



North Monterey County Unified School District Superintendent's Office

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

Dear Judge Hulsey:

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05(f), please consider this letter as the formal response from the North Monterey County Unified School District Board of Education ("Board" or "School Board") to the 2018 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report entitled "*School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards*" ("Final Report"), published on May 29, 2018.

The Board appreciates the important role the Grand Jury serves in protecting the public interest and agrees with many of the findings and conclusions presented in the Final Report. However, the Board believes that the Grand Jury's approach to gathering information from various stakeholder groups within the educational community would have been more effective if it had included input from more district superintendents and other community members who may have previously served as school board members.

Further, while recognizing the valuable information provided in the Final Report, the Board notes that when discussing County-wide student achievement, the Final Report does not take into account significant subgroups of students that are served within Monterey County and that bring unique learning needs that must be addressed. As a starting point, Monterey County schools serve a significant number of students who are designated as English Learners when enrolling in public school, usually in the primary grades, and who often require several years of English Language Development in order to become proficient in English. This objective is very different from reaching grade level competencies, especially in reading and writing. Monterey County public schools also enroll a significant percentage of students who are socio-economically disadvantaged and who may also qualify as homeless. Another significant segment of the County's pupil population are those students who are eligible for special education and related services due to their identified learning disabilities. Given the County's diverse pupil profile, it is important to look at "cohort growth" and other measures of achievement. College and Career Readiness is one such achievement indicator. Because there are other avenues for achievement in addition to obtaining a high school diploma, it is not practical to compare graduation rates to college entrance/readiness information. It is also important to acknowledge that California's high school graduation requirements do not equate to college readiness, although many high school districts have much more rigorous high school diploma requirements. That being said, the Board thanks the Grand Jury for its recognition of the importance of effective school governance on educational outcomes.

Lastly, as a clarification, the law does allow relatives of Board members to work for districts under certain circumstances; however, depending on those circumstances, individual Board members may have to recuse themselves, and the Board, as a whole, may be precluded from taking certain actions.

A portion of the Final Report addresses issues related to 24 school districts in Monterey County. With respect to the North Monterey County Unified School District (the "District"), the Final Report includes eight Findings and six Recommendations that require a response from the Board. Each of the Findings and Recommendations directed to the Board are addressed below in the order presented in the Grand Jury's Final Report.

This Response was approved by the Board on July 26, 2018.

FINDINGS

Finding No. 1: "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."

Response:

- Agree***
- Partially Disagree – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement***
- Wholly Disagree – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement***

Explanation (if applicable): N/A

Finding No. 2: "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."

Response:

- Agree***
- Partially Disagree – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement***
- Wholly Disagree – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement***

Explanation (if applicable): N/A

Finding No. 3: "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."

Response:

- Agree***
- Partially Disagree – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement***
- Wholly Disagree – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement***

Explanation (if applicable): The Board agrees that organizations can always do more to improve service. The Board also believes that the role of each district governance team (elected School Board members and the Superintendent) is critical in shaping that school district with a focus on student achievement and outcomes while also ensuring equitable access within the confines of limited resources. The role that leadership and school governance teams play is central for supporting what happens in the classroom.

Finding No. 4: "Promoting effective local governance requires better public information, communication, and a strong commitment to board development."

Response:

- Agree**
- Partially Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement
- Wholly Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement

Explanation (if applicable): The Board agrees with this Finding and notes that the Board has adopted a goal of “Enhanced Communication.” Steps towards implementation of this goal include: supporting the continued development of a social media master plan; maintaining a strong presence at school events; and, together with the Superintendent, developing a Speaker’s Bureau to share information about the District and promote open, honest communication with the community. The District has also formed a number of stakeholder forums and committees which allow parents, teachers, staff, and community members to provide input and feedback on a number of important District-wide issues. (See Recommendation No. 3, below.) Additionally, the District places great importance on Board development and actively encourages Board member participation in workshops and conferences (See Recommendation No. 2; *Appendix A.*)

Finding No. 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.”

Response:

- Agree**
- Partially Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement
- Wholly Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement

Explanation (if applicable): N/A.

Finding No. 6: “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 governance.”

Response:

- Agree**
- Partially Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement
- Wholly Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement

Explanation (if applicable): The Board agrees that organizations can always improve service.

Finding No. 7: “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.”

Response:

- Agree**
- Partially Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement
- Wholly Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement

Explanation (if applicable): The Board agrees that all websites could include more information about what school boards do, how to evaluate school board performance and how to assess school district outcomes. However, it partially disagrees with Finding No. 7, to the extent that the Board believes that

information posted on the MCOE website and the District website is sufficient and easy to navigate for both the general public and staff. In particular, the Board notes that the District website includes: contact information for Board members; the Board meeting schedule; links to Board policies, Board agendas and minutes, the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (“LCAP”); and a [link to the latest copy of the District Governance Handbook](#).

Finding No. 8: “School boards can do better in fulfilling their responsibility to communicate with school district stakeholders.”

Response:

- Agree**
- Partially Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement
- Wholly Disagree** – specify portion disputed and include explanation for disagreement

Explanation (if applicable): The Board agrees that organizations can always improve service. The District is continually striving to improve communication with District stakeholder groups. As one example, the District has formed a number of stakeholder forums and committees designed to ensure that students, parents, teachers, staff and community members can participate and provide input and feedback. (See Recommendation No. 3.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No. 1: “School Boards should adopt a policy to commit to all National School Board Association best practices.”

Response:

- (1) Has been implemented** – include summary of implemented action
- (2) Will be implemented in the future** – include explanation and timeframe
- (3) Requires further analysis** – include explanation, scope, and parameters of analysis, timeframe (not exceeding six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report.)
- (4) Will not be implemented because not warranted or reasonable** – include explanation

Explanation: (4) Adoption of a policy committing to all National School Board Association (“NSBA”) best practices is not warranted as the Board has adopted a binding Governance Handbook (available on the District website) that is reviewed annually and is based on best practices recommended by the California School Boards Association (“CSBA”).

Recommendation No. 2: “School Boards should adopt a bylaw to make initial training and ongoing workshops mandatory.”

Response:

- (1) Has been implemented** – include summary of implemented action
- (2) Will be implemented in the future** – include explanation and timeframe
- (3) Requires further analysis** – include explanation, scope, and parameters of analysis, timeframe (not exceeding six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report.)
- (4) Will not be implemented because not warranted or reasonable** – include explanation

Explanation: (4) Adoption of a new bylaw is not warranted as the Board has adopted Bylaw 9240 (Board Training), that encourages all Board members to participate in advanced training offered by CSBA in order to reinforce Board skills and build knowledge related to key education issues. Please refer to the attached list of trainings and workshops dedicated to School Board development that were attended by District Board members from 2012 to 2018 (attached as *Appendix A* to this Response). The Board has also adopted Board Bylaw 9230 (Orientation), requiring orientation sessions for new Board members as early as possible following election or appointment, and encouraging new Board members to attend CSBA's *Orientation for New Trustees, Institute for New and First Term Board Members*, and other relevant workshops and conferences.

In addition, the Board has adopted a comprehensive Governance Handbook (available on the District website) based on all best practices identified by CSBA. Among other things, the Governance Manual includes specific discussion of the role and responsibilities of School Board members as well as Board operating norms and governance standards.

The District has also invested in regular, ongoing customized trainings and workshops for its Board designed to continuously improve implementation of best practices for effective school boards and school governance teams. Many of the trainings and tools utilized by the District reinforce best practices that are in alignment with the eight common characteristics of effective school boards identified at page 9 of the Final Report.

Recommendation No. 3: *"School Boards, along with their superintendent and teacher union representatives, should make annual public presentations on school district goals and student achievement."*

Response:

- (1) *Has been implemented – include summary of implemented action*
- (2) *Will be implemented in the future – include explanation and timeframe*
- (3) *Requires further analysis – include explanation, scope, and parameters of analysis, timeframe (not exceeding six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report.)*
- (4) *Will not be implemented because not warranted or reasonable – include explanation*

Explanation: (1) The Superintendent currently presents to the general public regarding District goals and student achievement at regular meetings of the Board. The teachers' union and stakeholder groups regularly attend Board meetings and have the opportunity to voice their opinions on all agenda items. The District has also formed a variety of stakeholder forums and committees designed to ensure that students, parents, teachers, staff and community members can participate and provide input and feedback and make recommendations. These stakeholder forums and committees include: a Budget/Program Review Committee; an LCAP Advisory Committee; a Parent/Community Advisory Committee; and a Facilities Committee. The District also facilitates the North Monterey County Community Alliance. (4) The District does not agree that teacher union representatives should participate in making annual presentations on school district goals and student achievement, as this would provide a "voice" to only one stakeholder group, without providing the same opportunity to students, parents, classified staff, administration, and community members. Data is collected and shared by the Governance Team with all stakeholder groups, including the teachers' union, regarding feedback and input on district goals and student achievement results.

Recommendation No. 4: *"School Boards should provide clear, concise, and easy-to-find communications on their district's goals and outcomes on their district website."*

Response:

- (1) *Has been implemented – include summary of implemented action*
- (2) *Will be implemented in the future – include explanation and timeframe*
- (3) *Requires further analysis – include explanation, scope, and parameters of analysis, timeframe (not exceeding six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report.)*
- (4) *Will not be implemented because not warranted or reasonable – include explanation*

Explanation: (1) The District’s website includes a link to the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (“LCAP”) describing District goals and outcomes, as well as information about the new California Accountability System, the Dashboard, which provides the District and schools with indicators based upon multiple-measures to assist in determining progress and areas to focus improvements. Under the LCAP website link/page there is a message from the Superintendent and a link to the LCAP info graphic document, in English and Spanish, which helps communicate the progress and areas of focus for improvements. There are two versions (a longer version of 7 pages and a shorter 2 page version). These LCAP info graphic documents have been provided to parents/community members. The 2017-18 LCAP is posted and we are currently working on developing the 2018-19 LCAP info graphic documents based upon the LCAP that was approved on June 28, 2018. Pursuant to its usual practice, the 2018-2019 LCAP info graphic documents will be posted on the District website when complete.

Recommendation No. 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.”

Response:

- (1) *Has been implemented – include summary of implemented action*
- (2) *Will be implemented in future – include explanation and timeframe*
- (3) *Requires further analysis – include explanation, scope and parameters of analysis and timeframe (not exceeding six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report.)*
- (4) *Will not be implemented because not warranted or reasonable – include explanation*

Explanation: (1) The District website includes a separate, easy-to-find menu for Board information and documents that include contact information for each Board member; a schedule of Board meetings; Board agendas and minutes, and a link to the District’s Governance Handbook, which includes a comprehensive overview of the role and responsibilities of School Board members. The Governance Handbook is available to all staff and members of the public, including potential School Board members. All of this information is updated on a regular basis, or as needed. The Board of Education website page has been updated to include a link to the Board Bylaws describing the role and responsibilities of Board members.

Recommendation No. 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.”

Response:

- (1) *Has been implemented – include summary of implemented action*
- (2) *Will be implemented in future – include explanation and timeframe*
- (3) *Requires further analysis – include explanation, scope, and parameters of analysis, timeframe (not exceeding six months from the date of publication of the Grand Jury Report.)*
- (4) *Will not be implemented because not warranted or reasonable – include explanation*

Explanation: (1) Prior to the last election, the District held an informational session designed to educate potential School Board candidates on the duties and commitment associated with serving on a local school

board. The informational session was presented by a CSBA trainer; however, because such sessions are not mandatory, potential Board candidates who would have benefited from the information did not attend. The District will continue its practice of providing informational sessions for potential Board candidates prior to the next election, and is currently exploring options for providing these sessions, including working with MCSBA and other districts to offer sessions, and/or having the Superintendent provide the informational sessions.

Sincerely,


Kari Yeater, Superintendent


Martha Chavarria, Board President

APPENDIX A

NMCUSD BOARD TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS FROM 2012-2018

- October 24, 2012- Governance Leadership Session (Special Board Meeting)
- October 25, 2012-Goal Setting (Special Board Meeting)
- November 13, 2013-Educational Leadership Summit (MCOE/MCSBA Sponsored)
- April 10, 2014-MCSBA Training on Brown Act, LCAP, LCFF
- April 29, 2015-Annual Dinner and Organizational Meeting: Preparing Student for College & Career Success
- May 16, 2015-Governance Leadership Session: Board/Superintendent's Roles and Responsibilities and Governance Practices with Board, Working Styles, (Special Board Meeting)
- November 18, 2015-Educational Leadership Summit (MCOE/MCSBA Sponsored)
- December 3rd-December 5th, 2015 CSBA Conference in San Diego session included: Leveraging Social Media, Enhancing Employee/Employer Relationships Through an Interest-Based Approach, School Facilities 101: The Life Cycle of a School, Building a Culture of Trust, Making Achievement and Talent Development a Reality, Building a More Effective Governance Team, Closing the Achievement Gap Through Attendance Union and District Collaborative Partnership, Funding Our Schools: Fiscal Outlook and Perspectives, STEAM: Redefining the 21st Century Child Using STEAM at Vehicle, CTE Pathways and Partnerships, SEAL: CSS Implementation with English Learners at the Center, Reinventing School Counseling for 21st Century, Innovative Approach to Attendance Boundary Changes in the 21st Century, Scaling Career Pathways: Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence, Bargaining in an LCFF World: More Money Equals More Confusion, Governance that Works, A New Approach to Technology Policies, Ensuring a Preschool Education for All Children in the Community, Negotiating During Times of Change, Making Technology Work in School Districts: SAMR Model, Turn Teacher Evaluations into Transformative Experiences: Teacher Effectiveness, Creating Connections with Industry, District and ROP, The Digital Transition: How and Why Districts Should Do It?, Making California Stronger: Latino Leadership Initiatives, and Creating Conditions to Implement College and Career Readiness Equity and Access.
- November 30-December 3, 2016 CSBA Conference San Francisco: Session Outlined in Conference Materials
- January 23, 2016-Governance Leadership: Determine Unity of Purpose-Goals & Priorities, Reach a Common Understanding of Roles & Responsibilities, Review/Update Norms for Sustaining a Positive Governance Culture, Review/Update/Develop Procedures/Protocols that Support Effective Governance (Special Board Meeting)
- April 16, 2016-Governance Leadership: Review Board Self-Evaluation Process and Tool, Review New Tool and Process for Superintendent's Evaluation in closed session (Special Board Meeting)

- September 24, 2016-Governance Leadership Session: Governance Practices, Role, Responsibilities, Update Norms & Develop Protocols, Superintendent's Goals for 16-17 in closed session (Special Board Meeting)
- February 1, 2017- Governance Leadership Session: Review of Items from Board Self-Evaluation Identified as Focus Areas, Review Governance Handbook: Protocols, Board Goal-Enhanced Communication (Special Board Meeting)
- February 2, 2017- Governance Leadership Session: Board Stays Focused on District Priorities, Supporting the Governance Team (Special Board Meeting)
- April 27, 2017-MCOE Annual Dinner and Organizational Meeting
- July 29, 2017-Governance Practices, Role, Responsibilities, Norms, Protocols, and Self-Evaluation, Board Goal: Enhanced Community Communication-outlined actions (Special Board Meeting)
- August 19, 2017: New School Board Members-Candidate Orientation Training (Special Board Meeting)
- September 23, 2017- Governance Leadership Session: Review and Discuss Board Self-Evaluation-Building a Stronger Team, Review Governance Handbook and Possible Development of Board Goals, Discuss Superintendent's Goals in closed session. (Special Board Meeting)
- November 16, 2017-Educational Leadership Summit (MCOE/MCSBA Sponsored)
- January 6, 2018- Governance Leadership Session: Unity of Purpose, Review Roles/Responsibilities, Update Norms & Develop Protocols (Special Board Meeting)
- January 26th-27th CSBA Workshop in Sacramento (New and first term Board Members)
- March 22, 2018-Annual Organizational Meeting
- April 14, 2018- Governance Leadership Session: Governance Practices, Roles, Responsibilities, Norms & Protocols, Superintendent's Evaluation-review goals in closed session (Special Board Meeting)