

# INTRODUCTION

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## Background

To understand the challenges facing the Compton Unified School District in the area of community relations, it is necessary to look at the characteristics of the local community: What factors exist in the community that help or hinder the district in building community support for its schools? To what extent are these factors reflected in the district and schools? In addition, it is necessary to determine the current perception of the community toward the district and its schools in order to measure whether progress is made in future years.

### ***Social and Economic Characteristics***

Community members and district representatives describe the community as one characterized by high rates of poverty and unemployment, transiency, a heavy gang presence and large numbers of children living with single parents or foster parents.

Data from the 1990 Census provide some support to these perceptions. For example, of those households with related children, 35.4 percent were single females and 8.9 percent were single males. Among African American households with children, the percentage of single female parents reached 49.0 percent.

The 1990 Census also showed that most of the homes (56.8 percent) were owner occupied, but 43.2 percent were occupied by renters. Of the home owners, 73.5 percent were African American and 16.3 percent were Other (primarily Latino). The majority of renters (56.3 percent) also were African American, but the percentage of Other renters rose (31.7 percent). The median value of homes was \$108,000.

The number of students whose families receive aid provides another indication of the economic level of the community's residents. According to the California Department of Education, in 1996-97, 47.8 percent of the students in the district were from families who were recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

### ***Ethnic/Racial Issues***

In 1990, approximately half of the city's residents were African American and about a third were Latino. But a demographic shift has occurred in recent years, with Latinos making up a larger share of the population.

This demographic shift is reflected in the student population in the school district as well. According to the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS), in 10 years (1987 to 1997), the percentage of Latino students rose from 41.9 percent to 62.9 percent while the percentage of African American students decreased from 55.9 percent to 35.7 percent.

Among staff, however, the majority of both certificated and classified staff remains African American. In the past three years, there has been an increase in the percentage of Latino certificated staff but a slight decrease in Latino classified staff.

Racial issues divide the community as African Americans and Latinos compete for political power and recognition of their agendas.

Racial issues also divide the school district. For example, although most staff surveyed for this project believe that the state intervention was not primarily a racial issue, 34 percent of the classified staff, 16 percent of the classified managers and 15 percent of the teachers believe it was. The ethnicity of the state-appointed administrator has also been an issue, although the current African American administrator is generally respected by the Latino community because he speaks Spanish and has made an effort to reach out to the community.

In addition, some community members interviewed for this project charge that the school district has made decisions on the basis of race or ethnicity; they say the district has been slow to channel money into programs that will benefit limited-English-proficient students (who make up 41.5 percent of the student population). Some community members have organized student protests against perceived mistreatment of Latino students. There are also perceptions of discrimination in the hiring practices of the district, with some believing that discrimination is strongest against Latinos while others believe Latinos get more favorable consideration. Some staff report harassment on the basis of their ethnicity or say they are afraid to state their opinions on issues for fear of alienating supervisors of a different ethnicity. The board is not immune to these problems either: The actions and disagreements of the board (which currently includes six African American members and one Latino) are viewed as racially motivated by some.

### ***Political Issues***

The state's involvement in the district has had a significant influence on the schools and community. There is considerable resentment throughout the community about the state takeover; many feel that the district has been singled out by the state. They say that many other urban districts face the same problems as Compton but the state has not intervened. This distrust of the state has affected relations among board members and between the board and administrator, thus making it difficult to focus on the educational needs and priorities of the district's students. It also has affected the way the community perceives itself (e.g., the takeover was "an embarrassment") and its ability to govern its own schools.

On the other hand, many persons interviewed believe that the state intervention was necessary, not just because of financial difficulties or low student performance but because of perceived nepotism in hiring practices, infighting on the board or racial divisiveness throughout the district.

A 1997 survey of 400 likely voters in Compton, conducted by Gene Bregman and Associates in connection with the bond campaign, revealed that 43.6 percent believed the state made the right decision by taking over the district in 1993 (38.3 percent said the state did not, and 18.1 percent didn't know). Most of the respondents (71.7 percent) had heard about the state takeover before this 1997 survey, but over a quarter (26.7 percent) had not. African Americans were more likely than Latinos to have heard about it (73.8 percent and 64.1 percent, respectively). Those who recalled hearing about it were asked what they knew about it: The highest responses were that the district schools were not run properly (25.4 percent), just that the state took over the district (18.5 percent), that there was a misuse of funds (14.3 percent), and that the district was bankrupt, broke or debt-ridden (13.2 percent). Very few respondents mentioned low test scores (5.9 percent) or poor academic education (4.5 percent).

City politics also have a strong impact on the schools. The mayor of Compton is perceived as very unsupportive of the schools under the state's administration. He is publicly critical of many district decisions and actively campaigned against the school bond. The mayor's sister is a school board member and some community members believe he heavily influences her. In April 1998 the school board adopted a resolution calling upon the City of Compton to work cooperatively with the students for the good of the students. There are very few collaboratives or partnerships between the district and other local governments.

Throughout the community and district, there is a strong awareness of insider/outsider status. "Outsiders" include anyone representing the state as well as district employees who do not live in Compton. Only 13 percent of the teachers and 11 percent of classified managers live in Compton, although 46 percent of classified staff live in Compton. There is a belief that "outsiders" do not really care about the community or its schools, and cannot be effective in operating the schools because they do not know the community well enough.

On the other hand, community apathy exists in Compton as it does in many other communities. Only 33 percent of the registered voters turned out for the election in which the school bond lost by less than 1 percent of the vote.

### ***A Sense of Instability***

The district has been characterized by instability of staff and programs. The turnover of teachers and principals is reported to be quite high. In fact, many staff incorrectly believe that it is the district's policy to move principals every four years. In addition, the district now has its fifth state administrator since 1993.

However, most staff surveyed for this project felt that, for them personally, there have not been many real changes in their job since the state took over the administration of the district. Yet 58 percent of classified managers and 37 percent of classified staff said that the unsettled political environment in the administration office makes their job more difficult.

### ***Politics in Administration Make Job Harder***

The turnover in school-site administrators more directly affects some staff. Over half (58 percent) of the classified managers said that the turnover of principals and vice principals interferes with their jobs. Teachers and classified staff were more likely to say that it has not affected their jobs, but a significant number (40 percent of the teachers and 29 percent of classified staff) still say it has had an impact.

Staff at all levels interviewed for this project also reported frequent changes in programs and procedures. Many said that programs are not given enough time to be fully implemented and evaluated before changes are made.

One effect of this instability is the loss of expertise and experience with regards to community relations. It becomes necessary to start over time and time again. Staff build relations with the community and institute related programs but then leave the district or school. Principals and other staff are reluctant to devote much time to building community relations when they believe they will not be with a particular school for a long time. The community's and parents' confidence in the district is lowered when frequent changes are made without sufficient explanation. Staff morale is also lowered by job insecurity and changes in personnel.

## ***Current Perceptions of the District and Board***

Given all these factors, it is not surprising that the district has had difficulty building strong community support and involvement in the schools. Many of the persons interviewed for this project felt that the community is disenfranchised and apathetic. They attribute this to the poor quality of education, the board's behavior and/or the state takeover. A strong perception of nepotism in the hiring practices of the district also remains problematic.

Recent controversial issues have included the bond measure, charges of cheating by students at Dominguez High School on an achievement test, the implementation of the district's new promotion/retention policy, removal and reassignment of staff, the implementation of Sylvan Learning Centers, accreditation of Compton High School for one year only, the process used to elect the board president, the process used to appoint one of the board members, and the condition of school facilities.

Nearly half (48 percent) of the classified staff surveyed for this project and 64 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the school board has encountered increased public criticism and hostility from Compton residents during the past few years. Classified managers were more evenly split in their opinion on this question, and a significant percentage of each group was neutral or didn't know.

Staff was also asked whether community support had increased over the past two years. Teachers were slightly more likely to believe that community support had increased, while classified managers thought community support had not increased. Classified staff was largely neutral or didn't know, and was closely split among those who agreed and disagreed that community support had increased.

Classified managers and teachers tended to believe that the community is less involved now than it ever was. Classified staff was more evenly split in its opinion.

In terms of parent support, only 18 percent of classified staff and 8 percent of classified managers agreed/strongly agreed that parents are generally very supportive of the district and its activities. The majority of both were neutral or didn't know. The majority of teachers, on the other hand, believe that parents are very supportive.

Many classified managers and classified staff were neutral or didn't know if parental support had increased during the past couple of years. However, more classified staff thought it had not increased (30 percent) than thought it had (18 percent), but more managers thought it had increased (33 percent) than thought it had not (25 percent). Teachers were fairly evenly split in their opinions.

When asked if parents would be more involved if the state was not administering the district, large percentages of classified managers, classified staff and teachers were neutral or didn't know, but most others did not seem to think that the state administration was a factor.

The local media are viewed as overwhelmingly unsupportive of the district. Among staff members surveyed, 77 percent of teachers, 75 percent of classified managers and 66 percent of classified staff agreed or strongly agreed that the media paints an unfair picture of the situation in the district.

In order to determine the general perception of the public toward the district, the 1997 survey by Gene Bregman and Associates produced a job rating for the district in general and for the board. The largest percentage of respondents rated both the district and the board as "poor" (46.5 percent and 38.5 percent,

respectively). Latinos (n = 39) were a little more likely than African Americans (n = 317) to rate the district as poor (51.3 percent compared to 44.8 percent).

However, most respondents said their opinion of the job being done recently by the district has changed in a favorable direction: 61.2 percent had a somewhat or much more favorable opinion now, and 33.5 said there was no change in their opinion. Only 1.8 percent had a less favorable opinion. Latinos were slightly more likely than African Americans to say their opinion was more favorable (69.3 percent and 60.0 percent, respectively).

When asked whether the state administrators had done a better job than the board and district superintendent, 36.7 percent said there was no difference, 35.8 percent said the state administrators were somewhat or much better, and 16.8 percent said the state administrators were somewhat or much worse. Latinos were more likely than African Americans to believe that the state administrators were performing somewhat or much better (59.0 percent and 33.8 percent, respectively), whereas African Americans were more likely to believe that there was no difference (38.5 percent compared to 23.1 percent for Latinos).

Similar questions were asked of teachers, classified managers and classified staff in this project. Large percentages of staff surveyed felt that things are about the same since the state took over the administration of the district. But among those who felt things had changed, classified managers and teachers were more likely to believe that things had improved, while classified staff thought things were worse. Yet all staff tended to agree that the state administrator is doing a good job in helping the district.

Classified staff and teachers were fairly evenly split in their opinions as to whether or not the district is now ready to take control back from the state. Classified managers, however, overwhelmingly said that the district is not ready (58 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed that the district is ready; 15 percent agreed/strongly agreed).

Most persons interviewed for this project also felt that the board is not ready to resume governance of the district because of the problems that continue to be perceived in the district. They have come to rely on the state to make the decisions affecting their schools, and worry about what will happen if the community takes control again. Some interviewees, however, even if they agree that the district has not made significant progress, believe that things were no worse under the board's governance and so the community might as well resume control.

In general, it appears that the community has a lot of negative feelings toward the district and the board, and the district staff has noticed these attitudes. Regardless of whether or not the community's negative perceptions of the district are accurate, perception becomes reality in terms of its practical effects on the district. Staff morale is affected. Staff members are embarrassed to tell others where they work. Turnover among staff is high. They don't believe that the school system cares about its employees (59 percent of classified managers and 48 percent of classified staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that the organization cares; many others were neutral or didn't know). A third of the classified managers and classified staff do not think that the job rewards outnumber the disappointments.

Some positive things have occurred, however. Much of the community, even those who oppose state involvement, are very supportive of the current state administrator personally and believe he is really reaching out to the community. He has hosted community forums which are well attended and have positive feedback. Also, parents are generally supportive of the school their children attend. And staff,

especially teachers, remain optimistic about the future of the district.

The district needs to build on these efforts in order to improve its image, create a positive working environment for staff and students, make the district a place where parents are proud to send their children, and encourage higher levels of parent and community involvement.

## **Purpose**

Every district can benefit by forging strong partnerships with the community. Positive community relations can enhance the availability of community resources and services, the effective use of those resources and services, the development of programs that provide opportunities for students to learn and work in the community, direct assistance to students at home and at school, positive role models, a love of learning, staff morale, students' sense of belonging to the schools, and, ultimately, student achievement.

For the Compton Unified School District, community relations take on an added importance. The district must overcome the largely negative perception that currently exists, including any loss of confidence that arose from the district's financial and academic difficulties and the resulting state involvement. It must do so in order to resume the governance of its schools pursuant to AB 52, and it must do so for the sake of its students. Achievement of this goal will require a concerted effort of all those who have a stake in the education of Compton's children.

To fulfill the goals of AB 52, the California School Boards Association (CSBA) assessed the baseline performance of and developed improvement plans for the Compton Unified School District in three subareas of community relations: (1) Board Policies, Responsibilities and Boardmanship; (2) Communications System; and (3) Community Collaboratives and Advisory Councils. The final report includes 40 professional standards and 13 legal standards related to these areas.

For purposes of this study, the three areas were further divided into topical areas which address the following types of issues:

### ***Communications***

- the district's effectiveness in developing and communicating its messages to a variety of audiences, including its ability to be proactive in seeking and obtaining positive media coverage
- district policies and practices for ensuring the consistency of its messages
- the skill and credibility of district spokespersons
- internal communications between and among the district office and school sites

### ***Parents/Community Relations***

- activities designed to encourage parent/community involvement in schools and in their children's education
- access to schools by parents and community members
- the involvement of the board in building community relations
- communications to parents, including required parental notifications and school accountability report cards
- the existence and implementation of complaint procedures
- the involvement of students, staff and others in assessing district needs

## ***Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils***

- partnerships with community groups, local agencies and businesses
- the duties and membership of district advisory committees
- the duties and membership of school-site councils and committees
- training for members
- legal requirements related to site councils and school plans for School-Based Program Coordination
- the effectiveness of council/committee structures in ensuring a meaningful role for each participant and allowing the group to perform its established role

## ***Policy***

- the recency, accuracy, relevance and appropriateness of board policies
- the process used by the district to develop, adopt and review policies
- legal requirements related to policy adoption and review
- distribution of policies to staff and the public
- the board's support of district policies

## ***Board Roles/Boardsmanship***

- board member qualifications and training
- relations among board members
- the credibility and image of the board
- relations between the board and administrative team
- behavior of the board toward the public and staff
- the board's effectiveness in serving students and the community

## ***Board Meetings***

- legal requirements related to board calendars, agendas and minutes
- board preparation for meetings
- the efficiency of board meetings
- opportunities for public input during board meetings

## **Study Team**

CSBA project staff, and their primary areas of involvement, included:

Davis W. Campbell, Executive Director

Holly Covin, Assistant Executive Director, Policy Services and Analysis

Theresa Garcia, Senior Research and Policy Analyst

Kari Becker, Research and Policy Analyst

Emanuel Scrofani, Assistant Executive Director, Board Development

Kate McConkey-Coussens, Director of Training, Board Development

Judy Cias, Director of Policy Services

Neil Slavin, Assistant Director of Policy Services

Mina Fasulo, Assistant Executive Director, Communications

Diane Greene, Senior Consultant

Stephanie Goodlett, Administrative Assistant

In addition, CSBA subcontracted with SRA Associates of Sebastopol, California, a research and evaluation firm, to develop and conduct surveys, conduct interviews, and assist in facilitating parent focus groups. Performing these roles for SRA were Dr. Donald A. Dixon, Maren Heinze and Patty Holmes.

Dr. Phil Linscomb, former superintendent of Pasadena Unified School District and former administrator in Los Angeles Unified School District, assisted in making some of the preliminary contacts with district personnel, set up interviews and participated in interviews.

CSBA subcontracted with Communication Resources for Schools, a Sacramento-area communications consulting firm, to conduct and analyze assessments and develop recommendations related to internal and external communications. Thomas K. DeLapp, president, and Brian Lewis, managing director, fulfilled these duties on behalf of the firm.

## Study Guidelines

### *Assessments*

The baseline performance of the district in implementing the standards was determined through a variety of assessments which included interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations of board meetings and reviews of district documents.

#### *1. Interviews*

Many of the standards were assessed on the basis of interviews with board members; the state-appointed administrator; district office administrators; principals and teachers from elementary, middle and high schools; classified staff; union representatives; and community members. Altogether, 66 interviews were completed, including:

- 6 board members
- 12 district office administrators
- 9 principals
- 13 teachers
- 11 classified staff
- 2 union representatives
- 13 community members/community leaders

#### *2. Surveys*

Although a sample of staff members was interviewed in person to obtain more detailed responses (as described above), a larger number of staff was surveyed by other methods in early September, 1998. Phone interviews were conducted with 300 randomly selected teachers. Written surveys were sent to classified staff and classified managers; responses were received from 92 classified staff and 12 classified managers.

Demographic information for the survey respondents showed that the largest percentage was African American (83.3 percent of the classified staff, 59.8 percent of the classified managers and 49.8% of teachers).

See Attachments A, B and C for copies of the survey instruments.

Surveys included, but were not limited to, questions about the extent to which:



- information is available (e.g., about policy changes, evaluation processes);
- there is agreement and clarity throughout the system on policy and goals;
- their supervisor and others are interested in staff's ideas, and staff is involved in decisions that affect them;
- their job is impacted due to turnover of principals and politics in the administration;
- the board does not interfere with district plans and daily decisions;
- the board encourages public participation and supports staff;
- residents and parents support or are more hostile toward the board;
- board efforts have resulted in improvements;
- parents are involved in decision making;
- parents and the community support the district;
- the site council plays an important, active role;
- the media paint an unfair picture of the district and schools;
- things are better since the state has administered the district;
- there has been no change in their jobs since the state administration;
- the district is now ready to take control back from the state; and
- they are optimistic about the future of the district.

The written surveys contained 50 items each, plus demographic data. Essentially the same items were asked of both classified staff and management staff. Due to time constraints, the phone survey of teachers contained fewer questions (29). Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### *3. Parent Focus Group Meetings*

To obtain the perspective of parents on some of the standards, 10 parent focus groups were conducted in 10 different schools (4 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, 3 high schools) in early September 1998. The focus groups contained 4 to 12 participants each, with a total of 80 participants across all 10 groups. Participants included parents, grandparents, other close relatives/caretakers, volunteers and at least one foster parent. Unfortunately, in some cases school staff were brought in when sufficient numbers of parents were not available or when the groups were organized at the last minute. Project staff noted these instances and considered this fact in the analyses. As it turned out, the responses given by school staff vs. parents provided some interesting comparisons.

The large majority (83 percent) of the participants were female. The racial/ethnic distribution of the participants was 56 percent Latino, 43 percent African American and 1 percent Samoan.

In most schools, the community aide helped to identify parent participants and arrange meetings. Project staff facilitated the meetings. An interpreter was available for 8 of the 10 focus groups; her services were not necessary for the other two groups.

### *4. Observations of Board Meetings*

Because the advisory board's meetings are televised on cable, it was possible to obtain videotapes of 14 board meetings, including one from 1993 and the rest from 1997 and 1998. In addition, project staff had an opportunity to attend a couple of board meetings.

These observations were used to assess standards related to the working relations among the board, the level of respect between the board and administrative team, the board's support of the state administrator

and staff, board members' support of the board majority's decisions and actions, the board's respect for public input, board members' preparation for meetings, compliance with bylaws and the Brown Act, and board members' communications/public speaking skills.

### *5. Reviews of District Documents*

Project staff reviewed a variety of district documents, including:

- policy manual;
- management bulletins/procedures;
- school accountability report cards;
- board agendas;
- board minutes;
- Program Quality Reviews;
- Coordinated Compliance Reviews;
- WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) reports for three high schools;
- eight Division of School Operations reports;
- nine school plans;
- recent district recovery plans;
- comprehensive safety plan;
- District Advisory Council materials;
- district newsletters, news releases, press clippings and other communications; and
- results of a 1997 community survey conducted by Bregman & Associates.

## **Improvement Plan**

Project staff responsible for each subject area analyzed the assessment results, recorded findings and determined the extent to which each standard has been implemented by the district. All project staff met together to compare results and develop recommendations for improvement.

## **Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

Community relations are the responsibility of the governing board, all district staff, and the community. As elected representatives of the community, the board must be held accountable for serving the community effectively through all its programs and actions. Even when the board does not have full authority in the governance of the district, as in Compton, there is much the board can do to advise the administration of the community's interests, to demonstrate community leadership in their role as public figures, and to help build a climate of cooperation throughout the community.

District and school staff at all levels must also recognize that their job includes building community relations; they have the greatest access to parents and students and so play an important role in providing communications and opportunities for meaningful involvement. Their behavior toward visitors is one way in which staff can influence the public's willingness to become involved in the schools.

And finally, parents and community members must accept responsibility as well. They should vote in board elections, provide input during board meetings, participate on district and school committees, attend school activities and support their child's education at home. The education of the community's children is everyone's business.

This report, however, focuses on the role of the board and administration in building community relations. This project assessed the Compton Unified School District on 40 professional and 13 legal standards in six subject areas and developed an improvement plan to help the district implement these standards in a substantial and sustained manner.

## ***Communications***

### ***Findings***

The public image of the Compton Unified School District has been defined by negative press and fragmented internal and external communications efforts. The district has a public information program, but the drama and controversy at the district level often overshadow and negate the positive communications program. The steady stream of negative news stories about the district has led to a perception that the entire district is dysfunctional. It has also created a negative attitude among district employees toward the news media: “No news is good news” is a common feeling. This has made efforts by the district to enhance its reputation through proactive communications far more difficult.

It has also led to a detrimental reliance on the news media as the sole source for communication about the district to the general public. Too many of the staff and parent leaders have yet to be convinced, informed or empowered enough to be advocates within the community who corroborate the district’s external messages.

### ***Recommendations***

To be successful in restoring its public reputation and communication effectiveness, the district must shift the focus of public awareness away from the high-profile controversy between the state administration and the board to the recovery process now underway in the schools. Despite all its obstacles, the district has a positive story to tell. To get that message across to staff, parents and the greater community, the district must be prepared to devote the needed time, resources and sense of priority to implement an aggressive, comprehensive communications program. It must refocus public discussion of the district away from crisis management to academic and financial recovery. The more the district talks about its demonstrated progress, the less time it will have to spend explaining its past.

The key to an effective plan is to engage simultaneous internal and external communications strategies. Key messages must be developed and consistently delivered, media relations must be enhanced, and board members must present a positive, united public image. But simply expanding community or media relations without a corresponding effort to strengthen the internal communications network among staff and parents will not produce lasting results. The internal stakeholders need enough timely, complete, consistent and persuasive information so they can in turn become knowledgeable advocates for the district and persuade the external audiences that the district is on the road to recovery.

## ***Parent/Community Relations***

### ***Findings***

The district and school sites have implemented a variety of activities designed to encourage parent and community involvement in the schools, such as hiring community aides and liaisons, establishing parent centers at some school sites, holding community forums and conducting an annual conference for parents.

Board members verbally recognize their role as a vital communications link to the community, and sometimes attend district events, attend school open houses and visit schools. Yet, they are perceived by parents as distant figures. Parents rarely know board members' names or what the role of the board is.

And, despite the efforts of district and school staff, parents and community members do not necessarily feel welcome on campus and do not always get the support they need to become involved. Parents are more likely to come to schools when their children are performing or involved, but some parents get contacted only for negative reasons. Front-office staff at some schools is unfriendly, and Latino parents particularly feel alienated by the poor reception they receive and/or the inability to communicate without a translator available.

Concerns about safety inhibit some parents from visiting schools, especially for evening activities. Although some schools are viewed as safe, other are reportedly poorly lit at night and security not visible. The district does have its own police department, and district policies address safety issues related to visitors on campus (e.g., visitor registration), but these policies are not implemented at all schools.

Finally, the district has met some but not all legal requirements related to parent/community communications and complaints. Required parental notifications are sent by each school site without coordination and assistance from the district office, so the quality of notifications varies from site to site. School accountability report cards, required by law to be issued annually, have not been issued since 1994-95. However, uniform complaint procedures have been recently updated to make corrections reported in a Coordinated Compliance Review.

### ***Recommendations***

Because the support of parents and the community is so critical to the district's success and to the education of the district's students, the district should develop a comprehensive plan to improve parent/community involvement and should integrate this plan with its overall communications strategy. The plan should include the strategies already identified in the district's recently revised policy on parent involvement, as well as additional, specific recommendations developed through an inclusive process. Board members' participation in community relations efforts should be coordinated and linked to the overall strategy.

Effective two-way communications must be encouraged. The district must develop quality communications to parents, including parental notifications and school accountability report cards, and issue them consistently in a timely manner. And it must seek input from parents and community members on important educational issues through board meetings, district and school-site councils and committees, and other channels. The role of volunteers should be reviewed and enhanced to take advantage of their knowledge and skills.

The district must also ensure that all staff who have contact with parents and community members – including principals, teachers, front-office staff, community aides/liaisons and other classified staff – understand their responsibilities in building parent/community relations and have the skills to perform this role effectively. The principles of “customer service” and ways to deal with conflicts must be understood and practiced by all staff and by the board.

## ***Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils***

### ***Findings***

There are very few formal collaboratives between the district and other community agencies or organizations. Collaboratives with city agencies are desired but considered impossible currently given the strained relations between the district and city. The district does participate in a collaborative which is coordinated by the county department of mental health. The district also has single-project cooperative ventures (e.g., collaborations with the police and sheriff's office on specific projects), a Healthy Start program and business partnerships. The district has hired a person to build partnerships with businesses and to seek donations and contributions to schools. The board's role in seeking or supporting any of these community collaboratives and partnerships has been minimal, and in fact board members are largely unaware of them.

The District Advisory Committee, District Bilingual Advisory Committee, School Site Councils, School Advisory Committees, School Bilingual Advisory Committees and Leadership Teams provide structures for obtaining input from staff, parents and community members on district and school operations and encouraging site-based management or shared decision making. The infrastructure of these groups appears strong. For example, responsibilities are defined and comprehensive training is provided. Yet, somehow the current efforts are not producing results. Parent members are unable to answer specific questions about their role or about the information they receive to enable them to fulfill their functions.

In addition, concerns exist about the overall effectiveness and influence of these groups. Neither district nor school-site councils and committees appear to be consulted on some major policy issues, such as the district's approach to bilingual education in the aftermath of Proposition 227. Some School Site Council members feel that their questions and concerns are disregarded and that the district or principal has a preestablished agenda that members are expected to rubber-stamp.

By law, School Site Councils are responsible for developing and annually reviewing school plans for purposes of School Based Program Coordination, and boards are responsible for approving or disapproving these plans. In this case, the board has no authority to review school plans. The state administrator fulfills this role. However, the Coordinated Compliance Review found noncompliance in that modified school plans have not been consistently developed and approved with the review, advice and certification of School Site Councils, and plan modifications have not been approved by the board.

### ***Recommendations***

Because learning is affected by a variety of social, health and economic conditions outside school, it is important that the district look beyond its boundaries and work with other agencies and organizations that provide services to children. Collaboration with other agencies allows the complex and multiple needs of children to be addressed in a more efficient manner. It also can save money and other resources by reducing duplication of effort throughout the community and by encouraging new ways of doing business. The board and administration should take the initiative to establish contacts with appropriate community agencies and organizations and to invite their participation in efforts to identify unmet needs within the community, develop a common vision, and consider ways that community services can be coordinated. The district should also ensure that these collaboratives involve all participants in a meaningful way, that participants receive appropriate training, and that plans include an evaluation component.

At the district level, greater efforts should be made to improve the effectiveness of district and school-site councils and committees. Recruitment efforts must be designed to reach underrepresented segments of the community. Candidates for election or appointment to these groups should receive an explanation of the roles and responsibilities they would be expected to perform. Then, these groups must be allowed to fulfill the responsibilities established for them by law and district policy. Members must receive sufficient and timely information about the issues to be discussed at each meeting, and must not be coerced or intimidated by district or school leaders into supporting a particular decision. Instead, these groups must be recognized and appreciated for what they are – an opportunity to receive valuable input, fresh ideas and honest opinions about the feasibility of proposals.

## ***Policy***

### ***Findings***

The district's policy manual was adopted in 1982 and has not been reviewed as a whole since then. Many of the older policies do not reflect current law, and others are too vague to be useful. Only a few policies have been developed or updated by the state administrator. The district has not adopted all the policies mandated by law nor fulfilled legal requirements to annually review two policies. Administrative procedures or "management bulletins" are issued by the state administrator and other procedures come from district departments; none are organized within the policy manual. As a result, district policies and procedures are not a driving force in either district or school-site decision making. Policies are essentially irrelevant, as staff tends to rely on institutional memory or policies from other districts. School sites are frustrated by unclear or conflicting direction and so tend to operate independently. Although school-site discretion is desirable on many issues, the lack of clear district direction on other issues creates inconsistency and duplicative effort.

The district has established processes for involving staff and members of the public in policy development and review, but these processes have not been implemented in recent years. The board has not been involved to a large extent either. As an advisory board, the current board is asked to ratify policies developed by the state administrator. But there is no established process for the advisory board to initiate policy or recommend policy revisions, and the board spends very little time on policy issues.

### ***Recommendations***

The district must place a high priority on updating its policies and procedures in order to comply with law, to put existing and desired practices into writing and to provide consistent direction to staff, students, parents and the public.

As policies are reviewed and updated, the board must be involved in a meaningful way. After all, it would not be practical to revise the entire policy manual to describe the current situation in the district based on the state administration. Rather, as policies are updated, they should describe the board's direction for the schools as though the board had full governance authority. Therefore, it is important that the board be meaningfully involved in the development of policies now, rather than simply signing off on policies developed by the state administrator. The board should begin to provide input during the policy revision process, review policy drafts prepared by staff, listen to public input on policies, ensure that policies are aligned with the district vision and goals, and adopt policies contingent upon final approval of the state administrator. In order to perform these responsibilities effectively, the board must build its capacity for policy making by becoming knowledgeable about education issues in general and the board's policy-making role in particular.

Policy development and review processes should also take advantage of staff expertise and knowledge and include ample opportunities for public input. The district should reinstate its broad-based Policy/Regulation Advisory Committee, use other existing structures (e.g., District Advisory Council) to gather input on policy issues, and provide additional opportunities when the policy issue is of particular interest to the community or is controversial.

## ***Board Roles/Boardmanship***

### ***Findings***

Maintaining a united front is difficult for any school board. Members are elected as individuals, feel that they owe an allegiance to those who voted for them, and obviously have a right to their own beliefs and values. To be effective, however, these individuals need to make the transition to being a member of a team. They need to be able to work together and present a positive, credible image to the community regardless of their personal differences. Unfortunately, the board of the Compton Unified School District is deeply divided. Board decisions are usually split 4-3 and there is a perception that it will be difficult to bring the board together. Working relations are hampered by perceptions of unfairness, differences in personality, racial tension and personal agendas. Once a decision is reached by the board majority, board members in the minority voice their dissenting opinions publicly.

Relations between the board and administration are also strained, largely because of lingering hostility regarding the state's intervention in the district. Although the board majority appears to have positive working relationships with the state administrator, individual board members are openly disrespectful.

Many staff, parents and community members also feel alienated from the board. They feel their input and involvement are not really welcome. Observations of board meetings show that some staff members and members of the public are encouraged and treated with respect, while others are not.

On the other hand, board members are understandably frustrated by their current role as an advisory board. This role has never been clearly defined by the state, and many board members feel that they have no meaningful role. Support from district staff for the board's role is sometimes inadequate. As a result of the confusion, the board spends too much time on personnel issues and other issues that are administrative in nature, and very little time on major policy issues that impact students. And individual board members sometimes exceed their authority by attempting to become involved in administrative matters.

### ***Recommendations***

The education and welfare of students must become the primary focus of the board. If board members can recognize their common interest in serving students and their community and can set aside past conflicts, they can work together to move the district forward. In fact, their ability to resume governance of the district depends on their ability to communicate effectively with each other in a professional, respectful manner and to build a credible public image. This will require a commitment from each individual board member to work on team-building.

Board members must also make a commitment to improve working relations with the administration. As in any district, effective governance must be a joint effort of the board and administration. Board members must set aside their resentments about state intervention to work cooperatively with the administration, and the administration likewise must make a greater effort to develop positive working relations with the board minority.

This should start with a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the advisory board and administration. The administration and district staff must increase the level of support provided to the board. This includes providing an orientation to board members, as well as other information and support, to enable the board to fulfill its roles effectively. All board members should also participate in continuing education opportunities to keep abreast of critical education issues, address boardsmanship issues, and reinforce their knowledge and understanding of board roles and responsibilities.

## ***Board Meetings***

### ***Findings***

Board meetings should be the board's opportunity to encourage public interest and involvement in district issues, debate important educational matters, advise the administration, and present a positive image to the public that the board is acting in the community's best interests. Most board members in the district, most of the time, come to the meetings prepared to conduct business. When they do seem unprepared, however, it is difficult to determine if it is really a lack of preparation on the board member's part, a lack of adequate time to study to the agenda, a lack of support materials needed to understand the issues, or merely public positioning by asking an array of questions.

Infighting among board members also interferes with the board's ability to conduct business, as does the confusion and lengthy discussion regarding appropriate parliamentary procedures. Debate over parliamentary procedures has been an effective way for board members to dominate and avoid discussions of more important district issues.

Board members cannot rely on the district's bylaws to provide direction about the operation of meetings because they are out of date and do not reflect current law. Nevertheless, the district generally meets Brown Act requirements related to the location of meetings; the posting and distribution of agendas; nondiscussion of nonagenda items; public attendance at board meetings without registration; closed session purposes, agendas and reporting; and notices for special and emergency meetings. In addition, board agendas contain a place for public input on both agenda and nonagenda issues in accordance with law.

### ***Recommendations***

The board must improve the efficiency and operation of its meetings in order to improve its credibility and garner public support and respect. Toward this end, the board needs to mutually agree upon and implement a simpler form of parliamentary procedures and respect the role of the board president in running meetings. In addition, board members must be knowledgeable about Brown Act requirements, although the administration and legal counsel are also responsible for ensuring that meetings continue to be operated in accordance with law and that district bylaws reflect current legal mandates.

To ensure that meetings progress as quickly as possible while addressing all important issues, district staff must provide board members (and others) with sufficient and timely materials related to agenda items, and board members must accept responsibility for reviewing agenda materials prior to the meeting and preparing their questions and comments. The board should agree to a "no surprises" policy by which, to the extent possible, they ask the administrator for clarification of items prior to the meeting and notify him of additional information that will be requested.



## Conclusion

This community relations improvement plan is only a first step. CSBA's Reform and Restructuring Committee has pointed out that the process of selecting and implementing reforms may be as important as the particular reform chosen, since the willingness of the school, district and community to undertake a reform has a tremendous impact on its effectiveness and sustainability. Interested parties have been consulted in the development of this community relations improvement plan, but it will take more time to build their strong support and buy-in. In a district which has felt the top-down imposition of the state's administration of its schools and is therefore skeptical and resistant to further "recovery plans," it is especially critical to build a sense of ownership for any plan for reform.

In addition, it will be necessary for the district to prioritize its efforts. To expect the board, administration and staff to implement all these recommendations at once is to set the district up for failure. Instead, manageable goals need to be established, with progress assessed at regular intervals and adjustments made as necessary. In determining priorities, it must be recognized that certain recommendations are prerequisites to other recommendations. For example, some improvement in internal board relations needs to be seen before the board can work together on adopting a policy manual or effectively coordinating its community relations activities.

At the same time, it is necessary to return some governance responsibilities to the board in order to make the transition and give the board an opportunity to test its ability to work together — to prove itself. Some district activities cannot wait much longer — like setting a vision for the schools, doing a complete overhaul of the policy manual or evaluating program effectiveness. These processes really need to involve the board in a meaningful way. After all, the board and community will have to live with these programs, policies and structures long after the state has departed. The board must begin to be accountable to the community for the decisions it makes.

## 1.1 Communications

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### Professional Standard

Decisions and other information are effectively communicated throughout the system in a timely manner.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Staff interviews and surveys
2. Community member interviews
3. Parent focus groups
4. Notices/documentation
5. News articles/other media

### Findings

1. Structures are in place to provide information to staff. Information is shared among staff through a monthly employee newsletter as well as meetings at various levels. Also, the state administrator frequently holds brown-bag lunches at schools in order to meet with site-level staff.
2. District administrators generally believe that they receive the information they need to know. There are frequent and regularly scheduled cabinet meetings, division meetings and meetings with the state administrator. Administrators report that they sometimes need to go after the information themselves by going to the source. Some departments are more difficult to work with than others and give conflicting direction.
3. Principals expressed the greatest number of concerns about the level of information provided. A principals' meeting is held monthly, primarily for professional development although some operational issues are presented by the district. However, principals feel that their questions or issues are not welcome at these meetings. Furthermore, a number of principals said that information from the district is not always timely. They cited an example in which a lengthy program evaluation report was requested on June 10 with a June 19 due date. (District administrators contend that principals were trained and told of the upcoming report well in advance; Leadership Teams were told in October when the PIE (planning, implementation, evaluation) model was outlined and during the "key results visits" conducted twice annually.) Site administrators said they have also been surprised by personnel changes within their schools. One assistant principal said that she had left "seven messages" at the district seeking an explanation, and had not received a response.
4. School-site councils/committees often feel they are out of the loop, and that adequate information is not always available prior to meetings (see Stds. 3.4 and 3.5).
5. Some problems with internal communications were noted in CSBA's own experience attempting to organize parent focus groups for this project. It was clear that focus groups at several school sites were hastily organized at the last minute although communications had been sent to schools a month prior to the scheduled meetings. At most schools, community aides assisted by calling parents to participate, but at a couple of schools, the community aide was not aware of the meetings.

6. Teachers have little contact with or from the district office except for issues involving credentialing, payroll, etc. They receive most of their information from the principals and generally seem satisfied with the level of information they receive. Staff meetings at the site level are held approximately weekly.
7. Teachers, classified managers and classified staff were all likely to say that their supervisor lets staff members know what is expected of them and that the district administration is very clear about the kind of schools it wants:

*Supervisor Clear on Expectations*

	Classified Managers	Classified Staff	Teachers
Strongly disagree	8%	13%	4%
Disagree	8	10	6
Neutral/don't know	34	25	2
Agree	25	21	31
Strongly agree	25	31	57

*District Clear on Goals*

	Classified Managers	Classified Staff	Teachers
Strongly disagree	8%	9%	10%
Disagree	8	11	19
Neutral/don't know	25	43	6
Agree	58	16	32
Strongly agree	22	33	

8. Classified staff were also generally likely to say that their supervisor gives them the information necessary to do their jobs well. Classified managers were more evenly split on this question:

*Staff Given Information Necessary to Do Job*

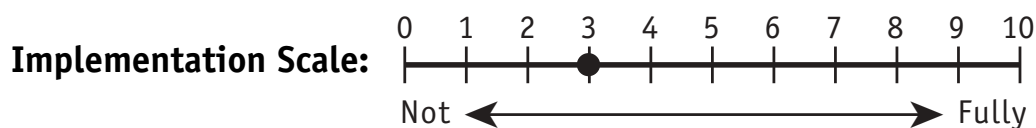
	Classified Managers	Classified Staff
Strongly disagree	8%	16%
Disagree	17	10
Neutral/don't know	50	26
Agree	8	24
Strongly agree	17	28

9. Staff expressed the greatest number of concerns about the level of information they receive about the district. When asked if they get adequate information about what is going on throughout the district, 42 percent of the classified managers and 55 percent of the classified staff disagreed/strongly disagreed.
10. Also see Std. 4.1 regarding the distribution of district policies and procedures.

## Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must develop a coordinated effort to communicate with employees so that employees have the information they need to perform their responsibilities effectively and so that they can become advocates for the district. Because classified and certificated staff set the tone and culture at the school and relay messages to parents and community members, the district needs to work on building these image-makers one employee at a time.
  - a. Internal communications should be addressed in the district’s comprehensive communications plan (see Std. 1.3).
  - b. The employee newsletter should be revamped. It should be different from Our Schools, the external district newsletter. It should include information about being an employee, but there must also be information addressing key messages and the major policy, practice and performance issues. It must speak to staff at all levels in the same way.
  - c. Site-level staff should be provided with fact sheets containing the district’s key message points.
  - d. Copies of news releases should be distributed to staff at all levels.
  - e. Whenever possible, key messages should be delivered in person to drive the message home and make it believable. The state administrator, public information officer, other district administrators and staff at all levels should plan to deliver key messages wherever people are getting together to talk about things. For example, if test scores are an important issue, the district’s message about test scores should be coordinated at every meeting from the maintenance staff to the cabinet. All persons in the district must have an opportunity to both receive and send information throughout the system, whether through standing committees, ad hoc committees, structured segments of individual staff meetings or all of the above.
  - f. High-level administrators should routinely attend site council/committee meetings as part of the larger internal communications effort.
2. All district staff must understand the importance of communications and make a commitment to communicate with each other as well as parents and community members.
  - a. The state administrator or designee should solicit suggestions from employees about how to improve internal communications.
  - b. The district should update its phone system and other technological supports, provide an e-mail system throughout the district, and institute simpler internal procedures requiring fewer signatures.
  - c. The district should provide staff development on effective communications techniques. This staff development should include “customer service” training to ensure that front-office staff and others make visitors feel welcome, plus training in ways to communicate with parents effectively.
  - d. Employees’ willingness and skill in communicating with others should be included in their performance evaluations.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 1.2 Communications

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### Professional Standard

Staff input into school and district operations is encouraged.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Staff interviews and surveys

### Findings

1. A number of regular meetings are held at all levels throughout the district which should provide opportunities for staff to provide input (e.g., school site councils/committees, district advisory committees, staff meetings). However, the perception is that staff input is not really encouraged.
2. School site councils/committees and other advisory groups do not appear to have much influence on district decisions (see Std. 3.5).
3. Principals feel that their questions or issues are not welcome at the monthly principals' meetings. Their issues are to be submitted on "assistance forms" and dealt with by appropriate district staff.
4. More classified managers and classified staff surveyed for this project said that staff members are not involved in helping make decisions that affect them (41 percent of managers and 36 percent of classified staff), although the largest percentage was neutral or didn't know. Teachers, on the other hand, tended to believe that they are involved in decisions that affect them, although a significant percentage (39 percent) still said that they are not involved.

#### *Staff Involved in Decisions That Affect Them*

	Classified Managers	Classified Staff	Teachers
Strongly disagree	8%	18%	20%
Disagree	33	18	19
Neutral/don't know	50	43	6
Agree	9	11	36
Strongly agree	10	19	

5. When asked whether the district administration is interested in seeking new ideas from staff about how to do a better job, more classified managers and classified staff said district administrators are not interested in their ideas (42 percent of managers and 47 percent of classified staff) than said district administrators are interested (16 percent and 25 percent, respectively). These perceptions may be at least partly explained by their feelings as to whether or not the administration has a high level of trust in staff: 59 percent of the classified managers and 48 percent of the classified staff disagreed/strongly disagreed that such trust exists. Again, teachers were more likely than other staff members to say that the district administration is interested in their ideas.

*District Administration Interested in Staff Ideas*

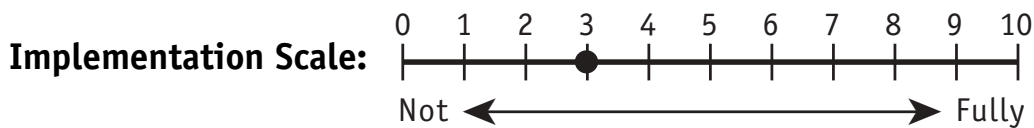
	Classified Managers	Classified Staff	Teachers
Strongly disagree	17%	26%	16%
Disagree	25	21	23
Neutral/don't know	41	28	13
Agree	8	12	29
Strongly agree	8	13	18

6. More classified staff stated that people above their supervisor are not receptive to ideas and suggestions. Half the classified managers, however, agreed that people above their supervisor are receptive to ideas and suggestions.

**Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district must improve opportunities for staff members to provide input regarding school and district operations.
  - a. Internal communications should be addressed in the district’s comprehensive communications plan (see Std. 1.3).
  - b. The district must use existing structures to solicit input from staff. District and school-site councils/committees must be allowed to make decisions and provide input in accordance with law and district policy. These meetings, as well as staff meetings, should not be designed simply to relay information to participants; they should include discussions of important issues and opportunities to provide recommendations. The chair of these groups or the supervisor leading a staff meeting should ensure that staff has a chance to be heard and that staff suggestions are not publicly denounced.
  - c. The district must implement a process involving staff in the development and review of policies (see Std. 4.5).
  - d. In addition to using “assistance forms” for principals to request help from the district office, the district should provide time during principals’ meetings for principals to raise issues that concern them.
  - e. The district should offer methods whereby staff can anonymously submit suggestions (e. g. , a suggestion box).

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 1.3 Communications

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### Professional Standard

The board has a proactive communications and media relations plan.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Staff interviews
2. News articles/other media
3. 1997-98 recovery plan

### Findings

1. Most interviewees and survey respondents agreed that media coverage of the district has been very negative.
2. The district has conducted a fairly standard media relations program of issuing news releases, holding news conferences and tracking newspaper clips. The district had a set of public information objectives for 1997-98 developed as part of a previous recovery plan (e.g., publish three issues of CUSD Update; increase reader response with questionnaires, quizzes, contests, etc.; update the “Introduction to CUSD” packet monthly; provide all schools with a template for monthly newsletters; maintain public relations focus on student achievement, safety and facilities improvements).
3. Most interviewees and survey respondents agreed that, with a few exceptions, the district has not been very proactive in counterbalancing the negative impressions. What has been missing is the strategic planning, coordination and implementation necessary to build and execute a long-range, effective, comprehensive communications plan. Without a coordinated media relations strategy, the district has engaged in a pattern of sporadic, disjointed and largely ineffectual media relations efforts. Media relations have taken the form of crisis management and damage control. As a result of high-profile negative news stories, there is almost uniform resistance to engaging the news media in anything the district does.
4. There appears to be some evidence that the district’s attitude toward media relations may be shifting. For example, the district is hiring a new public information officer/community relations professional who will be responsible for improving the district’s public outreach.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district should develop a comprehensive, written plan for communications and media relations with the goal of obtaining positive media coverage for the district and schools and building community support for district issues.
  - a. The district’s public information officer should work with the board, state administrator and appropriate staff to draft a cohesive and comprehensive communications plan for approval by both the state administrator and the board. A well-developed district communications plan is neither the plan of the board nor the plan of the administration, but rather a district plan that addresses the appropriate roles of all the respective players. It should encompass internal and external communications, relationship building, public engagement, public information and

- media relations. This plan should address, at a minimum:
- priority issues in the district;
  - key messages;
  - target audiences, including staff;
  - strategies for reaching those audiences;
  - persons responsible for each activity; and
  - timelines.
2. The district's capacity for implementing an effective communications plan must be expanded.
    - a. The state administrator or designee should determine whether staff support for this critical function can be increased beyond a single public information officer with part-time clerical assistance.
    - b. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training to board members, senior administrators, principals, key directors and others on the front line to help them improve their skills in dealing with the media and public groups. Such training should focus on the role of the spokesperson, interview techniques, the development of message points, ways to deal with conflicts and confrontations, and crisis communications.
    - c. Board members and administrators must be given a support system that helps them assume some of the burden for building positive relationships with the media and presenting the district's messages at every opportunity. For example, the public information officer should prepare fact sheets about the district and write up key messages or "talking points." The district might also provide a workshop to help school site administrators improve publicity of positive programs through news releases, campus tours, school-site fact sheets and program file sheets.
    - d. The state administrator must model the behavior and perspective that media and community relations are an important function for every administrator in the district. Internal communications efforts should be used to build an understanding that the district's good work will be undermined if people do not know the district is doing good work.
  3. The quality of relationships with reporters and editors must be improved.
    - a. The district should conduct briefings so the media know where the resources are in the district.
    - b. The public information officer should produce a media relations opportunity calendar that targets key dates when programs, events or issues should be promoted through the media.
    - c. The district should plan strategic public events that "roll out" key messages such as literacy improvement, testing, parenting skills, school-business partnerships or other priorities identified by the district.
    - d. The district should consider adopting a media relations theme for each month (e. g. , teacher quality, school safety, technology).
  4. The effectiveness of the district's communications efforts must be evaluated on an ongoing basis and the communications plan revised as necessary.
    - a. The public information officer should continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the district's news releases by tracking the amount of news coverage the district receives and measuring the degree to which that coverage is positive or negative (see Std. 1.4).
    - b. The district should obtain feedback from staff, parents and community members through school site councils/committees, surveys, focus groups or other methods. Such methods

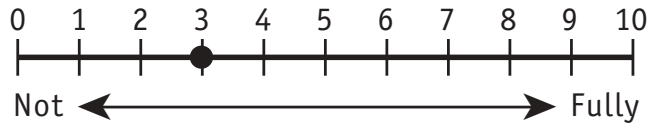


should assess, at a minimum, the overall perception of the district and school sites, whether specific communications efforts reached their intended audiences, and whether key messages were clearly understandable.

- c. The board should appoint a committee consisting of staff, parents and community members to review the district’s communications plan at least once a year and recommend revisions to the state administrator and board.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**

**Implementation Scale:**



## 1.4 Communications

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### Professional Standard

News releases are prepared and made available simultaneously to all appropriate news media.

### Sources and Documentation

1. News releases
2. Media distribution list
3. Distribution procedure

### Findings

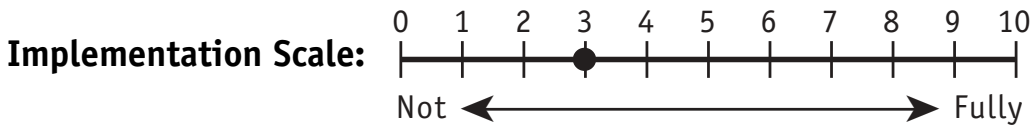
1. The district's limited communications staff has produced and distributed competent news releases and advisories.
2. This function has not been tied to a larger strategic plan.
3. The negative, controversial news of the district — frequently generated by the district and board members themselves — has overshadowed the efforts that have been undertaken. Although there has been coverage of the school district and some of its activities, the negative news has been more prominent and more memorable.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The development of news advisories and news releases must be driven by a strategic communications plan and be part of a cohesive strategy (see Std. 1.3).
2. The district should not rely on the media as the gatekeeper for public information. The district must ensure that news releases are distributed through an established internal mechanism so the messages the district carries can be understood and reinforced by staff, parent leaders and community leaders. By doing so, even if the news item does not appear in the local media, the news release itself becomes the vehicle for delivering information to internal audiences and they are armed with factual, timely and persuasive information when they talk to others.
  - a. The district's public information officer should develop a distribution list of staff and as many as 500 parent leaders and key opinion leaders in the community. Principals, school site councils/committees and the district's parent involvement coordinator should be consulted in the development of this distribution list.
  - b. Each time a news release is prepared for the media, a copy of that news release should be distributed to staff and mailed to parent and community leaders.
  - c. News releases should be included in other district communications such as the district newsletter or mailings to parents.
3. The district should refine its news releases to improve the chances that they will be used by the media.
  - a. The public information officer should include a box at the top of news releases that explains why the information is newsworthy.
  - b. When an item is particularly important to the district, the public information officer should follow up with a phone call to the local media.

- 4. The district should continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its news releases.
  - a. The public information officer should track news coverage by column inches and periodically report that to the state administrator and cabinet.
  - b. The public information officer should establish a framework that measures the degree to which coverage is positive or negative and produce a quarterly report for the board, state administrator and cabinet analyzing progress and improvement in the district's coverage.
  - c. The public information officer, state administrator and board should mobilize key opinion leaders to be media monitors and to write letters to the editor acknowledging both the paper's efforts at effective coverage and the district's good work.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 1.5 Communications

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### Professional Standard

Media contacts and spokespersons who have the authority to speak on behalf of the district have been identified.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Policy manual
5. News articles/other media

### Findings

1. Existing district policy on School News Releases (#1112.2) identifies the superintendent or his/her designee as the press liaison for coordinating the release of information concerning the district. Each principal is responsible for maintaining liaison with news media for the dissemination of information relating to his/her school. In addition, a policy on School-Sponsored Publications, Radio and Television (#1111) says that the administration is responsible for all informational services to and from the public, except for such matters as the board may from time to time wish to deal with publicly itself.
- 2 The district has a full-time public information officer whose duties include dealing with the media when they solicit information about the district, issuing news releases, keeping track of all media coverage of the district, producing the district newsletter and the employee newsletter, and serving as a public relations consultant to principals.
3. In practice, it is not clear that the public information officer serves as the primary media contact, nor that other spokespersons have been identified. Reporters have fallen into patterns of calling their own sources within the schools, board or administration, and not necessarily being channeled through the public information officer as the “clearinghouse.”
4. When board members speak to the media, it is not necessarily the board president speaking on behalf of the board. Individual board members present their personal viewpoints to the media. There seems to be little regard on the part of some school board members for the importance of planned communications nor an understanding of the negative impact on schools and students of counterproductive individual comments, news releases and news conferences.

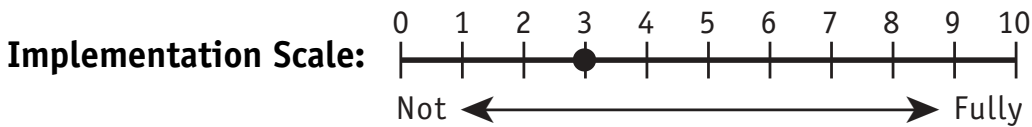
### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must establish a well-defined chain of command as to who talks to the media on behalf of the district to ensure that the district’s messages are consistent.
  - a. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2 to update its policies identifying district spokespersons and media contacts at the same time it updates the rest of its policies and regulations. It is recommended that, in the case of crisis communications, one person be named as the primary spokesperson throughout the event. The roles and responsibilities of media contacts and spokespersons also should be clarified in policy. The district should

consider developing a policy on Media Relations which addresses these issues and related issues in one place.

- b. District staff should distribute a copy of this policy to all staff, board members and local media, and should incorporate it as part of its comprehensive communications plan (see Std. 1.3).
- 2. Board members must develop an understanding of the importance of presenting a united front and must respect the role of the district's spokespersons in presenting messages on behalf of the district (also see Std. 5.5).
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide professional development to the board specifically related to the public role of the board and media relations.
  - b. If an individual board member does present a personal viewpoint in public that is contrary to the district's positions, that board member must clarify that he/she is not speaking on behalf of the board.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



# 1.6 Communications

## Professional Standard

Board spokespersons are skilled at public speaking and communications and are knowledgeable about district programs and issues.

## Sources and Documentation

- 1. Board member interviews
- 2. State administrator interview
- 3. News articles/other media
- 4. Observations of board meetings

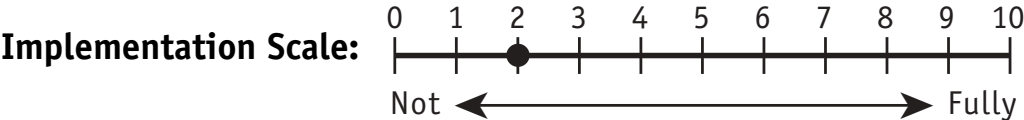
## Findings

- 1. The board has not identified, or at least some members do not recognize, members to speak on behalf of the board.
- 2. As with most boards, there is a diversity of skill and experience among individual board members in public speaking and media relations.
- 3. Board members' effectiveness as spokespersons is greatly affected by the tension that exists in governance and perceived lack of support for district programs under the state administrator (see Std. 1.5 - district spokespersons, Std. 5.4 - functional working relations, Std. 5.5 - board's support for majority decisions, Std. 5.6 - board/administration relations, etc.). What is missing is a genuine understanding of the impact of individual actions and statements.
- 4. There appears to be little developmental work done to provide board members with concise, accurate information which enables them and senior staff to speak with confidence and in lay terms about the key issues of the district.

## Recommendations and Recovery Steps

- 1. Board members identified as spokespersons (see Std. 1.5) must be skilled at public speaking and communications in order to accurately and effectively relay the district's messages.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide individual and group training for board spokespersons in all aspects of communication, including spokesperson training and media relations. Such training should include opportunities for board members to practice their public speaking and interviewing skills through simulations or role-playing exercises.
  - b. The district's public information officer or other appropriate staff should generate fact sheets on all the district's key messages and major topics. Such fact sheets should describe significant messages and include brief, persuasive data that can be used when addressing the public.
  - c. The district should provide board members with written information on the board's role in community relations and tips for effective communications.

## Standard Implemented: Partially



## 2.1 Parents/Community Relations

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### Legal Standard

Annual parental notice of rights and responsibilities is provided at the beginning of the school year. This notice is provided in English and Spanish. (EC 48980)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. School site handbook
3. Parental notifications

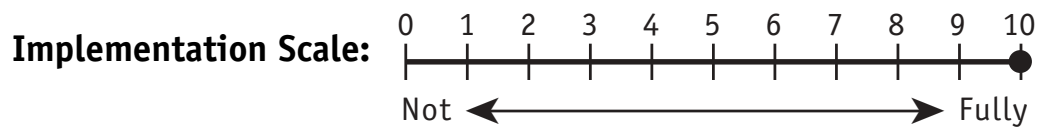
### Findings

1. Although various state laws require numerous notifications to parents, Education Code 48980 specifically deals with those parental notifications related to:
  - student discipline;
  - student absences for religious purposes;
  - excused absences;
  - residency for home/hospital instruction;
  - parental responsibility to notify school regarding student's presence in hospital within district;
  - consent for immunizations;
  - parental request for school assistance in administering medications;
  - exemption from physical exams;
  - consent for accident insurance;
  - right to nonparticipation in health, family life and sex education;
  - right to refrain from harmful or destructive use of animals;
  - the availability of individualized instruction for students with temporary disabilities;
  - schedule of minimum days and student-free staff development days;
  - the district's fingerprinting program, if any;
  - the district's sexual harassment policy;
  - student access to Internet and on-line sites; and
  - current statutory and local attendance options.
2. Education Code 48985 requires that parental notices be provided in languages other than English when 15 percent or more speak another language. In this district, 39.1 percent of the students in 1997-98 were Spanish speaking; only 26 students spoke languages other than English or Spanish.
3. Existing district policy on Welfare states that the board will notify parents of students' or parents' rights concerning student welfare, and cites Education Code 48980-48985.
4. The district prepares an annual notification in accordance with law, and school sites prepare additional mailings of site-specific information.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

None needed.

**Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained**





## 2.2 Parents/Community Relations

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### Legal Standard

A school accountability report card is issued annually for each school site. (EC 35256)

### Sources and Documentation

1. School accountability report cards

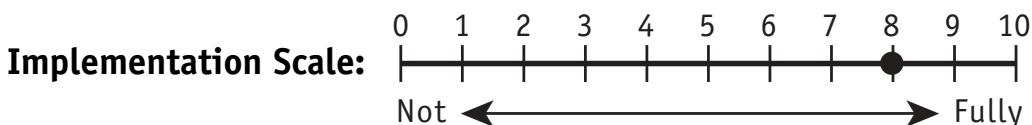
### Findings

1. Education Code 35256 requires that the board annually issue a school accountability report card for each school site. The responsibility is generally delegated to the superintendent and, in this case, the state administrator is responsible until the board resumes governance. These report cards are required to report all the conditions listed in Education Code 33126 and 41409.3.
2. The district issued school accountability report cards in November 1998 after several years of not issuing them.
3. An analysis of the 1994-95 report cards showed that they generally met the requirements of law at that time, with a few exceptions (e.g., no discussion of quality and currency of textbooks and other instructional materials; no grade-level breakdown for the total number of instructional minutes).

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must continue to issue school accountability report cards each year in accordance with law.
  - a. The state administrator or designee must develop a timeline and process for developing school accountability report cards for the 1999-2000 school year, and hold district and school accountable for meeting those timelines.
2. The district must distribute school accountability report cards in accordance with law.
  - a. The state administrator or designee must make the information contained in the school accountability report cards available on the district's Internet site as required by Education Code 35258.
  - b. The state administrator or designee must notify parents that a copy will be provided upon request as required by Education Code 35256.
  - c. District staff should explain the school accountability report cards to district and school-site councils/committees and school PTAs.
  - d. The state administrator or designee should identify other means of publicizing the school accountability report cards.

### Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantial



## 2.3 Parents/Community Relations

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### Legal Standard

The board has developed uniform complaint procedures. (Title 5, Section 4621)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Coordinated Compliance Review
3. Parent focus groups
4. Staff interviews
5. District Advisory Committee minutes

### Findings

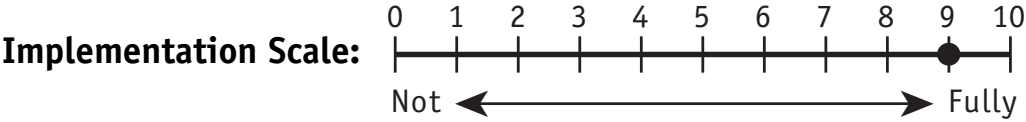
1. Districts are required to use uniform complaint procedures consistent with the state's uniform complaint procedures when addressing complaints alleging unlawful discrimination based on ethnic group identification, religion, age, gender, color, or physical or mental disability in any program or activity that receives state financial assistance. Districts are also required to use uniform complaint procedures when addressing complaints alleging failure to comply with state or federal law in adult basic education, consolidated categorical aid programs, migrant education, vocational education, child care and development programs, child nutrition programs and special education programs.
2. The district's uniform complaint procedures were adopted in February 1997. In November 1997, the Coordinated Compliance Review found that the procedures did not contain all required elements. Corrective actions were taken.
3. The District Advisory Committee has a complaint committee which is active. If dissatisfied, this group will write to the California Department of Education or the federal government, whatever is necessary to get the district to respond. The district's parent involvement coordinator stated that parents have become "very knowledgeable" about compliance issues as related to state and federal funding. If the district is not doing what it is supposed to be doing, the parents will follow up.
4. DAC minutes indicate that the committee may be performing an inappropriate investigative role and not allowing the district's uniform complaint procedures to resolve the issue locally first.
5. Parents in the focus groups generally were not aware of the district's uniform complaint procedures. Those who knew about the procedures learned of them through school or DAC meetings or through the school's community aide.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district should ensure that its uniform complaint procedures are implemented in an accurate, effective and timely manner.
  - a. District staff should distribute and explain the uniform complaint procedures to all staff, school site councils and other interested persons (see Std 4.1).

- b. District staff should specifically provide training to the complaint committee of the District Advisory Committee to ensure that district complaint procedures are utilized.
- c. District legal counsel should ensure that the district follows the uniform complaint procedures correctly for all complaints to which these procedures apply.
- d. District legal counsel and/or other appropriate staff should monitor changes in law related to uniform complaint procedures and recommend revisions in the district’s procedures as necessary.

**Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantial**



## 2.4 Parents/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

Charges or complaints against any employee will be addressed in a timely manner.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Uniform complaint procedures
2. Collective bargaining agreement
3. Employee union representative interviews
4. Board member interviews
5. Observations of board meetings

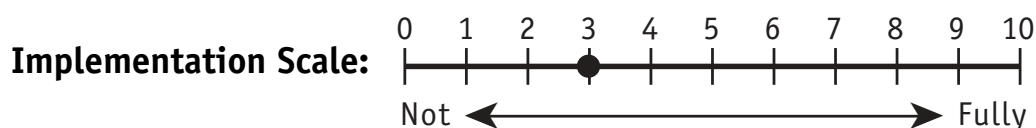
### Findings

1. The district uses uniform complaint procedures (see Std. 2.3) for all complaints against employees in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.
2. Employee representatives expressed no concerns about the process used.
3. Board members do appear to have concerns about the process. For instance, they have commented about employees being unfairly dismissed and about not being kept apprised of what is happening. At an October 1998 board meeting, board members asked for information about complaints against a principal and the district's investigation. The state administrator should have notified the board of these issues in closed session before the board heard it from other sources.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district should evaluate the effectiveness of using uniform complaint procedures for complaints against employees.
  - a. Employees and district representatives participating in uniform complaint procedures for complaints against employees should be asked to provide feedback on the procedures.
  - b. The state administrator should keep the board informed about complaints against employees and the district's investigation of these complaints.
  - c. When the district negotiates new collective bargaining agreements, it should consider recommending a different complaint procedure for complaints against employees, one which does not involve a potential appeal to the California Department of Education.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 2.5 Parents/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

Board members refer informal public concerns to the appropriate staff for attention and response.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interviews
3. Policy manual

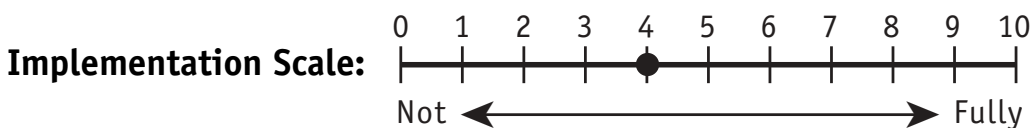
### Findings

1. Existing policy (#1000) calls for the board to refer comments/requests from citizens to the superintendent and, where necessary, to include such communications on board agendas for action.
2. The current practice is for all concerns to go through the state administrator, although occasionally board members will call other staff directly (see Std. 5.11 - individual board members do not attempt to exercise administrative authority). Since the advisory board has no power, it is unable to take action on the public's concerns anyway.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members must refer staff or public concerns to appropriate channels rather than attempting to deal with issues themselves individually.
  - a. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2 to review its policy (#1000) on referring public comments and requests.
  - b. The board should review its other policies related to complaints (e. g. , uniform complaint procedures) so that it will be knowledgeable about channels available to the public and the appropriate uses for those channels.
  - c. The district should provide training to board members on communicating with members of the public in a way that shows the board member cares without involving the individual board member in the resolution of the problem. If staff, students, parents or community members approach an individual board member with concerns, the board member should listen respectfully, suggest the appropriate staff person with whom to discuss the issue, and/or offer to forward the concerns to the state administrator. He/she should not promise to “fix” it or express an opinion that might be viewed as sympathetic or an implicit promise to assist.
  - d. The state administrator should report back to the board regarding the action taken in response to those concerns.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 2.6 Parents/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

The board has identified the needs of the students, staff and educational community through a needs assessment process.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Gene Bregman & Associates 1997 needs assessment
4. District's Strategic Alignment Plan
5. AB 52

### Findings

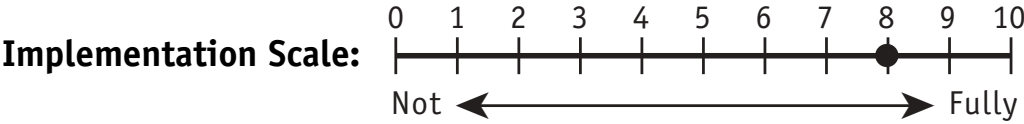
1. The foreword for the district's Strategic Alignment Plan states that it "was written and affirmed to by parents, students, teachers, classified employees, principals and representation from the CDE." The strategic alignment plan defines three categories: (1) district purpose, (2) district priorities, and (3) performance benchmarks.
2. A community survey was conducted in August 1997 on behalf of the district in relation to the bond campaign. Gene Bregman & Associates conducted a telephone survey of 400 likely voters in the district. Among other questions, respondents were asked to name the two biggest problems facing public education in the area. The issues most frequently mentioned (combined mentions) included more/better teachers (26.3 percent), crime/gangs/drugs (17.0 percent), upgrading/repairs of school buildings (15.0 percent), lack of funding in general (13.0 percent), the quality of education/curriculum (13.0 percent), lack of discipline/respect (12.3 percent) and more parental involvement (12.0 percent). These issues were fairly consistent across ethnicity, although Latinos were more likely than African Americans to mention crime/gangs/drugs (28.2 percent and 14.8 percent, respectively) and building upgrades/repairs (23.1 percent and 14.5 percent, respectively), and African Americans were more likely than Latinos to mention lack of discipline/respect (13.9 percent and 0.0 percent, respectively).
3. In accordance with AB 52, the district is being assessed in 1998 in the areas of pupil achievement, financial management, facilities management, personnel procedures and community relations. Improvement plans have been linked to those assessments.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The results of the needs assessment must be used by district and school-site decision makers to identify priorities and plan programs.
  - a. The district should review and use the results of needs assessments in developing a district vision or direction.
  - b. Until the district has adopted a vision or direction to guide programmatic decisions, the district should review and use the results of the needs assessments whenever it makes decisions about the district budget, curriculum, facilities, collective bargaining agreements, or special programs.

c. District and school-site councils and committees should use the results of needs assessments to ensure that funding decisions are linked to program and student needs.

**Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantial**



## 2.7 Parents/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

Parents and community members are encouraged to be involved in the schools.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Parent focus groups
2. Community member interviews
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. Policy manual
5. School accountability report cards
6. Coordinated Compliance Review

### Findings

1. Numerous activities have been designed to encourage parent and community involvement in the schools. Some of these are at the district level but, appropriately, many are initiated by school site staff. For example, at the district level:
  - one of the “district priorities” in the district’s strategic alignment plan is to forge stronger linkages with parents, families and the community (although several interviewees said this was “an afterthought”);
  - parent/community involvement is encouraged through a number of district policies, including a policy on Parent Involvement (#1210. 1) which was revised in 1998;
  - community forums are held several times a year and are usually well attended;
  - communications with parents are made through a Parent Center at the district office which also offers parenting classes, computer skills classes, ESL and some job training;
  - the desegregation grant supports 15 halftime “community liaisons” whose goals are to recruit parents who have not been previously involved with the schools; develop a roster of community agencies/services; produce a newsletter twice a year featuring activities and classes offered for parents; and provide these classes;
  - 4-5 “parent forum meetings” were held in the summer of 1998 to talk to parents about the new promotion/retention policy, school programs, focus of the district, progress that has been made, how families can supplement these efforts, and how families can obtain information directly from their principals and teachers;
  - there is a district newsletter;
  - parents and community members participate on the District Advisory Council; and
  - the district provides an annual conference for parents; ongoing mini-conferences, workshops, classes and training for school site councils, school advisory councils, bilingual advisory councils and other parent groups.

At the school-site level:

- some schools successfully solicit volunteers for weekend beautification projects and other school programs;
- each high school and middle school has a Parent Center (many of the Parent Centers at elementary schools were closed because of space limitations due to class size reduction);
- Bunche Middle School has a child care center and a health clinic;



- schools hold parent-teacher conferences, open houses, Back to School nights, carnivals, etc. ;
  - a UCLA Parent Partnership teaches parents about governance, budget, curriculum and instruction;
  - health aides call parents when their children do not have a complete record of immunizations;
  - schools issue newsletters;
  - parents participate on school site councils and bilingual advisory councils;
  - some leadership teams include parents; and
  - parent surveys are completed annually in connection with the school plan.
- (Note: PTAs were generally viewed as not very active. )

2. Despite these efforts, interviewees often describe parents and community members as apathetic, some say that parents are not involved in meaningful ways, and the district’s parent involvement coordinator says the major complaint she hears from parents is that they are not welcome on campus or do not always get the support they need to become involved. Parents are more likely to come to schools when their children are performing or involved, but “some parents are afraid of teachers and only get contacted for negative reasons.” Latino parents particularly feel alienated by the poor reception they receive and/or the inability to communicate without a translator available. The experience of CSBA’s own project staff in visiting schools was that some schools were very welcoming but, at others, front-office staff ignored the visitors or was surly with them.

3. Communications with parents are not always sufficient. Some parents said they are not adequately informed about their child’s progress and were surprised when notified that their child would be retained under the district’s new retention policy.

4. Survey results showing staff’s current perceptions of parent/community support and involvement are presented in the Introduction to this report. Among the findings were that large percentages of classified managers and classified staff were neutral or didn’t know if parents are generally very supportive of the district and its activities (67 percent of managers and 52 percent of classified staff), or if parental support has increased during the past couple of years (41 percent of managers and 52 percent of classified staff). However, only 8 percent of classified managers and 18 percent of classified staff agreed or strongly agreed that parents are generally very supportive of the district and its activities.

Compared to classified managers and staff, teachers were more likely to say that parents do support the district and its activities (53 percent agreed/strongly agreed). Their responses varied depending on length of service in the district, with those serving more than 10 years being more likely to believe that parents are supportive (56 percent of teachers serving 11-15 years and 66 percent of teachers serving more than 15 years agreed/strongly agreed). Also, a higher percentage of teachers who live in the district said that parents are supportive compared to those who do not live in the district (61 percent and 52 percent, respectively). Teachers were split in their opinions as to whether parent support has increased in the past two years (40 percent agreed/strongly agreed that it has increased; 38 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed).

5. Teachers, classified managers and classified staff generally believe that the state’s involvement in the district makes no difference in the level of parental involvement: only 26 percent of the teachers, 16 percent of classified managers and 25 percent of classified staff agreed/strongly agreed that parents would be more supportive if the state were not administering the district. This

contradicts the sentiment which predominated among parents in the focus group, who tended to say that parent support has decreased since the state administration.

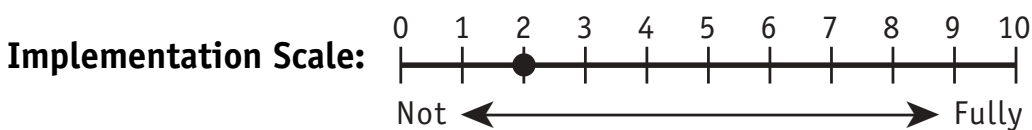
6. Teachers and classified managers were somewhat more likely to agree than disagree that *community* involvement is lower than ever (42 percent of classified managers agreed while 25 percent disagreed, and 40% of teachers agreed while 34 percent disagreed). Classified staff was more evenly split in its opinion. Opinions were also divided as to whether or not community support has increased in the past two years, with teachers slightly more likely to believe it has (40 percent agreed/strongly agreed; 31 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed), while classified managers thought it has not (25 percent agreed; 50 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed).
7. Staff was also asked whether community support had increased over the past two years. Teachers were slightly more likely to believe that community support had increased (40 percent vs. 31 percent who thought it had not), while classified managers thought community support had not increased (50 percent vs. 25 percent who thought it had). Classified staff was largely neutral or didn't know (54 percent), but was closely split among those who agreed (22 percent) and disagreed (25 percent) that community support had increased.
8. Also see the section Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils for findings related to formal partnerships with community agencies and organizations, and on the involvement of parents and community members on advisory and decision-making groups.

## **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district should develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated plan to improve parent/community involvement and support.
  - a. The district should implement the strategies identified in its policy and regulation on Parent Involvement (#1210. 1). These strategies include but are not limited to school-site plans for parent involvement, training for parents and others, a parent handbook, parent-teacher conferences, a school/parent compact, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the parent involvement program.
  - b. School-site parent improvement programs should be reviewed by the state administrator as part of the annual review of school plans in accordance with the district's Parent Involvement policy (also see Std. 3.11).
  - c. The state administrator or designee should establish a districtwide committee, consisting of appropriate district and school-site staff as well as parents and community members, to develop additional, specific recommendations for improving parent/community involvement and support.
  - d. Pursuant to the district's Parent Involvement policy, strategies for involving parents of Title I and bilingual students should be coordinated with parents of other programs including but not limited to Head Start, Healthy Start, "Free to Grow," state-run preschools/children's centers, PTA, Gifted and Talented Education, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools.
  - e. The district's plan for parent/community involvement should be coordinated and integrated with the district's comprehensive communications plan (see Std. 1.3).
  - f. The district's master facilities plan should address the need to reinstate parent centers at elementary schools as possible.
  - g. The district committee's recommended plan for parent/community involvement should be reviewed and approved by the state administrator and ratified by the board.

2. The district should ensure that all staff who have contact with parents and community members understand their responsibilities in building relations and have the skills to perform this role effectively.
  - a. The district should provide staff development to principals, teachers, front-office staff, community aides/liaisons, and other classified staff in effective communications, the principles of “customer service,” and ways to deal with conflicts.
  - b. The district should integrate and coordinate the efforts of community aides and liaisons at each school site. Community aides and liaisons should report their activities regularly to principals and to a single district staff person, and regular meetings of all community aides and liaisons should be organized by the district office.
  - c. Job descriptions for principals and teachers should emphasize their responsibilities for parent and community relations.
  - d. Performance evaluations for all staff should include an evaluation of staff’s effectiveness in dealing with parents and the public.
  
3. The district and school sites should enhance the role of parent and community volunteers in the schools.
  - a. District and school staff should review the current role and responsibilities of volunteers and ensure that volunteers play a meaningful role which contributes to the educational program, enhances student safety or provides another critical service.
  - b. School staff, parents and community members, working with the district’s parent involvement coordinator and other appropriate district staff, should develop and implement a plan for recruiting volunteers. For example, volunteers should be recruited during parent education classes, and principals and community aides should receive training in recruitment methods.
  - c. District and school staff should track the number of volunteers and provide an annual report to the administration and the board regarding the increase or decrease in the number of volunteers and efforts undertaken to involve parents and community members as volunteers.
  - d. Volunteers should receive training in the specific responsibilities they will be asked to perform, particularly those that involve student contact or instruction.
  
4. To build relations with parents and families, the district should enhance its services for parents and families or work with other community agencies and organizations to ensure that needed services are available and effective.
  - a. The state administrator or designee should evaluate the effectiveness of the district’s programs that support parents and families (e. g. , parent education, Healthy Start programs).
  - b. To the extent possible, school facilities should serve as resource centers in the community so that parents and community members develop a sense of belonging and ownership.
  - c. The district should develop partnerships and collaboratives with community agencies and organizations to ensure that the needs of children and families are met (see Std. 3.1).

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 2.8 Parents/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

The board provides access to schools for parents and community members while addressing safety issues related to visitors and volunteers.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews
3. Parent focus groups
4. Community member interviews
5. Reports of incidents/disruptions
6. On-site visitations

### Findings

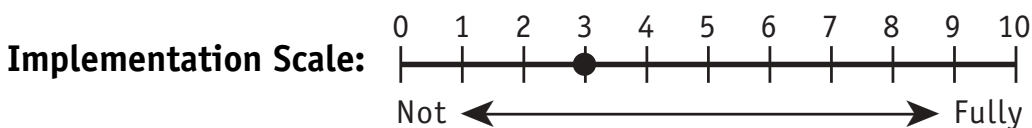
1. Visitors to school sites are addressed in existing district policy on Visits to the Schools (#1250), adopted in 1982. This policy states the board's intention that visitors be made to feel welcome, and requires that visitors be routed to the office for greeting by the principal and be asked to return to the principal's office for leave-taking. The extent to which parents actually feel welcome when they visit, however, varies from school to school (also see Std. 2.7).
2. Safety issues related to visitors are addressed in district policy on Loitering or Causing Disturbance (#1251), also adopted in 1982, which requires that all visitors register in the principal's office and receive approval to be present on campus. Any nonstudent or non-staff member who loiters on campus without written permission or causes disturbances may be prosecuted for disorderly conduct. Despite existing policy, CSBA representatives were not asked to register at any school site they visited; they were sometimes, but not always, escorted by the principal or another staff person. (At Caldwell and Compton High School in particular, CSBA representatives were able to walk right on campus. ) In addition, not all campuses had a notice posted at every entrance setting forth visitor registration requirements, as required by Penal Code 627. 6, and the location of the office was not always clear.
3. Concerns about safety do inhibit some parents from visiting schools. Some schools are viewed by parents as safe; others are not. Some parents don't want to attend events at night because campuses are poorly lit and there is no visible security. Break-ins, graffiti and gangs contribute to their fear. Some parent volunteers ("yellow jackets") do not feel supported. However, the district police chief sees his role as protecting students, staff and property from negative influences outside of the schools. Two officers are assigned to each high school, one at the continuation school, one at the community day school (middle school continuation), and the other officers are on patrol in the middle schools and elementary schools. Incidents of disruptions or violence involving nonstudents decreased from 131 in 1995-96 to 84 in 1996-97.
4. Volunteers are addressed in policies on Citizens' Assistance to School Personnel (#1240) and School-Community Associations (#1210). Parents and community members are encouraged to work at school sites in a variety of capacities, and the administration is directed to provide volunteers with appropriate supervision, insurance coverage, job descriptions and medical examinations when required or deemed advisable. Neither policy addresses the requirements of Education Code

35021 and 45349 to conduct records checks to ensure that registered sex offenders do not serve as volunteer instructional aides or nonteaching aides. There are several methods by which districts can ensure that sex offenders will not serve in these capacities. The Compton Unified School District requires volunteers to be fingerprinted. Parents report that this has not been a deterrent to their willingness to volunteer, although sometimes it means that a person may have to wait until the fingerprint check clears.

## Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district and individual school sites must make parents and community members feel welcome in the schools.
  - a. School staff, including front-office staff, should receive “customer service” training in order to better greet and serve visitors (see Std. 2.7).
  - b. District and school staff should develop and implement a plan to recruit volunteers and ensure that they play a meaningful role (see Std. 2.7).
  - c. Staff and volunteer job assignments should be in part dependent on evaluations of their ability to make parents and visitors feel welcome.
  
2. The district and individual school sites must address safety issues related to visitors and volunteers.
  - a. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2 to update its policies and regulations related to visitors and volunteers. These policies should continue to encourage parent/ community involvement while addressing safety issues related to visitor registration, sex offender checks, tuberculosis testing and related issues.
  - b. Pursuant to Penal Code 627. 6, the district must post a notice at every entrance to each school and school grounds which sets forth visitor registration requirements, hours during which registration is required, the registration location, the route to take to that location and the penalties for violation of registration requirements.
  - c. School staff should accompany visitors while they are on school grounds unless the principal determines on a case-by-case basis that it is unnecessary.
  - d. Safety issues related to visitors and volunteers should be included in the district’s and school-site comprehensive safety plans.
  - e. Visitor registration procedures should be included in the parent handbook with any new requirements highlighted.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 2.9 Parents/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

Board members are actively involved in building community relations.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups

### Findings

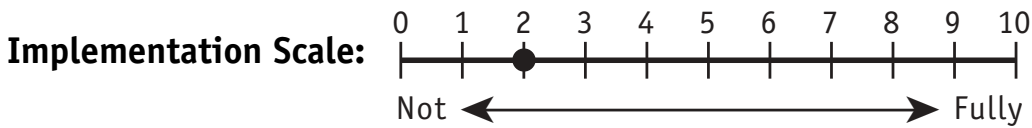
1. Board members verbally recognize their role as a vital communications link to the community. They sometimes attend district-sponsored community forums and school open houses, and some visit schools.
2. However, some interviewees say they have never seen a board member on campus and that board members only visit schools in their own neighborhoods. Parents at some schools did not know board members' names; board members are seen as distant figures. Parents at one school said the board has no communication with the community other than board meetings.
3. Board member attendance at district events and participation in other community relations efforts does not appear to be coordinated, as board members do not always know what other board members are doing or events going on in the district.
4. Board members do not necessarily make the distinction to be spokespersons for the district as opposed to just being spokespersons for themselves, nor do they have the information at their disposal to speak on behalf of the district.
5. Also see Std. 3.1 - partnerships with community agencies and organizations, Std. 1.6 - board spokespersons, and Std. 2.7 - parent/community involvement.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members, the state administrator and the district's communications staff must understand and appreciate the role of board members, as public figures and community leaders, in building community relations on behalf of the district.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training on the board's role in providing community leadership, including the need to keep parents and the community informed about school issues, be responsive to parent/community concerns and interests, encourage parent/community involvement in school activities and programs, and engage in advocacy on issues that impact schools.
2. Board members must be skilled at public speaking and communications and must be provided adequate information about district messages and issues in order to effectively serve as spokespersons (see Std. 1.6).

3. Board members' participation in community relations efforts must be linked to an overall, coordinated strategy to improve the understanding and knowledge base of the community in order to provide consistent, accurate messages.
  - a. The participation of board members in community relations should be addressed in the district's comprehensive communications plan (see Std. 1.3).
  - b. Board members, as well as the district's public information officer, should actively seek opportunities for board members to speak to civic groups and organizations and other target audiences to present the district's messages on priority issues.
  - c. The public information officer should establish a clearinghouse function in the communications office in order to manage the outreach function and allow the district to know who is speaking to which groups at what time. Board members (and administrators) should notify the public information officer whenever they are invited to speak in the community. The public information officer should always be aware which community groups are meeting in Compton and whether the district will have a presence at those meetings.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 3.1 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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### Professional Standard

The board supports partnerships with community groups, local agencies and businesses.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Community member interviews

### Findings

1. There are very few formal collaboratives with other community agencies or organizations. One is coordinated by the county Department of Mental Health in support of the System of Care (SOC) program. This program focuses on children at risk of out-of-home placement and includes observation, referrals, monitoring and follow-up. The district participates by referring children to the program and participating on the Interagency Screening Committee.
2. There do seem to be several areas in which the district works with the Compton Police Department and county sheriff's office. And there are business partnerships, single-project cooperative ventures and a Healthy Start planning grant. Examples of partnerships involving either the whole district or individual school sites include:
  - connections with JTPA, the adult school, the medical health clinics on-site at Bunche Middle School and two other schools, and the ROP;
  - a partnership with the Compton Police Department and county sheriff to provide an after-school recreation and educational program as well as gang prevention training at the school;
  - cooperation among the district police department, the Compton Police Department and the county sheriff, including a memorandum of understanding addressing jurisdictional issues and establishing how juveniles are to be handled;
  - probation officers assigned to the high schools;
  - collaborative work with Compton College, Cal State Long Beach and Cal State Dominguez Hills;
  - a partnership with UC Irvine to establish a math/writing academy that focused on a core group of students (on Saturday);
  - a Healthy Start planning grant at Tibby School;
  - support from the California Conservation Corps to provide classroom instruction in conservation and some landscaping maintenance;
  - school-to-work partnerships with businesses;
  - support from Pacific Bell and the Educate the Children Foundation;
  - a mobile van sponsored by Colgate which visits schools and provides students with dental checks; and
  - support for school athletic programs through the Nike Corporation.
3. Collaboratives with city agencies are desired but considered impossible given the current relations between the district and city.

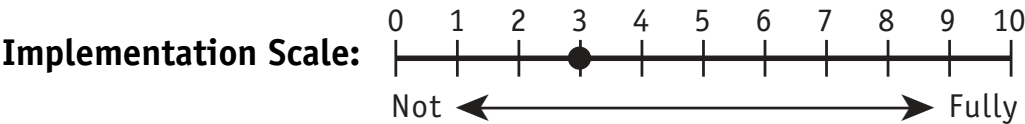


4. The district added a staff person to work on setting up business partnerships with the community. His efforts have been successful in increasing business contributions to the schools, but could be even more successful with greater cooperation and follow-through from school-site staff.
5. The board does not appear to be very involved in seeking or supporting these partnerships. In fact, board members were largely unaware of the district's collaborative with mental health or any other partnerships.
6. Also see Std. 2.7 - efforts to involve individual parents and community members in the schools and Std. 2.9 - board involvement in building community relations.

## **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district should work with other community agencies and organizations to develop and implement plans to increase needed services to parents and families, reduce duplication of services, and ensure that all services are efficient and focused on the needs of clients.
  - a. The district should conduct, or work with other community agencies and organizations to conduct, a needs assessment to determine parent and community needs that are currently being unmet in the community (see Std. 2.6), including educational, health and social services needs.
  - b. The state administrator and board should initiate contacts with appropriate community agencies and organizations to invite their participation in meetings designed to develop a common vision for the community and consider ways in which community services may be coordinated (also see Std. 3.1).
  - c. The board and appropriate staff should receive training and written materials related to inter-agency collaboration. For example, CSBA has issued a publication on the school board's role in coordinated services, and has jointly issued a publication with the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties designed to help local communities overcome barriers to collaboration. The Foundation Consortium for School-Linked Services and other organizations also provide technical assistance.
2. The board should expand its role in building community relations and business partnerships by actively seeking opportunities to speak to civic groups and community organizations and linking its efforts to a coordinated district strategy (see Std. 2.9).
3. The district should work with its partners to evaluate the effectiveness of community collaboratives and partnerships.
  - a. The state administrator or designee should provide regular reports to the board on the progress of collaborative efforts. Such reports should include but not be limited to feedback from staff, parents and the community.
  - b. The state administrator or designee should ensure that formal evaluations of the collaborative are conducted on a regular basis. An evaluation component, including a timeline and specific measures, should be included in the original plans for the collaborative.
  - c. The district should share the evaluation results with the staff and community through board meetings and other district communications (see Std. 1.3).

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 3.2 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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### Professional Standard

Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district all have identified specific outcome goals that are understood by all members.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Community member interviews
2. District Advisory Council member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Policy manual

### Findings

1. The only formal collaborative seems to be one with the county mental health department to provide a “System of Care.” The goals of the program are clear, but the district does not coordinate or “lead” the program.
2. Legally required responsibilities of the District Advisory Committee on Compensatory Education (DAC), District Bilingual Advisory Committee (DBAC), School Site Council (SSC), School Advisory Committee on State Compensatory Education (SAC) and School Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC) are outlined in materials from the California Department of Education’s Complaints Management and Bilingual Compliance office. The district distributes these materials to its various councils and committees, and provides training on the roles and responsibilities of these groups throughout the year.  
According to these materials, the tasks of the DAC include advising the district on at least the following: the eligibility criteria for student participation, the evaluation of the progress of participating students, the training of DAC members, and the implementation and evaluation of the State Compensatory Education Program. The tasks of the DBAC include advising the board on the development and revision of a district master plan for bilingual education, a districtwide needs assessment on a school-by-school basis, district bilingual education goals and objectives, administration of the annual language census, the written parental notification of initial school enrollment, the district’s redesignation criteria and any waiver request affecting services to limited-English-speaking students.
3. District policy adopted in 1982 (#1221.2) describes the membership and duties of a six-member “District Education Council - Board Liaison Committee,” which is intended to be composed of one member and one alternative member from each of three Elementary, Secondary or Compensatory Education Councils. The committee’s purpose is to communicate the concerns of the board to the community and to express the concerns of the community to the board. The Elementary, Secondary and Compensatory Advisory Councils are to be represented at every board meeting. However, the committee is not currently operating.
4. The duties of School Site Councils and School Advisory Committees are described in district policy and regulations:
  - District policy and regulation on School Site Councils (#1221. 3), adopted in 1982, describe the duties of the SSC in relation to the School Improvement Program. These duties include

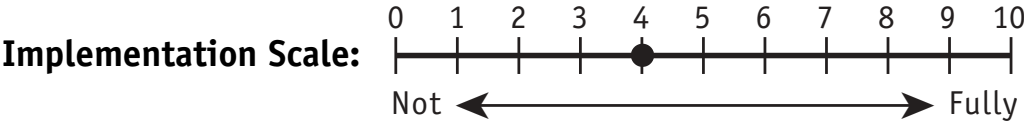
- determining whether the school will participate in the program; developing the school improvement plan in accordance with law; reviewing the implementation of the program with the principal, teachers, other school personnel and students; periodically assessing the effectiveness of the program; and annually reviewing the plan, establishing a new budget and, if necessary, making modifications in the plan to reflect changing needs and priorities.
- SSCs established for purposes of School Based Program Coordination are, according to district policy (#6123) adopted in 1992, responsible for determining whether the school will participate in the program and developing a school plan in accordance with law.
  - The Bilingual Advisory Committee advises the school regarding the bilingual education program (policy #1210. 1 on Parent Involvement, 1998).
  - The role of School Advisory Committees is to advise the school regarding the Compensatory Education program (Title I and SCE) unless it chooses to allow the SSC to function for them for a period of two years (policy #1210. 1). This includes approving the school plan and budget. In addition, each School Advisory Committee elects a representative to serve on the District Advisory Council and the District Bilingual Committee.
5. The duties of the SSC are not described in council election brochures. Similarly, when the district distributed a flyer to recruit people to be on its “7-11 committee,” the flyer did not explain what that committee would be responsible for doing, or even that it was related to school facilities.
  6. To determine how well their roles are understood, participants were asked to describe the responsibilities of these groups. DAC members explained that they advise the district about the expenditure of federal categorical funds and other issues, and help parents navigate the school system. A major activity of the DAC is to plan a three-day districtwide parent involvement conference. Plus, the DAC has been sponsoring the annual Unity Festival at Compton Community College to bring together people in the district to celebrate different cultures. School Site Council members did not seem to have a detailed understanding of their roles. Participants say their SSC “discusses the budget” and “approves expenditures.”
  7. The extent to which existing groups are actually allowed to fulfill their responsibilities is addressed in Std. 3.5 - decisions made at appropriate levels, and Std. 3.6 - meaningful role for all participants.

## **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district must update its policies and regulations to clarify the roles and responsibilities of district and school-site advisory groups and decision-making bodies.
  - a. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2, including the input of council and committee members, to update its policies and regulations which describe the responsibilities of district and school-site councils and committees, including its policies and regulations on School Site Councils (#1221. 3), School Based Program Coordination (#6123) and Parent Involvement (#1210. 1). These policies and regulations should clearly set out all the functions of these groups in an easily understood manner.
  - b. The district should develop a policy and regulation describing the duties of the District Advisory Committee and District Bilingual Advisory Committee.
2. The district must determine how to communicate and explain these duties to all members more effectively so that members are able to accurately describe their major functions.

- a. Candidates for election or appointment to councils and committees should receive the district’s policies or regulations describing the duties they would be expected to perform. Information about the roles of school-site groups should also be distributed to voters so they can select the most qualified person to perform those duties.
- b. The district’s parent involvement coordinator and/or other appropriate staff should periodically assess members’ knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and tailor the ongoing training opportunities to meet those needs.
- c. The district should provide training to principals and community aides/liaisons regarding the roles and responsibilities of school-site councils and committees.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



### 3.3 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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#### Professional Standard

The membership of community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district reflects the full cultural, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic diversity of the student population.

#### Sources and Documentation

1. Community member interviews
2. District Advisory Committee interviews
3. DAC and DBAC rosters
4. Staff interviews
5. Student demographic data
6. Parent focus groups

#### Findings

1. The membership of the District Advisory Council is diverse but does not reflect the proportions found in the student population. According to CBEDS, as of October 1997, the student population in Compton Unified School District was 62.9 percent Latino, 35.7 percent African American, 0.2 percent White and 1.2 percent Other. It is estimated that 60 percent of the District Advisory Committee members are African American, most of the rest are Latinos, and there are a few Samoans.
2. The District Bilingual Advisory Committee members are primarily Latino. It can be assumed that school-site Bilingual Advisory Committee members are also predominantly Latino since district policy requires the majority of those members to be parents of students participating in bilingual programs.
3. The district's parent involvement coordinator (who is the primary staff support to the DAC) recognizes that parent representation in the DAC and School Advisory Committees is not yet balanced racially but this is a goal of her office.
4. The ethnicity of the community aide/liason appears to influence the ethnic composition of school-site councils and committees. Latino parents often feel uncomfortable at schools and so feel inhibited participating in school groups; when the community aide is Latino they are more likely to participate.
5. In addition to looking at the cultural, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic diversity of the DAC, the DBAC and school site councils, it is important to look at other membership characteristics, such as the number of parent, staff and community representatives; the extent to which SSCs are coordinated with or overlap with the School Advisory Councils; and whether parents are included on the schools' Leadership Teams.

The DAC consists of two representatives from each school (one member plus an alternate), six community members, six nonpublic school members, two representatives of the DBAC, eight organization representatives (e.g., GATE, parents' rights group), three teachers and three principals. The SSC president is often the school's DAC representative. The DBAC consists entirely of

parent of limited-English-proficient students from each school.

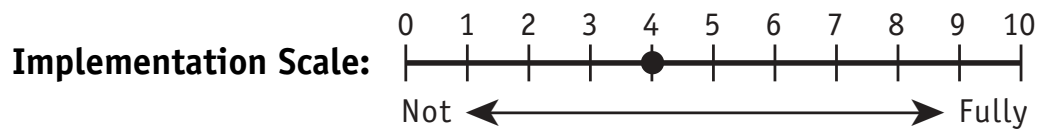
Membership of the SSCs varies from school to school. One school reports eight active parents; another says only two to four parents attend regularly; and another is mostly teacher-run. SSCs and SACs have essentially merged into one group at each school site. (This is acceptable by law, but only after the SAC votes to allow the SSC to perform its roles.) Some schools include parents on their Leadership Teams; some do not.

6. At some schools it is difficult to recruit parents willing to serve on these types of councils and committees. It is sometimes difficult to even get parents to vote: most of the schools estimate that between 20 and 50 parents vote in an SSC election even when schools mail parents information about the election and send information home with students. At one school with a much higher number of parents voting, the school's community assistant is very effective in helping to mobilize people to vote.

## **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district and school sites must increase efforts to recruit council and committee members who represent the diversity of the student population and the community, and who are dedicated to playing an active role on these groups.
  - a. District staff and principals and/or existing school site councils/committees should obtain input from parents, community members and staff in order to identify barriers to participation by some segments of the community (e. g. , time commitment, transportation needs, belief that they are not welcome).
  - b. District staff and principals and/or existing school site councils/committees should develop a plan to address those barriers.
  - c. The district and school sites should disseminate information about the purpose, responsibilities and successful results of these groups throughout the community and to all parents and staff in order to generate interest in the activities of these groups.
  - d. District staff and principals should develop a list of community leaders, dedicated staff persons and other qualified persons who might be personally recruited to run for election to school-site groups.
  - e. Community aides and liaisons must play an active role in providing information to parents about the roles and responsibilities of school-site councils and committees and encouraging parent participation. They should particularly conduct outreach to encourage participation of underrepresented ethnic groups.
2. The district and schools should review the composition of each group and determine whether any changes are needed to ensure a more representative group and/or to involve greater numbers of parents, staff and community members. In so doing, the district must ensure that legal mandates regarding membership are fulfilled.
  - a. The district's parent involvement coordinator should ensure that each school site convenes an SAC and that the SAC determines whether or not to delegate its responsibilities to the SSC in accordance with law.
  - b. The district should use the resources identified in Std. 4.2 to review and update its policies and regulations describing the membership of the District Advisory Committee and District Bilingual Advisory Committee (also see Std. 3.2).
  - c. Each school site should consider whether to include parents on its Leadership Team.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**





## 3.4 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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### Professional Standard

The district encourages and provides the necessary training for collaborative and advisory council members to understand the basic administrative structure, program processes and goals of all district partners.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Parent focus groups
2. District Advisory Committee interviews
3. Staff interviews

### Findings

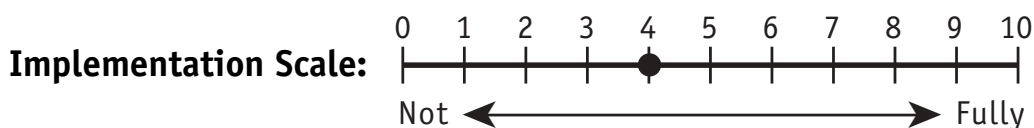
1. The district's parent involvement coordinator and the District Advisory Committee provide training monthly. Examples of topics include the roles of the School Site Council, School Advisory Committee, Bilingual Advisory Committee, etc.; bylaws and parliamentary procedures; reading; anger management; and conflict resolution. Parents also are trained in what to look for with their children, receive presentations from counseling staff, are given testing information, and are trained in how to help their children at home.
2. The DAC invites over 200 people to its annual conference which is designed to build parents' capacity for strong parent involvement.
3. The district's 1998 policy on Parent Involvement (#1210.1) specifies that each school may send from two to five council members to an approved compensatory education conference within the state; the DAC and DBAC may each send five members to conferences within the state; and two DAC members may attend national conferences related to compensatory education.
4. Despite the training provided to council/committee members, several interviewees felt that additional training is needed to help parents understand school budgets and other issues related to their roles on these committees. Problems were also noted in regard to training for student members of School Site Councils. Some SSC members were aware of the training provided by the district; others were not.
5. There was a division of opinion as to whether the groups receive adequate and appropriate information in the course of their duties. Many SSC members said they get plenty of information related to the curriculum, new programs and budget implications. But others said they do not know what a meeting is about until they get there or that the information is "stacked" because the principal already has an agenda he/she wants members to approve. Two members of the DBAC agreed that they receive adequate information and that they receive whatever they ask for, including state and local information and budget data. One DAC member reported that the DAC receives adequate information, including budgetary information. But another member said it was very hard to get budget information and, when a budget item is cut, she does not know how the money has been redirected. Certain district administrators who previously attended DAC meetings and provided support do not come as often any more.
6. In general, it appears that the infrastructure to provide training to council and committee members

is strong, but somehow the district’s efforts are not resulting in a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Even when parents said they understood their roles and received adequate information, when asked specific questions about their role and the information they receive, they were unable to respond.

## Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must enhance its existing trainings so that members are able to accurately describe their major functions (also see Std. 3.2).
  - a. Candidates for election or appointment to councils and committees should receive the district’s policies or regulations describing the duties they would be expected to perform. Information about the roles of school-site groups should also be distributed to voters so they can select the most qualified person to perform those duties.
  - b. The district’s parent involvement coordinator and/or other appropriate staff should periodically assess members’ knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and tailor the ongoing training opportunities to meet those needs.
  - c. The district should provide training to principals and community aides/liaisons regarding the roles and responsibilities of school-site councils and committees.
  - d. The DAC’s annual parent conference should be held locally to reduce the perception that they are “junkets” rather than educational opportunities. In addition, the conference should be evaluated each year by participants and by district staff to determine if the conference is meeting its goals or if the training goals would be more effectively met through additional, smaller events held throughout the year.
  
2. Members of district and school-site councils/committees must receive sufficient and timely information about the purpose and issues to be discussed at each meeting.
  - a. The chair of each group should ensure that agendas contain all the necessary support materials to explain an issue.
  - b. To the extent possible, the chair of each group should ensure that agendas are distributed at least one week prior to a meeting.
  - c. The chair of each group should encourage members to contact him/her or appropriate staff prior to the meeting if they have questions or will require additional information.
  - d. To the extent possible, district staff should be available at these meetings to answer questions, provide information and lend support.
  
3. The minutes of district and school-site councils and committees should be improved in order to effectively communicate with members as well as district staff and the public.
  - a. Minutes of district and school-site councils and committees should be reviewed by district or school staff for grammatical changes, clarity and appropriateness of content and then distributed to members and to district staff whom the group is intended to advise.
  - b. The district’s parent involvement coordinator and/or other appropriate staff should review the minutes of district and school-site councils and committees in order to identify training and information needs.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 3.5 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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### Professional Standard

The decision-making structure of community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district ensures that decisions are made at the appropriate level (e. g. , site-level team, district-wide interagency body) with appropriate input from parents, members of the community and agency policymakers.

### Sources and Documentation

1. District Advisory Committee interviews
2. Community member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups
5. District Advisory Committee minutes

### Findings

1. The District Advisory Committee is intended to be advisory only. School Site Councils do have responsibility for certain decisions (see Std. 3.2). Parent and community input into these recommendations or decisions is largely obtained through representation on the councils.
2. There is some sentiment that the DAC and SSCs are more effective than they used to be and that participants are more outspoken than they used to be. By and large, however, interviewees questioned whether these groups are focused on the education of children. There were complaints about the types of issues they are addressing, the motivations of participants (free “junkets”) and infighting. Of course, the effectiveness of school-site groups varies from school to school.
3. Some interviewees question whether the groups are actually allowed to perform their stated role. Although the district is not bound by the advice of the DAC, some members believe their recommendations are not even followed up on by district administrators. Neither the DAC nor the District Bilingual Advisory Committee has a very high profile in relation to advising the district. The DAC voted against hiring curriculum specialists but the district still hired them. A DAC member or two were involved in the development of the promotion/retention policy, but the policy was not reviewed and commented on by the larger body. The DBAC also was not involved in the development of that policy, nor in the development of the district’s approach to bilingual education in the aftermath of Proposition 227.
4. Some SSC members believe their group’s decisions are nearly fully implemented, but others feel their questions and concerns are disregarded. And district mandates sometimes impact SSC decisions. For example, two schools had voted to include community assistants in their annual school plans. Then they were told by district staff that they were required to hire curriculum specialists. They would have preferred community assistants but could not afford both. Another school felt that the Sylvan Learning Center program was “pushed down our throats.” There was no discussion even though SSC members had a lot of questions; one member said he didn’t believe his questions about Sylvan were welcome. Another SSC, however, after listening to district representatives present information about Sylvan and receiving other alternatives, decided not to use Sylvan and instead decided to use the money to offer a different program capable of reaching greater numbers of students.

5. When asked whether the SSC plays an important role in the operation of the district, none of the classified managers surveyed believed that it does (66 percent were neutral or didn't know; 17 percent strongly disagreed; 17 percent disagreed). On the other hand, 34 percent of the classified staff agreed/strongly agreed that the SSC plays an important role (38 percent were neutral or didn't know, and 28 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed).
6. Similarly, more classified staff (26 percent) than classified managers (8 percent) believed that most employees are very familiar with the SSC; 67 percent of the classified managers and 42 percent of the classified staff disagreed/strongly disagreed that employees are familiar with the SSC.
7. Teachers were pretty evenly split as to whether or not the SSC is very visible or active (42 percent think it is active; 40 percent think it is not). Only 17 percent of the classified managers and 24 percent of the classified staff feel the SSC is very active.
8. Also see Std. 3.6 - meaningful role for all participants.

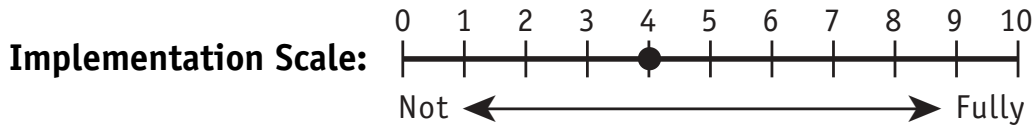
## **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district must clarify the roles and responsibilities of district and school-site advisory groups and decision-making bodies.
  - a. The board and state administrator should determine whether to reinstate the "District Education Council - Board Liaison Committee" as described in district policy (#1221. 2). According to district policy, the six-member committee would be composed of one member and one alternative member from each of three Elementary, Secondary or Compensatory Education Councils, and its purpose would be to communicate the concerns of the board to the community and to express the concerns of the community to the board.
  - b. The board and state administrator should determine whether to expand the duties of the DAC and DBAC to serve as a sounding board on district issues beyond compensatory and bilingual education and/or whether to establish a separate advisory group which could serve that function.
  - c. The district should use the resources identified in Std. 4.2 to update its policies and regulations that define the roles and responsibilities of district and school-site councils and committees (see Std. 3.2).
  - d. The district should provide training to district staff, principals, council/committee chairs and council/committee members regarding the roles and responsibilities of councils/committees and the appropriate role of the district office and principal in working with councils and committees (see Std. 3.4).
2. District and school-site councils and committees must be allowed to perform their stated roles.
  - a. The district should utilize district and school-site advisory committees as opportunities to gather input on policies and district operations (see Std. 4.6). The state administrator or designee should refer proposed policies to the District Advisory Council and/or District Bilingual Advisory Council as appropriate to obtain their input and their advice regarding implementation. On issues that affect school programs, the state administrator or designee should seek input from School Advisory Committees and School Site Councils.
  - b. The state administrator or designee should report back to the District Advisory Council, District Bilingual Advisory Council or school councils/committees regarding the steps taken

to consider their recommendations, the final outcome of those recommendations and the reasons that their recommendations were accepted or rejected.

- c. The district's parent involvement coordinator or other appropriate staff should be assigned to serve as an ombudsman for council/committee members who wish to report instances in which the group is not allowed to perform its responsibilities.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **3.6 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils**

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### **Professional Standard**

Collaborative and advisory council processes are structured in such a way that there is a clear, meaningful role for all participants.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. District Advisory Committee interviews
2. District Advisory Committee evaluations
3. Parent focus groups
4. Staff interviews

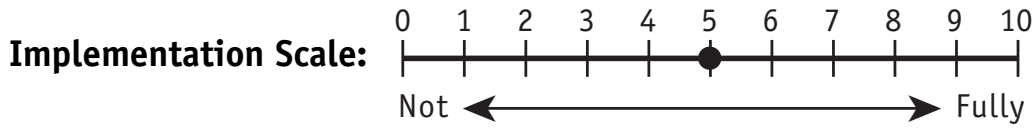
### **Findings**

1. In general, meetings of district and school-site councils and committees are run in such a way that each individual member has an opportunity to express his/her opinions and to vote on recommendations.
2. However, District Advisory Committee minutes and interviews indicate that some members tend to dominate the discussion.
3. Some School Site Council members say that the principal has a clear agenda that he/she wants members to “rubber stamp” or that the principal simply bypasses the SSC on an issue. Others say they do not feel that their questions are not welcome. Parents and teachers alike sometimes fear retaliation, either against their children or themselves professionally) and so do whatever the principal wants. Latino members at all levels are especially intimidated.
4. Also see Std. 3.5 - decisions are made at appropriate level.

### **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. Each individual council or committee member must be encouraged to play an active and meaningful role.
  - a. The district should provide training to all council/committee chairs regarding group dynamics and their leadership role in ensuring that all members are given an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. Training should also be provided to all members regarding group processes and decision making.
  - b. The chair of each group must ensure that all members have an opportunity to present their views in a respectful environment. He/she must be aware of individuals who dominate the discussion and ask the other members what they think about the issue.
  - c. The chair should ensure that members receive adequate background information on an issue and have an opportunity to hear divergent viewpoints.
  - d. As appropriate, voting on issues should be conducted anonymously by written ballot so that individual members will not feel intimidated to vote in a certain way.
  - e. To the extent possible, the chair should give individual members an opportunity to serve on a subcommittee and use different members each time.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



### 3.7 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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#### Professional Standard

Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district form action committees to research issues, and develop and implement recommendations.

#### Sources and Documentation

1. Community member interviews
2. District Advisory Committee interviews
3. District Advisory Committee minutes

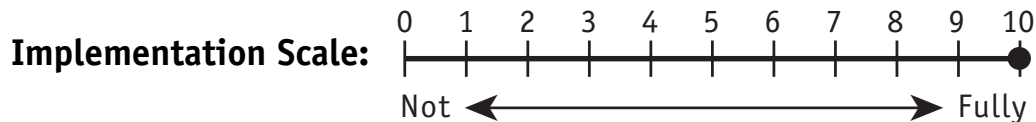
#### Findings

1. The District Advisory Committee has several subcommittees, including a Multicultural Committee and Conference Planning Committee.
2. Whether or not these groups have “action committees” may not be relevant as long as it uses an inclusive, effective process to fulfill its duties. See Std. 3.5 - decisions made at appropriate level, and Std. 3.6 - meaningful role for all participants.

#### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

None needed.

#### Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained





### 3.8 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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#### Legal Standard

Policies exist for the establishment of school site councils. (EC 52852. 5)

#### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual

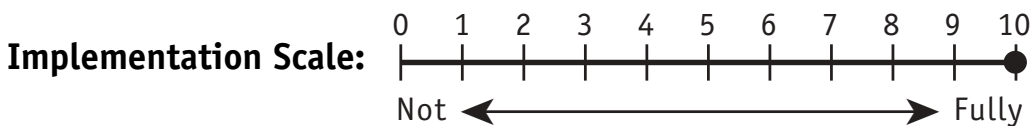
#### Findings

1. The establishment of a school site council for purposes of School-Based Program Coordination (Education Code 52852.5) is addressed in the district's policy and regulation on School Based Program Coordination (#6123), adopted in 1992.
2. The regulation provides that site councils established for the School Improvement Program will automatically become the site council for School-Based Program Coordination. (The membership, terms and responsibilities of school site councils related to the School Improvement Program are discussed in separate policies and regulations.) If no such council exists at a school, the school will undergo the process of establishing one. In accordance with law, all interested persons, including but not limited to the principal, teachers, other school personnel, parents, and students in secondary schools will have an opportunity to meet in public to establish the council. Student members will be selected by students, parents or other community members by parents, teachers by teachers, and other school personnel by other school personnel. The regulation also correctly reflects law regarding the composition of site councils (i.e., half shall be school staff, etc.).

#### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

None needed.

#### Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained



### 3.9 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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#### Legal Standard

School plans for the School-Based Coordinated Program exist at each school. (EC 52850)

#### Sources and Documentation

1. School plans
2. Compliance reviews
3. Policy manual

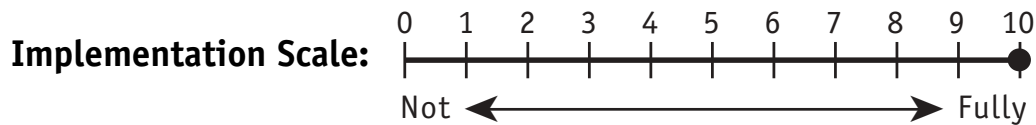
#### Findings

1. All schools that participate in School-Based Program Coordination have developed school plans.  
One new school is in the process of becoming a School-Based Program Coordination school.

#### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

None needed.

#### Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained



### 3.10 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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#### Legal Standard

School plans are comprehensive and have sufficient content to meet the statutory requirements. (EC 52853)

#### Sources and Documentation

1. School plans
2. Coordinated Compliance Review
3. Policy manual

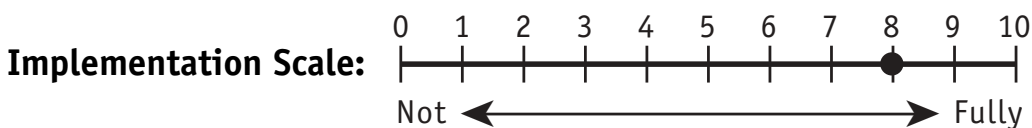
#### Findings

1. Legal requirements (Education Code 52853) regarding the content of school plans are accurately reflected in the district’s 1992 regulation on School Based Program Coordination (#6123). These include requirements that school plans must include an explicit statement of what the school seeks to accomplish by the coordinated use of categorical funds. School plans must also address (1) curricula, instructional strategies and materials; (2) instructional and auxiliary services to meet the needs of non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking students, educationally disadvantaged students, gifted and talented students and special education students; (3) staff development for teachers, other school personnel, paraprofessionals and volunteers; (4) ongoing evaluation of the school’s educational program; (5) other activities and objectives established by the council; and (6) proposed expenditures of funds available to the school for categorical programs.
2. The Coordinated Compliance Review only found that school plans had no description or budget for centralized services.

#### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must ensure that all school plans contains the elements required by law.
  - a. Each school site council should ensure that its school plan contain a description and budget for centralized services as recommended in the Coordinated Compliance Review.
  - b. In annually reviewing the site council’s recommended plan and determining whether to approve or disapprove the plan (see Std. 3.11), the state administrator should ensure that the plan contains each of the elements required by law.

#### Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantial



## **3.11 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils**

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### **Legal Standard**

The school site council annually reviews the school plan and the board annually approves or disapproves all site councils' plans. (EC 52853, 52855)

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. Coordinated Compliance Review
3. School site council minutes
4. Interviews with school site council members

### **Findings**

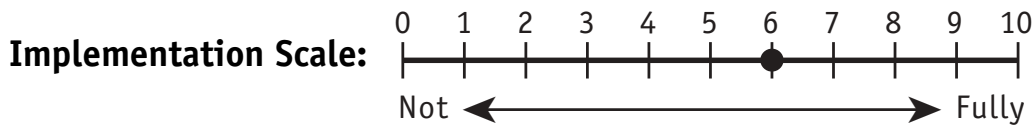
1. The district's 1992 regulation on School Based Program Coordination (#6123) accurately reflects legal requirements for the school site council's development of a school plan and the board's approval or disapproval of the plan, including the requirement that the board will communicate specific reasons if it disapproves the plan. However, it does not address the annual review of those plans nor the adoption of a new budget every year.
2. The advisory board currently has no authority to approve or disapprove school plans. The state administrator fulfills this role.
3. The Coordinated Compliance Review found noncompliance in that modified school plans have not been consistently developed and approved with the review, advice and certification of school site councils, and plan modifications have not been approved by the board.
4. School site councils do seem to be aware of the specific reasons that plans are disapproved. For example, two schools had voted to include community assistants in their annual school plans. Then they were told by district staff that they were required to hire curriculum specialists. They would have preferred community assistants but could not afford both. Sometimes the district's desires are expressed before the school site council recommends its plan; one school felt that the Sylvan Learning Center program was "pushed down our throats."

### **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district must ensure that it reviews and approves school plans each year in accordance with law.
  - a. The district should revise its regulation on School Based Program Coordination (#6123) to remove the provision which allows the school site council to request release time up to eight days for staff development. It is based on law (Education Code 52854) which was repealed in 1998 by SB 1193 (Ch. 313, Statutes of 1998). In addition, the district should add a provision to its regulation requiring the annual review of school plans and the development of a new budget each year.
  - b. Each school site council, with a reminder from the principal or district staff, must schedule an annual review of its school plan, develop a new budget and submit the recommended plan to the state administrator.
  - c. The state administrator must review each school plan and approve or disapprove it in accordance with law. If he disapproves, he must communicate specific reasons to the school site

council and give the council an opportunity to revise and resubmit the plan. If he approves, the plan should be submitted to the board for ratification.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 4.1 Policy

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### Professional Standard

Policies are written, organized and readily available to all members of the staff and to the public.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. State administrator interview
4. Staff interviews and surveys
5. Parent focus groups

### Findings

1. Policies are written and contained in a manual, organized by a system of policy coding which generally follows the CSBA coding system.
2. Processes for distributing policies are described in district procedures.
3. The policy manual is generally accessible to staff, but is not often used by staff because policies are out of date (see Std. 4.2). The advisory board does not have the authority to adopt policies, and only a few policies have been developed by the state administrator.
4. In recent years, some procedures have been distributed through “management bulletins.” Other procedures have been developed by individual departments. Teachers report that their principals provide procedural information and that the school handbook is useful to them.
5. Many interviewees expressed concern that procedures come from a variety of sources and/or that procedures are not written down. A personnel handbook does not exist and is not perceived by some district administrators as a priority. It was reported that, when the district lacks policies/procedures, it follows institutional memory or the policies of Long Beach Unified School District.
6. Some staff expressed concern about the lack of clear direction and said that, without consistent policies and procedures, schools operate fairly independently of the district.
7. Teachers, classified managers and classified staff were surveyed as to whether policy changes are conveyed to them in writing. Most (74 percent) of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that policy changes are conveyed in writing. Similarly, most (58 percent) of the classified managers agreed or strongly agreed that policy changes are conveyed in writing (another 26 percent were neutral or didn’t know). However, most classified staff either disagreed/strongly disagreed (45 percent) or were neutral or didn’t know (30 percent).
8. No parents in the focus groups said the district sends them literature regarding districtwide policies on a regular, or irregular, basis. Most information they do receive regarding policies comes from individual school sites. However, parents were aware of the new district policies on promotion/retention and school uniforms.  
Parent focus groups were specifically asked how they learned of the new promotion/retention

policy. Most parents said they received a flyer about the policy; a few learned about it during school meetings. The parents generally supported the policy, but thought the timing of its implementation caused unnecessary hardship. Only a few days before graduation, notices were sent to parents of children who would not be graduating with their classmates.

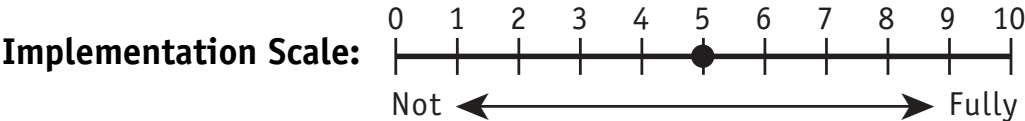
9. The board itself does not appear to have ready access to the policy manual. Only one board member reported having a copy, and she stated that it was a struggle for her to get it.

## **Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The district must place a high priority on updating its policies and procedures in order to put existing and desired practices into writing and to provide consistent direction to staff, students and the public.
  - a. The district should use the resources and processes described in Std. 4.2 to update its policies and procedures in a manner that includes significant staff involvement and a meaningful role for the board.
2. As the policy manual is updated, the district should review its policy coding system to determine if changes are needed.
  - a. District staff, working with a policy consultant, should review the index of CSBA's sample policy manual and determine if the district wishes to align its numbering system with CSBA's coding system as it has changed since 1982.
3. The district must develop an organized system for distributing policies and procedures to staff and making them available for public viewing.
  - a. The state administrator or designee should assign appropriate staff to oversee and implement the district's policy distribution process.
  - b. District staff should distribute a complete policy manual, after it has been updated, to the board, district department managers, all principals and other appropriate staff.
  - c. District staff should place an updated policy manual in an accessible location at the district office and school sites for public viewing.
  - d. District staff should develop a list of individuals who should receive ongoing policy/procedural updates, and ensure that appropriate staff is assigned the responsibility of distributing and inserting policy updates into each policy manual.
  - e. The state administrator or designee should consider simplifying the distribution of new policies by placing the district's policy manual on a compact disk provided through CSBA's policy services and ensuring that appropriate district staff and principals have access to computers with CD-ROM capability. In addition, the district can provide greater access to parents and others by placing the policy manual or selected policies on the district's Internet site.
  - f. When the policy manual is updated, the district should provide an inservice to principals and appropriate district staff which describes, at a minimum, the process the district will be using to review and update policies on a regular basis; individuals' responsibility for maintaining the policy manual; ways to use available resources to access district policies, other policy information, and state and federal law (e. g. , how to use CSBA's CD-ROM service); and major content changes. Subsequently, the district should offer a limited inservice as individual policies are adopted in order to explain major content changes to those staff most directly affected.

g. District staff should use the district newsletter, Internet site, annual notifications to parents and other appropriate means to notify the public about policies that have been updated. The district should also use direct mail to notify parents about those policies that would be of particular interest to them.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**





## 4.2 Policy

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### Professional Standard

Policies and administrative regulations are up to date and reflect current law and local needs.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. State administrator interview
4. Staff interviews

### Findings

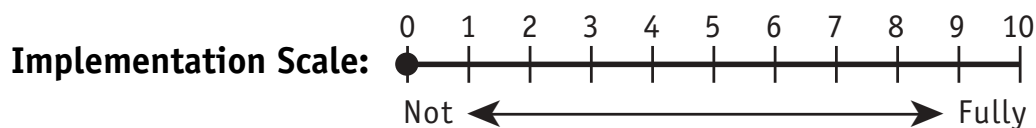
1. The district's policy manual was adopted in 1982 and has not been reviewed as a whole since then. Since 1992, only 20-25 policies have been adopted or revised.
2. As an advisory board, the current board is asked to ratify policies developed by the state administrator, but has no real policy-making authority. The board spends little time reviewing policies, and there is no mechanism to consider policies the board believes should be revised.
3. Many of the older policies do not reflect current law. The Coordinated Compliance Review process has identified some policies that needed to be revised (e.g., uniform complaint procedures, parent involvement policy), but it is unclear how the district otherwise finds out about changes in law, court decisions or new issues that would trigger the need for a policy review or a new policy. The district does not subscribe to any of CSBA's policy services. If state resources or the district's legal counsel are used for such purposes, they have not resulted in the large-scale updating of policies.
4. Some policies and procedures are too vague to be useful (e.g., terms like "excessive absenteeism" and "progressive discipline" are not defined; the number of vacation days awarded to full-time employees is not specified; access to personnel files and the content of personnel files are not clarified).
5. District staff generally recognizes the need to update the policies and procedures (one administrator said this is on the 1998-99 agenda), but others said the real question is where staff's time is best spent. Crisis management occupies much of it, and changes in administrations and procedures have been so frequent that developing and updating written procedures would be extremely time intensive. One administrator recommended that it needs to be a one-person job so that policies and procedures can be composed, checked and formatted in a standard way.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must place a high priority on updating its policies and procedures in order to provide consistent direction to staff, students and the public.
  - a. The district should contract with an outside firm such as CSBA to provide individualized policy services tailored to the district's needs. CSBA provides the expertise of a policy consultant who is knowledgeable about current law and appropriate policy content; it also provides word processing services which would save the district significant time and effort

- while ensuring the consistency of policy formats.
- b. The state administrator or designee should assign staff from each department to work with the policy consultant to thoroughly review the policies and procedures applicable to each department and make revisions as necessary. These district staff members must make a commitment to spend time with the policy consultant and on internal policy discussions and reviews.
  - c. The state administrator or designee should assign a staff coordinator knowledgeable about district policy and practices to oversee the district's work on the policy manual. The coordinator would serve as a liaison to the policy consultant and would be responsible for ensuring that district staff complete their assignments, reviewing staff recommendations and following the process through to adoption.
  - d. The state must determine the appropriate role of the board in the updating of policies. It would not be practical to revise the entire policy manual to describe the current situation in the district based on the state administration. Rather, as policies are updated, they should describe the board's direction for the schools as though the board had full governance authority. Therefore, it is important that the board be meaningfully involved in the development of policies now, rather than simply signing off on policies developed by the state administrator. After the board participates in intervention designed to improve board relations (see Std. 5.4), it is recommended that the board begin to participate in the district's work with the policy consultant, review policy drafts prepared by staff, listen to public input on policies, ensure that policies are aligned with the district vision and goals, and adopt policies contingent upon final approval of the state administrator. The authority of the state administrator to veto the board's policies should be limited to instances in which he judges that the policy would have a significantly negative impact on the district's finances or educational program.
  - e. In the interim, the district should subscribe to CSBA's Policy Reference Update Service or its GAMUT (Governance and Management Using Technology) CD-ROM service in order to have immediate access to current law in a usable format. In addition to providing a current sample policy manual, these services issue hard-copy or CD-ROM updates of sample policies and regulations three times a year.
  - f. Once the district's policy manual is updated, the district should subscribe to CSBA's Manual Maintenance service to receive continued, individualized policy assistance. The service includes ongoing access to a policy consultant, word processing services and, three times a year, a packet of sample policies and regulations plus the GAMUT CD.
2. To build its capacity for policy making, the board must be knowledgeable about education issues in general, the purposes and uses of policies, the appropriate focus and content of policies, and the role of the board in adopting and evaluating policies.
    - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm such as CSBA to provide training for the board and administrative staff related to the board's policy role.
    - b. The district should provide board members and administrative staff with written information about the board's policy role.
    - c. The district should ensure that board members have opportunities to participate in conferences and workshops on education issues that impact their schools and students (see Std. 5.2).

**Standard Implemented: Not**



## 4.3 Policy

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### Legal Standard

The board has adopted all policies mandated by state and federal law.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual

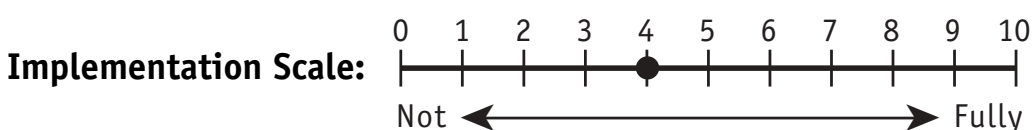
### Findings

1. CSBA has identified 49 cases in which laws require the board to adopt a policy or specific policy language (see Attachment D). The district has fulfilled 34 of these mandates (approximately 8 of which are fulfilled by either negotiated agreement provisions or personnel commission rules and regulations), has another 9 mandated policies with some specific mandated language missing, and has 6 missing altogether.
2. An additional 29 policies are mandated if the district participates in certain state or federal programs (e.g., if the district operates a Gifted and Talented Education program, it must have a related policy). The district has 12 of these policies in place, another 2 with some language missing, and 15 missing altogether. When the district updates its policy manual, it would be necessary to determine whether the district participates in those programs which would require these policies.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must set a high priority for updating its policies and regulations (see Std. 4.2) and, within that review, should place the mandated policies as the first priority.
  - a. The district should obtain the list of mandated policies from CSBA and consult district legal counsel about any additional known mandates.
  - b. District staff should determine which additional policies are mandated based on the programs offered by the district.
  - c. The district should use available resources described in Std. 4.2 to develop new policies as needed and to review existing mandated policies to ensure that the policy language reflects current law.
2. To ensure that the district continues to adopt policies in accordance with law, the district must establish a process for identifying new mandates.
  - a. The district should receive updated lists of mandated policies available through CSBA for districts which subscribe to the association's policy services and/or direct the district's legal counsel to notify the administrator and board of any new mandated policies.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 4.4 Policy

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### Legal Standard

The board annually reviews its policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/cocurricular activities. (EC 35160. 5)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board agendas
3. Board minutes

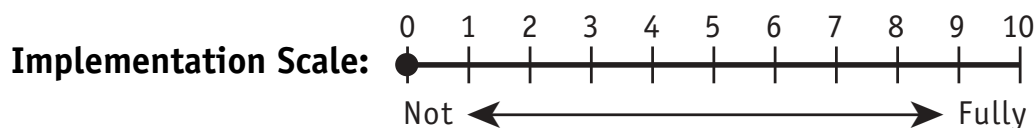
### Findings

1. The district's policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/cocurricular activities were last adopted by the district in 1982.
2. The district administration has not reviewed these policies in at least the past two years nor brought them to the advisory board for review or revision.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must annually review those policies for which annual review is mandated by law.
  - a. Until the board resumes its policy-making role, the state administrator or designee should annually review the district's policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/cocurricular activities. Any recommended revisions should be submitted to the board for ratification. If no changes are necessary, the state administrator should still ask the board to review and reapprove the existing policies.
  - b. When the board resumes its policy-making role, the board president and state administrator/superintendent should schedule an annual review of the district's policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/cocurricular activities at a designated board meeting each year. District staff should keep a "tickler" file of recurring board agenda items such as these annual reviews and should remind the board president and state administrator.
  - c. The state administrator/superintendent should assign staff to recommend any changes needed at that time.

### Standard Implemented: Not



## 4.5 Policy

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### Professional Standard

Existing board policies are regularly reviewed with the involvement of the staff.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. Policy manual

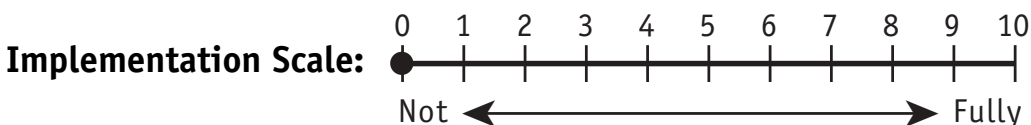
### Findings

1. Policies have not been regularly reviewed in recent years, either with or without staff involvement. In the absence of a policy-making role for the advisory board, a few policies have been developed by the state administrator.
2. Existing policies and regulations do establish a method for involving staff in policy development. They direct the superintendent to give the board proposed policy statements for consideration, modification and adoption, and establish a Policy/Regulation Advisory Committee to annually review the policy manual. These processes have not been followed in recent years.
3. Staff was surveyed regarding the extent to which they believe they and district administrators are in close agreement on school policy. Although large numbers were neutral or didn't know, more classified managers and classified staff said there is not agreement (33 percent and 37 percent, respectively) than said there is agreement (25 percent and 29 percent, respectively).

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must follow an effective process that uses staff expertise to develop policy recommendations and policy drafts for the state administrator's consideration or, once the board resumes its policy-making role, for the board's consideration.
  - a. The district should implement the district's procedures (#2231) for policy/regulation development, which involve administrators, teachers, principals, classified employees and employee union representatives in the development and review of policies.
  - b. The district should ensure that staff has access to a variety of sources of policy information to use in reviewing and developing policy recommendations. These include but are not limited to Education Code and other legal statutes, California Department of Education advisories and materials, publications related to education issues and trends, journals of education research, and CSBA policy services.
  - c. The board president and state administrator should schedule policy discussions as a regular part of board meetings.

### Standard Implemented: Not



## 4.6 Policy

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### Professional Standard

The district has established a system of securing citizen input in policy development and district operation.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews and surveys
3. Community member interviews
4. Parent focus groups

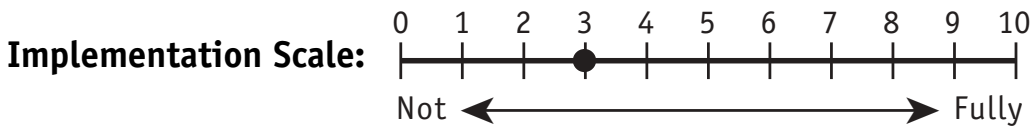
### Findings

1. Little policy development has occurred in the district in recent years.
2. The district has procedures (#2231) in place to include community members on the Policy/Regulation Advisory Committee, but this committee is not in operation.
3. Board meetings do contain opportunities for public input on all issues (see Std. 6.7).
4. There are a District Advisory Committee, District Bilingual Advisory Committee, school site councils and school advisory committees which are intended to provide input on school operations. However, district advisory committees do not appear to have much influence in district policy or operations (see Std. 3.5). A DAC member or two were involved in the development of the promotion/retention policy, but the policy was not reviewed and commented on by the larger body. The DBAC also was not involved in the development of that policy, nor in the development of the district's approach to bilingual education in the aftermath of Proposition 227.
5. Interviews and surveys also do not convey a sense that parents and community members are encouraged to provide input. When asked whether parents have a large say in board decisions, classified managers either disagreed/strongly disagreed (50 percent) or were neutral/didn't know (42 percent). A significant percentage of classified staff was also neutral/didn't know (38 percent), but 43 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed that parents have a large say. In fact, 41 percent of the classified managers said the board does not really encourage public participation (another 42 percent were neutral or didn't know, and 16 percent felt the board does encourage board participation). Teachers and classified staff were more likely than classified managers to believe that the board does encourage public participation: 42 percent of the teachers and 35 percent of the classified staff felt this way.
6. In the case of the district's new promotion/retention policy, parents in the focus groups said they knew of no parents who were involved in crafting the policy. Only a few people (some School Site Council members, some employees) said they knew about the policy before it was actually adopted. Nevertheless, they generally support the policy (but not the manner in which it was implemented; see Std. 4.1). Similarly, they generally support the school uniform policy, especially for elementary and middle schools, although some complained that the process for adopting the policy at their schools was not followed.

## Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must follow an effective policy development process that includes opportunities for input from parents and community members.
  - a. The district should implement its existing procedures (#2231) for policy/regulation development, which involve community members on the Policy/Regulation Advisory Committee.
  - b. The state administrator or designee should ensure that the members of the Policy/Regulation Advisory Committee, including community members, are trained in the purpose and content of policies.
  - c. The chair of the Policy/Regulation Advisory Committee must ensure that all committee members have an opportunity to present their views in a respectful environment.
  - d. The board president and state administrator should schedule policy discussions as a regular part of board meetings, and the board president must ensure that the public feels welcome to provide input on policies during these meetings (see Std. 5.8).
  - e. The district should utilize district and school site councils/committees as additional opportunities to gather input on policies and district operations.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 4.7 Policy

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### Professional Standard

The board supports and follows its own policies once they are adopted.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Board minutes
5. Parent focus groups

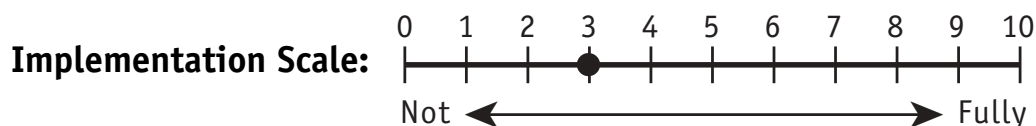
### Findings

1. The advisory board currently does not have the authority to develop its own policies; it only reviews and ratifies policies developed by the state administrator.
2. In any case, the outdated policy manual does not appear to be a driving force in either district or school-site decision making. Policies are essentially irrelevant. One example was noted in which the board had a lengthy discussion of the process the district should use to appoint a board member; finally a board member asked whether there was a procedure in the bylaws. Bylaw 9221 was read, but it had not been updated since 1982 and was not used in this instance. In other examples, individual board members have appeared to ignore the district's policy related to media spokespersons (see Std. 1.5), and the district's bylaw establishing a process for adopting a board calendar has not been followed (see Std. 6.1). However, one parent noted that the biggest surprise about the new promotion/retention policy was that "the district actually did it this time!"

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must place a high priority on updating its policies and procedures through a process that builds the support of the board, staff and community for the policies (see Std. 4.2, Std. 4.5, Std. 4.6).
2. Once updated, the district's policies should become a resource for district and board decision making.
  - a. District staff should include in the board agenda any policy language that is pertinent to the current issue being addressed by the board (e. g. , an agenda item on vandalism might include relevant policy language on student discipline, district police department guidelines or visitor registration; an agenda item on contracts might include the district's policy language on bids).
  - b. As policies are being considered by the board, district staff should provide information about, and the board should discuss, the potential impact of the policy on the district's budget, collective bargaining agreement, curriculum, staffing and facilities needs, and other operations.
  - c. Board members should periodically read the policy manual on their own time. In addition, the board president and state administrator should schedule periodic reviews at board meetings of selected policies and bylaws that are most relevant to board actions and behaviors.

### Standard Implemented: Partially





## 5.1 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Legal Standard

Each board member meets the eligibility requirements of being a board member. (EC 35107)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. Los Angeles County Registrar information
3. District roster of employees

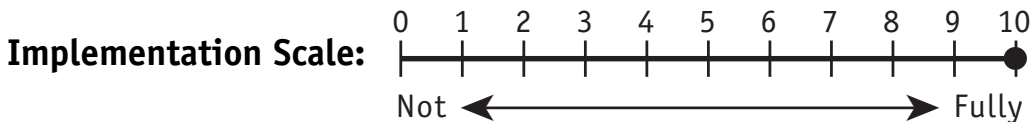
### Findings

1. Each board member meets the eligibility requirements of Education Code 35107, which include requirements that a board member be: (1) 18 years or older; (2) a citizen of the state; (3) a resident of the school district; and (4) a registered voter. Rumors persist that one board member does not actually live at the address given, but this cannot be confirmed.
2. Education Code 35107 also specifies that district employees may not be board members; none of the board members is an employee of the district.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

None needed.

### Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained



## 5.2 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Legal Standard

Board members participate in orientation sessions, workshops, conventions and special meetings sponsored by board associations.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. CSBA records on conference attendance

### Findings

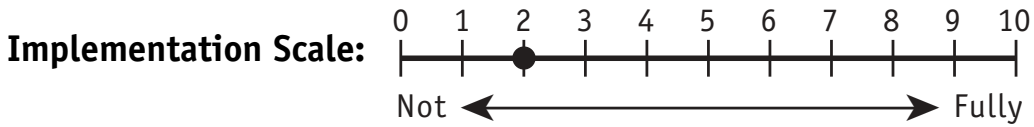
1. The district does not provide an orientation for its new board members.
2. There is an annual stipend of \$3,000 available to board members that can be used for development activities such as trainings, conferences and workshops.
3. The district has participated in a number of CSBA events over the past seven years (from 3 to 9 events each year). These have included CSBA's Annual Education Conference, Spokesperson Training, Legislative Action Conference, Curriculum Institute, New Board Member Institute, Board Presidents Workshop, Back to School Conference, separate conferences addressing the unique needs of Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander students, and briefings on the Brown Act, state budget, school-to-career programs and special education. However, not all board members attend these events. Generally, 1-3 board members attend a given event, and the same board members tend to participate each time.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. All district board members must participate in continuing education specifically designed to increase board members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities, boardsmanship and critical education issues that affect the schools.
  - a. Rather than providing a stipend to individual board members, the district's board development agenda should be coordinated by the governance team. The board should work together to develop an annual schedule of trainings which will meet the board's needs. The state administrator or designee should identify and recommend educational opportunities.
  - b. The district might also contract with an outside firm to conduct a single-district training tailored to meet the district's needs or to provide training on an ongoing basis.
  - c. Based on the training needs identified by the board, the state administrator should increase the budget for board development as necessary to provide sufficient opportunities for board members to be adequately trained.
  - d. Board members should attend workshops and conferences together whenever possible for team building and equal access to information.
  - e. The state administrator and other appropriate staff should provide an orientation session for all board members, and later for each new board member, in order to familiarize them with district policies and practices.
2. Board members should share their knowledge and experiences with each other and the state administrator.
  - a. After participating in a board development activity, board members should report to the full

- board about what they learned and possible implications for the district. Ideas about successful programs and practices also should be forwarded to the state administrator.
- b. Board members should share useful information about things they learned through reading or through other persons.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.3 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

Pertinent literature, statutes, legal counsel and recognized authorities are available to and utilized by the board to understand duties, functions, authority and responsibilities of members.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview

### Findings

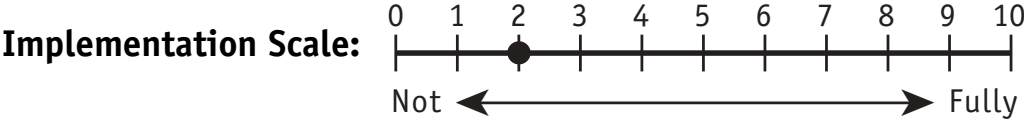
1. Because the role of the advisory board differs from that of other school boards, this standard must be looked at from two perspectives: (1) what sources the board has to understand its role as an advisory board, and (2) what sources the board has to understand the role it will fulfill when it resumes governance of the district.
2. There are no written guidelines or formal framework from the state describing the precise role of the advisory board, and the administration does not provide an orientation for board members (see Std. 5.2). The state administrator brings items to board meetings when he wants the board's opinion, direction and advice. After its change in status, the board participated in a CSBA training on its role as an advisory board, but there have been changes in the composition of the board since then. Some board members say they are unsure of their current role, and in fact are very frustrated that they do not have a meaningful role.
3. In terms of understanding the role of school boards in general, individual board members have attended CSBA trainings which include board roles and responsibilities (see Std. 5.2). The district is a member of CSBA and thus obtains CSBA publications and other informational services. The district does not subscribe to CSBA's policy services so does not have access to that source of information about board authority and relevant statutes. Several board members noted that they were not provided, or had difficulty obtaining, basic reference materials, district policies, pertinent legislation, etc.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The duties of the advisory board must be formalized and clearly delineated by the state. These duties must include a meaningful role in providing for public participation and public accountability.
  - a. The state must provide a written description of the advisory board's responsibilities.
  - b. The state administrator must provide an orientation session for board members to familiarize them with their responsibilities as an advisory board.
  - c. The district's legal counsel must be available to advise the board regarding its responsibilities.
2. In preparation for resuming governance of the district, the board must increase its knowledge and understanding of board roles and responsibilities.
  - a. The district should contract with an outside firm to conduct a preassessment of the board's current level of knowledge and understanding of board roles and responsibilities. Such a preassessment would help to target training on issues that would be most beneficial to the board and district. A self-evaluation component would allow board members to evaluate their own areas of strength and areas needing improvement.

- b. The district should contract with an outside firm to provide training to the board on its responsibilities in vision setting, curriculum, program accountability, policy, finance, school facilities, human resources, collective bargaining, community leadership and boardmanship.
- c. Board members should develop a coordinated board development agenda (see Std. 5.2) and make a commitment to ongoing attendance at conferences and workshops designed to reinforce board effectiveness.
- d. The state administrator should provide an orientation session for board members in order to familiarize them with district policies and practices and other issues they will need to know to fulfill their responsibilities.
- e. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2 to update its policies with regard to board roles and responsibilities.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.4 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

Functional working relations are maintained among board members.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. Community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Observations of board meetings

### Findings

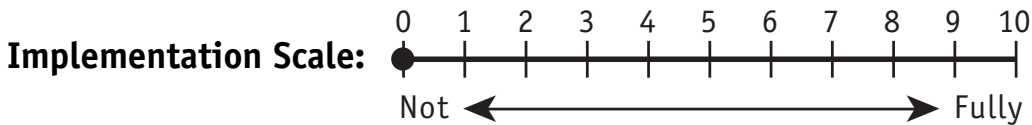
1. Board decisions are usually split 4-3 and there is a perception that it will be difficult to bring the board together. Relations are hampered by differences in personality, racial tension and perceptions of unfairness, personal agendas and lack of leadership. Divisive issues have included the election of the board president, the appointment of a board member, a school facilities bond, state oversight, personnel issues and procedural/parliamentary issues. While it is not unusual for any board to have differences of opinion and split votes, the lack of decorum in this district's board meetings hurts the board's ability to conduct business as well as its public image.
2. Parents and community members perceive a board that is "splintered" and "going in all directions."
3. In staff surveys, 58 percent of the classified managers and 52 percent of the classified staff said there is a lot of conflict among the board about district goals; most of the others were neutral or didn't know. None of the classified managers and 12 percent of the classified staff believed that there is not a lot of conflict about district goals.
4. When asked whether board efforts have resulted in important educational improvements in the past year or two, 42 percent of the classified managers disagreed, 33 percent were neutral/didn't know, and 25 percent agreed that there have been important improvements due to board efforts. Most classified staff (46 percent) were neutral/didn't know; however, 35 percent disagreed and 20 percent agreed that the board has made improvements. Among teachers, however, a larger percentage felt the board has been helpful (44 percent) than felt it had not (32 percent).
5. Also see Std. 5.5 - board member support for majority decisions; Std. 5.13 - board acts for the community; and Std. 4.7 - board follows its own policies.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members must learn how to communicate effectively with one another in a professional, respectful manner and to focus on their common interest in serving students.
  - a. The district should conduct a board retreat with an outside facilitator and an organizational development specialist experienced in multiracial/multicultural environments. This interactive training should be designed to:

- address the root causes of problems rather than symptoms;
  - emphasize behavior management and effective boardsmanship;
  - include a study of leadership/personal/management styles;
  - explore values and beliefs;
  - build knowledge and general awareness by studying the phases of group development (forming, storming, norming and performing);
  - use “structured experiences” in which board members engage in some meaningful activity, look back at the activity critically, obtain some useful information and then transfer that behavior to real-life experience;
  - use formal instrumentation (e. g. , Myer-Briggs, DISC Personal Profile System, 360-Degree Feedback, etc. ); and
  - focus on a common task such as setting a vision for the district.
2. The board president should exhibit leadership skills, model desirable behaviors, conduct board meetings in a way that keeps the board on task, and be perceived by all board members as a fair leader.
- a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide the board president with individualized training in public speaking, board president responsibilities, and meeting procedures.

**Standard Implemented: Not**



## 5.5 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

Individual board members respect the decisions of the board majority and support the board's actions in public.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Observations of board meetings
4. Policy manual
5. News articles/other media

### Findings

1. Maintaining a united front is difficult for any school board. Members are elected as individuals, must be responsive to their constituencies, and have a right to their own beliefs and values. To be effective, however, these individuals need to make the difficult transition to being a member of a team. This does not mean giving up one's own convictions. There is a distinction between supporting the board majority's action and not undercutting that action. Individual board members don't need to advocate what they don't believe. The time to state one's opinion is during the board discussion. Then, once a decision has been reached, all board members need to accept the majority's decision and not undermine it.
2. The district has a policy on public statements by board members which says that, when a board decision has been reached, all board members will support that decision.
3. However, interviews and observations of board meetings indicate that there is a serious lack of unity, and that the board members in the minority do not necessarily support the majority's decision (or the state administrator's decision). They feel that the board majority operates unfairly or acts as a "rubber stamp" for the state administrator.
4. There have been numerous instances in which dissenting opinions were voiced by board members publicly through the media and community groups (e.g., criticism of the district's decision to bring Sylvan Learning Centers to the district). Not surprisingly, the news media have repeatedly highlighted this disunity among the board.
5. The result of divisive actions and separate comments is ongoing public focus on the board rather than on student achievement, and confusion on the part of staff, parents and the public regarding board positions and actions. When the board appears in public to be in disarray, it creates the impression that the schools are in disarray as well.

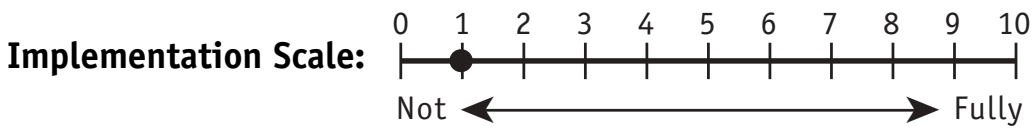
### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members must understand the negative impact that dissenting statements have on the schools and students and make a commitment to respect the majority's decision regardless of their own opinions.



- a. The district should contract with an outside firm to provide boardsmanship training. Among the issues addressed in such training should be the authority of the board as a whole to take action vs. the role of individual board members, and the public spokesperson role of board members.
- b. The board and administration should identify spokespersons who have authority to speak to the media on behalf of the district (see Std. 1.5).
- c. If an individual board member does publicly present his/her personal opinion which is contrary to the board position, that board member must clarify that he/she is presenting a personal viewpoint and is not representing the board.
- d. The board and district administration should counteract any contrary statements by engaging in proactive media relations with reporters, assignment editors and free-lancers to ensure that accurate, timely position statements are available.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.6 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

Functional working relations are maintained between the board and administrative team.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. Community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Observations of board meetings
7. News articles/other media

### Findings

1. The board majority appears to have a positive relationship with the current state administrator.
2. However, relations between the board minority and state administrator are decidedly strained. Individual board members are often perceived as being openly disrespectful of the state administrator and/or staff during board meetings and in remarks to the media and special interest groups. It does not appear that the state administrator criticizes board members in public.
3. The tension at the board level largely stems from the intervention role the state administrator plays, which is understandably quite different than the typical board-superintendent relationship. Some board members are so opposed to the state's intervention in the district that they do not want to be seen as supportive of any state administrator or to help the state administration be successful.
4. A lack of trust also has been created by a feeling that the administration does not provide adequate support to the board. The board feels out of the loop. For instance, the state administrator had not notified the board that many complaints had been made against a principal or what, if anything, he was doing about it.
5. There is a perception that the state administrator "plays favorites" with the board — meeting regularly with some board members while not meeting with others, whispering to some during board meetings, etc. The state administrator has offered to meet with all board members, but some have chosen not to exercise that option.
6. Also see Std. 5.7 - respect and support for district staff.

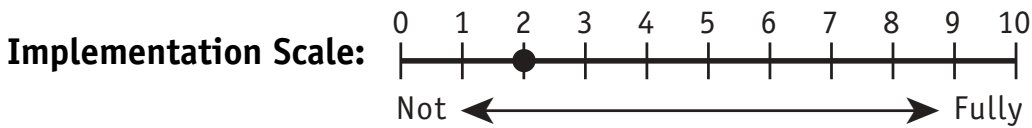
### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members must set aside their feelings about the state's intervention and work closely with the state administrator in order to move the district forward and resume governance on behalf of the community.
  - a. The board should be provided with survey results and anecdotal information which demonstrate the harm that is caused to the district and students by the inability of the board and state

administrator to work together effectively.

- b. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training to both the board and state administrator on boardmanship in general and board-administration relations in particular. Because of the unique division of responsibilities between the state administrator and the advisory board, the training needs to be tailored to this district.
2. The state administrator must make a greater effort to develop positive working relations with the board minority.
- a. The state administrator should reiterate a willingness to meet with each board member.
  - b. The state administrator should minimize discussions with individual board members during board meetings, except as is necessary to confer with the board president in the running of the meeting.
3. The board must be prepared to work effectively with a superintendent once the district resumes governance.
- a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide board training which includes information about the normal division of responsibilities between the board and superintendent.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.7 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

The board publicly demonstrates respect and support for district staff.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. Observation of board meetings
5. News articles/other media

### Findings

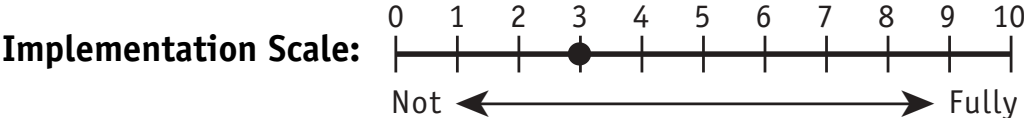
1. Although the board recognizes and appreciates the work done by some staff, some board members are openly critical of staff's qualifications and performance. They told interviewers of their concerns about the ability of staff at all levels. Even publicly, individual board members have questioned staff's qualifications, their personal interest in contracts, the reasons they were hired, the lack of credentials, etc.
2. In written surveys, staff members indicated that they felt unappreciated by the board: 42 percent of the classified managers agreed/strongly agreed that managers are never given credit by the board for their work (50 percent were neutral/didn't know and only 8 percent said the board gives credit to classified managers). Among classified staff, 58 percent agreed/strongly agreed that classified staff is never given credit by the board for their work (30 percent were neutral/didn't know and 11 percent said the board gives credit to classified staff).
3. Employees also do not believe that the organization cares about them: 59 percent of classified managers surveyed and 48 percent of classified staff disagreed/strongly disagreed that the organization cares about the welfare of its employees.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members must become more sensitive as to how their statements regarding staff influence staff morale and the public's perception of the district.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide the board with training on boardsmanship issues (see Std. 5.4 and Std. 5.6). Such training might include an opportunity for board members to view themselves in a videotaped board meeting to watch for instances in which their words or nonverbal messages were disrespectful to staff.
  - b. Board members should refer any concerns about staff's qualifications to the state administrator and recognize that staff evaluations are the responsibility of the administration. Once the board resumes governance, the board will have the opportunity to hold the superintendent accountable for results in the district, including staff performance. Even then, the board should not be involved in the evaluations of individual staff members but should only hold the superintendent accountable based on programmatic results and student achievement.
  - c. To the extent possible, the board should advise the administration of information that may be requested or questions that may be asked at board meetings so that staff will not be caught unprepared (see Std. 6.3).

d. The board should publicly praise staff for a job well done and should consider other rewards and incentives to encourage staff to do their best (e. g. , service pins, certificates, plaques, public recognition at a board meeting, cash awards). Pursuant to Education Code 44015, the board may, if it adopts rules and regulations to implement its awards program, make awards to employees who propose ideas or procedures which eliminate or reduce district expenditures or improve district operations; perform special acts or services in the public interest; or by their superior accomplishments make exceptional contributions to the efficiency, economy or other improvement in district operations.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.8 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

The board demonstrates respect for public input at meetings and public hearings.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Community member interviews
2. Parent focus groups
3. Board member interviews
4. Observations of board meetings
5. Staff interviews and surveys

### Findings

1. Board members state their desire to involve the public in the schools, including participation in board meetings.
2. Public attendance at board meetings is generally poor. The few audience members tend to be employees or older persons who do not have children in the district.
3. When members of the public do address the board, observations of board meetings show that some members of the public are encouraged and treated with respect while others are not (usually reflected by the split on the board). Some interviewees believe that the board is less welcoming toward Latino members of the public.
4. Part of demonstrating respect is holding the public input sessions early enough to encourage participation. Some interviewees complain that the meetings are too long and the items of greatest interest to parents often occur toward the end of lengthy meetings. Although this may have been true in the past, public input sessions now occur early on the board's agenda.
5. Parents and community members often said they do not feel that their input is really welcome. Many staff agree: When asked whether parents have a large say in board decisions, 47 percent of teachers surveyed disagreed/strongly disagreed (30 percent said they do have a large say, and 23 percent were neutral or didn't know). Classified managers also either disagreed/strongly disagreed that parents have a large say (50 percent) or were neutral/didn't know (42 percent). A significant percentage of classified staff was also neutral/didn't know (38 percent), but 43 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed that parents have a large say. Also, 41 percent of the classified managers surveyed said the board does not really encourage public participation (another 42 percent were neutral or didn't know, and 16 percent felt the board does encourage board participation). Teachers and classified staff were more likely than classified managers to believe that the board does encourage public participation — 42 percent of the teachers and 35 percent of the classified staff felt this way — but significant numbers of teachers (34 percent) and classified staff (28 percent) believe that the board does not encourage public participation:

*Board Does Not Encourage Public Participation*

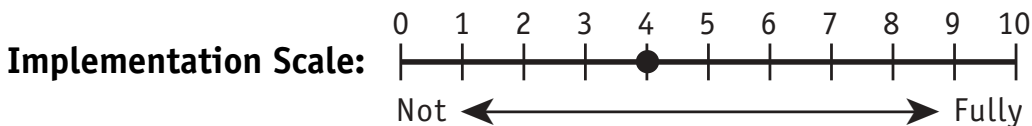
	Teachers	Classified Managers	Classified Staff
Strongly disagree	21%	8%	20%
Disagree	21	8	15
Neutral/don't know	25	42	38
Agree	22	33	11
Strongly agree	12	8	17

6. Also see Std. 6.7 - legal requirements for providing public input opportunities during board meetings, and Std. 4.6 - citizen input in policy development and district operation.

**Recommendations and Recovery Steps**

1. The board must ensure that its behaviors and actions invite rather than discourage public input.
  - a. The board should adopt a philosophical statement about the importance of respecting public input.
  - b. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide board training on communications with the public. Such training should address, at a minimum, verbal communications with the public, sensitivity to nonverbal messages and ways to deal with confrontations or criticism.
  - c. District staff should revise the agenda to be more welcoming of public input rather than focusing on guidelines for appropriate behavior by the public.
  - d. The board president should verbally encourage public input at each meeting.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.9 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

Board members respect confidentiality of information by the administration.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. News articles/other media

### Findings

1. There is a perception that board members have leaked confidential issues in the past. Opinions as to whether or not this still occurs are mixed.
2. At present, the damage that can be done by the release of confidential information outweighs the need to seek advisory input from the board, so the state administrator is reluctant to bring sensitive issues to the board. The board does hold closed sessions on issues involving personnel matters and other issues as allowed by the Brown Act (see Std. 6.5), but the state administrator will minimize the board's involvement in confidential matters until he believes that the board is committed to maintaining confidentiality.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

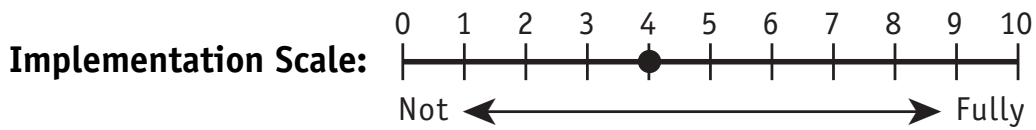
1. The board must be knowledgeable about legal requirements and consequences pertaining to the release of confidential information, and must make a commitment to abide by the principles of confidentiality.
  - a. When the district updates its policy manual using the resources described in Std. 4.2, it should adopt a bylaw addressing the disclosure of confidential/privileged information. Such a bylaw should include the definition of confidential/privileged information as provided in Government Code 1098, and should specify that confidential information from closed sessions shall not be divulged unless a majority of board members agree to release the information subject to applicable laws regarding closed sessions.
  - b. The district should update its bylaws pertaining to closed sessions and should provide training and information to board members regarding Brown Act requirements (see Std. 6.5).
  - c. When the board is in doubt about the appropriateness of disclosing any information, it must consult its legal counsel.
  - d. The district's legal counsel should advise the board that, pursuant to Government Code 1098, it is a misdemeanor for any public officer or employee to willfully and knowingly use or disclose for monetary gain any confidential information acquired in the course of his/her official duties.
  - e. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training on boardsmanship (see Std. 5.4 and Std. 5.6) which would include issues related to confidentiality.
  - f. Individual board members must demonstrate personal integrity in the handling of confidential matters. They must refrain from discussing such issues in public meetings, with friends or colleagues, or with the media.
2. When the board has made a commitment to respect confidentiality, the state administrator must be



willing to share confidential matters with the board. The board can only prove itself to be trustworthy if provided the opportunity.

- a. The state administrator should gradually begin to bring confidential matters to the board during closed sessions.
- b. If any board member violates the confidentiality of those issues, the state administrator or district legal counsel should remind the board member of the legal consequences of doing so. The full board should consider a censure of the board member for any such violations.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.10 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

The board restricts itself to a policy-making role and does not attempt to administer policies.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. Board minutes
5. Observation of board meetings

### Findings

1. As an advisory board, the current board has no policy-making role in the broad sense of providing direction through a district vision, curriculum guidelines, etc., nor in the sense of adopting specific written district policies on various topics. Its only role is to ratify the few policies developed by the state administrator. The board spends little time reviewing policies, and there is not a process for suggesting or adopting policy between the advisory board and the state administrator.
2. Existing policies spell out the appropriate distinction between the board's policy-making role and the superintendent's implementation role.
3. To determine whether or not the board attempts to "administer" policies in practice, the content of the existing policies was reviewed to determine if policies are overly prescriptive or administrative. Policies are the board's way of stating what it wants to happen and why.. Implementation details (how, who and when) are usually contained in procedures or administrative regulations developed by district staff. A board with full authority to govern its district does not need to be involved in implementation details because it has its opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and to hold its superintendent accountable for results. In any case, the district's existing policies do not appear to be overly prescriptive or administrative.
4. In staff surveys, classified managers were generally either neutral (50 percent) or agreed (34 percent) that the board is not involved in the day-to-day operations of schools. Furthermore, 44 percent of the teachers and 45 percent of the classified staff either agreed or strongly agreed; many others were neutral or didn't know. Altogether, only 16 percent of the classified managers, 27 percent of the teachers and 27 percent of the classified staff believed that the board *is* too involved in day-to-day operations.
5. Classified managers agreed/strongly agreed (75 percent) that district administrators are allowed to make plans and set priorities without excessive interference from the board; 32 percent of the classified staff and 37 percent of the teachers felt the same way, although the largest percentage (46 percent of classified staff and 48 percent of teachers) were neutral or didn't know. (Looked at another way, only 8 percent of the classified managers, 22 percent of the classified staff and 15 percent of the teachers felt that the board does interfere.)
6. On the other hand, interviews, board agendas, board minutes and observations of board meetings indicate that the board spends too much time on issues that are more administrative in nature. The

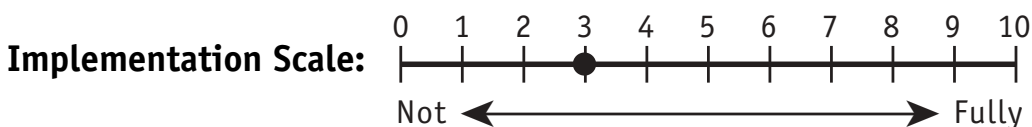
board agenda is replete with business items, and educational issues are rarely included. Personnel issues, in particular, dominate board discussion. There is confusion in the district about the appropriate role of the board in personnel issues. Although the Education Code states that the board hires staff, boards usually provide flexibility to the superintendent in this area so they can hold him/her accountable for staff performance later. Their typical role is limited to ratifying the superintendent's recommendations for hiring.

7. Also see Std. 5.11 regarding the extent to which individual board members attempt to get involved in operational issues.

## Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The board must focus on broad policy issues rather than administrative operations.
  - a. The state should entrust the advisory board with a more meaningful, policy-making role in order to focus the board on appropriate issues, begin to hold the board accountable for its decisions, and prepare the board to resume governance. These should include but not be limited to responsibilities for vision setting, policy adoption and review (see Std. 4.2), and program evaluation. The board and administration should meet in a retreat to ensure mutual agreement and understanding regarding these roles.
  - b. The state should prepare written materials describing the roles and responsibilities of the advisory board as agreed upon in #1a above (also see Std. 5.3).
  - c. The state administrator should provide an orientation for current board members, and subsequently for new board members, regarding the roles and responsibilities of the advisory board (see Std. 5.3).
  - d. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm such as CSBA to provide board training on effective governance and policy making (see Std. 5.3 and Std. 4.2).
  - e. The board president and state administrator should design board agendas that provide the board with opportunities to discuss issues related to student achievement and educational programs, and that minimize discussion of personnel and other operational issues.
  
2. As the policy manual is updated, careful attention must be paid to ensure that policies are not made overly prescriptive or administrative.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm such as CSBA to provide training to the board and administrative staff related to the appropriate content of policies.
  - b. The district should provide board members and administrative staff with written information on the appropriate content of policies.
  - c. The district should use a policy consultant who can provide guidance on the content of policies throughout the revision process (see Std. 4.2).
  - d. District staff and the board should ask themselves appropriate questions, or use a checklist, during each stage of the process (policy development, first reading, second reading if any, and policy adoption) to remind themselves of the appropriate level of policy content.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 5.11 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Policy manual

### Findings

1. The district has a bylaw (#9010), adopted in 1982, which addresses the limits of board authority and clarifies that board members have no individual authority. In accordance with law, the board as a whole is the unit of authority, and its authority is restricted to the functions required or permitted by law and then only when it acts in a legally constituted meeting.
2. The state administrator has a policy that board members should direct their questions to him, not to other district staff. This is a common practice in school districts although, when there is a culture of trust throughout a district, board members may be encouraged to call district staff directly. In this district, board members generally do go to the state administrator when they have issues. However, occasionally board members will call district staff directly. The Personnel department seems to receive the most calls from individual board members, who are interested in “who, how and when.”
3. When board members visit schools, they sometimes get involved in administrative issues and return with fix-it lists.
4. Despite the fact that individual board members have no authority, some interviewees are concerned that they will be fired when the board resumes governance because of strained relationships between some board members and the state administration.
5. Also see Std. 5.10 regarding whether the board as a whole restricts itself to a policy-making role and does not attempt to administer policies.

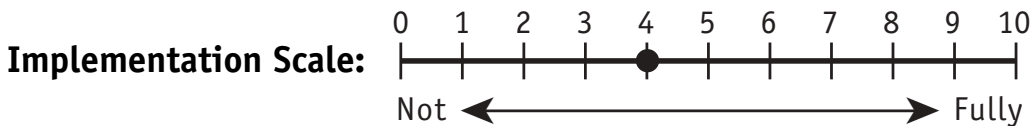
### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members must understand the source and limits of their authority.
  - a. When the district updates its policy manual using the resources described in Std. 4.2, it should review and readopt its bylaw addressing the limits of board members’ authority (#9010).
  - b. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training to board members on their roles and responsibilities (see Std. 5.2 and Std. 5.3), which would include their role as individual members.
2. Board members should respect the chain of command among district staff and address their questions or concerns to the state administrator.
  - a. The state administrator should clarify when, if ever, it is appropriate for board members to call district staff directly. For example, if a board member has a simple request for materials or a question about an agenda item, it might be more practical to go directly to the appropri-

ate staff person. Similarly, if the state administrator is unavailable, a board member might be encouraged to contact another staff person. However, if the board member has a complaint or has a request that involves staff research or a significant amount of time, he/she should always communicate directly with the state administrator.

- b. The state administrator should instruct district administrative staff and principals as to how to respond to requests or calls from individual board members. They might be instructed to answer simple questions but to tell the board member that they will discuss more significant questions with the state administrator. In addition, district administrators might be asked to notify the state administrator regarding any questions or requests they receive from board members, whether big or small.
3. Board members must refer staff or public concerns to appropriate channels rather than attempting to deal with issues themselves individually (also see Std. 2.5).
- a. When board members visit schools, their purpose should be to provide support and encouragement for positive programs and to serve as a district representative sharing information about district activities, programs and services in accordance with the district's comprehensive communications plan (see Std. 1.3). If staff, students or parents approach them with concerns, they should offer to forward the concerns to the state administrator; they should not promise to "fix" them themselves or express an opinion that might be viewed as sympathetic or an implicit promise to assist.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.12 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

The board evaluates the performance of the superintendent regularly on criteria which will encourage student achievement.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview

### Findings

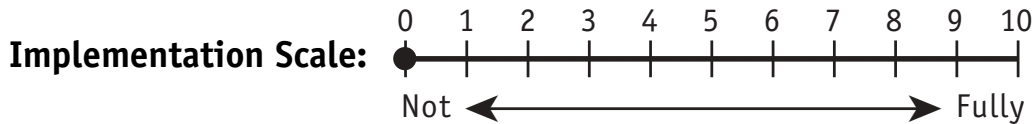
1. The district currently has no superintendent.
2. The advisory board has no role in evaluating the state administrator

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. In preparation for resuming governance, the board must understand its roles related to superintendent selection, employment, support and evaluation.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training to the board on its roles and responsibilities (see Std. 5.2 and Std. 5.3), including its role in superintendent selection and evaluation.
2. When the board resumes governance, it must establish criteria for superintendent evaluation which are aligned with the district's vision and goals.
  - a. The board must first adopt a district vision or direction through an inclusive process that involves staff, parents, students and community members in the identification of district needs, goals, objectives and priorities. The district might contract with a consultant to facilitate the strategic planning process.
  - b. Based on this vision for what the district hopes to achieve in the next few years, the board must identify criteria for superintendent selection which specify the general characteristics, traits and qualifications desired. The board must use an effective selection process that allows it to identify and employ a candidate who shares its vision. The district should consider using a professional advisor to assist the board in this task.
  - c. Upon hiring the superintendent, and annually thereafter, the board should collaborate with the superintendent to set priorities for the year among the district's goals and use those priorities to establish realistic annual performance expectations. Evaluation criteria should be listed in policy rather than the superintendent's contract so it will be less difficult to revise them as needed each year.
  - d. The board and superintendent should mutually decide what methods will be used to determine whether the district's goals and the performance expectations have been met and the evaluation instrument(s) to be used.
3. The board must implement an effective superintendent evaluation process.
  - a. The board should communicate to the superintendent throughout the year regarding the superintendent's performance and any support he/she needs to attain performance expectations.

- b. The superintendent should provide regular reports to the board regarding progress on district goals.
- c. The board should conduct a formal evaluation once a year which supplements the ongoing communication between the board and superintendent. In addition to evaluating strengths and identifying areas that need improvement, the evaluation is an opportunity for the board to receive a full report from the superintendent on the district's progress toward its goals, review the contractual agreement, review the superintendent's job description, listen to the concerns or needs of the superintendent, and set goals for the following year.

**Standard Implemented: Not**



## 5.13 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

The board acts for the community and in the interests of all students in the district.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews and surveys
3. Community member interviews
4. Parent focus groups

### Findings

1. Board members, publicly and in interviews with project staff, express desires to involve the community in schools and to protect the public's rights. The question is whether they understand their responsibility to represent the entire community rather than a particular constituency.
2. Numerous interviewees said that board members are more interested in personal agendas and posturing than they are in the education and welfare of students (e.g., "the board represents themselves"). Also, it was acknowledged that there are inequities across school sites in terms of resources, condition of facilities, etc., and this was attributed by some to board favoritism in the past.
3. Racial issues may play a part in whether or not the community perceives that the board represents its interests. The current board consists of six African American members and one Latino, and thus does not represent the ethnic diversity of the community, the majority of which is Latino.
4. The community has not accepted its share of the responsibility for holding board members accountable. Attendance at board meetings is low, as are voter turnouts for board elections. For the school bond election, when the bond lost by less than 1 percent, only 33 percent of the registered voters turned out for the election.
5. Also see Std. 5.4 - functional working relations among the board; Std. 4.6 - citizen input in policy development and district operations; Std. 6.6 - needs assessment; and Std. 2.9 - board member involvement in building community relations

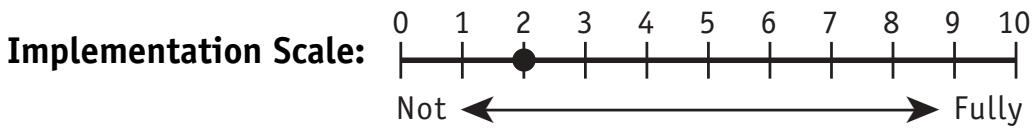
### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The board must consider the needs and viewpoints of the entire community, as well as its own judgments and experiences, before making decisions.
  - a. The board and district staff should make a greater effort to reach out and invite the community to provide input through board meetings, district and school site advisory groups, and other appropriate means (see Std. 1.3, Std. 3.3 and Std. 4.6).
  - b. The board and state administrator should identify resource inequities across school sites and develop a plan and a budget to correct the deficiencies in identified schools.
  - c. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training in boardsmanship (see Std. 5.4) which would enhance the board's understanding of the impact its behavior has on public perceptions of its intentions and effectiveness.



- d. The board president and state administrator should design board agendas to focus on issues that matter most to the community, particularly issues related to student achievement.
2. Board members and community members should work to build broader community participation in board elections and other district elections.
    - a. Community groups and the district should establish a collaborative project to increase voter registration in the community.
    - b. The PTA or other community groups should host forums where community members can hear and meet board candidates or learn about district bond issues or statewide educational initiatives.
    - c. Community groups should disseminate information about ballot issues through direct mail.
    - d. The district should work to educate future voters by developing and implementing a curriculum to teach students about local governments (including the role of school boards) and the importance of civic responsibility.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 6.1 Board Meetings

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### Legal Standard

An adopted calendar of regular meetings exists and is published specifying the time, place and date of each meeting. (EC 35140)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews
3. CSBA's own experience requesting a board calendar

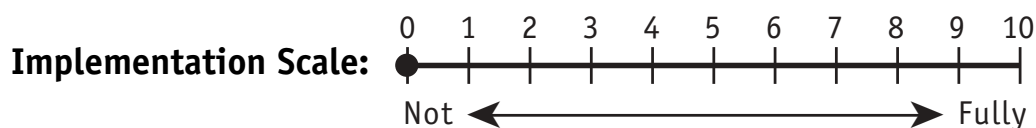
### Findings

1. Education Code 35140 requires that the board, by rule and regulation, fix the time and place for its regular meetings. Existing bylaws do establish a procedure for adopting a calendar of regular meetings. According to the bylaws, the calendar is to be adopted by the board at the annual organizational meeting or as shortly thereafter as possible. In addition, bylaws specify that the board will hold two meetings each month, with the date, time and place of these meetings established at the annual organizational meeting.
2. Despite what the bylaws say, the board currently does not meet twice a month; it meets the second Tuesday of every month.
3. A written calendar of board meetings apparently does not exist.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must publish an annual calendar of board meetings.
  - a. The board must adopt a schedule of board meetings once a year specifying the date, time and place of each meeting.
  - b. District staff must develop and post the board calendar.
  - c. The district must revise its bylaws to be consistent with current practice in terms of the number of meetings per month.

### Standard Implemented: Not



## 6.2 Board Meetings

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### Professional Standard

Agendas, minutes and other pertinent data are available to the public during regular working hours.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Policy manual
4. CSBA's own experience requesting these materials

### Findings

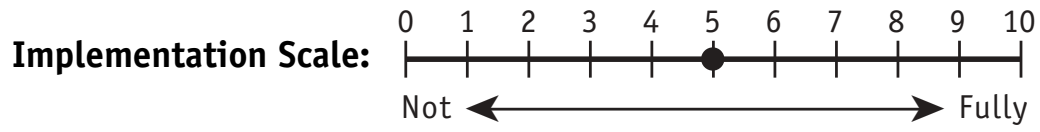
1. The district has complied with Government Code 54954.2, which requires that the agenda be posted at least 72 hours prior to a regular meeting and 24 hours prior to a special meeting at one or more locations freely accessible to the public. The agenda is posted in a timely manner at the front door in the main district offices, on the bulletin board and on the district's Internet site, and is sent to board members, the city, community college and union representatives. Copies of the agenda are also available at the meetings.
2. Government Code 54954.1 requires the district to mail the full agenda packet to any person upon request, charging a fee if desired to cover costs. The district makes the full agenda packet including support materials available at the district office Friday through Tuesday prior to a board meeting, for no fee, but only two to five people avail themselves of the full packet. The district also maintains a mailing list. However, it took many months for CSBA project staff to obtain a copy of the full agenda packet.
3. Board minutes have not been completed in a timely manner. Minutes have been completed as late as five months after the meeting. Also, the minutes have too many details, use hostile verbiage and attribute negative comments to individuals.
4. The district does have existing policy language regarding the distribution of agendas, as well as policy language requiring that public records be made available upon request in accordance with the Public Records Act and other state laws.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must make board agendas and minutes available in a timely manner.
  - a. The district should appoint or hire a staff person whose primary responsibility is to provide support for board meetings and other board functions, including board minutes and agendas (also see Std. 6.3).
  - b. The district should revise its policy on Governing Board Meetings to reflect the legal requirement for posting the agenda 72 hours prior to regular meetings.
  - c. District staff should streamline board minutes to describe only that there was discussion or debate on an issue and the action taken by the board. Minutes should not include the detailed discussion that took place, including detailed accusations or negative comments by board members or others.
  - d. The state administrator or designee should hold district staff accountable for completing

board minutes within at least a month of the meeting.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 6.3 Board Meetings

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### Professional Standard

Board members are prepared for board meetings by becoming familiar with the agenda and support materials prior to the meeting.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. Community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Board agendas
7. Board minutes
8. Observations of board meetings

### Findings

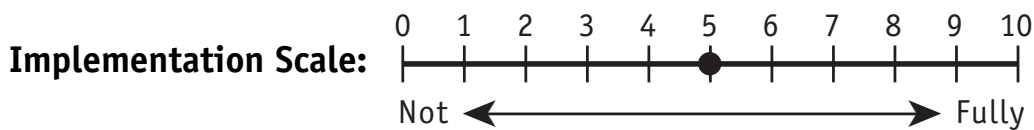
1. Mixed perceptions were found regarding the board's preparation for meetings. An attempt is made to distribute the agenda one week before the meeting, and most board members feel prepared. Yet perceptions prevail among staff and the community that the board is often unprepared.
2. When board members do seem unprepared, it is difficult to determine if it is really a lack of preparation on the board member's part, a lack of adequate time to study the agenda, a lack of support materials needed to understand the issues, or merely public positioning by asking an array of questions.
3. Sometimes board members do not appear to have studied the agendas. One board member pointed out that, if board members were really prepared, they would ask specific questions during meetings rather than general questions which are already covered in the materials.
4. District administrators did acknowledge that materials are sometimes not ready for the board in a timely manner. This was the case for a July 7, 1998, emergency meeting, when the board received the information packet the night before. In an October 13, 1998, meeting, three board members mentioned at different times in the meeting that their materials had come "yesterday." Board members have also indicated that their requests for board minutes and other information do not necessarily result in the provision of those items.
5. The content of the agenda materials is generally adequate. However, board minutes and observations of board meetings indicate that relevant information was lacking in a few cases (e.g., no references to law which specifies the appropriate reasons to hold emergency meetings; no copy of district's bylaw on board appointments when an appointment was being considered).
6. Some instances were noted in which staff support during the board meetings was lacking. For example, even though the purpose of the July 7 emergency meeting was to select a contractor to complete work which another contractor failed to complete, no legal counsel was present to answer the board's legal questions. And when meetings run long, staff may be dismissed before the meeting is over.

7. Board members' willingness to ask questions prior to the meeting needs to be considered. While it is appropriate to ask questions during the meeting, it is also appropriate to ask staff for clarification of items prior to the meeting or to alert staff to questions that will be raised so they can be prepared to respond (a "no surprises" policy). One board member believes the public has a right to hear all questions, and objects to being told to talk to the state administrator about the agenda.

## Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must provide board members with sufficient and timely materials related to agenda items.
  - a. The district should appoint or hire a board secretary or other person whose primary responsibility is to provide support for board meetings and other board functions, including board minutes and agendas.
  - b. District staff should continue to distribute agenda materials at least one week prior to a board meeting whenever possible.
  - c. District staff should ensure that the materials include all relevant laws, district policies, budget implications, other facts and staff analysis needed to help the board make a decision on an issue. The agenda should include staff recommendations backed by a brief rationale.
  
2. Board members must accept responsibility for reviewing the agenda materials prior to the meeting and preparing their questions and comments.
  - a. The board should agree to a "no surprises" policy by which, to the extent possible, they ask the administrator for clarification of items prior to the board meeting and notify the administrator of additional information that will be requested at the meeting. Additional questions may be asked at the board meeting but should be focused on obtaining new information not already covered in the agenda, and should not be designed to catch staff unprepared. When questions are dealt with efficiently, discussion can focus on obtaining comments and opinions, and meetings will move more quickly.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 6.4 Board Meetings

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### Professional Standard

Board meetings are conducted according to a set of bylaws adopted by the board.

### Sources and Documentation

1. District bylaws
2. Board member interviews
3. Board minutes
4. Observations of board meetings

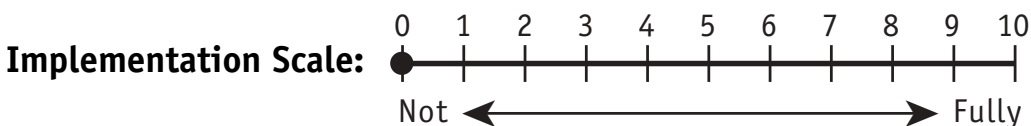
### Findings

1. Bylaws exist but some do not reflect current law. Existing bylaws are not always followed at meetings, and some may not be appropriate anyway given the advisory nature of the board (e.g., related to appointments to the board).
2. Board meetings are characterized by disorganization, as well as a great deal of confusion and discussion regarding appropriate parliamentary procedure. The board attempts to use Robert's Rules of Order, which were designed for a larger body. Debate over parliamentary procedures has been an effective way to filibuster and avoid discussions of policy issues.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district must update its bylaws to reflect current legal mandates and district practice.
  - a. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2 to update its bylaws at the same time it updates the rest of its policies and regulations.
2. The board needs to agree on and implement procedures for the efficient operation of board meetings.
  - a. The board should adopt rules governing the operation of board meetings. Such rules should address but not be limited to procedures for making motions, seconding motions, and voting on motions. Given the amount of time spent discussing parliamentary procedures during board meetings, the board should consider adopting its own set of rules which is simpler than Robert's Rules of Order, recognizing that such rules should serve to improve the efficiency of meetings, not tie the board to an arbitrary and complicated process. The state administrator or designee should develop and recommend a set of rules for the board to consider.
  - b. Training should be provided to the board president and to the full board regarding parliamentary procedures.
  - c. The board president and state administrator should have a copy of these rules available at every board meeting.
  - d. The board must agree to abide by the decisions of the board president pertaining to the operation of meetings.
  - e. If parliamentary procedures continue to be a source of frustration and dissension among the board, the state administrator should provide a parliamentarian at all board meetings.

### Standard Implemented: Not



## 6.5 Board Meetings

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### Legal Standard

Open and closed sessions are conducted according to the Ralph M. Brown Act. (GC 54950 et seq. )

### Sources and Documentation

1. Bylaws
2. Board minutes
3. Board agendas
4. Observation of board meetings
5. Board member interviews
6. State administrator interview

### Findings

1. The district holds regular and special meetings inside district boundaries in accordance with the Brown Act. Meetings are held in an auditorium at the district office.
2. The district posts the agenda at least 72 hours before a regular meeting in accordance with law (see Std. 6.2).
3. The district keeps a mailing list of persons interested in receiving the full agenda packet, and also makes the packet available at the district office. The district does not charge a fee as allowed by law. However, CSBA had difficulty obtaining a copy of the agenda packet (see Std. 6.2).
4. Board members seem sensitive to the need to adhere to Brown Act requirements which specify that, except in an emergency, there will be no action or discussion on items not on the agenda. However, they are not always sure what the Brown Act requirements are. Board minutes of January 6, 1998, show a discussion as to whether the board can take action on a nonagenda item. Several members thought they could take action as a “matter of special privilege” and the board did vote to approve a motion on a nonagenda item. (After the state administrator and legal counsel advised that the action may be a violation of the Brown Act, the motion was withdrawn for further study of the issue.)
5. The district does not ask persons attending board meetings to register their name, provide other information or complete a questionnaire in order to attend board meetings. Persons wishing to speak during the meeting on either agenda or nonagenda items are required to write their names on a sign-in sheet, but it is the opinion of CSBA’s legal counsel that this is not a violation of the Brown Act since the Brown Act specifically addresses sign-ups for meeting attendance only.
6. Board members report that they do not use direct communication, personal intermediaries or technological devices to develop a collective concurrence prior to the meeting. An exception appears to have occurred during the October 13, 1998, meeting, in which the board president announced a prearranged date to hold a board retreat rather than determining the date during the meeting.

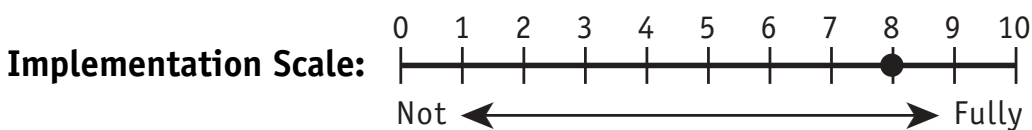


7. According to the state administrator, closed sessions generally deal with issues related to hiring, firing, and discipline, which are all appropriate subjects of closed sessions pursuant to Government Code 54957.
8. The district's agendas for closed sessions conform to law. For example, agenda items related to personnel evaluations list the title of the employees being reviewed, and agenda items related to personnel discipline, dismissal or release do not list any other information. Agenda items include the appropriate Government Code reference.
9. Reports of closed sessions are given during open sessions in accordance with law. For example, reports of personnel actions report the state administrator's reassignment, suspension, dismissal, etc. of employees by listing only the title of the position and the effective dates.
10. Notices of special and emergency meetings are distributed in accordance with law. However, when an emergency meeting was called by the state administrator on July 7, 1998, for purposes of selecting a contractor to complete work which another contractor failed to complete, board members questioned whether the meeting satisfied legal requirements concerning emergency meetings. The state administrator stated his belief that the issue fell within the legal parameters for an emergency meeting because the current conditions of the facilities present unsafe conditions for students and because classrooms would not be available at the start of the school year.
11. In summary, the district generally appears to comply with the major Brown Act requirements. The state administrator and legal counsel appropriately play a role in ensuring that the board operates within the law. Board members' knowledge of the Brown Act should be improved, however.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Board members must be knowledgeable about Brown Act requirements.
  - a. The district should update its bylaws to reflect Brown Act requirements. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2 to update its bylaws at the same time it updates the rest of its policies and regulations.
  - b. The district should contract with an outside firm to conduct a preassessment of the board's current level of knowledge and understanding of Brown Act requirements. Such a preassessment would help to determine whether training is needed and, if so, to target that training on issues that would be most beneficial to the board and district.
  - c. As necessary, the district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training to board members related to Brown Act requirements.
  - d. The district should provide written information to board members regarding Brown Act requirements.

### Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantial



## 6.6 Board Meetings

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### Professional Standard

The board has adopted bylaws for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Bylaws

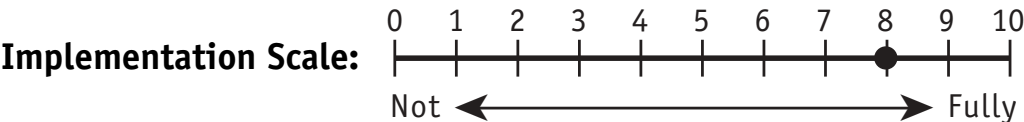
### Findings

1. Education Code 35145.5 expresses legislative intent that the board adopt rules for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public. The district has done so. An existing bylaw on Construction of Agenda, adopted in 1982, states that any member of the public may request that a matter directly related to school district business be placed on the agenda of a regularly scheduled board meeting. The bylaw lists four conditions: (1) the request must be in writing and must be submitted to the superintendent at least five school days before the public posting of the agenda; (2) the superintendent is the sole judge of whether the request is a “matter directly related to school district business”; (3) no matter which is a legally proper subject of closed session will be accepted under this provision; and (4) the board may place time limitations on individual speakers and the total topic.
2. Even if an item is not formally placed on the agenda, there is a place on the agenda for members of the public to raise issues (see Std. 6.7).

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. The district should ensure that its procedures related to the placement of items on the agenda by members of the public reflect current and desired practice.
  - a. The district should review its bylaw addressing the placement of items on the agenda by members of the public and revise it as necessary. The district should use the resources described in Std. 4.2 to update its bylaws at the same time it updates the rest of its policies and regulations.
2. The district should encourage the public to become more involved in board meetings by bringing their issues to the board for discussion and consideration.
  - a. The board should inform the public about the procedures available for placing items on the agenda. It might do so through a statement on the board agenda, a periodic announcement by the board president during board meetings, a statement on the district’s Internet site, and/or information in the district newsletter or other mailings to members of the public.

### Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantial



## 6.7 Board Meetings

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### Legal Standard

Members of the public have an opportunity to address the board before or during the board's consideration of each item of business to be discussed at regular or special meetings, and to bring before the board matters that are not on the agenda. (EC 35145. 5)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Bylaws
2. Board agendas
3. Board minutes
4. Observations of board meetings
5. Parent focus groups

### Findings

1. Board agendas contain a place for public input prior to board discussion of agenda items. The agenda explains that input may be provided on agenda or nonagenda issues that are directly related to district business. It also includes a statement that "no individual is to engage in making remarks demeaning or related to attacks on personnel. . . . Members of the Advisory Board, staff and community who participate in Advisory Board meetings are requested to discuss only matters directly related to district business and thus to focus their statements on the general subject matter of the issues. Any criticism, comment, evaluation, observation regarding staff, including members of this administration, should be addressed exclusively in Closed Session." However, this statement may be too broad in light of *Baca v. Moreno Valley USD*. Although that case is applicable only to the Moreno Valley Unified School District, the judge determined that a district could not prohibit a member of the public from criticizing an employee in open session. To be safe from litigation, the board should place no content restriction on public comments. Specific complaints may be referred to closed session.
2. A bylaw on Governing Board Meetings, adopted in 1982, contains language encouraging public input during board meetings.
3. Also see Std. 5.8 regarding the level of respect demonstrated by the board for members of the public at board meetings and the extent to which members of the public are made to feel welcome in providing input.

### Recommendations and Recovery Steps

1. Although the district technically provides opportunities for public input on agenda and nonagenda items, the agenda statement regarding public input should be revised so as not to be misinterpreted as limiting the content of public comment.
  - a. District staff should delete the statement in the agenda that "no individual is to engage in making remarks demeaning or related to attacks on personnel. "
  - b. District staff should revise the statement that "Any criticism, comment, evaluation, observation regarding staff, including members of this administration, should be addressed exclusively in Closed Session" to instead encourage comments about specific staff members to be

addressed in closed session.

**Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained**

