



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
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Board of Trustees
Noemí M. Armenta
Maricela Cruz
Guadalupe Ruiz Gilpas
Guadalupe Guzmán
Fernando Mercado

Dr. Héctor Rico, Superintendent

August 27, 2018

Via Hand Delivery

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

SUBJECT: 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 Judge Hulsey:

Enclosed, please find the Alisal Union School District Board of Trustees’ 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.” This response was approved by the Alisal Union School District Board of Trustees during their regular board meeting on August 9, 2018.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hector Rico", is written over the typed name.

Héctor Rico, Ed.D.
Superintendent



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August 27, 2018

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

From: Fernando Mercado
Board of Trustees, President
and
Héctor Rico, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Alisal Union School District
155 Bardin Rd.
Salinas, CA 93905

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

Response to 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 Alisal Union School District's (AUSD) Board of Trustees 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 AUSD Board of Trustees agrees with this finding.

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 AUSD Board of Trustees agrees with this finding.

Whilst the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) and AUSD School Board currently promote effective local governance in a variety of ways that is accountable to the community and produces good district outcomes, there can always be improvement on our collective efforts and we will continue to strive to do so.

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

The AUSD Board of Trustees agrees with this finding.

Whilst the AUSD School Board has a strong commitment to board development and currently provides public information and communication in a variety of ways to promote effective local governance, there can always be improvement on our efforts and we will continue to strive to do so.

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 AUSD Board of Trustees agrees with this finding.

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 AUSD Board of Trustees agrees with this finding.

Whilst the MCOE cannot dictate how school boards govern, they do provide leadership in promoting a culture of effective school board governance in a variety of ways.

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 board performance, or how assess school district outcomes.

The AUSD Board of Trustees partially agrees with this finding.

Whilst there can always be improvement on our efforts with respect to our website, the AUSD [website](#) provides easily accessible information about the District, its performance, its operations, and current news/events. The website provides parents with the District's calendars, the ability to enroll their children in school, information on school performance, and news of school and District activities. The AUSD website is not perfect and due to the dynamic nature of school- and District-related information, it will always be a work in progress. The website has been continually improved over the past decade and in January, 2018, an updated, more modern and user-friendly webpage management system (Blackboard)—with the ability to translate the content into multiple languages with one

click—was launched. Additional enhancements, including some based on the Grand Jury’s report, will be made in the near future.

With respect to providing adequate information about what school boards do, how to evaluate school board performance, or how to assess school district outcomes, again, whilst there can always be improvement on our efforts with respect to these areas, the AUSD website dedicates a specific [Trustees webpage](#) to provide this information. The Board’s goals, Board Policies, Board Bylaws, schedule for the District’s Board meetings, agendas, and Minutes are all easily accessible within this webpage.

Information on District performance—including the California State Dashboard (a summary of District and School performance)—is accessed through the website’s [homepage](#). School site performance is available on each school site webpage within the School Accountability Report Card.

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

The AUSD Board of Trustees partially agrees with this finding.

Whilst there can always be improvement on our efforts in fulfilling our responsibility to communicate with school district stakeholders, the AUSD School Board communicates with stakeholders in a variety of ways. The District maintains a website that provides information of immediate use to parents and other stakeholders. The Board conducts around twenty public meetings each year, during which the business of the District is transacted in full view of any citizen who wishes to attend. During these meetings, the Board provides ample opportunity for the public to comment on the business of the District. The District makes the Board members email addresses available on the District website to allow stakeholders to communicate directly with Board members at any time. The District will continue to seek opportunities to expand and improve communications with stakeholders.

AUSD Response to Recommendations:

R1. School Boards should adopt a policy to commit to all National School Board Association (NSBA) best practices.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented before the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

The AUSD Board follows the California School Board’s Association (CSBA) recommended polices and practices and, current, AUSD Board’s policies align closely to or surpass the NSBA’s best practices.

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

This recommendation requires further analysis and will be discussed by the end of January, 2019.

The AUSD Board places a high priority on supporting its trustees to develop their knowledge, skill and ability to be highly effective board members. Trustees attend a variety of MCOE, Monterey County School Board's Association (MCSBA), CSBA, and other training and workshops, including the AB 1234 Local Ethics Training that is required by the Fair Political Practices Commission; however, with the exception of the ethics course, they are not mandatory. The AUSD Board will analyze and discuss the feasibility of adopting a bylaw to make certain trainings or workshops, such as CSBA's *Masters of Governance* series, mandatory.

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

This recommendation has been implemented.

This is done annually in accordance with the State's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) requirements for engaging all stakeholders, including parents, staff, and all bargaining units, during multiple presentations and input-gathering meetings. The LCAP is presented at a public hearing and approved every June during a regular board meeting. Additionally, the District Superintendent regularly briefs the AUSD Board on student achievement and progress toward meeting goals, and provides an annual public report to the community on the status of education in the District.

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

This recommendation has been implemented.

Whilst there can always be improvement on our efforts with respect to communicating our district's goals and outcomes on our website, the AUSD [website](#) does provide significant communication on our district's goals and outcomes, including the [Board's Vision, Goals, Norms, and Resolutions](#) and the [Superintendent goals](#). Additionally, the AUSD webpage includes the ability to translate the content into multiple languages with one click.

Information on District performance—including the California State Dashboard (a summary of District and School performance)—is accessed through the website's [homepage](#). School site performance is available on each school site webpage within the School Accountability Report Card. The AUSD website is not perfect and due to the dynamic nature of school- and District-related information, it will always be a work in progress. Additional enhancements, including some based on the Grand Jury's report, will be made in the near future.

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.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented by the end of December, 2018.

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.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented by the end of December, 2018.

We will add additional relevant information and resources to our webpage. Currently, however, to learn about the board's role and responsibilities, potential school board candidates may contact the AUSD Board or District Superintendent, attend board meetings, and/or peruse the District's [website](#), including the [Trustees webpage](#) and the District [policies and bylaws webpage](#).