



# PACIFIC GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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July 24, 2018

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 Pacific Grove 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.

A portion of the Final Report addresses issues related to 24 school districts in Monterey County.

With respect to the Pacific Grove 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 23, 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 improve service.

**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):** N/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):** The Board agrees that organizations can always improve service.

**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 or 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 Board Goals in sufficient detail to address performance outcomes. Further, general public input regarding Board performance is addressed yearly at a special session of the Board specifically intended to allow for open dialogue concerning Board Goals, Governance Handbook details, Strategic Plans, Superintendent Goals and the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (“LCAP”). Summary and follow up information is provided on the District website in posted Minutes.

**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. General public input regarding Board performance is addressed yearly at a special session of the Board specifically intended to allow for open dialogue concerning Board Goals, Governance Handbook details, Strategic Plans, Superintendent Goals and the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (“LCAP”). Summary and follow up information is provided on the District website in posted Minutes. One Board Goal, in particular, addresses “Safety, Credibility, Confidence and Communication: High degree of communication with all stakeholders.”

## 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 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 Board has adopted a Governance Handbook (available on the District website) as a binding companion to the District's Policy Manual that is based on all best practices identified by the California School Boards Association ("CSBA"). CSBA's charter is aligned with that of the National School Boards Association ("NSBA"). All Trustees have, or will participate in the CSBA *Masters in Governance* training program.

**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 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 a comprehensive Governance Handbook (available on the District website) as a binding companion to the District's Policy Manual that is based on all best practices identified by CSBA. Among other things, the Governance Manual includes information adapted from the CSBA training manual for new Board members, *What Every New Board Member Needs to Know*. As discussed in greater detail in the Governance Handbook, the Superintendent provides every incoming Board member with a New Board Member Orientation Packet. In addition, all Trustees have, or will participate in the CSBA *Masters in Governance* training program.

**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 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 School Board performance at a yearly special meeting of the Board designed specifically to allow for open dialogue concerning Board Goals, Governance Handbook details, Strategic Plans, Superintendent Goals and the District LCAP. The Board takes any appropriate and/or necessary action at that meeting, or during subsequent general meetings. The teachers’ union, along with other stakeholder groups, is made aware of the presentation, attends the meeting, and has the opportunity to participate in the dialogue to the degree desired or needed.

**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 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 website includes a separate, easy-to navigate, pull-down menu specifically for Board information and documents that includes contact information for each Trustee, a schedule of Board meetings, Board agendas and minutes, and the District’s Governance Handbook. The Board web page also includes the District’s Strategic Plan, which outlines District, Board, and Superintendent Goals. All of this information is updated on a regular basis, or as needed.

**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, 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 link to the District's Governance Handbook, which provides a comprehensive overview of the role and responsibilities of school board members based on all best practices identified by CSBA and other training materials. The Governance Handbook is available to all staff and members of the public, and is a particularly useful tool for potential School Board candidates.

**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) The Board has adopted a Governance Handbook based on all best practices identified by CSBA. The Handbook is posted on the District website and is available to all staff and members of the public. The Handbook is a particularly useful tool for potential School Board candidates. (1) The Board's annual special session concerning Goals and the Governance Handbook will occur on September 27, 2018, prior to the next election, which will take place on November 6, 2018. (2) The Board has directed staff to schedule an informational session during the school year, and prior to the next election, specifically designed to educate potential School Board candidates on the duties and commitment associated with serving on a local school board.

Sincerely,



Ralph Gómez Porrás, Superintendent