

August 27, 2018

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 Washington Union School District respectfully submits its responses to the findings and recommendations of the Civil Grand Jury’s 2017-2018 Final Report as follows:

Findings:

- F1:** The District **agrees** that 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.
- F2:** The District **agrees** that 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.
- F3:** The District **partially agrees** that 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.
- Monterey County Office of Education provides opportunities for local boards to improve governance and be informed. The district agrees that governance teams need ongoing education and information in order to be educated and accountable. The district also feels strongly that better district outcomes are achieved through support and training of teachers, and the board is committed to upholding the professional governance standards, while maintaining an emphasis on their fiduciary responsibility to the fiscal health of the district.
- F4:** The District **agrees** that promoting effective local governance requires better public information, communication, and a strong commitment to board development.

- F5:** The District **agrees** that, 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.
- F6:** The District **agrees** that, 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 leadership.
- F7:** The District **partially agrees**. While the Monterey County Office of Education's website can be difficult to navigate, the District acknowledges that maintaining websites is fluid as technology and information changes so rapidly in these times. The District recently updated our website in order to make it more user-friendly and up to date. The board is unclear as to what sort of information would be posted in regards to how to evaluate school board performance. Stakeholders are given information throughout the school year in regards to student achievement, strategic planning, LCAP, and budget. Information is delivered at meetings and posted on the website.
- F8:** The District **agrees** that school boards can do better in fulfilling their responsibility to communicate with school district stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- R1:** The **recommendation has been implemented**. The District has adopted bylaws that are aligned with the California School Boards Association's Professional Governance Standards.
- R2:** The **recommendation has not been implemented**. The district board is committed to upholding governance standards and making every effort, as individuals, to stay informed through ongoing trainings and workshops. The district does not agree, however, that initial training and ongoing workshops be mandatory.
- R3:** The **recommendation has been implemented**. The district has biannual Strategic Planning meetings where a public presentation is made on school district goals and student achievement. The committee, consisting of board members, the superintendent, fiscal analyst, teachers, parents, Parents' Club representatives, and Educational Foundation representatives, reviews the district goals, is updated on student achievement in the district, and makes recommendations for revisions and updates to the strategic plan. In addition to the Strategic Planning committee, public presentations are made at the District Advisory Council meetings, monthly school board meetings, Parents' Club meetings, Foundation meetings, and school site council meetings.
- R4:** The **recommendation has been implemented**. The district's Strategic Plan, LCAP, and California School Dashboard information are all posted on the district's website. Additionally, the website offers resources for parents and community members for understanding the dashboard and California's accountability system.

R5: The recommendation has not yet been implemented. Information will be posted on the website in the coming month. With a change in district leadership over the last three years, and a change on the board, the district's governance handbook needs to be updated. A board retreat will be held in September and the governance handbook will be updated and revised as necessary. The updated handbook will be available on the district website in Fall 2018 along with information for potential board members, or anyone desiring information about governance or the role of a school board member.

R6: The recommendation has been implemented in the past. The current superintendent and board will implement the practice of providing access to informational sessions to educate potential school board candidates on the duties and commitment associated with serving on a local school board in future elections. In previous elections, the superintendent held informational sessions for potential candidates to outline the duties and responsibilities of a board member. Additionally, board members made themselves available to candidates for informal conversations about the duties of the board and board members. After discussion, we have committed to reinstating that practice.

We thank you for the opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations of the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report – "School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards."

Respectfully,



Gina Uccelli, Superintendent
Washington Union School District



Kathy Lagrandeur, President
Washington Union School District
Board of Trustees