

Cuyama Joint Unified School District

2300 Highway 166, New Cuyama, California 93254
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FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA

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Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY Mark Hanson Deputy Clerk

CUYAMA JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

M. Hanson

"Public Participation Without Barriers: Brown Act Clarity at School Board Meetings"

The Honorable Patricia Kelly

Presiding Judge, 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: Cuyama Joint Unified 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 of Cuyama Joint Unified School District appreciate the opportunity to review and respond to the findings and recommendations contained in the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury report, *Public Participation Without Barriers: Brown Act Clarity at School Board Meetings*.

Cuyama Joint Unified School District is committed to maintaining an open, transparent, and welcoming process for public participation in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. As a small rural school district, we value the close relationships we maintain with our students, families, staff, and community members and continuously seek ways to improve public access to information and board proceedings.

Pursuant to California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the District responds as follows:

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.

The language currently used on Cuyama Joint Unified School District board meeting agendas clearly welcomes public participation and does not require completion of speaker cards, registration forms, or the disclosure of personal information in order to address the Board. To further clarify the District's commitment to unrestricted public participation, the public comment section of the agenda has been revised to expressly state that speaker cards are voluntary and used solely to facilitate the orderly conduct of meetings. The revised language also affirms that members of the public may attend and address the Board without providing their name, address, or other identifying information.

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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.

Response: Disagree Partially.

Finding 2a

The District's primary website contains a direct link to current Board of Trustees agendas and minutes that is readily accessible to the public.

Finding 2b

The District acknowledges that Spanish-language versions of Board agendas and meeting minutes are not currently available on the District website. To improve accessibility and communication with families and community members, the District is implementing a process to provide Spanish translations of board agendas and minutes. Beginning no later than August 13, 2026, Spanish-language copies will be available at Board meetings and posted on the District website.

The District remains committed to enhancing communication and ensuring meaningful public access to information for all members of the community.

Finding 3

Several education governing boards provide no clear remote option for observing meetings or providing public comment.

Response: Disagree.

Cuyama Joint Unified School District is a small, rural district located in a geographically remote area with limited broadband infrastructure. Due to connectivity and bandwidth limitations, the District faces significant challenges in reliably supporting virtual attendance or online public participation during Board meetings.

At present, the District does not offer remote participation options. However, the District continues to provide full public access through in-person attendance and remains committed to evaluating future opportunities for expanded access as technology and infrastructure resources improve.

Finding 4

Some education governing boards do not clearly identify where approved meeting minutes can be found or lack established procedures for posting them online.

Response: Agree.

The District agrees with this finding. Currently, no Board policy or administrative regulation establishes a specific timeline for posting approved Board meeting minutes to the District website.

While approved minutes are available through the District website within Board agenda materials, they have historically been maintained as part of agenda backup documents rather than in a centralized minutes archive.

To improve transparency, accessibility, and organization of public records, the District will present a Board resolution for consideration at the August 13, 2026 regular Board meeting

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establishing a process for posting approved Board meeting minutes and maintaining a dedicated, publicly accessible archive on the District website.

Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board review agenda language and public comment instructions to clearly state that speaker cards, sign-up sheets, and online forms are optional tools used solely to organize public comment and that individuals may address the board without providing identifying information.

Response: Has Been Implemented.

The District has reviewed and revised its public comment language to expressly state that speaker cards are voluntary and used only to facilitate the orderly conduct of meetings. The revised language further clarifies that members of the public may address the Board without providing their name, address, or other identifying information.

Recommendation 2a

The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board provide a prominent direct link to current board meeting agendas on its primary website homepage.

Response: Has Been Implemented.

The District's website currently provides a direct and visible link to Board agendas and related meeting materials from the homepage.

Recommendation 2b

The Grand Jury recommends that governing boards serving communities with significant Spanish-speaking populations provide Spanish-language translations of board meeting materials.

Response: Will Be Implemented.

Although Spanish-language translations are not currently posted online, the District has initiated a process to provide Spanish translations of Board agendas and minutes. This change will be fully implemented no later than August 13, 2026.

Recommendation 3

The Grand Jury recommends that education governing boards evaluate and implement remote participation options to reduce barriers to public engagement.

Response: Will Not Be Implemented.

Given the District's rural location and limited broadband infrastructure, implementation of reliable virtual participation systems is not feasible at this time. The District will continue to provide open public access through in-person attendance and will revisit remote participation opportunities as infrastructure and resources allow.

Recommendation 4

The Grand Jury recommends that governing boards establish clear procedures and timelines for posting approved Board meeting minutes and maintaining a publicly accessible archive.

Response: Will Be Implemented.

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The District will present a Board resolution for adoption at the August 13, 2026 regular Board meeting to establish procedures governing the posting of approved Board meeting minutes and the maintenance of a centralized archive on the District website.

Cuyama Joint Unified School District values transparency, public engagement, and compliance with the Brown Act. We appreciate the Grand Jury's efforts to examine public participation practices and welcome opportunities to strengthen communication and accessibility for our community.

Respectfully submitted,

CUYAMA JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

On Behalf of the Governing Board



Kevin Lebsack Superintendent/Principal

Cuyama Joint Unified School District

Approved by the Governing Board on August 13, 2026