



Graves School District

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Board of Trustees
Yolanda Zepeda , Board President
Gonzalo Espina – Board Clerk
Edwardo Lopez – Board Member

To: The Honorable Stephanie E. Hulsey Judge of the Superior Court County of Monterey
240 Church Street Salinas, Ca 93901

RE: Response to the 2017-2018 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report
“School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards”

Dear Honorable Judge Hulsey:

The 2017-2018 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report- “School Boards Make a Difference, improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards” – focuses on the importance of effective practices for school boards.

Grave Elementary School District Trustees agree with the Grand Jury Report that improved student achievement requires the attention of a larger community. Below please find the Graves Elementary School District’s and the Graves Superintendent’s responses to the findings and recommendations.

Findings

F1. 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 Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree with the finding.

F2. 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 Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree with this finding.

F3. 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.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree with this finding.

We agree there can always be improvement on our efforts and will continue to prioritize effective local governance that is accountable to the community and produces improved district outcomes.

F4. Promoting effective local governance requires better public information, communication, and a strong commitment to board development.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree that public information, communication, and a strong commitment to board development can always be improved.

F5. 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.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree school boards can make a commitment to adhering to best practices, training, and ongoing professional development.

F6. While the Monterey County Office of Education cannot dictate how school boards govern, they can provide strong leadership in promoting a culture of effective school board governance.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree with this finding so long as the independence and autonomy of the individual school district is not imposed upon.

F7. 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 Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree that the MCOE website is sufficient and finds that the District's website needs to be improved upon to better serve the community.

F8. School boards can do better in fulfilling their responsibility to communicate with school district stakeholders.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree that communication can always be improved and requires ongoing effort.

Recommendations

R1. School Boards should adopt a policy to commit to all National School Boards Association best practices.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree that adopting "best practices" policies are important but also recognizes the unique needs of the Graves School District. While we frequently review and modify board policy in line with CSBA recommendations, we also maintain that Graves' policies should reflect that is best for Graves' students.

R2. School Boards should adopt a bylaw to make initial training and ongoing workshops mandatory.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree that ongoing training and attendance at workshops is an important priority and this is reflected in our policies. We feel at this point that making such involvement mandatory is unnecessary.

R3. School Boards, along with their superintendent and teacher union representatives, should make annual public presentations on school district goals and student achievement.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree and already do so in accordance with the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) requirements for all engaging all stakeholders. The LCAP is presented at a public hearing and approved at a regular board

meeting. The Superintendent regularly briefs the Board and the public on progress toward achieving Graves' goals and strategic priorities.

R4. School Boards should provide clear, concise, and easy to find communications on their district's goals and outcomes on their district's website.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree

R5. 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.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree, and have already taken steps to improve this portion of our website.

R6. School Boards should provide access to informational sessions to educate potential school board candidates on the duties and commitment associated with serving on a local school board.

The Graves Elementary School District and the Graves Superintendent agree to abide by this recommendation if the District ever receives multiple candidates for an open Board Seat.

We thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations of the 2017-2018 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report- "School Boards Make a Difference, improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards."

Sincerely,



Rosemarie Grounds
Graves Elementary School District
Superintendent/Principal