



Santa Barbara SCHOOL DISTRICTS

720 Santa Barbara Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Phone (805) 963-4338, Fax (805) 962-3146

September 4, 2008

The Honorable J. William McLafferty
Superior Court
County of Santa Barbara
1100 Anacapa Street, 2nd Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

County Civil Grand Jury
Attn: Foreman Ted Sten
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Judge McLafferty:

This letter is in response to the Civil Grand Jury's letter dated June 12, 2008 requesting a response to its 2007-2008 report titled *Anti-Gang Efforts in the City of Santa Barbara: Who's in Charge?* Attached please find the Santa Barbara School Districts response pursuant to the requirements of California Penal Code Section 933.05.

The attached response was approved by the Santa Barbara School Districts Board of Education on Tuesday, August 26, 2008.

Thank you for your efforts to reduce youth gang violence in our community. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. J. Brian Sarvis
Superintendent

Adams Elementary School
Cesar Chavez Charter School
Cleveland Elementary School
Franklin Elementary School
Harding Elementary School

McKinley Elementary School
Monroe Elementary School
Open Alternative School
Peabody Charter School

Roosevelt Elementary School
Santa Barbara Charter School
Santa Barbara Community Academy
Washington Elementary School

Goleta Valley Junior High School
La Colina Junior High School
La Cumbre Junior High School
Santa Barbara Junior High School

Dos Pueblos High School
La Cuesta Continuation High School
San Marcos High School
Santa Barbara High School
Home School Santa Barbara



Santa Barbara
SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

The Santa Barbara School Districts' Response to the June 2008 Grand Jury Report

Anti-Gang Efforts in the City of Santa Barbara: Who's in Charge?

September 4, 2008

The Santa Barbara School Districts'
Response to the June 2008 Grand Jury Report
Anti-Gang Efforts in the City of Santa Barbara: Who's in Charge?

INTRODUCTION

The Santa Barbara School Districts with appreciation recognizes the 2007-2008 Civil Grand Jury for their *Anti-Gang Efforts in the City of Santa Barbara: Who's in Charge?* report on citywide efforts to prevent and intervene in the escalation of gang-related violence facing our community. The school districts share the concerns expressed in the report and are in agreement with the findings and recommendations of the report.

The report references the 2006-2007 California Healthy Kids Survey that reported 142 seventh-grade students, of 1,266 who participated in the survey, brought a knife or club to school and 56 students claimed to have brought a gun to school. The school districts have requested assistance from University of California at Santa Barbara consultants to assist the districts in determining the validity of this finding and recommend an appropriate course of action.

The Grand Jury report also makes reference to the districts' collaboration with Fighting Back and the end of the three-year U.S. Department of Education's Reduce Alcohol Abuse Program grant that supported this important anti-substance abuse program. Please know that the districts will continue to support this program for the 2008-2009 school year with a \$175,000 contribution to Fighting Back.

The report also states that the districts rejected a proposal to create a vocational school as an alternative to core academic training. In March 2007, the districts' board of education was presented with a charter high school petition for a liberal arts program and two self-contained career-technical schools (a School of Construction Technology and Design and a School of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness). The board elected to reject the petition because the petitioners failed to satisfy the mandates for a charter school set forth in law.

Finally, the report states that the Santa Barbara School Districts have the continuing responsibility to ensure that campuses, especially at the secondary level, are safe and that all students feel connected to schools through academic or career-building curricula. The safety of our students, staff and visitors to our schools is, and will continue to be, the first priority of the Santa Barbara School Districts. Our experiences and all relevant research findings conclude that though curricula is a powerful means of connecting students to schools, the best way to connect students to schools is through the building and maintenance of caring, positive, healthy, and relevant relationships between students and the teachers, counselors, administrators and other school staff.

SANTA BARBARA SCHOOL DISTRICTS' RESPONSES TO THE GRAND JURY'S FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Grand Jury Finding 3

In many cases parents do not have the skills or experiences to deal with their at-risk children.

Grand Jury Recommendation 3

Schools and law enforcement need to partner with community groups that provide counseling classes for parents.

Santa Barbara School Districts' Response

The Santa Barbara School Districts are in agreement that schools and law enforcement need to partner with community groups that provide counseling classes for parents. One of the greatest challenges educators have when dealing with the parents of at-risk students is helping parents confront denial and convincing parents to recognize and act appropriately when dealing with at-risk issues. The districts are currently partnering with the Family Service Agency, the Santa Barbara Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse's Fighting Back program, and La Casa de la Raza to provide such services. The districts recognize that a number of community groups that can offer counseling classes for parents must be greatly expanded. The districts have been working with the city-led Strategic Planning Committee on Youth Violence, the Collaborative Communities Foundation, the Youth Violence Steering Committee led by staff of La Casa de La Raza, and the Chicano Studies Institute of the University of California at Santa Barbara to increase the number of parenting programs available for parents of at-risk youth.

For the past four years, the districts have piloted a number of parent education programs. For example, in 2004 the Parent Education and Community Literacy Program partnership consisting of the Gevirtz Research Center, Santa Barbara Junior High School, Santa Barbara High School, La Cuesta, and the districts conducted a six-week parent education program called *Programa Educativo Para Padres* at Santa Barbara High School. The program focused on: school success, attendance and truancy, parent involvement in schools, drug and alcohol education, juvenile justice system and gang prevention, parent support and skill development, post-secondary education, parent and student rights and responsibilities, and school and community resources. The evaluations of the program were overwhelmingly positive and more than 60 parents were in attendance. In 2006-2007, the districts funded a pilot parent education program taught by Ms. Norma Perez-Sandford, a Ventura County based counselor. The *Parent Project* consisted of a twelve-week parent education program that focused on helping parents on dealing with conflict and authority at home. It took place at the Santa Barbara Junior High School cafeteria and was attended by 29 Spanish-speaking parents. The evaluations of the program were generally positive. This past year, Ms. Linda Guerena, a Dos Pueblos High School community liaison, implemented a similar program at Dos Pueblos High School and at Goleta Valley Junior High School. Over 50 parents attended this ten-week, one evening (6-9 p.m.) per week program. As of this date, over 350 parents have participated in parent education programs sponsored by the Santa Barbara School Districts. Attendance and program evaluations demonstrate that there is support and a need for the expansion of parenting programs in our community.



Grand Jury Finding 6

Most violent gang activity happens after school and off school campuses.

Grand Jury Recommendation 6a

Schools and law enforcement should continue to work in concert and focus on safety zones beyond the school campuses.

Santa Barbara School Districts' Response to 6a

The Santa Barbara School Districts agree that with rare exceptions most of the violent gang activity happens after school and off school campuses. The districts are also in agreement that schools and law enforcement, along with business leaders and community partners, need to work in concert and focus on safety zones beyond the school campuses. Several years ago, the districts worked with merchants in the Goleta Valley Junior High School residential area to establish violence-free zones beyond the Goleta Valley Junior High School campus. School officials worked with selected Goleta businesses to establish a "safe haven" program whereby the merchants agreed to permit students who felt they were in danger to enter their businesses and expedite calls to law enforcement, parents and/or school officials if needed. Signs identifying the store or business as a safe haven were posted on storefront or business windows.

The Santa Barbara School Districts are considering a pilot program to hire gang prevention/intervention specialists that would work exclusively on issues related to youth violence prevention and intervention on school campus as well as in the surrounding neighborhoods. The Districts will study the Attorney General's California Community Relations Service's School Gang Prevention Safe Passage Program, a multi-agency enforcement partnership effort designed to protect students from gang violence as they travel to and from school for its applicability to our community.

Grand Jury Recommendation 6b

Santa Barbara School Districts should continue to partner with community organizations to develop after-school programs.

Santa Barbara School Districts' Response to 6b

The Santa Barbara School Districts are in agreement that the districts should continue to partner with community organizations to develop after-school programs. The school districts currently partner with over 29 community organizations. A partial list of partner organizations and programs includes: All For One- Youth and Mentoring Program; American Youth Soccer organization; Boys and Girls Club; Boys Scouts of America; City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation's after school sports programs and Youth Volunteer Program; Community Action Commission's Los Compadres Program; Endowment for Youth Committee; Family Services Agency- Big Brothers/Big Sisters Programs, School Based Counseling Programs; Future Leaders; Girls, Inc; Goleta Valley Community Center; Isla Vista Youth Projects; La Casa de la Raza's recreational, educational and cultural arts programs; Page Youth Center; Planned Parenthood's Peer Advocates Program; Police Assistance League; Santa Barbara City College; Santa Barbara Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse's Youth Services Specialist Program, Mentor Program, Parent Program, Substance Use Prevention and Education Resource Program, Teen Court, Club Live Program, Friday Night Live Program, Daniel Bryant Youth and Family Center Programs; Santa Barbara Community Youth Performing Arts Center; Santa Barbara County Office of Education; Santa Barbara Community College's CAL-SOAP Mentoring

and Tutoring Program; Santa Barbara Youth Football League; United Way- Mentoring, Tutoring and Recreational Programs; University of California-Santa Barbara's ENLACE program, Early Academic Outreach programs, Gevirtz Homework Centers, MESA programs; YMCA; Young Life; and Zona Seca) to provide after school, intersession, and summer session activities. In fact, many more organizations are providing after-school activities on the districts' school campuses than were provided a year ago. The districts' challenge is to develop more after school programs that will appeal to and attract at-risk youth.



Grand Jury Finding 7

Effectiveness of school security personnel is limited.

Grand Jury Recommendation 7

School security personnel should have direct communication with law enforcement and should be trained to monitor youth violence appropriately.

Santa Barbara School Districts' Response

The Santa Barbara School Districts will study this recommendation. School security personnel include two sets of personnel: school administrators, including the principal and the assistant principals, and campus safety assistants. School administrators are issued two-way radios as well as cell phones. Campus safety assistants are issued two-way radios. When a campus safety assistant needs additional assistance from school administrators, the need is conveyed by radio. When a campus safety assistant requires law enforcement assistance, the request is sent to a school administrator and their administrative assistants who call law enforcement. Little time is lost from the moment a request for law enforcement assistance is received and the call to law enforcement is placed. To date, there is no evidence that the work of campus safety assistants or the security of our school campuses have been impeded or jeopardized by routing communications with law enforcement through school administrators.

The Santa Barbara School Districts agree that school security personnel (school administrators and campus safety assistants) need additional training to monitor youth violence appropriately. The districts have already provided additional training and will continue to provide such training. The districts' consideration of a pilot program to hire prevention/intervention specialists (referenced in the districts' response to **Grand Jury Recommendation 6a**) may greatly enhance each school's abilities to monitor youth violence appropriately.



Grand Jury Finding 8

The Santa Barbara School Districts have not implemented a district-wide tip line.

Grand Jury Recommendation 8

The Santa Barbara School Districts, in partnership with law enforcement, should establish and promote a telephone tip line.

Santa Barbara School Districts' Response

Tip lines are being installed by the districts at each high school and junior high school campus within the district's jurisdiction, which spans the city of Santa Barbara, the city of Goleta, and unincorporated areas from Montecito to Ellwood. Reports received on the tip lines will be screened by school officials and then forwarded to either Santa Barbara Police Department or to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department depending on jurisdiction. The tip lines are scheduled to be operational by the start of the 2008-2009 school year. As the hardware becomes operational, school districts' staff will convene a meeting with city police and sheriff officers to formalize the protocols that will be followed by the districts' staff when referring reports received on the tip line. The districts will assess the installation of the tip lines to determine their effectiveness in the promotion of safety in schools and their neighborhoods.



Grand Jury Finding 9

Fighting Back is a crucial element in the success of intervention programs and is in danger of losing its funding,

Grand Jury Recommendation 9

The Santa Barbara School Districts should strive to maintain this effective anti-drug/anti-gang program.

Santa Barbara School Districts' Response

The Santa Barbara School Districts also believes that the youth services specialists (YSS) provided by the Fighting Back program of the Santa Barbara Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse is a critical component of our anti-drug programs.

The Fighting Back program was designed to be a partnership between the Santa Barbara School Districts and Santa Barbara Fighting Back, a community collaborative dedicated to reducing alcohol and drug abuse. It expanded the capacity and strategies of the youth service system, a comprehensive system of school-based universal prevention curricula and strategies targeting the general school population, as well as selected and indicated curricula and services targeting at-risk groups of students and those demonstrating signs of alcohol abuse. Services were delivered by trained YSSs on each junior high and high school campus of the districts.

The project implemented three Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Model Programs: *LifeSkills Training* (for grades 7-9), *Too Good For Drugs and Violence* (for grades 10 – 12), and the *Reconnecting Youth Program* (targeted at-risk students). A social marketing strategy designed by youths educated students about the consequences of alcohol abuse using the latest brain scan imagery graphically illustrating the effects of alcohol on the brain.

The *SUPER Program*, a family education program, targeted youth who have been suspended for alcohol and drug offenses, and their parents.

Outcome objectives for the project included: a measurable decrease in the percentage of students who report binge drinking in the past 30 days; a measurable increase in the percentage of students who perceive that frequent use of alcohol is harmful to their health; a measurable increase in the percentage of students who report that they disapprove of alcohol

abuse; a measurable decrease in the percentage of students who report using alcohol in the past 30 days; a measurable increase in the perceptions of peer disapproval of alcohol use; and a measurable increase in the perceptions of parental disapproval of alcohol use.

While the U.S. Department of Education's grant to Reduce Alcohol Abuse Program supported this collaborative between the Santa Barbara School Districts and the Fighting Back program of the Santa Barbara Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse for the past three years has ended, the Santa Barbara School Districts continue to support this program with a \$175,000 contribution for the 2008-2009 school year. *It is unknown at this time whether the districts can continue to sustain this contribution in light of the state's persistent fiscal challenges.*



Grand Jury Finding 10

Tutoring and mentoring by college students have been shown to positively impact young people's behavior.

Grand Jury Recommendation 10

Santa Barbara School Districts should work with community groups to enlist more participation from college students for tutoring and mentoring at-risk youth.

Santa Barbara School Districts' Response

The Santa Barbara School Districts agree that tutoring and mentoring by college students positively impacts young people's behavior and that the districts need to enlist more participation from college students to work with at-risk youth. The districts work with a number of college student groups from Santa Barbara City College and the University of California at Santa Barbara to provide the districts' students with after school and summer tutoring and mentoring. Santa Barbara City College's Consortium of the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) provides the districts' students from low-income families, who will be the first in their family to attend college, with tutorial and mentoring services.

The Gevirtz Homework Centers sponsored by Gevirtz Research Center of the University of California at Santa Barbara; Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) Program of the College of Engineering at University of California at Santa Barbara; and the Engaging Latino Communities in Education (ENLACE) Program of the Academic Preparation Department of the University of California at Santa Barbara also provide the districts' students with comprehensive tutorial and mentoring program during the school year as well as summers. The Santa Barbara School Districts were recently notified that a group of students from the UCSB Latino Business Association will also begin to offer mentoring services to the districts' students this fall.