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ORCUTT UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
08/14/2026
Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY M. Hanson Deputy Clerk
M. Hanson

July 24, 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 Public Participation Without Barriers: Brown Act Clarity at School Board Meetings

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

The Orcutt Union School District ("Orcutt") conducts meetings of its Board of Trustees in accordance with the Brown Act and with transparency and openness. The Board values public attendance and participation at its meetings. Orcutt makes information about board meeting dates/times, meeting agendas, meeting materials, and minutes of previous meetings accessible to the public via its website, www.orcuttschools.net. Included in each agenda is specific information on opportunities for public comment.

Because the Board values public engagement at its meetings, reports and presentations are intentionally planned to encourage public attendance and participation. A typical monthly board meeting includes student and employee recognition, presentations about school and district programs, updates on district initiatives, and a comprehensive report by the superintendent on happenings around the district. Student performances (band, choir, musicals) periodically are included. In 2025-2026, Orcutt adopted a practice in which school updates are given by student leaders instead of school staff. Students provided excellent presentations on events and programs on their campuses this past year, and this model will continue in 2026-2027. All of these elements bring people – students, parents, staff, and community members – to meetings, and indeed the board meeting room is full or close to full more often than not.

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

Responses to Findings

Finding 1
Some education governing boards' agendas and public comment instructions imply that members of the public must complete a speaker card, sign-up sheet, online form, or provide identifying information in order to speak at a public meeting.

OUSD Response to Finding 1: Disagree
Those wishing to make a public comment at an OUSD board meeting are invited to complete a simple form stating their name and the agenda item they would like to speak about. The form is handed to the superintendent's administrative assistant, who presents the forms to the board president. Forms can be completed while the meeting is in progress. The name is requested in order to call forth the individual and to provide a staff response to the speaker's questions or concerns following the meeting. No identifying information, address, phone number, or other information is sought from those making a public comment. Individuals are not compelled or required to complete a public comment form if they do not wish to do so and are welcome to make public comment without completing the form.

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, particularly for Spanish-speaking community members and individuals who rely on accessible document formats.

OUSD Response to Finding 2: Disagree Partially
Orcutt currently does not have Spanish versions of its meeting agendas and minutes available on its website (see response to Recommendation 2b for more on this). The website itself can easily be switched to Spanish or other languages via a button in the top right corner. Translation at board meetings is available upon request.

Finding 3
Some governing boards provide no way to participate remotely while public comment is officially open.

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OUSD Response to Finding 3: Disagree Partially
Orcutt chooses not to live-stream its board meetings (for more on this, see response to Recommendation 3a). That said, upon request public comments can be made via email message, speakerphone, or on Zoom.

Finding 4
Some governing boards do not consistently post meeting minutes in a clear and easy-to-find location, which makes it harder for the public to track board actions over time.

OUSD Response to Finding 4: Disagree
Meeting minutes for Orcutt's board meetings are available on the district website. Minutes are easily accessed from the home page of the website. Meeting minutes currently posted go back to the 2012 calendar year.

Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation 1
The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1 below, review agenda language and public comment instructions to plainly state that speaker cards, sign-up sheets, and online forms are optional tools used solely to help organize public comment, and to affirm that any person may address the board during public comment periods without providing a name, address, or other personal identifying information. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

OUSD Response to Recommendation 1: Will Be Implemented
As stated earlier, individuals who wish to make a public comment are not compelled to complete a form if they do not wish to do so. That said, submission of a name and agenda item are helpful to the board president in order to call the individual to the podium at the appropriate time. Submission of a name also is helpful so staff can respond to the speaker's questions or concerns following the meeting. By December 31, 2026, the district will revisit its language about public comment to underscore that forms are requested and not required.

Recommendation 2a
The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1

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below, place a prominent, direct link to current agendas on its primary homepage, as required by Government Code section 54954.2. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

OUSD Response to Recommendation 2a: Has Been Implemented
Orcutt currently has agendas easily accessible from the home page of its website in the "Leadership" section. In addition, when a new board agenda is posted and until the board meeting is held, a pop-up notice of the upcoming board meeting appears on our website as soon as the member of the public accesses the home page.

Recommendation 2b
The Grand Jury recommends that governing boards serving districts with more than a 20% Spanish-speaking population provide Spanish language translations of their meetings, agendas and minutes on their websites. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

OUSD Response to Recommendation 2b: Will Be Implemented
Orcutt sees the need to include Spanish versions of board agendas and minutes on its website in order to make these more accessible to Spanish-speaking members of the public. We will accomplish this by December 31, 2026.

Recommendation 3a
The Grand Jury recommends that each education governing board, where listed in Table 1 below, provide video conferencing for remote participation, which also can be used as a broadcast archive. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

OUSD Response to Recommendation 3a: Will Not Be Implemented
Orcutt's Board has made the choice not to live-stream board meetings for three reasons. First, we have been advised that live broadcasts run the risk of accidentally or unintentionally revealing protected student information or showing a student whose parents have opted them out of media releases. Second, we have concerns – based on what we see in other school systems and public entities that live-stream meetings – about them becoming platforms for grandstanding, with participants playing to the camera for brief video clips or social media posts as opposed to focusing on productive, collaborative discussion. Finally, we note that live-streaming of board meetings is not required by the Brown Act or any other laws.

Recommendation 3b
The Grand Jury recommends that, where remote participation is offered, agendas clearly

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explain how the public may observe and provide comment remotely at any time public comment is open. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

OUSD Response to Recommendation 3b: Will Not Be Implemented
As stated above, Orcutt does not intend to have board meetings live-streamed. That said, we are very willing to have public comment be delivered in forms other than in-person attendance: email, speakerphone, or Zoom. We will update our information on public comments to reflect this.

Recommendation 4
The Grand Jury recommends each governing board adopt a written practice for promptly posting approved minutes on its website. As a best practice, approved minutes should be posted within five business days after approval, with past minutes kept in an accessible online archive. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

OUSD Response to Recommendation 4: Has Been Implemented
Our district does have a practice for promptly posting approved minutes on our website. We work to ensure that approved minutes are posted online as soon as practicable.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Waffle
President, Board of Trustees
Orcutt Union School District

Holly Edds, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Orcutt Union School District