

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

A.W., et al. v. Santa Rosa City Schools, et al.

Case No. 25-cv-00034-DMR · No. 25-cv-00034-DMR · Decided July 1, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California considers Santa Rosa City Schools’ motion to dismiss A.W.’s First Amended Complaint under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). The amended complaint asserts claims under Title VI, California Education Code section 220, and negligence based on alleged racial harassment, discriminatory discipline, and retaliation at a middle school. The court grants the motion in part and denies it in part, including denying the District’s section 820.2 discretionary-act-immunity argument without prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Donna M. Ryu
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	July 1, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-00034-DMR
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant Santa Rosa City Schools moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss the First Amended Complaint. The court granted the motion in part and denied it in part.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts factual allegations in the complaint as true and dismisses only when there is no cognizable legal theory or the complaint lacks sufficient factual matter to state a facially plausible claim. The court also applies the requirement that prospective injunctive relief requires a real and immediate threat of future injury.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished federal district court order; persuasive authority only and not binding precedent outside the case.
PARTIES	A.W., et al. v. Santa Rosa City Schools, et al.

TOPICS

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civil procedure

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PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the District and its employees were entitled at the pleading stage to blanket discretionary-act immunity under California Government Code section 820.2 for disciplinary and related school conduct.
2. Whether A.W. stated a viable California Education Code section 220 claim seeking only injunctive relief without alleging a real and immediate threat of future injury.
3. Whether Rincon Valley Middle School was a suable entity separate from Santa Rosa City Schools.

HOLDINGS

1. The court denied the motion to dismiss on section 820.2 immunity grounds without prejudice because the District had not shown that the specific alleged conduct involved an authorized basic policy decision and a conscious balancing of risks and benefits rather than ministerial implementation of an existing policy.
2. The court granted the motion to dismiss the California Education Code section 220 claim because the FAC did not allege facts showing a real and immediate likelihood of substantial and irreparable future injury. The dismissal was with leave to amend.
3. Rincon Valley Middle School was not an entity capable of being sued independently and was dismissed as an improper party. The court stated that A.W. could amend to name Santa Rosa City Schools, and the conclusion granted leave to amend.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The court declines to adopt a blanket approach to immunity, especially at the pleadings stage.” (at 1 of Discussion A)

“Precedent is clear that “a finding of immunity requires a showing that the specific conduct giving rise to the suit involved an actual exercise of discretion, i.e., a conscious balancing of risks and advantages.”” (at 1 of Discussion A)

“A plaintiff seeking prospective injunctive relief must demonstrate that he is realistically threatened by a repetition of the violation.” (at 2 of Discussion B)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

A.W., a Black middle-school student, alleged that classmates repeatedly directed racial and homophobic slurs at him and that school personnel failed to discipline the other students while imposing discipline and other restrictions on A.W. He alleged disparate treatment, including suspensions, removal from classes, a search for drugs, a behavior contract, and restrictions on basketball tryouts and restroom use. The alleged incidents

occurred primarily between January 2023 and April 2024, when A.W. was in seventh or eighth grade at Rincon Valley Middle School.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A.W. filed the action in Sonoma County Superior Court on September 24, 2024. Santa Rosa City Schools removed the action to the Northern District of California on January 2, 2025. The court dismissed the initial complaint in part on April 22, 2025, after which A.W. filed a First Amended Complaint asserting Title VI, California Education Code section 220, and negligence claims. The court then ruled on the District's motion to dismiss the First Amended Complaint.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Parks Sch. of Bus., Inc. v. Symington, 51 F.3d 1480, 1484 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- Shroyer v. New Cingular Wireless Servs., Inc., 622 F.3d 1035, 1041 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 677-78 (2009)
- Navarro v. Block, 250 F.3d 729, 732 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 554, 555 (2007)
- Eminence Capital, LLC v. Aspeon, Inc., 316 F.3d 1048, 1051 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Lockheed Martin Corp. v. Network Sols., Inc., 194 F.3d 980, 986 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Kemmerer v. County of Fresno, 200 Cal. App. 3d 1426, 1435, 1437-38 (1988)
- Quigley v. Garden Valley Fire Prot. Dist., 7 Cal. 5th 798, 444 P.3d 688 (2019)
- Steinle v. City & County of San Francisco, 919 F.3d 1154, 1161 (9th Cir. 2019)
- Caldwell v. Montoya, 10 Cal. 4th 972, 981 (1995)
- Johnson v. State, 69 Cal. 2d 782, 788, 795 n.8, 796 (1968)
- Jones v. County of Los Angeles, 722 F. App'x 638, 638-39 (9th Cir. 2018)
- AE ex rel. Hernandez v. County of Tulare, 666 F.3d 631, 639-40 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Lema v. Bd. of Trs. of Cal. State Univ. Sys., No. 21-cv-02131-JAH-KSC, 2023 WL 3572882, at *7 (S.D. Cal. May 17, 2023)
- Walsh v. Tehachapi Unified Sch. Dist., 827 F. Supp. 2d 1107, 1122 (E.D. Cal. 2011)
- J.M. v. Parlier Unified Sch. Dist., 2021 WL 5234770, at *7 (E.D. Cal. Nov. 10, 2021)
- Clifford v. Regents of Univ. of Cal., No. 11-CV-02935-JAM-GGH, 2012 WL 1565702 (E.D. Cal. Apr. 20, 2012)
- Thompson v. Sacramento City Unified Sch. Dist., 107 Cal. App. 4th 1352, 1361 (2003)
- Nicole M. v. Martinez Unified Sch. Dist., 964 F. Supp. 1369, 1389-90 (N.D. Cal. 1997)
- Doe v. Petaluma City Sch. Dist., 830 F. Supp. 1560, 1564, 1583 (N.D. Cal. 1993)

- Wormuth v. Lammersville Union Sch. Dist., 305 F. Supp. 3d 1108, 1129-31 (E.D. Cal. 2018)
- T.L. v. Orange Unified Sch. Dist., No. 23-cv-01078-FWS-KES, 2024 WL 305387, at *17 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 9, 2024)
- Railey v. Pentagon Fed. Credit Union, No. EDCV 22-2166 JGB (SPX), 2023 WL 3564789, at *5 (C.D. Cal. Apr. 13, 2023)
- City of Los Angeles v. Lyons, 461 U.S. 95, 102, 111 (1983)
- O'Shea v. Littleton, 414 U.S. 488, 495-96, 502 (1974)
- Davidson v. Kimberly-Clark Corp., 889 F.3d 956, 967 (9th Cir. 2018)
- Nordstrom v. Ryan, 762 F.3d 903, 911 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Schiavone v. Fortune, 477 U.S. 21 (1986)

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