



# **West Fresno Elementary School District**

Governance and  
Community Relations

Comprehensive Review  
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# GOVERNANCE/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overview

The following summarizes some of the major findings and recommendations in the topical areas of Communications; Parent/Community Relations; Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees and School Site Councils; Policy; Board Roles/Boardsmanship; and Board Meetings. More detailed findings and recommendations are presented in this report in the Community Relations Improvement Plan.

### Communications

To rebuild the district's credibility in the public's perception and improve student and staff morale, the district will need an aggressive communications and media relations effort. However, currently the district does not have a comprehensive communications plan addressing external and/or internal communications. The development of a communications plan must be accomplished with broad input from the community, the administrators and other staff. The plan should describe a more proactive strategy to communicate with target audiences about district achievements and issues of interest to the district.

The adequacy of internal communications has varied widely in the past few years depending on the district leadership. In general, staff members feel that they were not consistently informed of district news. Opportunities for staff input into district operations appear to have been limited: Meetings of district staff were infrequent and irregular, and the staff did not always feel welcome to provide input to the Superintendent or board. Staff input was not invited on several key issues (e.g., a new curriculum, the district's suspension/expulsion policy), which the staff indicated was a cause of resentment among them.

Internal communications in the district seem to have improved under the state administrator. Senior staff members meet regularly. In addition, the state administrator expresses a desire to have an "open door" policy for all staff. However, there are always opportunities to improve the two-way flow of communications. The communications plan of the district should address the issue of consistent and timely communications to staff, and the district must continue to emphasize that staff input is welcome.

Since the West Fresno ESD is a small district, mainstream media such as *The Fresno Bee* and local network affiliates typically provide little or no general coverage of the district. West Fresno's issues tend to be overshadowed by issues in the much larger Fresno Unified School District. However, West Fresno ESD's fiscal difficulties, dealings with the Fresno County Office of Education, and the state takeover legislation did receive considerable media attention. It appears from this recent media coverage that the district had not established strong relationships with the media in the area. The district needs to place greater emphasis on developing positive media relations in order to improve the public's perception of the district.

The district, schools and individual staff members have made more significant strides with direct communications to parents and community members. The district has implemented a variety of strategies, such as monthly "Meet and Greet" breakfasts for parents, a monthly newsletter, an informational marquee to announce events, and a practice of sending notifications of events in

three ways: notices carried home by students, letters sent in the mail, and follow-up telephone calls in the language of the parent. The small size of the district allows home visits by teachers and phone calls to play a more meaningful role in the communications plan.

In addition, the district has made efforts to reach out to parents whose first language is not English. The district employs parent advisors/liaisons (and other staff) who are multilingual. These staff members have direct contact with parents of particular ethnic and linguistic communities, attend parent-teacher conferences upon request, and provide written and verbal translation services in Spanish and Hmong (as well as limited verbal translation support in Mein, Laotian and other Southeast Asian languages). Most newsletters and event notices are sent both in English and other languages. However, given the language needs of the community, interviewees express a continuing need to develop strategies for communicating with parents who do not speak or read English or who may not be able to read in their native language. The district should consider the feasibility of translating additional documents (e.g., report cards and suspension notices). Strategies for reaching more parents and other interested people should be included in the district's comprehensive communications plan.

### **Parent/Community Relations**

This district faces a number of challenges in its two-way communications with parents and the community. Most teachers and classified staff surveyed for this review perceive a relatively low level of parent and community support. They believe concerns about the district's fiscal situation and the dramatic turnover of district administration have affected the desire of parents and community members to become involved in the schools. However, many interviewees indicate that the public's disengagement with the schools preceded the current fiscal crisis and is affected by socioeconomic, language and cultural factors in the community.

Effective communications with parents and community members are essential to soliciting their support and involvement. Certain communications with parents and the community are required by law. This district has not consistently distributed required parental notifications nor issued school accountability report cards. There also is no evidence that the district has adopted and distributed uniform complaint procedures that reflect current law. The district must establish processes to ensure full compliance with these legal requirements each year.

At the district office and school site level, there appears to be a sincere desire to involve parents and community members in the schools. A number of strategies have been implemented, such as parent breakfasts, parent conferences, parent education/literacy classes, home visits and Back-to-School nights. Some (though not all) of these efforts have been highly successful in attracting large numbers of parents, particularly when the parents' children are involved. Information about district and school events is often communicated to parents through a variety of means, and many of the announcements are translated into the major languages of the community.

Most notably, the efforts of the parent advisors/liaisons appear to be making inroads in the community. Because the advisors are bilingual or multilingual, their translation services have provided a link to non-English-speaking parents for the district and for individual teachers. However, currently there is no parent advisor assigned to conduct outreach with African American parents, and a number of interviewees felt this would be a valuable addition.

Despite the variety of approaches used to encourage parent/community involvement, several traditional avenues are missing in this district. Efforts to organize a PTA have been unsuccessful so far, and there are almost no classroom or school volunteers. District and site-level committees and councils were inactive in the past year, but are rebuilding and meeting consistently again this year.

Among the identified barriers to parent/community participation were language barriers, cultural attitudes about education and lack of a formalized process for participation. Additional support from the district may be needed to assist school-site efforts. Such support might include staff development on building parent/community relations, additional translation services, a campaign to publicize school-site activities, outreach through churches and community organizations and/or coordination of parent/community relations efforts throughout the district.

Finally, the board will need to assume a leadership role in improving community relations. Although there were opportunities for the public to address the board at each board meeting, the consensus of interviewees was that the board did not value input from all segments of the community, and board meetings were an unwelcome place for the public. The board also appears to have had limited involvement in initiating and facilitating community partnerships. It appears that individual board members have strong personal relationships throughout the community. The board needs to expand upon these relationships to reach out to communities within the district that have been disenfranchised and not represented on the board.

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

The district has few formal collaboratives with outside community agencies to jointly address the needs of children and families. There are some cooperative programs with the city police department and the county department of social services, and occasional assistance from other organizations, but no coordinated effort to develop such partnerships. There also are no significant partnerships with private businesses. The few collaborative efforts that do exist are generally credited to staff. The board reportedly has not been actively involved in developing or supporting community collaboratives, although it is a goal of at least one board member.

Expansion of collaborative efforts might begin with a community-wide needs assessment to determine priorities for services. Then, greater leadership by the board and district administration is needed to encourage and facilitate collaboration. Continuing education and/or publications on related issues might be helpful in increasing the district's understanding of the collaborative-building process. The structuring of collaboratives should include an expectation and a plan for periodically evaluating the effectiveness of collaborative efforts.

Broad participation of interested stakeholders is also sought through district and school-site advisory councils. However, the district does not appear to make significant use of such groups beyond legal requirements for the establishment of councils for specific categorical programs. The district has advisory councils for the Migrant Education and English Language Learner programs. Representatives from the Migrant Advisory Council and English Language Advisory Council jointly form a Parent Advisory Committee. There is also a combined School Site Council this year, after a year without any functioning site councils. Finally, a "leadership team" consisting of parents, staff and administrators is working on the district plan required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. These groups generally receive adequate training and information to perform their duties and appear to be representative of the diversity of the community.

The School Site Council has specific legal responsibilities for developing and annually reviewing a Single Plan for Student Achievement. Because the district did not have an operational council nor a school plan for 2001-02, review team members were unable to assess the approval process and the content of plans. The current council, however, is in the process of working with an outside consultant to develop the school plans. As the district completes this process, it will need to ensure compliance with legal requirements regarding approvals and content. It will also need to make efforts to ensure that the adopted school plan becomes a guiding force for school decision-making and accountability.

### **Policy**

This district has written policies placed into binders in a single, centralized location that is reasonably accessible to district staff and both school sites. However, some policies appear to be missing or numbered incorrectly, and the lack of a current index makes it difficult to locate policies. When board members or staff need to refer to district policy, they tend to make inquiries of the board president, Superintendent or legal counsel rather than use the manual.

In addition, the majority of policies are out of date. Most were adopted on or before 1990, and only 11 have been adopted since 1994. A substantial number of policies have no adoption date, and CSBA sample policies are interspersed with district-adopted policies in the policy manual with no indication as to whether these were reviewed or adopted by the board. Only a third of policies mandated by state or federal law appear in the policy manual, and most of these have not been updated recently and do not reflect current law. The district's policies need to be updated in order to ensure fair and consistent treatment of staff, students and parents; comply with current law; and reflect local needs and district practices. The district should begin a systematic review of its policies, setting a priority on updating the mandated policies and/or other policies that may have the greatest impact on student learning. The state administrator, who has the authority to adopt policies, should lead this effort. Staff should be consulted as appropriate in adopting such policies, and the advisory board should be included in the process.

In recent years, staff and the public reported having had little or no opportunity to provide input on board policy. The State Administrator or designee should determine an appropriate role for the staff and the public, and identify those policies that would be of most interest to them and benefit from their input. The district also must establish an effective process for notifying interested stakeholders regarding changes in policy.

After the district has brought its policies up to date, it should establish a process for monitoring and updating policies on an ongoing basis so that the policy manual keeps up with changes in law and recommended practices. The district should identify resources available to inform the district regarding changes in law and should encourage staff to recommend policy needs within their areas of operation.

### **Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

Based on an assessment of their performance and conduct prior to the state takeover in March 2003, it is apparent that board members in this district lack a fundamental understanding of the Governing Board's roles, responsibilities and legitimate authority.

Most striking was the board's inability to foster any degree of stability in the district by hiring and supporting a permanent Superintendent. Without this leadership at the top, the board appears to have routinely engaged in operational matters more appropriate to the administration. For example, some board members appear to have been involved directly in virtually all aspects of the district's human resources operations, including establishing positions and job descriptions, determining qualifications of candidates, interviewing and hiring candidates, setting salary levels, informally "evaluating" staff, and initiating or attempting to initiate terminations. Several staff and community leaders expressed their deeply felt conviction that the driving motivation for board service among some of the members was securing jobs in the district for their friends and relatives. Staff and community members also called into question the qualifications, experience and motives of many of those individuals whom the board hired as either staff or consultants to work for them.

In addition to personnel issues, the board's primary focus during the past several years appears to have been trying to maintain the fiscal solvency of the district. This focus contributed to highly contentious relations with the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, which by law has fiscal oversight responsibilities for all districts in the county.

During this period of time, the board did not fully engage in many of its core responsibilities, such as actively engaging parents and the community, adopting a district vision and goals, establishing a structure to achieve the goals, and ensuring accountability. There are few indications that the board received reports on district performance regularly during the past two years.

It also appears that board members did not always avail themselves of advice and information about the appropriate role and duties of boards, as well as budget information, offered by recognized authorities such as legal counsel and financial consultants. In fact, there is evidence that the board ignored the advice or opinions of its legal counsel and advisors on several occasions. The two most recently elected board members (elected in November 2002) indicated that amid all of the district turmoil and conflict with the County Superintendent, they did not always know who they could turn to for objective information or advice.

Comments by staff, community members and board members themselves make it clear that various members of the board during the past few years did not work well together. Certain board members often demonstrated a lack of respect for the opinions of their colleagues. Board meetings were typically described as "chaotic." One board member ultimately resigned as a result of the strained relations and another was recalled.

Interviewees frequently mentioned at least one board member who spent considerable time on campuses or in classrooms, and engaged in discussions related to operational matters with staff at all levels. Several staff reported that it was not uncommon for him to try to intimidate or threaten to terminate them while visiting campuses. Many interviewees also stated that certain board members did not respect an operational chain of command and engaged in direct communication with teachers and other staff to settle disputes.

Staff and parents generally felt their input was not solicited or welcomed by the board. School-site staff expressed frustration with not feeling supported by the board, and district staff expressed that they did not feel respected. There is little evidence of staff recognition at board



meetings. There is a considerable amount of resentment by site-level staff who feel they were not included in significant policy or program decisions such as an overhaul to the elementary school curriculum. A majority of interviewees expressed their belief that staff morale has improved since the takeover.

Parents – especially non-African American parents – expressed high levels of frustration because they feel that the board did not listen to their concerns, treat them with respect, provide support such as translation services to facilitate their involvement, or address the needs of their students. The board’s greatest governance and public relations challenge moving forward will be demonstrating that it acts for the community and in the interests of all students in the district. The board must work to overcome the perception that most ethnic groups in the community are dismissed or ignored.

Before resuming governance of the district, all board members must actively participate in comprehensive and ongoing training to ensure that they fully understand the scope of their role and authority, as well as the principles of effective governance in all major areas of board oversight. Board members must also avail themselves of an array of pertinent literature and resources related to governance, school finance and other related topics to enhance their knowledge and ability to make sound decisions in the interests of students.

To date, there are no written guidelines from the state and/or state administrator regarding the precise responsibilities of an “advisory” board. This board has yet to meet with the state administrator to define its role. Generally speaking, as an advisory board, the West Fresno ESD board should strive to keep appropriately informed about district programs and issues, and to participate to the extent that it can in developing the district’s comprehensive communications plan, participating in the policy development process, and actively encouraging parent/community participation in district activities. Working supportively with the State Administrator to get the district working toward recovery may be the fastest way to the board resuming authority.

Once it regains authority, the board, working with the administration, must rebuild relationships and establish processes that enable it to be effective. Such relationships and systems will require ongoing maintenance. The board also should focus on reviewing the district vision and priorities, and its systems to evaluate the district’s progress toward those priorities.

### **Board Meetings**

The advisory board has not yet met. Thus, assessments related to board meetings, meeting conduct and procedures were considered prior to the appointment of the State Administrator. These assessments were constrained by the lack of opportunity by the review team to observe any meetings directly or on tape.

The most significant finding is that district compliance with legal requirements regarding the publishing of an adopted board meeting calendar and distribution of the board agenda could not be confirmed. Board bylaws reflect these legal requirements, but evidence of their implementation could not be found. In fact, some interviewees strongly suggested that regular and special meetings were not properly noticed on a consistent basis. Special meetings were frequent: For example, from January through June 2002, the board held five regular meetings and 12 special meetings. When the board does resume its meetings, careful attention must be paid to establish-

ing (and as much as possible adhering to) a calendar of meetings, and providing at least the minimum advance posting and distribution of agendas. These actions will help increase the public's access to and preparation for board meetings.

The timeliness of meeting notice and agenda distribution also affects the board's ability to be prepared for meetings. In addition, there is little evidence of background materials being provided along with the agendas. To assist the board in conducting meaningful discussions, the district will need to prepare and distribute agenda packets that include relevant background information, analyses, references to law and district policies, budget implications, staff input and/or other appropriate information. Board members also will need to take seriously their responsibility for reviewing agenda materials prior to meetings.

To conduct meetings in a professional manner, the board must adhere to its own adopted bylaws, as well as legal requirements (the Brown Act) pertaining to open and closed sessions. The board has adopted bylaws pertaining to meeting conduct, but there were a number of reports that the board did not consistently follow legal requirements of the Brown Act. A finding by a Fresno County Superior Court Judge regarding violations of the Brown Act confirmed the perceptions and observations of many interviewees who had attended board meetings. For example, questions were raised about the timely and proper notice of board meetings, location and time of meetings, and appropriateness of topics discussed in closed sessions. Because of the seriousness of these matters, all board members should receive training on Brown Act requirements and must be willing to seek and accept legal advice when questions arise regarding appropriate and lawful conduct.

Beyond compliance with the legal requirements, a well-run, efficient meeting depends on the leadership of the board president and the conduct of each individual board member. Past board meetings in this district were described by interviewees as being characterized by frequent shouting, arguments, disorder, and the board retreating into long closed sessions while staff and the public waited. Opportunities for public comment appeared on the agendas of regular meetings, but many interviewees reported that staff was not always allowed to speak, other speakers would be cut off depending on the content of their statements, and in general members of the public were not made to feel that their input was welcome.

Overcoming these perceptions may require boardsmanship training for all board members, and specific training in leadership responsibilities each time a new board president is elected. The district also should establish procedures to ensure consistent, fair treatment of public testimony. Ultimately, however, it will require a commitment by the board to exhibit professional behavior and demonstrate a respect for staff and public input so that the best interests of students, schools and the community can be served.

Finally, the board, staff and community can find common ground by focusing on issues pertaining to student achievement. In recent years, board discussions appear to have focused on fiscal and personnel matters rather than student performance and programmatic issues. Even in its current advisory role, the board can begin to establish a focus on student achievement by facilitating discussions and developing recommendations to the State Administrator regarding policies that would have a positive effect on student learning.



## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

*Note:* The majority of findings in this report are based on an assessment of the Governing Board's and district's performance prior to the state takeover in March 2003. Some standards do incorporate significant findings related to activities or efforts since March 2003, as relevant.

Currently there are no written guidelines from the state regarding the precise responsibilities of an advisory board. Since the role of an advisory board substantially differs from that of a typical Governing Board, many of the recommendations in this report are provided from two different perspectives: (1) immediate recommendations for the district to implement and sustain the standard (with recommendations specifically for the board in its advisory role noted as appropriate), and (2) recommendations to implement and sustain the standard for when the board resumes its governance role.

## **1.1 Communications**

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### **Professional Standard**

The district has developed a comprehensive plan for internal and external communications, including media relations.

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

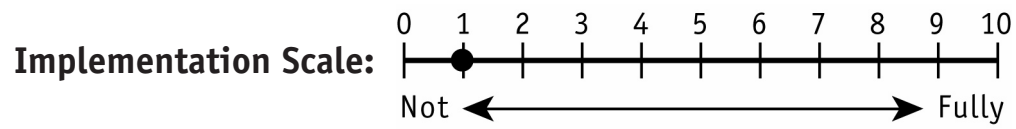
### **Findings**

1. The district does not appear to have a comprehensive communications plan addressing internal and/or external communications, nor any district-wide written goals or strategic priorities to enhance communications.
2. Board Policy 1100 Communications with the Public (1990) provides that the community will be kept informed of developments within the school system. The policy states the district's commitment to provide a variety of ways to involve members of the community. In addition, the California School Boards Association's sample Board Policy 1112, Media Relations (1996), was included in the policy manual, but it is unclear whether the board adopted this policy for use by the district.
3. District and school site staff have implemented a variety of external communications efforts (see CR1.4), but these are not linked to a coordinated, proactive plan.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district should develop a comprehensive, long-term communications plan that encourages proactive communications with the media, parents, district staff, the community and other key target audiences.
  - a. The plan should be developed with input from parents, community members, administrators and staff.
  - b. The district should consider organizing the communications plan around priority issues in the district. For those issues identified as priorities, the communications plan might delineate key messages, target audiences, strategies for reaching those audiences, persons responsible for each activity, and timelines.
  - c. In developing communications strategies, the district must take into account the different language needs within the district.
2. The district should review and update its policies related to communications and media relations to ensure consistency with the comprehensive communications plan.
3. The district should monitor the implementation of strategies identified in the communications plan (see CR1.2 and CR1.4).

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **1.2 Communications**

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### **Professional Standard**

Information is communicated to staff at all levels in an effective and timely manner.

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

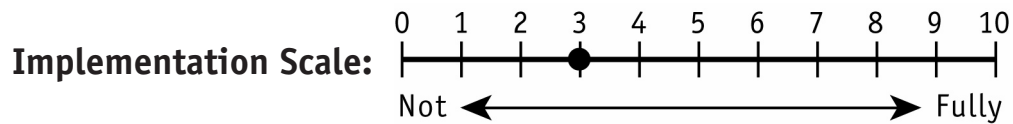
1. The district does not have a comprehensive communications plan including procedures and systems to ensure that information is provided to staff (see CR1.1).
2. The relatively small number of total staff, as well as the close geographic proximity of the district office and two sites, allow for an informal flow of a lot of information.
3. Interviewees indicate that there have been few opportunities for two-way dialogue between district administration and site staff. However, under the state administrator, the staff has had additional opportunities to participate in regular meetings.
4. Under the state administrator, the district's senior staff meets on a regular basis and has an opportunity to provide input to the district office.
5. Information from the district office is typically distributed to the principals and then by the principals to other site-level staff. This usually occurs through staff meetings and word of mouth. Most staff meetings occur at the site level or the department level.
6. Some staff expressed concern about the timeliness of the information provided to them about board actions. For example, it was reported that the board eliminated certain services to English Language learners and made changes to the curriculum without prior notification to staff. Staff also believe that information about the district's fiscal situation and about staffing changes was not provided in a uniform manner by the board and administration.
7. Some staff stated that on occasion, they received conflicting information about new directives.
8. Among the teachers and classified staff surveyed, none agreed that they are given full and complete information when they ask questions of district and school officials (95 percent of the teachers and 86 percent of the classified staff disagreed; the remainder were neutral or didn't know). In addition, 95 percent of the teachers and 75 percent of

the classified staff disagreed that changes in board/district policy are communicated to them in writing.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), it should include strategies for strengthening ongoing internal communications to staff at all levels.
  - a. Consistent information related to the board or district actions or policies must be relayed in a timely manner.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## **1.3 Communications**

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### **Professional Standard**

Staff input into school and district operations is encouraged.

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. Opportunities for staff input into district operations have varied depending on the Superintendent. In general, most interviewees indicated that they have not felt welcome to provide input to the board or district administration in recent years.
2. Under the state administrator, the senior staff of the district is meeting on a regular basis and has an opportunity to provide input to the district office.
3. The state administrator stated that he has an “open door” policy for all staff. However, many teachers interviewed said they have had limited dialogue with the state administrator, except at a district-wide staff meeting. When teachers have suggestions, they generally go to the principal.
4. Traditionally, teachers have had some input on issues related to curriculum and staff development. However, a number of interviewees noted that during the tenure of one interim Superintendent, a new curriculum was selected without teachers’ input or knowledge. Staff also say they have had very little input on district policymaking (see CR4.5), most notably the district’s suspension/expulsion policy. Staff members indicated their lack of involvement in these key issues has created resentment and a devaluing of their role as professionals.
5. The district does not utilize many committees or task forces to obtain input from staff and others (see CR3.2). Some staff members have been involved on the leadership team that is working on the Local Education Agency (LEA) Plan for the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and some participate on the School Site Council.
6. A number of staff interviewed said they were uncomfortable providing input to the board because they feared reprisals or retaliation by the board.
7. Several interviewees stated that there were times when the board would not allow staff members to speak during board meetings. They said the board would make decisions without staff input and without informing staff of their actions.



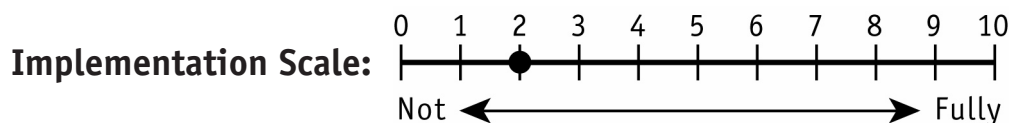
All of the teachers surveyed, and 75 percent of the classified staff, disagreed or strongly disagreed that the board welcomes teachers to come and give their opinions at board meetings.

8. Over half the teachers (58 percent) and classified staff (57 percent) surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that *principals* encourage their input into decision-making and school/district operations (32 percent of the teachers and 29 percent of the classified staff agreed or strongly agreed; the remainder were neutral or didn't know). Higher percentages of both teachers and classified staff were neutral or didn't know if *district administration* encourages teacher/staff input into decision-making, although there was still a tendency for both to disagree that the administration encourages input (47 percent of teachers and 43 percent of classified staff). Results for the *board's* encouragement of teacher input were much more negative, with 95 percent of the teachers and 88 percent of the classified staff disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the board encourages input.

## Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must expand opportunities for those working directly with students and programs to provide input regarding school and district operations.
  - a. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), its internal communications strategies should address two-way communications.
  - b. Staff should be encouraged to attend meetings when district policies and issues are discussed, and they should feel welcomed to offer input.

## Standard Implemented: Partially



## 1.4 Communications

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### Professional Standard

The district effectively implements strategies for communicating with parents, the community and the media.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. Administrator interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups
5. Student handbook
6. District newsletter

### Findings

1. The district office and schools have implemented several strategies for communicating with parents. To invite parents to events, the district often sends information in three different ways: a notice is carried home by students, a letter is sent by mail, and a follow-up phone call is made in the language of the parent. There is a monthly “Eagle Express” newsletter, a monthly “Meet and Greet” parent breakfast, a marquee for announcements, and yearly visits by teachers to their students’ homes.
2. The district employs six parent advisors/liaisons who reach out to parents in particular ethnic and linguistic communities, especially regarding individual student attendance or other issues. The liaisons also provide written and verbal translation services in Spanish and Hmong (as well as limited verbal translation support in Mien, Laotian and other Southeast Asian languages). Several classified staff at the elementary school are also multilingual. While most newsletters and notices of events are translated, other documents such as report cards and suspension notices are not.
3. Some interviewees noted that communication could be further enhanced with a parent advisor/liaison specifically assigned to the African American community.
4. There have been some attempts to work with local churches to enhance the district’s ability to connect with parents in the community.
5. The mainstream media in Fresno (the *Fresno Bee* and local network affiliates) has provide little positive coverage of the district. Some interviewees stated that the media have been unfair to the district, “blowing things out of proportion.” Some believe that the lack of coverage is related to the fact that many people in the community are low income, minority and many unable to speak or read English.

Half of the classified staff and teachers surveyed agreed that schools are considerably better than shown in the media (the other half of the classified staff and 28 percent of the teachers were neutral or didn’t know; only 22 percent of the teachers disagreed). However, they were more likely to disagree that the media paint an unfair picture of the situation in the district: Among teachers, 65 percent disagreed, 20 percent were

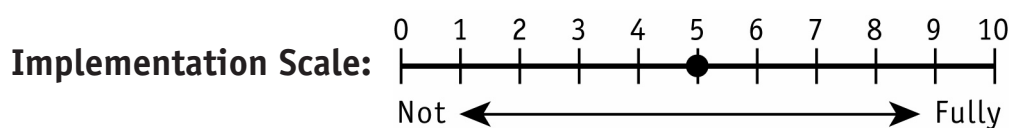
neutral or didn't know, and 15 percent agreed. Among classified staff, 50 percent disagreed, 25 percent were neutral or didn't know, and 25 percent agreed.

6. It appears that the district has had no organized strategy for outreach to provide the media with information about the successes within the district. The media have been invited to attend career days, multicultural days and other events, but typically do not attend.
7. Interviewees stated that the board made little effort to communicate with the public about the financial situation in the fall of 2002.
8. The student handbook is a resource that can provide critical information to parents, but its distribution has been inconsistent. A handbook was not distributed this year.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should implement a more proactive media relations campaign to highlight the accomplishments of students and staff in the district.
2. As part of the district's comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), the district should further refine and extend outreach strategies to better communicate with non-English-speaking, disenfranchised, and less-involved parents and community members.
  - a. The district should consider translating additional documents including report cards and suspension notices.
  - b. The district office and sites should pool resources as much as possible to maximize outreach efforts.

### 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. Staff interviews
3. News articles
4. Policy manual

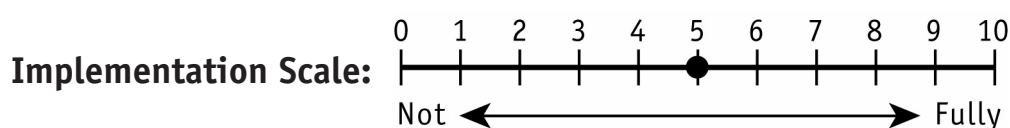
### Findings

1. It is unclear if the district had a specified spokesperson prior to the state takeover. The district does not currently have a communications plan in place that delineates roles and responsibilities regarding district spokespersons or media relations procedures (see CR1.1).
2. The district also provided no board-adopted policy addressing spokespersons. CSBA's sample Board Policy 1112 Media Relations (1996) was included in the district's policy manual without a board adoption date. This sample policy provides that spokespersons include the board president, Superintendent and public information officer, although other board members and staff may be asked by the Superintendent to speak to the media on a case-by-case basis. Given the board's advisory nature, the presence of the state administrator and the lack of a public information officer, this policy would not be adequate.
3. In practice, the state administrator currently serves as the spokesperson for the district.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Through a comprehensive communications plan and/or district policy, the district should clarify the roles and responsibilities of district administration, other staff, and board members when working with public inquiries and the media.
  - a. Staff should be informed as to the protocols and procedures regarding public and media inquiries.
  - b. The state administrator or designee should refer media inquiries to other staff as appropriate based on their expertise and communications skills.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## **1.6 Communications**

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### **Professional Standard**

Individuals not authorized to speak on behalf of the district refrain from public comments on board decisions and district programs.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. News articles

### **Findings**

1. It could not be effectively determined whether unauthorized individuals spoke on behalf of the district during the past two years.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. Once a formal protocol regarding spokespersons has been developed, all board members and district staff must respect the district's procedures and protocols (see CR1.5).
  - a. Inquiries should be referred to the identified spokespersons as appropriate so the district's messages will be consistent.

### **Standard Implemented:**

Could not be determined at this time.

### **Implementation Scale: Not Applicable**

## **1.7 Communications**

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### **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. Staff interviews
3. Parent interviews
4. Community member interviews

### **Findings**

1. Because two board members chose not to participate in this review and because no board meetings were held during the period this review was conducted, the review team was unable to assess all board members.
2. Board members have not participated in media trainings or other briefings to discuss communications protocols and procedures.
3. One board member suggested that the media tended to focus on the anger or emotion of the messenger rather than the content of the message.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. No recommendations at this time.

### **Standard Implemented:**

Could not be determined at this time.

### **Implementation Scale: Not Applicable**



## **2.1 Parent/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 in languages other than English when 15 percent or more speak other languages (Education Code 48980, 48985).

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Student/parent handbook
2. Staff interviews
3. Policy manual

### **Findings**

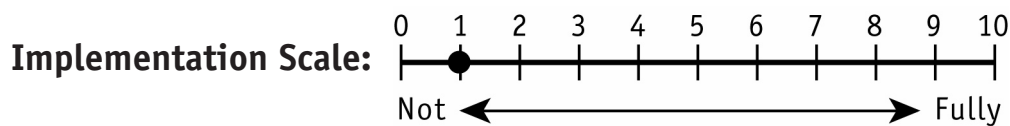
1. Although various state laws require numerous notifications to parents, Education Code 48980 specifically deals with those parental notifications related to:
  - student discipline
  - student absences for religious purposes
  - excused absences
  - the availability of individualized instruction for students with temporary disabilities
  - parental responsibility to notify the receiving district regarding his/her temporarily disabled child's presence in a hospital within the 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
  - schedule of minimum days and student-free staff development days
  - high school exit examination requirement
  - the district's fingerprinting program, if any
  - the district's sexual harassment policy
  - student access to Internet and online sites
  - current statutory and local attendance options
  - availability of state funds for Advanced Placement fees
2. Historically, the district has distributed a student/parent handbook which contains many of the required parental notifications. However, the distribution of the handbook has been inconsistent in the past few years and was not distributed in 2002-03.
3. Education Code 48985 requires that parental notices be provided in languages other than English when 15 percent or more of the students in a school speak another primary language. The schools in the district do have more than 15 percent of their students speaking Spanish and Hmong. District staff members indicate that most notices are sent in English, Spanish and Hmong.

4. Board Policy and Exhibit 5145.6, Notifications Required by Law, detail the notifications required by law to be given to parents. The policy contains the provision that notices be in the primary language of students when 15 percent or more of the students speak a language other than English. The policy bears no adoption date.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must ensure that parental notifications are annually distributed in accordance with law.
  - a. The district might review its policy and exhibit on parental notifications to ensure that these materials reflect current law and thus are useful to staff that prepare notifications.
  - b. The district should annually issue its student/parent handbook containing parental notifications or identify other means of distributing the notifications.
  - c. The district should ensure that all notices are provided in languages other than English as required by law.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 2.2 Parent/Community Relations

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### Legal Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews

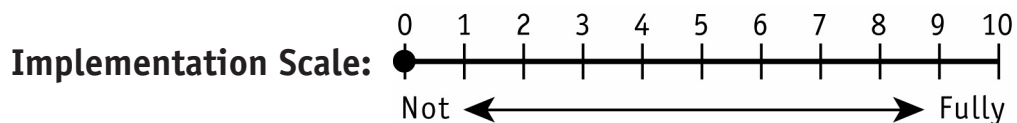
### Findings

1. Education Code 35256 requires that the board annually issue a school accountability report card for each school site. These report cards are required to report all the conditions listed in Education Code 33126 and 41409.3. In addition, Education Code 35256 requires that parents be notified that a copy of the report card will be provided upon request.
2. The district did not issue school accountability report cards in 2002-03.
3. The district's policy manual includes a copy of CSBA's 1998 sample board policy and administrative regulation pertaining to school accountability report cards, but there is no evidence that these were adopted by the district (see CR4.2) and they do not reflect current law (CSBA last updated these materials in November 2000).

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must ensure that school accountability report cards are issued annually for each school site in accordance with law, and must notify parents that a copy of the report card will be provided upon request.
  - a. The district might consider distributing a summary of the report card or a complete report card to each parent to keep them informed about school and district performance and progress.
2. The district might develop or update a policy and administrative regulation on school accountability report cards to reflect current law.

### Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



## 2.3 Parent/Community Relations

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### Legal Standard

The district has developed and annually disseminates uniform complaint procedures (Title 5, Sections 4621 and 4622).

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews

### Findings

1. The law requires that districts use uniform complaint procedures consistent with the state's uniform complaint procedures when addressing complaints alleging unlawful discrimination based on age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical 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.

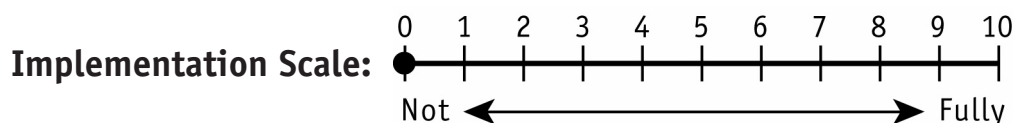
The California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 4622, contains requirements for annual dissemination of district complaint procedures and information about available appeals, civil law remedies and conditions under which a complaint may be taken directly to the California Department of Education.

2. The district's policy manual includes a copy of CSBA's 1996 sample board policy and administrative regulation pertaining to uniform complaint procedures, but there is no evidence that these were adopted by the board (see CR4.2) and they do not reflect current law (CSBA last updated these materials in March 2003 and 2002, respectively).
3. Staff members seemed unsure whether official procedures had been adopted and were unclear on the exact requirements of the procedures as applied to them. However, staff members indicated that complaint procedures are followed informally, and are almost always resolved at the principal level.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must adopt and annually disseminate uniform complaint procedures consistent with law.

### Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



## **2.4 Parent/Community Relations**

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### **Professional Standard**

Procedures are in place for addressing parents' and community members' complaints against employees in a fair and timely manner.

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

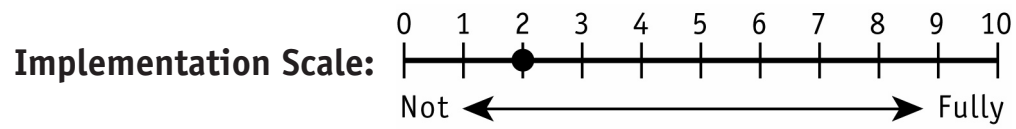
### **Findings**

1. Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 1312.1, Complaints Concerning School Personnel, were found in the district's policy manual but had no adoption date.
2. Interviewees report that when parents approach principals, it is often to appeal teacher decisions regarding discipline.
3. In interviews, staff members seemed unsure whether official procedures had been adopted and were unclear on the exact requirements of the procedures as applied to them. However, they indicated that complaints are almost always resolved at the site level and rarely get to the level of requiring the formal complaint process.
4. When asked in the survey whether charges or complaints against employees are handled in a timely and professional manner by the district administration, 95 percent of the teachers and 88 percent of the classified staff disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked in general whether the district handles parent complaints in a uniform manner using established procedures, again 95 percent of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed, as did the majority of classified staff (63 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 25 percent were neutral or didn't know, and 13 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district should update and adopt written complaint procedures.
2. The district should ensure that staff are aware of the procedures and are capable of informing parents about them. Parents might also be notified of complaint procedures through the student/parent handbook or other direct means.
3. The district should ensure the fair and consistent implementation of the complaint procedures.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**





## **2.5 Parent/Community Relations**

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### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Parent/community member interviews
4. Parent focus groups

### **Findings**

1. Insufficient information was available to determine the process used by board members to refer or address informal public concerns. One board member reported that he receives several phone calls per week from parents who have complaints about staff, primarily dealing with discipline issues or concerns that staff is not following up on a matter, and that he advises parents to document their complaints and to go to the principal. However, there have also been reports that in the past some board members inserted themselves in operational matters of the district to try to directly address concerns or issues (see CR5.14).

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. To increase board members' understanding of the appropriate distinction between board and staff roles, board members should participate in continuing education focused on boardsmanship issues and board roles and responsibilities.
2. The district should establish and implement a plan to enhance district office responsiveness so there is greater confidence that matters will be satisfactorily addressed at the staff level.

### **Standard Implemented:**

Could not be determined at this time.

### **Implementation Scale: Not Applicable**

## 2.6 Parent/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

Parents and community members are encouraged to be involved in school activities and their children's education.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Staff surveys
5. Parent/community member interviews
6. Parent focus groups
7. Policy manual

### Findings

1. The district and schools have implemented a variety of strategies to involve parents and community members. For example, the district currently has a free monthly parent breakfast in the cafeteria so parents can have breakfast with their children and have an opportunity to speak with staff. The district also holds a parent conference day on the Monday after each grading period, and estimates about 90 percent parent participation. Parent education/literacy classes are offered to the community. District policy requires teachers to make home visits for all students in their classes. The district has minimum days the first week of classes so that teachers have time to make the home visits. Back-to-School nights reportedly attract about half of the parents. Parents are most likely to attend school events or activities when their child is involved.
2. Sites attempt to inform parents in a variety of ways, by providing notices to students, by mailing letters and by following up with telephone calls (see CR1.4). For all three of these methods, the district does attempt to provide translation services.
3. There is little to no parent/community volunteerism in the schools; see CR2.8.
4. The district does not have a PTA. Several attempts have been made over the years to organize a PTA, but none have had lasting success.
5. Staff reports that many parents tend to engage with the schools only when their child is in trouble.
6. As is typical in most districts, parent involvement tends to be higher in elementary grades and lower in the middle grades.
7. The district does not provide specific training to principals or site staff on engaging parents.
8. After a year with no functioning School Site Council, an SSC is in operation again this year (see CR2.7 and CR3.5).

9. The district has three designated staff members who serve as parent advisors and whose job is to provide parent outreach and translation to specific ethnic communities within the district. Attendance and truancy issues are a primary focus. There are also other staff assigned to be migrant liaisons and community liaisons. Interviewees give high marks for the work performed by these parent advisors/liaisons.

While there are parent advisors for the Southeast Asian and Latino communities, there is not an African American parent advisor.

10. Some interviewees report that socioeconomic status is a major hindrance to parental involvement: “These parents are just trying to survive.” Language barriers are perceived as another hindrance. While the district does have bilingual staff and puts out materials in Spanish and Hmong, participants in the parent focus group agreed that the district could be even more effective in its outreach to Latino and Southeast Asian parents.
11. Some parents believe that not all parents in the district are respected or treated the same way. In particular, there is a perception that the board is more responsive to African American parents than to other members of the community.
12. The district’s policy manual provided to the review team did not include a mandated policy on parent involvement in Title I programs.
13. Staff members surveyed for this review have mixed opinions regarding the level of support exhibited by parents. Teachers surveyed were slightly more likely to disagree than agree that parents are generally supportive of the district and its activities (40 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed, 30 percent neutral or didn’t know, and 30 percent agreed/strongly agreed). Classified staff were even more likely to disagree that parents are generally supportive (50 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed, 38 percent neutral or didn’t know, and 13 percent agreed/strongly agreed).

Furthermore, most teachers surveyed disagreed that the level of parental support has increased significantly in the past few years (63 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed, 32 percent were neutral or didn’t know, and 5 percent agreed/strongly agreed), whereas classified staff were evenly split in their opinions as to whether the level of parental support is higher now (43 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed, 43 percent agreed/strongly agreed, and 14 percent neutral or didn’t know).

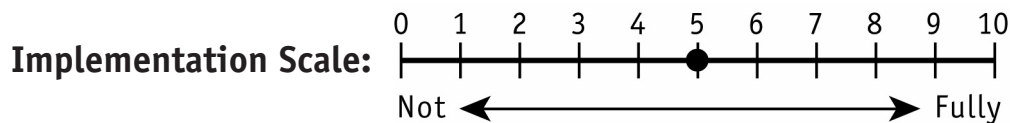
14. Teachers and classified staff surveyed differed in their perspective as to whether there has been a change in the level of community support. The majority of classified staff (57 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that the community is now less involved in the district than ever (29 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed, 14 percent neutral or didn’t know). Teachers surveyed were more likely to disagree that community support is lower than ever (42 percent disagree/strongly disagree compared to 21 percent agree/strongly agree, although 37 percent were neutral or didn’t know).

15. Both teachers and classified staff surveyed gave average grades of about a C to principals in terms of their effectiveness in encouraging parent participation at the school level.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district and school sites should continue to identify and utilize opportunities for engaging parents, especially traditionally disenfranchised parents.
  - a. The district should continue to encourage sites to pursue creative approaches and focus on getting parents to interact with the schools for positive reasons.
  - b. The district should consider providing training and support to staff to raise cultural awareness and address the perception that some parents are treated differently from others.
  - c. The district might expand on the types of trainings it facilitates directly with parents who are interested in participating but are not certain how to best get involved or who have not traditionally felt welcomed.
2. The district must adopt a policy addressing parent involvement in Title I programs as mandated by law.

### **Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **2.7 Parent/Community Relations**

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### **Professional Standard**

Parent and public input into school and district operations is encouraged.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. State administrator interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Staff surveys
5. Parent/community member interviews
6. Parent focus groups

### **Findings**

1. While the board has a policy to provide for public input during board meetings as required by law (see CR6.8), most interviewees said that public comment is not valued by the board.
2. Some interviewees felt that translation services were inconsistently provided at board meetings and were not always reliable.
3. A number of interviewees describe the community as having a very vocal African American community and a fairly vocal Hispanic community. Southeast Asian parents are described as more reserved and more willing to accept without question that the schools are doing their best.
4. Parent and public input was not sought prior to the hiring of recent superintendents.
5. There does not appear to have been a process for obtaining citizen input in policy development and review (see CR4.5).
6. This year, the district has reestablished some opportunities for parent and public input through councils; see CR3.2.
7. When teachers failed to receive their paychecks, approximately 400 persons attended an informational meeting. Several interviewees noted that this occurrence, plus the subsequent “sick out” held by the teachers, generated more parent involvement in the district than any other issue in recent years.
8. In surveys conducted for this review, 95 percent of the teachers and 75 percent of the classified staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that parents have a large say in decisions made by the school board.

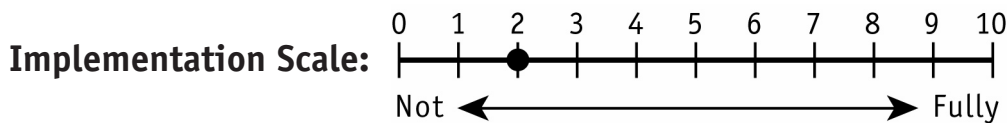
When asked to “grade” the board and district administration on a scale of 0 to 4 in terms of their effectiveness in encouraging parent/public participation in district poli-

cymaking, teachers gave the board an average rating of 0.2 and the district administration an average rating of 1.2. Classified staff's ratings were only slightly higher: 0.6 for the board and 2.0 for the district administration.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Because representation of the community's interests is a fundamental role of the board, the board must demonstrate to parents and the public that it sincerely wants to hear and consider all perspectives and viewpoints.
  - a. The board should participate in continuing education or in-service workshops on boardsmanship issues.
  - b. All board members must demonstrate respect for people who are addressing the board; see CR5.11, CR6.6 and CR6.8.
2. The district should ensure that its efforts to reach out and involve traditionally disenfranchised parents (see CR2.6) include efforts to solicit meaningful input on school and district operations.
3. The district should examine the manner in which input from parents and the public contributes to district decision-making.
  - a. The district should consider whether existing committees/councils and/or new committees and task forces can be useful in providing input on issues identified as priorities by the district or school sites (see CR3.2 and CR3.7).

### Standard Implemented: Partially





## 2.8 Parent/Community Relations

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### Professional Standard

Volunteers receive appropriate training and play a meaningful role that contributes to the educational program.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Parent/community member interviews
2. Parent focus groups
3. Staff interviews

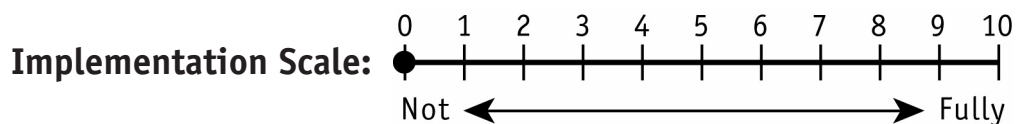
### Findings

1. There is little to no volunteerism in the district's schools. Therefore, formalized training offered through the district is nonexistent. In some cases, teachers may recruit and encourage parent volunteers to join in particular classroom activities.
2. Members of the district and school councils do receive some training or information related to their responsibilities (see CR3.5).

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. To encourage volunteerism, the district might involve principals, other key staff, parents and community members in developing a coordinated plan for recruiting volunteers, including underrepresented groups of parents and community members.
  - a. The district may first need to seek input from parents and community members to identify and address barriers to participation.
2. The district should be prepared to provide training for volunteers in the specific responsibilities they will be asked to perform, particularly those that involve student contact or instruction.

### Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



## 2.9 Parent/Community Relations

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### Legal Standard

The district has established procedures for visitor registration and posts registration requirements at each school entrance (Penal Code 627.2, 627.6).

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Personal experience of the review team

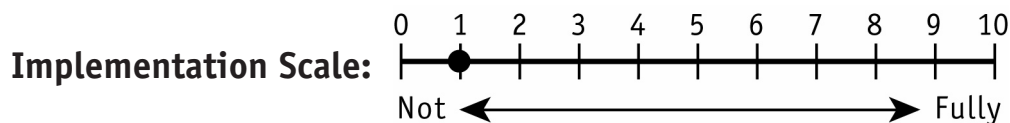
### Findings

1. Board Policy 1251, Loitering or Causing Disturbance (1990), requires outsiders to register and receive approval upon entering campuses. The policy does not contain provisions for posting of registration requirements.
2. Signs by the school gates indicate that all visitors must go to the office. They do not include other information required by Penal Code 627.6, such as school hours during which registration is required, the route to take to the office, and the penalties for violating registration requirements.
3. The review team was consistently asked to sign in while visiting the district office and campuses, but was not asked for other information required by Penal Code 627.3 for outsiders, such as address or proof of identity. It could be argued that the review team did not meet the legal definition of “outsider” in that they may have been considered “on school grounds at the school’s request” and had scheduled appointments with staff.
4. The review team was not consistently escorted around campuses.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should review and update its policy on visitor registration to reflect current law and desired practices to ensure student safety.
2. The district should ensure that a notice is posted at every entrance to each school and school grounds containing the statements required by law.
3. The district should ensure that principals and front-office staff are knowledgeable about registration procedures and actions that should be taken if an outsider’s presence threatens to disrupt the school, students or employees or result in property damage.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## **2.10 Parent/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 interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Staff surveys
5. Parent/community member interviews
6. Parent focus groups

### **Findings**

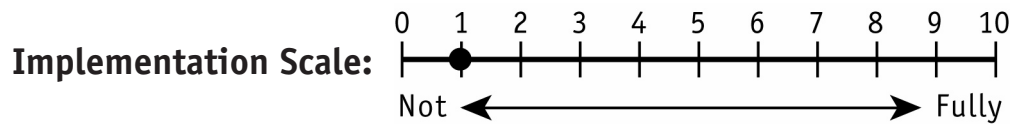
1. Individual board members have strong ties in the community. Many have resided in the community for many years, attended local schools, have family in the community, and belong to neighborhood churches and organizations.
2. Interviewees largely agreed that the board has not been involved in developing relationships with various segments of the community. There is a perception among some members of the Southeast Asian and Latino communities that the board only pays attention to the African American community.
3. Some interviewees reported that the board did not contribute to building community collaboratives and may have even been counterproductive in the collaborative-building process; see CR3.1.
4. The board has a contentious relationship with the county office of education resulting from the county office's fiscal oversight role.
5. Classified staff surveyed for this review assigned an average grade of 1.0 on a scale of 0 to 4 to the board in terms of maintaining good community relations. Teachers surveyed gave an even lower grade (0.2).
6. Although some board members visited school sites, it does not appear that the visits were conducted for the purpose of seeking staff input or viewing school operations. Rather, staff often felt intimidated by board members and felt that, at least in one case, school visits were motivated by personal agendas and desires to micromanage district operations.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. Board members should make it a high priority to actively seek to build positive relations in the community, making a special effort to reach out and include all segments of the community.

- a. The board might play a leadership role in building and supporting community partnerships that would bring additional resources and services to district students and families.
- 2. Board members' participation in community relations efforts should be linked to a proactive coordinated strategy to improve the community's understanding and knowledge of district issues and goals.
  - a. The participation of board members in community relations might be addressed in the district's comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1).

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



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

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#### **Professional Standard**

The board and Superintendent support partnerships and collaborations with community groups, local agencies and businesses.

#### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Community member interviews
4. Board minutes
5. Policy manual

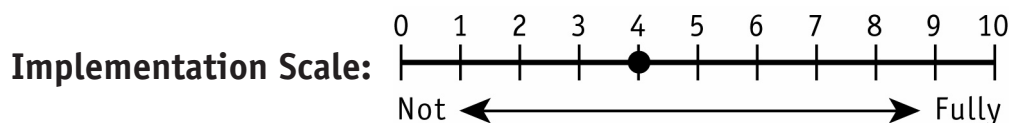
#### **Findings**

1. Board Policy 1200, Participation by the Public (1990), supports and encourages partnerships and collaborations with “community organizations, teachers, city government representatives, students, parents, and any other concerned group.”
2. The district has few formal collaboratives with outside community agencies. The most notable collaboratives are with the Fresno Police Department for programs such as D.A.R.E. and classroom anti-drug instruction. The Fresno County Department of Social Services provides a variety of family services. In addition, mental health counseling services are provided through this agency for students in need.
3. Examples of other agencies providing occasional assistance when needed include the County Office of Education, the Mexican American Political Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Fresno County Department of Recreation, which makes the Ivy Center available for after-school activities.
4. There are not any significant partnerships with private businesses. Few businesses are located in the community.
5. Some interviewees reported that the board did not contribute to building what few collaboratives exist and may have even been counterproductive in the collaborative-building process. Most interviewees attribute district collaborative initiatives to the efforts of the staff in the district.
6. One board member expressed a desire to establish more collaboratives, including working with the County Office of Education and Fresno City College to provide mentoring programs for students. This board member also suggested getting the local churches more involved in notifying and motivating the community to support district events.

## Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should work with other community agencies and organizations to conduct a community-wide needs assessment to determine parent and community needs that are currently being unmet, including educational, health and social services needs.
2. The district should develop a coordinated district strategy for building community collaboratives and partnerships that serve students and their families and facilitate sharing of resources.
3. The state administrator or designee 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.
4. The board and appropriate staff should consider participating in continuing education or study available publications on facilitating and implementing collaboration.
5. The district should work with its partners to monitor the effectiveness of community collaboratives.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



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

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#### **Professional Standard**

The board and Superintendent establish broad-based committees or councils to advise the district on critical district issues and operations as appropriate.

#### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Community member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Policy manual
4. Board and committee agendas and minutes

#### **Findings**

1. Board Policy 1220, Citizen Advisory Committees (1990), recognizes the importance of committees to better understand the community, and provides that the district may establish them as needed for advisory purposes.
2. The district has a leadership team consisting of parents, staff and administrators working on the Local Education Agency (LEA) Plan, due in June 2003, to satisfy the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.
3. The district has a Parent Advisory Committee, which is a combination of representatives from the Migrant Parent Advisory Council and English Learner Advisory Council.
4. In January 2001, board minutes show a motion was made to create a Community Advisory Committee. Any subsequent action to establish the committee could not be determined.
5. In March 2001, the board discussed establishing small subcommittees on personnel and curriculum, budget and finance, construction and facilities, and discipline and safety, to further assist the board in its review and oversight requirements. These subcommittees were intended to consist of one board member, one community member and one staff member. Any subsequent action to establish these subcommittees could not be determined.
6. In 2001-02, there was no active School Site Council in the district. It was reported that a council was elected at the beginning of the school year, but that the board removed those members from office and put a different group in their place. It appears that the group did not meet.

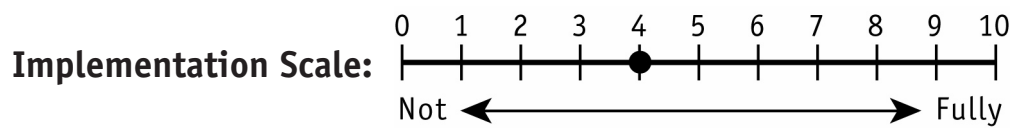
In 2002-03, the district has a combined SSC for both schools. The staff was recently notified that each school needs a separate SSC to comply with the law, and the district plans to make this change in the 2003-04 school year.

7. Many interviewees said they have not felt welcome to provide input on district operations in recent years, but that there has been some improvement under the state administrator; see CR1.3.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. In order to expand opportunities for staff and public input, the district should examine the committee structure to determine if there is a need to establish additional committees or task forces focused on specific issues of priority to the district.
2. The district should continue to encourage participation in committees and councils; see CR3.4.

### **Standard Implemented: Partially**





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

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#### Professional Standard

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

#### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. School Site Council minutes and bylaws
3. Parent Advisory Committee minutes
4. Board member interviews
5. Staff interviews
6. Community member interviews

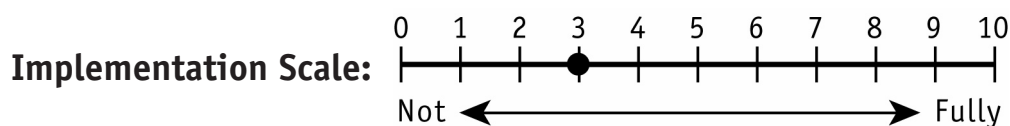
#### Findings

1. Administrative Regulation 1221.2, School Site Councils (1990), outlines the legal responsibilities of School Site Councils, including development of a school plan and budget. SSC bylaws also contain information about council responsibilities.
2. The SSC briefly reviewed its legal roles and responsibilities at its first meeting.
3. The SSC reviewed the SSC Training Manual at its January meeting. Based on the minutes, the council used the training manual to discuss its roles and responsibilities.
4. The Parent Advisory Committee minutes note that district staff gave a presentation on the duties and responsibilities of elected officers of the Parent Advisory Committee. No other evidence of written goals/charges could be found.

#### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should periodically review and clarify in writing the purposes and charges of each committee and/or council.
2. The district should continue to provide committees and/or councils with annual trainings and periodic reviews of specific goals and responsibilities.

#### Standard Implemented: Partially



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

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#### **Professional Standard**

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

#### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. School Site Council rosters
3. Parent Advisory Committee rosters
4. Staff interviews
5. Parent focus groups

#### **Findings**

1. Administrative Regulation 1221.2, School Site Councils (1990), outlines the membership requirements of SSCs. There are parent and staff representatives on the SSC.
2. The roster for this year's SSC reflects the diversity of the student population. The SSC is comprised of Latino, Southeast Asian and African American parents.
3. The Migrant Parents Advisory Council is made up of five elected officers. Four are Latino and one is Southeast Asian. All are women and all are parents. One of these members, a Latino, was chosen to represent the MPAC on the SSC.

The English Language Advisory Council has both Latino and Southeast Asian parents. Representatives from both the Migrant Parents Advisory Council and English Language Advisory Council sit on the Parent Advisory Committee.

4. The Parent Advisory Council is a six-member group of district staff members employed as parent liaisons who also provide multilanguage translation for the district.
5. The Parent Advisory Council makes strong efforts to reach out and involve a representative group of parents and community members on district committees. There are several parent advisors for the Latino and Southeast Asian parents, but no district staff person assigned to help generate participation by and organize the African American parents. Parent advisors have noted that African American parents have not been receptive when contacted.

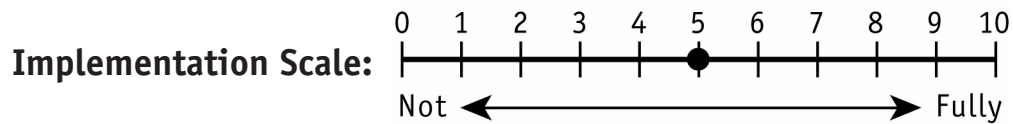
#### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. District staff should continue efforts to recruit council and committee members who represent the diversity of the student population and the community.
  - a. District staff, principals and/or council chairs should consider obtaining input from parents and community members in order to identify barriers to participation by some segments of the community (e.g., time commitment, transportation needs, language barriers, belief that they are not welcome). Then a plan should be

developed to address those barriers. For example, translation services should be provided for parents who wish to participate.

- b. The district and school sites should disseminate information about the purpose, responsibilities and successful results of these groups to parents, community and staff in order to generate interest in participation.
  - c. Committee and council chairs and staff members might receive training in generating and maintaining parent participation.
2. The district should consider employing or assigning an African American parent advisor to help generate participation by the African American community.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



### 3.5 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees and 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. School Site Council minutes
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups

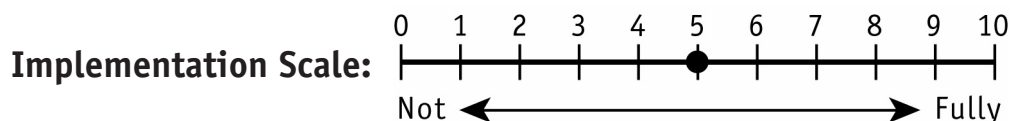
#### Findings

1. District staff members provide training for the School Site Council using the state handbook as well as material that the district has compiled to meet its specific needs. This material addresses roles and responsibilities and, in the case of the SSC, the legal requirements for the development of a Single Plan for Student Achievement. The councils also review Roberts Rules of Order.
2. The Parent Advisory Committee also received a training guide and a training session through the district this year.

#### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should continue to provide training and/or information to assist advisory committee and council members in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.
  - a. The district should continue to provide an opportunity for the School Site Council to discuss the content of the training manual at the beginning of each school year.
  - b. District staff should periodically assess members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and tailor training opportunities to meet those needs.
2. The district should ensure that candidates for election or appointment to councils and committees receive materials describing the duties they would be expected to perform.

#### Standard Implemented: Partially



## **3.6 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees and 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, with appropriate input from parents, members of the community and agency policymakers.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. School site rosters
2. School Site Council minutes
3. Parent Advisory Committee minutes
4. Staff interviews
5. Parent focus groups

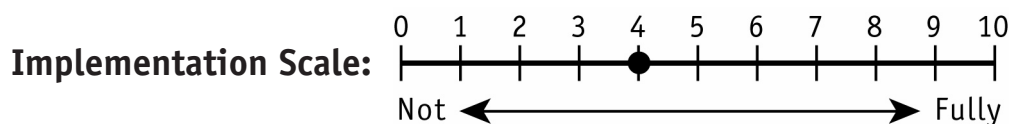
### **Findings**

1. Committees/councils appear to provide an appropriate number of slots for parents, staff and others. Some committee compositions are designed to include representation from other committees.
2. School Site Council minutes indicate that participation by all parents was high at the beginning of the year. However, in recent months, the participation of some parents has declined. In particular, it appears that the Hmong parents are no longer attending the meetings, although the reasons for their nonparticipation could not be determined.
3. It is unclear from the SSC minutes if all parents who attend the meetings were actively engaged, as comments and suggestions were not attributed to specific individuals.
4. Translators are available at meetings to facilitate the participation of non-English-speaking members.
5. It appears that the Parent Advisory Committee meets on a regular basis and notices for the meetings are sent in three languages. Interpreters are available at the meetings. The minutes indicate that there is a lot of parent participation in the meetings. However, it is unclear from the minutes if all parents in attendance were actively engaged, as comments and suggestions noted in the minutes were not attributed to specific individuals.
6. The sign-in sheets for the Parent Advisory Committee meetings show that the meetings are well attended and that the audience is made up mostly of Latino parents. There are also a few Asian parents.

## Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must continue to encourage each individual council or committee member to play an active and meaningful role.
  - a. Staff should contact parents who have not attended recent SSC meetings to determine why their participation has declined. Staff should explore possible structural or cultural issues that could be discouraging these parents from participating.
  - b. The district should consider providing 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 might also be provided to all members regarding group processes and decision-making.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



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

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#### **Professional Standard**

Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district effectively fulfill their responsibilities (e.g., research issues, develop recommendations).

#### **Sources and Documentation**

1. School Site Council minutes
2. Parent Advisory Committee minutes
3. Board minutes
4. Staff interviews
5. Community member interviews
6. Staff surveys

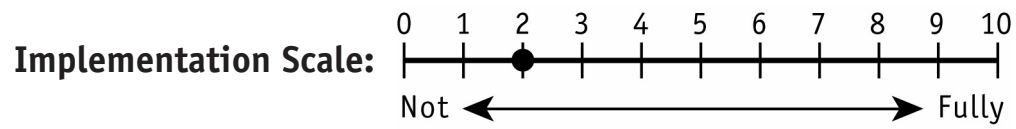
#### **Findings**

1. The School Site Council did not meet in 2001-02. However, the district has made progress in 2002-03 by reconvening the SSC. The council is actively meeting and working on a Single Plan for Student Achievement; see CR3.8.
2. Among the teachers surveyed for this review, half (50 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that site councils are *not* very visible in the district, but a significant percentage (40 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed (10 percent were neutral or didn't know). A significant percentage of classified staff surveyed also agreed/strongly agreed that site councils are not very visible (38 percent), but an equal percentage were neutral or didn't know, and 25 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.
3. The Parent Advisory Committee meets monthly. According to the minutes, the district staff appears to provide information to the migrant parents with regard to their children's education, future education plans and health-related issues.

#### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district and principals should assist councils and committees to effectively fulfill their responsibilities.
  - a. The district might utilize district and school-site advisory committees as opportunities to gather input on policies and district operations. The district might refer proposed policies and critical issues to district-level and/or site-level advisory groups as appropriate to obtain their input and their advice regarding implementation.
  - b. Each year the district might ask all council/committee chairs and members about their general satisfaction with the experience and their recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the council/committee.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**





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

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#### Legal Standard

The school site council develops a Single Plan for Student Achievement at each school applying for categorical programs through the consolidated application (Education Code 64001).

#### Sources and Documentation

1. School Site Council minutes
2. Staff interviews

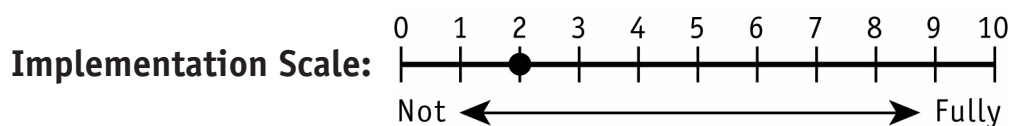
#### Findings

1. Effective January 2002, Education Code 64001 requires any school using the consolidated application process to apply for state or federal categorical funds specified in Education Code 64000, including but not limited to School-Based Program Coordination, to consolidate its school plans into a Single Plan for Student Achievement.
2. The district does not have a Single Plan for Student Achievement for the 2002-03 school year.
3. The School Site Council is actively working with an outside consultant to develop a Single Plan for Student Achievement for the 2003-04 school year.
4. Board Policy 1221.2 School Site Councils (1990) encourages the development of SSCs at each site that are expected to create a three-year school improvement plan. This policy has not been updated to reflect legal requirements for the single plan.

#### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should ensure that the SSC completes the development of the single plan for each school.
2. The district should consider developing and/or updating its policies and procedures to reflect legal requirements pertaining to the Single Plan for Student Achievement.

#### Standard Implemented: Partially



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

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#### Legal Standard

School plans are comprehensive and have sufficient content to meet the statutory requirements Education Code 64001).

#### Sources and Documentation

1. School Site Council minutes
2. Staff interviews

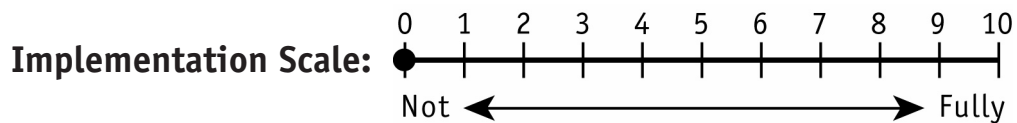
#### Findings

1. Because the district does not currently have its Single Plan for Student Achievement for each school (see CR3.8), the review team was unable to evaluate the content of the plans. However, the School Site Council is working with an outside consultant who should be knowledgeable regarding plan requirements.

#### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. As the district develops and approves school plans (see CR3.8), the School Site Council and district administration must ensure that plans contain the required components.

#### Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



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

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#### Legal Standard

The school site council annually reviews and updates the school plan and the board annually approves all site councils' plans. (Education Code 64001)

#### Sources and Documentation

1. School Site Council minutes
2. Staff surveys

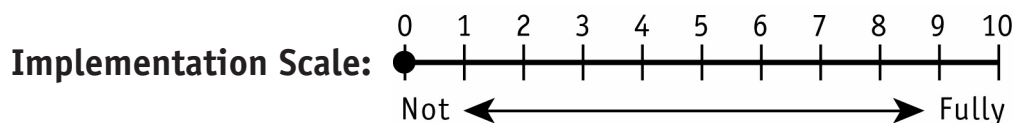
#### Findings

1. In 2002-03, the district did not have a functioning School Site Council (see CR3.2) nor a Single Plan for Student Achievement (see CR3.8). The SSC is working to develop a plan for the 2003-04 school year.
2. The district could not provide a Coordinated Compliance Review that might have addressed the plan approval process in previous years.
3. Among the staff surveyed, there were conflicting reports as to whether the school staff works with the site council to review and updates the school plan. About half the teachers (53 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that staff helps review the school plan (47 percent were neutral or didn't know). Classified staff, on the other hand, tended to agree or strongly agree that staff was involved in reviewing plans (57 percent, compared to 29 percent who disagreed/strongly disagreed and 14 percent who were neutral or didn't know).

#### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. School plans must be annually reviewed and approved in accordance with law.
  - a. District administration and the principal at each school should ensure that the SSC fulfills its responsibility for annual review of school plans.
  - b. When the state administrator or board reviews each school's plan, the review should include a determination as to whether or not the SSC was appropriately involved in the approval process at the site level.
2. To increase support for the school plan, the SSC might seek the input of all school staff in the development and review of the plan.

#### Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



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

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#### Professional Standard

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

#### Sources and Documentation

1. School Site Council minutes
2. Staff interviews
3. Staff surveys

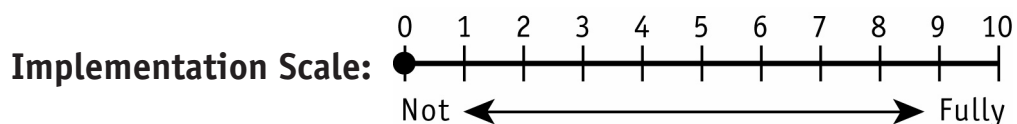
#### Findings

1. The district does not have a Single Plan for Student Achievement for the 2002-03 school year; see CR3.8.
2. Most staff interviewed were unaware of the existence of any school plans.
3. Among the teachers and classified staff surveyed, none said that the school staff consults the school plan when making decisions about school programs or budgets; 85 percent of the teachers and 57 percent of the classified staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that plans are consulted (the remainder were neutral or didn't know).

#### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. When the school plans are adopted, principals and School Site Councils should work to increase all site staff's knowledge of and support for the plan, and thus increase its meaningfulness as a driving force at the school.
  - a. The principal should exert leadership in ensuring that the school plan is consulted during site-level decision-making.
2. The annual review of school plans should include a determination of the extent to which the provisions of the school plan have been successfully implemented and whether the school's actions have improved student learning for various subpopulations of students.
  - a. When the SSC annually submits a revised plan and budget, the district should expect a brief analysis of the school's ability to implement the provisions of its school plan, changes that have resulted in improved student learning, and the rationale for revisions.

#### Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



## **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. Staff interviews
4. Staff surveys

### **Findings**

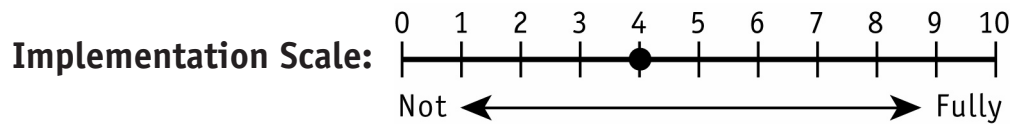
1. District policies are written and assembled in two three-ring binders. They appear to be organized using CSBA's indexing system. However, some policies were numbered incorrectly and some were out of place. The manual does not appear to have a current index listing all the policies that are contained in the manual, making it difficult to locate policies.
2. The policy manual is maintained at the district office. Because the district office is located at the middle school site and is adjacent to the elementary school site, it is reasonably accessible to staff.
3. Some board members and staff exhibited little familiarity with the policy manual and stated that they do not refer to it on a regular basis. If they had questions about policy in the past, they asked the board president, Superintendent or legal counsel as appropriate.
4. The adequacy of communications regarding policy changes has varied depending on the Superintendent. Most interviewees agree that it has been several years since they have received regular communications regarding board policy.
5. In staff surveys, 95 percent of the teachers and 75 percent of the classified staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that changes in board/district policy are communicated to them in writing.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district should designate a staff person to maintain the policy manual and hold that person accountable for updating the policy manual with the most recent versions of policies adopted by the board.
2. The district should consistently apply a coding system and index that make it easy to locate policies.
3. The district should consider whether there is a need to maintain more than one policy manual at different locations to facilitate greater accessibility by staff and the public.

- a. All staff should be notified of the locations of policies.
  - b. The Superintendent or designee should consider the use of technology, such as the Internet or a compact disk, to make policies more accessible.
  - c. To maximize parent involvement, the district should communicate with parents in their native language, and should consider utilizing a service that can provide translations of key policies that parents should know.
4. The district should determine how policy changes will be communicated to other staff, parents or interested people. As new policies are adopted or existing policies revised, they should be made known to all interested parties in a timely manner.

**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

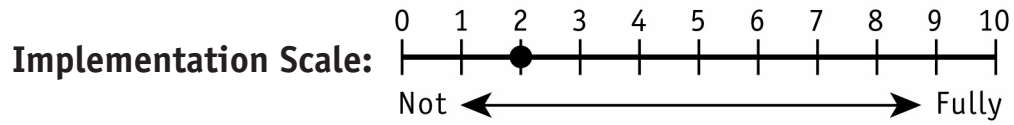
1. The policy manual that was provided by the district contained one policy adopted in 2001, three from 2000, and seven from 1994-1998. In addition, over 200 were adopted in 1990 and nearly 140 (including most of the policies in the 5000 series on Students) indicated no adoption date. The vast majority of policies are over 13 years old; consequently most do not reflect current law.
2. CSBA sample policies were interspersed between board-adopted policies. It is unclear whether these samples were intended to replace existing board policies or to be used as a supplemental reference. Some staff believe that the board adopted these policies as the district policies, but there is no evidence of actual adoption. Furthermore, CSBA sample policies are intended to be used as a resource only; CSBA recommends that districts tailor the sample policies to reflect local needs and circumstances.
3. The district subscribed to CSBA's online policy services in 2001-02. However, it is no longer a member of CSBA, and therefore does not currently have access to CSBA sample policies and administrative regulations as a source of information about changing laws or recommended practices.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should begin a systematic review of its policies, beginning with mandated policies (see CR4.3), in order to ensure fair and consistent treatment of staff, students and parents; comply with current law; and reflect local needs and district practices.
  - a. The district should determine priorities for reviewing and updating other policies, perhaps starting with those that may have the greatest impact on student learning.
2. The state administrator has the authority to adopt policies. The staff should be consulted as appropriate in developing such policies (see CR4.5), and the advisory board should be included in the process.
3. The district should establish a process for monitoring and regularly updating policies.
  - a. The district should consider subscribing to services that can inform the district on an ongoing basis regarding changes in law.

- b. The district should consider establishing a method and time line for evaluating the effectiveness of policies that are of special interest to the community or that may have a substantial impact on student learning.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**





## 4.3 Policy

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### Professional Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual

### Findings

1. CSBA has identified 53 applicable cases in which state or federal laws require the board to adopt a policy or specific policy language.

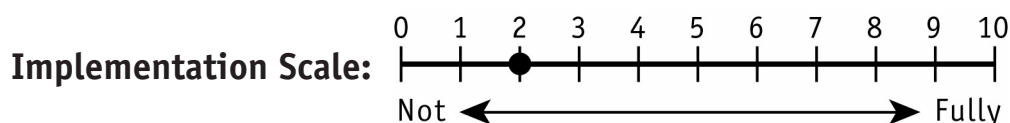
The district appears to have 18 of the 53 policies. Another 10 appeared in the policy manual, but had no adoption date, and 25 were not found in the manual. Furthermore, of the 18 that did exist and have adoption dates, only two appear to be up to date.

2. CSBA has identified an additional 33 policies that are mandated if the district participates in certain state or federal programs. For example, if a district operates a School-Based Pupil Motivation and Maintenance program, Education Code 54725 mandates that the board adopt policy regarding the establishment of school site councils. A thorough audit of the district's policy manual would be necessary to determine whether the district participates in those programs that would require those policies.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must ensure full compliance with policy mandates of state and federal law, including those policies that may be mandated depending on the programs offered by the district.
  - a. The district should begin a systematic review of its mandated policies (see CR4.2) and update them as necessary.
2. To ensure that the district continues to adopt policies in accordance with law, the district should establish a process for identifying new mandates.
  - a. To identify new mandates, the district may utilize legal counsel, district staff, or the list of mandated policies provided to districts that subscribe to CSBA's policy services.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 4.4 Policy

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### Legal Standard

The board annually reviews its policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/co-curricular activities. (Education Code 35160.5)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board agendas and minutes

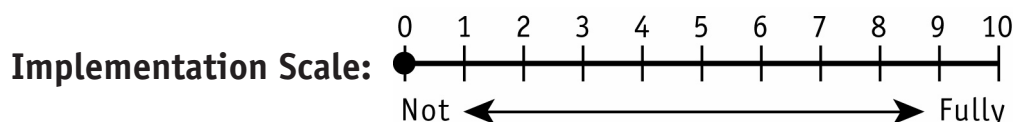
### Findings

1. The district does not have a policy on Intradistrict Open Enrollment since it has only two schools containing different grade levels.
2. Board Policy 6145, Extracurricular and Cocurricular Activities, does reflect the requirement for annual review. However, the policy was adopted in 1990, and does not appear to reflect current law. For example, it does not reflect the nondiscrimination provisions of the Title 5 regulations adopted in 2001. There is no evidence that the policy has been reviewed annually in recent years.
3. Board minutes provided by the district were insufficient to determine whether the board conducted a review.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. In accordance with law, the district must annually review its policy on Extracurricular and Cocurricular Activities.
  - a. The district should immediately begin to review this policy in order to satisfy the legal requirement.
  - b. To ensure sustained compliance, the district should consider scheduling an annual review of this policy at a designated time each year.
- c. Even if the district does not revise this policy following review, the review itself must be noted in district records and/or the policy should be readopted with a new adoption date so that the district's compliance with the annual review requirement can be evidenced.

### Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



## 4.5 Policy

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### Professional Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

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

### Findings

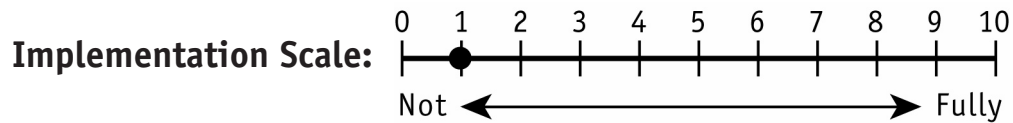
1. The district's policy on Development, Distribution and Maintenance of Policy Manual (BP/AR 9310, 1990) generally addresses the policy development process and obtaining input from staff and others. However, no specific language was found to suggest how input from staff and citizens was to be gathered and used in the development of policy.
2. Staff members at all levels report having had no input into the development of district policies in the past few years. They frequently cited as one example the district's controversial suspension/expulsion policy.
3. There were some reports that parents were involved in discussions about a school uniform policy several years ago, but other parents said they did not feel adequately informed about or involved in the development of the policy.
4. When asked to assign "grades" on a scale of 0 to 4 to both the board and district administration regarding their effectiveness in encouraging parent/public participation in district policymaking, teachers surveyed gave an average grade of 0.2 to the board and 1.2 to the district administration. Classified staff's "grades" were only slightly higher: 0.6 to the board and 2.0 to the district administration.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should implement an effective policy development process that includes opportunities for input from staff, parents and community members as appropriate.
  - a. Since the state administrator has, and should exercise as appropriate, the authority to adopt policies, it is imperative that staff and parents have a means to provide input. In other districts, other state administrators have also utilized the advisory board to provide input and/or ratify policies adopted by the state administrator.
  - b. Because it may be too time-consuming to seek broad input on each policy, the district should identify those policies that are of most interest to staff and the public and would most benefit from their input. For example, policy changes that are being made to comply with law may require less input than issues with greater district discretion.

- c. The district might consider using existing committees or councils, establishing a policy review committee, or holding public hearings to provide an opportunity for citizen input on critical policies.
- d. The district's policy and regulation describing the policy development process should be revised to clarify how input from staff and citizens will be gathered and utilized.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 4.6 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. Staff interviews
3. Parent focus groups

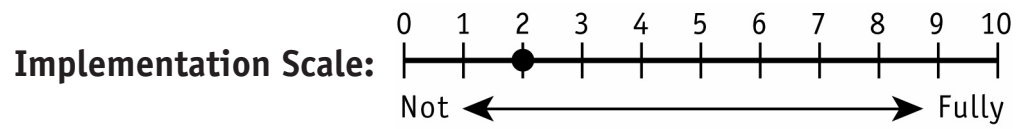
### Findings

1. Newly elected board members stated that they did not have easy access to, and were not familiar with, district policies; see CR4.1.
2. Many of the staff interviewed referenced several instances in the previous two years when the board did not adhere to policies, or else amended policies to accommodate personal circumstances. For example, staff reported that the board enacted a policy requiring school uniforms. However, after a few months that policy was, without explanation, no longer enforced. Similarly, at least one board member amended the suspension/expulsion policy. The perception is that the particular board member terminated suspensions and expulsions in order to prevent a family member enrolled in the district from being suspended.
3. A number of interviewees stated that board meetings did not operate in accordance with district bylaws; see CR6.4.
4. Board members, district staff and others do not appear to regularly consult the district's policy manual, but sometimes they will ask the board president, Superintendent or legal counsel about policies; see CR4.1.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should maintain an updated policy manual and consistently notify staff (and parents as appropriate) regarding policy changes; see CR4.1.
2. The district should set an expectation that policy will be a guiding force in the district.
  - a. District policies should provide direction to staff on issues requiring consistent districtwide implementation and/or legal compliance, while providing discretion to staff and school sites on other issues as appropriate to make judgments based on their expertise.
  - b. The district should ensure alignment of district policies, administrative regulations and other district documents in order to provide consistent direction.
  - c. Staff should be held accountable for implementing district policies.
  - d. The district should set an example by consistently adhering to existing policies. If a policy no longer meets the district's needs, the district should initiate a review and revision of the policy.

**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 (Education Code 35107).

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Fresno 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.
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 Improvement Plan**

Unable to determine a rating at this time.

**Standard Implemented: Not Applicable**

**Implementation Scale: Not Applicable**

## **5.2 Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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### **Professional 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
3. District records on conference attendance

### **Findings**

1. Participation in board education does not appear to be coordinated among the governance team. One board member has within the past two years participated in multiple governance courses through the CSBA Masters in Governance program. Other individual board members have attended CSBA's Annual Conferences in the past two years.
2. The two board members elected in November 2002 have not participated in any trainings, conferences or workshops.
3. It does not appear that board members have attended orientations, workshops or conventions sponsored by other organizations.
4. One board member interviewed explained that the board would have participated in more board training opportunities, but after September 2001, it was difficult to concentrate on training because "the focus became saving the district."
5. There is no formal policy or process for providing an orientation to new members of the board. In the past two years, with turnover in the Superintendent's position, there has not consistently been a professional administrator available who could provide an informal orientation, information and/or guidance to new and veteran board members. New board members interviewed stated that they informally consulted with the board president or other long-term board members for answers to their questions.

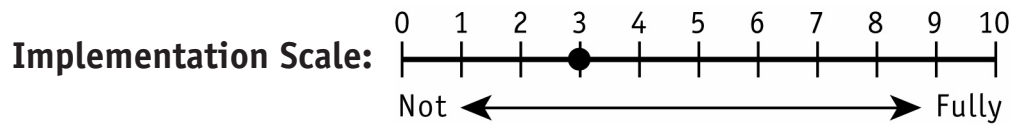
### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. All district board members must participate in continuing education specifically designed to increase their understanding of school governance, including the roles and responsibilities of boards, and critical education issues that affect schools.
  - a. The district should consider contracting with an outside firm to conduct a comprehensive governance training program aimed at helping the board to understand its current role as an advisory board, and helping members to gain the knowledge and skills they will need to function effectively when board authority is restored.
  - b. The governance team should consider developing a continuing education agenda and an annual schedule of workshops to ensure that continuing education opportunities address the district's greatest needs and provide equitable opportunities for



- each member to receive training. The state administrator/superintendent or designee should assist in identifying and recommending educational opportunities.
- c. The state administrator should assist in helping the board to hold periodic public workshops on critical education topics.
2. The district should consider adopting and implementing a policy or bylaw providing for the orientation of new members, including formal assistance for each member-elect to understand the board's functions, policies and procedures and the general operation of the school system.

**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
3. Fresno County Superior Court records
4. Board minutes
5. Policy manual

### **Findings**

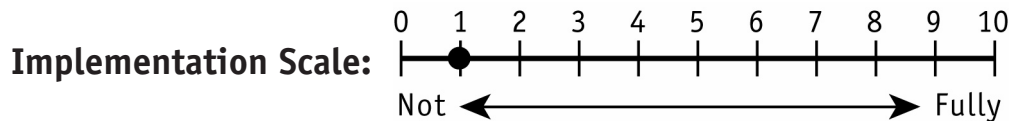
1. The West Fresno Elementary School District was a member of CSBA through the 2001-2002 fiscal year. The district is not currently an active member, which means it does not have access to all CSBA publications, trainings or resources. However, some other governance materials are also available on various Web sites.
2. Board members appear not to have availed themselves of advice and information about the appropriate role and duties of boards offered by recognized authorities such as legal counsel, representatives from the county office of education, state legislators, and district staff and consultants.
3. During one period of time, the board hired an individual who reportedly had no experience or expertise in the areas of governance or education to serve as an advisor or “liaison” to the board.
4. One board member was enrolled in a comprehensive training program that addresses board roles and responsibilities; see CR5.2.
5. The board has legal counsel available to assist in carrying out its duties. However, Fresno County Superior Court Judge, James Quaschnick, found that in some instances the board conducted meetings in violation of the Brown Act despite the advice of legal counsel, and the board refused to accept the opinions of legal counsel that did not conform to their objectives. (See CR6.5 as well as Ruling on Order To Show Cause re: Contempt, Mehas, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools v. Governing Board of the WFESD, et al., Superior Court of California, County of Fresno, Docket No. 02CECG00647, November 4, 2002.) Several staff and community members concurred with these findings.
6. The board also appears to have hired or retained various fiscal advisors and consultants, allegedly because the board either did not agree with or wanted to challenge the data provided by the county office of education and/or the state.
7. Some interviewees stated that one or more district administrators chose to resign in part because the board did not heed their guidance.

8. Members of the board do not have access to a district policy manual that includes all board-adopted policies and bylaws, including those related to board functions, duties and authority. In several cases, the board has not adopted policies in these areas. (See CR4.1 and 4.2.)

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. 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 consider contracting with an outside firm to conduct a preassessment of the board's current level of understanding and knowledge about 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 consider contracting with an outside firm to deliver a specialized training program based on the preassessment.
2. The district should ensure that it receives pertinent and timely information and materials about governance, and that board members and administrators have access to conferences and continuing education opportunities.
3. The board should consider reviewing the CSBA Professional Governance Standards, CSBA sample policies/bylaws and/or CSBA publications on effective governance as a basis for identifying appropriate roles of the board.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## **5.4 Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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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. Board agendas and minutes
4. Staff interviews
5. Staff surveys
6. Parent interviews

### **Findings**

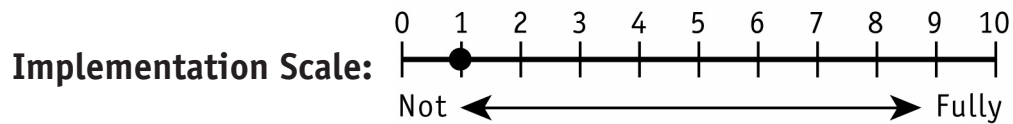
1. The board has not established a framework or a process to conduct a needs assessment of students, staff and the community.
2. To the extent that needs assessments occurred, staff members indicated that they were done informally by staff members.
3. The district has not recently prepared any plans that would facilitate identifying and addressing the needs of students, staff and the community.
4. In the past year, the district did not develop school site plans where a needs assessment would have been included; see CR3.8. However, site plans are expected to be developed in the coming year.
5. The comprehensive FCMAT review process currently being conducted will assist in providing the district with an assessment of needs in the areas of pupil achievement, financial management, facilities management, personnel management and community relations.
6. Among staff surveyed, the vast majority of teachers (95 percent) and classified staff (88 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the board has done a good job of identifying the needs of students, staff and the education community.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district should establish a process and schedule for conducting periodic assessments of student, staff and community needs.
  - a. Such needs assessments might include public hearings, surveys or focus groups of students, staff and community members to identify priority issues and concerns, as well as the use of disaggregated student assessment results and program evaluations.

- b. Given the size of the district, the school site plan development process might also be utilized as the main vehicle to ensure that an annual needs assessment is conducted in order to satisfy this standard.
- 2. Results of needs assessments should be reviewed by the board, administration and staff to recommend any necessary changes in the district's vision and goals, policies, budget allocations, site plans or educational programs.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **5.5 Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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### **Professional Standard**

The board has established a district-wide vision/mission and uses that vision/mission as a framework for district action.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. District documents
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Staff surveys
5. Parent/community member interviews
6. Board agendas and minutes
7. Policy manual

### **Findings**

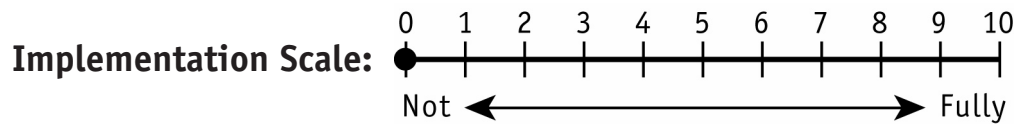
1. There is no evidence that the district has established a vision/mission statement or goals.
2. The lack of a formally adopted vision/mission statement resulted in multiple perceptions among staff and community members that the board operated with individual agendas.
3. All of the classified staff surveyed and 84 percent of the teachers surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that board members appear very clear about district goals.
4. From September 2001 through March 2003, the board was embroiled in a dispute with the Fresno County Office of Education regarding the district's financial condition. As a result, the board focused its energy on demonstrating fiscal solvency and maintaining local control of the district.
5. Board minutes from January 2001 through July 2002 reflect an item where the administration requested approval by the board "to develop higher standards and goals for students of the district." The minutes further indicate that "all board members are in favor of developing new goals and policies."

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The board in its advisory capacity should cooperate with the state administrator to involve the community and staff to develop a vision and goals for the district focused on student achievement.
  - a. The board and district administrator should ensure that the needs of all district students are considered and addressed.
2. Once adopted, this vision and goals should be incorporated into the comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), and widely publicized throughout the system to ensure support from all staff, parents and the community.

3. The administration should use the district's vision and goals as a guiding force for district actions.
4. When local governance is restored, the board should consider scheduling a formal review of the district's vision and goals at least every three years, using a process that invites input from students, parents, staff and the community. Following this review, the board should either reaffirm the existing vision or make adjustments as needed.
  - a. The governance team should informally review the vision every time a new board member joins the team.

**Standard Implemented: Not Implemented**



## **5.6 Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Board agendas and minutes
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews

### **Findings**

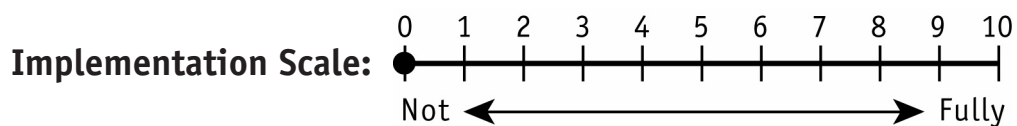
1. Evidence of board agendas containing additional background materials or analyses could not be found; see CR6.3. Board agendas and minutes that were provided from January 2001 through July 2002 do not reference studies or reports, or Superintendent/staff recommendations.
2. The large number of special board meetings called on short notice posed a serious challenge for the board in terms of enabling members to avail themselves of all available data and information; see CR6.3.
3. There appear to have been some instances where at least one board member requested but did not receive pertinent information before the board took actions.
4. In the past two years, the board made a number of significant decisions such as those related to hiring superintendents, changing the district's curriculum, approving a number of charter school petitions, and approving new policies. There is little evidence that background materials describing these issues were prepared and distributed to the board.
5. Many interviewees stated that, even if available, the board did not rely on data or information to make its decisions.
6. There is a prevailing perception that board members only valued recommendations that were consistent with the board majority's opinions and motivations.
7. Staff, parents and community members indicated that their input was not encouraged and was frequently dismissed by board members. The pervasive belief is that the board listened to public comments, complaints or recommendations as a matter of formality, but rarely if ever acted upon them. (See CR1.3 and CR5.11.)
8. Many staff members indicated that they were not consulted on policy decisions or changes to programs or curriculum; see CR4.5.



## Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must establish a formal system to ensure that there are sufficient research, analyses and background materials prepared in advance for any item on the board agenda requiring action.
  - a. Board members must respect the right of their colleagues to ask questions and seek additional information about items on which they are being asked to make a decision.
  - b. Staff should make recommendations to the board on all items requiring action.
2. The board should encourage input from staff on district proposals and draft policies, and incorporate such input into recommendations for the board; see CR1.3 and CR4.5.
3. The board should encourage staff and public input during board meetings; see CR5.11.
4. To make informed decisions, board members should continue to expand their knowledge of education issues in general and district issues in particular; see CR5.2.

## Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



## **5.7 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. Staff interviews
3. Community member interviews
4. Parent focus groups
5. Staff surveys
6. News articles/other media

### **Findings**

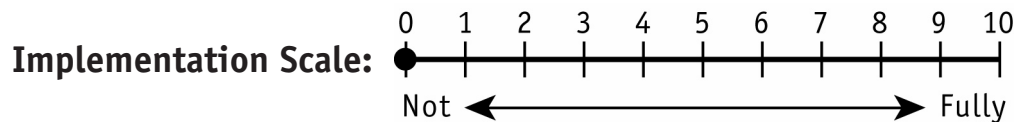
1. In the past, a majority of the board appears to have at times discouraged other individual board members from fully expressing their views and raising questions.
2. During the past two years, relations were poor as evidenced by the fact that one board member was recalled because of differences of opinion with other board members. Another board member resigned because he stated that he did not want to be affiliated with the actions of the other board members.
3. The frequency of special meetings and alleged failure to provide notice and share information with all board members about these meetings further exacerbated poor relations among the board; see CR6.2.
4. Among teachers surveyed, 74 percent agreed that conflict among board members about goals has increased greatly the past two years (26 percent disagreed). Classified staff surveyed also tended to see an increase in conflict (63 percent agreed, 25 percent neutral or didn't know, and 13 percent disagreed).
5. Direct observation of board meetings was not possible for this review because no board meetings were held during the period in which it was conducted. However, interviewees often described board meetings as "chaotic," with board members occasionally arguing and yelling at each other as well as at members of the audience.
6. The current board has not conducted any meetings in its advisory capacity.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. Although it is difficult to overcome previous perceptions, members must work to rebuild the credibility of the board.
  - a. Board members must learn how to communicate effectively with one another in a professional, respectful manner, and to focus on the common interest of student achievement.
  - b. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), it should identify methods of rebuilding the image of the board.

2. The district must ensure that all board members receive appropriate notice and information about all meetings and board activities.
3. The board president should attend training in order to help ensure that every board member is adequately heard on issues during meetings. The board must foster a culture that values individual points of view, and demands that votes are made on the basis of research, data and individual considerations rather than “voting bloc” loyalty.
4. The board should consider ongoing training to further enhance its ability to function effectively as a team.
5. The board should consider adopting a code of ethics or the CSBA Professional Governance Standards (sample Board Bylaw 9005, 2001) to formalize the expected behaviors and interactions of individual board members and the board as a whole, with special emphasis on ensuring that the viewpoints of all members will be respected.

**Standard Implemented: Not Implemented**



## **5.8 Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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### **Professional Standard**

Individual board members respect the decisions of the board majority and do not undermine the board's actions in public.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Board minutes

### **Findings**

None at this time.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

None at this time.

### **Standard Implemented:**

Could not be determined at this time.

### **Implementation Scale: Not Applicable**

## **5.9 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
4. Staff surveys
5. Community member interviews
6. Parent focus groups
7. Policy manual
8. News articles/other media

### **Findings**

1. The district has policies and bylaws defining the roles of the board and Superintendent, all adopted in 1990 (Board Bylaw 9000, Role of the Board and Members; Board Policy 2120, Superintendent of Schools; and 2122 Superintendent of Schools: Job Description).
2. Since January 2001, relations between the board and the administration appear to have been poorly maintained — largely because no chief administrator has remained in the district long enough to establish and sustain such a functional relationship. In a period of two years, the board employed a series of different individuals in the position of Superintendent or interim Superintendent, including one who was not recognized by the county office of education, which then exercised its stay and rescind powers (see Attachment E).
3. Many interviewees stated that these various administrators each brought particular skills and abilities to the job that appeared to be valued by the board. However, there was a perception among staff and community members that relations quickly disintegrated due to some combination of these administrators becoming frustrated with the board's inappropriate behaviors, or the board becoming dissatisfied that the administrators were not carrying out the board's directions.
4. Some interviewees stated their unequivocal belief that previous superintendents were terminated or threatened with termination if they did not comply with board decisions or expressed an opinion contrary to the board.
5. Several interviewees reported that the public exchange between the board and superintendents was not always respectful and informative.
6. Relationships between the board and administrative team may have been further strained by the fact that board hired a number of superintendents who had no previous

experience as superintendents, or even as school district administrators — thus, these administrators had less experience to draw upon in establishing appropriate board-Superintendent roles.

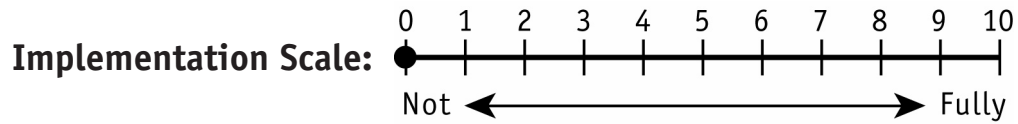
7. Since the departure of Superintendent Lee, it is not clear the extent to which other district superintendents or administrative staff were directly and consistently involved in all aspects of board meetings, such as the development of board agendas, the scheduling of special meetings, the preparation of meeting materials, the presentation of reports and information, and the production of meeting minutes.
8. One board member indicated that the board's desire was to establish an administrative structure with multiple people reporting directly to the board so that a Superintendent "wouldn't filter information."
9. Administrative staff stated that one board member in particular would approach them with directives. They reported being frequently criticized, intimidated and threatened.
10. There is a common belief that the board terminated or attempted to terminate several key administrative staff members without cause.
11. It is not yet clear what type of relationship exists between the board and the new state administrator. At least two board members indicated that they are committed to doing whatever it takes to help the district recover, including working with the state administrator. The other three members are on record as vigorously opposing any intervention by the state in the district.
12. The board has not yet met in its advisory capacity with the new state administrator. The state administrator intends to implement monthly meetings of the advisory board in the near future.

## **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The board must work to establish positive relations with the new state administrator in order to move the district forward and ultimately resume governance on behalf of the community.
  - a. During the next year, the state administrator should consider initiating regular meetings with the advisory board, and should initiate a system of regular, proactive communications with the board.
  - b. Board members must be clear about their current advisory role, and respect all processes and channels of communication established by the state administrator.
  - c. Board members should demonstrate respect and professionalism in all of their interactions with administrative staff.
  - d. Once the board has received adequate training and other standards in this plan have been properly addressed, the board should be regularly engaged in providing input and making recommendations to the administrator, as appropriate, in preparation for having the board's local governing authority restored (see CR5.2).

2. The district should review and update its policies clarifying board and Superintendent roles and responsibilities.
3. All board members should participate in training about the board's role in human resources and personnel (see CR5.2).

**Standard Implemented: Not Implemented**



## **5.10 Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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### **Professional Standard**

The board publicly demonstrates respect for and support for district and school-site staff.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Staff surveys
4. Board minutes
5. News articles/other media

### **Findings**

1. There is little evidence of staff recognition at board meetings. However, the November 2001 board minutes reflect an item recognizing “teachers of the year.”
2. Many school-site staff expressed feeling frustrated with and unsupported by the board. They felt that they often were not given adequate or timely information, and some expressed feelings that they had “nowhere to turn” during the recent instability in district administration.
3. Multiple school site staff indicated that they were not consulted on significant policy and curriculum decisions; see CR4.5.
4. Many district staff expressed that they did not feel respected. As an example, some mentioned instances where they felt the board hired unqualified employees to fill or replace positions without advance notice or discussion.
5. Several interviewees expressed feelings that staff morale has improved since the state administrator was appointed. Site-level staff report feeling greater support, and they also appreciate the fact that they are now asked for input in district matters.
6. When surveyed about their overall satisfaction with the district, teachers and classified staff assigned an average grade of 1.8 and 1.6, respectively, on a scale of 0 to 4.

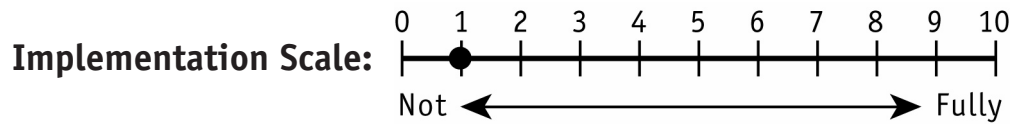
### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The board must support district staff in order to build employee morale and retain quality staff.
  - a. The board and administrators should publicly praise staff for a job well done and should consider other rewards and incentives to encourage staff to do their best.
  - b. Board members must become more sensitive as to how their actions and statements regarding staff can negatively affect morale and the public’s perception of the district.
2. Board members should abide by a practice of referring any concerns about staff’s qualifications to the state administrator/Superintendent.



3. The district should encourage appropriate levels of staff input and participation in the district's decision-making processes; see CR1.3.
4. All board members should receive training about the board's role in human resources and personnel; see CR5.9.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **5.11 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. Staff interviews
5. Board agendas and minutes
6. Policy manual

### **Findings**

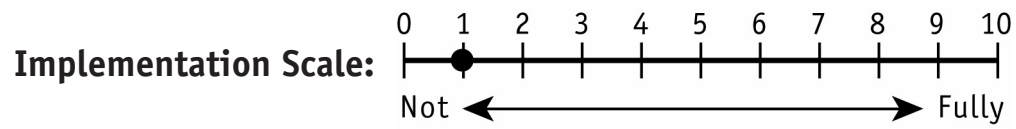
1. Board meetings were not consistently held at regularly scheduled times. Multiple special or emergency meetings were held in the months immediately preceding the state takeover. In addition, many board meetings were conducted at times that were inconvenient for most people, such as early in the morning (see CR6.2 and CR6.3).
2. Parent attendance at board meetings during the past two years was generally poor. Parents cited several reasons for the low attendance, including lack of translation services for non-English speakers, the belief that the board really did not listen to what the community had to contribute, and a perception the board had already made decisions prior to the meetings. However, more recently, meetings concerning the district's fiscal crisis, alleged misappropriation of funds, and the district's inability to meet its payroll obligations brought out hundreds of concerned parents.
3. School administrators, teachers and classified staff interviewed said they rarely or never attend board meetings. Several described the board meetings as "a joke" or "like a circus." They shared many of the same reasons for not attending as the parents; see CR6.6.
4. Many staff members did attend when meetings focused on issues such as benefits or salary. Representatives of employee organizations were most likely to attend board meetings.
5. The board generally followed a practice whereby each member of the public who wished to speak was allocated two or three minutes to present his/her comments. However, several sources alleged that the time limits were unequally enforced. The board reportedly engaged in "shouting matches" with meeting attendees when publicly criticized about their actions.
6. Non-English speaking parents and community members were not encouraged to attend board meetings, as translation services were infrequently available. Many bilingual staff explained that when translation services were provided by the board, the translations were not always accurate. The message was sometimes skewed to reflect favorably on the board.

7. Some Latino and Southeast Asian parents complained that the board was responsive only to the interests of the African Americans in the district. They suggested that African Americans were given much more respect than Latinos and Asians. They also reported that the board often ignored complaints that did not come from African Americans.
8. Several interviewees commented that the board would frequently go into closed session for long periods of time. Many community members would need to leave before the closed sessions ended.
9. The board discussed and made decisions about many significant issues at special board meetings that were often called with only one day's notice. For instance, the board made decisions to restructure the district administrative office, hire new superintendents, approve certain charter school petitions, and adopt new policies – all at special meetings.
10. The board's pattern of holding frequent special meetings, providing a lack of background information related to agendas, adjourning frequently to meet in closed session, and inconsistently managing the public input session of meetings all contribute to an overwhelming perception that the board preferred to conduct district business away from public view and scrutiny.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district should work to increase the level of public input at board meetings in order to have a broad basis for making decisions.
  - a. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), it should consider methods to notify parents and community members about opportunities for providing input on important issues that affect the district and student learning.
  - b. All agendas should be developed and made available well in advance of meetings.
2. The district should conduct extensive outreach to enhance the participation of non-English or limited-English-speaking parents.
  - a. Effective translation must be available at board meetings to facilitate participation of limited-English-speaking individuals.
  - b. All meeting notices should be provided in multiple languages.
3. The district should restrict the need for special meetings in order to respect the public's ability to provide input on critical district issues.
4. The district should ensure that each board president receives training in how to run an effective meeting and promote positive public participation; see CR6.6.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **5.12 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**

None at this time.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

None at this time.

### **Standard Implemented:**

Could not be determined at this time.

### **Implementation Scale: Not Applicable**

## 5.13 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

The board does not involve itself in operational issues that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Staff surveys
5. Fresno County Superior Court records
6. Board agendas and minutes

### Findings

1. Interviews indicated that, prior to the state takeover in March 2003, the board had become increasingly involved in operational issues — especially since the departure of Superintendent Joe Lee in December 2000.
2. Among staff surveyed for this review, 80 percent of the teachers and 63 percent of the classified staff agreed or strongly agreed that the board often tried to involve itself in day-to-day school operations.

Both teachers and classified staff surveyed gave the board low marks in terms of its willingness to let *district administrators* manage day-to-day operations without excessive interference (average grades of 0.2 and 0.5, respectively, on a scale of 0 to 4). When asked whether *principals* are allowed to make plans and set priorities without excessive board interference, 61 percent of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed (28 percent neutral or didn't know, 11 percent agreed or strongly agreed). Classified staff were even more likely to disagree (86 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 14 percent neutral or didn't know).

3. At least some board members appear to have been involved directly and inappropriately in virtually all aspects of the district's human resources operations, including establishing positions and job descriptions, determining qualifications of candidates, interviewing and hiring candidates, setting salary levels, informally "evaluating" staff, and terminating, attempting to terminate or threatening to terminate staff.

Several staff and community leaders expressed their strongly held belief that the agenda of several board members was securing jobs in the district for their friends and relatives.

One board member stated that the board's goal was only to give local taxpayers who were qualified to be hired the "the right of first refusal" for jobs in the district.

Some parents and staff interviewed felt that the board did not follow standard hiring procedures and that the board gave overt preference to African American candidates when hiring.

4. The board employed an individual without prior school district financial or management experience to serve as its “advisor.” Several interviewees suggested that this advisor eventually gained “control” over many aspects of the district’s operations, including approving expenditures or program change as requested by the board. Thus, it was widely perceived by staff and community members that, through their advisor, the board effectively exercised many operational and administrative responsibilities.
5. Many interviewees reported instances of individual board members attempting to exercise administrative responsibilities; see CR5.14.
6. Several staff members indicated that the board took actions to intervene in disciplinary actions against children related to them. For example, the board reportedly implemented a new policy barring all suspensions and/or expulsions in the district with little or no input or recommendations from staff.

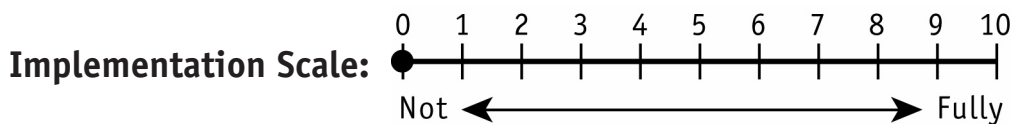
Some staff also made reference to a situation where the board reportedly told teachers they could not call the police “under any circumstances.”

7. The district has policies and bylaws defining the roles of the board and Superintendent, all adopted in 1990 (Board Bylaw 9000 Role of the Board and Members; Board Policy 2120 Superintendent of Schools; and 2122 Superintendent of Schools: Job Description).

## Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. When local governance is resumed, all members of the board must demonstrate that they clearly understand and respect their role and authority as a board.
  - a. The board and state administrator should ensure that the board receives comprehensive training about the board’s roles.
  - b. The district should review and update its policies describing the role of the board and the role of the Superintendent.

## Standard Implemented: Not Implemented



## 5.14 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. Parent focus groups
5. Policy manual

### Findings

1. Board Bylaw 9200, Limits of Board Member Authority (1990), reflects law that restricts authority to the board as a whole, and then only when it acts in a legally constituted meeting: “Apart from the normal function as part of the unit, the Board member has no individual authority.” Further, it provides that “No individual member of the Board, by virtue of holding office, shall exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools; nor, as an individual, command the services of any school employee.”
2. Many interviewees stated that certain board members did not respect an operational chain of command and engaged in direct communication with teachers and other staff to settle disputes over operational and administrative matters.
3. Interviewees frequently mentioned at least one board member who spent a considerable amount of time on campuses, and engaged in discussions related to personnel and other matters.

Some site-level and district staff reported that an individual board member occasionally threatened to terminate staff while visiting campuses. There were multiple reports from teachers that this board member would go directly into their classrooms and demand that they “do things a certain way” or refrain from taking certain actions.

The lines between individual board members exercising administrative responsibilities seem to have been further blurred because board members also interacted with school staff as parents or relatives of students in the schools.

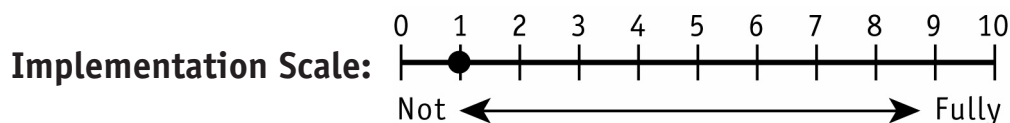
4. During the summer of 2002, a board member advised the U.S. Postal Service that the district would be closed for several weeks, and not to deliver the district mail. He admitted in court that he directed someone else to subsequently obtain and “sort out” the district mail. (See Docket No. 02CECG00647, November 4, 2002)
5. One board member appeared to have significant administrative responsibilities with regard to preparing and/or maintaining board documents, such as meeting minutes. Several district staff indicated that some board and district documents were not located at the district office but at the home of a board member or staff to the board.



## Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. When local governance is resumed, all individual board members must clearly understand and respect the purpose and limits of their authority.
  - a. The board and state administrator/Superintendent should ensure that the board receives comprehensive and ongoing training about the board's roles.
  - b. The board should consider adopting a code of ethics and/or CSBA Professional Governance Standards to reinforce the importance of each member understanding the distinctions between board and staff roles and understanding that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individuals.
2. All board members should respect the chain of command among the district staff and school staff, and address their questions or concerns to the state administrator/Superintendent.
  - a. All board members should refer staff or public concerns to appropriate channels rather than attempting to deal with them individually.
3. Board members should work with the state administrator/Superintendent to establish a protocol for conducting site visits.
  - a. The main purpose of site visits should be to provide support and encouragement for positive district programs and to serve as a district representative sharing information and district activities, programs and services.

## Standard Implemented: Partially



## **5.15 Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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### **Professional Standard**

The board evaluates the performance of the Superintendent regularly on criteria that will encourage student achievement.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Staff interviews
2. Superintendent contracts
3. Policy manual

### **Findings**

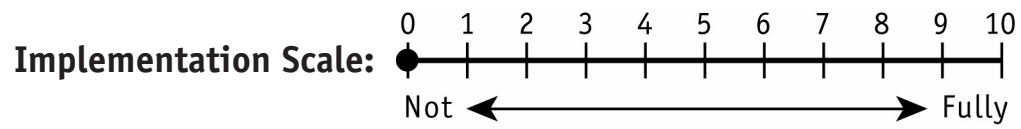
1. The district does not currently have a Superintendent, and the advisory board has no established responsibility for evaluating the state administrator.
2. The board did not conduct formal annual evaluations of any of the superintendents or interim superintendents after the departure of Superintendent Joe Lee in December 2000.
3. There is an evaluation clause in most of the Superintendent contracts. The language states that the Superintendent and the board shall meet every year to establish mutually agreed upon performance objectives for the Superintendent. The Superintendent and board shall meet every other year to review the Superintendent's performance. If the review was satisfactory, the board could consider extending the contract, and if the review was unsatisfactory, the board would provide in writing the unsatisfactory findings as well as specific recommendations for improvement.

The board terminated some superintendents before the process for a first annual evaluation began.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. In preparation for resuming governance, the board must understand its roles related to Superintendent selection, employment, support and evaluation.
  - a. The district should consider contracting with an outside firm to provide training specific to this area, or else it should be incorporated into a comprehensive training program for the board.
  - b. Special emphasis should be placed on the value of the board seeking input from staff and the community in the process of hiring a new Superintendent.
  - c. When the board resumes governance, it must establish criteria for Superintendent evaluation that are aligned with district vision and goals.

**Standard Implemented: Not Implemented**



## 5.16 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
3. Parent/community member interviews
4. Parent focus groups

### Findings

1. All the board members currently live within walking distant of the district office. Several attended district schools as students and all grew up in or near the district. Some members appear to have extensive networks of family and friends who reside in the district. One board member has a grandchild currently enrolled in a district school. One board member has served for more than two decades on the board, though not continuously. One member's father served on the board for eight years during the 1990s, prior to the son being elected.
2. Only three of the five current board members made themselves available to be interviewed for this review. Two of those members were newly elected in November 2002.

Two board members who were interviewed indicated that they were encouraged to run for the board by other community leaders. Among the motivations for running for office, newly elected members expressed desire to help heal divisions in the community that have been caused by the recent turmoil in leadership and to help keep the district's and community's focus on the students.

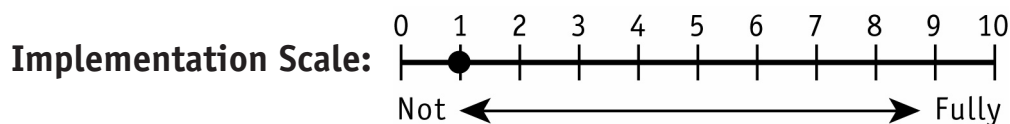
3. Racial issues play a key part in the community's perception as to whether the board represents the interests of all students. Presently all of the members of the board are African American. Several parents and community leaders felt strongly that, because of this, the board cares mainly about African American issues. As examples, many parents claimed the board favored African American employees. The board also reportedly eliminated services to English Language Learners, which caused a high level of anger and frustration among parents and many staff members — both about the decision and the perceived lack of communication about the decision.
4. Many parents in focus groups and interviews stated that they did not feel welcomed by the board to offer input or participate in district processes; see CR5.11. They further perceived that the board did not sincerely listen to their concerns or comments when they were offered.
5. Many parents and staff interviewed feel that students are not treated equitably due to language and cultural differences.

6. Following the resignation of a board member in 2001, the board had an opportunity to appoint a new member. The review team found no mention in board minutes or agendas as to a process for soliciting and selecting a candidate for this seat. Ultimately, the board did not utilize this opportunity to enhance diversity on the board by appointing a non-African American.
7. Some interviewees said they believe that all the board members truly care about students. Others expressed very strong opinions that “they forgot they were there for kids,” “the board ran the district like it was their own private business,” and “the board was all about themselves.” Many people in the community believe that the board used its position for personal power, prestige and to benefit family and friends.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board must make a concerted effort to demonstrate that it acts in the interests of all students in the community.
2. The board should work cooperatively with the state administrator to mend and strengthen relationships with all community and parent groups.
  - a. The board and state administrator should consistently and proactively solicit input from and consider the needs and viewpoints of all segments of the community.
  - b. District programs should be evaluated for effectiveness with subpopulations of students (e.g., based on race/ethnicity, gender or special needs).
3. When it reviews and adopts a vision statement for the district (see CR5.5), the board should consider a prominent goal to meet the needs of all students.-

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 5.17 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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### Professional Standard

The board receives and reviews reports from the Superintendent regarding district performance.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Board agendas and minutes

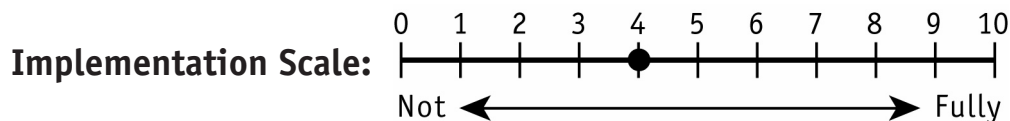
### Findings

1. During the past two years, the board has received and reviewed reports from superintendents, interim superintendents, other staff, district consultants, and representatives of the county office of education and FCMAT — primarily related to the district's financial condition, recovery plans and legal issues.
2. Evaluative reports by district staff about district programs appear to have been mostly informal and conducted verbally.
3. The board has not recently conducted Superintendent evaluations, which would have provided an opportunity to review district accomplishments and needs; see CR5.14.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should formalize its program evaluation and reporting procedures in order to demonstrate accountability to the community and to provide information on which to base decisions about district programs.
  - a. The district should identify and communicate indicators that will be used to measure district progress toward established goals.
  - b. Measures used to evaluate district programs should provide disaggregated data as appropriate to determine program effectiveness for various student populations.

### 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 (Education Code 35140).

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews
3. Board minutes

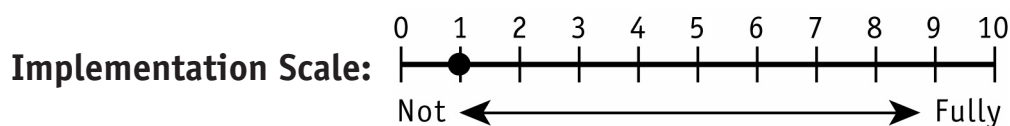
### Findings

1. Board Bylaw 9320 establishes regular meetings of the board on the second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.
2. Evidence of a published calendar of board meeting dates and times could not be found.
3. Board meeting minutes reflect at least one annual organizational meeting being held, but do not reference adoption of a calendar at this meeting.
4. Notice of an upcoming meeting date was most typically posted on the marquee in front of the district.
5. Several interviewees stated that regular meetings of the board were occasionally cancelled without notice, but this could not be confirmed.
6. In addition to a regular monthly meeting, the board held frequent special meetings.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must publish an annual calendar of board meetings, once the state administrator determines that meetings will resume.
  - 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 post and distribute the board calendar in accordance with law.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## **6.2 Board Meetings**

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### **Legal Standard**

The board agenda is made available to the public in the manner and under the time lines prescribed by law (Government Code 54954.1, 54954.2, 54956).

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews
3. Board member interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews

### **Findings**

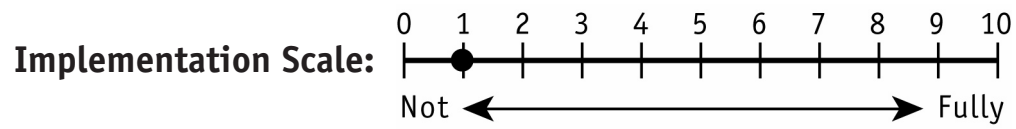
1. Government Code 54954.2 requires that the agenda be posted publicly 72 hours before a regular meeting. This requirement is reflected in the district's Board By-law 9320 Meetings and Notices (1990). Board Bylaw 9322 (1990), Agenda/Meeting Materials, states that the agenda will be posted on a bulletin board at each school, the district office and other public places.
2. The review team could not confirm that board agendas for regular meetings were consistently posted 72 hours prior to meetings as required by law. Some interviewees strongly suggested that this was not the case during the past two years.
3. In addition to regular meetings, the board frequently held special meetings. Opinions are mixed as to whether 24-hour notice was provided for all these meetings as required by Government Code 54956. Records indicate that written notices for these special meetings were prepared. However, several interviewees stated that these written notices were not posted in time and/or delivered on time to all board members.
4. The sheer number of special meetings, even if properly noticed, poses a serious challenge in terms of ensuring that the public is kept aware of issues in the district. For example, in 2002, the board held regular monthly meetings on January 10, February 14, March 14, April 11 and June 13. During those months, the board also held special meetings on January 16, February 7, 23 and 27, March 12 and 20, April 22, May 9 and 14, and June 6, 19 and 27.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. All board agendas must be made available to the public in accordance with law.
2. To gain trust with the community, the board should consider reviewing its use of special meetings and, as much as possible, conduct business during regularly scheduled meetings in order to maximize public notice and participation.



**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 6.3 Board Meetings

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### Professional Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Parent/community member interviews

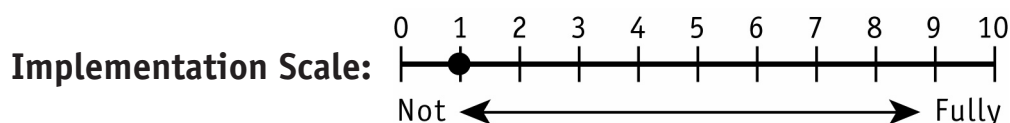
### Findings

1. Some current and former board members indicated they did not always receive agendas with enough advance time to enable them to appropriately prepare for meetings.
2. There are indications that board agendas were distributed without background or support materials.
3. The large number of special board meetings called with one day's notice made it difficult for all board members to adequately prepare for discussions by gathering input from members of the community or reading related materials.
4. Because the board is not currently meeting, the review team did not have an opportunity to directly observe board meetings to determine the level of preparedness demonstrated by board members.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must establish a process for preparing and distributing high-quality agenda packets in advance of every advisory board meeting.
  - a. These packets should include background information, analyses, references to relevant laws and district policies, budget implications, staff recommendations and other information as appropriate to each item on the agenda.
2. Board members must accept responsibility for reviewing agenda materials prior to meetings.

### 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. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews

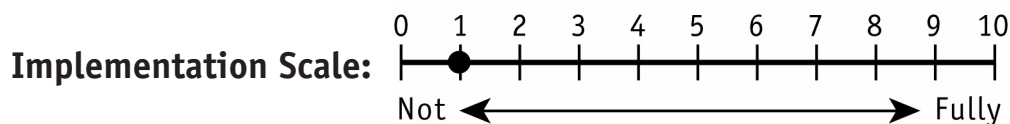
### Findings

1. The board has adopted bylaws related to meeting conduct (1990), but these do not reflect current law.
2. It appears that the board sometimes did not follow its bylaws related to meeting notices, location of meetings, and perhaps other bylaws reflecting Brown Act requirements; see CR6.5.
3. There are reports that the board did not consistently follow established time limits for speakers at board meetings; see CR6.8.
4. Many interviewees describe board meetings as chaotic rather than orderly; see CR6.6.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Board bylaws related to meeting conduct should be reviewed for compliance with current law and adherence to desired district practice.
2. The advisory board and state administrator should review the district's bylaws on meeting conduct and make a commitment to follow established procedures.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## **6.5 Board Meetings**

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### **Legal Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Board minutes

### **Findings**

1. The Brown Act contains requirements pertaining to the posting and distribution of agendas, the location of board meetings, prohibition against sign-ins for meeting attendance, prohibition against acting on nonagendized items, allowable purposes of closed sessions, descriptors of agenda items for closed sessions, reports of actions from closed sessions, and other matters pertaining to the conduct of open and closed sessions.

The district does have bylaws reflecting Brown Act requirements. However, the majority of board bylaws pertaining to board meetings were adopted in 1990 and thus do not reflect changes to the Brown Act that have occurred since then.

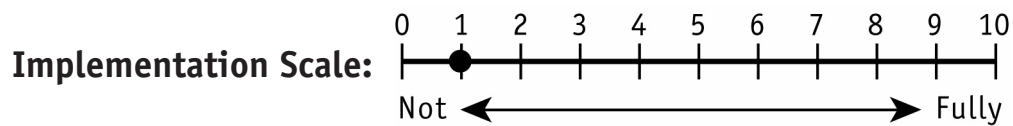
2. A Fresno County Superior Court Judge found that the board conducted meetings in violation of the Brown Act despite the advice of legal counsel (Docket No. 02CECG00647, November 4, 2002).
3. The review team could not confirm whether the district provided proper and timely notice for regular and special meetings, although some interviewees felt strongly that sufficient advance notice was not consistently provided; see CR6.2.
4. Some interviewees stated their belief that a majority of board members met outside of public meetings on occasion to discuss district issues, including one meeting outside of district boundaries.
5. Board minutes show and interviewees confirm that the board frequently met in closed session. Notice regarding the items that can legally be addressed in closed session appears to have been properly provided on board agendas and minutes.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district should review and update all policies related to the Brown Act to ensure compliance with law.
2. All board members should receive training about the requirements of the Brown Act.

3. The district should ensure that all new board members receive an orientation about the Brown Act upon their election.
4. When the board resumes its meetings, the board should consult with the state administrator/district Superintendent or legal counsel before taking any actions on matters pertaining to board meeting notices or closed sessions.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **6.6 Board Meetings**

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### **Professional Standard**

The board president ensures that meetings proceed in a businesslike manner while allowing opportunity for full discussion.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Board minutes

### **Findings**

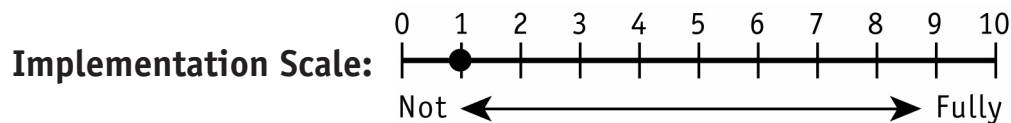
1. Board Bylaw 9323, Meeting Conduct (1990), establishes guidelines for meeting conduct, stating that meetings will be conducted by the president and follow parliamentary procedure.
2. Interviewees who attended board meetings reported frequent shouting and disorder, as well as arguing among board members. They used words such as “chaotic,” “shouting matches,” “hostile,” “highly charged,” “ugly,” a “circus” and a “joke” to describe board meetings during the past two years.
3. A number of interviewees stated that board members did not appear to listen to staff. Many referred to the board president’s practice of abruptly cutting off discussions or “gavelling down” speakers who expressed a viewpoint with which he disagreed.
4. Many interviewees said there often was no opportunity for a discussion of issues on the agenda.
5. The board frequently went into closed session for long periods of time during meetings.
6. Board minutes between January 2001 and July 2002 rarely reflect the content of discussions at meetings.
7. Board minutes indicate that items on regular meeting agendas were routinely “tabled” and either not taken back up, or taken back up at special meetings.

### **Recommendations and Improvement Plan**

1. The district should regularly review its written bylaws to communicate expectations for board meeting conduct.

2. All board members should participate in continuing education on boardsmanship principles and meeting operations.
  - a. The district should consider an in-service training tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of this district and board.
  - b. Whenever a new board president is elected, he/she should receive orientation or training in the leadership responsibilities of the office, including the efficient running of meetings.
3. The board must recognize that the best interests of the students, schools and community can be served only when the board is perceived as professional and willing to hear diverse viewpoints.
  - a. Each board member must respect the need to conduct meetings in an efficient manner and should maintain focus and brevity in his/her comments as much as possible.
  - b. The board should ensure opportunities for the public to provide input during board meetings (see CR5.10, CR5.11 and CR6.8).

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 6.7 Board Meetings

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### Legal Standard

The board has adopted bylaws for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public (Education Code 35145.5).

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual

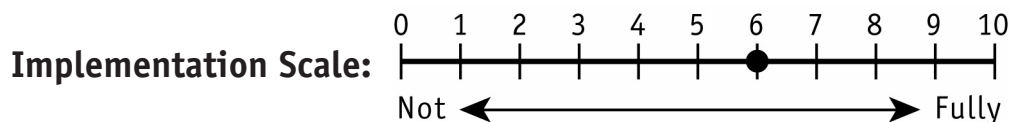
### Findings

1. Board Bylaw 9322, Agenda/Meeting Materials (1990), contains language allowing members of the public the opportunity to submit items for board review and placement on the agenda and establishes guidelines that requests be made in writing eight days before the meeting.
2. It appears that, in the absence of a permanent, stable district Superintendent, the board president and/or board members were intimately involved in the development of meeting agendas.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. When the board resumes its meetings, the district should consistently implement bylaws providing for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public.
  - a. The process for adding items to the agenda should be communicated to the public. The district might consider using the student/parent handbook, board agendas and/or other printed materials.
  - b. District staff should be available to advise members of the public as to the correct process.

### Standard Implemented: Partially





## 6.8 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 (Education Code 35145.5).

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Board agendas and minutes

### Findings

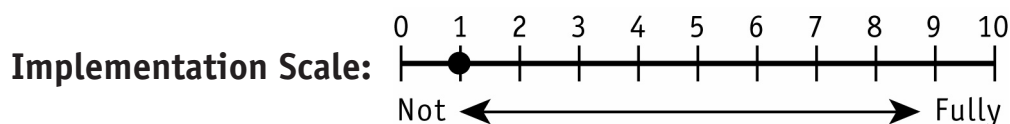
1. Board Bylaw 9323, Meeting Conduct (1990), allows for public participation at board meetings and establishes guidelines for such participation, including reasons that members of the public may be removed from the meeting.
2. Board minutes indicate that a time for public input was regularly agendized.
3. Special meeting agendas did not consistently indicate an opportunity for public input.
4. A series of meeting agendas in April 2001 stipulates in capital letters that "COMMENTS ARE LIMITED TO ITEMS LISTED IN THIS AGENDA." However, Education Code 35145.5 allows the public to comment on any matters related to the district. By the May 30, 2001, agenda, the language about public testimony had been changed to comply with the law.
5. Board minutes and interviews indicate that sometimes members of the public were required to sign in if they desired to speak; other times, all those desiring to speak were asked to stand. Some interviewees reported that the board would sometimes ask potential speakers for their addresses (to see whether they resided in the district) before allowing them to speak.
6. Some interviewees reported that the board attempted to disallow teachers from speaking during the public input sessions. The board gave reasons such as "staff needs to follow a chain of communication" or "some staff do not live within the boundaries of the district" as justification.
7. Many parents and community members interviewed stated that they did not feel welcome to provide input at board meetings. They said that the board would sometimes ask who wished to speak, then would move into closed session to "wait the public out."

8. The board's practice was to place a time limit on speakers, but individuals who attended meetings stated that this limit was not consistently enforced. They stated that "if the board agreed with your position you were allowed to talk longer."
9. During the past two years, the preponderance of special meetings, called often with one day's notice, posed a significant challenge for members of the public to attend, let alone address the board.
10. Between January and March 2001, the board took action to approve at least three charter schools. Board minutes and agendas reflect very little discussion of at least two of these proposals, and they reflect no reports, analysis or discussions about the alignment of these schools with district goals, the impact on the district's budget, etc. Some of these actions to approve charter schools were taken at special meetings.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. When the board resumes its meetings, it should reaffirm the priority placed on public input at board meetings in order to gain the public's confidence.
  - a. The district should consider reviewing, updating and readopting its bylaws related to public participation in board meetings.
  - b. The board should make every effort to adhere to a published schedule of meetings and should hold special meetings only when necessary.
  - c. The district might consider establishing the public testimony session near the beginning of every meeting.
2. The district should establish and implement a consistent, fair procedure for public testimony.
  - a. The board must not exclude any member of the public from addressing the board during the public comment session.
  - b. The board president must fairly and consistently enforce any established time limits for individual speakers.
3. Members of the board should treat all members of the public with courtesy and respect.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



## 6.9 Board Meetings

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### Professional Standard

Board meetings focus on matters related to student achievement.

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board agendas and minutes
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Staff surveys
5. Parent/community member interviews

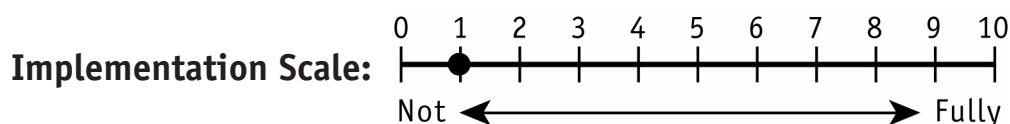
### Findings

1. The primary focus of the board during the past two years appears to have been addressing the district's financial condition, clarifying the district's relationship with the county office of education as a result of the fiscal situation, and making decisions related to personnel.
2. Board agendas and minutes between January 2001 and July 2002 show no items related to reporting of student test scores, and few items related to the review/evaluation of student programs.
3. The board met for lengthy periods of time in closed session. Issues related to student achievement would not be appropriate for those sessions.
4. Interviewees who attended meetings rarely, if ever, referred to board discussions about student achievement matters.
5. Both teachers and classified staff surveyed for this review assigned the board an average grade of 0.1 on a scale of 0-4 (an F) in terms of its effectiveness in promoting student achievement.

### Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. In its current advisory role, the board should establish student achievement as its primary focus.
  - a. The board should help facilitate discussions about achievement issues.
  - b. The board should help develop recommendations to the state administrator regarding student achievement issues.

### Standard Implemented: Partially



# Governance/Community Relations

Standard to be addressed		July 2003 Rating	Focus for January 2004
1.1	The district has developed a comprehensive plan for internal and external communications, including media relations.	1	
1.2	Information is communicated to the staff at all levels in an effective and timely manner.	3	
1.3	Staff input into school and district operations is encouraged.	2	
1.4	The district effectively implements strategies for communicating with parents, the community and the media.	5	
1.5	Media contacts and spokespersons who have the authority to speak on behalf of the district have been identified.	5	
1.6	Individuals not authorized to speak on behalf of the district refrain from public comments on board decisions and district programs	NA	
1.7	Board spokespersons are skilled at public speaking and communication and are knowledgeable about district programs and issues.	NA	
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, 48985).	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2	A school accountability report card is issued annually for each school site (EC 35256).	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3	The board has developed and annually disseminates uniform complaint procedures (Title 5, Section 4621, 4622)	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4	Procedures are in place for addressing parents' and community members' complaints against employees in a fair and timely manner.	2	
2.5	Board members refer informal public concerns to the appropriate staff members for attention and response.	NA	
2.6	Parents and community members are encouraged to be involved in school activities and in their children's education.	5	

# Governance/Community Relations

Standard to be addressed		July 2003 Rating	Focus for January 2004
2.7	Parent and public input into school and district operations is encouraged.	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.8	Volunteers receive appropriate training and play a meaningful role that contributes to the educational program.	0	
2.9	The district has established procedures for visitor registration and posts registration requirements at each school entrance. (Penal Code 627.2, 627.6)	1	
2.10	Board members are actively involved in building community relations.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1	The board and Superintendent support partnerships and collaborations with community groups, local agencies and businesses.	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2	The board and the Superintendent establish broad-based committees or councils to advise the district on critical district issues and operations and appropriate.	4	
3.3	Community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils all have identified specific outcomes goals that are undertood by all members.	3	
3.4	The membership of community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils reflects the full cultural, ethnic, gender and socio-economic diversity of the student population.	5	
3.5	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	
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 policy makers.	4	
3.7	Community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils led by the district effectively fulfill their responsibilities (e.g., researching issues, developing recommendations).	2	
3.8	The school site council develops a Single Plan for Student Achievement at each school applying for categorical programs through the consolidated application (EC 64001).	2	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Governance/Community Relations

Standard to be addressed		July 2003 Rating	Focus for January 2004
<b>3.9</b>	School plans are comprehensive and have sufficient content to meet the statutory requirements (EC 64001).	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3.10</b>	The school site council annually reviews the school plan and the board annually approves or disapproves all site councils' plans (EC 64001).	0	
<b>3.11</b>	School plans are a vital part of school operations and school accountability.	0	
<b>4.1</b>	Policies are written, organized and readily available to all members of the staff and to the public.	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.2</b>	Policies and administrative regulations are up to date and reflect current law and local needs.	2	
<b>4.3</b>	The board has adopted all policies mandated by state and federal law.	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4.4</b>	The board annually reviews its policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/cocurricular activities (EC 35160.5).	0	
<b>4.5</b>	The district has established a system of securing staff and citizen input in policy development and review.	1	
<b>4.6</b>	The board supports and follows its own policies once they are adopted.	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.1</b>	Each board member meets the eligibility requirements of being a board member (EC 35107).	NA	
<b>5.2</b>	Board members participate in orientation sessions, workshops, conventions and special meetings sponsored by board associations.	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.3</b>	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.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.4</b>	The board has identified the needs of the students, staff and educational community through a needs assessment process.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.5</b>	The board has established a districtwide vision/mission and uses that vision/mission as a framework for district action.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>

NA not applicable

☐ targeted for review

# Governance/Community Relations

Standard to be addressed		July 2003 Rating	Focus for January 2004
5.6	The board makes decisions based on the study of all available data, including the recommendations of the Superintendent.	0	
5.7	Functional working relations are maintained among board members.	0	
5.8	Individual board members respect the decisions of the board majority and do not undermine the board's actions in public.	NA	
5.9	Functional working relations are maintained between the board and administrative team.	0	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.10	The board publicly demonstrates respect for and support for district and school site staff.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.11	The board demonstrates respect for public input at meetings and public hearings.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.12	Board members respect confidentiality of information by the administration.	NA	
5.13	The board does not involve itself in operational issues that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.	0	
5.14	No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.15	The board evaluates the performance of the Superintendent regularly on criteria that will encourage student achievement.	0	
5.16	The board acts for the community and in the interests of all students in the district.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.17	The board receives and reviews reports from the Superintendent regarding district performance.	4	
6.1	An adopted calendar of regular meetings exists and is published specifying the time, place and date of each meeting (EC 35140).	1	
6.2	The board agenda is made available to the public in the manner and under the time lines prescribed by law (Government Code 54954.1, 54954.2, 54956).	1	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Governance/Community Relations

Standard to be addressed		July 2003 Rating	Focus for January 2004
6.3	Board members prepare for board meetings by becoming familiar with the agenda and support materials prior to the meeting.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.4	Board meetings are conducted according to a set of bylaws adopted by the board.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.5	Open and closed sessions are conducted according to the Ralph M. Brown Act (GC 54950 et seq.).	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.6	The board president ensures that meetings proceed in a businesslike manner while allowing opportunity for full discussion.	1	
6.7	The board has adopted bylaws for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public (Education Code 35145.5).	6	
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).	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.9	Board meetings focus on matters related to student achievement.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>