



# Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

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November 15, 2021

The Honorable Gustavo Lavayen  
312 East Cook Street  
Santa Maria, CA 93454

Pamela Olsen, Foreperson  
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury  
[sbcgj@sbcourts.org](mailto:sbcgj@sbcourts.org)

**Re: 2021 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Remote Learning During COVID-19**

Dear Judge Lavayen, Foreperson Olsen, and Grand Jury Members,

Thank you for your attention to the topic of remote learning during COVID-19. As an educational leader, I have held the continuity of learning, social-emotional wellness, and the physical health of our students at the forefront of my mind and in my heart since the pandemic began. On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO), I am pleased to provide the following responses to your letter dated November 8, 2021.

#### **Finding 4**

Santa Barbara County school districts did not use one common test throughout Santa Barbara County, making it impossible to compare countywide testing results.

**SBCEO response:** Agree. Districts, charter schools, and county offices of education are referred to collectively as Local Education Agencies or LEAs. All LEAs in the state were granted flexibility to administer either the Smarter Balanced Assessment or an alternative local summative assessment for the 2020-2021 school year only.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That the Santa Barbara County school districts and the Santa Barbara County Education Office work together to develop a common summative testing program to be adopted for all Santa Barbara County school districts for the 2022-23 school year.

**SBCEO response:** LEAs within Santa Barbara County and the state of California are required to comply with annual state and federal testing requirements. All districts, charters, and the

county education office will resume administering the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English/language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11 as part of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) this school year (2021-2022). The California Department of Education (CDE) will resume publishing those results next December on the California State Dashboard, after the Dashboard was suspended this year by Assembly Bill 130.

SBCEO does not have the authority to determine local assessment requirements for districts. However, LEAs have the option to continue to administer *additional* summative assessments for planning and evaluation purposes and to base that choice on the needs of their local school communities.

#### **Finding 5**

Students with the greatest learning loss will require a concentrated effort to bring them up to Federal and State grade-level standards.

**SBCEO response:** Agree. Students experienced significant losses in opportunities to learn during the pandemic and will require concentrated efforts to counter those losses. One metric for determining the impact of that loss is performance on summative assessments. Santa Barbara County schools and districts use the results of these assessments and multiple additional measures to determine if students are making appropriate progress towards grade-level expectations. Educators are using a variety of diagnostic and formative tools to inform their response efforts.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That Santa Barbara County Schools outline their plans to attain Federal and State grade level standards for math and English language arts.

#### **SBCEO response:**

LEAs began outlining their plans to mitigate the impact of lost learning time with the June 2021 adoption of their Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant plans. LEAs also outlined additional actions to implement evidenced-based practices to counter the effects of the pandemic on learning within the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER-III) plans, adopted at a public board meeting in October 2021 and reviewed and approved by SBCEO.

Each year, every district prepares and submits a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) to the County Superintendent of Schools for review and approval. SBCEO supports districts in the development of these plans, which require meaningful school community engagement and a public hearing prior to adoption. These plans include an annual update of the previous year's metrics, actions, services, and expenditures as well as the plan going forward to meet their goals.

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SBCEO's Curriculum and Instruction Division continues to work with districts on the most effective, evidence-based practices to improve student learning. Additionally, SBCEO supports districts in monitoring progress and providing differentiated assistance and support in the alignment of existing required plans and the additional plans established by Assembly Bill 130.

#### **Finding 7**

Federal and State COVID relief funds cannot be counted on indefinitely.

**SBCEO response:** Agree. SBCEO and school districts within the county are aware that COVID relief funds are limited in nature. SBCEO's School Business Advisory Services (SBAS) team works closely with school districts on their budgets and fiscal planning. The plans referenced above reflect the limited nature of the funds.

#### **Recommendation 7**

That the Santa Barbara County Education Office schedule a series of meetings prior to the 2022-23 school year with Santa Barbara County school districts to establish spending guidelines and review budgets' post-COVID relief funds to ensure that mitigation efforts continue.

**SBCEO response:** SBCEO's School Business Advisory Services (SBAS) team works closely with school districts throughout the year on their budgets and fiscal planning. SBCEO also invites statewide presenters to discuss the governor's January proposed budget and May revised budget to support all districts in planning and preparing for the next fiscal year.

We appreciate the Grand Jury's focus on Santa Barbara County's 70,000 students' health, safety, well-being, learning, and growth. Santa Barbara County schools are fully committed to supporting all students, and continue to partner with school districts, local agencies, and non-profit organizations to provide support to families and school communities.

Sincerely,



Dr. Susan Salcido  
Santa Barbara County  
Superintendent of Schools