



# Santa Maria-Bonita School District

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November 29, 2021

To: Presiding Judge Gustavo Lavayen  
312 E. Cook St.  
Santa Maria, CA 93454

Pamela Olsen  
Foreperson  
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury  
sbcgj@sbcourts.org

From: Luke Ontiveros  
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Santa Maria-Bonita School District  
708 S. Miller Street  
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Subject: 2021 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Remote Learning During COVID-19

I received the report titled "Remote Learning During COVID-19" that was generated by the 2021 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury via Docu-Sign on November 12, 2021. Within this communication you will find responses to the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury per the directions contained in the November 8, 2021, cover letter written by Foreperson Pamela Olsen.

### **Finding 1**

In-person learning is more effective than remote learning both academically and emotionally.

**SMBSD response:** Agree.

### **Finding 2**

For student achievement, especially for low performing students, in-person learning in small classes or small groups is preferable to larger classrooms.

**SMBSD response:** Disagree partially. Generally speaking, in-person learning in small classes or small groups is preferable to larger classrooms. More critical than class size is the delivery of appropriate content through high quality instruction to maximize student learning.

### **Finding 3**

Remote learning exposed the importance of outreach efforts to provide coaching to parents on creating a positive home learning environment.

**SMBSD response:** Agree.

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**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.

**SMBSD response:** Agree.

**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.

**SMBSD response:** Will be implemented through the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) tests in English/language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 that provide a common summative testing program for all California public schools, including those in Santa Barbara County. The CAASPP assessments are expected to be on-cycle in 2022-2023.

**Finding 5**

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

**SMBSD response:** Agree.

**Recommendation 5**

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

**SMBSD response:** Has been implemented. The primary goal, Goal #1, in the SMBSD Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) establishes the foundation for all district planning endeavors: *Provide effective district and school wide support systems, procedures, processes, materials and practices that support student learning.* That goal is reflective of SMBSD's Vision for Student Success, which states, "Santa Maria-Bonita is committed to preparing successful citizens who are college and career ready. To achieve this level of readiness, every student will learn at grade level and beyond through effective Tier 1 practices. We have a deliberate, intentional culture of learning with high expectations where every day, every educator, every staff member, and every student seeks to learn and strives for growth. We support and challenge each other to stay focused on what matters most: ensuring that in every classroom our students are tackling relevant, challenging content, taking ownership for their learning and improving every day."

**Finding 6**

As the 2020-21 school year wore on, remote learning and teaching techniques and students' computer skills improved.

**SMBSD response:** Agree.

**Finding 7**

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

**SMBSD response:** Agree.

**Finding 8**

Community organizations provided critical assistance to the Santa Barbara County school districts by expanding their efforts to bridge the learning gap between the home environment and school.

**SMBSD response:** Agree.

**Recommendation 8**

That each Santa Barbara County school district develop plans by the start of the 2022-23 school year to encourage community organizations to continue to provide critical academic and emotional support.

**SMBSD response:** Has been implemented and will continue to be developed in response to needs. SMBSD has a long-standing history of partnerships with community organization forged to provide academic and emotional support. From partnerships with the Santa Maria Valley YMCA and the Boys and Girls’ Clubs of the Central Coast in SMBSD’s After School Education and Safety (ASES) to on-site emotional supports provided by Family Service Agency (FSA), Council on Drug and Alcohol (CADA) and Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley (FBSMV), SMBSD has long sought to leverage outreach to better support students and families. That preexisting design will only be strengthened and extended in 2022-2023 through a nascent effort coordinated across Santa Barbara County by the Department of Behavioral Wellness through the Mental Health Student Services Act grant.

**Finding 9**

Internet services were critical to remote learning and, in most cases, Santa Barbara County school districts filled the gap for homes that did not have them.

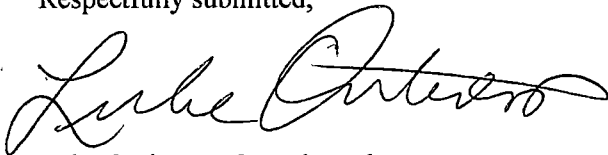
**SMBSD response:** Agree.

**Recommendation 9**

That each Santa Barbara County school district maintain adequate internet services for all students if distance learning or an emergency should again require remote learning.

**SMBSD response:** Has been implemented. The SMBSD Instructional Technology Department has generated a multiple-layered approach in providing the necessary learning tools to enable students and families to access the online learning tools that were required in distance learning, but have now become a critical component of in-person learning as well. In addition to providing students with a take-home computing device, SMBSD provides support for internet connectivity to students and families that is needed through internet “hot spots.” In addition, SMBSD is in process of implementation of a project that will “broadcast” each school site’s wi-fi signal into the adjacent neighborhood area to provide access to registered devices.

Respectfully submitted,



Luke Ontiveros, Superintendent  
Santa Maria-Bonita School District