LOMPOC UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Trusting Relationships + High Expectations = Every Student Achieves

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
09/29/2026
Angela Braud, Executive Officer
BY M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

September 27, 2026

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

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

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

The Lompoc Union School District ("LUSD") shares the Grand Jury's commitment to supporting safe, supportive, and positive learning environments for all students. Like the Grand Jury, we acknowledge that criminal street gangs can have harmful effects on youth, families, schools, and communities, and we appreciate the Grand Jury's focus on this topic.

We have had very few incidents or fights associated with gangs, and gangs are not pervasive in the Lompoc schools. Our students recently confirmed this in their responses to the 2025 California Healthy Kids Survey. An item in the survey asks students, "Do you consider yourself a member of a gang?" Those responding "no" included 97% of seventh graders (516 respondents), 99% of ninth graders (161 respondents), and 98% of 11th graders (128 respondents).

With this background information provided, Lompoc respectfully submits the following responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

Responses to Findings

Finding 1

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

LUSD Response to Finding 1: Disagree

In LUSD, student conflicts occurring before or after school hours have been rare – generally less than ten incidents per school year. When they happen, school personnel work collaboratively with students, families, the Lompoc Police Department, Vandenberg Space Force Base Security Police, Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department, and other community partners to respond to the incident, address safety concerns, provide support services, and reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

LUSD does agree that student conflicts occurring before and after school hours can present challenges for schools, particularly when those incidents affect student safety, school climate, and/or students' ability to engage in learning. When these incidents occur, they generally take place outside of the direct supervision and authority of school personnel. Schools have limited ability to monitor or intervene in activities occurring in public spaces before students arrive at school or after they depart from school.

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.

LUSD Response to Finding 2: Disagree Partially

LUSD agrees that structured, constructive activities and supportive adult relationships can help reduce student vulnerability to negative influences, including gang recruitment. Research and prevention frameworks recognize that youth disconnection from family, school, community, and future opportunities can increase vulnerability, while positive school engagement, mentoring, and extracurricular opportunities can serve as protective factors.

That said, LUSD also believes that vulnerability to gang involvement is influenced by a complex combination of individual, family, peer, school, and community factors. While a lack of structured activities outside of school may increase risk for some students, it does not necessarily result in gang involvement, nor does participation in organized activities alone prevent it.

Like many other school systems, LUSD supports a comprehensive approach that includes positive youth development, family engagement, mentoring, counseling, educational opportunities, and community partnerships to help students make healthy choices and avoid involvement in gangs and other harmful influences.

Lompoc has invested time and resources into multiple afterschool opportunities for students of all grade levels. LEO After-School Program: Formerly known as ELOP, the LEO after-school program provides safe, enriching after-school activities and engaging learning experiences available for all transitional kindergarten through 6th-grade students. Middle and high school students have after-school sports, clubs, and other activities. Lompoc has invested in other afterschool programs including the YMCA Teen Center, the Lompoc Teen Center, and Gateway Educational Services. At all levels, the district has partnered with local agencies and school staff to foster creative opportunities for students, including E-sports where students can engage in healthy gaming activities that promote leadership, teamwork, and social-emotional development.

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.

LUSD Response to Finding 3: Disagree Partially

LUSD agrees with the importance of early intervention in elementary and middle school to prevent students from joining gangs. Each elementary and middle school is addressing gang prevention by intervening on early warning signs in the following ways: addressing attendance and academic struggles, reducing exclusionary discipline by increasing restorative practices, building students' social-emotional skills, guaranteeing each student has connections to at least one adult at school, and engaging with families as partners.

In response to this, LUSD has programs in place that constitute early prevention of students gravitating toward gang involvement and fascination.

El Joven Noble/Xinacthli/Circle Keepers: LUSD implements with school staff and partners with the nonprofit CommUnify to offer this 10-week, evidence-based personal growth and leadership curriculum. El Joven Noble, Xinacthli, and Circle Keepers are curricula through Los Compadres National Network that provide a culturally-relevant, community-centered approach to engaging student leaders. Sessions are based on circle keeper methodologies that value relationships, identity, family, and meaningful student experiences.

Restorative Approaches to Discipline: All LUSD schools use a restorative lens in disciplinary actions to ensure that students are actively engaged in the process and not treated in ways that lead to escalating behaviors or feelings of exclusion from school. Restorative models require student reflection, discussions with those who are affected by their actions, and actively repairing the resultant harm. Students often present their findings to school administrators, counselors, or other staff.

Expanded Student Support Counseling: LUSD employs dedicated campus social-emotional and mental health counselors, social workers, and wellness coaches to provide guidance, conflict resolution, and mentorship, helping steer students away from negative influences like gangs, drugs, and violence. Schools implement group academies for students on specific social-emotional skills or behaviors such as friendship groups, self-management strategies, anger management, peer mediation, social skills, and more.

Over the past six years, LUSD has partnered with Dr. Victor Rios, UCSB Sociology Professor and Scholar System, to train staff, work directly with students, and build parent leaders. Currently, Scholar System is building the capacity of community school staff in elementary schools to partner with parents to address the needs of students in ways that will improve their educational outcomes and ultimately deter students from gang membership.

Another early intervention for LUSD is the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program. The program is structured as a 10-week curriculum targeted specifically at 6th-grade students to teach them how to make safe, responsible choices, resist peer pressure, and avoid drugs and violence. Instead of traditional local police officers leading the classes, LUSD works

through a unique local partnership. Members of the Counterdrug Task Force from the nearby Vandenberg Space Force Base come directly into classrooms to lead the lessons and celebrate with students upon completion. We believe D.A.R.E. is another important force steering students in a positive direction.

Finding 4

Some school administrators across the County lack information to identify gang clothing, insignia, or signs.

LUSD Response to Finding 4: Agree

Lompoc agrees that awareness of current gang trends, symbols, behaviors, and indicators can be an important component of school safety and student support efforts and recognizes the value of providing training opportunities and information-sharing resources to support school personnel in identifying and responding appropriately to gang-related concerns. Lompoc holds regular safety committee meetings with school administrators from all sites where local law enforcement officers attend to provide information about trends, including gangs. Multiple times in the past ten years, law enforcement has conducted specific training on information about identifying gangs at the safety committees, often with additional presentations to school site staff at the middle school and high schools.

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.

LUSD Response to Finding 5: Agree

No weapons brought onto school campuses are acceptable, as they pose a significant threat to the safety and well-being of students, staff, and visitors. Schools must maintain safe learning environments where students can focus on learning without fear of violence or intimidation. Lompoc supports policies, procedures, and educational efforts designed to prevent weapons from being brought onto campus and to respond appropriately when safety concerns arise.

Finding 6

Anonymous communications 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.

LUSD Response to Finding 6: Agree

LUSD agrees that providing students and staff with accessible reporting mechanisms can help identify safety concerns, including potential gang-related activity, and support early intervention, prevention, and appropriate response efforts. The district has worked to put in place a "Tip Form" an anonymous reporting form on each school website and the district's main website, which is affiliated with Sandy Hook Promise and is staffed 24/7 and 365 days per year. Students

and parents may also download the Lompoc 360 app on their phones to text directly with any safety concerns. Anonymous reports are sent directly to school administrators for follow-up. Depending on the severity of the safety concern, they may have an immediate response, which will notify local law enforcement and district administration.

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.

LUSD Response to Finding 7: Agree

Lompoc agrees that positive relationships with trusted adult mentors can be an important protective factor for students. Mentoring can help promote student connectedness, resilience, positive decision-making, and overall well-being, particularly for students who may be vulnerable to negative influences. LUSD also believes that promoting positive peer relationships can be an additional protective factor and has programs at all schools to this effect.

Responses to Recommendations 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. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 1a: Will Not Be Implemented

As stated earlier, incidents occurring off campus and outside school hours generally take place beyond the direct supervision, authority, and control of school personnel. Given the wide variation in local circumstances and community needs across schools and districts throughout Santa Barbara County, a single "template" would neither be appropriate nor feasible to support off-campus before and after school activities.

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.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 1b: Will Not Be Implemented

LUSD supports the intent of this recommendation and recognizes the importance of student safety before and after the school day. LUSD also has an excellent partnership with its law enforcement agencies, the Lompoc Police Department, Vandenberg Space Force Base Security Police, and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department. That said, it is not appropriate or feasible for school systems to be involved in policies or programs that extend school supervision beyond school grounds and school-sponsored activities.

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 extracurricular activities. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 2a: Has Been Implemented

LUSD recognizes that structured enrichment activities can promote student engagement, foster positive peer relationships, and provide opportunities for students to develop interests and skills outside the traditional classroom setting. It has made significant strides in this area at each of its educational levels.

At the elementary level, state Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) funding has enabled the district to provide more academic and recreational offerings after school. In the past two school years, these have included academic intervention, academic enrichment, music enrichment, and fitness enrichment. These opportunities are at each elementary school, with over 1,200 students participating.

At the middle school level, cocurricular and athletic afterschool activities have been expanded. The middle schools now have Chess, Anime, Dance, Folklorico, Robotics, Weight, Yearbook, GSA, Dance/Cheer, Drama, Digital Media, Battle of the Books, Mock Trial, Spanish/Dance, and STEM clubs. Teams and sports open to students now include volleyball, soccer, and basketball. The schools will continue to expand programming to meet the needs of students.

High school after-school programming and extracurricular activities are robust with approximately 100 clubs and sports and over 75% of student participation.

Lompoc partners with local agencies to provide additional programming for students through Gateway Educational Services, the YMCA, FUTURE, and the Lompoc Teen Center.

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.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 2b: Has Been Implemented

Lompoc has multiple community partnerships in place around after-school activities as mentioned in the response to recommendation 2a. Lompoc continues to explore additional partnerships as they arise from within the community.

Recommendation 3

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

LUSD Response to Recommendation 3: Has Been Implemented

El Joven Noble, PBIS, expanded support counseling, ELOP programs, and D.A.R.E. are programs Lompoc has implemented that steer students in positive directions. For more information on these early prevention programs, please see the response to Finding 3.

Recommendation 4

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County Education Office provide annual information to school administrators to make them aware of the latest gang clothing, insignia, and signs. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 4: Has Been Implemented

As stated in the narrative for Finding 4, Lompoc receives training for its administrators in the latest gang clothing, insignia, and signs from local law enforcement officers during district safety meetings, meeting the intention of this recommendation. Lompoc asserts that local law enforcement is the most appropriate resource for the district given that information about gangs differs from one location to the next.

Recommendation 5

The Grand Jury recommends that the 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.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 5: Has Been Implemented

Through its Annual Notice to Parents (ANTP), Lompoc annually provides parents/guardians with information regarding California laws related to firearm safety, storage, and California Penal Code Section 25100. The following is the specific item as it appears in the ANTP:

> With very limited exceptions, California makes a person criminally liable for keeping any firearm, loaded or unloaded, within any premises that are under their custody and control where that person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to the firearm without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, and the child obtains access to the firearm and thereby (1) causes death or injury to the child or any other person; (2) carries the fire-arm off the premises or to a public place, including to any preschool or school grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, or to any school-sponsored event, activity, or performance; or (3) unlawfully brandishes the firearm to others. Note: The criminal penalty may be significantly greater if someone dies

or suffers great bodily injury as a result of the child gaining access to the firearm. • With very limited exceptions, California also makes it a crime for a person to negligently store or leave any firearm, loaded or unloaded, on their premises in a location where the person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to it without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, unless reasonable action is taken to secure the firearm against access by the child, even where a minor never actually accesses the firearm. • In addition to potential fines and terms of imprisonment, as of January 1, 2020, a gun owner found criminally liable under these California laws faces prohibitions from possessing, controlling, owning, receiving, or purchasing a firearm for 10 years. • Finally, a parent or guardian may also be civilly liable for damages resulting from the discharge of a firearm by that person's child or ward.

Recommendation 6

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County school districts provide all schools with anonymous communications 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.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 6: Has Been Implemented

As stated in the response to Finding 6, Lompoc has worked to put in place a "Tip Form" anonymous reporting form on each school website and the district's main website, which is affiliated with Sandy Hook Promise, and is staffed 24/7 and 365 days per year. Students and parents may also download the Lompoc 360 app on their phones to text directly with any safety concerns. Anonymous reports are sent directly to school administrators for follow-up. Depending on the severity of the safety concern, they may have an immediate response, which will notify local law enforcement and district administration.

Recommendation 7

The Grand Jury recommends that the 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.

LUSD Response to Recommendation 7: Has Been Implemented

LUSD's schools utilize a variety of systems to identify and support students who may be socially isolated or otherwise in need of additional support. LUSD employs dedicated campus social-emotional and mental health counselors to provide guidance, conflict resolution, and mentorship, helping steer students away from negative influences like gangs, drugs and violence and pair them with school-based guidance and support.

Respectfully submitted,

LOMPOC UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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