

Monterey County Grand Jury Report

“School Boards Make a Difference.”

Response from Bradley Union School District Governing Board, August 14, 2018

Updated February 6, 2019.

Finding #1: Student achievement suffers when school districts are unproductive or dysfunctional. It can be very costly and take years to address problems if the Monterey County Office of Education and/or California Department of Education have to step in to support or save a school district.

The Bradley Union School District Governing Board agree that this find is true and accurate. While the cause of unproductive or dysfunctional schools is not always black and white, the outcomes are predictable.

Finding #2: There are proactive steps that can be taken by the Monterey County Office of Education in collaboration with school boards to prevent many pitfalls of poor governance.

The District believes this to be a true statement.

Finding #3: The Monterey County Office of Education and local school boards can do more to promote effective local governance that is accountable to the community and produces better district outcomes.

This statement is dependent upon circumstance. In the case of a poorly governed school district, this statement is true. Many districts are well governed, but suffer from outside financial pressures that wouldn't be easily rectified by collaboration alone.

Finding #4: Promoting effective local governance requires better public information, communication, and a strong commitment to board development.

Commitment to board development can be an important factor, but the terms 'better public information, communication...' is vague, and may or may not be an important component to school success.

Finding #5: Although each school district has individual priorities, school boards can each make a commitment to adhering to best practices, training, and ongoing professional development when it comes to school board governance.

Each school district does have individual priorities, which means it may have different definitions of best practices, and definitions of school success. The BUSD Governing Board doesn't believe in standardizing procedures or definitions of what is 'successful.' However, they do agree that an educated and involved school board is essential to a school meeting its individual needs and requirements.

Finding #6: While the Monterey County Office of Education cannot dictate how school boards govern, they can provide stronger leadership in promoting a culture of effective school board governance.

The BUSD Governing Board believes that MCOE can contribute with training opportunities, advice, and solid oversight, however, we believe the statement 'stronger leadership' implies judgement of past leadership quality. We do not have insight or knowledge to determine weak leadership in the past, and MCOE has been helpful to the BUSD Governing Board on many occasions, as well as having offered regular training and networking opportunities for board members.

Finding #7: Information posted on Monterey County Office of Education and school district websites is insufficient and not user-friendly. It does not provide the public with adequate information about what school boards do, how to evaluate school board performance, or how to assess school district outcomes.

The BUSD Governing Board does not have direct knowledge of the quality of MCOE's website. However, the BUSD website has all information required by law to be posted on the website, and feels it is user friendly. Further, it feels the website is not the best vehicle for the goals stated in the finding. The BUSD Governing Board believes that the best way for families, staff, and community stakeholders to take understand the goals, the performance, and the adherence to school goals is to attend board meetings, meet and discuss issues and concerns with the superintendent and board members, and attend town halls, school site council, and other community outreach events. Schools, and school goals are more than words on a website, and the best way to understand a school's success is a hands on process.

Finding #8: School boards can do better in fulfilling their responsibility to communicate with school district stakeholders.

This is an open ended statement, which may or may not be true. The BUSD Governing Board does not have further comment on it.

Recommendation 1: School Boards should adopt a policy to commit to all National School Board Association best practices.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: The Bradley Union School District will commit to reviewing the National School Board Association best practices guide during the 18-19 school year, and determine which would meet the needs of our unique school and community. Appropriate and useful best practices will be adopted.

Recommendation 2: School Board should adopt a bylaw to make initial training and ongoing workshops mandatory.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: The Governing Board will review its current practices and board policies and determine if a new policy or policy change is required to continue to provide proper district oversight.

Recommendation 3: School Boards along with their superintendent and teacher union representatives should make annual public presentations on school district goals and student achievement.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Bradley Union School District already holds public board meetings, typically in September and June, which review all school goals, priorities, and test outcomes. Bradley USD does not have a CTA representative, but teacher and staff input are collected as part of all school initiatives.

Recommendation 4: School Boards should provide clear, concise, and easy to find communications on their district's goals and outcomes on their district's website.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: The Bradley Union School District website, lists all pertinent plans, including the Local Control Accountability Plan, Safety Plan, District Emergency Response Plan, and SARC. Between all of these readily available plans, the District's goals for academics, safety, emergency response, and current levels of preparedness are detailed. Further, parents, community, and any other interested parties are available to board meetings for budget, academic, and strategic updates monthly.

Recommendation 5: School Boards should provide information on their district's website about the role and responsibilities of school board members to educate parents, the public and potential school board candidates.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Currently, www.bradleyusd.org lists all board members, board meeting dates, and all meeting backup, accessible to the public. It does not specify information about role of the school board, and the board will review it during the 18-19 school year and determine if that information should be added.

Recommendation 6: School Boards should provide access to informational sessions to educate potential school board candidates on the duties and commitment associated with serving on local school board.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: This is an area of ongoing discussion with the Bradley USD governing board. As, all members are desirous of continued training on

proper board function, but fitting these trainings into the busy work schedules is difficult. Several board members have attended off site trainings in the past 2 years, and more will attend during the 18-19 school year.

Regarding accessibility to trainings for potential board candidates, this is difficult as we often do not know who the candidates will be until they register at election season. Also, as a small rural district that does not offer benefits or compensation, our board members are appointed, more often than elected, due to low turnout. It seems a better use of very limited funds to focus training on acting board members.

Recommendation 7: The Monterey County Office of Education should provide information sessions regarding the depth and breadth of school board service to people running for school board positions.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Monterey County Office of Education specific. Response N/A.

Recommendation 8: The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should actively promote and provide the California School Board Association Masters of Governance training in Monterey County.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Monterey County Office of Education specific. Response N/A.

Recommendation 9: The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should adopt options for school board training to increase attendance and engagement in school board training. For example, offer training throughout the county webinars, or onsite training.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Monterey County Office of Education specific. Response N/A.

Recommendation 10: The Monterey County Office of Education should revamp its website in an effort to present useable information that is relevant for a public audience.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Monterey County Office of Education specific. Response N/A.

Recommendation 11: The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should provide information about school board best practices on their website

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Monterey County Office of Education specific. Response N/A.

Recommendation 12: The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should provide information on their website about the role and responsibilities of school board members to educate parents, the public and potential school board candidates.

Bradley USD Governing Board Response: Monterey County Office of Education specific.
Response N/A.