

# **Bullying and Harassment at NJUHSD Schools: Going Underground?**

2025-2026 Nevada County Grand Jury

Report Date: March 18, 2026

Release Date: March 26, 2026

## **Summary**

Student bullying and harassment can lead to long-term physical and mental health issues for those involved. Nevada Joint Union High School District (The District) has been focusing on reducing Bullying and Harassment (B&H) at the schools within its jurisdiction. The District's annual Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) survey measures if students feel both physically and emotionally safe at school. Additionally, The District also uses the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) as another measure of the extent of bullying and harassment in its schools.

Analyzing both the LCAP and CHKS survey results for the past 4-5 school years, it appears that bullying and harassment is getting worse within The District, primarily at Nevada Union High School (NUHS). The District has taken some steps to address this problem at its staff and administration level but has taken only minimal prevention efforts at the student level.

The District needs to take more student-based measures to prevent bullying and harassment. Additionally, The District needs to improve safeguards around its LCAP survey, enhance LCAP metrics to monitor unreported bullying and harassment, and address poor survey participation rates at NUHS.

## **Glossary**

BRHS:	Bear River High School
B&H:	Bullying and Harassment
CEC:	California Education Code
CDE:	California Department of Education
CHKS:	California Healthy Kids Survey
GECHS:	Ghidotti Early College High School
Jury:	2025 – 2026 Nevada County Grand Jury
LCAP”	Local Control and Accountability Plan
NT:	Non-Traditional Schools (NT schools do not use traditional grading system)
NUHS:	Nevada Union High School
OBPP:	Olweus Bullying and Prevent Program
The District:	Nevada Joint Union High School District
SS:	Silver Springs High School

## **Background**

Nevada Joint Union High School District (The District) is the only Nevada County high school district. The District has approximately 2550 students through traditional and non-traditional high schools. Nevada Union High School (NUHS) and Bear River High School (BRHS) are the traditional high schools, having approximately 1500 and 650 students respectively. Non-traditional high school programs include Ghidotti Early College High School (GECHS), Silver Springs High School (SS), North Point Academy, and authorized Charters, which have approximately 400 students.

Since 2022, there have been multiple news articles regarding B&H within The District (e.g., [KQED](#), [Sierra Thread](#)). Two trustee members proposed a resolution (No Student Left Behind) in April 2025 addressing B&H within the school district. The defeat of this resolution by the board prompted a publicized student walkout within The District, which [YubaNet](#) and [The Union](#) news organizations covered.

The District's [Every Student Belongs Resolution #22-24/25](#) text;

**WHEREAS**, it is the right of every child to access a free and appropriate public K-12 education and the Nevada Joint Union High School District welcomes and supports all students;

**WHEREAS**, the District has a responsibility to ensure that all students who reside within its boundaries can safely access a free public education as mandated by law.

**WHEREAS**, NJUHSD is resolute in its mission to build an inclusive, safe and equitable educational environment that places the success of ALL marginalized and non-marginalized students at the forefront of its work; and

**WHEREAS**, public schools and school districts in California are subject to all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination.

**WHEREAS**, we will work to eliminate barriers and promote student success across race, social class, geographic location, immigration status or other personal characteristics such as creed, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, economic status, gender, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, pregnancy status, marital status, physical appearance, or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability; and

**WHEREAS**, the NJUHSD Board recognizes the importance of policies and practices that promote belonging, respect, and dignity that lead directly to the educational and life success and health and wellbeing of all district students.

**WHEREAS**, through its policies and practices, the District has made a commitment to a quality education, which includes a safe and stable learning environment that is affirming for all students

**WHEREAS**, the District supports education that celebrates our different identities; integrity in how we treat others; and courage to do what's right by listening to, learning from, and respecting diverse viewpoints;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Nevada Joint Union High School Board affirms its unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety, inclusion, belonging, and affirmation of ALL students.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the District prohibits discrimination and bullying against all persons, regardless of personal characteristics, identifications or immigration status; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board declares the District a place to learn, to thrive, and to seek assistance, information, and support free from discrimination and bullying; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board will continue to implement and uphold policies that prohibit discrimination, harassment, and bullying and will work to strengthen a culture of respect and belonging for all.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Nevada Joint Union High School Board stands in solidarity with all students and remains committed to upholding their rights, dignity, and educational success.

California Education codes ostensibly protect students from B&H within schools. The jury, based upon the above information, decided to investigate the District to identify if B&H occurs and whether, if it does, administration, staff, and students are addressing it appropriately under California law.

### **Approach**

The jury focused its investigation primarily on the post COVID period, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year. The jury interviewed Nevada County officials, The District board members, employees, parents of students, and former students.

The jury conducted extensive internet research of B&H information published by the United States Government, California Government and non-profit organizations. The jury reviewed the [California State Constitution Article 1 Section 31](#), and [California Education Codes](#) §§ 212.5, 234, 32261, 32280–32289, 48900.

The Jury also reviewed the [California Healthy Kid Survey](#) (CHKS) reports, The District Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) surveys, and B&H incident records to help determine B&H trends within The District.

## Discussion

### Laws and Impact

**Bullying** is defined as any physical or verbal act directed at one or more individuals, including written communications and electronic messaging, that can cause fear, mental health issues or interfere with academic performance. **Harassment** is defined as any physical or verbal act that can cause fear, mental health issues or interfere with academic performance. The [StopBullying.gov](#) website helps clarify these definitions by stating “Although B&H sometimes overlap, not all bullying is harassment, and not all harassment is bullying.” California Education Code (CEC) addresses the definition of bullying in [CEC 48900](#).

“When bullying happens, everyone who is involved or witnesses it can have lasting impacts on their mental health and well-being. Bullying is linked to many outcomes, including increased risk of depression and anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide.” [StopBullying.gov](#).

### Data Investigation

To help determine if incidents of B&H are increasing or decreasing within The District, the jury reviewed records provided from NUHS, BRHS, SSHS, and GECHS for the last 3 years. The records contain no personal identifiable information. The results are summarized in **Table 1** below.

<b>Table 1 – Reported Bullying &amp; Harassment Incidents</b>			
School Year	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
	26	61	40

The jury also reviewed reports from the [California Healthy Kids Surveys](#) (CHKS) for the last 4 school years (2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025). CHKS is a comprehensive student data collection system developed and conducted by the

California Department of Education. It addresses school climate, health risks and behaviors, for public schools. This survey is conducted every school year for high schools and surveys 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and non-traditional (NT) school students. Section 8.2 of this survey asks students if they have experienced any type of harassment. **Table 2** below depicts those results.

<b>Table 2 - California Health Kids <u>Survey</u> – Student Response Data</b>												
<b>School Year</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>			<b>2022-2023</b>			<b>2023-2024</b>			<b>2024-2025</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	NT									
<b>Target Student Population</b>	665	569	162	665	508	76	668	661	54	677	611	83
<b>Response Rate</b>	65%	69%	27%	73%	60%	84%	73%	71%	74%	89%	71%	70%
<b>Any Type of Harassment</b>	32%	28%	17%	30%	26%	33%	29%	28%	29%	33%	21%	26%

The Jury reviewed the data from The District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) survey which it conducts annually to measure performance on LCAP goals.

**Table 3** on the next page depicts those results.

<b>Table 3 - Summary Data from NJUHSD <a href="#">LCAP Surveys</a></b>				
<b>School Year</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>
<b>Total Students</b>	2489	2451	2544	2574
<b>Student Participation</b>	354	1381	1371	891
<b>Participation Rate</b>	37.6%	56%	53%	35%
<b>Students feel physically safe at school</b>	82.1%	86.3%	90.6%	90.2%
<b>Students feel emotionally safe at school</b>	81.3%	75.7%	78.6%	83.5%
<b>Students feel safe asking staff for support</b>	74.2%	68.6%	75.9%	82.6%

The jury conducted interviews that consistently revealed interviewees felt that B&H within The District schools has been declining over the past 3 to 4 years. The anecdotal information is not substantiated by the data in **Tables 1-3**

In reviewing the LCAP scorecards for the individual schools in The District (see Appendix A) the jury found the following for the 2024-2025 school year:

- The survey participation rate for Nevada Union High School (NUHS) was only 14.1%. Participation rates for the other schools within The District ranged from 43.2% to 82.6% for the same school year.
- The percentage of students who feel physically safe at school for NUHS was 78.2%, the lowest in the past 5 school years. Other schools within The District ranged from 90.8% to 92.8% for this same metric.
- The percentage of students who feel emotionally safe at school for NUHS was 67.6%, down from the 2023-2024 school year of 72.1%. Other schools within The District ranged from 82.3% to 97.6 % for this same metric in the 2024-2025 school year.

- The percentage of students who feel safe asking staff for support for NUHS was 67.3%, down from previous school years of 75.9. Other schools within The District ranged from 82.9% to 95.3% for this same metric.

Given the low participation rate for NUHS's 2024-2025 LCAP survey there could be some bias introduced for this particular year. However, in reviewing the 5 years of the individual school's LCAP metrics (Appendix A), the jury has determined that B&H is a larger problem at NUHS in comparison to other schools within The District.

The data collected in the LCAP surveys may be unreliable because the jury found The District has not implemented any safeguards in survey to prevent an individual from taking the survey and identifying themselves as someone they are not or taking the survey multiple times. For example, any person can take the survey and claim they are a student from any of the high schools with no verification if the individual is a student at that high school.

### **The District's Efforts**

The District has taken the following steps to address B&H within the schools:

- Included in its LCAP is a goal to "Promote the Safety, Well-Being, and Culture of the school and district community through equitable and inclusive practices for all." This goal has metrics to measure The District's performance in several areas. **Table 3** above contains key metrics.
- Communicate policies regarding B&H to students in homeroom classes and student assemblies each school year.
- Conducted anti-B&H training using external consultants for district and school staff training above that what is required by CEC.
- Complied with all state and federal education codes pertaining to B&H.
- Conducted "Breaking Down the Walls" training at its schools to reduce B&H. [Breaking Down The Walls](#) training goal is to create a safe environment for students to build empathy and understanding through a play, trust, learn model. This training was discontinued throughout The District schools for various

reasons. At NUHS it was discontinued because staff found it difficult to maintain student's attention in a large group setting.

The jury identified some other concerning facts. These are:

- The District schools inconsistently records aspects of B&H in the Student Information System (Aeries). This makes district-wide efforts to address B&H issues more challenging. During the summer of 2025 The District began efforts to address these inconsistencies.
- Discipline for similar B&H incidents at different schools within The District, albeit within policy, differed based upon the school, NUHS is more lenient than other schools (e.g. BRHS). The jury was also informed that these discipline application differences extended to other types of incidents.
- Student Handbooks containing B&H policies, school culture and other information for students are supposed to be published online for student access. The jury, was only able to find student handbooks for [NUHS](#) and [BRHS](#), which required detailed website searches to find. The BRHS student handbook hasn't been updated since the 2022-2023 school year. Student handbooks for the other schools within The District, the jury could not find on their websites. The District's website homepage does contain Board Policies on B&H. Given the importance of communicating policies forbidding B&H, these should also be prominently displayed on each school's website homepage

### **Unreported B&H**

The jury consistently heard in interviews that B&H within The District schools does go unreported. Looking at the data from the reported incidents within The District in **Table 1** and the CHKS in **Table 2**, the jury calculated the number of minimum unreported B&H incidents within The District for school years 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025

<b>Table 4 –Calculated Minimum Unreported Incidents</b>										
	<b>School Year</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>			<b>2023-2024</b>			<b>2024-2025</b>		
<b>Row</b>	<b>Grade</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	NT	9 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	NT	9 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	NT
A	<b>Target Student Population from Table 2</b>	665	508	76	668	661	54	677	611	83
B	<b>Response Rate from Table 2</b>	73%	60%	84%	73%	71%	74%	89%	71%	70%
C	<b># Students Responding</b> <i>(Row B times Row A)</i>	485	305	64	488	470	40	603	436	58
D	<b>Any Type of Harassment from Table 2</b>	30%	26%	33%	29%	28%	29%	33%	21%	26%
E	<b>Calculated Minimum number of Incidents</b> <i>(Row D times Row C)</i>	146	79	21	141	132	12	199	128	15
F	<b>Calculated Minimum Incidents for School Year</b> <i>(9<sup>th</sup> + 11<sup>th</sup>+ NT)</i>	246			285			342		
G	<b>Reported Incidents from Table 1</b>	26			61			40		

H	<b>Total Calculated Minimum Unreported Incidents</b> (Row F minus Row G)	220	224	302
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Table 4 above uses information from the other tables to mathematically calculate the total minimum number of B&H incidents in The District (Row H). The table in Row C identifies the number of students in 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and at NT schools that have taken the CHKS survey for different school years. Taking the numbers in Row C and multiplying them by the percentage of students experience some form of harassment in Row D produces a **Calculated Minimum Number of Incidents** in Row E.

In Row F the **Calculated Minimum Number of Incidents** from Row E are totaled for all survey grade levels (9, 11, and NT) to produce the **Total Calculated Minimum Number of Incidents**. The table then takes the number in Row F and subtracts the Reported Incidents (Row G) from Table 1 to finally produce the **Calculated Minimum Number of Unreported Incidents** for the grades (9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and NT) for schools within **The District**.

It is important to note the **Calculated Minimum number of Incidents (Row E)** and the **Total Calculated Minimum Unreported Incidents (Row H)** in **Table 4** are very low numbers. The reason behind this statement are:

- The CHKS survey does not include 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, and
- The **Calculated Minimum number of Incidents** (Row E) being based upon a percentage of students experiencing **Any Type of Harassment** (Row D), it does not include multiple incidents that have occurred. CHKS section 8.2 contains data regarding the number of times students have been harassed, however because of the data format it cannot be accurately used in **Table 4**.

The information contained in **Table 4** indicates that B&H incidents are not decreasing within The District schools but are in fact increasing and not being reported.

The jury further concluded based upon the information contained in **Table 4** and the Appendix that NUHS has the largest B&H problem.

Information provided by the United States Department of Justice's [Office of Justice Programs](#) along with the website [StopBullying.gov](#) identifies many reasons why incidents of B&H go unreported. They range from fear of retaliation, fear of being labeled a snitch, feeling of shame, belief that nothing will be done, along with potential adult overreaction. In 2021, The District implemented an anonymous reporting system as part of a state mandate. This anonymous reporting system can be used to report a variety of school safety issues, including B&H. When a B&H issue has been reported, school administrators review and investigate the report. If the administrator determines that it is a valid incident report, they then take appropriate action and update the offending student's record in The District's student information system (AERIES).

As part of the jury's review of the AERIES records provided, the jury could not identify any reports of B&H originating from an anonymous report.

The jury fully understands that eliminating all B&H within a school district is an unachievable goal. However, metrics that capture an accurate rate of B&H should be developed and used to take appropriate action to reduce the rate as much as possible.

### **Addressing The B&H Problem**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services' [StopBullying.gov](#) and the California Department Education (CDE) identifies preemptive actions that schools and districts can take to prevent B&H. The [Olweus Bullying and Prevention Program](#) (OBPP) stands out as being the most effective for high schools. The program focuses on long term change that creates a safe and positive school climate. Developed by Clemson University, OBPP has been used in schools since the mid-1990s. Research has shown that it has been effective in reducing B&H by up to 62% at schools.

The District superintendent, in December 2025, provided an [Op-Ed](#) to the Union newspaper in which he strongly stated The District stance on B&H. The Jury commends this stance and encourages the NJHUSD Board to take a similar strong stance in its actions.

## **Findings**

- F1** The District is complying with all State and Federal laws and codes regarding B&H.
- F2** The District has provided anti-B&H training for staff in addition to that required by CEC.
- F3** The information in this report indicates Bullying and harassment incidents are not decreasing within The District schools; they are increasing.
- F4** Students at NUHS feel the least safe amongst all the students within The District's Schools.
- F5** The District LCAP metrics do not effectively measure B&H within its schools.
- F6** The District LCAP survey lacks the safeguards required to ensure survey integrity.
- F7** The District LCAP student survey participation rate for NUHS is far below that of other schools within The District.
- F8** The District's preventative efforts to reduce B&H have been primarily focused on district and school staff.
- F9** Schools within The District do not discipline equally for like offenses.
- F10** Student Handbooks are either not available, out of date, or not easily accessible on school websites within The District.
- F11** The District' superintendent has publicly taken a strong stance against B&H within its schools.

## **Recommendations**

- R1** The District should modify its LCAP metrics to measure unreported B&H. (F5)
- R2** The District should implement safeguards in its LCAP survey to ensure accuracy. (F6)
- R3** The District Board should establish a resolution re-affirming its commitment to reduce B&H within The District. (F8)

- R4** The District should establish a program like OBPP at NUHS. (F3,4,8)
- R5** The District should publish B&H policies prominently on each school's website homepage. (F10)
- R6** The District should ensure each school prominently displays their current student handbook on the school's website homepage. (F10)
- R7** The District should conduct a study to understand why NUHS LCAP survey participation rates are much lower than that of other schools and take corrective action. (F7)
- R8** The District should align the application of discipline within its schools. (F10)
- R9** The Jury commends the public stance against B&H by The District superintendent and recommends the NJHUSD Board to take a similar strong stance in its actions. (F11)

### **Request for Responses**

Pursuant to PENAL CODE §§ 933 and 933.05, the Nevada County Civil Grand Jury requires the agencies below, within 90 days of receiving the report at the agency, to respond to the following:

- The District
  - Findings 1-11
  - Recommendations R1-R9
- Principal of NUHS
  - Findings F4, F7 and F10
  - Recommendations R4 and R6
- Principal of BR
  - Finding F10
  - Recommendation R6
- Principal of SS
  - Finding F10
  - Recommendation R6
- Principal of GECHS

- Finding F10
- Recommendation R6

Responses go to the Presiding Judge of the Nevada County Superior Court in accord with the provisions of CAL. PENAL CODE § 933.05. Responses must include the information that § 933.05 requires.

## Appendix A

### NEVADA UNION HIGH SCHOOL SCORECARD

#### Culture & Student Well-Being Metrics

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>Culture &amp; Student Well-Being</b>					
LCAP Survey Participation (% of School)	13.9%	9.2%	54.3%	48.0%	14.1%
Students Feel Comfortable Asking Staff for Support	63.7%	52.9%	60.6%	75.9%	67.3%
Students Feel Physically Safe at School	79.9%	80.0%	80.7%	86.6%	78.2%
Students Feel Emotionally Safe at School	69.1%	64.7%	68.7%	72.1%	67.6%
Classroom Material is Meaningful & Relevant	58.8%	55.1%	62.2%	62.0%	64.4%
Students Feel Engaged in School Culture	55.9%	60.3%	61.3%	63.3%	68.6%
STARs Referrals	131	188	158	189	

## BEAR RIVER HIGH SCHOOL SCORECARD

### Culture & Student Well-Being Metrics

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>Culture &amp; Student Well-Being</b>					
LCAP Survey Participation (% of School)	24.9%	10%	65%	61.4%	66.4%
Students Feel Comfortable Asking Staff for Support	77.4%	76.4%	73.5%	74.0%	82.9%
Students Feel Physically Safe at School	96.2%	96.4%	91.4%	94.1 %	90.8%
Students Feel Emotionally Safe at School	85.7%	74.5%	82.4%	82.0%	82.3%
Classroom Material is Meaningful & Relevant	78.2%	70.9%	69.6%	75.1%	72.9%
Students Feel Engaged in School Culture	70.7%	81.8%	78.8%	82.0%	83.0%
STARS Referrals	21	64	63	69	

## SILVER SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL SCORECARD

### Culture & Student Well-Being Metrics

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>Culture &amp; Student Well-Being</b>					
LCAP Survey Participation (% of School)	0.5%	3.0%	12.6%	32.9%	61.3%
Students Feel Comfortable Asking Staff for Support	100%	100%	87.5%	88.9%	90.3%
Students Feel Physically Safe at School	0%	80.0%	87.5%	90.7%	96.8%
Students Feel Emotionally Safe at School	0%	80.0%	70%	79.6%	96.8%
Classroom Material is Meaningful & Relevant	0%	60.0%	79.1%	74.1%	83.9%
Students Feel Engaged in School Culture	0%	60.0%	79.3%	72.2%	90.3%
STARs Referrals	13	27	21	30	

## NORTH POINT ACADEMY SCORECARD

### Culture & Student Well-Being Metrics

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>Culture &amp; Student Well-Being</b>					
LCAP Survey Participation (% of School)	4.8%	85.6%	71.7%	76.2%	43.2%
Students Feel Comfortable Asking Staff for Support	60.0%	82.6%	87.9%	70.7%	95.3%
Students Feel Physically Safe at School	80.0%	97.7%	96.7%	96.0%	92.8%
Students Feel Emotionally Safe at School	40.0%	91.3%	90.1%	94.9%	97.6%
Classroom Material is Meaningful & Relevant	40.0%	82.6%	88%	82.8%	90.5%
Students Feel Engaged in School Culture	40.0%	65.2%	75.3%	76.8%	85.8%
STARs Referrals	4	56	8	10	

## GHIDOTTI SCORECARD

### Culture & Student Well-Being Metrics

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>Culture &amp; Student Well-Being</b>					
LCAP Survey Participation (% of School)	61.4%	75.0%	75.4%	85.1%	82.6%
Students Feel Comfortable Asking Staff for Support	93.3%	91.2%	87.9%	75.6%	88.7%
Students Feel Physically Safe at School	97.1%	100%	99.2%	96.9%	97.2%
Students Feel Emotionally Safe at School	96.2%	97.4%	92.8%	90.0%	94.3%
Classroom Material is Meaningful & Relevant	84.8%	79.8%	85.6%	80.9%	85.7%
Students Feel Engaged in School Culture	70.5%	91.2%	79.9%	77.1%	78.1%
STARs Referrals	20	24	16	11	