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MEDIA STATEMENT

Fresno Unified Addresses Concerns at Pyle Elementary

Yesterday afternoon we were made aware of a social media post from the Fresno Teachers
Association (FTA) with seven concerns regarding a recent incident at Pyle Elementary. FTA’s
post references a letter with signatures from 35 of 37 educators at Pyle, however, after more than
one request, we have still not seen the signed letter referenced by FTA. Nonetheless, we
would like to address those listed concerns as school safety is of utmost importance to our district.

Concern #1: “The district did not reach out to our staff and communicate a follow up with new
updated emerging protocols on what we were to do if this type of incident occurred again.”

Pyle’s principal emailed all staff following the incident to review existing safety protocols, as well
as updating the entire staff that the principal and vice principals would be covering arrival
supervision duty for the remainder of the year.

Concern #2: “A staff meeting did not take place to make everyone aware of the parent who
trespassed the office and threatened a teacher in front of her entire class during instruction. This
was not just a single incident.”

While there was not an all staff meeting regarding the incident, the principal did meet and debrief
the incident with the grade level teachers involved and with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT).
These discussions included offering additional support as needed for the teachers of the
effectected grade level.

Concern #3: “After being asked several times, the district did not provide extra support to our
school for a campus security guard for the remainder of this year.”

This was a public request from FTA, however not a repeated request internally. As a response
team, the district school leadership team and our safety team made the decision to provide a
campus safety assistant to Pyle for the remainder of the week of the incident, until the parent had been served the stay-away order. There have been no additional incidents on-site since this incident.

*Concern #4: “During this traumatizing incident we could have lost a teacher, other staff members who tried to help, and a classroom of students. Knowing the parent’s previous actions and threats, why were we not put on a lock down?”*

There are a couple of reasons there was no lockdown issued at the time of the incident. First, the parent was inside a classroom with a teacher and students, therefore a lockdown would have trapped that teacher and students in the classroom with the verbally abusive parent. The principal and vice principals had immediately responded to the incident and were inside of the classroom containing the parent while evacuating the teacher and students from the classroom as quickly as possible. As administration contained the parent and called police, there was no immediate threat of danger to the rest of the campus, therefore no lockdown was necessary.

*Concern #5: “The district did not reach out to support the teacher in process of retaining the restraining order.”*

The teacher involved was given time during the school day to file the appropriate paperwork for a restraining order. Restraining orders can be a long, arduous process so our teams have followed up with the teacher involved to ensure we support any future court dates or needs related to attaining that restraining order.

*Concern #6: “With the escalating violence and outburst of parents and students at our school, our staff of many teachers do not feel prepared to handle these situations effectively.”*

To address these concerns, the principal has reviewed safety protocols with the staff, the principal and vice principals took over arrival supervision duty for the remainder of the year, a stay-away order was put in place, extra safety support was provided between the incident and the stay-away order, and more. Any teacher needing additional training on safety protocols are encouraged to speak with their school site administrators, and school site administrators can always reach out to our safety department if they have questions or additional needs.

*Concern #7: “We have ongoing concerns regarding safety and violent disruptive behaviors that need to be addressed by our leaders. We would appreciate immediate action to protect our students and staff and assure a learning environment where students and staff feel not only safe but respected, too.”*

We absolutely agree on immediate and preventative action and our teams have been doing just that. Our Superintendent has shared some of the current safety protocols and upcoming safety investments in several recent statements including his Friday message email and video to all staff just this past week. Currently, all Fresno Unified schools are required to do four lockdown drills per year, all classrooms and offices have an emergency response guide, and our district policy is to keep all gates locked during the school day except for one.

We are reviewing and updating our safety protocols with our principals and staff over the summer before we return to school, we are piloting and implementing a new visitor management system which includes safety notifications for our schools this upcoming year, and on June 15th our board is considering a contract to begin bringing full-time School Resource Officers to our middle schools – even better than the previous SNRO program where officers were only part-time at our middle schools.
In the upcoming school year, we are investing in more than 300 additional school site staff including campus safety assistants, school psychologists, campus culture teachers, child welfare and attendance specialists, bilingual home school liaisons, vice principals and GLAs, behavior intervention specialists, resource counseling assistants, and counselors. These positions all contribute to the safety and climate of the school campus, as well as our many investments in social emotional curriculum, training, and supports through our Department of Prevention and Intervention (DPI). Over the last decade DPI’s budget has grown from $5M to a proposed $38M for the upcoming school year, and from about 50 staff to over 200 staff in the same amount of time. Not only have we increased our student mental health supports, but we have also expanded our supports to families through CareSolace.

First and foremost, this information is for our staff as we know as a Fresno Unified family, we are all focused on how we keep our school campuses safe. However, we are also releasing this information to the media as FTA has chosen to surface these seven concerns through social media. We have regular, weekly, in-person meetings with FTA which have included school safety discussions, and specific discussions about the incident at Pyle. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively as a Fresno Unified family to keep our school campuses safe.

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