



Spreckels Union School District

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Eric Tarallo, Superintendent

August 7, 2018

The Honorable Stephanie E. Hulsey
Judge of Superior Court
County of Monterey
240 Church Street
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: Spreckels Union School District's Response to the 2017-18 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report- "School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards"; Approved at August 7, 2018 School Board Meeting

Dear Honorable Judge Hulsey:

The Spreckels Union School District (SUSD) Board of Trustees greatly appreciates the work that the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury put into its recent report. We pride ourselves on being a highly functional, cohesive Board whose main focus is the safety and achievement of our students. With that said, we agree that local school boards play a critical role in the successful education of students and we are committed to increasing our effectiveness to better serve our students. Specifically, please accept our required responses to the report.

Findings

The SUSD Board of Trustees **agrees** with Findings 1-8.

Recommendations

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

This recommendation has been **implemented**. The SUSD Board of Trustees believes it is important to adhere to best practices of school governance and has adopted Bylaw #9005: "Governance Standards" (attached) that holds Board members responsible for following the best practices of the California School Board Association (CSBA) of which SUSD is a member.

We are confident that the CSBA's governance standards are nearly identical to the best practices of the NSBA. We clearly provide a link to the CSBA best practices we follow on our website at <https://spreckelsdistrict.org/our-district/board-of-trustees/>.

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

This recommendation has been **implemented**. Item 4 of Board Bylaw #6: "Governance Standards" reads, "Each individual Board member shall participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader." Further, Board Bylaw #9240: "Development in Service" reads, "Board members shall be provided sufficient

opportunities for professional development that helps them understand their responsibilities, stay abreast of new developments in education, and develop boardmanship skills." District funds are allocated for this purpose, and the various opportunities that arise are communicated to each Board member by the Superintendent and/or District staff. For example, various Board members have taken part in the Monterey County Office of Education's (MCOE) Leadership Summit held every two years at Spanish Bay. Additionally, the District Superintendent and one Board member will begin the Masters of Governance program sponsored by the MCOE that starts in September.

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

This recommendation has already been **implemented**. As required by the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) process, our District involves all stakeholders, including members of both bargaining groups, in the development, communication, and implementation of our LCAP that includes our five district goals and student progress on goals.

The superintendent updates the Board of Trustees on components of the LCAP at regular meetings throughout the year. The LCAP is then presented at a public hearing and approved by the Board in June.

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.

This recommendation has already been **implemented**. As required by law, both our LCAP and School Accountability Report Cards (SARC's) are clearly posted on our district website at <https://spreckelsdistrict.org/>. Both documents outline district goals and outcomes.

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.

This recommendation has already been **implemented**. We recently launched a new and more user-friendly website at <https://spreckelsdistrict.org/>. The "Board of Trustees" page (<https://spreckelsdistrict.org/our-district/board-of-trustees/>) clearly outlines the role and responsibilities of a school board member and provides contact information for interested candidates.

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 a local school board.

This recommendation has already been **implemented**. On our "Board of Trustees" webpage, interested candidates are provided the superintendent's contact information and encouraged to meet to discuss training opportunities. Depending on the individual needs of the potential candidate, the Superintendent will offer both formal and informal training opportunities.

Once again, we thank the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury for their work on this report. We feel that the process of providing a response has already improved our school governance practices and, in turn, our commitment to our students' achievement. If any more information is required from us, please contact Superintendent Eric Tarallo at etarallo@montereycoe.org or 455-2550 x316.

Sincerely,



Eric Tarallo
SUSD Superintendent



Peter Oppenheim, MD
SUSD Board President

Board approved on August 7, 2018

Spreckels Union School District

GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

The Governing Board believes that its primary responsibility is to act in the best interests of every student in the District. The Board also has major commitments to parents/ guardians, all members of the community, employees, the state of California, laws pertaining to public education, and established policies of the District. To maximize Board effectiveness and public confidence in District governance, Board members are expected to govern responsibly and hold themselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The Board expects its members to work with each other and the Superintendent to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. Each individual Board member shall:

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus
2. Value, support and advocate for public education
3. Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community
4. Act with dignity, and understand the implications of demeanor and behavior
5. Keep confidential matters confidential
6. Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader
7. Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff
8. Understand that authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individuals

Board members also shall assume collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture. To operate effectively, the Board shall have a unity of purpose and:

1. Keep the District focused on learning and achievement for all students
2. Communicate a common vision
3. Operate openly, with trust and integrity
4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect
5. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures
6. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance
7. Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness
8. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations

Spreckels Union School District

Board Bylaws

Bylaw #9240

DEVELOPMENT IN SERVICE

The Governing Board believes that the Board's ability to effectively and responsibly govern the District is essential to promoting student achievement, building positive community relations, and protecting the public interest in District schools. Board members shall be provided sufficient opportunities for professional development that helps them understand their responsibilities, stay abreast of new developments in education, and develop boardmanship skills.

The Board and/or the Superintendent or designee may provide an orientation to newly elected or appointed Board members which includes comprehensive information regarding Board roles, policies, and procedures and the District's vision and goals, operations, and current challenges. Throughout their first term, Board members are encouraged to participate in additional educational opportunities designed to assist them in understanding the principles of effective governance, including, but not limited to, information on school finance and budgets, student achievement and assessment, labor relations, community relations, program evaluation, open meeting laws (the Brown Act), conflict of interest laws, and other topics necessary to govern effectively and in compliance with law.

Funds for board training shall be budgeted annually for the Board and each Board member. In selecting appropriate activities, the Board and/or individual Board members shall consider activities that are aligned with the District's vision and goals and the needs of the Board or individual member to obtain specific knowledge and skills.

Board members may attend a conference or similar public gathering with other Board members and/or with the Superintendent or designee in order to develop common knowledge and understanding of an issue or engage in team-building exercises. In such cases, a majority of the Board members shall not discuss among themselves, other than as part of the scheduled program, business of a specified nature that is within the District's jurisdiction, so as not to violate the Brown Act open meeting laws pursuant to Government Code 54952.2.

Board members shall report to the Board, orally or in writing, on the board training activities they attend, for the purpose of sharing the acquired knowledge or skills with the full Board and enlarging the benefit of the activity to the Board and District.

Legal Reference:

GOVERNMENT CODE

54950-54963 The Ralph M. Brown Act, especially:

54952.2 Meeting

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

Professional Governance Standards for School Boards

WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

California County Boards of Education: <http://www.theccbe.org>

National School Boards Association: <http://www.nsba.org>