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## Carmel Unified School District

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July 20, 2018

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

Dear Judge Hulseley:

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05(f), please consider this letter as the formal response from the Carmel 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 Carmel 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 18, 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):** The Board agrees that school districts can take proactive steps “to prevent many pitfalls of poor governance”; however, depending on the circumstances, it may not be appropriate for the Monterey County Office of Education to intervene with regard to local governance issues that are properly addressed at the district level.

**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 generally agrees that organizations can always do more to improve service; however, without additional information, it is not possible to comment further regarding this Finding.

**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):** 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 generally agrees that organizations, including the MCOE, 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 generally agrees that districts should ensure that their websites are user-friendly; 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 MCOE website tab for the MCOE Board includes information describing the Board’s function and purpose and has easy-to-locate links to MCOE Board Policies and information about the roles and responsibilities of school board members. Likewise, the District website includes contact information for Board members; the Board meeting schedule, agendas and minutes; links to Board Policies and a Board-adopted Governance Handbook. The website also includes links to the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (“LCAP”) describing District goals and outcomes, along with informational notes in English and Spanish; information about the new California Dashboard accountability system which provides the District and schools with indicators based upon multiple-measures to assist in determining progress and areas to focus improvement; School Accountability Report Cards (SARC); and school site presentations. The Board notes that the Grand Jury has not identified any criteria it believes should be used in evaluating school board performance and further notes that each district and board identifies goals based, in part, on each district’s demographics and student population. Thus, assessment of school district performance must include consideration of these unique factors, as well.

**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 generally agrees that there is always room for improvement within every organization, but it is not possible to respond in greater detail because this statement does not more specifically identify the specific stakeholder groups and gaps in communication to such groups that the Grand Jury believes need improvement. That being said, the Board and the District as a whole are continually striving to improve communication with District stakeholder groups.

## 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:** (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 based on best practices recommended by the California School Boards Association (“CSBA”). The Board has also adopted *Board Bylaw 9000 (Role of the Board)* and *Board Bylaw 9005 (Governance Standards)*, both of which are based on CSBA’s *Professional Governance Standards*. Many of these standards are aligned with NSBA’s best practices.

**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 recognizes that each member brings a variety of skills and experience to the Board. Thus, mandatory trainings may not be appropriate for all members or economically feasible for some districts. However, the Board has adopted *Bylaw 9240 (Board Training)*, that encourages all Board members “to continuously participate in advanced training offered by the CSBA in order to reinforce boardmanship skills and build knowledge related to key education issues”, as well as *Board Bylaw 9230 (Orientation)*, that requires orientation sessions for new Board members and encourages them to attend CSBA’s *Orientation for New Trustees, Institute for New and First-Term Board Members*, and other relevant workshops and conferences. The Board’s comprehensive *Governance Handbook* also encourages new Board members to attend governance training sponsored by CSBA and MCOE within the first year of being seated on the Board. A number of current Board members have indicated that they will be enrolling in CSBA’s upcoming *Masters in Governance* training program and the District is planning to have the entire Board—including newly-elected Board members—in attendance at CSBA’s annual conference.

**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:** (4) Implementation of this recommendation is not warranted as presentations regarding District goals and student achievement are properly made by the Superintendent or her designees at regular meetings of the Board. During this past school year, the Superintendent traveled to each of the District’s six school sites in order to make State of the District presentations. The site administrator and staff from each District site also report annually to the Board regarding site-specific goals and achievement.

The Board reserves a segment of every Board agenda for bargaining unions to present reports to the Board. Moreover, the Superintendent meets weekly with union representatives to proactively address a variety of issues, including, as appropriate, those related to district goals and student achievement. As members of the District’s WASC and LCAP committees, teacher representatives have additional opportunities to provide feedback and input on District goals and student achievement.

**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) Among other things, the District’s website includes links to: District Goals; the District’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (“LCAP”) describing District goals and outcomes, along with informational notes in English and Spanish; information about the new California Dashboard accountability system which provides the District and schools with indicators based upon multiple-measures to assist in determining progress and areas to focus improvement; School Accountability Report Cards (SARC); and school site presentations. Although the website is already easy to navigate, the District is in the process of upgrading it to include additional information and make it even more user-friendly. The website upgrade is on track to be completed before the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

**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 separate menu for Board information and documents that includes links to Board Policies, Bylaws, and the District's Governance Handbook, which provides a comprehensive description of the role and responsibilities of School Board members. Notification about informational sessions for potential School Board candidates is posted on the website once the candidate filing period for each election commences.

**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) Once the candidate filing period for the upcoming November election opens, the Superintendent will schedule informational sessions designed to educate potential School Board candidates on the duties and commitment associated with serving on a local school board. Members of the District's Cabinet will participate in these information sessions, providing overviews of the departments and programs they administer.

Sincerely,



Barbara Dill-Varga, Ed. D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Carmel Unified School district