Vista Del Mar Union School District
Vista de las Cruces School
9467 San Julian Rd.
Gaviota, CA 93117

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
08/20/2026
Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

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

Regarding: Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Report: "PREPARING FOR THE UNTHINKABLE: How are Santa Barbara County Schools Preparing to Prevent or Minimize the Effects of a Potential Mass Shooting?"

Dear Presiding Judge Patricia Kelly and Members of the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury:

The Vista del Mar Union School District shares the Grand Jury's commitment to ensuring that Vista de Las Cruces School provides a safe, welcoming, and supportive learning environment for every student and employee. The District recognizes that maintaining safe schools requires continuous planning, thoughtful preparation, and strong partnerships among educators, families, law enforcement, mental health professionals, emergency responders, and community organizations.

Student and staff safety is fundamental to the District's mission. Vista del Mar maintains a proactive approach to emergency preparedness through regular emergency drills, ongoing review and refinement of emergency procedures, staff training, and collaboration with local public safety agencies to strengthen readiness for a wide range of emergency situations.

Guided by this commitment, Vista del Mar Union School District respectfully submits the following responses to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations.

Responses to Findings and Recommendations

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.*

Response to Finding 1: Partially Disagree

Explanation: Vista del Mar agrees that SBCEO provides valuable school safety training, including training related to identifying pathways to targeted violence. The District does not have information indicating that its own participation in school safety training has been limited. The Superintendent/Principal is new to the District and has participated in school safety trainings in previous districts. Going forward, the District will prioritize participation in SBCEO school safety trainings, including the School Safety Symposium.

Recommendation 1a*: The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County Education Office make its School Safety Symposium available online for ease of accessibility for school staffs county-wide.*

Response to Recommendation 1a: Will Not Be Implemented

Explanation: This recommendation is directed to the Santa Barbara County Education Office and calls for action by SBCEO rather than Vista del Mar Union School District. Accordingly, implementation of this recommendation is outside the District's authority and will not be undertaken by Vista del Mar.

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.*

Response to Recommendation 1b: Will Be Implemented

Explanation: The Superintendent/Principal has participated in school safety trainings in previous districts and will participate in the SBCEO School Safety Symposium in person at least once every two years, as recommended, as well as other appropriate school safety training opportunities.

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.*

Response to Recommendation 1c: Will Be Implemented

Explanation: The District recognizes the importance of providing teachers and staff opportunities to strengthen their knowledge of school safety practices. Vista del Mar will encourage teachers and staff to participate in the School Safety Symposium and other appropriate school safety training opportunities, while taking into consideration employee work schedules and the availability of substitute personnel.

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.*

Response to Finding 2: Partially Disagree

Explanation: Vista del Mar follows the Standard Response Protocol and recognizes that effective emergency preparedness requires regular practice and reinforcement. The District will conduct emergency drills throughout the school year to ensure that students and staff are familiar with appropriate responses to a variety of emergency situations.

Recommendation 2a: *The Grand Jury recommends that Santa Barbara County school districts train and drill all full-time campus personnel and students for campus safety at least once per semester.*

Response to Recommendation 2a: Will Be Implemented

Explanation: Vista del Mar will conduct emergency preparedness drills throughout the school year involving all students and staff. The District will conduct two lockdown drills annually, earthquake drills quarterly, evacuation drills monthly, and other emergency response drills at least once annually. These drills will reinforce the Standard Response Protocol and provide students and staff regular opportunities to practice appropriate emergency responses.

Recommendation 2b: *The Grand Jury recommends that 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.*

Response to Recommendation 2b: Will Be Implemented

Explanation: Emergency binders are maintained in each classroom and provide temporary personnel, including substitute teachers, access to emergency procedures and information. The District will ensure that temporary personnel are made aware of these resources and receive appropriate verbal information regarding school emergency procedures before assuming their assignments.

Recommendation 2c: *The Grand Jury recommends that 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.

Response to Recommendation 2c: Has Been Implemented

Explanation: Vista del Mar has emergency response posters displayed on campus and emergency binders available in each classroom. These resources provide readily accessible information regarding emergency response procedures for staff and students.

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.*

Response to Finding 3: Partially Disagree

Explanation: Vista del Mar agrees that accessible pathways for reporting potential threats or safety concerns are an important component of school safety. However, the District does not believe that the absence of a formal anonymous reporting system indicates a deficiency in its current threat-reporting practices. As a small, single-school district serving 71 students, Vista del Mar maintains close relationships among students, staff, administration, and families, which support direct communication and allow safety concerns to be identified and addressed promptly. Students have regular access to trusted adults on campus and are encouraged to report concerns to staff. The District will continue to evaluate its reporting practices and consider additional mechanisms if student needs or circumstances indicate they would provide a meaningful safety benefit.

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.*

Response to Recommendation 3a: Will Be Implemented

Explanation: During the 2026–27 school year, Vista del Mar staff will receive professional development in the Nurtured Heart Approach, restorative practices, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies. These efforts will strengthen staff capacity to build trusting relationships with students, maintain healthy boundaries, promote a positive school culture, and support students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs. As needs arise, the District will also consider appropriate partnerships with community service providers when those partnerships would provide meaningful additional support for students.

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.*

Response to Recommendation 3b: Will Not Be Implemented

Explanation: Vista del Mar does not plan to establish a formal anonymous electronic reporting system or physical reporting drop box at this time. With 71 students in a small, single-school setting, students have regular access to the administrator, teachers, and other trusted adults and are encouraged to communicate safety concerns directly. The District's size allows staff to know students individually, maintain close communication with families, and respond promptly when concerns arise. Based on the District's current circumstances and student needs, Vista del Mar does not believe that establishing and maintaining separate electronic and physical anonymous reporting systems would provide a sufficient additional safety benefit to warrant implementation. The District will continue to evaluate its reporting practices and may consider additional reporting mechanisms if future needs demonstrate that they would meaningfully strengthen student safety.

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.*

Response to Finding 4: Partially Disagree

Explanation: Vista del Mar agrees that strong partnerships with law enforcement are an important component of school safety but does not believe that a dedicated School Resource Officer or School Resource Deputy is necessary for every school. As a small, single-school district, Vista del Mar prioritizes collaboration with local law enforcement appropriate to its size and circumstances. On August 5, 2026, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office SWAT team conducted a multi-scenario training on the Vista de las Cruces campus, providing law enforcement personnel an opportunity to train within the school's actual physical environment.

Recommendation 4: *The Grand Jury recommends that all Santa Barbara County school districts have School Resource Officers (SRO) or Deputies (SRD).*

Response to Recommendation 4: Will Not Be Implemented

Explanation: Vista del Mar is a small, single-school district, and maintaining a full-time School Resource Officer or School Resource Deputy is neither operationally necessary nor a practical allocation of limited District resources. The District will instead continue to prioritize a strong working relationship with local law enforcement, including opportunities for emergency preparedness and

scenario-based training on the school campus. Most recently, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office SWAT team conducted a multi-scenario training at Vista de las Cruces School on August 5, 2026.

Finding 5: *Some schools in Santa Barbara County school districts lack adequate controls for visitor access.*

Response to Finding 5: Partially Disagree

Explanation: Vista del Mar has established procedures to identify and monitor visitors while they are on campus. All visitors are required to check in through the school office and are issued a visitor sticker that must be worn visibly while on campus. Vista de las Cruces is an open campus, and the District recognizes the importance of continually reviewing its visitor access procedures to ensure they remain appropriate for the school's size, setting, and safety needs.

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.*

Response to Recommendation 5a: Will Not Be Implemented

Explanation: Vista del Mar does not currently utilize an electronic visitor management system that screens visitors for restraining orders or other legal restrictions. As a small, single-school district, the District does not believe that procuring and maintaining such a system is a practical allocation of its limited resources. The District will instead continue to require all visitors to check in through the school office and follow established campus visitor procedures.

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.*

Response to Recommendation 5b: Has Been Implemented

Explanation: Vista del Mar requires all visitors to check in through the school office. After checking in, visitors are issued a visitor sticker that must be worn visibly while they are on campus.

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.*

Response to Finding 6: Partially Disagree

Explanation: Vista del Mar has safety infrastructure in place appropriate to its small, single-school setting, including security cameras on campus. Staff

members also have access to their cell phones for immediate communication. The District recognizes that school safety infrastructure must be reviewed and improved as needs and available technologies evolve and is currently exploring the purchase of two-way radios to strengthen communication among staff during emergencies.

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.*

Response to Recommendation 6: Will Be Implemented

Explanation: Vista del Mar currently utilizes security cameras on campus, and staff have access to their cell phones for immediate communication. The District is also evaluating the purchase of two-way radios to strengthen communication among staff during emergencies. Beginning in the 2026–27 school year, the District will conduct an annual review of its security infrastructure and consider reasonable improvements based on identified needs, effectiveness, and the resources available to a small, single-school district.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Ray Fausel, Superintendent/Principal, Vista del Mar Union School District

Board of Trustees, Vista del Mar Union School District