



**Santa Maria-Bonita
School District**
CULTIVATING BRIGHT FUTURES

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Dr. Darren McDuffie
Superintendent

September 8, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
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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 School Shootings

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

Draft Response: Santa Maria-Bonita School District

Report #2: PREPARING FOR THE UNTHINKABLE: How are Santa Barbara County Schools Preparing to Prevent or Minimize the Effects of a Potential Mass Shooting?

The Santa Maria-Bonita School District (SMBSD) shares the Grand Jury's commitment to ensuring that schools remain safe, welcoming, and supportive places for students and staff. School safety is a community-wide responsibility that requires ongoing collaboration among schools, families, law enforcement, mental health professionals, local partners, and emergency responders.

SMBSD has maintained a sustained commitment to school safety planning, emergency preparedness, crisis response, and violence prevention across all school sites. The following provides context for the Grand Jury's findings and reflects the district's ongoing investments in this area:

Standard Response Protocols (SRPs)

SMBSD adopted the Standard Response Protocols (SRPs) in alignment with the Santa Barbara County Office of Education (SBCEO), incorporated into the Comprehensive School Safety Plans (CSSP) during the 2023-2024 school year, and retrained all site and district staff during the 2025-2026 school year. This training provided all staff with badges and posters that included the Standard Response Protocols to ensure everyone had easy access to the information.

FILED
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COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
09/08/2026
Angela Braun Executive Officer
BY *Mark Hanson*
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

Comprehensive School Safety Plans (CSSP)

Each school within SMBSD reviews and updates the Comprehensive School Safety Plans (CSSP) on or before March 1 annually. This review includes input from administrators, staff, parents, School Site Council, and local law enforcement. District staff ensures updates are made to district and school plans required by law and improved based on best practices.

Threat Assessment Team

SMBSD maintains a district team of licensed professionals that guide assessments on threats to harm self and harm to others. This team trains school site crisis response teams who evaluate initial reports of threats to harm self or others, and determine whether the situation requires escalation for further assessment by the district's Crisis Response Team. The district team then evaluates the next steps in partnership with school and district administrators to determine if outside agencies such as Behavioral Wellness, mobile crisis response, or local law enforcement are needed. This team then supports the development and monitoring of individual safety plans when deemed necessary to ensure access to educational opportunities is provided in a safe way for all students.

Student Mental Health and Wellness

SMBSD has an integrated team of wellness professionals including Credentialed School Counselors, Wellness Coaches, School-Based Therapists, and School Psychologists at all 21 school sites. District teams include Mental Health Professionals, Credentialed School Nurses, Licensed Psychiatric Technicians, and Licensed Clinical Social Workers. Truancy Mentors, Conflict Resolution Specialists, Family Outreach Advocates, Community School Specialists, and Foster Youth and Homeless Liaisons help connect students and families to appropriate outside resources and remove barriers for students to engage and attend school. Mental health and wellness staff are provided by SMBSD staff or partnerships with community based organizations with organizations that have specialized expertise in the areas of student mental health.

Law Enforcement and Community Partnerships

SMBSD appreciates the positive partnerships we maintain with local law enforcement agencies, including involvement with the Community Resource Officer and other key personnel that support creating conditions for safe schools and our community.

Please find the Santa Maria Bonita School District's responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations below, followed by important background related to the Grand Jury's report:

Finding 1

The Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) provides County school districts training in identifying pathways to targeted violence, although attendance by employees of the various Santa Barbara County school districts in the SBCEO's School Safety Symposium is limited.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Finding 1: Disagree Partially

SMBSD values the district trainings provided by the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) in identifying pathways to targeted violence, and has sent district and school representatives to these trainings. SMBSD recognizes that limitations exist to in-person attendance, including scheduling, staffing, space, and location.

SMBSD staff have utilized the information presented to update Comprehensive Safe School Plans, trainings for administrators and school staff, and school safety practices across the district. SMBSD believes that SBCEO trainings are valuable, and that utilizing key staff to attend who then bring information back to influence practices and train others supports school and district safety.

Recommendation 1b

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts require administrative leaders to attend the School Safety Symposium in person at least once every two years.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 1b: Will not be implemented.

SMBSD values the district trainings provided by the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) and will continue to send district and site representatives; however, ensuring all administrative leaders attend in person every two years may not be practical in ensuring school sites remain safe and functional and is not required to positively impact school safety and safety plans.

SMBSD will continue to send key district and school site administrators who then bring back information to ensure Comprehensive School Safety Plans are updated, design training for the district, and support training of staff.

Recommendation 1c

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts encourage teachers and staff to attend the School Safety Symposium in-person, and if not in-person, access the online seminar annually.

Santa-Maria Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 1c: Will not be implemented.

SMBSD trains staff annually on the appropriate schools' Comprehensive Safe School Plans, practices safety drills monthly, and values the training provided by the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO). It is not practical for SBCEO to accommodate the more than 2000 staff employed by SMBSD, nor is it practical for SMBSD to send all teachers and staff to SBCEO in person or online seminars annually.

Finding 2

Santa Barbara County school districts are compliant in creating Comprehensive School Safety Plans for their schools, but some staff require more information and training on safety protocols.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Finding 2: Disagree Partially

SMBSD reviews and updates Comprehensive School Safety Plans for each school annually as required by law. These updates and reviews include administrators, school staff, parents, School Site Council, and local law enforcement partners. In addition, staff are trained annually throughout the district on the Standard Response Protocols:

Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter. Staff are provided a badge with the Standard Response Protocols to ensure in-the-moment access to safety information, and drills are performed monthly at all school sites.

SMBSD recognizes that school safety is an ongoing topic and that some staff would always appreciate more training, and will continue to plan, review, update, train, and practice safety protocols with students and staff.

Recommendation 2a

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts train and drill all full-time campus personnel and students for campus safety at least once per semester.

Santa Maria- Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 2a: Has been implemented.

As part of the Comprehensive School Safety Plan, school administrators plan and facilitate drills at each school site throughout the year. This includes 1 lockdown and 1 secure or hold in the first month of school, a monthly evacuation drill between September and May, and a shelter followed by evacuation in October coordinated as part of the district disaster drill and the Great California Shakeout. This plan for safety drills exceeds the recommendations and will continue to be implemented in SMBSD.

Recommendation 2b

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide written and verbal instruction to all temporary personnel, including substitute teachers, prior to their entering a new classroom location.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 2b: Will be implemented

SMBSD will review onboarding and information provided to temporary and guest employees to ensure that Standard Response Protocols and safety information are provided to each employee. While this information is accessed with information provided at each work location, additional information provided, as well as the Standard Response badge and quick reference guides, can support all staff in being prepared for any emergency situation.

Recommendation 2c

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide quick reference situational cards and/or information posters conveying simple instructions for emergency response procedures in every classroom and in public rooms.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 2c: Has been implemented.

During the 2025-2026 school year, as part of the Comprehensive School Safety Plan training, all school staff and district personnel were provided a quick reference badge and one-page Standard Response guide in English and Spanish to post in their classroom or access at their work location. Access to these resources will be provided along with annual safety training.

Finding 3

While many Santa Barbara County school districts have a watch, listen, and report culture for enhancement of threat detection in their schools, not all schools have anonymous pathways for reporting threats or potential threats online or on campus.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Finding 3: Disagree Partially

SMBSD agrees that having reporting systems that allow students to report in an anonymous way helps proactively identify conflicts, school safety. Having systems that allow for reporting in a variety of ways, such as online, drop boxes, or directly to trusted school staff, are positive systems that SMBSD has set up for students across the district. Each school within SMBSD has existing systems for reporting, including online and physical reporting pathways. As a community, “see something, say something” helps SMBSD schools proactively address concerns related to conflict, violence, and gang activity at all schools.

Recommendation 3a

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts train school personnel on how to gain trust, understand healthy boundaries, and engage in strategic partnerships with community service groups to support student needs.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 3a: Has been implemented.

A restorative approach has been embedded in training throughout SMBSD, with the focus on creating the conditions for positive communities at the district, school, classroom, and individual level. This helps staff build a community of trust and learning in all classrooms. In addition, the expansion of Community Schools throughout SMBSD supports our further engagement with community partners to support students. We maintain partnerships with community organizations such as Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley (FBSMV), Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA), Family Services Agency (FSA), and Effective School Solutions (ESS) to support student connection to school.

Recommendation 3b

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts provide an anonymous reporting mechanism on school-provided devices, in addition to a drop box available on campus.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 3b: Has been implemented

Each school within SMBSD has existing systems for reporting, including online and physical reporting pathways.

Finding 4

School Resource Officers or Deputies are valuable in preventing or addressing potentially dangerous situations on campus, but many schools do not employ them.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Finding 4: Disagree Partially.

SMBSD agrees that law enforcement partners are valuable resources in assisting in planning and preparing for emergencies, responding to emergency situations, and supporting community safety.

SMBSD does not currently employ School Resource Officers; however, it maintains a positive relationship with the law enforcement partners. SMBSD uses a proactive approach to planning, prevention, and responding to dangerous situations involving all staff.

Recommendation 4

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts have School Resource Officers (SRO) or Deputies (SRD).

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 4: Requires further analysis

SMBSD maintains a positive relationship with local law enforcement partners. Across our TK-8 sites, the District currently staffs student supervision aides who are responsive and present on campus daily, with additional security personnel at our 7-8 sites. In our experience, having several site-based safety/security officers provides more consistent coverage than a single SRO shared across multiple junior high campuses. Formally adopting an SRO/SRD model involves further considerations between the District and law enforcement — including staffing, funding, and role coordination — that require further analysis. The District will continue to monitor and evaluate its safety systems to ensure they best serve our students.

Finding 5

Some schools in Santa Barbara County school districts lack adequate controls for visitor access.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Finding 5: Disagree Partially.

SMBSD has implemented improved visitor controls progressively over the past several years, including visitor check-in systems through Raptor that provide verification of identity and public database searches to ensure student safety, improved signage delineating public spaces from school facilities, and access for visitors through school offices. While systems are in place, continued progress is being made to ensure that all school facilities, including the district office, employ consistent practices for visitor sign-in.

Recommendation 5a

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts improve visitor access control during school hours by requiring valid government-issued photo identification verified by school personnel, utilizing a system that checks for restraining orders or other legal restrictions.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 5a: Has been implemented.

SMBSD has implemented improved visitor access requiring valid photo identification, including the use of the visitor check-in systems through Raptor that provide verification of identity and public database searches to ensure student safety.

Recommendation 5b

The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts require all schools to issue visitors a badge and require its visibility on the visitor while on campus during school hours.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 5b: Has been implemented.

SMBSD utilizes the Raptor visitor management system to check in visitors. This system generates temporary badges with a photo of the individual and information about their visit. These are provided for visitors upon entry to a school site.

Finding 6

Not all schools in Santa Barbara County have adequate safety infrastructure, including fences, cameras, classrooms that lock from the inside, restricted access points, and instantaneous communication devices.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Finding 6: Disagree.

SMBSD has adequate safety infrastructure at all school sites, including but not limited to perimeter fencing, locking classroom doors, restricted access points, and communication devices used in emergency situations. The Comprehensive School Safety Plan for each school outlines specific safety measures including entrance/egress, campus maps, and communication.

Recommendation 6

The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts have each school conduct an annual security review with respect to video security cameras at key points across school grounds, two-way communications on campus, and innovations, such as artificial intelligence-aided technologies or drones, and make improvements based on those reviews.

Santa Maria-Bonita School District Response to Recommendation 6: Has been implemented.

SMBSD reviews and updates Comprehensive School Safety Plans for each school annually. These reviews and updates include input from school administrators, teachers, parents, School Site Council, and local law enforcement. In addition, school sites are practicing safety drills on a monthly basis to ensure individuals are trained and prepared to act in an emergency consistent with the Standard Response Protocols adopted by the District and the Santa Barbara County Office of Education (SBCEO). New and improved technologies are ever-evolving, and new technologies in support of best practices for school safety will be reviewed and evaluated.

The Santa Maria-Bonita School District remains committed to providing safe, welcoming, and supportive school environments for all students and staff. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships, invest in our safety systems, and actively engage in countywide efforts to prevent violence and promote student well-being.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Darren McDuffie

Superintendent, Santa Maria-Bonita School District