



GOLETA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of the Superintendent

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September 24, 2026

Superintendent

Dr. Mary Kahn

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

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
09/24/2026
Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY *Mark Hanson*
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

Re: 2025-26 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report on Gangs of Santa Barbara County: Should the Schools Do More to Address Them?

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

The Goleta Union School District (GUSD) shares the Grand Jury's concern that criminal street gang activity is a community concern that can affect youth, schools, and the community as a whole. We recognize that schools play an important role in teaching prosocial behavior, developing students' social-emotional skills, and providing access to positive activities that are incompatible with participation and affiliation with gangs. We also recognize that students are in school 180 days per year, and members of the community for 365 days a year. Therefore any efforts to prevent youth from participating in gangs must be a community-wide effort and responsibility.

Please find GUSD's responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations below:

Finding 1

Many student fights occur in the areas surrounding school campuses before and after school hours, outside school supervision, leaving a gap in County schools' responses.

GUSD Response to Finding 1: Disagree partially with an explanation

GUSD recognizes that there are 20 school districts in the county and cannot speak to what other districts may be experiencing. However, GUSD is not aware of regular fights occurring involving its students before, during, or after school hours.

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 to go to or from home. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 1b: Has been implemented

GUSD Expanded Learning Programs provide a safe and supportive space for students after the regular school day. Through this program, GUSD serves approximately 1,300 students across the district, providing supervised enrichment, academic support, and other engaging activities during the hours when students may otherwise be traveling home or waiting for a caregiver. Expanded Learning is designed to be accessible and affordable for GUSD families, with program fees structured to support participation by families across a range of financial circumstances. Financial assistance is available to qualifying families. By providing students with a safe, supervised place to remain on campus after school, Expanded Learning helps extend the safe space available to students as they transition from the school day to home.

Recommendation 1c

The Grand Jury recommends that all school districts consider the templates, policies, and programs proposed in Recommendations 1a and 1b. To be implemented by June 30, 2027.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 1c: Will not be implemented

GUSD agrees with SBCEO in its response to recommendations 1a and 1b that includes that the wide variation in local circumstances and community needs across schools and districts throughout the county make the development of a template unfeasible for this purpose. However, if SBCEO develops a template for this purpose, GUSD will reconsider this recommendation.

Finding 2

When children lack a set structure to occupy their time on constructive activities outside of regular school hours, they become vulnerable to recruitment from criminal street gangs.

GUSD Response to Finding 2: Agree

Recommendation 2a

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts implement more after-school programs such as music, sports, art, drama, and other extra-curricular activities. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 2a: Has been implemented

The GUSD Expanded Learning Program provides students with a variety of opportunities to participate in music, sports, art, and other extracurricular activities beyond the regular school day. Activities are designed to support students' interests

and provide opportunities for creativity, physical activity, and collaboration with other students. Depending on the school and program, students may participate in enrichment offerings such as instrumental music, sports, art, cooking, or STEAM. These programs provide students with accessible opportunities to explore new interests and develop skills outside of the traditional classroom setting.

Recommendation 2b

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts partner with others, including community-based organizations and local government entities, such as Parks and Recreation Departments, to offer after-school programs. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 2b: Has been implemented

GUSD has established partnerships with community-based organizations to expand after-school programming and enrichment opportunities for students. Through partnerships with organizations such as Family Service Agency (FSA) and Learn, Engage, Advocate, Partner (LEAP), GUSD provides students with additional supportive services beyond the regular school day. These partnerships allow GUSD to utilize community resources to offer programming that further meets the diverse needs and interests of students and families.

Finding 3

Gangs are increasingly grooming and recruiting students in elementary, middle, and junior high schools, yet many anti-gang programs focus on older students.

GUSD Response to Finding 3: Agree

Recommendation 3

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts implement programs that are aimed at dissuading elementary, middle, and junior high students from gang membership. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 3: Disagree with an explanation

Goleta Union School District does not currently plan to implement programming specifically focused on gang prevention because the District has experienced minimal need for this type of targeted intervention among its elementary-age students. GUSD does, however, provide a strong social-emotional learning program that supports positive relationships, responsible decision-making, self-management, belonging, and healthy choices. When students or families need additional support, the District also partners with local community organizations and service providers to connect families with appropriate resources. GUSD will continue to monitor student and community needs and consider additional targeted supports if circumstances warrant them in the future.

Finding 5

Students who bring guns, knives, and other weapons on campus, even when provided by parents for their children's safety, pose a threat to school safety.

GUSD Response to Finding 5: Agree**Recommendation 5**

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts remind parents and guardians annually of California Penal Code Section 25100 regarding the criminalization of unsafe storage of guns. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 5: Has been implemented

Goleta Union School District includes a section specific to California Law Regarding Safe Storage of Firearms, citing Penal Code Section 25100, in its Annual Notification of Rights and Responsibilities to parents and guardians. Parents and guardians are required to review and acknowledge this notice when registering their children for school each year.

Finding 6

Anonymous communication systems, both digital programs and physical drop-boxes, when made available to school students and personnel, can help identify gang activity ahead of serious consequences.

GUSD Response to Finding 6: Agree**Recommendation 6**

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts provide all schools with anonymous communication systems for student or staff reporting of danger on and off campus, both via digital media and local drop boxes. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 6: Has been implemented

GUSD has added anonymous reporting systems at each of our schools in order to support students. We encourage our students to share safety concerns with a trusted adult. However, we recognize that if a student does not feel they have an adult they can share concerns with, anonymous reporting may help.

Finding 7

Socially isolated students can benefit from engagement with responsible mentors as a deterrent to negative manipulation by outside influences, such as gangs, social media, or other ongoing stresses in family life.

GUSD Response to Finding 7: Agree

Recommendation 7

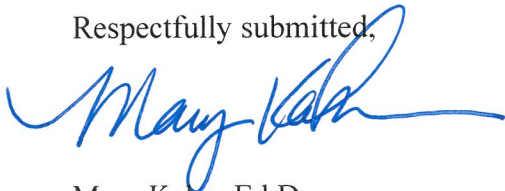
The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts create systems in their schools to pair socially isolated students with school mentors. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

GUSD Response to Recommendation 7: Has been implemented

One of GUSD's regular practices through our Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is Check-In/Check-Out (CICO). This intervention relies on a predictable, consistent daily routine centered around an adult mentor who is paired with a student. Those adult mentors meet with the students to start and end their day in order to provide a positive, encouraging start and reflection on how they are doing at the end of the day. Separately, GUSD has a partnership with Learn, Engage, Advocate, Partner (LEAP) to provide mentorship to 4th through 6th grade students throughout the after school program. In addition to this opportunity, the GUSD after school program provides social-emotional learning opportunities and structured daily check-ins with group leads to help develop positive relationships, build a sense of belonging, and identify trusted adults at school. These opportunities provide students with consistent spaces to connect with peers and adults, reflect on their experiences, and develop social-emotional skills. Additionally, restorative practices are incorporated into the after school program to strengthen relationships, build community, and support students in reflection. Restorative reflection forms are utilized with students grades 2-6 to provide a structured opportunity for student reflection.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Kahn, Ed.D.
Superintendent,
Goleta Union School District