



Salinas Union High School District

Dan Burns
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June 29, 2018

Dr. Blanca Baltazar-Sabbah
Associate Superintendent
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The Honorable Stephanie E. Hulsey
Judge of the Superior Court
County of Monterey
240 Church St.
Salinas, Ca 93901

Alberto Verduzco
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RE: Requests for responses to the 2017-18 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report – “School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards”

Ana V. Aguillon
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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 critical role school boards play in shaping their school districts.

The Salinas Union High School District Board of Trustees and the District Superintendent agree with lasting impression of the Grand Jury Report that improving student achievement requires full public attention of the community. We also concur that local school boards have influence through governance and policy to ensure success of their students. For example, the new funding process for each Local Educational Agency called the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) has highlighted how local boards must provide oversight to budgeting to ensure alignment of resources with student needs.

However, we do not completely agree with the tone of the report that attributes student achievement directly to the capabilities of school board members. Keep in mind, the challenges that California school districts face with deficits in per-pupil funding are also a significant factor in student outcomes. That said, we do agree that continuous improvement must be a hallmark of our work. Thus, our responses to the findings and recommendations in this report are made in that spirit.

Findings

Below is our responses to the findings as required by your request for submissions:

F1. Student achievement suffers when school districts are unproductive or dysfunctional. It can be very costly and take years to address problems if MCOE or the CDE have to step in to support or save a school district.

- The SUHSD agrees with this finding.

F2. There are proactive steps that can be taken by MCOE in collaboration with school boards to prevent many pitfalls of poor governance.

- The SUHSD agrees with this finding.

F3. MCOE and local school boards can do more to promote effective local governance that is accountable to the community and produces better district outcomes.

- The SUHSD agrees with this finding.

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

- The SUHSD agrees with this finding.

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 SUHSD agrees with this finding.

F6. While MCOE cannot dictate how school boards govern, they can provide stronger leadership in promoting a culture of effective school board governance.

- The SUHSD agrees with this finding.

F7. Information posted on MCOE and 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 assess school district outcomes.

- The SUHSD agrees with this finding.

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

- The SUHSD agrees with this finding.

Recommendations

Below is our responses to the recommendations as required by your request for submissions:

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

- *Requires further analysis – The SUHSD Board was a member of the NSBA and several current policies include the NSBA framework for effective governance. However, the SUHSD no longer is a member because of the lack of support given to local boards and therefore the SUHSD will continue to be an active member of CSBA and will review the opportunities for support provided by NSBA in the next six months.*

R2. School Boards should adopt a bylaw to make initial training and ongoing workshops mandatory. *Requires further analysis -Current Bylaw 9240 demonstrates the Board's commitment to training but mandating will require funding and a policy for what happens if a mandate isn't met.*

- *Not yet implemented – The SUHSD Board has a bylaw (9240) that expressly outlines their commitment to ongoing training including participating in training provided by CSBA. However, the Board does not have "mandates" for training and what would be the potential consequence for not completing the "mandate". Therefore, the SUHSD Board will have the Superintendent review sample policy including policy related to "mandates" for training prior to become an officer on the Board. These will be discussed in August of 2018.*

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

- *Being implemented. The SUHSD district staff give an annual summary of student during Board Sessions that include the attendance of the union representatives. These presentations are mirrored at school sites through their parent and governance committees.*

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

- *Not yet implemented – will be added to current front page in September of 2018.*

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.

- *Not yet implemented – is already in process with video production as well. Completion scheduled by September 2018.*

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.

- *Been implemented but not consistently. Board Bylaws are in place for the process. Will be offered for the pending November 2018 election.*

We thank you for the opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations of the 2017-18 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Burns', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Burns
Superintendent

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patty Padilla-Salsberg', with a large loop at the end.

Patty Padilla-Salsberg
Board President