

The Honorable Stephanie E. Hulsey
Judge of the Superior Court
County of Monterey
240 Church St.
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:

The San Antonio Union Elementary School Board has reviewed Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report – “School Boards Make a Difference, Improving Education: The Role of Local School Boards”

The San Antonio Union Elementary School Board **agrees** with the Grand Jury Report that improving student achievement is impacted by the level and manner of involvement of all the stakeholders in the community.

The San Antonio Union Elementary School Board appreciates the time that was put into this study and encourages the Grand Jury to consider the many facets of the public education system that impact student achievement and California’s Eight State Priorities to include the availability of adequate resources, capacity, training, and funding for all stakeholders, particularly for small school districts.

Below please find the San Antonio Union Elementary School Board responses to the findings and recommendations.

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 San Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees** that student achievement suffers when school districts are unproductive or dysfunctional.

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 Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees** there are proactive steps that can be taken by the Monterey County Office of Education in collaboration with school boards to support strong,

accountable governance teams. San Antonio appreciates the Monterey County Office of Education's efforts at providing trainings and support for governance teams. The San Antonio Union Elementary School Board also recognizes that more geographic friendly training opportunities would benefit all governance teams in Southern Monterey County.

F4 and F5.

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

The San Antonio Union Elementary School Board **agrees** that public information and communications 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 governance team **agrees** school boards can make a commitment to adhering to best practices, training, and ongoing professional development.

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 Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees** that the Monterey County Office of Education can provide strong leadership in promoting a culture of effective school board governance. While the Monterey County Office of Education cannot insert itself into local culture, it can provide and facilitate local trainings on current research and best practices in education and governance.

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 to assess school district outcomes.

The San Antonio Union Elementary governance team believes that the MCOE website is sufficient and finds that the updated SAUESD website is sufficient and user friendly as well.

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

The San Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees** that communication can always be improved and requires ongoing effort.

Recommendations

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

The San Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees**. The Monterey County Office of Education as identified the NSBA's list of Effective School Board practices as:

1. Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement.
2. Have strong shared beliefs and values about students' ability to learn and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.
3. Are accountability driven.
4. Have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community.
5. Are data-savvy.
6. Align and sustain resources to meet district goals.
7. Lead as a united team with the superintendent.
8. Take part in team development and training.

The San Antonio Union School board will add these to the board's by-laws.

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

The San Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees** that ongoing training is critical to being an effective member of the governing team. This recommendation, however requires further analysis of the financial impact of this action. While the grand jury report lists the cost of participating in the CSBA Master of Governance of Program as \$1500 per board member, this does not include travel costs, the impact of a potential minimum expenditure of \$9000 for this training on the fiscal health of a small school district, the impact of moving this amount of funding away from other resources, and the cost of time off work for individual school board members.

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

The San Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees**. This recommendation has already been implemented in accordance with the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) requirements for engaging stakeholders in the development of the LCAP. Further, the LCAP is presented at a public hearing and approved at a regular board meeting.

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

The San Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees**. The District's Local Control and Accountability Plan including the district's goals and student achievement results are posted on the school's website and can be found at <http://www.sanantonioud.org/lcap/lcap>. In addition, San Antonio Elementary School is required to post the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) which includes the schools' goals and student achievement results by February 1 each year. The school's SARC can be found at <http://www.axiomadvisors.net/livesarc/Presentation/SARCAdministration/Portals/SideMenu/Portal.aspx?CDS=27661676026629&LanguageID=1&Preview=False> which is linked to the school/district's website <http://www.sanantonioud.org/index>.

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 Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees** that providing information about the role and responsibilities of school board members is valuable to the public. The California School Board Association (CSBA) identifies the role and responsibilities of school board members as:

- Setting direction
- Establishing an effective and efficient structure
- Providing support
- Ensuring accountability
- Providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools

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 Antonio Union Elementary governance team **agrees** and looks forward to providing an information session for school board candidates prior to the November 2018 election.