



Blochman Union School District

BENJAMIN FOXEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Blochman Union School District Draft Response to the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report

"Gangs of Santa Barbara County: Should the Schools Do More to Address Them?"

August 6, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court

Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury

Re: Response to the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report

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

On behalf of Blochman Union School District, I respectfully submit the District's response to the findings and recommendations contained in the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report entitled "Gangs of Santa Barbara County: Should the Schools Do More to Address Them?"

Blochman Union School District shares the Grand Jury's commitment to maintaining safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments. As a small TK–8 district, we believe the strongest protection against gang involvement and other high-risk behaviors is a school culture where students are known, connected, supported, and engaged by caring adults.

Although gang-related incidents have been infrequent within our district, we recognize the importance of remaining proactive. Our approach emphasizes prevention through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Second Step social-emotional learning, PBIS-informed practices, restorative conversations, Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), collaboration with families, and timely academic, behavioral, and mental health supports.

Respectfully,

Superintendent/Principal

FILED

SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA

08/18/2026

Angela Braun, Executive Officer

BY
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

Blochman's Commitment to Student Safety

Blochman Union School District serves students from transitional-kindergarten through eighth grade within a close-knit educational community. The district believes student safety is best achieved through prevention, positive relationships, and early intervention rather than reactive measures alone. Through MTSS, Second Step SEL, PBIS-informed practices, restorative conversations, ELO-P, school psychology services, and strong family partnerships, the district works to strengthen protective factors associated with positive youth development and school connectedness.

Finding 1

Response: Disagree

Blochman acknowledges that incidents occurring before or after school may affect students and the school environment. Such incidents, in larger districts and communities, generally occur outside the direct supervision and legal authority of school personnel. When they affect the school environment, administrators collaborate with families and community partners to address student safety, support affected students, and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Finding 2

Response: Agree in Part

The District agrees that structured activities and supportive adult relationships are important protective factors. Vulnerability is influenced by multiple factors including family, peers, school connectedness, and community conditions. Through ELO-P, Second Step, MTSS, PBIS-informed practices, restorative conversations, and coordinated student supports, Blochman promotes resilience, belonging, and positive decision-making.

Finding 3

Blochman Response: Agree in Part

Blochman Union School District recognizes that students may become exposed to gangs or other harmful influences during their elementary and middle school years. While the District is unaware of any gang recruitment on campus, it believes prevention efforts should begin well before high school. As a small TK–8 district, Blochman incorporates prevention through Second Step social-emotional learning, MTSS, PBIS-informed practices, restorative conversations, and positive adult-student relationships. These efforts help students develop decision-making, empathy, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills that serve as protective factors throughout childhood and adolescence.

Finding 4

Blochman Response: Agree

Blochman agrees that administrators benefit from current information regarding gang clothing, symbols, behaviors, and emerging trends. Although gang-related activity has been limited within the District, ongoing collaboration and training with local law enforcement and county partners would strengthen staff awareness and ensure appropriate responses should concerns arise. The District supports annual informational updates that are practical, age-appropriate, and relevant to Santa Barbara County.

Finding 5

Blochman Response: Agree

Blochman believes that weapons of any kind have no place on a school campus. The District maintains policies and procedures designed to promote safe learning environments while educating students and families regarding school safety expectations. When concerns arise, administrators respond promptly in accordance with Board policy, California law, and established safety procedures, while providing appropriate support to affected students and families.

Finding 6

Blochman Response: Agree

Blochman agrees that accessible reporting systems can encourage students, families, and staff to report safety concerns before they escalate. As a small district, students and families have direct access to school administrators and office staff, and concerns may be reported promptly by phone or in person. The District continually encourages open communication and recognizes the value of maintaining trusted reporting pathways for its school community.

Finding 7

Blochman Response: Agree

Blochman agrees that meaningful relationships with caring adults are among the strongest protective factors for children and adolescents. The District's TK–8 structure allows staff to build long-term relationships with students and families over many years. Through MTSS, school psychology services, collaboration among educators, and coordinated student support, students who may appear socially isolated or demonstrate emerging concerns are identified early and connected with appropriate interventions. The District will continue strengthening opportunities for student connectedness and positive mentoring relationships.

Recommendation 1a

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County Education Office create a template for schools' response procedures for student safety in the areas surrounding school campuses before and after school hours.

Blochman Response: Will Not Be Implemented

Blochman supports the intent of promoting student safety before and after the school day. However, because incidents occurring off campus generally fall outside the District's supervision and legal authority, the District believes that a single countywide response template may not adequately address the unique circumstances of individual schools and communities. Blochman will continue collaborating with families and local public safety partners whenever off-campus incidents affect the school environment.

Recommendation 1b

The Grand Jury recommends that local law enforcement agencies, in conjunction with school districts, create policies and programs to extend the safe space for students traveling to and from school.

Blochman Response: Will Not Be Implemented

Blochman values its relationships with local law enforcement and appreciates collaborative efforts that promote student safety. While the District supports community partnerships, it believes school supervision should remain focused on school-sponsored activities and areas within the District's legal authority. The District will continue communicating with families and appropriate agencies whenever concerns affecting student safety arise.

Recommendation 2a

The Grand Jury recommends implementing additional after-school opportunities such as music, sports, art, drama, and other extracurricular activities.

Blochman Response: Has Been Implemented

Blochman has implemented this recommendation through its Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), which provides students with supervised enrichment, academic support, recreational opportunities, and activities that strengthen school connectedness. The District recognizes that meaningful participation in positive after-school experiences helps develop protective factors associated with healthy youth development.

Recommendation 2b

The Grand Jury recommends partnering with community organizations and local government agencies to provide after-school programming.

Blochman Response: Has Been Implemented

Blochman recognizes that partnerships enhance opportunities available to students and families. The District will continue seeking and maintaining collaborative relationships with community organizations, educational partners, and public agencies that support student learning, wellness, enrichment, and positive youth development.

Recommendation 3

The Grand Jury recommends implementing programs aimed at discouraging gang involvement among elementary and middle school students.

Blochman Response: Has Been Implemented

Blochman's comprehensive prevention framework addresses this recommendation through Second Step social-emotional learning, MTSS, PBIS-informed practices, restorative conversations, ELO-P programming, and coordinated student support services. Rather than relying upon a single anti-gang program, the District emphasizes prevention by strengthening student connectedness, decision-making skills, resilience, and positive relationships with trusted adults.

Recommendation 4

The Grand Jury recommends annual information regarding gang clothing, insignia, and signs for school administrators.

Blochman Response: Requires Further Analysis

Blochman welcomes continued collaboration with the Santa Barbara County Education Office and local law enforcement regarding emerging gang trends and appropriate staff training. The District supports periodic professional learning that reflects local conditions and student needs while remaining developmentally appropriate for a small TK–8 school district.

Recommendation 5

The Grand Jury recommends that school districts annually remind parents and guardians of California Penal Code section 25100 regarding the criminalization of unsafe firearm storage.

Blochman Response: Has Been Implemented

Blochman Union School District supports responsible firearm ownership and recognizes the importance of educating families regarding safe firearm storage. The District provides annual notices and communications to families consistent with applicable legal requirements and will continue reviewing its annual parent notifications to ensure firearm safety information remains current and accessible.

Recommendation 6

The Grand Jury recommends that school districts provide anonymous communications systems for student or staff reporting of danger on and off campus.

Blochman Response: Has Been Implemented

Blochman encourages students, families, and staff to promptly report concerns affecting student safety. As a small TK–8 district, students and families have direct access to administrators and office staff by telephone or in person. The District values open communication, maintains trusted reporting pathways, and will continue evaluating additional reporting options that may further strengthen student safety.

Recommendation 7

The Grand Jury recommends that school districts create systems to pair socially isolated students with school mentors.

Blochman Response: Has Been Implemented

Blochman has established a comprehensive system of student support through MTSS, collaborative problem-solving, school psychology services, PBIS-informed practices, restorative conversations, and ongoing communication among staff. Because of the District's small TK–8 structure, staff members often know students over multiple years, allowing emerging concerns to be recognized early and appropriate adult connections to be developed. The District will continue strengthening opportunities for student belonging, connectedness, and positive relationships.

Closing Statement

Blochman Union School District appreciates the work of the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury in examining strategies to enhance student safety throughout the county. Although the District has experienced limited gang-related concerns, it recognizes the importance of remaining proactive through prevention, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

As a small TK–8 school district, Blochman believes that meaningful relationships, strong family partnerships, evidence-based educational practices, and timely student supports are the most effective means of promoting safe schools and reducing the risk factors associated with youth violence and gang involvement. The District remains committed to reviewing its practices, strengthening community partnerships, and providing a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for every student.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daugherty", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Superintendent/Principal