

# San Ardo Union Elementary School District

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August 29, 2018

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

**RE: Response to the 2017-2018 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report - "School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards"**

Dear Honorable Judge Hulsey:

On Behalf of the San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent, please find below the responses to the finding and recommendations.

## Findings

**F1. Student achievement suffers when school districts are unproductive and 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 San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent **agree** with this finding.

## **F2 and F3**

**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.**

**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.**

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent agree there is always room for improvement in our efforts. The Board of Trustees and Superintendent believe and support the Monterey County Office of Education in the proactive steps they have taken to work in collaboration with local school boards, such as the Leadership Summit and bringing the Masters of Governance training to Salinas.

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

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent agree that public information, communication, and a strong commitment to board development can always be improved.

**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 San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent agree with this finding and have embedded them in our Board Bylaws.

**F6. While the Monterey County Office of Education cannot dictate how school boards govern, they can provide strong leadership in promoting a culture of effective school board governance.**

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent agree that the Monterey County Office of Education does provide strong leadership in effective school board governance. It is further agreed that the Monterey County Office of Education cannot dictate how school boards govern. There is a valid reason why school boards are given local control to govern the diverse populations and areas they represent. San Ardo is not Carmel and it would be futile to make comparisons of the local priorities.

**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, and how to assess school district outcomes.**

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent partially agree with this finding. We find our website to be user friendly and sufficient. There is a tab for the Board of Trustees containing current and previous agendas, minutes, board packets and information regarding the Board. The Local Control & Accountability Plan (LCAP) is also located on the homepage with access to all school district outcomes published within the LCAP. We do not publish information on the website about what school boards do and how to evaluate school board performance. We also find the Monterey County Office of Education's website to be extremely comprehensive.

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

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent agree that communication can always be improved and requires ongoing improvement efforts.

#### Recommendations

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

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and the Superintendent agree. Our current bylaws offer a comprehensive list of best Board practices that surpass the National School Boards Association's best practices. It has been implemented.

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

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent agree this is a lofty goal. However, the recommendation **will not be implemented**. In the rural community of San Ardo, there is not training locally available. We are over 60 miles from the Monterey County Office of Education. Many Board Members work full-time jobs and are not available when trainings occur. Furthermore, adequate funds should be provided to facilitate the training.

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

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and superintendent agree with this recommendation and it has already been **implemented**. The annual public presentation on school district goals and student achievement is made at Back-to-school night and again during Open House.

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

with the recommendation of providing clear, concise, and easy to find communications of their district's goals and outcomes on the website. This recommendation has been **implemented**. The district posts easy to read, clear and concise infographics in English and Spanish outlining the district's goals and outcomes on the homepage of the website. There is also a link to the California Dashboard.

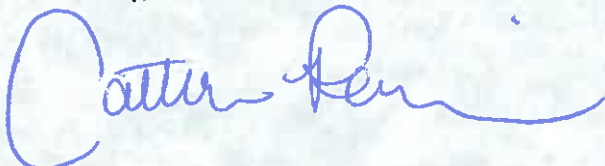
**R5. School Boards should provide information on their district's website about the role and responsibilities of school board members to educate parents, the public and potential school board candidates.**

The San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and superintendent **agree** with the recommendation. This recommendation has been **implemented**. The Board of Trustees section has a link provided where parents, the public, and potential school board members can access information about the role and responsibilities of school board members.

**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 San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees and superintendent **partially agree** with the recommendation. A potential school board candidate should contact local board members and/or the superintendent to learn about the board's role and responsibilities. School board candidates should take the initiative to find out what is expected of school board members by attending school board meetings, reading the district's website, and checking the local school district's policies and bylaws. The initiative would need to come from the potential candidate. We would be happy to provide the information, however; will not hold informational sessions. The San Ardo Union Elementary School District most of the time does not have candidates running for the school board. They are appointed because no other person desires to serve with no compensation. In some cases, they care very deeply about their local school district and how it is functioning. In other instances, that is not the case.

Sincerely,



Catherine Reimer, Ed.D., Superintendent

On behalf of the San Ardo Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees