



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

July 20, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
pkelly@sbcourts.org

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

**Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Bullying in Santa Barbara County
Schools: Addressing Aggressive and Violent Behavior Among Students**

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

The Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools and the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) share the Grand Jury's commitment to student well-being and recognize that bullying can have a significant impact on students' academic success, mental health, and sense of belonging at school.

SBCEO appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's report, which applauded the "many efforts already undertaken by school districts to limit bullying in recent years." While schools throughout the county vary in many ways, including enrollment, grade levels, funding levels, and geography, all endeavor to create spaces that foster safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments for all students.

SBCEO provides resources and support to local school districts through a variety of initiatives focused on student wellness, mental health, school climate, family engagement, and student support services including:

- Maintaining a [Youth Mental Health & Wellness](#) webpage and promoting a statewide [Bullying Prevention](#) site dedicated to providing resources and information for families and school teams.
- Expanding access to school-based mental health services and supports for students and families.

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SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA

07/20/2026

Angela Braun, Executive Officer

BY *Mark Hanson*

M. Hanson

Deputy Clerk

- Providing professional learning, networking opportunities, and technical assistance focused on social-emotional well-being, positive school climate, and inclusive learning environments.
- Promoting student connectedness, belonging, and early intervention strategies that encourage students and adults to recognize concerns and seek support.
- Supporting schools in preventing and addressing bullying, harassment, intimidation, and discrimination through training, resources, countywide coordination, and evidence-based practices.
- Fostering safe, supportive, and appropriate educational environments for students served through SBCEO-operated programs, including Juvenile Court and Community Schools which serve court-involved and justice-involved youth.
- Connecting Santa Barbara County students and families to mental health services and offering assistance in navigating the complex mental health support system through the Mental Wellness Education and Linkages program of SBCEO's Health Linkages non-profit.

It is important to note that SBCEO does not have authority to direct district and school policies, staffing levels and employee assignments, financial decisions, student discipline procedures, counseling services, supervision plans, and school climate initiatives for any school or districts. These decisions are made locally, for and by school districts, based on local needs, available resources, enrollment, facilities, and community priorities.

Accordingly, SBCEO's responses are limited to recommendations that relate to the students served through the SBCEO-operated Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS), which serve court-involved and justice-involved youth. Within these programs, SBCEO implements student wellness, school climate, safety, behavioral support, and student engagement practices consistent with its operational responsibilities.

Within SBCEO's JCCS classrooms, significant investments have been made to support student well-being and to prevent and address bullying incidents. Such investments include partnerships with community organizations to bring in Licensed Family and Marriage Therapists, weekly Intervention Team meetings, and the launch of a monthly parent workshop where topics such as bullying prevention are discussed.

Results from the California Healthy Kids Survey administered in January 2026 highlight the positive impact these investments have made:

When SBCEO's JCCS students were asked: "During the past 12 months, how many times, on school property, were you harassed

or bullied?" 95-100% of students reported they had been harassed/bullied 0 times.

It is with the above-outlined distinctions and responsibilities in mind that the Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools and Santa Barbara County Education Office offer the following responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations:

Finding 1

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

SBCEO Response to Finding 1: Agree

SBCEO agrees that additional safety measures, when paired with prevention, student support services, and positive school climate efforts, can help reduce bullying and improve student well-being.

Recommendation 1a

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

SBCEO Response to Recommendation 1a: Has been implemented

SBCEO supports the intent of this recommendation and agrees that appropriate adult supervision is an important component of safe school environments.

At SBCEO, each Juvenile Court and Community School classroom is staffed with a credentialed teacher and a teaching assistant. In addition, every Court School classroom is assigned a Juvenile Institution Officer (JIO) provided by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department. Probation staff also supervise all Court School breaks.

At FitzGerald Community School, where there is one point of entrance and exit, a security guard trained to work in school settings is present whenever students are on campus. School staff and security personnel provide supervision in all areas where students gather before and after school, as well as during breaks, ensuring continuous monitoring throughout the school day.

Recommendation 1b

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

SBCEO Response to Recommendation 1b: Has been implemented

SBCEO supports the goal of maintaining safe learning environments and recognizes that security infrastructure may be one tool available to schools as part of a broader student safety strategy.

SBCEO confirms there are cameras in and throughout all Juvenile Court and Community School facilities, including in classrooms and other gathering areas. Private spaces, such as bathrooms, are exempt and do not have cameras installed.

Recommendation 1c

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

SBCEO Response to Recommendation 1c: Has been implemented

SBCEO agrees that access to counseling, mental health, and student support services is important to student well-being and positive school climate.

Each Juvenile Court School and Community School site serves fewer than 50 students and is staffed with a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) counselor. In addition, the Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness provides a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) to deliver treatment and support services to Court School students. The Community School has partnered with the Family Service Agency to provide an associate LMFT for on-site student support, as well as an Alcohol and Other Drug Counselor for substance use-related services. The Community School is also hiring a bilingual Behavioral Health Practitioner, a newly created position aimed to further expand student support services.

Finding 2

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

SBCEO Response to Finding 2: Disagree

SBCEO agrees that effective communication among administrators, counselors, educators, and student support personnel is an important component of addressing student behavioral concerns and supporting student well-being.

Through staff meetings, the work of an Intervention Team, and other important mechanisms, communication about student concerns and incidents are monitored and shared consistently to any and all parties who may need to know (including counselors) at SBCEO's Juvenile Court and Community Schools.

Recommendation 2

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

SBCEO Response to Recommendation 2: Has been implemented

SBCEO supports the intent of this recommendation and recognizes the important role that coordinated communication plays in supporting students and addressing bullying concerns.

At the Community School, an Intervention Team consisting of counselors, therapists, and school administrators meets weekly to discuss student behavioral, social-emotional, and academic needs, including concerns related to bullying. Individual student matters are also a standing agenda item at weekly staff meetings, allowing all staff to raise concerns and receive support in addressing them.

At the Court School, student needs and progress are reviewed through a multidisciplinary Treatment Team process. Through this process, every student is discussed at regular and consistent intervals by a team that includes the Site Liaison (Lead Teacher), Probation, Medical, and Behavioral Wellness staff to identify concerns and coordinate appropriate supports.

Finding 3

Parent participation in outreach programs for bullying has been poor.

SBCEO Response to Finding 3: Disagree partially

SBCEO agrees that family engagement is a critical component of student success and that many schools and districts face challenges in increasing participation in outreach programs.

Before the 2023-24 school year, parent information nights at JCCS were hosted twice a year (once per semester) and have since been increased to a monthly meeting schedule, with interpretation in Spanish and Mixteco, family childcare, and free meals.

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.

SBCEO Response to Recommendation 3a: Has been implemented

SBCEO supports the intent of making family engagement opportunities more accessible to parents and guardians.

The Juvenile Court and Community Schools staff work hard to bring parents and guardians in as partners in preventing and addressing bullying. JCCS hosts in-person monthly parent workshops and information nights (after typical working hours) on topics such as bullying.

Recommendation 3b

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

SBCEO Response to Recommendation 3b: Has been implemented

SBCEO supports the intent of reducing barriers to family participation and encouraging meaningful engagement between schools and families.

At the Juvenile Court and Community Schools parent information nights, a number of supports are provided to reduce barriers to family participation, including providing Spanish and Mixteco interpretation, childcare for those with young children, and a meal for every participant and each participating family.

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.

SBCEO Response to Recommendation 3c: Has been implemented

SBCEO agrees that family engagement is important in addressing repeated bullying behavior and supporting student well-being. Families are encouraged to participate in all support and outreach programs.

Creating positive school climates where students feel safe, connected, and supported is a responsibility shared by educators, families, students, and community partners. SBCEO remains committed to supporting student wellness initiatives, family engagement efforts, professional learning opportunities, and countywide collaboration aimed at ensuring that all students have access to safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Susan Salcido
Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools