Santa Barbara County Education Office
4400 Cathedral Oaks Rd, PO Box 6307, Santa Barbara, CA 93160-6307
Telephone: (805) 964-4711 • FAX: (805) 964-4712 • sbceo.org
Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

July 9, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
pkelly@sbcourts.org

Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
sbcgj@sbcourts.org

Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Bullying in Santa Barbara County Schools

Dear Judge Kelly, Foreperson Mezzetta de Cossio, and Grand Jury Members:

The Santa Barbara County Board of Education appreciates the findings and recommendations brought forth by the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury and the opportunity to highlight the importance of fostering safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students.

The County Board of Education shares the Grand Jury's commitment to student well-being and recognizes that bullying can have a significant impact on students' academic success, mental health, and sense of belonging at school. Creating school environments where students feel safe, connected, respected, and supported is essential to student success.

The County Board of Education recognizes the countywide efforts of the Santa Barbara County Education Office to strengthen student wellness, mental health, family engagement, positive school climate, and bullying prevention through resources, professional learning, technical assistance, and coordination with local educational agencies.

Examples include:

- Maintaining a Youth Mental Health & Wellness webpage and promoting a statewide Bullying Prevention site dedicated to providing resources and information for families and school teams.
- Expanding access to school-based mental health services and supports for students and families.

- Providing professional learning, networking opportunities, and technical assistance focused on social-emotional well-being, positive school climate, and inclusive learning environments.
- Promoting student connectedness, belonging, and early intervention strategies that encourage students and adults to recognize concerns and seek support.
- Supporting schools in preventing and addressing bullying, harassment, intimidation, and discrimination through training, resources, countywide coordination, and evidence-based practices.
- Fostering safe, supportive, and appropriate educational environments for students served through SBCEO-operated programs, including Juvenile Court and Community Schools which serve court-involved and justice-involved youth.
- Partnering FitzGerald Community School with local specialized services, such as Family Service Agency to provide a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, and One Community Action for Youth Mentor/Case Management to provide holistic support to our Juvenile Court and Community School students.
- Connecting Santa Barbara County students and families to mental health services and offering assistance in navigating the complex mental health support system through the Mental Wellness Education and Linkages program of SBCEO's Health Linkages non-profit.

It is important to note that California school districts are independently governed by locally elected boards of education. Local districts are responsible for establishing district and school policies, staffing levels and employee assignments, financial decisions, student discipline procedures, counseling services, supervision plans, and school climate initiatives. The Santa Barbara County Board of Education does not govern local school districts or their governing boards and has no authority over district-operated schools or district-level implementation of programs, policies, or services.

The County Board of Education's governance and oversight responsibilities apply only to programs operated by the Santa Barbara County Education Office, including Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS), which serve court-involved and justice-involved youth. Accordingly, the responses provided by the County Board are limited to recommendations that relate to the students served in Juvenile Court and Community Schools.

Within SBCEO's JCCS classrooms, significant investments have been made to support student well-being and to prevent and address bullying incidents. Such investments include partnerships with community organizations to provide Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, weekly Intervention Team meetings, and the launch of a monthly parent workshop where topics such as bullying prevention are discussed.

Results from the California Healthy Kids Survey administered in January 2026 highlight the positive impact these investments have made:

> *When JCCS students were asked: "During the past 12 months, how many times, on school property, were you harassed or bullied?" 95-100% of students reported they had been harassed/bullied 0 times.*

The County Board works collaboratively with the County Superintendent of Schools and Juvenile Court and Community Schools administrators to support educational opportunities, student well-being, and safe and appropriate learning environments for students in SBCEO-operated programs.

It is with the above-outlined distinctions and responsibilities in mind that the Santa Barbara County Board of Education offers the following responses.

Finding 1

Bullying in County schools will be reduced by implementing additional safety measures.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 1: Agree

The County Board of Education agrees that additional safety measures, when paired with prevention, student support services, and positive school climate efforts, can help reduce bullying and improve student well-being.

Recommendation 1a

The Grand Jury recommends that school boards increase staff presence in areas where students congregate before, during breaks, and after school.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1a: Has been implemented

The County Board of Education supports the intent of this recommendation and agrees that appropriate adult supervision is an important component of safe school environments.

Each Juvenile Court and Community School classroom is staffed by a credentialed teacher and a teaching assistant. In addition, every Court School classroom is assigned a Juvenile Institution Officer (JIO) provided by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department. Probation staff also supervise all Court School breaks.

At FitzGerald Community School, a security guard trained to work in school settings is present whenever students are on campus. School staff and security personnel provide

supervision in all areas where students gather before and after school, as well as during breaks, ensuring continuous monitoring throughout the school day.

Recommendation 1b
The Grand Jury recommends that school boards have sufficient cameras in order to monitor where students congregate before, during, and after school.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1b: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the goal of maintaining safe learning environments and recognizes that security infrastructure may be one tool available to schools as part of a broader student safety strategy.

The Board confirms there are cameras in and throughout all Juvenile Court and Community School facilities, including in classrooms and other gathering areas. Private spaces, such as bathrooms, are exempt and do not have cameras installed.

Recommendation 1c
The Grand Jury recommends that school boards add more counselors to achieve a ratio no greater than 250:1.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1c: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education agrees that access to counseling, mental health, and student support services is important to student well-being and positive school climate.

Each Juvenile Court School and Community School site serves fewer than 50 students and is staffed with a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) counselor. In addition, the Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness provides a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) to deliver treatment and support services to Court School students. The Community School has partnered with the Family Service Agency to provide an associate LMFT for on-site student support, as well as an Alcohol and Other Drug Counselor for substance use-related services. The Community School is also hiring a bilingual Behavioral Health Practitioner, a newly created position aimed to further expand student support services.

Finding 2

Administrators do not consistently inform school counselors when students under their guidance engage in bullying.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 2: Disagree partially

The County Board of Education agrees that effective communication among administrators, counselors, educators, and student support personnel is an important component of addressing student behavioral concerns and supporting student well-being.

Through staff meetings, the work of an Intervention Team, and ongoing communication regarding student concerns, incidents are consistently monitored and communicated to all appropriate parties, including counselors, within SBCEO's Juvenile Court and Community Schools.

Recommendation 2
The Grand Jury recommends that school boards inform school counselors whenever any students under their guidance engage in bullying.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the intent of this recommendation and recognizes the important role that coordinated communication plays in supporting students and addressing bullying concerns.

At the Community School, an Intervention Team consisting of counselors, therapists, and school administrators meets weekly to discuss student behavioral, social-emotional, and academic needs, including concerns related to bullying. Individual student matters are also a standing agenda item at weekly staff meetings, allowing all staff to raise concerns and receive support in addressing them.

At the Court School, student needs and progress are reviewed through a multidisciplinary Treatment Team process. Through this process, every student is discussed at regular and consistent intervals by a team that includes the Site Liaison (Lead Teacher), Probation, Medical, and Behavioral Wellness staff to identify concerns and coordinate appropriate supports.

Finding 3

Parent participation in outreach programs for bullying has been poor.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 3: Disagree partially
The County Board of Education agrees that family engagement is a critical component of student success and that many schools and districts face challenges in increasing participation in outreach programs.

The Board also recognizes that family participation varies across communities and can be affected by work schedules, transportation challenges, childcare needs, language access, and

other barriers. However, JCCS has increased parent information and education events from twice per year to once per month and provides interpretation in Spanish and Mixteco, childcare, and free meals for participating families.

Recommendation 3a
The Grand Jury recommends that school boards direct school administrators to schedule parent outreach programs regarding bullying on evenings, weekends, online, and with archived recordings to accommodate working parents.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 3a: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the intent of making family engagement opportunities more accessible to parents and guardians.

The County Board of Education supports the work being done by the Juvenile Court and Community Schools to bring parents and guardians in as partners to prevent and address bullying. JCCS hosts monthly parent workshops and information nights (after typical working hours) on topics such as bullying. Before the 2023-24 school year, parent information nights were hosted twice a year (once per semester) and have since been increased to the monthly meeting schedule.

Recommendation 3b
The Grand Jury recommends that school boards implement non-monetary incentives to encourage parents to attend outreach programs.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 3b: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the intent of reducing barriers to family participation and encouraging meaningful engagement between schools and families.

At the Juvenile Court and Community Schools parent information nights, a number of supports are provided to reduce barriers to family participation, including providing Spanish and Mixteco interpretation, childcare for those with young children, and a meal for every participant and their family.

Recommendation 3c
The Grand Jury recommends that school boards strongly encourage parents of students who have engaged in repeated acts of bullying to attend outreach programs.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 3c: Has been implemented

The County Board of Education agrees that family engagement is important in addressing repeated bullying behavior and supporting student well-being. Families are encouraged to participate in all support and outreach programs.

The Santa Barbara County Board of Education remains committed to fostering safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students in the SBCEO-operated Juvenile Court and Community Schools. Through its governance and oversight responsibilities, the Board will continue to support policies, practices, and partnerships that promote student well-being, positive school climate, and academic success.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadra Ehrman
Santa Barbara County Board of Education President
On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Education

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Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
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Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on School Shootings

Dear Judge Kelly, Foreperson Mezzetta de Cossio, and Grand Jury Members:

The Santa Barbara County Board of Education appreciates the findings and recommendations brought forth by the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury and the opportunity to highlight the importance of school safety, emergency preparedness, student wellness, and violence prevention throughout Santa Barbara County.

The County Board of Education shares the Grand Jury's commitment to ensuring that schools remain safe, welcoming, and supportive places for students and staff. Preparing for emergencies, preventing violence, and supporting student well-being require ongoing collaboration among educators, families, law enforcement, mental health professionals, emergency responders, community partners, and public agencies.

The County Board of Education works collaboratively with the County Superintendent of Schools to support educational opportunities and student success throughout Santa Barbara County. The County Board recognizes that the Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools and Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) serve as a support, resource, and coordinating agency for Santa Barbara County's public school districts in the areas of school safety planning, emergency preparedness, crisis response, and threat prevention.

The Grand Jury report recognizes several of these efforts, including SBCEO's annual School Safety Symposium, School Safety Liaison position, and the resources and guidance provided to local educational agencies regarding Comprehensive School Safety Plans.

In 2023, SBCEO, with consensus from all school districts, Allan Hancock College, Santa Barbara City College, UC Santa Barbara, representatives from the early care and education community, representatives from private schools, police chiefs, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff, and County Fire Chief, facilitated a process through which all partners adopted the same Standard Response Protocols (SRPs) described in the Grand Jury report (see: https://www.sbceo.org/supporting-students/school-safety).

Concurrent with the adoption of countywide SRPs, SBCEO hired its first School Safety Liaison to serve all schools and convened a countywide School Safety Symposium that brought together school leaders, educators, law enforcement personnel, fire personnel, emergency management officials, mental health professionals, and community partners to strengthen school safety systems throughout the county.

Since 2023, SBCEO has hosted an annual School Safety Symposium. Topics have included violence prevention and response, emergency preparedness, family reunification procedures, student mental health, threat management, opioid response, support for students with disabilities, and implementation of Standard Response Protocols and Standard Reunification Methods. SBCEO also maintains a countywide school safety resource webpage, provides safety planning templates and tools, and offers ongoing support and assistance during emergencies through its School Safety Liaison and Director of Communications/Public Information Officer positions.

The County Board of Education recognizes that individual school districts develop their safety plans, provide staff training, conduct safety drills, foster relationships with local law enforcement and first responders, and create context-based responses for handling various emergency situations. SBCEO's safety initiatives provide added layers of support and training opportunities. In fact, many school districts had previously adopted and implemented the SRPs and have been continuously investing in school safety training, protocols, and processes long before 2023. SBCEO's ability to launch countywide safety-related efforts was made possible by the strong collegial relationships among schools throughout the county, a long history of collaboration among schools and first responders during crisis situations, and a shared commitment to prioritizing school safety.

It is important to note that California school districts are independently governed by locally elected boards of education. Local districts are responsible for establishing district and school policies, safety plans, staff assignments, financial priorities, and local school goals. The Santa Barbara County Board of Education does not govern local school districts or their governing boards and has no authority over district-operated schools or district-level implementation of programs, policies, or services.

The County Board of Education's governance and oversight responsibilities apply only to programs operated by the Santa Barbara County Education Office, including Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS), which serve court-involved and justice-involved youth. Accordingly, the responses provided by the County Board are limited to recommendations that relate to the students served in Juvenile Court and Community Schools.

Finding 1

The Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) provides County school districts training in identifying pathways to targeted violence, although attendance by employees of the various Santa Barbara County school districts in the SBCEO's School Safety Symposium is limited.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 1: Agree

Recommendation 1b
The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts require administrative leaders to attend the School Safety Symposium in person at least once every two years.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1b: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the intent of encouraging participation in high-quality school safety training and recognizes the value of the School Safety Symposium hosted by SBCEO. Staff from SBCEO's Juvenile Court and Community Schools have attended all School Safety Symposiums and are trained each year on the Comprehensive School Safety Plan and the Standard Response Protocol.

Recommendation 1c
The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts encourage teachers and staff to attend the School Safety Symposium in person, and if not in person, access the online seminar annually.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1c: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the goal of increasing access to school safety resources and professional learning opportunities. Staff from SBCEO's Juvenile Court and Community Schools have attended all School Safety Symposiums and are trained each year on the Comprehensive School Safety Plan and the Standard Response Protocol.

The County Board of Education also recognizes that certain school safety topics may involve sensitive content, presenter restrictions, sensitive scenarios, and candid discussion among participants. The County Board of Education supports SBCEO's efforts

to evaluate appropriate ways to expand access to school safety materials and resources while preserving the integrity of in-person collaboration and sensitive training environments.

Finding 2

Santa Barbara County school districts are compliant in creating Comprehensive School Safety Plans for their schools, but some staff require more information and training on safety protocols.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 2: Agree

Recommendation 2a
The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts train and drill all fulltime campus personnel and students for campus safety at least once per semester.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2a: Has been implemented
SBCEO's Juvenile Court and Community Schools staff are trained each year (not per semester) on the Comprehensive School Safety Plan and the Standard Response Protocol. In addition, the schools fulfill drill requirements for staff and students as outlined in Education Code, by following an established schedule for various safety drills, including active assailant trainings.

Recommendation 2b
The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide written and verbal instruction to all temporary personnel, including substitute teachers, prior to their entering a new classroom location.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2b: Has been implemented
At SBCEO's Juvenile Court and Community Schools all temporary personnel receive a half-day orientation before they begin their assignment. In addition, substitute teachers observe in all classrooms to become familiar with routines and procedures.

Recommendation 2c
The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide quick reference situational cards and/or information posters conveying simple instructions for emergency response procedures in every classroom and in public rooms.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2c: Has been implemented

All SBCEO-operated classrooms have posted the Standard Response Protocols (SRPs) which provide instructions for each action, in Spanish and English. In addition, the same SRP information is on the back of all SBCEO employee badges, which are worn daily.

Finding 3

While many Santa Barbara County school districts have a watch, listen, and report culture for enhancement of threat detection in their schools, not all schools have anonymous pathways for reporting threats or potential threats online or on campus.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 3: Disagree partially
The County Board of Education agrees that trusted relationships, early reporting, and clear reporting pathways are important components of school safety and threat prevention.

SBCEO has a "Report a Concern" form available on the website for SBCEO programs, where individuals can anonymously report incidents and concerns. In addition, all Juvenile Court and Community Schools classrooms and common areas display posters in English and Spanish with a QR code that directs users to the Report a Concern form on the SBCEO website.

Recommendation 3a
The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts train school personnel on how to gain trust, understand healthy boundaries, and engage in strategic partnerships with community service groups to support student needs.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 3a: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the intent of training school personnel to build trust with students, maintain healthy boundaries, and engage with community partners to support student needs. Trusted adults and strong partnerships are especially important in prevention, intervention, and student wellness efforts.

Through partnerships such as One Community Action's Por Vida program, the creation of student wellness spaces, and ongoing staff training focused on building trust, setting healthy boundaries, and leveraging community resources, the Juvenile Court and Community Schools continuously prioritize supportive relationships with students. With an average of 62.3% of JCCS students reporting on the 2025–26 California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) that they have caring relationships with adults at school (an increase from 48% in 2023–24), these efforts are making a positive impact. CHKS also shows significant increases in other relevant areas including a) students believe their teachers have high expectations for their success; b) students report that they are academically motivated and try hard at their schoolwork; c) students feel safe in school.

Recommendation 3b
The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts provide an anonymous reporting mechanism on school-provided devices, in addition to a drop box available on campus.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 3b: Has been implemented
SBCEO has a Report a Concern form available on the website for all programs, where individuals can anonymously report incidents and concerns. All Juvenile Court and Community Schools classrooms and common areas display posters in English and Spanish with a QR code that directs users to the Report a Concern form on the SBCEO website. In addition, most students have one-to-one counseling sessions, where they can safely and confidentially share any concerns with a trusted adult. According to administrators, counselors routinely bring concerns to administration that are made in this manner while maintaining client confidentiality.

Finding 4

School Resource Officers or Deputies are valuable in preventing or addressing potentially dangerous situations on campus, but many schools do not employ them.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 4: Agree partially
The County Board of Education agrees that School Resource Officers, School Resource Deputies, and law enforcement partners can help prevent and address potentially dangerous situations on campus.

The County Board of Education supports local evaluation of school safety staffing models and recognizes that decisions regarding School Resource Officers or Deputies include factors such as local needs, student population, available resources, and existing law enforcement partnerships.

Recommendation 4
The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts have School Resource Officers (SRO) or Deputies (SRD).

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 4: Has been implemented
There is a Juvenile Institution Officer (JIO) assigned to every classroom in SBCEO's Court School, provided by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department.

At the Community School, a security guard trained to work in schools using trauma-informed practices is present whenever students are on campus.

Finding 5

Some schools in Santa Barbara County school districts lack adequate controls for visitor access.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 5: Disagree partially

The County Board of Education agrees that visitor management and access control are important components of school safety. SBCEO-operated JCCS schools have a single point of entry and all visitors are required to check in.

Recommendation 5a

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts improve visitor access control during school hours by requiring valid government-issued photo identification verified by school personnel, utilizing a system that checks for restraining orders or other legal restrictions.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 5a: Has been implemented

The County Board of Education supports the intent of maintaining secure campuses and appropriate visitor access procedures during school hours.

At SBCEO's court school, the Santa Barbara County Probation Department maintains limited and strict visitor policies and procedures and at the community school, there is only one point of entry and all visitors must check in with the front office assistant. Visitors must provide a valid ID, log their full legal name, their reason for visiting, and their time of entry and departure. If they are not wearing their agency or school badge or are not with an agency or a school, they are issued a visitor badge that is returned when they check out and leave the campus.

At SBCEO's community school, all visitors must check in with a valid ID, reason for visit, and time in/out.

Recommendation 5b

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts require all schools to issue visitors a badge and require its visibility on the visitor while on campus during school hours.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 5b: Has been implemented

The County Board of Education supports the intent of clearly identifying visitors on campus as part of maintaining safe school environments.

At SBCEO's court school, the Santa Barbara County Probation Department maintains limited and strict visitor policies and procedures and at the community school, there is

only one point of entry and all visitors must check in with the front office assistant. Visitors must provide a valid ID, log their full legal name, their reason for visiting, and time in and out. If they are not wearing their agency or school badge or are not with an agency or a school, they are issued a visitor badge that is returned when they check out and leave the campus.

Finding 6

Not all schools in Santa Barbara County have adequate safety infrastructure, including fences, cameras, classrooms that lock from the inside, restricted access points, and instantaneous communication devices.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 6: Disagree partially

The County Board of Education agrees that safety infrastructure, including secure access points, communication systems, classroom security, and other protective measures, can be important components of school safety planning.

SBCEO JCCS programs are enclosed, have cameras, restricted access points and radio communication devices.

Recommendation 6

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts have each school conduct an annual security review with respect to video security cameras at key points across school grounds, two-way communications on campus, and innovations, such as artificial intelligence-aided technologies or drones, and make improvements based on those reviews.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 6: Has been implemented

The County Board of Education supports the intent of regularly reviewing school safety infrastructure and emergency communication systems. The County Board of Education also recognizes that emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence-aided tools or drones, require careful consideration of student privacy, safety, cost, feasibility, equity, legal requirements, and educational appropriateness.

The recommendation has been implemented with the exception of drone technology, which the County Board does not currently believe is necessary or appropriate for SBCEO-operated Juvenile Court and Community Schools. Both Juvenile Court and Community School sites are completely enclosed with a single point of entry. Cameras are installed throughout all Juvenile Court and Community School facilities, including at entry points, in classrooms, and in other common areas. Private spaces, such as bathrooms, are exempt and do not have cameras installed.

In addition, all staff, including contracted counselors and security guards, carry a two-way radio at all times and are trained annually on radio protocol. Substitutes are also trained on and provided two-way radios when on campus.

The Santa Barbara County Board of Education remains committed to creating safe, supportive, and appropriate learning environments for all students. Through its governance and oversight responsibilities for SBCEO's Juvenile Court and Community Schools, the County Board of Education will continue to support policies, practices, and partnerships that promote student safety, student wellness, emergency preparedness, positive school climate, and academic success.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadra Ehrman
Santa Barbara County Board of Education President
On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Education

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Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Gangs of Santa Barbara County: Should the Schools Do More to Address Them?

Dear Judge Kelly, Foreperson Mezzetta de Cossio, and Grand Jury Members:

The Santa Barbara County Board of Education shares the Grand Jury's commitment to supporting students and creating educational environments that foster safety, belonging, positive relationships, and academic success. The County Board recognizes that early intervention, student connectedness, family engagement, mentoring, counseling, and access to support services play an important role in helping young people make positive choices and avoid involvement in gangs and other harmful influences.

The County Board's governance responsibilities include oversight of the Santa Barbara County Education Office's Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS), which serve some of the county's most vulnerable youth. Many JCCS students have experienced significant challenges and benefit from the intensive educational, behavioral, social-emotional, and mental health supports JCCS offers. Through partnerships with Probation, Behavioral Wellness, community-based organizations, counselors, therapists, mentors, and educators, JCCS works to provide students with the structure, support, and positive adult relationships necessary to promote resilience and long-term success.

It is with these responsibilities and commitments in mind that the County Board of Education offers the following responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

Finding 1

Many student fights occur in the areas surrounding school campuses before and after school hours, outside school supervision, leaving a gap in County schools' responses.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 1: Disagree partially

The County Board of Education agrees that student conflicts occurring before and after school hours can present challenges for schools, particularly when those incidents affect student safety, school climate, or students' ability to learn. The Board recognizes the importance of early intervention, positive school climate, student engagement, and strong community partnerships in helping prevent conflicts from escalating and supports ongoing efforts to strengthen these practices within SBCEO-operated programs.

However, the Board notes that incidents occurring off campus and outside school hours generally take place beyond the direct supervision and authority of school personnel. Schools have limited ability to monitor or intervene in activities occurring in public spaces before students arrive at school or after they leave campus.

When off-campus incidents become known and have the potential to affect the school environment, Juvenile Court and Community Schools staff work collaboratively with students, families, probation personnel, mental health providers, community partners, and law enforcement agencies, as appropriate and within their respective roles and responsibilities, to intervene and address safety concerns, provide support services, and reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Recommendation 1b

The Grand Jury recommends that local law enforcement agencies, in conjunction with school districts, create policies and programs to extend the safe space for students to go to or from home. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1b: Will not be implemented

The County Board of Education supports the intent of this recommendation and recognizes the importance of student safety before and after the school day.

At JCCS, whenever students are on campus, they are supervised. The Court School students are housed within the Juvenile Justice Center and are supervised by Santa Barbara County Probation staff throughout the school day. At FitzGerald Community School, a security guard trained to work in school settings is present whenever students are on campus, and school staff and security personnel provide supervision before school, during breaks, and after school.

The majority of FitzGerald Community School students are transported to and from school by family members. Upon arrival, students are searched and their personal belongings are secured until dismissal. At the end of the school day, staff supervise dismissal, monitor students as they leave campus, and frequently engage with family members during pick-up. Arrival and dismissal procedures are structured to support student safety, including staggered schedules designed to minimize interaction between junior high and high school students. When specific safety concerns arise, school staff communicate and coordinate with law enforcement as appropriate, and request a unit to be in the area during arrival and dismissal as needed.

However, the Board notes that incidents occurring off campus and outside school hours generally take place beyond the direct supervision and authority of school personnel. Incidents that occur in public spaces before students arrive on campus or after they leave for the day limit the ability of school personnel to monitor, manage, or directly intervene. While the Board supports ongoing collaboration among schools, families, community organizations, probation personnel, mental health providers, and law enforcement agencies, it does not believe it is feasible or appropriate for schools to establish policies or programs that extend school supervision beyond school grounds and school-sponsored activities.

Recommendation 1c
The Grand Jury recommends that all school districts consider the templates, policies, and programs proposed in Recommendations 1a and 1b. To be implemented by June 30, 2027.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1c: Will not be implemented
The County Board of Education supports the goal of promoting student safety and recognizes the value of collaboration among schools, families, community organizations, probation personnel, mental health providers, and law enforcement agencies.

However, the Board does not believe it is feasible or appropriate for schools to establish policies or programs that seek to extend school supervision beyond school grounds and school-sponsored activities.

Finding 2

When children lack a set structure to occupy their time on constructive activities outside of regular school hours, they become vulnerable to recruitment from criminal street gangs.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 2: Disagree partially
The County Board of Education agrees that structured, constructive activities and supportive adult relationships can help reduce student vulnerability to negative influences, including gang recruitment. Research and prevention frameworks recognize that youth disconnection from family, school, community, and future opportunities can increase vulnerability, while positive school engagement, mentoring, and extracurricular opportunities can serve as protective factors.

However, the Board believes that vulnerability to gang involvement is influenced by a complex combination of individual, family, peer, and community factors. While a lack of structured activities outside of school may increase risk for some students, it does not necessarily result in gang involvement, nor does participation in organized activities alone prevent it.

The Board supports a comprehensive approach that includes positive youth development, family engagement, mentoring, counseling, educational opportunities, and community partnerships to help students make healthy choices and avoid involvement in gangs and other harmful influences.

Recommendation 2a
The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts implement more after-school programs such as music, sports, art, drama, and other extra-curricular activities. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2a: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education recognizes that structured enrichment activities can promote student engagement, foster positive peer relationships, and provide opportunities for students to develop interests and skills outside the traditional classroom setting.

At the Community School, students have access to extracurricular opportunities including the Cultural Club and Gardening Club. In addition, JCCS partners with community-based organizations that provide a variety of enrichment, mentoring, and youth development activities available to both students and families outside of school hours. Information about these opportunities is regularly shared with students and families, and monthly parent information nights are used to connect families with a variety of community resources and programs.

Court School students are housed within the Juvenile Justice Center, where supervision and programming outside of school hours are provided by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department. The Board supports continued collaboration with Probation and

community partners to ensure students have access to constructive activities and supports both during and after school hours.

SBCEO's JCCS schools have increasingly focused on incorporating music and arts programming for students before and after school in the past several years. For example:

- Mural Project with Juan Manuel Perez Salazar
- Singer/Songwriter Workshops with Austin Willacy
- Visual Arts Workshops with Lacyeloo Winkelpleck
- Graphic Arts and Logo Design with Jon Donaghy

Recommendation 2b
The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts partner with others, including community-based organizations and local government entities, such as Parks and Recreation Departments, to offer after-school programs. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2b: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education sees the value that community partnerships can provide in expanding opportunities and support services for students, both during and after school.

As shared above, SBCEO's JCCS schools have incorporated music and arts programming for students before and after school. For example:

- Mural Project with Juan Manuel Perez Salazar
- Singer/Songwriter Workshops with Austin Willacy
- Visual Arts Workshops with Lacyeloo Winkelpleck
- Graphic Arts and Logo Design with Jon Donaghy

SBCEO's JCCS also collaborate with a variety of community partners and agencies to provide counseling, mentoring, case management, behavioral health services, restorative justice programs, and other supports for students, including:

- Family Service Agency
- One Community Action
- Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness
- Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
- More information on additional programs available at the Court School may be found here: https://www.countyofsb.org/4042/Juvenile-Program-Menu

Finding 3

Gangs are increasingly grooming and recruiting students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools, yet many anti-gang programs focus on older students.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 3: Disagree partially

The County Board of Education agrees that age-appropriate prevention efforts should begin early and are most effective when implemented before gang involvement occurs. Research and prevention frameworks recognize that children and adolescents may become vulnerable to gang recruitment during the elementary and middle school years and that early intervention, positive school engagement, mentoring, family support, and access to constructive activities can serve as important protective factors.

However, the Board acknowledges there are numerous age-appropriate prevention, intervention, mentoring, education, and support services currently available to students of all grades throughout Santa Barbara County. As noted within the Grand Jury's report, these efforts include programs and services provided by schools, community-based organizations, public agencies (e.g. the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office), and collaborative partnerships such as Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley, the South Coast Youth Safety Partnership, D.A.R.E. programs, and other youth-focused initiatives designed to promote positive youth development, violence prevention, mentoring, and healthy decision-making.

Recommendation 3

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts implement programs that are aimed at dissuading elementary, middle, and junior high school students from gang membership. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 3: Has been implemented

The Board supports age-appropriate prevention, intervention, and student support efforts designed to strengthen student connectedness, resilience, and positive decision-making before gang involvement occurs.

While JCCS does not serve younger elementary students, the Community School serves students in grades 7-12 and the Court School can serve students from ages 10-18. Through counseling, mentoring, behavioral health services, case management, family engagement, and other student support services, JCCS works to promote positive decision-making, school engagement, and student well-being for any and all students who come into our classrooms.

At the Community School, these efforts include:

- The POR VIDA program provided by One Community Action, which offers mentorship, case management, student engagement activities, and family support services designed to strengthen students' connections to their schools, families, and communities.
- Partnerships with organizations such as Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley, Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and Behavioral Wellness, which provide prevention, intervention, behavioral health, restorative justice, and youth development services.
- Other partnerships which provide counseling, behavioral health, and case management services that connect students with positive adult role models and support networks.

For Court School students, additional intervention and support services (more info here: https://www.countyofsb.org/4042/Juvenile-Program-Menu) are available through programs coordinated by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department and its community partners. Through these services and partnerships, students are connected with trusted adults, community resources, and evidence-based supports designed to reduce risk factors associated with harmful influences.

Finding 5

Students who bring guns, knives, and other weapons on campus, even when provided by parents for their children's safety, pose a threat to school safety.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 5: Agree

The County Board of Education agrees that weapons brought onto school campuses can pose a significant threat to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and visitors. Schools must maintain safe learning environments where students can focus on learning without fear of violence or intimidation. The Board supports policies, procedures, and educational efforts designed to prevent weapons from being brought onto campus and to respond appropriately when safety concerns arise.

Recommendation 5

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts remind parents and guardians annually of California Penal Code Section 25100 regarding the criminalization of unsafe storage of guns. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 5: Has been implemented

The County Board of Education recognizes the important role that safe firearm storage plays in protecting children and preventing access to weapons.

Juvenile Court and Community Schools annually provide parents and guardians with information regarding California laws related to firearm safety, storage, and California Penal Code Section 25100 through the Annual Notification to Parents. This information is provided annually in accordance with California education code § 49392.

Finding 6

Anonymous communications systems, both digital programs and physical drop-boxes, when made available to school students and personnel, can help identify gang activity ahead of serious consequences.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 6: Agree

The County Board of Education agrees that providing students and staff with accessible reporting mechanisms can help identify safety concerns, including potential gang-related activity, and support early intervention, prevention, and appropriate response efforts.

Recommendation 6

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide all schools with anonymous communications systems for student or staff reporting of danger on and off campus, both via digital media and local drop boxes. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 6: Has been implemented

SBCEO has a Report a Concern form available on the website for all programs, where individuals can anonymously report incidents and concerns. All Juvenile Court and Community Schools classrooms and common areas display posters in English and Spanish with a QR code that directs users to the Report a Concern form on the SBCEO website. In addition, most students have one-to-one counseling sessions, where they can safely and confidentially share any concerns with a trusted adult. According to administrators, counselors routinely bring concerns to administration that are made in this manner while maintaining client confidentiality.

Finding 7

Socially isolated students can benefit from engagement with responsible mentors as a deterrent to negative manipulation by outside influences, such as gangs, social media, or other ongoing stresses in family life.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 7: Agree

The County Board of Education agrees that positive relationships with trusted adult mentors can be an important protective factor for students. Mentoring can help promote student

connectedness, resilience, positive decision-making, and overall well-being, particularly for students who may be vulnerable to negative influences.

Recommendation 7
The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts create systems in their schools to pair socially isolated students with school mentors. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 7: Has been implemented
Juvenile Court and Community Schools utilize a variety of systems to identify and support all students, including those who may be socially isolated or otherwise in need of additional support. Students have access to counselors, therapists, educators, probation staff, case managers, and community-based mentors. Through Intervention Team meetings, Treatment Team meetings, counseling services, and mentoring partnerships with organizations such as One Community Action for Youth, students are connected with trusted adults who provide guidance, support, and mentorship.

The Santa Barbara County Board of Education remains committed to supporting safe, supportive, and engaging learning environments for students served in the Juvenile Court and Community Schools and will continue to support efforts that promote student well-being, strengthen positive connections, and help students build successful futures.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadra Ehrman
Santa Barbara County Board of Education President
On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Education

Santa Barbara County Education Office
4400 Cathedral Oaks Rd, PO Box 6307, Santa Barbara, CA 93160-6307
Telephone: (805) 964-4711 • FAX: (805) 964-4712 • sbceo.org
Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

July 9, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
pkelly@sbcourts.org

Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
sbcgj@sbcourts.org

Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Public Participation Without Barriers: Brown Act Clarity at School Board Meetings

Dear Judge Kelly, Foreperson Mezzetta de Cossio, and Grand Jury Members:

The Santa Barbara County Board of Education is committed to conducting its meetings in accordance with the Brown Act and in an open, transparent, and accessible manner. The Board recognizes the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for public participation and ensures that members of the public have access to board meetings, agendas, meeting materials, and opportunities to address the Board on matters within its jurisdiction.

The County Board of Education provides multiple opportunities for public participation beyond minimum legal requirements, including in-person and virtual attendance options, Spanish interpretation, and public access to board meeting recordings (in both English and Spanish) and board meeting materials through its website.

It is with these principles in mind that the Santa Barbara County Board of Education respectfully submits the following responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

Finding 1

Some education governing boards' agendas and public comment instructions imply that members of the public must complete a speaker card, sign-up sheet, online form, or provide identifying information in order to speak at a public meeting.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 1: Disagree partially

The County Board of Education agrees that public comment procedures should clearly communicate that members of the public may address the Board without providing identifying information.

The County Board of Education's agenda language, public comment procedures, and related materials communicate that sign-up sheets are tools used to assist in organizing public comment. Individuals may address the Board without providing a name, address, or other identifying information.

Recommendation 1
The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1 below, review agenda language and public comment instructions to plainly state that speaker cards, sign-up sheets, and online forms are optional tools used solely to help organize public comment, and to affirm that any person may address the board during public comment periods without providing a name, address, or other personal identifying information. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 1: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education agrees that members of the public should be able to address the Board without being required to provide identifying information.

The County Board of Education's agenda language, public comment procedures, and related materials communicate that individuals may address the Board without providing a name, address, or other identifying information.

Finding 2

Website structure, language access, and accessibility issues at some education governing boards hinder the public's ability to find agendas, minutes, and participation instructions, particularly for Spanish-speaking community members and individuals who rely on accessible document formats.

County Board of Education Response to Finding 2: Disagree partially
The County Board of Education agrees that public access and participation are important and that educational governing boards should make reasonable efforts to ensure meetings and meeting materials are accessible to the communities they serve.

The County Board of Education currently provides multiple avenues for public access, including participation in person and through real-time Zoom webinars, Spanish interpretation of the board meetings, and posting Board meeting recordings in both English and Spanish on the County Board Meeting Agendas page and the SBCEO YouTube channel.

Recommendation 2a
The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1 below, place a prominent, direct link to current agendas on its primary homepage, as required by Government Code section 54954.2. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2a: Has been implemented
The County Board of Education supports the intent of this recommendation and agrees that providing easy public access to Board meeting agendas promotes transparency and public engagement.

The Board Meeting Agendas page can be accessed in one click from any page on the SBCEO website (including the homepage) by clicking "Meeting Agendas."

Recommendation 2b
The Grand Jury recommends that governing boards serving districts with more than a 20% Spanish-speaking population provide Spanish language translations of their meetings, agendas and minutes on their websites. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

County Board of Education Response to Recommendation 2b: Has been implemented partially
The County Board of Education supports the intent of this recommendation and agrees that language access is important to public participation. In fact, the County Board provides access beyond the Brown Act legal requirements to enhance accessibility.

The County Board of Education provides Spanish-language interpretation during Board meetings, posts both English and Spanish meeting recordings on the County Board Meeting Agendas page and on the SBCEO YouTube channel. The meeting agenda and minutes are not translated; however, all Juvenile Court and Community School parent/family-related materials and communications are translated into Spanish, with additional Mixteco interpretation services provided as well.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadra Ehrman
Santa Barbara County Board of Education President
On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Education