



SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION
DR. FARIS SABBAH - SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Santa Cruz County Board of Education • 400 Encinal Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • Tel (831) 466-5900 • www.santacruzcoe.org

Mr. Ed Acosta • Dr. Stacey Kyle • Mr. Greg Larson • Ms. Sue Roth
Mr. Abel Sanchez • Mr. Bruce Van Allen • Ms. Rachel Williams

Student Trustee: Vicente Guillen Martinez and Ash Immoor

RESOLUTION #26-15
ELIMINATING THE USE OF THE N-WORD AND ALL HATE SPEECH

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (Santa Cruz COE) Vision affirms that the Santa Cruz COE creates and supports learning environments that challenge and enable each and every student to achieve their highest potential; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz COE Core Values affirm that every person has intrinsic worth, deserves dignity and respect, thrives in safe environments, and benefits from access, equity, honesty, integrity, and inclusion in a diverse community; and

WHEREAS, Santa Cruz COE Strategic Goals call for positive and engaging school environments, the social-emotional well-being of all students, the elimination of achievement gaps, and strong communication and partnerships with our community; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz COE acknowledges the historical and ongoing harms caused by racism, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and other forms of discrimination, and recognizes its responsibility to actively address these harms within our schools; and

WHEREAS, the N-word is among the most offensive and harmful words in the English language, rooted in a history of racial violence, dehumanization, and oppression; and

WHEREAS, hate speech in any form — including language that demeans individuals or groups based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected identities — undermines student well-being, belonging, academic success, and school climate; and

WHEREAS, the increasing normalization of harmful language in popular culture and social media has contributed to rising incidents of offensive speech among students, negatively impacting African American students and other historically marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS, the use of the N-word or other hate speech in schools — regardless of intent — causes real harm, disrupts learning, contradicts Santa Cruz COE Core Values, and impedes the Santa Cruz COE’s ability to close opportunity and achievement gaps; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz COE maintains policies prohibiting harassment, bullying, discrimination, and the use of vulgar, obscene, or demeaning language; and

WHEREAS, Student leaders have recommended formal action to eliminate the use of the N-word and all hate speech and to strengthen education, prevention, and restorative responses;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Santa Cruz County Board of Education hereby:

1. **Affirms that the N-word and all forms of hate speech are unacceptable** in Santa Cruz COE schools, programs, and activities, except when used in structured instructional settings that explicitly examine historical context and harm.
2. **Reinforces Santa Cruz COE Core Values** by committing to school environments that uphold dignity, respect, safety, honesty, integrity, access, equity, and the intrinsic worth of every student and staff member.
3. **Aligns this resolution to Santa Cruz COE Strategic Goals** by supporting positive, engaging school climates; strengthening students’ social-emotional well-being; reducing harm that contributes to achievement gaps; and promoting inclusive, high-expectation learning environments.
4. **Directs staff to implement proactive education and prevention efforts**, including curriculum, student learning modules, staff professional learning, and family outreach focused on respectful language, identity affirmation, and the impact of harmful speech.
5. **Commits to restorative and instructional responses** when harmful language occurs, prioritizing learning, accountability, reflection, repair, and growth - while maintaining clear behavioral expectations and consequences when speech is used to demean, intimidate, or harm.
6. **Elevates student voice and leadership** by continuing partnership with student leaders to guide implementation, monitor impact, and strengthen school culture.
7. **Encourages Santa Cruz COE-wide and site-based initiatives**, including communication campaigns, community conversations, and visual reminders that reinforce the Santa Cruz COE’s shared commitment to belonging, respect, and equity.

8. **Affirms the Santa Cruz COE’s responsibility** to ensure that every Santa Cruz COE student learns in an environment where they feel safe, valued, included, and empowered to achieve their highest potential.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Santa Cruz County Board of Education, County of Santa Cruz, State of California, this 16th day of April 2026, by the following vote:

AYES: Acosta, Kyle, Larson, Van Allen, Williams

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Roth, Sanchez

Rachel Williams

Rachel Williams, Board President
Santa Cruz County Board of Education

Faris Sabbah

Dr. Faris M. Sabbah, Secretary
Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools