reporting.

He said data being analyzed for the 1986-87 reporting period indicate an improvement in reporting, with 24 of 1,028 districts failing to report for the last six months of 1986 and 17 for the first six months of 1987.

The 1984 legislation establishing the reporting requirement also was sponsored by Stirling and was designed to foster effective programs to combat school crime.

Among its major findings, the department reported:

- 162,734 incidents of crime and violence on school grounds or at school-related events statewide.

- 74,700 (46 percent) were crimes against property, with a total loss to dis-

tricts of \$23.3 million.

- "Other" crimes, including acts of violence against students, school personnel and others, totaled 60,270 (37 percent).

- 17 percent of the reported crimes involved substance abuse and possession of weapons.

- Of the 15 murders reported, two involved student victims and one occurred on school grounds during the day. Other reported homicides included the dumping of victims on school grounds or homicides committed against adults by adults or unknown assailants in the evening.

The report's authors urged caution in interpreting the statistics and making comparisons among counties, districts, categories or populations.

The department concluded that some school officials may have under-reported crime to avoid the label of high-crime campus, while others may have interpreted crime category definitions differently.

Inconsistencies are glaringly apparent in the ranking of counties in the report, with Tehama, Inyo, Mono, Amador and Orange counties reporting the lowest overall crime rates — in a range of seven to 24 crimes per 1,000 students. Lassen, Yuba, Alpine, Stanislaus and Colusa counties — all rural counties in Northern California — reported the highest rates.

The report found very little relationship between student enrollment in a given county and total crime rates.

"These data apparently contradict the common belief that districts in larger, urban counties have higher crime rates than rural counties with smaller student enrollments," the report notes.

"However, the data may have been reported inaccurately by some districts. Some smaller districts in rural counties may be more accurately reporting crime,

while larger districts in urban counties may be underreporting criminal incidents."

State education officials cautiously conclude in the report that incorrect reporting "may be a serious problem." As an example, they cite San Francisco County reports of 3.7 incidents of crimes in the "other" category per 1,000 students (about three-fourths of which is substance abuse), while San Mateo County — also an urban county with approximately the same enrollment — reported twice the amount of "other" crime.

The largest county, Los Angeles, reported a mere four "other" incidents per 1,000 students, while nearby Riverside County reported nearly three times that number.

McGhee said incidents did not necessarily result in arrests, and an altercation resolved amicably might not be reported. However, he said administrators were urged to report incidents resulting in personal injury or in suspension or expulsion of a student.

In addition to legislation to force districts to report school crime data, state education officials made several other recommendations, including:

- A \$30,000 appropriation to evaluate a sample of districts to determine the "accuracy and consistency" of their reporting practices.

- A \$130,000 appropriation to provide additional staff for the program.

- A \$50,000 appropriation to develop a "safe school model" for the middle grade level schools.

- Inclusion of schools operated by county education offices — juvenile court schools, regional occupational programs and other special programs — in the reporting requirement. McGhee said they were inadvertently excluded from the original legislation.