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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 Civil Grand Jury Final Report- "School Boards Make a Difference in Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards"

Dear Honorable Judge Hulsey:

Below please find the responses of the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) to the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report "School Boards Make a Difference in Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards." Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations of this important report.

Findings

F. 1 Student achievement suffers when school districts are unproductive or dysfunctional. It can be very costly and take years to address problems if the MCOE or CDE has to step in to support or save the school district.

The Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) agrees with this finding.

F. 2 There are proactive steps that can be taken by the MCOE in collaboration with school boards to prevent many pitfalls of poor governance.

MCOE offers various opportunities to collaborate with local school boards, however, there are always improvements that can be made and therefore MPUSD agrees with this finding.

F. 3 The MCOE and local school boards can do more to promote effective local governance that is accountable to the community and produces better district outcomes.

MCOE and local school districts currently work to promote effective local governance practices that are designed to promote accountability to the public. However, there are always improvements that can be made and therefore MPUSD agrees with this finding.

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

MPUSD agrees with this finding and is committed to providing public information and proactive communication, as well as strong board development.

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F. 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.

MPUSD agrees with this finding and is committed to following best practices as outlined by the California School Boards Association (CSBA).

F. 6 While the MCOE cannot dictate how school boards govern, they can provide stronger leadership in promoting a culture of effective school board governance.

MPUSD agrees that a culture of effective school board governance is important and the majority of our School Board has completed the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Masters in Governance class. MCOE currently provides a number of opportunities for school board members to develop their governance skills and MPUSD believes these opportunities should continue to be given to local school boards.

F. 7 Information posted on the MCOE 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 assess school district outcomes.

MPUSD agrees that sharing information in a user friendly way is important for public transparency. We have recently reorganized our website to be more user friendly and agree that more improvement can be made to meet the various needs of stakeholders.

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

MPUSD believes in transparency and proactive communication and has received a number of awards for our community engagement efforts. That being said, MPUSD is in agreement that continuous improvement is always a goal and focus of effective organizations and will always strive to do better.

Recommendations

R. 1 Adopt a policy to commit to all National School Board Association best practices.

MPUSD believes we have met the spirit of this recommendation by adopting policies that are in line with the California School Boards Association (CSBA). We believe that these best practices are adequate and in the best interest of the district.

R. 2 Adopt a bylaw to make initial training and ongoing workshops mandatory.

MPUSD believes that individual school board members have varying degrees of previous Board experience, and does not agree with a one-size fits all policy mandate. The MPUSD Board has approved a policy in which attending CSBA trainings are encouraged but not required and therefore does not believe this recommendation is warranted.

R. 3 Along with their superintendent and teacher union representatives, make annual public presentations on school district goals and student achievement.

MPUSD has already implemented the practice of regularly updating the Board on progress toward district goals and student achievement measurable outcomes. Union representation is at each Board meeting and frequently addresses the Board during public comment.

R. 4 Provide clear, concise, and easy to find communications on their district's goals and outcomes on their district's website.

MPUSD has already implemented this practice and will continue to look for ways to use our revamped website to effectively communicate with stakeholders.

R. 5 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.

MPUSD has already implemented this practice and will continue to look for ways to use our revamped website to effectively communicate with stakeholders.

R. 6 Provide access to informational sessions to educate potential school board candidates on the duties and commitment associated with serving on a local school board.

MPUSD has already implemented this practice. All school board meetings and board policy committee meetings follow the Brown Act and are open to prospective candidates. Additionally, all regular board meetings are televised and streamed live by Access Monterey Peninsula. Finally, the Superintendent has made himself available to any prospective candidate to answer any individual questions she/he/they may have regarding the duties of the school board.