

May 26, 2021



To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the Alternatives to Violence Project. I have been working closely with AVP since 2017 as both a High School Dean of Student Engagement and in my capacity currently as the district Coordinator of School Climate and Safety. In the time that I have been working with AVP, Pat Hardy and J.P. Herrada have demonstrated professionalism and dedication to meeting the needs of our students and their families.

AVP has become an integral part of our prevention and intervention efforts in the district, particularly for students facing challenges involving violence and disengagement from school. **Our data for students who participate in AVP workshops shows an 88% reduction in suspensions, 64% reduction in fights, 42% reduction in truancy, 33% reduction in office referrals, and a 19% increase in grades.** What is most noteworthy to me is the low instance of recidivism related to violence after participation in the program. The workshops help our students develop important social and emotional skills like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and decision-making. These skills are vital for success in both school and in life. The workshops also help our students connect to caring adult mentors and positive peer mentors and create a community of connection and belonging.

I continue to be impressed by the work of the Alternative to Violence Project and I am a believer in the program. Additionally this year, as the Chair of the School Attendance and Review Board, I invited AVP to join our board because their services fill a very big need in our school community. AVP is an integral community partner in our district's efforts to support student success and I recommend them highly.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [jbalaishis@sbunified.org](mailto:jbalaishis@sbunified.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Balaishis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long tail.

Jennifer Balaishis  
Coordinator of School Climate and Safety  
Santa Barbara Unified School District