

SOUTH MONTEREY COUNTY JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Brian Walker Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools

August 29, 2018

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

Dear Honorable Judge Hulsey:

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District Board of Education welcomes the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury as a partner in addressing the concern of student performance in Monterey County.

In the report; "School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of the Local School Boards," the Grand Jury focuses on the critical role effective governance plays in improving student performance. To help further the discussion and effort we offer these responses to the Findings and Recommendations of the Grand Jury.

Findings:

F1. 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.

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District, perhaps more than any other district in Monterey County, agrees with this finding.

F2. 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.

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District agrees with this finding and reaffirms its commitment to work with the Monterey County Office of Education to ensure successful governance continues.

F3. 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.

GREENFIELD High School
225 S. EL Camino Real
Greenfield, CA 93927
831-674-2751

KING CITY High School
720 Broadway Street
King City, CA 93930
831-385-5461

PORTOLA-BUTLER
Continuation High School
760 Broadway Street
King City, CA 93930
831-3854661

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District agrees with this finding. The work the school district has done in defining L.C.A.P. goals and building a strategic plan has provided for community involvement and dialogue on outcomes.

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

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District agrees with this finding. The actions the South Monterey County JUHSD Board has taken since the district went into receivership and the state intervened with a State Administrator, has exemplified a strong commitment to public communication and board development.

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 South Monterey County Joint Union High School District agrees with this finding. This finding has been a top priority for the South Monterey County JUHSD Board and community since governance autonomy was restored. The Board has approved bylaws requiring members to complete “Masters in Governance” training within eighteen months of election; they adopted a Governance Handbook that defines a Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, conducting effective board meetings and sustaining a positive culture including norms and protocols. They have developed a calendar for the Superintendent’s evaluation as well as tool for self-evaluation and a metric to measure their level of performance. This all culminates with the expectation they will educate one another with the information they receive by attending on-going professional development throughout their terms.

F6. 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.

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District agrees with this finding and will continue to attend professional growth opportunities provided by the Monterey County Office of Education.

F7. 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 assess school district outcomes.

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District partially disagrees with this finding. Although the district agrees that the information posted on the website about what the School Board does and how they evaluate their performance is insufficient, we disagree that the information specific to the districts operation and the individual school sites is insufficient. Currently our website provides information on; the Board and Board meetings, professional development opportunities, calendars for the many events scheduled, the Facilities Master Plan, links for students, parents and staff, lunch menus, bullying and violence tip-lines, news and announcements and links to the individual sites with all their specific information.

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

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District agrees with this finding.

Recommendations:

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

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District has implemented this recommendation. In October of 2017, the Governing Board of Trustees, adopted a Governance Handbook which includes “Best Practices” from the National School Board Association and the California School Boards Association. This handbook will be added to the school district’s web page for the 2018-2019 school year.

R2. School Boards should adopt a bylaw to make initial training and ongoing workshops mandatory.

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District has implemented this recommendation. Board Bylaw 9223, was adopted in December of 2015, and requires all board members to complete the “Masters in Governance” training provided by the California School Boards Association, within eighteen months of their election to the board. The bylaw further emphasizes “the importance of a well-educated Governing Team, who is not only well informed of the districts activities, but who also is aware of the necessity to function as a team with each member and group assuming its appropriate role.”

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

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District has implemented this recommendation. The regulations for the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), require the district to engage all stakeholders, including bargaining units, in the development of the LCAP. Further, the LCAP is presented at a public hearing and approved at a regular Board meeting. The district uses other venues such as; local Rotary meetings, Chamber of Commerce meetings and City Council meetings to present information on school district goals and student achievement.

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

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.

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District has not yet implemented these recommendations. During the 2018-2019 school year the South Monterey County JUHSD will be developing a comprehensive strategic plan that will incorporate other important planning documents such as the LCAP, WASC plan, SPSA's and SARC's to provide clear and concise information about district goals and outcomes. This Strategic Plan will be placed in a location on our website that is easy to find and move through. In addition, we will put our Governance Handbook, which clearly delineates the role and responsibilities of Board members on our website as well.

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.

The South Monterey County Joint Union High School District has implemented this recommendation. Currently, school board elections are held every other year, coinciding with national and regional elections. Prior to the November election an orientation meeting is hosted by the school board and the district for the candidates that register at the county office of elections. At this meeting the candidates receive a "Board of Trustees Binder" that includes; a district profile, organizational charts, appropriate calendars, roles and responsibilities, norms and protocols, contracts for

each unit, necessary board bylaws and budget account codes. These topics are discussed in detail at the orientation and this initiates their preparation to be seated on the board if they win the election.

The Board of Trustees of the South Monterey County Joint Union High School District would like to complement the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury for putting the time and energy into researching and writing a noteworthy report on Public School Governance. "School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards," is an ambitious effort to look at a component of public education, particularly in Monterey County, that is crucial to successful school leadership, but very underrepresented.

We thank you for the opportunity to share our experience and review and comment on the findings and recommendations of the final report.

Sincerely,



Brian Walker, Ed. D.
Superintendent, SMCJUHSD



Paulette Bumbalough,
Board President, SMCJUHSD