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BALLARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

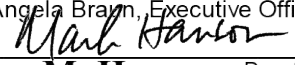
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SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA

07/16/2026

Angela Brahm, Executive Officer

BY 
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

July 16, 2026

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

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: "Bullying in Santa Barbara County Schools: Addressing Aggressive and Violent Behavior Among Students"

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 respond to this report, as we care deeply about ensuring our school remains a kind, inclusive, and welcoming place where every student feels safe and valued. Before proceeding to our formal responses, we must highlight one overarching issue that directly affects our perspective. Elementary schools face a vastly different reality than secondary schools. The extreme examples of bullying highlighted in the report—such as digital blackmail, text message death threats, and gang-related restroom confrontations—are indicative of middle and high school environments. Enforcing rigid, resource-intensive mandates meant for older teenagers onto a small elementary school serving children ages 4 to 12 is developmentally inappropriate, visually intimidating, and simply the wrong approach for young kids.

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

Responses to Findings

Finding 1: Bullying in County schools will be reduced by implementing additional safety measures.

Response: Disagree partially.

While smart safety measures help, stopping bullying at the elementary level isn't about adding security cameras or physical gear. True prevention for young children happens through Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), character building, watchful recess supervision, and teaching kids how to talk through disagreements kindly.

Finding 2: Administrators do not consistently inform school counselors when students under their guidance engage in bullying.

Response: Disagree.

This statement is completely incorrect when it comes to Ballard School. In a small school of 104 students, our administrator, teachers, and support staff talk constantly throughout the day. If a student conflict pops up, everyone involved is notified immediately so we can help the kids right away.

Finding 3: Parent participation in outreach programs for bullying has been poor.

Response: Disagree partially.

While we understand that long commutes and busy work hours make it hard for families across the county to attend standalone night meetings, characterizing parent turn-out as completely "poor" doesn't match our experience at Ballard. Our parents are incredibly supportive and show up in large numbers when we mix informational sessions into our regular school events, open houses, and student performances.

Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation 1a: The Grand Jury recommends that school boards increase staff presence in areas where students congregate before, during breaks, and after school.

Response: Has been implemented.

Having eyes on our students is a huge priority for us. We strategically schedule our staff so that our play yards, lunch areas, and pick-up zones are actively supervised before school, during recesses, and at dismissal.

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

Response: Partially implemented.

While Ballard School does have outdoor security cameras that record around campus, their primary purpose is to protect our property from vandalism during evenings and weekends—which, fortunately, has rarely been an issue. We do not spend our time,

energy, or budget actively video-monitoring our students during the day. Because we maintain an exceptionally low student-to-staff ratio on the yard, we rely entirely on direct, personal human supervision while kids are playing. We firmly believe that having attentive, caring staff members interacts with our 4-to-12-year-old students is far more effective and developmentally appropriate than tracking them through a surveillance network.

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

Response: Has been implemented.

We strongly believe in supporting our students' mental health. With an enrollment of only 104 students, our student-to-support ratio is far better than the recommended 250:1 baseline, giving our kids immediate access to social-emotional help.

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

Response: Has been implemented.

This team communication is standard practice at our school. The superintendent/principal and teachers work hand-in-hand on any student behavior concerns to ensure we are giving immediate, consistent guidance to the children.

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.

Response: Has been implemented.

To respect our families' busy work routines, we coordinate our parent informational workshops in the evenings and make sure our school's digital updates provide easy-to-access resources for parents at home.

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

Response: Has been implemented.

We find the best incentive for our families is community and connection. By pairing our parent outreach with high-interest events like student showcases, family nights, or school performances, we enjoy excellent parent engagement.

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.

Response: Has been implemented.

In our small elementary setting, if a student has an ongoing behavior issue, we immediately call for a parent conference. We work closely with the family as direct partners to implement behavioral plans and support strategies at home and at school.

The Ballard School District will always advocate for practical, age-appropriate solutions that protect both the physical and emotional safety of our young learners. We continue to stress that a rigid, one-size-fits-all plan doesn't work for a tiny elementary campus, and our local school board will continue to prioritize our budget where it directly supports our unique students.

Respectfully submitted,

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