



West Contra Costa Unified School District

Community Relations

Comprehensive Review
January 2003

**Administrative Agent
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Office of Kern County
Superintendent of Schools**

Chief Executive Officer
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1.1 Communications

Professional Standard

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

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

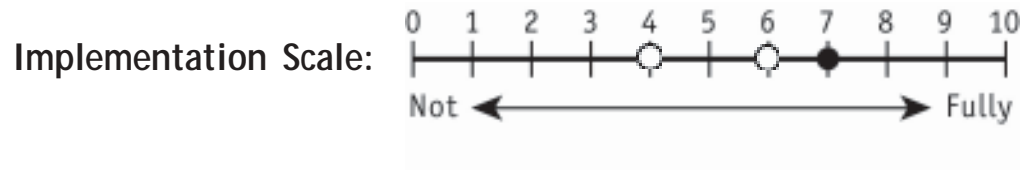
1. “Friday FYI,” a weekly update designed to inform district staff, parents, city government, community members and the media, continues to be sustained and consistently released. It relates to a variety of issues of both local and statewide interest. It is apparent that the updates have been fully integrated into the everyday operations of the communications department. The updates, which are both faxed and e-mailed to individuals, have covered issues such as the cancellation of the statewide attendance audits, and recognizing the accomplishments of district board members and/or staff. In short, there has been noticeable change in the approach of providing continued updates from a defensive/reactive to a proactive nature.
2. The district also has recognized the value of developing a core message that has been incorporated into several aspects of its communications materials. Information contained on the district’s Web site, press releases, “Friday FYI” updates, and other documents tie back to a common theme of improving academic achievement for all students. Additionally, the district continues to be active in working with its community on promoting literacy through numerous activities such as “West County Reads” and the Leading for Literacy Institute for district administrators. In fact, the district has revised its communications plan to reflect the literacy efforts.

The district’s commitment to student achievement will provide focus and direction for the communications department. The deliberate attention to this issue will reflect positively on the district.

3. The district’s Web site has been an ongoing challenge. Although the district has good intentions and ideas to improve the site, there simply haven’t been enough staff resources to implement the improvements. However, the district has requested and received approval to hire a part-time Webmaster position by the end of 2002. Again, this demonstrates the district’s intent to effectively communicate to both external and internal audiences.
4. The district has been very aggressive in collaborating with community, business, and advocate groups. Most recently, the district worked with the League of Women Voters, district PTA, and the American Association of University Women to organize and produce six school board candidate forums prior to the election at each of the district’s six high schools. Also, the district has created a marketing group consisting of local Chamber of Commerce, business community, parent, and district representatives that is designed to discuss common goals, objectives and solutions (for example, literacy).
5. In an innovative approach to increase two-way communication within the district, “listening teams” will soon begin touring school sites. These teams will consist of the Superintendent and Cabinet members who will, in an informal setting, discuss day-to-day issues and simply listen to the concerns, questions, and comments from school site employees.

Standard Implemented: Partially

June 2001 Rating:	4
December 2001 Rating:	6
June 2002 Rating:	7
December 2002 Self-Rating:	7
December 2002 New Rating:	7



1.3 Communications

Professional Standard

The Governing Board and Superintendent have developed and effectively implemented a proactive communications and media relations plan.

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Findings 1 and 2 from Communications Standard 1.1 apply here also. They are:

“Friday FYI,” a weekly update designed to inform district staff, parents, city government, community members and the media, continues to be sustained and consistently released. It covers a variety of issues of both local and statewide interest. It is apparent that the updates have been fully integrated into the everyday operations of the communications department. The updates, which are both faxed and e-mailed to individuals, have related to issues such as the cancellation of the statewide attendance audits, and recognizing the accomplishments of district board members and/or staff. In short, there has been noticeable change in the approach of providing continued updates from a defensive/reactive to a proactive nature.

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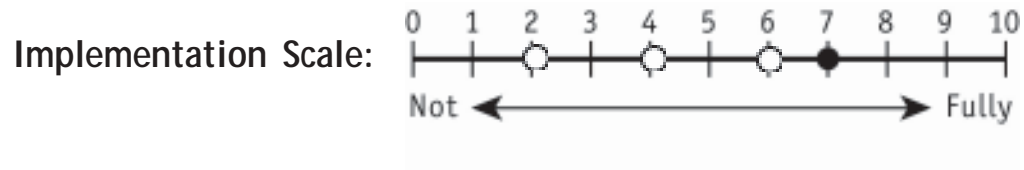
The district’s commitment to student achievement will provide focus and direction for the communications department. The deliberate attention to this issue will also reflect positively on the district.

The district realizes that its communications plan is a fluid document that needs updating and amending over time. On several occasions the district has revised the plan, most recently to reflect the district’s literacy efforts. This demonstrates that the district 1) utilizes the plan and 2) understands its purpose as a blueprint for long-term communications strategies.

2. “Apple Bites,” the title for district press releases, continue to be written and distributed regularly. To date (this school year), there have been seven releases on an array of issues. The quantity and quality of the releases is sufficient.
3. Many of the district’s community collaborations (described in more detail in Standard 1.1) will benefit the district’s media relations. As the relationships within those collaborations continue to grow, so will the reputation of the district as an education resource.
4. As the district admits, the continued challenge is balancing long-term goals and projects while attending to the day-to-day operations of the district with the resources available.

Standard Implemented: Partially

June 2001 Rating:	2
December 2001 Rating:	4
June 2002 Rating:	6
December 2002 Self-Rating:	6
December 2002 New Rating:	7



2.2 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

Professional Standard

A school accountability report card is issued annually for each school site.

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. School accountability report cards are available at all school sites and via the district's Web site, each with the legally required elements.
2. The district has implemented a comprehensive process for collecting the data from each school site, with district and school site liaisons responsible for collection and maintenance of the required data.
3. The district has contracted with School Wise Press for the development of both the school accountability report cards and summaries for the '01-02 school year, which are scheduled to be available by December 2002.
4. School accountability report cards are formatted and designed to be accessible and easily understood by parents. Summaries of school accountability report cards are provided to all parents.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

June 2001 Rating:	5
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	6
December 2002 Self-Rating:	8
December 2002 New Rating:	8



2.8 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

Professional Standard

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

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district has established an office for outreach to families and the community. The new administrator in charge of this function is currently completing its work plan.
2. The district has effectively utilized Project REEL (Restructuring Education for English Learners), now in its second year, to provide support for parents of English learners.
3. The district has refined and continued to implement parent trainings for the various school-site and district-level advisory committees, focusing on roles and responsibilities.
4. The district actively monitors the composition of school site councils and school advisory committees to ensure that parents and community members serve in those capacities.
5. The district's Strategic Plan focuses on increased parent and community involvement. The plan continues to be an integral part of district operations.
6. The district maintains a highly informative Web site to ensure that parents and community have access to district- and school-level information.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

June 2001 Rating:	6
December 2001 Rating:	7
June 2002 Rating:	7
December 2002 Self-Rating:	8
December 2002 New Rating:	8



3.6 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

Professional Standard

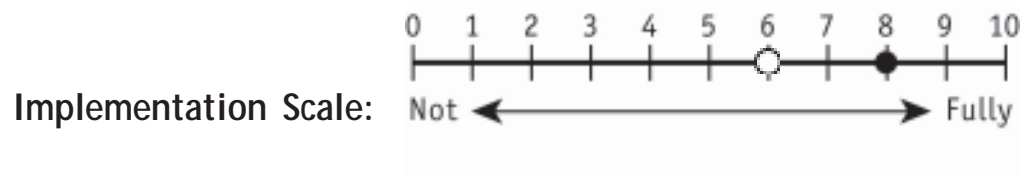
Collaborative and advisory council processes are structured in such a way that there is a clear, meaningful role for all participants, with appropriate input for parents, members of the community and agency policy makers.

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district actively monitors the composition of school site councils and school advisory committees to ensure that the required numbers of parent, community and school representatives participate.
2. All minutes of the school advisory committees and school site councils are submitted to the district for review to ensure that meaningful participation occurs at the site level.
3. The district provides baby-sitting support to parents to help remove barriers to full parent participation at school site council/advisory committee meetings.
4. Comprehensive handbooks are provided to all school site councils. The district is currently translating these handbooks into Spanish.
5. The district has enhanced the English Learners Advisory Committee tool kit to ensure more effective participation by its members.
6. A variety of trainings have been provided for council members, including effective monitoring of school plan progress, school site council and responsibilities, and Title I laws.
7. The special education Citizens Advisory Committee is actively rewriting the Local Plan and is updating bylaws to ensure active participation of all stakeholders.
8. The GATE parent advisory committees at GATE school sites remain an active voice. Minutes are submitted to the district office for review.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

June 2001 Rating:	6
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	Not Reviewed
December 2002 Self-Rating:	8
December 2002 New Rating:	8



3.7 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

Professional Standard

Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The findings for Standard 3.6 also apply here.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

June 2001 Rating:	6
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	Not Reviewed
December 2002 Self-Rating:	8
December 2002 New Rating:	8



3.12 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

Professional Standard

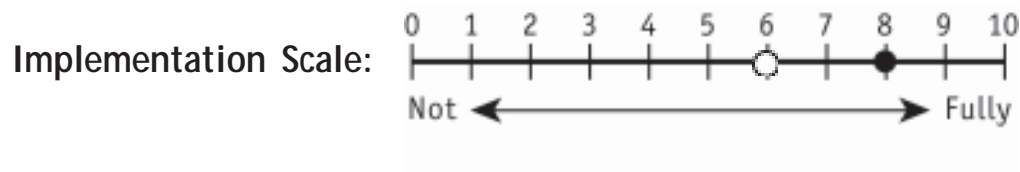
School plans are a vital part of school operations and school accountability.

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. School plans are submitted to the board for approval. Councils must report on how they will monitor the effectiveness of site plans.
2. School site councils received training on how to evaluate the progress of school plans to ensure that plans become an integral part of school operations and improve student learning.
3. School plans are required to identify challenges and opportunities for successful implementation of school plans.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

June 2001 Rating:	6
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	Not Reviewed
December 2002 Self-Rating:	8
December 2002 New Rating:	8



4.1 Policy

Professional Standard

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

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

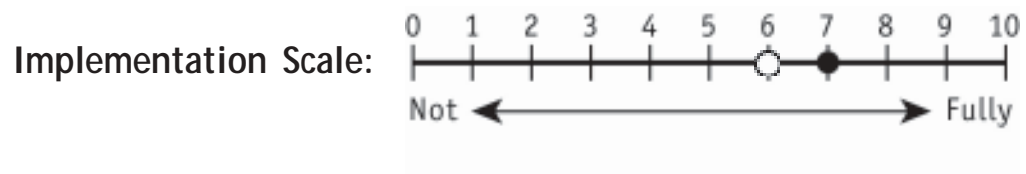
1. A major change is taking place in the district's method of managing board policies. The first step has been to assign the oversight of board policy to the district's general counsel rather than to send proposed updated material to an outside legal firm and having the Personnel Department responsible for change proposals and distribution of adopted policies and regulations.
2. The district's present process of creating 130 copies of the entire four-volume policy manual demonstrates a serious effort to provide district-wide access to district policies. In addition, the district's decision to budget funds to place its policies online using CSBA's GAMUT Online service will provide simple and wide access to board policies. It also will save district staff time and allow board members and site administrators to quickly research and locate policy language to address current district or site-level issues.
3. In December, the district provided CSBA with a full set of the policies and an electronic version of most of the current policies. CSBA Policy Services has begun the process of converting the district material into the format for placing it on GAMUT Online. The next step will be to review the current policies and to work with district staff to update language to reflect legal requirements.

Once district material is available online, the district should assign access codes to staff, board members and to the public. Links to this policy material on the CSBA-maintained Internet site should be placed on the district's Web site.

The board has approved an initial budget of \$9,000 to begin this process of auditing, updating and placing the material online, and has requested costs for continued maintenance of the district policy manual online.

Standard Implemented: Partially

June 2001 Rating:	6
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	7
December 2002 Self-Rating:	6
December 2002 New Rating:	7



4.7 Policy

Professional Standard

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

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district is working with CSBA to implement a plan to place district policies online. With the online service, district material will be readily available to board members and district staff.

The online program provides several features that will allow staff and/or board members to research information on issues under consideration. Search features allow the researcher to identify all current district policies that apply to an issue. Hyperlinks to related policy language and to legal codes give the opportunity to look at various aspects of an issue as well as the most recent version of the law. These features work when researching district material, CSBA samples, or the policies of other districts that have manuals on this online site.

These features will make it easier for board members or staff to identify existing policy language as well as existing legal requirements quickly when the topics arise during board meetings. The district plans to provide orientation to board members and staff in the use of these access features.

2. The board has adopted extensive operational guidelines and protocols and to date have been functioning within them.

Standard Implemented: Partially

June 2001 Rating:	6
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	6
December 2002 Self-Rating:	6
December 2002 New Rating:	7



5.5 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard

The board makes decisions based on the study of all available data, including the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Because of the level of trust that existing between the board and the Superintendent, there has been improvement in the availability of data to support board decision-making. The board takes the recommendations of the Superintendent very seriously, and tries to support the Superintendent wherever possible.

Almost every district, however, experiences some difficulty with the amount and quality of information that is available to board members. Because of the different decision-making styles of individual board members, it is often difficult to achieve the right balance in providing information. The West Contra Costa Unified School District is no different in this regard. There appears to be a sincere effort on the part of staff to provide the board with the information it needs.

2. Board members have made every effort to obtain high-quality information to support their positions. All board members attend some form of professional educational activity during the year. One member in particular is very active in CSBA.
3. Three board retreats are held each year. These meetings appear to be very substantive and cover a range of issues from the Superintendent's evaluation to program reviews to operational protocols.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

June 2001 Rating:	7
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	Not Reviewed
December 2002 Self-Rating:	8
December 2002 New Rating:	8



5.6 Board Roles /Boardsmanship

Professional Standard

Functional working relations are maintained among board members.

Progress on Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board has made real progress in establishing working relationships among the board members. In past years the board was known for its difficult and often rancorous relationships. Board members now work well together. They communicate in a courteous, professional manner and board meetings are focused and well run. As one board member put it, the board “clicks” now as a team.
2. Board members are highly visible in the community. The board showed exemplary leadership in the recent bond campaign and demonstrated strong teamwork.
3. The board has adopted a core beliefs statement and numerous norms and protocols that guide its decision-making.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

June 2001 Rating:	7
December 2001 Rating:	Not Reviewed
June 2002 Rating:	Not Reviewed
December 2002 Self-Rating:	9
December 2002 New Rating:	9



Focus Areas for Next Six-Month Progress Report

The review team believes that all the standards in the Community Relations operational area of review are being fully implemented by the district, and many standards have been substantially met. Individual standards, therefore, will not be identified as focus areas for the next, and final, six-month progress report. Instead, the team will provide a summary overview of the progress made by the district in the following Community Relations sub-areas:

- Communications
- Policy
- Governance
- Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

Chart of Community Relations Standards

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Progress Ratings Toward Implementation of the Improvement Plan

Community Relations					
Standard to be addressed		June 2001 Rating	Dec. 2001 Rating	June 2002 Rating	Dec. 2002 Rating
1.1	Decisions and other information are effectively communicated throughout the system in a timely manner.	4	6	7	7
1.2	Staff input into school and district operations is encouraged.	4	6	7	NR
1.3	The board and Superintendent have developed and effectively implemented a proactive communications and media relations plan.	2	4	6	7
1.4	News releases are prepared and made available simultaneously to all appropriate news media.	9	NR	NR	NR
1.5	Media contacts and spokespersons who have the authority to speak on behalf of the district have been identified.	5	6	NR	NR
1.6	Individuals not authorized to speak on behalf of the district refrain from public comments on board decisions and district programs.	4	5	7	NR
1.7	Board spokespersons are skilled at public speaking and communications and are knowledgeable about district programs and issues.	5	NR	8	NR
2.1	Annual parental notice of rights and responsibilities is provided at the beginning of the school year. This notice is provided in English and in languages other than English when 15 percent or more speak other languages (EC 48980).	9	NR	NR	NR
2.2	A school accountability report card is issued annually for each school site (EC 35256).	5	NR	6	8
2.3	The board has developed uniform complaint procedures (Title 5, Section 4621).	6	8	NR	NR
2.4	Uniform complaint procedures are communicated throughout the system and implemented consistently.	8	NR	NR	NR
2.5	Charges or complaints against any employee are addressed in a timely manner.	3	7	NR	NR
2.6	Board members refer informal public concerns to the appropriate staff for attention and response.	8	NR	NR	NR

Community Relations (continued)					
Standard to be addressed		June 2001 Rating	Dec. 2001 Rating	June 2002 Rating	Dec. 2002 Rating
2.7	The board has identified the needs of the students, staff and educational community through a needs assessment process.	6	NR	NR	NR
2.8	Parents and community members are encouraged to be involved in the schools.	6	7	7	8
2.9	The board and Superintendent provide access to schools for parents and community members while addressing safety issues related to visitors and volunteers.	6	NR	NR	NR
2.10	Board members are actively involved in building community relations.	4	5	7	NR
3.1	The board supports partnerships with community groups, local agencies and businesses.	5	NR	NR	NR
3.2	Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district all have identified specific outcome goals that are understood by all members.	4	6	NR	NR
3.3	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.	4	6	NR	NR
3.4	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.	5	6	NR	NR
3.5	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).	7	NR	NR	NR
3.6	Collaborative and advisory council processes are structured in such a way that there is a clear, meaningful role for all participants, with appropriate input from parents, members of the community and agency policymakers.	6	NR	NR	8

Community Relations (continued)					
Standard to be addressed		June 2001 Rating	Dec. 2001 Rating	June 2002 Rating	Dec. 2002 Rating
3.7	Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district effectively fulfill their responsibilities (i.e., research issues, develop recommendations, etc).	6	NR	NR	8
3.8	Policies exist for the establishment of school site councils (EC 52852.5).	10	NR	NR	NR
3.9	School plans for the School-Based Coordinated Program exist at each school participating in the program (EC 52850).	10	NR	NR	NR
3.10	School plans are comprehensive and have sufficient content to meet the statutory requirements (EC 52853).	7	NR	NR	NR
3.11	The school site council annually reviews the school plan and the board annually approves or disapproves all site councils' plans (EC 52853, 52855).	5	NR	8	NR
3.12	School plans are a vital part of school operations and school accountability.	6	NR	NR	8
4.1	Policies are written, organized and readily available to all members of the staff and to the public.	6	NR	7	7
4.2	Policies and administrative regulations are up to date and reflect current law and local needs.	5	7	NR	NR
4.3	The board has adopted all policies mandated by state and federal law.	7	7	7	NR
4.4	The board annually reviews its policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/cocurricular activities (EC 35160.5).	1	7	NR	NR
4.5	Existing board policies are regularly reviewed with the involvement of the staff.	5	NR	8	NR
4.6	The district has established a system of securing citizen input in policy development and district operation.	5	NR	5	NR
4.7	The board supports and follows its own policies once they are adopted.	6	NR	6	7

Community Relations (continued)					
Standard to be addressed		June 2001 Rating	Dec. 2001 Rating	June 2002 Rating	Dec. 2002 Rating
5.1	Each board member meets the eligibility requirements of being a board member (EC 35107).	10	NR	NR	NR
5.2	Board members participate in orientation sessions, workshops, conventions and special meetings sponsored by board associations.	6	NR	8	NR
5.3	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.	8	NR	NR	NR
5.4	The board has established a district-wide vision/mission and makes decisions that advance the district toward that vision.	6	NR	7	NR
5.5	The board makes decisions based on the study of all available data, including the recommendation of the Superintendent.	7	NR	NR	8
5.6	Functional working relations are maintained among board members.	7	NR	NR	9
5.7	Individual board members respect the decisions of the board majority and support the board's actions in public.	8	NR	NR	NR
5.8	Functional working relations are maintained between the board and administrative team.	8	NR	NR	NR
5.9	The board publicly demonstrates respect for and support for district and school-site staff.	5	NR	8	NR
5.10	The board demonstrates respect for public input at meetings and public hearings.	6	NR	8	NR
5.11	Board members respect confidentiality of information by the administration.	5	8	NR	NR
5.12	The board restricts itself to a policy-making role and does not attempt to administer policies.	7	NR	NR	NR
5.13	No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.	6	NR	NR	NR

Community Relations (continued)					
Standard to be addressed		June 2001 Rating	Dec. 2001 Rating	June 2002 Rating	Dec. 2002 Rating
5.14	The board evaluates the performance of the Superintendent regularly on criteria that will encourage student achievement.	6	9	NR	NR
5.15	The board acts for the community and in the interests of all students in the district.	4	6	NR	NR
5.16	The board receives and reviews reports from the Superintendent regarding district performance.	5	6	7	NR
6.1	An adopted calendar of regular meetings exists and is published specifying the time, place and date of each meeting (EC 35140).	6	7	NR	NR
6.2	Agendas, minutes and other pertinent data are available to the public during regular working hours.	9	NR	NR	NR
6.3	Board members are prepared for board meetings by becoming familiar with the agenda and support materials prior to the meeting.	8	NR	NR	NR
6.4	Board meetings are conducted according to a set of bylaws adopted by the board.	9	NR	NR	NR
6.5	Open and closed sessions are conducted according to the Ralph M. Brown Act (GC 54950 et seq.).	8	NR	NR	NR
6.6	The board president ensures that meetings proceed in a business-like manner while allowing opportunity for full discussion.	8	NR	NR	NR
6.7	The board has adopted bylaws for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public.	10	NR	NR	NR
6.8	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).	10	NR	NR	NR