

Pam Rennick
Superintendent/Principal

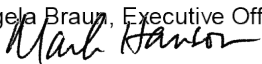
BALLARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

2425 SCHOOL STREET
SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA 93463
(805) 688-4812

GOVERNING BOARD:
Aniesa Ballinger
Séan A. Conroy
A. Arthur Kaslow

July 16, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
07/16/2026
Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY 
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

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

Re: Ballard School District Response to the 2025-26 Grand Jury Report: "Public Participation Without Barriers: Brown Act Clarity at School Board Meetings"

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

The Board of Trustees and administration at Ballard School District appreciate the opportunity to review and respond to this report. We fully support the core purpose of the Brown Act: making sure public school business is handled openly, transparently, and without barriers for our community. Ballard School District has a strong track record of open government, with no history of Brown Act violations or public concerns raised in the past. Because our district is small and serves just 104 students, our families already have direct, easy access to school leadership. All meeting agendas and minutes are posted on time according to state guidelines, and our local residents regularly participate in our board meetings.

Following California Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Ballard School District responds as follows to the findings and recommendations:

Responses to Findings

Finding 1: Some agendas use speaker cards, registration forms, or other instructions in a way that an average reader might interpret as requiring their names and addresses, which can deter participation at public meetings.

Response: Disagree partially.

While we understand that some larger school districts across the county use speaker cards that might seem confusing or restrictive to the public, that is not the case at Ballard School. Our board meetings are open. We welcome anyone to speak publicly and do not condition a person's right to speak on filling out mandatory sign-up sheets or providing

personal information. We do, on the occasion that it appears that a large number of people would like to speak, require speaker cards to be sure that everyone is given the opportunity to speak. We also accept people raising their hands to indicate that they would like to be heard during public comment.

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.

Response: Disagree partially.

While we support the goal of making online meeting materials clear and easy to locate, this finding applies a broad brush to all districts. Ballard School District's agendas and minutes are organized and fully accessible on our website. Furthermore, our local data shows that we do not have any non-English language group that makes up 20% or more of our student or family population, meaning multilingual translation is not a barrier to participation in our specific community.

Finding 3: Several education governing boards provide no clear remote option for observing meetings or providing public comment, which limits practical access for working families or community members with mobility issues.

Response: Disagree partially.

While remote participation tools like Zoom or livestreaming are practical for large, spread-out school districts, they are not a voiced need in our single-school rural community. Other than during mandatory COVID-19 pandemic protocols, our district has not offered a remote option, and it does not appear to be a limiting factor for attending. To ensure everyone has a voice, our district allows anyone to submit a written letter to the board ahead of time, which we read aloud word-for-word into the public record during the meeting.

Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board 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.

Response: Has been implemented.

Ballard School District has reviewed its agenda formatting and meeting instructions. We have updated our public comment text to clearly state that speaker cards are strictly optional and that any member of the public is welcome to speak without providing a name, address, or any other identifying details.

Recommendation 2a: The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board place a prominent, direct link to current agendas on its primary homepage, as required by Government Code section 54954.2.

Response: Has been implemented.

Our district website features a direct, easy-to-see link right on the main homepage that takes visitors straight to our current board meeting agendas and archived minutes.

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.

Response: Will not be implemented.

As noted in our response to Finding 2, Ballard School District does not have a Spanish-speaking demographic that meets or exceeds 20% of our family population. Managing and paying for professional translation services for all agendas, detailed minutes, and live meetings would be an unnecessary use of our limited public education funds.

Recommendation 3: The Grand Jury recommends that education governing boards evaluate and implement remote participation options—such as video conferencing or telephone comment lines—to eliminate physical or scheduling barriers for working parents and community members.

Response: Will not be implemented.

Because our district consists of a single school with 104 students, our public meetings are highly accessible and close to home for our families. We have no local demand for a remote attendance option. Additionally, our website displays the direct email addresses of every Board of Trustees member, allowing residents to contact them directly. Between direct emailing and our open invitation for written letters to be read aloud during meetings, our families have excellent, barrier-free access to our board without the district needing to buy and maintain virtual meeting infrastructure.

The Ballard School District values transparency and is proud of our open relationship with our community. We believe our current board practices fully respect both the letter and the spirit of the Brown Act. We will continue to protect local control, ensuring that our public funds remain

focused inside our classrooms rather than being spent on technology or language services that do not align with our small district's actual needs.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Rennick Superintendent/Principal on behalf of The Board of Trustees
Ballard School District