

Solvang School District

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September 4, 2026

The Honorable Patricia Kelly
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
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FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
09/09/2026

Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY *Mark Hanson*
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

Stacy Mezzetta de Cossio, Foreperson
2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
sbcgj@sbcourts.org

RE: Solvang Elementary School District Response to the 2025–26 Grand Jury Report: "Bullying in Santa Barbara County Schools: Addressing Aggressive and Violent Behavior Among Students"

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

The Board of Trustees and administration of the Solvang Elementary School District appreciate the opportunity to respond to the 2025–2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report, "Bullying in Santa Barbara County Schools: Addressing Aggressive and Violent Behavior Among Students." We share the Grand Jury's commitment to student well-being and agree that every child deserves a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment free from physical and emotional harm.

Solvang Elementary School District is a Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 8 (TK–8) district serving nearly 600 students across two adjacent, unique campuses—Lower Campus (TK–5) and Upper Campus (6–8)—each led by a dedicated principal. Our mission is to educate all students to realize their full potential, foster shared responsibility among families and staff, and provide a safe, nourishing learning environment. In alignment with this mission, our Comprehensive School Safety Plan (CSSP) and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) emphasize proactive social-emotional learning, robust yard supervision, tiered behavioral interventions, and strong school-home partnerships].

Pursuant to California Penal Code § 933 and § 933.05, the Solvang Elementary School District Board of Trustees and administration formally submit the following responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

RESPONSES TO FINDINGS

Finding 1: Bullying on county school campuses can be reduced by implementing additional safety measures.

District Response: Agree.

The Solvang Elementary School District agrees that appropriate, evidence-based safety measures can significantly reduce opportunities for bullying and improve overall school climate. However, we believe that physical safety enhancements (such as fencing and cameras) must be balanced with direct human supervision, robust social-emotional and mental health supports, and proactive behavioral systems to achieve lasting prevention.

Our safety data and parent surveys indicate a strong perception of safety on our campuses: 82% of parents agree or strongly agree that our school is safe for their child. To sustain and improve this environment, we have integrated physical security upgrades with comprehensive student support programs.

Finding 2: Administrators do not consistently inform school counselors when students under their guidance engage in bullying.

District Response: Disagree as to Solvang Elementary School District.

While this finding may represent systemic issues across some county campuses, it does not reflect the operational reality at Solvang School. Given our small-school environment (~600 students across two adjacent campuses), our administrative team, credentialed school counselor, school psychologist, and teaching staff collaborate in real time on all student behavioral concerns.

Bullying and cyberbullying are categorized as Level 3 behaviors, which are referred directly to site principals. Site administrators work hand-in-hand with our counselor and school psychologist to coordinate immediate interventions, conduct threat or risk assessments, and establish individual behavioral supports.

Finding 3: Parent participation in outreach programs for bullying has been poor.

District Response: Agree with Explanation

The District agrees with the Grand Jury's finding that there is room for improvement in parent and family participation. The District recognizes that meaningful engagement requires more than providing information; it requires accessible, inclusive, and varied opportunities for families to participate in decisions affecting their children and the broader school community.

To strengthen parent participation, the District is expanding multilingual communication, providing interpretation and translated materials, offering meetings and engagement opportunities at varied times and through multiple formats, and increasing direct outreach to families who have historically been underrepresented. The District is also seeking parent input through surveys, coffee with the principals, English Learner Advisory Committee meetings, LCAP engagement activities, parent education opportunities, and school and district events. Staff members are working to create more welcoming and accessible opportunities for families to provide feedback, ask questions, and participate in decision-making.

The District will continue to evaluate participation data and family feedback to identify barriers, assess the effectiveness of its outreach efforts, and adjust its strategies accordingly. Increasing authentic parent participation remains an ongoing priority, and the District is committed to building stronger partnerships with all families.

RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1a: The Grand Jury recommends that school boards increase staff presence in areas where students congregate before, during breaks, and after school.

District Response: Has been implemented.

Active, visible adult supervision is a cornerstone of Solvang's campus safety operations.

Supervision Schedule: Our playground supervision begins at 8:15 a.m., with early-arriving students supervised in the library beginning at 7:30 a.m. for Early Care. Staff members are also assigned to supervise crosswalks during peak arrival and dismissal times. During recess and lunch breaks, students are under active playground supervision. Any students remaining in classrooms must be under direct teacher supervision.

After-School Programs: At dismissal, students are expected to go directly home unless enrolled in supervised after-school enrichment, athletic activities, or our state-funded Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP), which maintains strict supervision and structured activity rotations.

Recommendation 1b: The Grand Jury recommends that school boards have sufficient cameras in order to monitor where students congregate before, during, and after school.

District Response: Has been implemented.

The District has integrated security camera technology as a vital tool to complement direct physical supervision.

Current Infrastructure: Through our "Project Safe" initiative, the District enclosed the interior of both campuses with perimeter fencing and installed security cameras throughout both campuses. In 25–26, we added gate and door buzzers integrated with an intercom and camera system at school offices to monitor campus access points.

Planned Enhancements In our 2026–27 LCAP (Goal 1, Action 1.6), we have prioritized funding to further upgrade our campus-wide camera and intercom systems on both campuses to enhance our real-time monitoring capability.

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

District Response: Will not be implemented with explanation.

Solvang Elementary School District deeply values school counseling and mental health services; however, achieving a strict 250:1 student-to-counselor ratio is not fiscally viable at this time due to deficit spending and structural budget constraints.

With an enrollment of nearly 600 students, the district employs one full-time (1.0 FTE) credentialed school counselor and one full-time (1.0 FTE) school psychologist. While this represents a ratio of approximately 600:1 for counselors, our integrated student support network significantly multiplies our capacity. In the 2026–27 school year, Solvang took back Special Education, hiring an in-house psychologist, behavior technicians, and specialized teachers, which will allow "side-by-side" collaboration with general education teams to improve IEP and behavioral implementation. Additionally, the District collaborates with the Santa Barbara County Office of Education (SBCEO) and partners with MWell for Behavioral Wellness to embed wellness coaches and navigators on our campuses, providing intensive, small-group, and 1:1 counseling tailored to students' unique needs.

Recommendation 2: The Grand Jury recommends that school boards inform school counselors whenever any students under their guidance engage in bullying.

District Response: Has been implemented.

Interdisciplinary communication and unified team action are standard protocols at Solvang School. When a student is reported for Level 3 behaviors (such as bullying, cyberbullying, or harassment), site principals immediately handle the referral and notify the school counselor to initiate support. Our school counselor actively supports these students through check-in/check-out (CICO) interventions, restorative problem-solving, and individual self-regulation counseling using the Zones of Regulation curriculum. For any severe or perceived threats, our district utilizes a coordinated threat assessment team consisting of administrators, the school counselor, school psychologist, and law enforcement (pursuant to SB 671 and EC 49393) to evaluate and address the situation comprehensively.

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.

District Response: Has been implemented.

Solvang has established a multi-format outreach strategy to accommodate our diverse and commuting working families:

SEL & Cyber-Safety Evenings: The district hosts "Parent SEL Info Nights" and digital safety programs (including Screenagers cyber-safety modules) scheduled specifically in the evenings. Additionally, the District has offered Volunteer training in the mornings and evenings.

Bilingual Digital Accessibility: Bilingual (English/Spanish) digital newsletters, website links, social-emotional resources, and informational brochures are updated regularly on our district website for on-demand parent access.

Recommendation 3b: The Grand Jury recommends that school boards implement non-monetary incentives to encourage parents to attend outreach programs.

District Response: Has been implemented.

Removing barriers to participation is the most effective incentive for our families. In accordance with LCAP Action 2.1, Solvang has implemented the following supportive measures at our whole-school Family Workshops and academic informational evenings: The District provides free childcare and refreshments during family math, literacy, and SEL workshops to ensure busy parents do not have to choose between their family duties and school engagement. All parent workshops and advisory sessions (including LCAP PAC and DELAC) feature professional bilingual translation and interpretation services, making our campus accessible and welcoming to our Spanish-speaking families. Following direct recommendations from our DELAC, the district is incorporating community potlucks and multicultural celebrations to further incentivize parent engagement and foster a deep sense of belonging.

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.

District Response: Has been implemented.

Under Solvang's progressive discipline system (BP/AR 5144.1) and student conduct code, repeated acts of behavioral non-compliance or Level 3 offenses (including bullying) trigger direct and immediate principal-led parent conferences. In these meetings, parents are brought in as direct partners alongside administrators and the school counselor to design individual behavior intervention plans, review digital safety guidelines, and coordinate home-school strategies. Families are strongly directed to our school-based counseling resources and connected with local external partners, such as MWell for Behavioral Wellness, for intensive family guidance and mental health support. Additionally, in severe instances where a student is suspended for disrupting school activities, the parent or guardian may be required to attend a portion of the school day in their child's classroom, encouraging direct collaboration and parent retraining Classroom Attendance Provisions.

The Board of Trustees and administration of the Solvang Elementary School District remain deeply committed to continuous improvement, safe facilities, and the holistic development of every Viking Warrior. We believe that our integrated safety plans, dedicated staff, and robust

school-home partnerships provide a strong foundation for preventing bullying and promoting student success.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Siena Laughridge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Superintendent
Solvang Elementary School District

On behalf of the Solvang Elementary School District Board of Trustees