

San Dieguito

Union High School District

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August 1, 2017

Presiding Judge Jeffrey B. Barton
550 W. C Street, Suite 860
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Judge Barton:

We are in receipt of the Grand Jury Report "San Diego County School Board and Superintendent Training." Please accept this letter as our response as to the recommendation contained therein.

The District shares the Grand Jury's interest in ensuring that school board members and superintendents are prepared for the many challenges presented in governing a public school district. It has long been the policy of the Board of Trustees that new trustees receive orientation, that all trustees hold memberships in school board associations, and that the district adopt a budget that includes training opportunities for board members. Furthermore, it is an explicit expectation in the Superintendent's contract that the Superintendent participates in meetings at the local, county, state, and national level as well as maintain memberships in appropriate professional associations. All such memberships, meetings, and attendance at conferences and workshops are professional development opportunities for the Board and Superintendent to increase their knowledge and expertise in current issues affecting public education.

We appreciate the Grand Jury's recognition of the "exceptional efforts in creating opportunities for individual or group training," and the "outstanding effort" made by the four school boards to whom the report was directed.

With respect to the formal findings and recommendation in the report, the district responds as follows:

Finding 01: Formal training for school board members is inconsistent throughout San Diego County school districts.

Response: To the extent that the Grand Jury has investigated and reported on differences in practices between school districts in the county, the district agrees with the finding.

Finding 02: School board members would benefit from additional formal training.

Response: The district agrees with the finding.

Finding 03: Many superintendents find themselves in novel and extraordinary situations where additional training would be beneficial.

Response: The district agrees with the finding.

Finding 04: Formal training for superintendents is inconsistent throughout San Diego County school districts.

Response: To the extent that the Grand Jury has investigated and reported on differences in practices between school districts in the county, the district agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 17-23: The 2016/2017 San Diego County Grand Jury recommends that the Carlsbad Unified School District, San Dieguito Union High School District, Poway Unified School District, and the Santee School District review their process for training of school board members and their superintendents in areas where they lack experience and consider mandating training.

Response: As noted above, it is already an expectation of the Board of Trustees that the Superintendent maintain memberships in professional associations and participate in various meetings in order to further develop his expertise in areas pertaining to the numerous aspects of his position. To that end, the recommendation has been implemented.

With respect to the Board of Trustees, we reiterate that Trustees have participated in orientations and many meetings, conferences, workshops, governance programs and webinars by professional associations that have increased their knowledge in subjects where they have needed additional training. There was no evidence provided in the report that the San Dieguito Union High School District Board of Trustees, either individually or as a whole, was specifically lacking experience in any particular subject matter. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the combination of required and voluntary training is providing ample opportunities for the governing board members to be fully informed on matters pertaining to their jurisdiction.

The Board has considered engaging in specific training in governance with a facilitator provided by the California School Boards Association over the last two years. There has not been unanimous consent among the Board of Trustees that this training would be necessary or effective. It is the opinion, therefore, of some board members that mandatory training of the full board is not warranted. In the spirit of collaboration, the board majority has not imposed this requirement in the hope that consensus can someday be reached for a mutually productive series of targeted workshops.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Eric R. Dill
Superintendent