

School Boards Make a Difference



IMPROVING EDUCATION: *The Role of Local School Boards*

SUMMARY

The Monterey County Civil Grand Jury's (Jury) investigation was driven by an interest in identifying what can be done to empower school districts and improve student achievement. The purpose is to draw attention to an underappreciated area of the public-school system, which is the critical role School Boards play in shaping their school districts.

The underlying concern is poor education outcomes across grade levels throughout Monterey County. Furthermore, it is evident that high graduation rates mask the fact that a significant number of graduates are neither qualified for college, nor prepared for a career upon completion of high school. This problem requires full public attention. It also necessitates realistic strategies for raising standards and strengthening governance to improve district and county-wide outcomes.

The good news is that we *can* do better. Student achievement can be raised; and, there are many points of intervention. The opportunity and challenge relate to the decentralized public education system and its emphasis on local control. The State of California establishes guidelines and provides districts with the flexibility to plan and budget based on district priorities. The Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) is a source of support, services, and information on best practices for strengthening school governance and improving student outcomes. Aside from budget oversight, however, MCOE cannot dictate how the 24 separate school districts in

Monterey County are run. Elected local school boards govern their individual school districts and are ultimately responsible for student achievement and district performance.

Local control means communities have the power to make positive change in their schools. But, this requires proactive effort to ensure the fragmented, decentralized public education system works. In other words, each “player” must not only do its part within its limited authority, but also help strengthen the overall educational system. Central to this is understanding the roles of the MCOE, school boards, and the public, and how they interact and support one another. Effective local control requires well-informed public involvement, skilled school board leadership, and active MCOE support directed at creating a culture of effective school board governance. The public needs clear information on the role good governance plays in raising student achievement. It is not enough to passively provide the tools for effective leadership; the County and school boards need to actively promote a culture of good leadership.

This report focuses on empowering and linking the roles of the public, school boards, and MCOE to produce better educational outcomes by establishing higher expectations, concrete goals, and clear communication about student achievement.

GLOSSARY

CSBA - California State School Board Association

CCI - College/Career Indicator

CDE - California Department of Education

CPS - Center for Public Schools

DOE - Federal Department of Education

LCAP - Local Control and Accountability Plan

LCFF - Local Control Funding Formula

MCOE - Monterey County Office of Education

MCSBA - Monterey County School Board Association

NSBA - National School Board Association

SMCJUHSD - South Monterey County Joint Unified High School District

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this investigation is to draw attention to the critical role school boards play in shaping their school districts. The impetus for this investigation began with general concern over low student achievement followed by recognition of the challenge that the County's 24 separate school districts present for targeting interventions to improve educational outcomes. This is a problem that deserves attention because education is central to both individual prosperity and the vitality of Monterey County.

There is plenty of evidence that student achievement can be raised and that the public does not have to accept poor outcomes as destiny. The structure of the public education system does, however, present specific challenges for elevating outcomes county-wide. These challenges also suggest areas that can be focused on to strengthen public education in the county. This report centers on local school boards because they influence and control the effectiveness of their school districts.

The history of public education explains both the goals and structure of the public education system. Public education has a moral and ethical component tied to democratic values and principles of equity. As such, the public education system in the U.S. is designed to promote both local control and universal access. This results in a complex public education system that is decentralized, fragmented, and bureaucratic. Moreover, the underlying intent to promote broad, equitable access presents additional challenges given disparities in resources and needs across diverse communities. Thus, while school districts have the ultimate authority, they also have to accommodate broad access within the confines of limited resources.

Improving education outcomes depends on identifying realistic targets for change. Attitudes about what it takes to produce successful schools and who to hold responsible for poor student achievement have changed over time. Not long ago, unequal outcomes were considered destiny for groups of students of various racial, immigrant and/or socio-economic backgrounds. The belief was that some students were inherently disadvantaged and that unequal outcomes were to be expected. Documented success stories of schools that performed beyond expectations against all odds replaced this perspective with the idea that the real enemy of public education is low expectations. This shift acknowledges that all students can learn if teachers and staff set high expectations and high standards for achievement. This perspective represents a more positive aspiration, but it has also put an unreasonable burden on teachers and principals to be accountable for many concrete, system-wide social problems that are beyond their control.

Today a more balanced view prevails—one that seeks to raise performance by facing district-specific challenges. The reality is that there are many stakeholders and socio-economic factors

that impact public education. Thus, more and more, the role leadership and school governance play are seen as central for supporting what happens in the classroom.¹

The structure of the public education system, county education outcomes, and lessons gleaned from the experience of local districts and education advocates form the basis for this investigation into what can be done as a community to improve student achievement.

APPROACH

To understand the state of education K-12 in Monterey County, the Jury reviewed education outcomes, structure of the public education system, and factors that contribute to student success. The Jury investigated the role of the elected officials in school governance, the MCOE in supporting the success of school districts, the public in choosing effective school leaders, and reporting accessible and clear information to the public. Our investigative methodology involved the following:

- Interviews of elected officials, a district superintendent, school board members, nonprofit executives, teachers, and administrators
- Reviews of State, County and district level data and statistics with respect to educational outcomes, which included the 2016 and 2017 Monterey County Education Reports
- Examining survey findings from *United Way's* “Impact Monterey” and *Bright Futures for Monterey County* with respect to citizen concerns and educational aspirations
- Reviewing *Bright Futures for Monterey County* –a collaborative partnership to organize, leverage local efforts, and measure progress toward key educational goals
- Reviewing the roles and responsibilities of: The Federal Department of Education (DOE), The California State Department of Education (CDE), The Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE), and the county and district school boards
- Examining how information was presented and reported on the websites of the MCOE and each of the 24 Monterey County school districts
- Researching the history, purpose and structure of the United States public education system

¹ Education Writers Special Report. Effective Superintendents, Effective Boards of Education. The Wallace Foundation. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Effective-Superintendents-Effective-Boards-Finding-the-Right-Fit.pdf>

- Reviewing the CDE Accountability Model and School Dashboard
- Reviewing the school board training sessions offered by the MCOE, California School Board Association (CSBA), and Monterey County School Board Association (MCSBA)
- Researching local issues and concerns presented in newspaper articles
- Researching the National School Board Association (NSBA) and the Center for Public Schools (CPS) best practices for effective school board governance
- Attending the MCOE’s biennial Educational Summit on board governance
- Attending “Bright Spots” conference sponsored by Bright Futures to present highlights and progress with respect to seven county-wide educational goals
- Examining the history and current state of South Monterey County Joint Unified High School District (SMCJUHS) to understand the role and importance of governance to school district effectiveness and student achievement

DISCUSSION

The Jury’s focus is on practical ways the County can strengthen leadership and governance in order to improve school district performance and raise student achievement. This is an important goal because education is central both to individual prosperity and the vitality of our county. Investment in public education contributes to the health and stability of individuals and families, and positively impacts the economy, tax revenue, public health, public safety and decreases social service expenditures.²

There are well-established best practices promoted by associations, such as the Center for Public Schools (CPS) and National School Board Association (NSBA). These best practices provide school boards with proactive measures and prescribed tools for effective governance. The structure of public education suggests specific areas of responsibility for the MCOE and local school boards, particularly with respect to providing clear and useful public information.

Strong board governance produces better outcomes, exhibits competency and resilience in navigating inevitable challenges, by using strategies to prevent avoidable, often costly, mistakes. The example of SMCJUHS illustrates the consequences of dysfunctional governance and provides practical lessons about the strategies and benefits of effective governance.

² Mitra, D. (2010). The social and economic benefits of public education (Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University). Retrieved from https://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/BestInvestment_Full_Report_6.27.11.pdf

The State of Education in Monterey County

The current state of education in our community reveals persistently poor educational outcomes throughout our county. While the overall graduation rate is 85.5%, a mere 21.4% of Monterey County students successfully complete the education pipeline, which begins with kindergarten and culminates in either entering college or launching a career.³ Many of our students fail to meet critical milestones by the third grade that ultimately determine their ability to achieve and sustain ongoing educational successes. This is evident in overall Math and English proficiency levels that are well below averages for the State of California, which is currently being sued over literacy rates.⁴ According to 2017 data, student achievement in the County ranked significantly lower in comparison to the state. Even more problematic, the state mandated “dashboard” has begun to reveal that high graduation rates conceal the fact that a very low percentage of graduates are prepared for college or to begin a career or trade.⁵ According to the CDE dashboard and the 2017 Monterey County Education Report:

- County students meeting or exceeding standards in Math is only 25% compared to 38% of students statewide.
- County students meeting or exceeding standards in English is only 36% compared to 49% of students statewide.
- Reading with proficiency by 3rd grade is a determinate of ongoing educational success—through 3rd grade you learn to read, afterwards you read to learn. In Monterey County, only 30% of 3rd graders meet or exceed reading standards. This also means that 70% of 3rd graders *do not* meet basic reading expectations, which is the basis for ongoing academic success.
- While the percentage of students meeting or exceeding math and reading proficiency is low across the board, even larger achievement gaps exist across subgroups of students.
- Monterey County’s 2017 Education Report to the community states an 85.5% graduation rate for all students. Graduation rates for individual high schools in the county range from 78-97%. This statistic does not reflect student readiness for college or careers.
- The 2017 California Dashboard provides the college/career indicator (CCI) that measures the percentage of students who are likely ready for college or career after graduation. In

3 Bright Futures. A Glimpse at Our Community: Based on local trends, it is estimated that 1,500 out of 7000 students that entered kindergarten in 2014 will complete a post high-school program <https://brightfuturesmc.org/en/challenge/>

4 Hauser, C. (December 6, 2017). Too Many Children Can’t Read in California, Lawsuit Claims. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/us/california-literacy-lawsuit.html>

5 California Department of Education Accountability Model & School Dashboard provides district by district statistics on outcomes <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/>

Monterey County, the CCI for individual high schools range from 9% to 78% and in every case is significantly lower than reported graduation rates.

- The discrepancy between high graduation rates and college/career readiness explains County survey results, which found that while 90% of students surveyed want to go to college *and* believe this is an option for them, less than one third (32%) of high school graduates have completed all the requirements needed to apply to a University of California or California State University school by graduation. ⁶

Public Education System and the Role of Local School Boards

The structure of public education is meant to stress equity, access, and local control. The state sets education law and policy, while county Offices of Education provide support and financial oversight of school districts. It is local school boards, however, who govern their school districts and are ultimately responsible for student achievement and district performance. This is a frustration for education advocates who want to improve county-wide outcomes because the 24 separate and independent school districts (see Appendix A) make it difficult to target interventions to raise student achievement.

There are several levels of government, and elected officials, that impact school governance. Each has its own role, responsibilities, and accountability with respect to legal compliance and educational outcomes. The California Department of Education (CDE) provides districts with the flexibility to plan and budget based on district priorities. The CDE requires local accountability in the development of budgets (LCFF)⁷ and educational priorities (LCAP)⁸ for counties and districts. The CDE has launched an Accountability Model and School Dashboard to monitor and report district outcomes based on 10 state and local indicators (see Appendix B). The purpose is to identify educational disparities and guide local decision-making planning for improving outcomes.

The MCOE is run by an elected governing board and an elected superintendent. It calls school board elections, examines and approves district budgets, and provides support services for districts, including professional development for teachers, administrators, and school board members. MCOE also administers supplemental educational programming and provides training

⁶ Impact Monterey County Community Assessment: Adult Experiences and Aspirations. ([May, 2017](#)) Institute for Community Collaborative Studies. California State University of Monterey Bay, pg. 22
<http://www.impactmontereycounty.org/sites/default/files/IMPACT%20MONTEREY%20COUNTY-ADULT%20ASPIRATIONS%20SURVEY%20REPORT-May%2029%202015.pdf>

⁷ LCAFF Local Control Funding Formula

⁸ LCAP Local Control and Accountability Plan

to support districts. Aside from establishing legal parameters and providing support, neither the state nor county can dictate how individual school districts are run.

School boards are charged with a great deal of responsibility in the public education system. Most school board members receive little or no compensation; some receive benefits, such as health insurance. The work of school boards is challenging and highly impactful on school districts. It is critical that school boards get support to ensure successful district leadership.

School boards are elected and, in turn, appoint and evaluate the district superintendent. They establish the district budget, curriculum, policies, and standards for achievement. They adopt collective bargaining agreements and oversee facility issues. School boards must adhere to state law while determining district priorities and strategic long-term goals regarding finances, academics, culture and equity. Ultimately, local school boards are the champions of their schools; they are the community's education watchdog. Their most important responsibility is to work with the community to raise student achievement.⁹

School board members are expected to be accessible and accountable to the community, serving as its education watchdog. Because they are elected, the presumption is that they reflect their community's beliefs and values, are responsive to the needs of the community, and can be held accountable for producing good outcomes. If a school board does not produce results, then voters have the right to replace them with a board that can.

- The key work of school boards is ensuring a high level of student achievement. Effective school boards are those that make student achievement their primary focus.
- Candidates for school boards need not have prior experience in education or board governance.
- The legal requirements for school board candidates are that they:
 - be a registered voter
 - be a resident of the district in which they are running
 - have a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency
 - have not been convicted of a felony
 - are not a current employee of the district or related to an employee in that district

⁹ National School Board Association <http://www.nsba.org/ABOUT-US/FREQUENTLY-ASKED-QUESTIONS>

- School board members come from many different backgrounds. Prior to serving, they may have limited or no experience in governance, education methodologies, laws that apply to education, and/or how their district operates financially and administratively.

Local School Board Best Practices

The effectiveness of district School Boards directly shapes and impacts what happens in the classroom—positively or negatively. There is a great deal of variability in the performance of school boards and, by extension, in the performance of school districts. Training and best practices are available so school boards can stay current and new members can prepare to be education leaders. School boards can equip themselves with the tools, and a roadmap, to become effective governing boards.

Best practices are a guide to executing critical duties while including, and communicating with, all district stakeholders. Most importantly, they lay out a proactive approach to governing and preventing common pitfalls of dysfunctional leadership. There are well-established best practices that can be adopted by all school boards. The NSBA and the Center for Public Schools (CPS) have a framework for building effective school boards based on core skills surrounding vision, policy, accountability, community leadership and relationships. Eight common characteristics of effective school boards are that they:

- Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement
- Hold shared strong beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn
- Are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement
- Have a collaborative relationship with staff and community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage stakeholders in achieving district goals
- Are data savvy and embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement
- Align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals, even in the midst of budget challenges
- Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and trust
- Take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts

Effective local school board leadership is the result of training, good governance practices, and an informed electorate. Whether or not they have experience, all school board members should receive regular training updates on school board governance, school budgets and financial management, state law, education policy and current education practices. Best practices are

important governing tools for establishing goals, accountability for results, effective working relationships, formal and informal communication, and regular evaluation of the board and district outcomes. Finally, clear information and communication are vital to the effectiveness of local control.

An informed and an engaged public is key if school boards are to be held accountable and responsive to their communities. This means the public must be knowledgeable about the role of school boards and how their school board is performing. To this end, the public needs regular and clear information about school board goals, school district outcomes, and the commitments of board members and candidates. There are many informal and formal ways by which school boards can communicate information. They can post information on school websites, talk to the media, hold focus groups and town halls, and present annual “state of the district” reports at city council or other public forums. In the end, school boards are responsible for communicating with stakeholders and providing clear information about district goals, board performance and student achievement.

The MCOE cannot compel school boards to engage in best practices or undergo training. The MCOE or the CDE can only step-in and compel action when districts are in distress. The tendency is to maintain appropriate boundaries and respect local control. Thus, the County is reluctant to promote best practices. Because school boards are independent, there is no guarantee they will voluntarily adopt best practices. As a result, there is no common standard applied to board governance across districts within the County. Likewise, there is no common standard guiding communications and providing public information. Therefore, the public has no consistent way of knowing what training school board members receive or how well their school boards are performing.

A commitment to training and best practices in no way interferes with school board independence. Rather, training and best practices equip school boards with leadership skills and tools needed to carry out important district functions. The MCOE and school districts can actively promote information about the role of school boards and school board best practices for school districts, the general public, and potential school board candidates. They can also provide access to clear information by which the public can assess performance of schools and school boards.

A strong commitment to consistent governance practices and public information is needed for several reasons:

- There is no one jurisdiction that can dictate how school boards operate
- All districts depend on knowledgeable, effective leadership to set and meet goals. When school boards and board members engage in training, they are better able to function as

an effective governing body, set high expectations for student achievement, and foster positive environments for administrators and teachers.

- MCOE does not offer informational sessions for potential candidates to learn about the role and responsibilities of elected school board members prior to running for office.
- The MCOE and most school district websites are not user-friendly. There is very little clear, easy to understand public information by which citizens can base informed decisions about school board candidates and/or interpret the effects of school board policies on their school districts.
- Only a school board can commit itself to a culture of good governance by including training requirements in its bylaws, adopting best practices, and performing self-evaluations. Evaluation tools are available to assess school board performance, such as the CSBA self-evaluation tool for school boards.
- There is an extensive array of training options available for school board members. Many of these training options are free or offered at low cost. For example, MCOE and the MCSBA offer regular training sessions throughout the year in the areas of board governance, legal compliance, and educational methodologies. MCOE also raises funds to offer a biennial Summit to try to encourage and increase school board involvement in training. The CSBA offers a Masters of Governance certification program. Governance training is also available from the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and legal firms. School boards can also arrange for their own training sessions.
- School boards choose the training topics made available to them via the MCOE. Every school board appoints a representative to the MCSBA. These MCSBA representatives then determine training sessions based on the needs of their individual school boards and districts. Training sessions include topical areas, such as school board governance, college readiness, and compliance with state law with respect to LCAP and LCFF.
- MCOE is considering offering the Masters of Governance training in the County. This high-level governance certification normally requires traveling to a CSBA site outside the county. Making this possible in our county requires a minimum attendance commitment on the part of school boards.
- Less than half of the districts' school boards send members to MCSBA training sessions offered by the MCOE. Some district school boards do not send any.
- MCOE does not provide information to the public on districts that do and/or do not pursue training, certification, and self-evaluation. Most school boards do not provide this information on their district websites.

- Most school boards do not present annual “state of the district” reports on district outcomes to the public at city council meetings or other public forums.

A Case Study on the Importance of School Board Governance

The experience of SMCJUHSD illustrates both the costs and consequences of dysfunctional board governance and provides practical lessons about the strategies and benefits of effective governance. The district implemented good governance practices only after it suffered years of dysfunction and was taken over by the state. By adopting new practices and creating a culture of good governance, the district has been able to execute a successful turn-around. This shows that strong leadership and governance practices do work. It also shows us that the consequences of a dysfunctional school district go beyond financial costs; student education is adversely impacted, as are the lives of many families, sometimes for several years. The lesson for all districts, the MCOE and the public is that the enormous costs of dysfunction can be prevented or, at the very least, mitigated by proactively engaging in good governance practices.

- The costs and consequences of ineffective or dysfunctional governance were felt throughout the SMCJUHSD:
 - The King City HS district was saddled with high debt (\$14 million), which led to it being taken over by the state and a loss of local control
 - State Trustees were put in charge of hiring, firing, negotiating contracts, and making decisions regarding curriculum which cost the district an additional \$12 million to sustain the district and pay for a state administrator
 - During this time, morale was extremely low and turnover in staff, teachers, administrators and school board members was high
 - During the long rebuilding and recovery period between 2009 – 2016, the school board lost all autonomy, ceding local control to the state administrator
 - Approximately 1000 students per year were affected during school years 2009 - 13. Student achievement suffered due to increased class sizes, fewer course options and fewer extracurricular activities. Some parents transferred their children to other school districts, disrupting continuity and separating life-long friends.
 - The school came extremely close to losing its accreditation, which would have meant that graduating students would not have been eligible for state college admission

- SMCJUHSD reorganized the school board with new members committed to mandatory training in governance and best practices by all school board members. They have raised attendance and student achievement. They are also on track to pay back their loans in 9 years, rather than the typical 20 years it takes for school districts in receivership. To achieve these results, the board adopted the following measures:
 - The Board of Trustees passed a by-law requiring CSBA Masters of Governance Training for all current and new board members on December 4, 2015
 - Adopted best governing practices
 - Partnered with CSBA for ongoing training and professional development
 - Employed the CSBA template for district policies and committed to update and revise policies every 3 months to stay current with best practices, state law, and district needs.
 - Board members committed to routinely educate themselves on protocols and procedures.
 - Board members committed to regularly review and revise standard operating procedures.
 - Hired a superintendent who provides leadership to the district with an eye to what is best for the students, including a diligent communication style with all stakeholders
 - Clarified authority and leadership roles according to strategic, planning and operational decision-making
 - The Superintendent committed to reporting district results to the city council annually
 - Board members committed to provide clear public information about district goals and outcomes on the district website.

For more information about the SMCJUHSD case study, see Appendix C.

In sum, school boards are critical to student and district performance. School board members shoulder a great deal of responsibility and need adequate support to be effective leaders. Effective local control requires well-informed public involvement, skilled school board leadership, and active MCOE support directed at creating a culture of effective school board governance. The public needs clear information on the role of good governance in raising student

achievement. It is not enough to passively provide the tools for effective leadership; the MCOE and school boards need to actively promote a culture of good leadership.

FACTS

- (1) There are 24 K-12 independent school boards in the county. There is no one jurisdiction that can dictate how school boards operate.
- (2) Candidates for school boards are not required to have any prior experience in education or board governance.
- (3) The Monterey County Office of Education does not offer formal informational sessions or programs to educate potential school board candidates about the role and responsibilities of elected school board members prior to running for office. Potential candidates can approach the Monterey County Office of Education individually and request information.
- (4) There is no legal requirement for school board members to attend trainings and the Monterey County Office of Education cannot require district school boards or individual school board members to engage in training. Similarly, although it is considered best practice, there is no legal requirement for school boards to self-evaluate their performance.
- (5) The key work of School Boards is ensuring a high level of student achievement. Effective school boards are those that make student achievement their primary focus.¹⁰
- (6) School Boards can commit to training by including training requirements in their bylaws.
- (7) There are well-established best practices for school boards.
- (8) Evaluation tools are available to assess school board performance, such as the California School Board Association self-evaluation tool for school boards.
- (9) The Monterey County Office of Education does not provide information to the public on districts that do and/or do not pursue training, certification, and self-evaluation.

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

¹⁰ What do School Boards do? The National School Board Association. <http://www.nsba.org/about-us/what-school-boards-do%20>

Education and/or California Department of Education have to step in to support or save a school district.

- 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.
- F4. Promoting effective local governance requires better public information, communication, and a strong commitment to board development.
- 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.
- F6. 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.
- 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 assess school district outcomes.
- F8. School boards can do better in fulfilling their responsibility to communicate with school district stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. School Boards should adopt a policy to commit to all National School Board Association best practices.
- R2. School Boards should adopt a bylaw to make initial training and ongoing workshops mandatory.
- R3. School Boards along with their superintendent and teacher union representatives should make annual public presentations on school district goals and student achievement.
- R4. School Boards should provide clear, concise, and easy to find communications on their district's goals and outcomes on their district's website.
- 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.

- 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.
- R7. The Monterey County Office of Education should provide information sessions regarding the depth and breadth of school board service to people running for school board positions.
- R8. The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should actively promote and provide the California School Board Association Masters of Governance training in Monterey County.
- R9. The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should adopt options for school board training to increase attendance and engagement in school board training. For example, offer training throughout the county, webinars, or onsite training.
- R10. The Monterey County Office of Education should revamp its website in an effort to present useable information that is relevant for a public audience.
- R11. The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should provide information about school board best practices on their website
- R12. The Monterey County Office of Education and the Monterey County School Board Association should provide information on their website about the role and responsibilities of school board members to educate parents, the public and potential school board candidates.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the grand jury requests responses as follows:

From the following individuals:

- Monterey County Superintendent of Schools F1-8; R7-12

From the following governing bodies:

- Monterey County Board of Education F1-8; R1-6
- Each School Board Listed below F1-8; R1-6
- Alisal Union School District
- Big Sur Unified School District

- Bradley Union School District
- Carmel Unified School District
- Chualar Union School District
- Gonzales Unified School District
- Graves School District
- Greenfield Union School District
- King City Union School District
- Lagunita School District
- Mission Union School District
- Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
- North Monterey County Unified School District
- Pacific Grove Unified School District
- Salinas City Elementary School District
- Salinas Union High School District
- San Antonio Union School District
- San Ardo Union School District
- San Lucas Union School District
- Santa Rita Union School District
- Soledad Unified School District
- South Monterey Co. Joint Union High School District
- Spreckels Union School District
- Washington Union School District

INVITED RESPONSES

Type titles of individuals here and list the findings and recommendations (by number) that each individual is invited to respond to.

Monterey County School Board Association R 9, 11, 12

Director, Bright Futures for Monterey County F 1-8, R 1- 12

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.
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APPENDIX A

24 School Districts in Monterey County

Alisal Union School District
Big Sur Unified School District
Bradley Union School District
Carmel Unified School District
Chualar Union School District
Gonzales Unified School District
Graves School District
Greenfield Union School District
King City Union School District
Lagunita School District
Mission Union School District
Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
North Monterey County Unified School District
Pacific Grove Unified School District
Salinas City Elementary School District
Salinas Union High School District
San Antonio Union School District
San Ardo Union School District
San Lucas Union School District
Santa Rita Union School District
Soledad Unified School District
South Monterey Co. Joint Union High School District
Spreckels Union School District
Washington Union School District

APPENDIX B

California Department of Education Local Control Funding Formula priorities

- Priority 1: Basic Services
- Priority 2: Implementation of State Standards
- Priority 3: Parent Involvement
- Priority 4: Student Achievement
- Priority 5: Student Engagement
- Priority 6: School Climate
- Priority 7: Course Access
- Priority 8: Student Outcomes
- Priority 9: Expelled Youth
- Priority 10: Foster Youth

APPENDIX C

Case Study: South Monterey County Joint Unified High School District (additional information)

By 2009, King City High School found itself in a bind. Poor leadership on the part of the dysfunctional school board and administrative team over several years (starting with the 2000-2001 school year) led to a weak negotiation with the King City Joint Union High School Teachers Association (now, SMCJUHS Teachers Association). This ended up causing a large debt burden to the district, and would have bankrupted the district by 2009. This burden was alleviated when the state put the district in receivership and took control. It has taken 9 years to get the school district back on track. The cost to the district went beyond the financial, as community confidence in their school declined as well. Student achievement went down, teachers left, parents took their children out of the school, and the school board disintegrated. Over time, many positive changes were made – changes which turned this failing district into a successful one, changes which are applicable to other districts desiring to change a culture of low expectations to high achievement.

Lessons learned from the study of the SMCJUHS included the understanding that a positive turnaround in student achievement - as measured by graduation rates and attendance - came as a result of reorganizing the school board with new members committed to mandatory training in governance and best practices. Subsequent hiring of a superintendent who provides leadership to the district with an eye to what is best for the students, including a diligent communication style with all stakeholders, has led to many improvements. They are on track to pay back their loans in 9 years, rather than the typical 20 years it takes for school districts, becoming financially viable and regaining local control in 2016.

When expectations of student achievement are raised, students can do better. Keeping the best interests of students in mind is a guiding principle of a successful school district.

Changes in the way the school board operates have been set in place as a result of this process:

- The board passed a by-law requiring CSBA Masters of Governance training as a condition of board membership and became partners with the CSBA for ongoing training and policy mentoring – cost: \$1500 per board member, paid for by the school district
- The board now uses the CSBA template for policies, which is revised every 3 months, to insure that they are in compliance with state mandates, best practices, and newly passed state laws
- Board members routinely get educated in protocols and procedures; the district covers the cost of any attendance and training expense
- Standard Operating Procedures are being updated and finalized

- Best practices for governing were installed:
 - The Governance team includes School Board members (not involved in daily operations), the Superintendent and the Cabinet. They set policy and strategic long term goals (financial, academic, cultural, equity)
 - The Cabinet leadership team includes principals, assistant principals and department chairs. They are responsible for planning and scheduling changes
 - The Operational team includes principals and teachers. They are responsible for implementing change at the school site and in the classroom
- Teachers' salaries were reduced by the state administrator

New strategies were employed to improve student achievement:

- The appropriate level of staffing was re-established, class size was cut and AP classes were instituted, along with career pathway courses
- Instruction is being modified based on the state's accountability model – from “drill & kill” learning from books, to project based problem solving
- They've started a Newcomer class – for those students who start school speaking another language. Students stay together in content classes with special teachers who have earned specific professional development and credentials. This effort includes the feeder elementary and middle schools.
- New teachers were hired:
 - 80-85% new hires are recent grads with teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) credentials (all colleges are now putting ESL into their teaching credential instruction)
 - The district provides professional development for principals and teachers to help get students thinking differently: turning from the 3 R's – reading, writing and 'rithmetic – to the 5 C's (communication, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and community)
 - SMCJUHSD employs two full-time counselors (with plans to hire two more) and utilizes the services of CSUMB and UCSC interns to help high school students navigate their way through high school into college and/or career readiness

Outcomes tracked with regard to student achievement since being under receivership:

- Reduced class size down to 29:1 (was at 36:1)

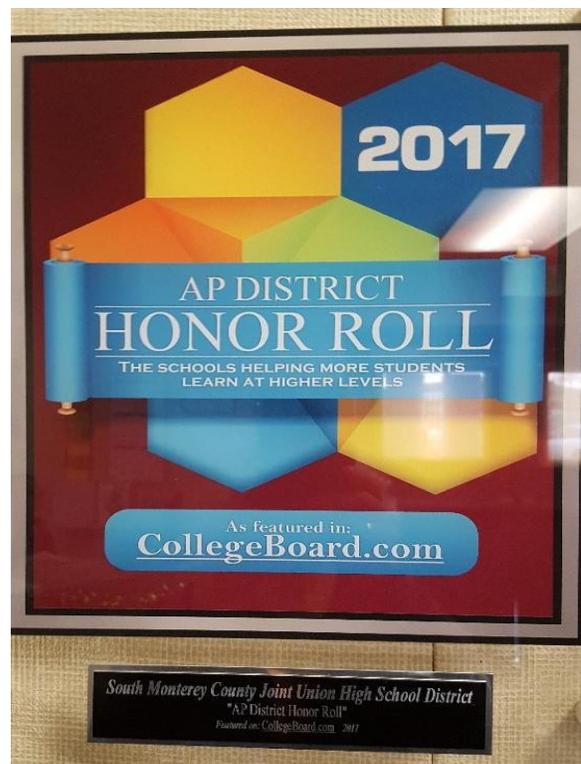
- Enrichment programs added back into the curriculum (15-18 AP classes)
- Career and college readiness programs are building curricular pathways throughout high school
- Community support for the school is evidenced by its continuing strong support for Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the sports programs

Higher expectations by the school board, district administration, and school site staff are reaping benefits:

- State graduation requirements are considered a minimum standard to be met
- Taking the required college entry classes for admission to all of the CSU/UC campuses (known as A-G classes) while not mandatory, are a goal for all students
- Advanced Placement (AP) courses provide the rigor of a college program. The district has been recognized for the number of these courses that are now available to students
- Graduation rates and attendance (95%) are all up

**SOUTH MONTEREY COUNTY
JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**
Governance Team Mission Statement
*We are a governance team of community individuals
with collective authority that focuses on the
continuous improvement of student achievement.*
*We set the direction for the district and establish
policies to promote a culture of higher learning that
ensures the education of all students.*
*We are responsible to the students, parents
and community members within the
South Monterey County
Joint Union High School District.*

On the board room wall of SMCJUHS (mission statement)



On the lobby wall of SMCJUHS (AP honor roll photo)