

Response to
Bullying and Harassment at NJUHSD Schools: Going Underground?
A Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report dated March 18, 2026

From: Kelly Rhoden, Principal of Nevada Union High School

The summary of this report concludes:

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.

Per Penal Code 933 and 933.05, the Nevada County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) requires a response from five key stakeholders, each addressing specific findings and recommendations.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSE:

Nevada Union High School recognizes the seriousness of the issues raised in the Grand Jury report, as well as the importance of maintaining safe, supportive, and respectful school environments for all students. The prevention of bullying and harassment remains a consistent priority in both District and site-level practice.

At the same time, Nevada Union High School has significant concerns regarding the conclusions drawn in the report due to limitations in the underlying data and the interpretations applied to that data. The report acknowledges challenges in capturing accurate rates of bullying and harassment, including well-documented factors such as underreporting due to fear of retaliation, stigma, or lack of trust that concerns will be addressed. These are real and widely recognized challenges in interpreting survey-based and incident-reporting data.

The District currently uses multiple systems to identify and respond to reports of bullying and harassment, including anonymous reporting tools implemented as part of state

requirements. Reports submitted through these systems are reviewed and investigated by site administration, and substantiated incidents are documented and addressed in the District's student information system.

However, the absence of anonymous reports reflected in the dataset referenced by the Grand Jury raises questions about how reporting pathways are being used and how those data points were interpreted in reaching broader conclusions. Additionally, differences in survey design, response framing, and participation rates can significantly influence how student perception data is understood.

Given these limitations, there are multiple plausible interpretations of the available information. These may include improved reporting prevention and intervention efforts, changes in student experience over time, variations in how survey questions are interpreted by students, or ongoing underreporting of incidents. Without clearer methodological transparency and consistent disaggregation of data sources, it is difficult to fully substantiate the report's conclusion that bullying and harassment are increasing or that Nevada Union High School has the highest incidence within the District.

Nevada Union High School agrees that no level of bullying or harassment is acceptable and that continuous improvement in prevention, reporting, and response systems is essential. The school remains committed to using available data responsibly, strengthening reporting accessibility, and maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

Principal of Nevada Union High School on specific findings and recommendations

Findings: F4, F7, F10

Recommendations: R4, R6

Finding F4: Students at NUHS feel the least safe amongst all the students within the District's schools - *Partially Disagree*

The Grand Jury's report indicates that students at Nevada Union feel the least safe among all District schools. However, the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data reflected on the California School Dashboard shows that the percentage of students reporting that school is "very safe or safe" increased by 10.4% between the 2022-23 and 2024-25 survey cycles. This

appears to differ from the report's statement that the percentage is "the lowest in the past five school years."

However, it is difficult to make a direct comparison. While school-level data is available on the District's website, the Grand Jury report references a 14% participation rate for Nevada Union on the LCAP survey that is not included in the [publicly available scorecard](#). Without access to the same participation data referenced by the Grand Jury, it is not possible to fully understand how that figure was used in relation to the findings. As a result, this finding cannot be fully confirmed.

That said, it is reasonable to consider factors that may influence student perceptions of safety at Nevada Union. As a school of nearly 1,500 students, more than double the enrollment of the other comprehensive high school and significantly larger than the District's alternative programs, Nevada Union serves the most diverse student population within the District.

This diversity provides students with meaningful exposure to peers from a wide range of racial, religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds, as well as differing perspectives and life experiences. For many students, this is a valuable and important part of their high school experience. At the same time, a larger and more diverse student body can present challenges as students navigate differences and develop a shared sense of belonging.

Nevada Union High School recognizes both the opportunities and complexities that come with serving a large and diverse population and remains committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment where all students feel supported.

Finding F7: The District LCAP student survey participation rate for NUHS is far below that of other schools within the District - *Partially Disagree*

The Grand Jury's finding indicates that Nevada Union High School has a significantly lower participation rate in the LCAP student survey compared to other District schools. However, a review of the publicly posted Nevada Union High School Scorecard, as well as those of other schools in the District, does not include participation rate data. This makes it difficult to verify the comparison as presented.

Similar to the response to Finding F4, it is possible that the finding is directionally accurate, even if the specific figures cannot be confirmed. The report references a 14% participation rate for Nevada Union; however, without access to the underlying data or methodology used to calculate that figure, it is difficult to fully assess its accuracy. When compared to other available data points, such as the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS),

which reflects approximately 70% participation at Nevada Union, the reported LCAP participation rate appears unusually low and may not reflect overall student engagement with surveys more broadly.

There are also practical factors that may contribute to lower participation in a specific survey. Students are asked to complete multiple surveys throughout the year, including the LCAP survey, CHKS, and the tobacco use survey. This can lead to survey fatigue, particularly if surveys are not consistently administered within structured time during the school day.

Regardless, Nevada Union administration had already identified a decline in LCAP survey participation and has taken proactive steps to address it. These steps include providing designated class time for students to complete the survey and offering staff the opportunity to complete their survey during scheduled meeting time. These adjustments are intended to improve access and participation across groups.

Based on the available information, this finding cannot be fully confirmed as presented. However, the concern regarding participation rates is taken seriously, and steps have already been implemented to improve engagement moving forward.

Finding F10: Student Handbooks are either not available, out of date, or not easily accessible on school websites within The District. - *Wholly Disagree*

This finding is not accurate as it relates to Nevada Union High School. The Nevada Union Student Handbook was updated at the beginning of the current school year and was readily accessible on the school's website at the time of the Grand Jury's review.

While the report notes that the handbook required a "detailed website search" to locate, at Nevada Union it could be found using the site search function by typing "handbook," requiring only minimal navigation. In addition, the handbook has been consistently and proactively shared with the school community. At the start of the school year, administration highlighted new and updated sections through weekly announcements and included a direct link to the full handbook.

Since that time, the handbook link has been included in the "Resources" section of the weekly communication sent to families throughout the school year, ensuring ongoing and consistent access to this information.

Nevada Union High School agrees with the broader principle that student handbooks and behavior policies should be easy to locate and readily available to students and families. To that end, the school will continue to review website organization and communication practices to ensure that important resources remain visible and accessible.

Based on these factors, Nevada Union High School does not agree with this finding as it applies to its site.

Recommendation R4: The District should establish a program like Olweus Bullying and Prevention Program (OBPP) at NUHS. - *Requires Further Analysis*

This recommendation is directed to the District, though it references implementation at Nevada Union High School. As such, any consideration of a program of this nature would appropriately be made at the District level, with input from school sites and other stakeholders, rather than through a site-specific directive.

While Nevada Union High School does not agree with the implication that the absence of a specific program necessitates the establishment of a new one of this type, the school is always open to exploring additional frameworks that support student safety, belonging, and positive school climate. Any such consideration would need to be thoughtful, collaborative, and aligned with existing systems already in place across the District and at individual sites.

The report also states that “Breaking Down the Walls” (BDTW) training was discontinued across District schools and at Nevada Union. This characterization is not accurate for NUHS. While the program was paused for one year, it has since been reinstated and is currently in use at Nevada Union as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen student connection and school community.

Nevada Union High School recognizes the importance of effective approaches to preventing bullying and supporting student well-being. Should the District choose to explore the adoption of a comprehensive framework such as OBPP, Nevada Union would anticipate participating in a collaborative process that includes planning, stakeholder input, and consideration of how any new program integrates with existing practices and initiatives.

Recommendation R6: The District should ensure each school prominently displays its current student handbook on the school’s website homepage. - *Already Implemented*

Since the time of the Grand Jury report, District and school websites have undergone revisions and updates. There is agreement that a direct link to the student handbook will be placed on each school's website landing page to improve visibility and access.

While these updates are in progress, the Nevada Union student handbook remains easily accessible through the website search function and continues to be consistently linked in the weekly school communications sent to families throughout the year. This ensures that students and families maintain ongoing access to current expectations and school information during the transition to the updated website layout.