Fiscal & Crisis Management Assistance Team

Berkeley Unified School District

Community Relations

Comprehensive Review
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Community Relations and Governance

The review of the Community Relations and Governance operational area included standards grouped in three major areas: (1) board policies, responsibilities and boardsmanship; (2) communications system; and (3) community collaboratives and advisory councils.

This report addresses 60 standards of performance related to community relations, including 45 professional standards and 15 legal standards. The standards have been divided into six topical areas that include but are not limited to the following issues:

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

Parent/Community Relations
- Activities designed to encourage parent/community involvement in schools
- Access to schools by parents and community members
- The involvement of the board in building community relations
- Communications to parents, including required parental notifications and school accountability report cards
- Complaint procedures

Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils
- Partnerships with community groups, local agencies and businesses
- The duties, membership and training of district and school-site councils and advisory committees
- Legal requirements related to site councils and school plans
- The effectiveness of councils and committees in performing their established roles

Policy
- The recentness, accuracy, relevance and appropriateness of board policies
- The process used by the district to develop, adopt and review policies
- Legal requirements related to policy adoption and review
- Distribution of policies to staff and the public
- The board's support of district policies

Board Roles/Boardsmanship
- Board member qualifications and training
- Relations among board members
- Relations between the board and administrative team
- Behavior of the board toward the public and staff
- The board's ability to carry out specified board roles, including assessing the needs of students, staff and the educational community; setting a district vision; evaluating the Superintendent; and evaluating district performance
- The board's effectiveness in serving all students and the community

Board Meetings
- Legal requirements related to board calendars and agendas
- Board preparation for meetings
- Rules used to conduct board meetings
- Opportunities for public comments during board meetings
- The type of issues addressed during board meetings

This study is based on an underlying belief that strong ties between schools and community are essential to student learning. The community's support and involvement in the schools enhance the district's ability to serve its students by improving staff and student morale, providing additional resources, and ensuring that district programs address the needs of all students. This study focuses on the critical community leadership role of the board and administration, but recognizes that community relations are truly the shared responsibility of the governance team, all school-site and district staff, parents and the community.

School/Community Background Information

An assessment of any school district's community relations activities is best understood within the context of issues and circumstances faced not only by the school district, but by the community as a whole. During the four months in which the project team conducted interviews, surveys and focus groups and reviewed district documents and materials, several factors were identified that should be considered when examining the findings and recommendations. Many of these factors are addressed in more specific detail in sections of the improvement plan. They are: (1) demographic characteristics of the district and city, (2) economic and racial disparities, (3) local politics, (4) changes in district leadership/culture, and (5) the current fiscal crisis.

Demographic Characteristics
Berkeley Unified is situated in the northern part of Alameda County. The city of Berkeley is one of the most densely populated communities in the state, with nearly 102,000 residents living in approximately 10.5 square miles. The University of California plays a prominent role in the community and is the city's largest employer. Approximately 18 percent of the city's residents are UC Berkeley students.

There are 16 schools in the school district: 12 elementary, three middle and one high school. The elementary and middle schools serve three geographic "zones" and through the district's student assignment program, all schools are able to serve a mix of students from throughout the city. There are approximately 550 full-time equivalent teaching positions, 40 administrative positions and 450 classified staff (these totals may have fluctuated significantly due to budget cuts and reorganization during the past two years).

Total K-12 enrollment for the district is approximately 9,060. The California Department of Education shows the student ethnicity for 2002-03 as 33 percent African-American, 29 percent white, 15 percent Hispanic, 14 percent mixed race or no response, seven percent Asian, one percent Filipino, and less than one percent Native American and Pacific Islander. English learners make up approximately 13 percent of the student population.

Ethnicity comparisons between the student population and the overall population of the community reveal important differences. According to 2000 Census data, 59 percent of the population in the city of Berkeley was Caucasian, 16 percent Asian, 14 percent African-American, 10 percent Hispanic or Latino, and less than one percent American Indian or Pacific Islander.

Lower income residents are most likely to be focused in the southern and western parts of the city. African-American and Latino residents are also disproportionately concentrated in these low-income sections. The remainder of the city, including the high-income "hill" area, is predominantly white.

Economic and Racial Disparities

The Berkeley Unified School District is not alone in finding stark disparities in student performance along racial and/or ethnic and socioeconomic lines. In fact, this is part of a statewide and nationwide pattern that demands additional research and action to address the "achievement gap." However, this gap may be perceived by the Berkeley community as more pronounced because of the exceptionally high performance of some students on one end, compared with the lower achievement of a disproportionate number of students of racial and ethnic minorities or from low-income backgrounds. There are also significant feelings of frustration and disenfranchisement toward the school district among many low-income parents or parents from racial and ethnic minorities, although these parents typically feel better about the local school sites where their children attend.

Generally speaking, the community prides itself on the value of diversity, and on its progressive, activist approaches to social issues. Yet, this community and the school district appear to struggle when it comes to engaging in open and honest dialogue about education issues as they relate to race and economic conditions. In interviews and focus groups, few persons felt that the school district or parents have yet been able to talk openly about this complex issue, in order to build consensus toward constructive ways to address it.

Local Politics
The local community is typically characterized as "activist." Indeed, turnout for elections, including school board races, runs fairly high.

The Berkeley community demonstrates an exceptional level of support for its public schools. The community approved a parcel tax measure in 1994 by a vote of 83 percent (this measure was originally adopted in 1986 and was re-approved in 1998). The community also supported school bonds in 1992 (71 percent support) and 2000 (84 percent support), and an additional parcel tax for maintenance and safety in 2000 (79 percent support). These votes indicate a strong commitment toward the public schools and a willingness by citizens to tax themselves to support school projects and activities. Berkeley citizens provide further financial support for the district through a nonprofit community foundation.

Interviewees report that while it does not take a lot of money to be competitive for a seat on the board, it does require either some financial resources or a significant commitment of time and energy to campaigning (or both). There are several political and community organizations that get

involved in school board elections, mainly through endorsing candidates. City officials, county leaders and school district employee groups also endorse candidates and become involved in supporting campaigns.

All the current board members had experiences in the school district and community prior to being elected. Several past and present board members were/are parents of school-aged children attending district schools. One of the current members taught for many years in the district. The two most recently elected members both served on a districtwide citizens' Planning and Oversight Committee related to the parcel tax, prior to running for the board. This suggests that service on councils and committees is often viewed as a good "training ground" for future board members. Board members do not typically serve more than two terms (eight years) on the board. This is not a result of any term limits policy; rather, it has been somewhat of a custom. Current and past board members report that service on a board in this community is a demanding and time-consuming duty, and that two terms represents a fulfilling level of service.

There are frequent perceptions that the "split" dynamics of the community, with its higher-income, predominantly white "hill" population and a lower-income, predominantly African-American and Latino "flats" population, plays itself out in school board politics, with hill parents tending to "control" the system. In fact, the hill parents are a very active, articulate and powerful constituency. However, contrary to perception, not all board members personally reside in the hill sections, and some are viewed as having their strongest pockets of support from "flats" sections. Currently, there is one person of a racial or ethnic minority on the five-member board. Many individuals have noted the lack of any members on the board who are African-American, especially given that African-Americans make up the largest segment of the student population.

Changes in District Leadership/District Culture
A new Superintendent was hired by the Governing Board in July 2001. Prior to that, there had been an Interim Superintendent in the district for about six months, and a previous Superintendent who served for about six years. The board appears to have involved the community extensively in the process of searching for the current Superintendent. Parents, staff and community leaders provided comments on the district's needs and the individual characteristics desired of a new Superintendent. Since her tenure began, the Superintendent has focused most attention on addressing the district's budget crisis, as well as on trying to build or improve important internal systems and structures that may have affected the budget crisis, such as those related to the Personnel and Financial departments.

The Superintendent also has attempted to bring greater consistency and alignment among the individual sites with regard to procedures and programs. The Superintendent inherited a districtwide and communitywide culture that heavily favors decentralization, one where meaningful comments into all aspects of district operations is frequently expected by some members of the community, and one where few formally adopted and updated district policies existed. This culture, often referred to in interviews as the "Berkeley way," has enjoyed popularity among segments of the staff and community who value the emphasis on autonomy and individual initiative, although it seems to pose challenges for the effective implementation and sustainability of the FCMAT standards in this report.

The Current Fiscal Crisis

The Berkeley board of education was in the middle of reviewing and approving a recovery plan when the project team began its assessment. This recovery plan is required and is part of a three-year recovery effort to ensure the district's fiscal solvency. Addressing budget issues has been the focal point of this school board and Superintendent. The district's fiscal situation has been further exacerbated this year by a state budget crisis that resulted in a midyear reduction in allocations to schools, as well as proposed reductions to K-12 allocations for the next budget year. A combination of these fiscal circumstances led to the district issuing a significant number of layoff notices to the staff by the statutorily required March 15 deadline, some of which were withdrawn by the May 15 deadline. This painful process and the frustration, concern and anger it generated, were referred to frequently during interviews, surveys and focus groups.

Summary of Principal Findings and Recommendations

The following summarizes some of the major findings and recommendations in each topical area: 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 later in this report in the Community Relations Improvement Plan.

Communications

Berkeley Unified has not yet developed a comprehensive communications plan, but is beginning to refocus on its communications program with the recent hiring of a Public Information Officer. The development of a communications plan should be accomplished with broad comments from board members, the Superintendent, senior administrators and other staff members.

Currently, the quality of the district's internal communications varies widely, as would be expected in any organization. It varies from school to school and from individual to individual. The district primarily relies on electronic communications and meetings to inform staff about district activities and issues, however, electronic communications are not easily accessible to all the staff. Teachers and the classified staff generally feel disconnected from the district office, but feel they receive adequate information about district issues from their principals.

Interviewees report that the "Berkeley style" has traditionally been very decentralized and collaborative, so there is an expectation that staff at all levels will be highly involved in decision-making. Recently, staff comment has been sought on budget issues. Staff members who participate on district and school-site committees and councils also have those avenues to provide comments on district issues and operations.

The Superintendent's focus on the district's budget and internal systems has limited her opportunities to visit school sites, meet with the staff, and build strong relationships. Although the Superintendent is admired by many staff members and parents for what she is trying to do for the district, her assertive communications style has caused problems for many staff members who view her as too "directive." Work is needed to strengthen these internal relationships and encourage the staff to provide meaningful comments.

The district conducts a standard media relations program for external communications. The Public Information Officer appears knowledgeable of district needs. District spokespersons and media contacts do not appear to be explicitly identified in writing, but the practice is for media requests to be submitted to the public information office and for the Superintendent to serve as the primary spokesperson for the district. The board president serves as the primary spokesperson for the board when there are controversial or sensitive issues. There was little evidence of concern about other people speaking out inappropriately or misrepresenting personal opinions as district positions. Board spokespersons generally do a fine job of representing the district despite a lack of media training and a lack of clear, concise information to support the district's key messages.

The district also has several communications mechanisms that provide quality information to the public more directly. Board meetings are broadcast on radio and cable television, however, the district can do more to proactively provide information about board actions and decisions

following meetings. Parents and community members receive information through the district's Web site, e-mail system and e-trees as well as school site and PTA newsletters. Parents generally feel that their local school sites provide them with useful information. As with communications to staff, there is concern that the district relies too much on electronic communications methods that are not accessible to large numbers of parents. Also, a district newsletter was not funded this year, and some interviewees expressed concerns regarding the adequacy of translation services for parents and community members who do not speak English. As the district develops a comprehensive communications plan, it needs to develop strategies for communicating with *all* parents and interested people.

To present a consistent district message to external audiences, communications efforts should be better coordinated districtwide. The district should consider offering media training to district and board spokespersons, developing quality district fact sheets and key messages for spokespersons, and ensuring that the Superintendent and/or Public Information Officer is aware of all speaking engagements involving the district staff or board members.

Parents and community members also should be able to receive information directly from the district office and schools, upon request. A high number of problems were reported regarding how unresponsive some district office staff members are to requests for information or assistance. The district office staff's customer-service role should receive higher priority and may require related training and/or tracking of responses to requests.

Parent/Community Relations
This district benefits from a comparatively high level of parent and community engagement. Berkeley parents and citizens volunteer directly in the schools and also serve on site and district-level committees and councils. They demonstrate a deep commitment to their children, play a vital role in raising additional funds for schools, and support additional programs and opportunities for students. The Berkeley community has also repeatedly demonstrated support for its public schools by approving a parcel tax and school facilities bond measures.

To have an optimal affect on student learning, parents and the community must understand school and district goals, have access to pertinent information, benefit from effective two-way communications, and be meaningfully involved in decision-making. Besides providing information to parents and the community, it is important that the district listen and be responsive to their concerns. The board should also help the community to better understand the board's responsibilities and decision making role.

Certain communications with parents and the community are required by law. The Berkeley Unified School District annually distributes required parental notifications, although the Superintendent or designee should ensure that all parental notifications meet current legal requirements and are presented in clear, easy-to-understand language. The district also develops and distributes required school accountability report cards, although the full report cards are not accessible on the district's Web site.

The district and school sites generally encourage parents and the public to give their opinions on issues and operations. For example, parent and public comments have been sought on budget issues and district priorities through a series of meetings. There are numerous district- and site-

level committees and councils that serve in an advisory role, and an opportunity is provided at each board meeting for the public to address the board.

In this district, some concerns regarding communication exist, but they are not about the amount of parent/public comments in general. Instead, they center on whether the comments are focused on district priorities, whether traditionally disenfranchised parents and community members feel welcome to give comments, and whether the board and Superintendent listen and respond to the comments. The district and schools make sincere efforts to reach out and be inclusive, but need to do more to reach underrepresented groups, channel the high level of comments into manageable processes, and follow up on the comments provided.

This district also benefits from a high level of parent/community involvement in school activities at individual school sites. There is a large volunteer base in Berkeley schools; these volunteers play meaningful roles, offer their personal time and energy, and bring a great deal of expertise. Parents and community members also attend school and classroom functions and help raise funds for school projects. Once again, the concern is not about the level of participation in school activities but about how representative participating parents are of the larger community. Among the identified barriers to parent/community participation were language barriers, parents' employment, families not living near the school site as a result of school assignment/choice, and occasionally, parents feeling unwelcome or frustrated by their initial encounters with staff (or even other parent activists).

Encouraging parent/community participation at school sites is largely left to principals and other site-level staff. However, to engage all parents, additional support from the district may be needed. Professional development specifically for principals and other key staff on building parent/community relations should be provided or coordinated by the district. The district might also provide support through translation services, greater involvement of the public information office in publicizing school-site activities, and/or coordination of parent/community relations efforts throughout the district.

The board and Superintendent also need to continue to play a direct role in building community relations. Individual board members appear to be personally involved in community outreach, many of them fairly extensively. They attend school and community meetings, conduct public forums, and communicate with individuals and groups by telephone and e-mail. However, many staff and parents perceive a need for the board to improve in this area. The lack of visibility of board members and the Superintendent at school sites has been noted as a concern by many staff and parents. The board has recently resumed an "adopt-a-school" program to enhance its presence, but sustained efforts in this area are needed. To further enhance current activities, the board and Superintendent should make special efforts to reach out to minority communities, and should work with the public information office to develop a coordinated strategy for parent/community relations which supports the district's vision, goals and communications priorities.

Finally, the district must implement effective and appropriate methods of handling complaints by the public. The district recently reviewed and updated its uniform complaint procedures to reflect current law. It also has procedures in place for addressing parents' and community members' complaints against employees. Board members generally do a good job of referring informal complaints to the Superintendent, although there is concern regarding the responsiveness of district staff in addressing those complaints.

Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees and School-site councils
Community groups, local agencies and businesses are highly involved with this district and its schools. Berkeley has a number of organized parent/community groups interested in education, including several that are focused on the educational needs of specific populations of students. The business sector donates funds, materials and time to read with students. The district also has an active education foundation that raises funds for school and classroom projects and other initiatives such as music programs, capital projects and classroom minigrants. Furthermore, the district and city are working together toward common goals. Representatives of the school board and the city council meet regularly, several specific collaborative projects are underway, and the mayor recently sponsored a forum on education. There is some (but not enough according to many interviewees) collaboration with the University of California, but little collaboration with the County of Alameda.

The magnitude of collaborations with agencies and organized associations is impressive. However, there appears to be a lack of coordination and direction provided by the district to more effectively channel these efforts toward specific districtwide goals and student outcomes. Much of the good work currently occurs at or through the school sites, and the programs and projects are not widely known throughout the district. Linking coordinated services to an assessment of the needs of children and families in the community, and strengthening and aligning existing relationships, could help provide additional services to children and/or reduce costly duplication of services. The school district, city and university have recently embarked on important joint efforts to begin to accomplish part of this. A stronger role for the district in encouraging, coordinating and supporting collaborative projects at the site level could facilitate more effective implementation of these collaboratives. Evaluation processes also should be built into the system so that the effectiveness and impact of the district's collaboratives can be determined.

Broad participation of interested stakeholders is also sought through district and school-site advisory councils, committees and task forces. District committees study issues, develop recommendations, and have an opportunity to report to the board at each board meeting. The community appears to have a wide array of avenues available to participate in school district processes. The effectiveness of committees and councils varies: Some committees, such as the district-level and site-level BSEP (Berkeley Schools' Excellence Project) committees that are required by a ballot measure, are widely lauded, while there is less clarity about the role and function of some other district committees. Some are seen as exceeding their authority and attempting to implement programs. Little training is provided to committee and council members on a regular basis, with the exception of the BSEP committees.

The board is currently undergoing a comprehensive review of its committees, examining their composition, categorization (e.g., board-appointed vs. Superintendent-appointed), charges, and reporting mechanisms. Completion of this process is an important step in streamlining and maximizing the effectiveness of the district's committees. District and school committees and task forces should serve specific roles that are linked to the district's vision and goals, and should receive training and information to assist them in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

To further improve the effectiveness of district and school councils and committees, the district and school sites must increase efforts to recruit council and committee members who represent the diversity of the student population and the community and who are dedicated to playing

an active role. It may first be necessary to identify and address barriers to participation, and to generate interest by disseminating information about the purpose, responsibilities and successful results of these groups to parents, community and staff.

Some councils, such as the school-site council for purposes of School-Based Program Coordination or other categorical programs, are required by law and have specific requirements regarding membership and duties. In this district, it appears that all schools have established school-site councils. Site councils have developed a Single Plan for Student Achievement in accordance with law, and a review of school plans showed that they were thorough and met the statutory obligations in terms of content. State law requires that school-site councils annually review and update the plan and that the board annually approve the plan. It appears that the district followed the appropriate review process in the current year. Nevertheless, the school plans do not appear to be a guiding force in all the schools, with only about half the teachers surveyed saying that school staff consults the school plan when making decisions about programs or budgets. Further, there is little evidence that schools are held accountable for meeting their identified school goals. To be more meaningful, the annual review of school plans should include a progress report on the implementation and impact of the school's actions on student achievement.

Policy

This district reportedly has extensive written policies but they are not organized in a single, centralized location. When the board adopts new policies or revises policies, the district staff has not been inserting them into a comprehensive policy manual. Board and staff members often cannot locate current district policies, and the district was unable to provide a policy manual for this review. In the absence of easy access, the policies do not serve as a useful resource and guide, and the board's direction is not consistently implemented throughout the district. The site-level staff will either act autonomously or contact the district staff in an attempt to find current policy. Responding to such requests is time-consuming for district staff.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the policy provided to the board, staff or public will be the most recent version. Sometimes, policies with no adoption date will be distributed. These may be policy revisions that were drafted several years ago but never formally adopted by the board. Other times, sample policies from the California School Boards Association will be distributed. These materials may be useful to the extent that an interested person is merely trying to identify legal requirements, but they have not been tailored to the needs of the district and do not reflect the board's direction.

The district has recently renewed its efforts to review and update its policies. Board representatives and a consultant are working to make policy recommendations to the board. The district chose to begin with those policies that are mandated by state or federal law, and nearly all of these were adopted by the board in May 2003. The law mandates the annual review of two policies, and these were reviewed and adopted this year as part of the updating of mandated policies. The district should establish processes to monitor and respond to future changes in law and to ensure that it sustains the annual review of policies when so required by law.

In the recent review of mandatory policies, the district staff and the public have been minimally involved in the process, except to the extent that the public has a right to provide comments during board meetings on any item on the agenda. The district also has an established committee

structure, with the intent that these committees will provide comments on critical district issues. It is not yet clear how the district intends to involve these or any other groups as it continues to review its policies.

The district should make a concerted effort to complete the large-scale review of its policies in a timely manner in order to provide consistent direction to staff, students and the public and ensure that the district is complying with current law. It must design an effective policy development process that involves the staff, parents and the community as appropriate in order to obtain the commitment of key stakeholders, while ensuring that the process itself does not become so overwhelming that it discourages progress. In setting priorities for policy review and development, the district should consider focusing on issues most likely to affect student learning and those that will help further the district's progress toward its vision and goals when those are more clearly articulated.

Then, to ensure that staff and the public have access to current district policies, the Superintendent or designee should hold staff accountable for maintaining updated policy manuals at designated locations. The use of technology to facilitate access might be considered. As policies are adopted, the district should use a variety of means to notify staff, parents and other interested persons regarding major content changes.

To support the implementation of adopted board policies throughout the district, the Superintendent or designee should develop related plans and administrative procedures as needed, assign the appropriate staff to carry out related responsibilities, and hold those staff members accountable through the evaluation process. The board can support implementation by directing the Superintendent to provide periodic reviews of selected policies at board meetings in order to determine whether policies are being implemented and whether they are achieving the desired results.

Finally, the board needs to set an example by using and following its own policies. Individual board members generally support, or at least do not undermine, the board majority's decisions once those decisions are made. Also, board agenda materials reference existing policy and law on each issue under consideration so that board members can make an informed decision. However, some concerns are occasionally expressed that the board does not consistently follow district policies. If the board determines that existing policy no longer meets the district's needs, it should initiate a review and revision of the policy through established procedures rather than waiving or ignoring the policy.

Board Roles/Boardsmanship
The board of Berkeley Unified appears to be dedicated and sincerely interested in the well-being and educational achievement of its students. Board members had a wide range of experiences in the district and within the community prior to being elected, and some of the members currently have students attending district schools.

Board members understand their roles and responsibilities, although they have not recently adopted bylaws or policies to formalize this understanding. The board has not participated extensively in continuing education programs, but the district does receive materials and publications on effective governance. The current board president has participated in more extensive governance training.

The board as a whole at times lacks a strong unity of purpose, as each member brings particular priorities to the board room. On critical issues such as the recent financial crisis, however, the board has functioned with a high degree of shared purpose. The individual members recognize the different experiences and perspectives that each brings to the team and, even when they strongly disagree on issues, they publicly respect each other's viewpoint and do not try to undermine decisions made by the board majority.

The board also has generally positive relationships with the Superintendent, characterized by mutual respect and support. Some staff members and parents perceive that the board does not fully assert its authority in its relationship with the Superintendent. However, when specific examples are provided, it is apparent that the board and Superintendent generally have acted within appropriate roles. For example, when individual board members refer a complaint from a parent to the district office instead of trying to take action directly, this behavior is sometimes misperceived as a board member's being "afraid" or "unable" to do anything without first checking with the Superintendent. Similarly, the Superintendent has tried to establish an internal communication process in which inquiries from board members to district staff go through her office first. This is not an uncommon practice among Superintendents and it helps assure that the Superintendent is kept fully aware of issues, but it has been misperceived by some staff and community members as overly controlling.

Generally, communications between the board and the Superintendent are open, although both acknowledge they could be more frequent and consistent. Members of the board have expressed a desire to receive more information and data from the Superintendent that is relevant and appropriate to their ability to make good decisions. The Superintendent and staff need a system that allows them to more effectively track and respond to these requests. The Superintendent should also employ more regular and proactive means for sharing general information with the board.

To further strengthen the governing team's effectiveness, the board and Superintendent should formally agree upon their roles and responsibilities, ensuring there is clarity that the Superintendent is responsible for all operational aspects of the district. While individual board members demonstrate an internal understanding of the board's appropriate roles and responsibilities, they occasionally do not fully put this understanding into practice. The board must continue to focus on providing overall direction, maintaining structure and stability through policies and ensuring accountability.

The board speaks highly of site-level staff and recognizes their hard work and dedication. However, the board's support is not necessarily felt by site-level staff. Although there were a number of positive comments regarding the current board, the staff interviewed and surveyed for this project more often either felt disconnected from the board or felt the board did not value their contributions. Very few staff members attend board meetings except when issues that are personally important to them are on the board agenda. There is resentment over salary issues linked to the district's financial situation.

The budget crisis has understandably been the primary focus of the board in recent years, but other matters also demand the board's attention. The most significant area on which the board should focus is developing a vision and goals for the district. Even difficult deliberations on the budget would be better informed if the board could measure and communicate about choices based on the district's vision and goals. The district has not revisited its central vision or goals in

at least five years, and the absence of a focused board direction is felt throughout the schools and community. Involving the community and staff in a process to update the vision and goals would provide a framework to guide all major district activities. Without a clear vision and goals, board members occasionally stray in focus away from issues that directly impact districtwide student achievement.

During the past year, the Superintendent has initiated discussions with stakeholder groups such as parents and teachers to begin identifying areas of concern and/or need, as a first step toward developing a new vision and goals. This process should be continued with the board fully engaged. It is a critical part of board leadership to help solicit comments about, and refine and articulate, the community's desires for the school system, even in a difficult financial climate when resources to achieve the vision and goals may be limited.

Currently, the board performs its accountability role by receiving reports on the district's performance, although the process has been inadequate because program evaluations are not aligned to any clearly articulated strategic priorities. The board also evaluates the Superintendent annually, with a midyear progress review, and this process, while still evolving, has been constructive. Once the board has provided leadership in adopting a district vision, the Superintendent should then regularly report to the board on progress toward the goals and objectives. The Superintendent's annual evaluation can also become even more meaningful when aligned to a district vision and goals. The Superintendent and board should more regularly reference the vision and goals, and the Superintendent and staff should present reports and information in the context of their relationship to particular goals when communicating to the board and public.

Another major challenge the board faces is to demonstrate that it acts for the entire community and in the interests of all students in the district. There is a perception that some students and parents are favored over others. These perceived divisions are based on socioeconomic or racial/ethnic lines. There is a high awareness that an achievement gap exists among students of different races and ethnicities. This is a concern throughout the district and community, but many feel that the board is not providing leadership to address it, and others worry that the severity of recent budget cuts will further stall any serious efforts to actively address it. As consistent with the priorities set forward in the new vision and goals, the board and Superintendent need to initiate a serious districtwide analysis of student achievement using disaggregated data and place a high priority on developing plans and accountability measures to address the achievement gap. The board also needs to communicate more about existing programs and activities designed to address the achievement gap, and continue to evaluate their effectiveness.

Board Meetings

While the board does not currently have board-adopted bylaws and policies in place related to board meeting postings and procedures, meetings (both in open and closed session) seem to be conducted in a professional and appropriate manner and are compliant with legal requirements. However, to ensure that board members and the public have access to all Brown Act requirements, the board should adopt relevant bylaws.

The public has ample opportunities to provide comment at board meetings, and in fact, the public is often highly engaged at meetings. All regular board meetings are broadcast live on KPFR/FM

89.3 and Cable TV channels 25 and Berkeley Government Access Channel 78, which helps promote greater awareness of and access to board meetings.

The public also benefits from satisfactory posting of all meeting dates, and the availability of some, though not all, meeting-related materials such as agenda packets and meeting minutes on the district Web site and in hard copy at the district office.

Board members appear generally well prepared for meetings and operate with dignity and respect. Board meetings at times can exceed four or more hours in length, and steps could be taken to maximize the amount of time the board devotes to discussions and decisions directly related to its overall policymaking and oversight responsibilities. Additionally, steps can be taken to minimize the amount of time devoted to discussions of topics that are important but peripheral to student achievement.

Background materials provided to the board and public are sufficient, but not exemplary. In some instances, the board should be provided with more information and analysis relevant to a topic or the district's overall performance so that the board can make a well-informed decision. At the same time, individual board members occasionally lapse into requesting highly detailed information and/or data about areas that are more operational in nature, and more appropriately in line with the Superintendent's and staff's responsibilities.

Assessment Process

The district's baseline performance was determined through a variety of assessments, including interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations of board meetings and reviews of district documents.

1. Interviews

Many of the standards were assessed on the basis of interviews with district stakeholders. Altogether, 71 persons were interviewed, including:

- Five board members
- The Superintendent
- Five district office administrators
- Sixteen principals
- Seven teachers
- Nine classified staff members
- Five employee union representatives
- Three former board members
- Seventeen parents and/or community leaders representing community organizations, business, local government, and other active individuals
- Three media representatives

Interviewees were selected on the basis of their position in the district or, especially in the case of community members, the recommendation of board members, the Superintendent and district staff.

Demographic data (available for 69 of the 71 interviewees) show that the sample was predominantly female (50 females, 19 males) and white (42 white interviewees, 11 Latino, 11 African-American and five Asian-American). The following table shows the demographic breakdown for samples of principals, teachers, classified staff and community leaders.

Gender and Ethnicity of Interviewees

	Principals	Teachers	Classified Staff	Community Leaders
Total Number	16	7	9	17
Gender				
Female	13	7	9	11
Male	3	0	0	6
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	8	5	4	10
African-American	1	0	4	4
Latino	4	2	1	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	0	0	1

2. Teacher Surveys

Electronic surveys were sent to 289 teachers in the district, with 66 responding (approximately 23 percent). The majority of respondents were female (59.1 percent) and white (72.7 percent, with 4.5 percent African-American, 4.5 percent Latino, 4.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander and 13.6 percent mixed race.) This sample compares with 2001-02 California Department of Education data that shows the ethnicity of all teachers in the district as: 70.8 percent white, 10.7 percent African-American, 8.3 percent Asian, 5.8 percent Hispanic or Latino 0.8 percent Filipino, and 3.5 percent did not respond.

The sample was fairly evenly split among grade levels (31.8 percent elementary teachers, 31.8 percent middle school teachers, and 36.4 percent high school teachers).

The survey contained 50 items. Twenty items asked teachers to grade (from A to F) the school's or district's performance on various tasks. Other responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Two items called for open-ended responses as to the three greatest problems facing the district and the three greatest strengths in the district.

3. Parent Focus Group Meetings

To obtain the perspective of parents on some of the standards, six parent focus groups were conducted — two at elementary schools, one at a middle school, and three in the community. The focus groups were arranged with the assistance of principals and community leaders. The team facilitated the meetings.

The focus groups contained from four to 12 participants each, with a total of 45 participants across all groups. Although nearly all of the participants were parents, there were a few teachers, principals and community members included. Each group was predominantly female. Exact data regarding ethnicity and socioeconomic level was unavailable, however, project staff, working with community advocates, ensured that a representative sample of ethnicities were included in the process. Further, significant efforts were made to include parents not engaged in traditional school or district activities (such as PTA), as well as low-income parents and non-English speakers.

4. Observations of Board Meetings/Other Meetings

Team members attended two regular board meetings between February and April 2003, and observed videotapes of six additional regular meetings that occurred between 2000 and 2003, in order to note the working relations among the board, the level of respect between the board and administrative team, the board's support of the Superintendent and staff, board members' support of the board majority's decisions and actions, the board's respect for public comments, board members' preparation for meetings, compliance with bylaws and the Brown Act, and board members' communications/public speaking skills.

The team members also attended the mayor's Forum on Education in March 2003. The forum brought together district and city representatives, as well as parents, community members, business representatives and university faculty, to talk about working together on youth and education issues.

5. Reviews of district Documents

The team members reviewed a variety of district documents, including:
- District policies and administrative regulations as provided by the district
- Board agendas and minutes
- Coordinated Compliance Reviews
- Sample district communications
- Sample site-level communications
- School plans and site council minutes
- Berkeley Schools Excellence Project (BSEP) handbook and annual plan
- Student/parent handbook
- Various district reports
- School district recovery plan
- District Web site

Extent of Implementation

Team members responsible for each subject area analyzed the assessment results, recorded findings, and determined the extent to which each standard has been implemented by the district (fully and substantially, fully and sustained, partially, or not implemented).

In addition, a numerical rating from 1 to 10 was assigned to indicate the extent that each standard is being implemented. Based on the scoring rubric provided by FCMAT, a rating of 0 indicates that the standard is not implemented, a rating of 1-7 indicates that the standard is partially implemented in varying degrees of completion, and a rating of 8-10 indicates that the standard is fully implemented in varying degrees of sustainability.

Improvement Plan

Based on the analysis of the district's current implementation of each standard, the team members developed recommendations for improvement with the goal of helping the district fully and substantially implement each standard and then sustain that level of performance. While some recommendations require an allocation of financial resources, an effort was made to develop recommendations that require little or no additional resources. Many do require the time and commitment of the board and staff, and it is hoped that a reprioritization of current responsibilities may be sufficient to enable their implementation.

1.1 Communications

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. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. District work plan

Findings

1. The district has not yet developed a comprehensive communications plan but, according to district staff, such a plan is "in the process."

2. Individual board members have identified the need for the district to strengthen internal and external communications.

3. The district recognizes that communications have not been a priority in recent years, and in January 2003 funding from the Berkeley Schools' Excellence Project (BSEP) enabled the hiring of a Public Information Officer to develop the district's communications program.

4. The Public Information Officer has developed a Proposed Work Plan that identifies "key goals" for the district's public information office. These goals include (1) generating maximum public understanding of, and support for, the Berkeley Unified School District as "the beacon for a diverse community united in its commitment to public education"; (2) generating high morale and sense of purpose within the school district; and (3) beginning to provide a voice on major educational issues. The Proposed Work Plan also briefly identifies the role for the public information office as it relates to three major tasks: communications from schools to the community, communications from community to schools, and communications from district to community.

   The information within the work plan is dedicated to external communications and focuses on short-term ideas and proposals. The work plan does not address internal communications, including procedures and strategies to ensure that district and school site staff is provided current and relevant news and information, and does not specifically include a media relations component.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should complete the development of a comprehensive, long-term communications plan that encourages proactive communications with the media, parents, the district staff, the community and other key target audiences.

a. The plan should be developed with comment from board members, the Superintendent, senior 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 time lines.

c. The Public Information Officer should distribute communications protocols and procedures to all staff, board members and school sites in a timely and efficient manner.

2. The comprehensive plan should specifically address the issue of strengthening the level of responsiveness and "customer service" among district staff (see CR1.4).

3. The Superintendent and Public Information Officer should monitor the implementation of strategies identified in the communications plan (see CR1.2 and CR1.4).

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 2

Implementation Scale:

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Not ← → Fully
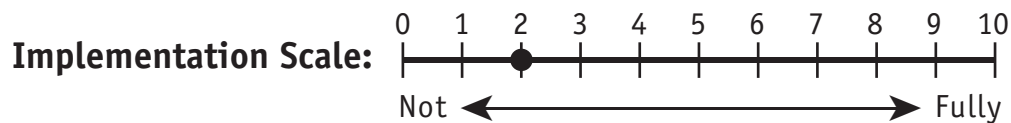
1.2 Communications

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Teacher survey
5. District work plan
6. Observations of board meetings

Findings

1. At this time, the district does not have a comprehensive communications plan including procedures and systems to ensure that information is provided to staff (see CR1.1). The public information office's Proposed Work Plan does not address the internal dissemination of information.

2. "E-trees" are utilized to provide timely information to staff. Described as "open forum list-serves," E-trees are similar to Internet posting boards, where two-way dialogue can occur between participants. The two main E-trees for the staff are the management team tree (for principals, and then distributed by them to staff) and the council tree (for cabinet and senior staff in the administration). However, not all the staff has easy access.

3. Principals' contact with the district has been primarily through an associate Superintendent. She frequently talks to them by phone and at meetings. Principals' meetings are held regularly, including meetings of all principals, only elementary principals, only middle and high school principals, and staff development for principals. The middle school principals, who are fairly new, meet every four to six weeks to "problem solve."

   The Superintendent has been unable to regularly attend the principals' meetings, or visit school sites on a regular basis. As a result, relationships including ongoing communications between the Superintendent and principals have not yet been fully developed. The Superintendent acknowledges that she would like to spend much more time on campuses, but that she has had to devote the bulk of her time to addressing the budget crisis and strengthening the district's internal systems.

4. Information from the district often is distributed to the principal and then by the principal to other site-level staff. Staff also receives information from employee organizations.

5. Several interviewees expressed concern with the timeliness of the information provided by the district and with the lack of responsiveness by the district staff to requests for information or assistance. Only a few particular district staff members were noted for their excellent responsiveness.

6. No formal process exists for the timely dissemination of information about decisions or actions taken by the board at meetings. When the board revises or adopts a policy, the appropriate staff are sometimes, but not always notified through a memorandum sent by district staff.

7. Among the teachers surveyed, none agreed or strongly agreed that they are given full and complete information when they ask questions of district and school officials (68 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 32 percent were neutral). In addition, they largely disagreed that changes in board/district policy are communicated to them in writing (59 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 14 percent neutral, 27 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

   When asked to grade the district administration's ability to communicate effectively and clearly with teachers, they gave an average rating of 1.3 on a scale of 0-4 (about a D+).
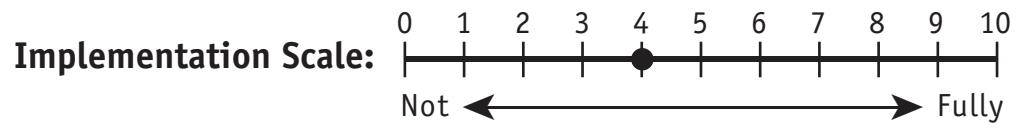
8. In interviews, employee organization representatives indicated their dissatisfaction with the district's response to their requests for information about the district's finances.

9. Several staff members responded that one of the main ways they learn about district issues is through "word of mouth."

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), it should emphasize strategies for ongoing internal communications to staff at all levels.
   a. The district should develop specific strategies to reach staff members who do not have easy access to electronic communications.
   b. The district should consider preparing a summary or brief highlights about actions taken at board meetings to be promptly and consistently distributed to staff. The Superintendent might also consider holding principal and/or staff "debriefings" on the days following board meetings.
   c. Discussion and feedback on internal communication issues might be added to the agendas of principal meetings as a regular item.

2. The district office staff should be held accountable for responding to requests for information or assistance from site-level staff.

3. The Superintendent and principals should make an ongoing commitment to strengthening communications between the district office and sites. The Superintendent should consider making regular visits to all school sites and initiating more frequent interactions by phone, in person or through meetings with principals.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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         0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
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          Not ◄───────────────────────► Fully
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1.3 Communications

Professional Standard
Staff input into school and district operations is encouraged.

Sources and Documentation
1. Superintendent interview
2. Staff interviews
3. Teacher survey

Findings

1. The cabinet, consisting of the Superintendent and the three associate Superintendents, attempts to meet once a week. The council, a directors-level group of 12 people, including the cabinet, also attempts to meet weekly.

2. The principals' meetings (see CR1.2) have been criticized by some interviewees as focusing on opportunities for the central office to send information from the top down rather than to engage in discussions with principals' comment. However, it was also reported that principals set the agenda for the middle school principals' meeting held approximately monthly.

2. In the early stages of a vision development process, the Superintendent held meetings with teachers, classified staff and administrators about their priorities and about how to involve the wider community in setting a vision.

3. The district has provided opportunities for staff members to state their opinions on current budget issues. An all-staff meeting and several staff forums brought together staff members from all levels to talk about priorities for the budget, and interviewees commented that there was meaningful dialogue. Some staff members believe their opinions may not be seriously considered by the board and Superintendent during decision-making.

4. Most teachers who were interviewed stated that when they have suggestions or comments, they generally go to their principal.

5. Teachers help decide and plan many staff development activities. Their opinion on curriculum is especially perceived as strong.

6. Some of the employee organizations feel that their opinions are not sought or welcomed enough, although the district will contact individual administrators, teachers or classified staff.

7. Many site-level staff interviewed indicated concerns about what they perceive to be the Superintendent's "top-down" or "directive" style. These staff members believe this approach runs counter to the historical "Berkeley-style" approach, which is highly decentralized.
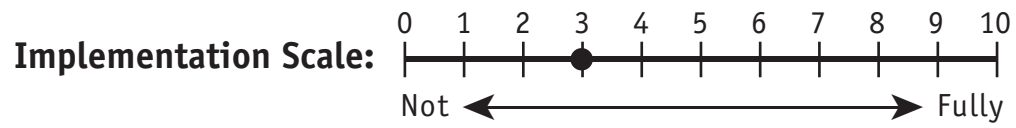
8. Several staff members indicated their personal admiration for the Superintendent's efforts to tackle the budget crisis and systemic problems in the district, however, many also indicated that they feel apprehensive about offering comment directly to the Superintendent.

9. The district utilizes district and school-site committees and councils, many of which include the staff, to solicit comment and recommendations (see CR3.2).

10. Half the teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their principal encourages teacher comment into decision making and school/district operations (41 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, nine percent neutral). They were much less likely to say that the district administration and the board encourage teacher comment into decision-making (86 percent and 73 percent, respectively, disagreed or strongly disagreed). When asked whether the board welcomes teachers to board meetings to give their opinions, 41 percent agreed or strongly agreed, and an equal number did not know or were neutral (18 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed).

11. Staff members report that they often do not see tangible results or receive information back about "next steps" after they provide comment.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), its internal communications strategies should address two-way communications.

2. The district must expand opportunities for those staff members working directly with students and programs to provide comment regarding school and district operations. Suggested approaches that the district and Superintendent might refine or pursue include:
   - Continuing to hold meetings and forums with the site staff to solicit their opinions on critical matters;
   - More frequent site visits by the Superintendent and other district-level staff members;
   - Hosting periodic meetings with each of the employee organization representatives;
   - Reviewing the purpose of staff meetings and the committee structure to ensure that these groups are focused on providing meaningful comment on priority issues;
   - Taking steps to reassure staff that they are welcome to offer their comment and suggestions.

3. To facilitate responsiveness, the district should consider developing a chart for use by the district and school-site staff, which indicates the types of questions handled by each office as well as contact names and phone numbers.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 3

Implementation Scale:

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    0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
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    Not ←─────────────────────────→ Fully
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1.4 Communications

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Media interviews
5. Parent/community member interviews
6. Parent focus groups
7. District policies
8. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
9. School newsletters
10. District Web site
11. District work plan
12. Teacher survey

Findings

1. As identified in the public information office's Proposed Work Plan, there are broad strategies to communicate with the community (see CR1.1). For example, the work plan proposes monthly forums for dialogue with high school students, teachers and community members.

2. District policy on news media relations focuses on providing equal, simultaneous access to school information to all representatives of the media. District policy on Public Information Program states that the board will provide the means for keeping the public informed about the policies, administrative operation, objectives, educational program, and successes or failures of the schools. The Superintendent and staff are assigned responsibility for informing the public regarding the district's administration and educational program.

3. The district hired its current Public Information Officer (PIO) in January 2003, and there is broad confidence that district communications are improving with the filling of this position.

4. The public information office is funded from the BSEP budget. The Superintendent has the authority to hire for the position, but the position's roles and responsibilities were largely determined by BSEP, and are focused on external communications.

5. The PIO handles media interaction and is responsible for the district newsletter, Web site, press conferences, special community meetings and information distribution. An identified regular activity of the PIO is the review and dissemination of daily news clips. The Superintendent is briefed by the PIO regarding pertinent stories, and copies are provided to board members through their in-boxes.

The PIO meets with the Superintendent frequently, is a member of the Superintendent's cabinet, and attends board meetings, principals' meetings, and other city and community meetings.

7. There appear to be occasional communications between the PIO and board members. Board members do not receive consistent issue briefings, key messages or speaking points from the public information office (see CR1.7).

8. The PIO's "Ideas/Projects/Programs for 2003" identifies several potential external communication efforts, such as writing a district/Superintendent column for the Berkeley Daily Planet and Berkeley Voice newspapers, broadcasting Berkeley High School sporting events on radio, and broadcasting interviews prior to board meetings regarding various issues.

9. The Berkeley Daily Planet is the primary newspaper that covers the district on a day-to-day basis and is the forum that community members utilize to submit letters to the editor and opinion columns regarding local education issues. The newspaper is printed twice weekly (Tuesday and Friday). This paper had been out of business for a period of time, during which the district received little media attention. The district receives scattered coverage from the Daily Californian (the University of California newspaper), Berkeley Voice, Oakland Tribune, San Francisco Chronicle and newsberkeley.com (a Web-based newsletter).

10. It appears that the Public Information Officer is knowledgeable of media needs and understands the importance of responsiveness and of a working relationship with local reporters. The Public Information Officer and Superintendent attempt to accommodate requests for information, however, on several occasions, locating and/or providing requested information and/or documentation have failed. Interviewees have stated that obtaining information from the district, at times, has been troublesome.

11. Teachers surveyed for this project were fairly evenly split in their opinions as to whether the district's schools are considerably better than shown in the media (36 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 32 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 32 percent neutral or didn't know). However, they were more likely to disagree that the media paint an unfair picture of the situation in the district (14 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 45 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 41 percent neutral or didn't know).

12. The district makes frequent use of its Web site, e-mail system and E-trees for external communications to parents and community members.

13. The district's Web site has been recently redesigned and is of high quality. It provides basic district information, links and other resource materials, including the district's recent financial recovery plan, construction updates, budget/layoff information, a calendar of district events, and other important and timely materials. It was reported that the Web site is viewed more than 700 times each day.

14. "E-trees" are utilized to provide timely information to staff, parents and the community at low cost. There are currently 18 E-trees in use. However, some interviewees believe

that the district relies too heavily on this method of communication and that the E-trees are ineffective in reaching the majority of parents. The district does not have an organized strategy to reach parents and community members who do not have access to E-mail; it relies on PTA communications, site newsletters, word-of-mouth and phone trees to communicate information to individuals who do not have electronic media.

15. The district has had a quarterly newsletter, the A+ News, but it was not funded this year.

16. The Student/Parent Handbook is distributed annually and provides extensive information to parents. Among the topics are parent rights, district calendar, important telephone numbers, academic standards, report cards and assessments, promotion and graduation requirements, specific programs (e.g., special education, Gifted and Talented Education, Title I program), enrollment process and priorities, attendance requirements, immunizations and other medical issues, student discipline, school safety, transportation, after-school programs, student use of technology, parent/community involvement, school site and district committees, complaint procedures, and the district's sexual harassment policy.

17. Little is communicated out regarding board actions, except on the district's Web site. However, all regular board meetings are broadcast live on KPFR/FM 89.3 and Cable TV channel 25 and Berkeley Government Access Channel 78.

18. The district made a concerted effort to communicate with the public about the recovery plan and proposed budget cuts. It made copies of the plan available at the district office, posted it on the district Web site, held meetings at each school site and conducted a public forum with the board.

19. Some parents interviewed said that the closure of a magnet school was announced in the newspaper before the parents and the staff were notified. They felt there was little feedback regarding the reasons for the closure.

20. Communications with parents are largely a function of individual school sites. Many parents expressed that their local school sites do a solid job of providing them with general information. Some of the school sites produce weekly or monthly newsletters to provide parents with information about upcoming school and district events, deadlines, and opportunities for parent involvement. The information contained within the newsletters is obtained without the coordination or assistance from the district's Public Information Officer. The production schedules of the school site newsletters vary, and contribute to the difficulty for the district to provide timely information to be included in the newsletters. PTAs also produce newsletters.

21. A number of interviewees reported problems with the responsiveness of the district office staff to requests for information or questions. Often, parents and community members have difficulty determining who to contact about a particular problem or issue. Other times, phone calls may not be returned and requested information may not be provided. Some attributed this to lack of a customer-service attitude. A few interviewees felt that the district is not being forthcoming with information, but most felt that there is a general lack of accountability for individual staff members, as well as problems with internal systems and limited resources that have hindered the district office's ability to provide the type of data, analysis or responses requested.

Teachers surveyed for this project tended to support this perception, with 32 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and only 12 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that district staff work closely with parents and community members to resolve requests or concerns.

22. Some parents expressed frustration with the inadequacy of translation services at the district office. Also, district materials and school newsletters may not be in Spanish and parents must rely on other organizations or their children to translate for them. Select school sites and PTAs appear to do a good job of providing materials to parents in English and Spanish.
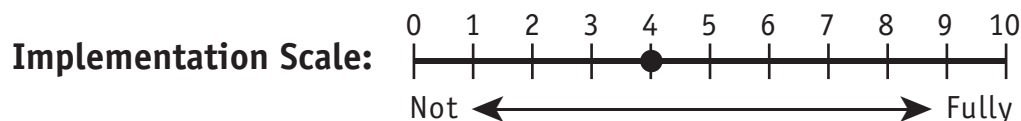
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. "Customer service" and responsiveness should be emphasized as priorities for all the central office staff.
   a. The district should initiate staff development for all district staff members who are responsible for dealing with other staff members, parents or the general public on how to strengthen their communications skills, with a special emphasis on demonstrating sensitivity to different cultures and being responsive.
   b. The district might consider developing a uniform method to track information requests to ensure that timely responses are provided.
   c. The district should develop ways to make available to parents and community members easy-to-use reference information, such as the types of questions handled by each department as well as contact names and phone numbers.
   d. Staff members should be held accountable through the evaluation process for their ability to effectively address the questions and concerns of parents and the public.

2. The Public Information Officer should communicate with school site staff, district staff and board members regarding the role of the public information office and how the office can assist in district and school-site communications efforts.

3. Even though the position is funded through BSEP, the Superintendent must have clear authority to establish job parameters and priorities for the PIO.

4. The Superintendent and other district staff should ensure that school site staff is well informed about district decisions and other pertinent information (see CR1.2) so that the school sites can effectively distribute the information to parents.
   a. District news might be a regular feature of school newsletters. School sites should cooperate by informing the public information office of newsletter deadlines and proactively seeking district news.

5. The district should proactively inform parents and the community about board actions and decisions. This might include preparing summary or brief highlights that can be promptly and consistently disseminated to parents, community members and the media.

6. As part of the district's comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), the district should be aggressive in developing ongoing and creative outreach strategies to better communicate with non-English-speaking, disenfranchised, and less-involved parents and community members.

   a. The district should directly involve these parents in the development of strategies.

   b. The district should consider seeking outside assistance in pursuing these strategies, as appropriate, or assigning additional staff with specific responsibilities for parent outreach.

   c. The district should ensure that it is providing a proper level of translation services to assist district staff or school sites with communications efforts.

7. The district should provide more proactive information to the media about important district issues, programs and activities. This information should not be limited to budget and fiscal issues, but should also consistently highlight achievements of the district's students and staff.

   a. The Superintendent and/or PIO should ensure that all inquiries and requests from the media receive an appropriate response.

8. To avoid redundancy and gaps in the district's community connections, the outreach function should be managed through the public information office and/or Superintendent or designee so that the district is aware of who is speaking to which groups at any given time. District spokespersons and staff should inform the designated person whenever they will be speaking to parents, community members or the media on behalf of the district.

9. To monitor the effectiveness of the district's communications efforts, the Superintendent or designee should periodically assess whether the district's key messages are reaching their intended audiences and affecting the perception of students, parents, staff and community members about district performance and specific district issues.

   a. The district might use surveys, focus groups, or other methods that encourage participants to freely give their opinions about district performance. Such assessments should be aligned with critical issues and key messages identified in the district's communications plan.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10
      ├───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┤
                          ●
      Not  ◄───────────────────────►  Fully
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1.5 Communications

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
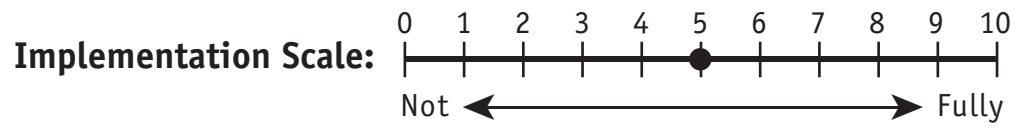2. Staff interviews
3. Media interviews

Findings

1. The district does not currently have a communications plan that delineates roles and responsibilities regarding district spokespersons or media relations procedures (see CR1.1). The district also provided no board policy addressing spokespersons.

2. In practice, media inquiries are generally directed to the Public Information Officer. The PIO provides background information to reporters, but the district Superintendent serves as the spokesperson in most instances.

3. Other district staff members are occasionally called upon, either directly by the media or through the PIO, to provide specific information to reporters. It is unclear whether they are authorized to speak on behalf of the district.

4. The board follows a practice of designating the president to represent the board as spokesperson on significant issues. Otherwise, spokesperson responsibilities are not limited to the board president; other board members receive media inquiries as well.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1) and updates its policies, it should clarify the roles and responsibilities of district staff, the Superintendent and board members when working with public inquiries and the media.

2. The district staff should be informed as to the protocols and procedures regarding public and media inquiries.

3. The board might consider adopting a policy to formalize current practices regarding the designation of spokespersons.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9  10
 |---|---|---|---|---|-●-|---|---|---|---|
 Not ←----------------------→ Fully
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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. Media interviews
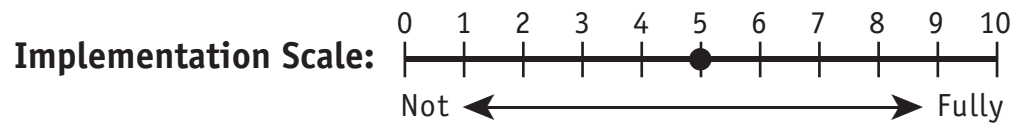4. News articles/other media

Findings

1. District spokespersons are not clearly identified (see CR1.5), although in practice the Superintendent serves as the primary spokesperson for the district and the board president serves as the primary spokesperson for the board on significant issues. It is unclear whether other district staff members have authority to speak on behalf of the district.

2. There appears to be no serious concern regarding mixed or inappropriate messages to the media. In general, those people who speak to the media on behalf of the district present a united front and are supportive of the district's positions. Disparate messages, infighting or confusion are not evident.

3. Disagreements among board members occur during board deliberations as appropriate but are not played out in the media after the board has made its decisions.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. After spokespersons and media contacts have been identified, all board members and the district staff must respect the district's protocols.
   a. If people who are not spokespersons directly receive public or media inquiries, they should refer the inquiries to identified spokespersons as appropriate so the district's messages will be consistent and the district's procedures will become known. When it is impractical to refer the inquiry, those who are not spokesperson should notify the Superintendent or Public Information Officer as soon as possible regarding the inquiry and the response.
   b. When making public comments, board members need to continue to clarify when they are speaking as individuals rather than on behalf of the district. They also need to be aware that this distinction is sometimes blurred in the public's perception, and consider choosing topics on which they can fully support the district's position and, which will advance the district's goals.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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  0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
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  Not ◄—————————————————————————————► Fully
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1.7 Communications

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Media interviews
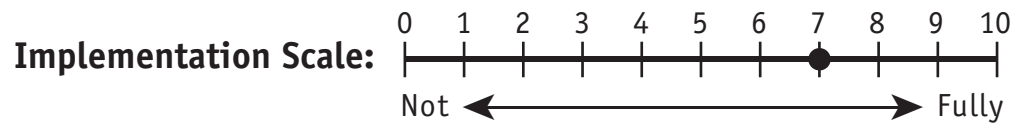4. Parent/community member interviews

Findings

1. Board members are generally articulate and professional when communicating in public, and demonstrate knowledge of district programs and issues.

2. Board members have not participated in media trainings or other briefings to discuss protocols and procedures.

3. The Superintendent demonstrates exceptional skill and knowledge as a spokesperson.

4. The district staff, particularly the Public Information Officer, does not have much interaction with board members, nor are there collaborative efforts to develop key messages, statements or other communications strategies between the PIO and the board.

5. The Public Information Officer prepares a briefing sheet prior to board meetings for the Superintendent on "hot issues" in the district.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Although the board members are generally skilled in public speaking, they might consider individual and group training in all aspects of communications (including spokesperson training and media relations) in order to maximize board effectiveness.

2. The district's public information office should consider developing fact sheets and other informational devices on key messages and other major issues that can be utilized by the Superintendent, board members and district staff. This ensures that all parties are fully knowledgeable regarding issues prior to speaking publicly, thus providing a consistent response.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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Not ◄─────────────────────────► Fully
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2.1 Parent/Community Relations

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 2002-2003
2. 2002-03 Notice to Parents
3. Staff interviews

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
   - Availability of individualized instruction for students with temporary disabilities
   - Parental responsibility to notify the receiving district if his/her temporarily disabled child is 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. Each year, the district distributes a Student/Parent Handbook, which contains many of the required parental notifications. The 2002-03 handbook included 12 of the 18 notifications listed above.

   The other six notifications are briefly described in the district's 2002-03 Notice to Parents. However, this lengthy notice simply restates the law pertaining to the parental notifications; it does not appear that it would be clearly understood by parents and it is not personalized for the district. For example, the notice cites the law regarding the need to notify parents about the fingerprinting program, if any, but does not indicate whether the district offers such a program.

The notice indicates that two of the notifications (i.e., the right to refrain from use of animals and the schedule of minimum days) would be sent separately. The former is to be distributed by teachers of affected classes. (It is possible that other notifications are sent separately but were not provided to project staff.)

Parents are asked to sign a letter acknowledging that they have been informed of their rights through these documents.
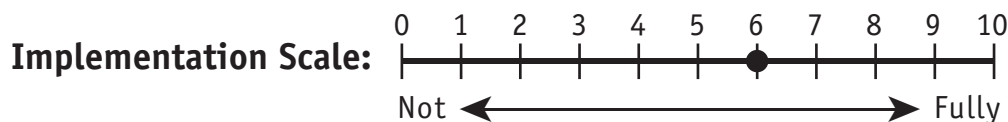
3. Education Code 48985 requires that parental notices be provided in languages other than English when 15 percent or more of the students in a school speak another primary language. In 2001-02, three of the district's schools had more than 15 percent of their students speaking Spanish. Principals in these schools indicate that notices are sent in both English and Spanish. In addition, the Student/Parent Handbook indicates that the information is available in Spanish; parents are asked to contact their child's school if they need a Spanish version.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The Superintendent or designee should ensure that parental notifications meet current legal requirements and are in clear, easy-to-understand language.
    a. The district could use CSBA's sample Exhibit 5145.6 Parental Notifications to develop or update a master list of all required notifications, including but not limited to those required by Education Code 48980.
    b. The Superintendent or designee should review and revise the parental notifications in the Notice to Parents to personalize them to the district's circumstances rather than simply restating the law.
    c. The Superintendent or designee should consider rewriting the notifications to be easier for parents to understand, using everyday language rather than legal jargon as much as possible.
    d. The district should provide support and oversight to ensure that all required notices are provided in languages other than English, to meet the requirements of law at a minimum but ideally to better serve the language needs of all parents.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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2.2 Parent/Community Relations

Legal Standard

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

Sources and Documentation

1. District Web site
2. Staff interviews
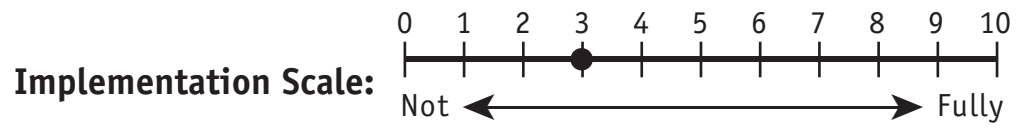3. Experience of project staff

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, and Education Code 35258 requires that districts with access to the Internet make school accountability report cards available on the Internet and update them annually.

2. The district issued school accountability report cards in August 2002, and a summary of each appears on the district's Web site. However, the Web site does not include the full report card containing all the components required by law, nor was it confirmed by the district whether report cards were distributed or made available to parents and the public any other manner. Even if the full report card is distributed in paper copy to all parents or is made available to them upon request, the California Department of Education has interpreted the relevant laws to require Internet access to all the required data (see "School Accountability Report Card: Frequently Asked Questions" on the CDE's Web site (www.cde.ca.gov/ope/sarc/question.htm).

3. Each summary report card on the district's Web site states that more information can be obtained by calling or visiting the school or by contacting the district office. The project team requested, but was not provided with copies of any full report cards, and thus, the content of the report cards could not be analyzed for compliance with law.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The Superintendent or designee should ensure that each school accountability report card reflects the most recent requirements of law.

2. The district should make the full school accountability report cards available on the Internet as required by law, and consider other methods of distribution as well.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 3

Implementation Scale:

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2.3 Parent/Community Relations

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

Sources and Documentation
1. District policies
2. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
3. Staff interviews
4. Teacher survey

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 district reviewed and updated its uniform complaint procedures (BP/AR 1312.3, previously adopted in 1992) as part of its review of all mandated policies (see CR4.3); these were adopted by the board in May 2003. The newly revised materials appear to reflect all legal requirements and Coordinated Compliance Review expectations.

2. 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.
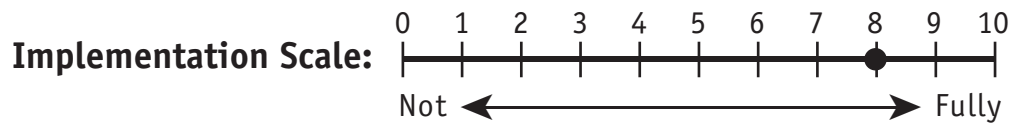
   The uniform complaint procedures are distributed annually through the Student/Parent Handbook. In addition, the district's policy on Uniform Complaint Procedures reflects the requirement for annual dissemination of the complaint procedures to parents/guardians, employees, committees, students and other interested parties.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should plan to regularly review its uniform complaint procedures to ensure that they continue to fulfill the requirements of current law.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

July 2003 Rating: 8

Implementation Scale:

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2.4 Parent/Community Relations

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. District policies
2. Staff interviews
3. Parent interviews
4. Teacher survey

Findings

1. District policy on Parental Complaint About School Personnel (1984) establishes a complaint process that refers complaints first to the site administrator and then to the assistant Superintendent, Superintendent and board as necessary until the parent is satisfied. A form is available on which parents are asked to describe the nature of the complaint.

   Procedures described on the back of the form indicate that the process will be handled in a timely manner. The Principal will confer with the parties within three working days of receiving the complaint. If additional steps are necessary, the Associate Superintendent will confer with the complainant within ten working days of the conference with the Principal and will respond in writing within five working days, the Superintendent will confer with the complainant within five working days and will respond in writing within five working days, and the board may hold a hearing within 15 working days of receiving the Superintendent's response.
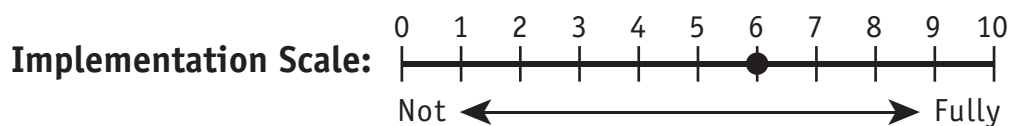
2. Although procedures are in place pursuant to this standard, some parents expressed frustrations about the lack of information or assistance offered by the district to assist them with appropriately raising and addressing complaints. Others shared their perception that the district does not always adhere to its own procedures or time lines, or that the staff "waits until the last day" to respond.

3. Teachers surveyed for this project tended to disagree that charges or complaints against employees are handled in a timely and professional manner by district administration (50 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 36 percent neutral or didn't know, 14 percent agreed or strongly agreed). When asked in general whether the district handles parent complaints in a uniform manner using established procedures, the majority of teachers (59 percent) were neutral or didn't know, 23 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 18 percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. As the district conducts a comprehensive review and updating of its policy manual (see CR4.2), it should review its nearly 20-year-old policy on complaints regarding school personnel to ensure that it reflects current law and district practice.

2. The Superintendent or designee should ensure that staff members are aware of the policy and are capable of informing parents about it, and that all time lines and procedures described within the policy are followed.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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2.5 Parent/Community Relations

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups

Findings

1. Board members appear to demonstrate an understanding of their appropriate roles and their authority to act only as a board. Board members show awareness of and respect for a process of referring informal concerns and complaints to appropriate staff. In most cases, the Superintendent has articulated that board members should refer issues through her office, and this practice has been respected.

2. During the latest round of layoff notices, when parents and community members expressed passionate concerns, board members appear to have responded appropriately by relaying information to the Superintendent and to the board as a whole. Individual board members have also tried to utilize opportunities to educate the public about the district's reasons for issuing the notices, including legal requirements, and they have not acted independently to try to address particular concerns.

3. Several board members and many of the parents included in this study expressed frustration that their concerns do not receive a prompt or adequate response from the district staff (see CR1.4).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Board members should continue to abide by a process of referring informal concerns and complaints to the appropriate staff.

2. The Superintendent should establish and implement a plan to enhance district office responsiveness (see CR1.4).

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

July 2003 Rating: 8

Implementation Scale:

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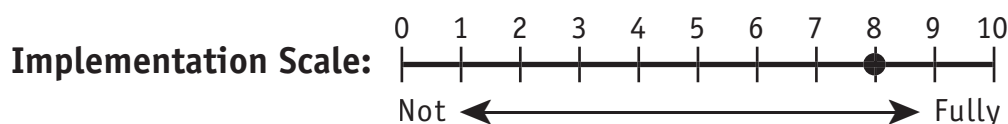
2.6 Parent/Community Relations

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. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Teacher survey
7. District policies
8. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003

Findings

1. The district policy on Programs for the Disadvantaged: Parent Involvement was reviewed and updated to reflect current laws as part of the board's recent review of mandated policies (see CR4.3).

2. The district policy on Physical Facility Volunteer Projects (1989) encourages parent/community participation in the improvement of school facilities. Such activity requires prior approval and coordination with site and district personnel responsible for school construction and building maintenance.

3. Many efforts to involve parents and community members are initiated and implemented at the school-site level. Examples include back-to-school nights, open houses, student performances, cultural celebrations and volunteer programs.

4. The Student/Parent Handbook, distributed to parents each year, encourages parents to participate in parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). It also describes the role of volunteers in the schools (see CR2.8).

5. The level of parental involvement at school sites is mostly dependent on the outreach efforts of the site Principal and the other school staff. Principals have different styles and priorities for engaging parents. There are multiple examples of sites employing creative approaches to generating more parental involvement, such as combining meetings or programs with student performances, providing school buses for transportation to campus meetings and events, holding meetings at parks and other sites and not just at school campuses, and hosting principal "chat nights" where parents can meet directly with the Principal.

6. The district more or less leaves it up to principals and site staff to engage parents. The district does not provide specific training to principals or site staff on engaging parents, although it is a topic that has been identified as worthwhile by the district office.

7. Sites facilitate involvement by sending a considerable amount of information to parents and by inviting parents to attend school events. Communication from sites to parents is generally good (see CR1.4). Most sites produce principal and PTA newsletters and rely on e-mail communications.

8. Most parents who were interviewed appear to view school sites (with the exception of the high school) as welcoming environments. At the high school, there appears to be a lack of a cohesive parent-involvement process or system, although an on-site parent resource center was created to address this situation.

   Similarly, most parents who were interviewed feel that the elementary and middle school staff is responsive to their questions, but many reported frustrations with the responsiveness of staff at the high school (and at the district office).

9. Most of the site staff interviewed indicated that parent turnout at school activities is high. Parents especially come to watch their children participate and perform.

10. The district and sites benefit from a large number of volunteers, including parents, university students and community members (see CR2.8).

11. A number of parents are involved in their children's education through participation in school-site councils and other district and school committees (e.g., see CR2.7 and CR3.4).

12. Site PTAs vary in level of activity and organization. Some PTAs perform extensive fund-raising and coordinate other activities. At many sites, the PTA appears not to include a diverse group of parents, although some interviewees report that progress toward more diversity is slowly being made at some of these sites.

13. Parents and community members help support school projects by raising funds through the Berkeley Public Education Foundation and through their support of local measures such as the BSEP initiative.

14. Some interviewees reported that time constraints are a barrier to parental involvement, especially for parents of young children.

15. Many district students do not come from traditional families. The site staff reports that they often need to build relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles and other extended family members.

16. Some sites report high percentages of minority parent involvement in school activities, but this does not appear to be true throughout the entire district. Most of the staff and parents interviewed agreed that there needs to be a more concerted effort to involve parents from racial and ethnic minorities.

    A few school sites recognize and value the cultures of the students and families they serve by holding events and activities that relate to and honor these cultural heritages.

17. Parents in focus groups frequently expressed a belief that not all parents in the district are respected or treated the same way. In particular, there is a perception that parents from racial and ethnic minorities are not treated the same as white parents, or that they are not as welcome to be part of the system. Some report that the lack of a diverse teaching staff also inhibits involvement of parents of racial and ethnic minorities. There were perceptions of parent "disenfranchisement" by both race and class.

18. There is also a perception among some parents of racial and ethnic minorities that in order to have an impact, they must demonstrate "strength through numbers," whereas they believe one white parent with strong connections can get the same result. These parents stated beliefs that: "loud and articulate voices get the most attention;" "hill parents get their calls returned;" and "those who know how the system works" get the best classes, programs and teachers for their children.

19. Language is frequently identified as a barrier to greater parental participation, especially among the Latino community. Sites that have bilingual staff and distribute materials in Spanish (see CR1.4) report more effective outreach.

20. Staff reports that some parents tend to engage with the schools only when they are angry about something or have a complaint.

21. A primary way for parents to get involved is through the district's "school choice" process, in which parents have a say in which campus their child may attend. Parents have the opportunity to meet principals at various sites, review information, etc.

    Feelings about this program appear to be mixed. Comments range from feelings that the policy contributes to a more equitable system of opportunity for all students to feelings that individual sites are forced to compete with each other in an unhealthy way. Some parents also feel that the system benefits "savvy" parents who understand how to navigate it, while other parents do not understand the system well enough to know how best to assist their children.

22. The district's student assignment program appears to effectively achieve integration. However, when children do not attend their neighborhood school, there are greater challenges, such as transportation, for some parents to participate.

23. Teachers surveyed for this project tend to believe that parents are generally very supportive of the district and its activities (52 percent agreed or strongly agreed compared to 10 percent who disagreed or strongly disagreed; 38 percent were neutral or didn't know). In addition, only 14 percent of the teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the community is less involved in the district than ever (55 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 32 percent were neutral or didn't know). However, teachers also do not perceive an increase in the level of community or parent support in the past few years. These results seem to indicate a perception that the level of community involvement and support has remained steady in recent years.

24. Teachers surveyed assigned slightly below-average grades to the effectiveness of the board and district administration in encouraging parent participation at the school level (in each case, an average grade of about C-), and a slightly higher grade for the effectiveness of principals in encouraging parent participation at the school level (about a C+).
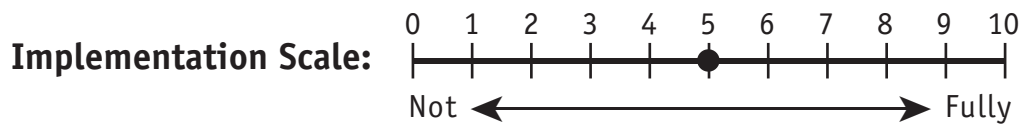
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district and school sites should continue to identify and utilize opportunities for engaging parents and community members.
    a. The district should continue to encourage sites to pursue creative approaches and focus on getting parents to interact with the schools, especially in proactive and positive ways as opposed to waiting until problems or concerns arise.
    b. As part of the district's comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), the district might develop strategies for communicating with PTAs and other school site groups regarding upcoming district events and activities so that these groups can help encourage parent/community attendance.
    c. The district should provide ongoing professional development to all principals to assist them in promoting positive parent/community relations. Annual principal evaluations should be aligned to the district's vision and goals related to parent/ community relations.
    d. The district should consider providing ongoing staff development to teachers, the front-office staff, site liaisons and the other classified staff focused on helping them strengthen community outreach and parent engagement. Staff development might address effective communications, the principles of customer service, and ways to deal with conflicts.

2. The district should especially focus on reaching out and involving traditionally disenfranchised parents.
    a. The district should provide training and support to the staff to raise cultural awareness and address the perception that some parents are treated differently than others.
    b. The district should work with all school sites and provide and coordinate support as necessary to ensure that adequate translation services are available so that language is not perceived as an impediment to parental involvement.
    c. The district could offer trainings directly to parents who are interested in participating but are not certain how to best get involved or who have not traditionally felt welcomed. The district should consider involving representatives from traditionally disenfranchised groups to help provide comment on the development of this training curriculum.

3. The district should be informed about, and when appropriate assist in the coordination of, parent/community relations efforts throughout the district.
    a. To facilitate district support of site efforts, the designated site staff might be encouraged to notify a single district staff person regarding the school's activities.
    b. The district's Public Information Officer should assist in publicizing school events and activities through appropriate means.

  c. The district might organize regular meetings of all the appropriate site staff to share information and suggestions.

 4. The board and Superintendent or designee should build an expectation among all school staff that parent/community relations are an important part of their job.

  a. The board should consider requesting annual reports from the Superintendent regarding each site's efforts to enhance parental engagement, with special emphasis on outreach to economically disadvantaged parents, parents of racial and ethnic minorities, and parents whose first language is not English.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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2.7 Parent/Community Relations

Professional Standard
Parent and public comment into school and district operations is encouraged.

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
7. Teacher survey

Findings

1. Members of the public may e-mail the board or staff at the e-mail address provided on the Web site. There is a high level of communication by e-mail, with some district administrators averaging 60 or more e-mails per work day.

2. The public has an opportunity to provide comment during board meetings as required by law (see CR6.8). The board generally demonstrates respect toward the public during board meetings, although a few interviewees expressed concerns about whether the public's comment always receives an adequate response (see CR5.11).

3. During the recent budget crisis, the public has been involved in recovery plan meetings, with large numbers of participants showing up at several meetings.

4. Parent and public comment on district priorities was sought during the Superintendent search two years ago and during meetings in preparation for vision-setting (see CR5.4).

5. The district has established numerous opportunities for parent and public comment through site-level and district-level committees and councils. These committees and councils are described in the Student/Parent Handbook (also see CR.3.2).

6. Some parents report that the length of meetings such as board meetings and BSEP committee meetings (sometimes three hours or more) prevent them from becoming involved. Parents of young children also find it difficult to attend board and committee meetings, which may run late at night.

7. Middle and upper-income parents and white parents seem to be more involved at most schools and make up the majority of site councils and committees unless there is considerable emphasis placed on wider outreach by the principals (see CR2.6 and CR3.4).

8. Teachers surveyed for this project showed a slight tendency to agree that parents have a large say in decisions made by the board: 41 percent agreed or strongly agreed that parents have a large say, 32 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 27 percent were neutral or didn't know.

    However, when asked to grade both the board's willingness and effectiveness in encouraging parent and public participation in district policymaking, they assigned average grades of 1.8 and 1.5, respectively (about a C- in both cases). Similarly, they assigned an average grade of 1.8 to the district administration's effectiveness in encouraging parent/public participation in district policymaking.

9. Several interviewees commented that the board's problem is not the level of parent/public involvement, but rather the difficulty of effectively processing, channeling and responding to the high level of comment. In addition, sometimes the comments may not respond to areas that are most needed by the district and schools.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should ensure that its efforts to reach out and involve traditionally disenfranchised parents (see CR2.6) include efforts to solicit meaningful comments on school and district operations.

2. The district should examine the manner in which comments from parents and the public contributes to district decision-making.
    a. The district should continue to review the purpose and structure of its committees and councils to ensure that such groups are focused on issues identified as priorities by the district or school sites (see CR3.2 and CR3.3).
    b. The board and Superintendent should look for opportunities to close the communications loop by reporting to parents and the community about ways in which their comments were utilized or considered. This might be done formally through reports at board meetings and district communications.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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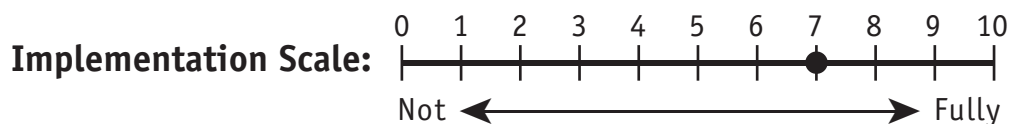
2.8 Parent/Community Relations

Professional Standard

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

Sources and Documentation

1. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
2. Parent/community member interviews
3. Staff interviews
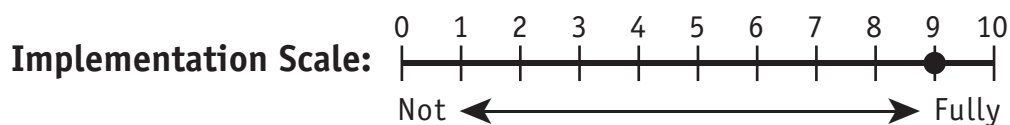4. District Web site

Findings

1. There is a large volunteer base in Berkeley schools, including but not limited to tutors, guest speakers in classrooms, fund-raisers, after-school volunteers, and parents helping in classrooms and in the writing room. Volunteers play meaningful roles, offer time and energy, and provide a great deal of expertise. Many schools report a good deal of parent volunteerism in the classrooms.

2. The Student/Parent Handbook describes the roles of parent/community volunteers in the schools, including classroom tutoring, Literacy Pals for middle school students, DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) Day, mentoring and school beautification. Berkeley School Volunteers, funded by the Berkeley Public Education Foundation, recruits, trains and places over 1,000 volunteers a year. The handbook provides a contact name and phone number for interested parents.

3. The district's Web site describes the volunteer opportunities available in the district, including 13 ways that individuals can help. Contact information is provided. According to the Web site, some programs require attendance at a 90-minute new volunteer orientation, which is conducted almost every week at various times of the day. Such orientation is required for classroom volunteers, Writers' Room coaches, after-school volunteers, special education, libraries, school gardens, summer school, and clerical volunteers. Writers' Room has its own training requirements in addition to the orientation.

4. Some committee/council members receive training or information related to their responsibilities (see CR3.5).

5. Information regarding the diversity of parents and community members who serve as volunteers was unavailable. However, in general it has been reported that parents of racial and ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged parents are less likely to be involved in the schools; see CR2.6.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district and schools should continue to reach out to recruit underrepresented groups of parents and community members to serve as volunteers in the schools.

2. To maximize the effectiveness of volunteers, the district might involve principals, other key staff, parents and community members in evaluating the amount and quality of training and support available to volunteers.

3. The district should continue to publicly recognize the contributions of volunteers.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

July 2003 Rating: 9

Implementation Scale:

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2.9 Parent/Community Relations

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. District policies
2. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
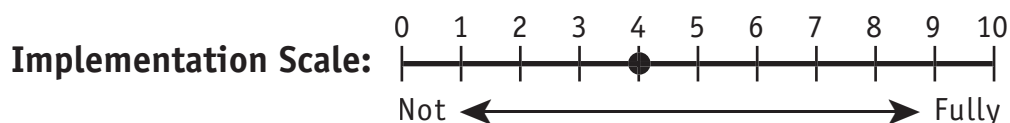3. Personal experience of project staff

Findings

1. District policy on Visitors to Schools (1984), which is included in the Student/Parent Handbook, requires all visitors to report to the school office when entering. School principals are authorized to take "appropriate action" to prevent unauthorized persons from entering buildings and from loitering on school grounds. The policy does not provide any further detail nor reflect the legal requirement to post registration requirements at each school entrance.

2. The project staff was not consistently asked to register nor escorted while on some campuses. The project staff observed registration requirements at some but not all school entrances.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board should review its policy on Visitors to Schools and consider expanding the policy to reflect the information that visitors will be required to furnish upon registration (Penal Code 627.3), legal provisions pertaining to denial/revocation of registration and appeals (Penal Code 627.4, 627.5, 627.7), and the required content of the posted notices (Education Code 32211).

2. The district should ensure that a notice is posted in accordance with law at every entrance to each school and school grounds, which sets forth visitor registration requirements, hours during which registration is required, the registration location, the route to take to that location and the penalties for violation of registration requirements.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
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      Not  ◄─────────────────────►  Fully
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2.10 Parent/Community Relations

Professional Standard
Board members are actively involved in building community relations.

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
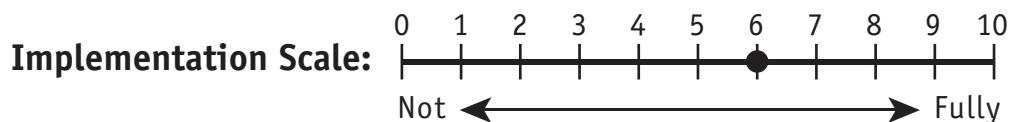6. Teacher survey

Findings

1. Board members appear to take seriously their responsibility to help build community relations. Board members and the Superintendent have conducted numerous public forum meetings. They attend a variety of meetings in the community. Individual board members and the Superintendent meet with various groups and individuals in the community.

2. Individual board members view themselves as liaisons to different segments of the community and participate in meetings with those segments of the community.

3. Some board members hold regular community meetings where they invite parents and members of the public to share comments and concerns.

4. Individual board members report spending time prior to meetings calling, e-mailing and meeting with individuals and groups.

5. The board has recently resumed an adopt-a-school program to ensure that board members visit all the sites and that all schools have a chance to interact with board members.

6. Board members are involved in regular meetings with city council representatives to discuss common interests related to youth issues (see CR3.1).

7. Some members of the African-American, Latino and Asian-American communities perceive that only one or two of the board members pay serious attention to building relationships with them. There is evidence of meetings occurring in the past with African-American and Latino parents and community groups, however, relationships appear to have been especially strained since the board chose not to pursue a specific policy direction recommended by these groups two years ago.

8. Teachers surveyed for this project assigned the board an average grade of 1.5 on a scale from 0 to 4 in maintaining community relations.

9. Several segments of the community expressed a desire for more interaction with the Superintendent.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. All board members should actively seek to build relations in the community, making special effort to reach out to minority communities.
   a. Direct contact with parents and the staff, including visits to school sites, should be a priority.

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, as well as the board's role in providing leadership.
   a. The participation of board members in community relations might be addressed in the district's comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1).
   b. Board members (and administrators) might be asked to notify the Public Information Officer whenever they are invited to speak in the community so that he/she will be aware of which community groups are meeting and whether the district will have a presence at those meetings.
   c. To ensure consistency of message, the Superintendent or Public Information Officer should consider providing briefings, key messages or speaking points to all the district's spokespersons (see CR1.7).

3. The board should periodically assess its performance in this area.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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3.1 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Community member interviews
5. District policies
6. Observation of city forum on education

Findings

1. There appears to be strong communication between the district and city on youth issues, especially with the renewed interest of the Mayor's office. For example, the district and city hold meetings that involve two members of the school board and two members of the city council. The Superintendent and City Manager attend these meetings as well. Opinions regarding the effectiveness of these meetings vary, but they are generally positive, with all participants believing that the meetings provide a worthwhile structure for discussing common interests.

   In addition, the Mayor held a forum on education in April 2003 that focused on ways to coordinate/align city and school district resources and services. The forum reviewed areas such as the mentors program, school readiness, mental health services, restructuring contracts, libraries, after-school programs and others.

   Some specific collaborative projects are already in place. For instance, the city provides staffing for the high school health center. Also, the district staff reports that the city has extensive resources to which they refer children and families in need.

2. Collaboration between the district and the University of California at Berkeley is generally perceived as uncoordinated, and some district interviewees express a desire to strengthen relationships with the university. There have been some connections, typically between individual sites and individual departments at the university. For instance, university students often volunteer with the schools, and the university sponsored the Diversity Project that studied the achievement gap at the high school. The university and district also worked closely to establish the DIME (Diversity in Math Education) program, which brings many graduate students to the middle schools to assist with math education.

3. The Berkeley Alliance, formed in 1997 to foster relations between the university, the city and the school district, brings together key community representatives from each entity. The alliance is currently focused on identifying budget savings through joint purchas-

ing and other means, joint support services and shared transportation services. The group does not formally include board members or city council members.

4. Collaboration between the district and the county does not appear to occur at a significant level.

5. The district interacts with a number of active parent/community groups on education issues. These include the Berkeley Organization of Congregations for Action (BOCA), Chicano Latino for Academic and Social Success (CLASS), Latinos Unidos, Concerned Citizens for Berkeley High, and Parents of Children of African Decent (PCAD). CLASS includes some teachers, counselors, a principal and community members. PCAD was established in response to the achievement gap at the high school. Interviewees mentioned other community and parent groups as well, indicating a broad array.

6. The local business community appears to be very involved in the schools. Business owners donate books, materials, and their time to read with the students. Businesses have also helped provide funds to pay for a staff development trainer to come in and work with teachers. The "Edible Schoolyard" program is an impressive partnership between local restaurants and the middle schools.

7. The Berkeley Public Education Foundation is very active and effective in raising funds for specific school and classroom purposes, including capital campaigns like the construction and enhancements to Rosa Parks Elementary School and a theater at Longfellow Middle School, music and arts programs, and mini-grants for individual teachers.

8. Interviewees referenced additional collaborative projects, including but not limited to:
   - Volunteers from San Francisco State University and Mills College – site-based, dependent upon personal relationships
   - UC Zellerbach theater
   - Cal Mentors
   - Berkeley Botanical Gardens
   - Berkeley Historical Society
   - Berkeley Boosters – Berkeley High School Athletics
   - Berkeley Youth Alternatives
   - Berkeley Mental Health Department
   - Berkeley YMCA
   - South Berkeley YMCA

9. The district policy on Relations with Other Education Agencies: Goals and Objectives establishes the board's desire to cooperate with other school districts and with other local, state and regional agencies and organizations on educational issues of common concern. According to the policy, such cooperation might include research, exchange of information and data, coordination of curriculum, coordination of school calendars and activities, and construction of facilities. The Superintendent is directed to recommend to the board "an evaluation of the desirability and feasibility of cooperation with other agencies in endeavors which could benefit the district."

Other district policy (no adoption date) on Public and Private Sector Cooperative Partnerships and Joint Ventures addresses contractual relationships in which schools/students and the private sector partner each receive economic benefits.
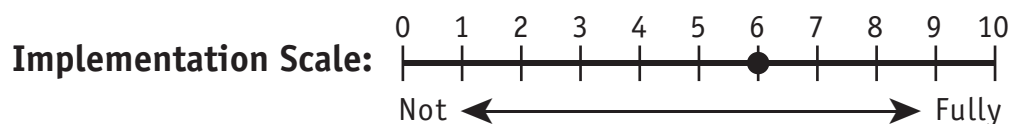
10. Despite the array of partnerships and collaborations, there does not appear to be coordination through the district office or a designated staff member to provide overall guidance and assistance, ensure alignment and tracking, or initiate evaluation.

11. Sometimes well-meaning interest groups pursue programs or initiatives without involving the district as a full partner. Without an official district representative serving as a stakeholder, those goals may not always be in alignment with district priorities.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The Superintendent or designee should consider assigning a high-level staff person to take the lead on coordinating community collaborations in order to maximize the efficient use of funds and ensure alignment with district priorities and other district or site programs.

2. The district might work with other community agencies and organizations to conduct a needs assessment to determine children's unmet needs in the community, including educational, health and social services needs, and to develop a common vision for children's services in the community.

3. The district should consider how to provide greater support for site-level efforts, such as by providing technical assistance, resources and/or other incentives for participation in collaboration.

4. The district should work with its partners to evaluate the effectiveness of community collaboratives.
   a. District representatives involved in collaborative efforts should regularly encourage informal and formal evaluations of collaboratives.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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3.2 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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. District policies
2. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
3. Board member interviews
4. Superintendent interviews
5. Staff interviews
6. Parent/community member interviews

Findings

1. The district and schools have established numerous committees and councils. Site committees include the School-site council, Site Advisory Committee for developing the Title I portion of the school plan, the English Learner Advisory Committee, and the BSEP (Berkeley Schools' Excellence Project) Site Committee. District-level committees include the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Advisory Committee, the District Advisory Committee (DAC), District English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), BSEP Planning and Oversight Committee, Citizen's Construction Advisory Committee, Facilities Maintenance and Security Advisory Committee, Budget and Finance Advisory Committee, Child Nutrition Advisory Committee, and Berkeley Arts in Education Steering Committee. A task force has been established to study the concept of creating "small schools" at the high school, and citizen advisory committees have also been used to assist in the selection of principals.

   Some of these, such as BSEP and the Maintenance Advisory Committee, are legally required as part of local parcel tax measures; others are established at the discretion of the board or Superintendent.

2. District policy on Administrative Councils, Cabinets and Committees authorizes the Superintendent to establish permanent or temporary councils, cabinets and committees as he/she deems necessary for the proper administration of board policies and for the improvement of the total educational program.

3. The Student/Parent Handbook lists school site and district-level committees. For some of these committees a contact phone number is provided, but for most there is no specific number to call.

4. Each district-level committee is staffed by district staff and has a board member liaison.
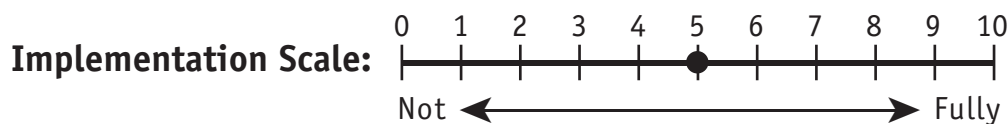
5. Several school sites have consolidated their various committees into a single "school governance council" (to the extent that it still complies with legal requirements) and report that this has been successful in broadening diversity and ensuring meaningful participation at the site.

6. Many interviewees expressed concerns regarding the number and purpose of the district's committees. There appears to be a widespread perception that there are too many committees, some of which may have been appointed to appease vocal constituents rather than fulfilling a purpose that advances the district goals; committees rarely get disbanded. (There are also concerns that some committees do not understand their roles and attempt to exceed their authority; see CR3.3.)

7. Recently the board has been examining the entire committee structure, looking at committee composition, categorization (e.g., board-appointed vs. Superintendent-appointed), charges, reporting mechanisms, etc. In March 2003, the board revised and updated its master policy on board committees (BB 9130). This policy delineates two types of board committees: oversight committees and task forces. The board has also updated and adopted policies for two of the oversight committees and reviewed policies for three of the task forces.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board and Superintendent should complete their examination and clarification of the process for establishing and disbanding district/school committees.
   a. Information provided to committees and task forces should indicate whether the committee is a standing committee with ongoing responsibilities or, if not, the timeframe for expected completion of the task force's charges.
   b. The board and Superintendent should consider establishing time lines for the periodic review of the committee structure to ensure that the committees continue to serve a valid purpose.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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3.3 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
2. District policies
3. School-site council minutes
4. Board member interviews
5. Superintendent interviews
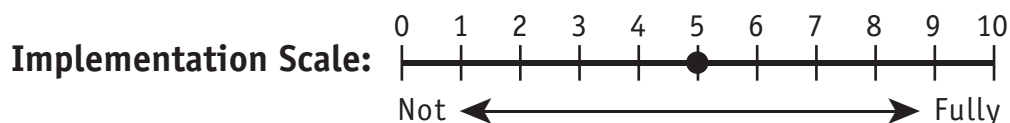6. Staff interviews
7. Community member interviews

Findings

1. The district has established a number of school site and district-level advisory committees and councils (see CR3.2). The Student/Parent Handbook describes the goals of these committees. For example, each school's BSEP site committee annually conducts a schoolwide needs assessment and determines how the school's BSEP School Enrichment Fund money will be spent.

2. District policy on Administrative Councils, Cabinets and Committees states that the purpose of Superintendent-established bodies is to obtain the advice and counsel of administrative and supervisory personnel and to aid in district communication. Such groups shall function in an advisory capacity only, and the Superintendent has the authority to define and change their responsibilities.

3. Most of the school-site councils reviewed their legal roles and responsibilities at their first meeting. This presentation was usually conducted by the Principal and was short in duration – usually five to 10 minutes long. School-site council minutes indicate that a few of the councils also discussed their bylaws.

4. Some confusion regarding the role of the different committees is apparent. A few have specific outcome goals described by law, however, interviews reveal that there is no mutual understanding about the goals of many advisory councils.

5. The board is in the process of examining and clarifying the roles of committees as it conducts a review of the district's entire committee system; see CR3.2.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board and Superintendent should continue to examine and clarify, in writing, the purposes and charges of each committee.
   a. The district and school committees and task forces should serve specific roles that are linked to the district's vision and goals.
   b. The board and Superintendent should consider establishing time lines for the periodic review of committee charges in order to determine whether the charges need to be revised to align with changing district needs.

2. When the district completes its review and updating of the committee structure, all district and site-level committees will need information and/or training regarding their roles and responsibilities (also see CR 3.5).
   a. The district should consider how to communicate these duties to all members more effectively so that members are able to accurately describe their major functions.
   b. The district and schools might provide candidates for election or appointment to councils and committees with a detailed description of the duties they would be expected to perform. Detailed information about the roles of school-site groups might also be distributed to voters so they can select the most qualified person to perform those duties.
   c. The appropriate district staff might periodically assess members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and tailor training opportunities to meet those needs (see CR3.5).

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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3.4 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
2. District policies
3. School-site council rosters
4. School-site council meeting sign-in sheets
5. Board member interviews
6. Superintendent interview
7. Staff interviews
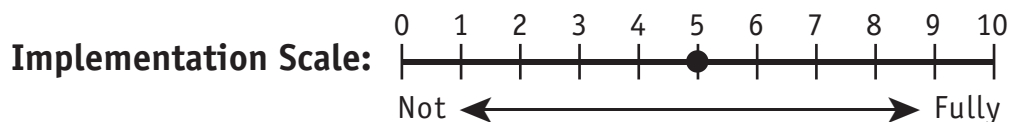8. Parent focus groups

Findings

1. The Student/Parent Handbook describes the member composition of various site and district committees (e.g., number of staff or parents).

2. District policy on Administrative Councils, Cabinets and Committees allows the Superintendent to define the membership and composition of Superintendent-established groups.

3. The diversity of district committees varies. For example, the district staff reports that the ELAC is predominately Hispanic with some Asians, whereas the DAC is predominately African-American.

4. The diversity of school-site councils and advisory committees varies widely from school to school. BSEP site committees are viewed as fairly diverse.

5. Most principals appear to make strong attempts to reach out and involve a representative group of parents and community members (see CR2.6), with mixed results. In general, principals and others report that the more affluent parents have more time to participate and may feel more welcome. The student assignment (school choice) program also makes it more difficult for some parents to participate in committees at their child's school, although in the past the district has sent buses to pick up parents for BSEP night meetings at school sites outside their own neighborhoods.

6. Board members and the Superintendent indicated that diversity is a core value of the district and community.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district and school sites should increase efforts to recruit council and committee members who represent the diversity of the student population and the community.

    a. The district staff, the principal and/or existing councils/committees might obtain comments from parents, community members and the staff 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. Advisory committee chairs and staff members might receive training on how to effectively include all segments of the population in a welcoming and productive manner.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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3.5 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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. School-site council minutes did not indicate any specific training for council members other than a brief review of their legal roles and responsibilities at the first meeting and sometimes, a review of the council's bylaws. SSC handbooks are provided by the state as a resource for members.

2. It was reported that school-site councils received training districtwide in the past, but that such training was not provided this past year. During interviews, a few principals raised a concern regarding the level of training provided to school-site council members and indicated that they wanted to provide such training.

3. BSEP is reportedly the most "fleshed out" district committee, with training sessions and materials provided to members.

4. Other committees appear to receive sporadic training, which is not held every year.
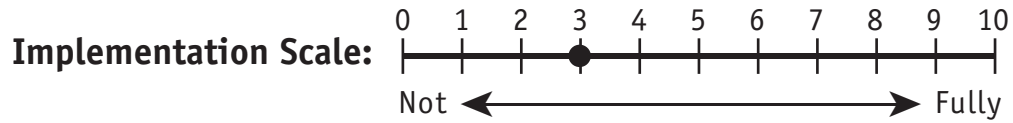
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district and schools should provide training and/or information to assist advisory committee and council members in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.
    a. The district staff might support the training of school-site councils and committees by either conducting annual districtwide trainings separately for all members of school-site councils, BSEP site committees, ELAC site committees, etc., or establishing expectations as to the training and information that will be provided to site groups by the principal.
    b. Written information might be developed by district staff for distribution to each committee. In addition to committee bylaws and charges, such information might include the district's vision and goals, an explanation of the district budget and budget process, relevant district policies and regulations, or other information pertinent to the committee's role.

    c. Appropriate district staff might periodically assess members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and tailor training opportunities to meet those needs.

  2. Members of district and school-site councils/committees must receive sufficient and timely information about the purpose and issues to be discussed at each meeting.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 3

Implementation Scale:

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3.6 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

Professional Standard

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

Sources and Documentation

1. School-site rosters
2. School-site council minutes
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups

Findings

1. District and school site 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. Most of the school-site councils have high levels of parent participation by representatives from the BSEP committees, SIP committees and GATE committees. Parent representatives from the ELAC and Title I committees were often identified on the school-site council rosters, but were less likely to attend many of the meetings.

3. In most cases, school-site minutes, when available, indicate that parents who attend the meetings were actively engaged.

4. Interviewees generally felt that BSEP committees are very empowered groups, with parents outnumbering staff on the committees.

5. Some parents expressed concerns that the scheduling of meetings may inhibit their participation in some cases. For example, committee meetings are sometimes held immediately after school hours so that teachers and the staff will attend, which means that working parents cannot attend unless they take time off from work. On the other hand, sometimes principals have scheduled meetings in conjunction with performance events or held meetings away from the school site in order to increase parent attendance at meetings.

6. A few interviewees felt that district representatives sometimes communicate an established agenda or "know what feedback they want to receive" rather than appearing open to suggestions (e.g., in the case of the community advisory committee on budget priorities).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district and school sites must place a high priority on recruiting council and committee members who are dedicated to playing an active role on these groups (see CR3.4).

2. Each individual council or committee member must be encouraged to play an active and meaningful role.
    a. 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.
    b. The chair of each group must ensure that all members have an opportunity to present their views in a respectful environment. The chair should also ensure that members receive adequate background information on an issue and have an opportunity to hear divergent viewpoints.

3. Council/committee meetings should provide opportunities for comments from nonmembers.
    a. The schedule of council/committee meetings should be widely publicized and comments from nonmembers encouraged.
    b. Meeting agendas should include an opportunity for nonmembers to address the council/committee on matters under consideration by the council/committee.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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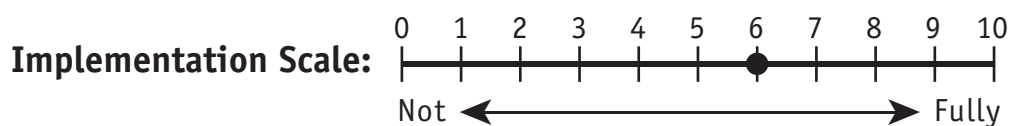
3.7 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

Professional Standard
Community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils effectively fulfill their responsibilities (e.g., research issues, develop recommendations, etc.).

Sources and Documentation
1. School-site council minutes
2. Board minutes
3. Board member interviews
4. Superintendent interview
5. Staff interviews
6. Community member interviews
7. Teacher survey

Findings

1. The effectiveness of school site committees and councils varies from site to site, with effectiveness depending largely on the leadership of the principals. There seems to be general satisfaction with the decisions that the site councils are making. There was a tendency among teachers surveyed to disagree that site councils are not very visible in the district (41 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 32 percent were neutral or didn't know, 27 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

2. Most of the school-site councils were involved in the school's needs assessment process and school surveys. Nearly all actively reviewed the site plan required under law; see CR3.10. School-site councils discuss issues that are timely for the school and develop recommendations.

3. The BSEP committees are given high marks throughout the district. At both the district and site levels, the BSEP committees are generally viewed as quite effective. They receive the most training and information (see CR3.5); are seen as disciplined, active and involved; and are a model that some would like to duplicate with the other district committees. The district BSEP committee helped determine the need for a Public Information Officer position and developed the job description for that position, which is funded through BSEP.

4. Some concerns were expressed in interviews about the fact that BSEP committees are perceived to have tremendous influence in determining what gets funded and what doesn't, and that there is always a potential those decisions may not align with what the district or school staff views as the greatest needs. However, most people interviewed indicated that the BSEP council works closely and effectively with the board.

5. The district advisory committees have an opportunity to report to the board at each meeting if they so choose. Most of the committees appear to be doing extensive work, developing recommendations and helping to shape programs for the district.

   However, several concerns were raised about a perceived mismatch between some of the committees' recommendations and the goals of the board and district administration. On one hand, several interviewees felt the committees sometimes appear to do much more than their charges require. On the other hand, some committee members expressed frustration that certain proposals or recommendations do not get accepted or acted upon by the board.
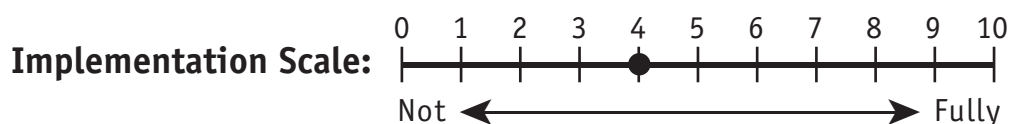
6. In the case of a couple of district committees, there is a perception by some interviewees that the committee has overstepped its advisory or oversight role and delved into micro-management (i.e., attempting to run the district's program).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board, Superintendent or designee, and principals should assist councils and committees to effectively fulfill their responsibilities.
   a. The board should complete its review of the district's committee structure and the purpose and roles of all committees in order to clarify expectations of committees and ensure greater alignment of committee work with the district's vision and goals (also see CR3.2 and CR3.3).
   b. The Superintendent or designee should report back to the councils/committees regarding the steps taken to consider their recommendations, the final outcome of those recommendations and the reasons that their recommendations were accepted or rejected.
   c. Because the leadership of principals is viewed as a key factor in the effectiveness of site-level councils and committees, the district should consider providing additional staff development to principals regarding their responsibilities in this area.

2. The district might consider conducting a brief annual survey of all council/committee chairs and members to ascertain their level of clarity about goals, their opinions regarding the adequacy of training provided to them, their general satisfaction with the experience, and their recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the council/committee.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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3.8 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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 plans
2. Board agendas and minutes

Findings

1. 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.

   Twelve of the 13 district schools provided their Single Plans for Student Achievement. The existence of the other school's plan could not be confirmed: The plan was not provided to project staff and was not included in the list of school plans that was reviewed by the board in September 2002.
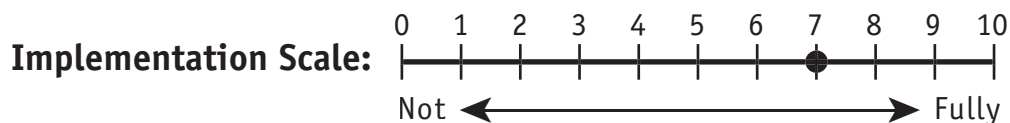
2. The district did not provide a district policy or regulation addressing the legal requirements of the Single Plan for Student Achievement.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should ensure that all schools applying for categorical programs specified in Education Code 64000 submit a single school plan in compliance with law.

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

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
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3.9 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Coordinated Compliance Review, 1999-2000
2. School plans

Findings

1. The 1999-2000 Coordinated Compliance Review commended the district on the innovative programs in the evaluation of Consolidated Programs. It found no noncompliance items in this review.

2. Subsequently, the law changed to require schools to consolidate their school plans for various categorical programs into a Single Plan for Student Achievement (effective January 2002). A template developed by the California Department of Education helps schools and districts ensure that their single plans meet the content requirements. Using the template, the school lists its school goals for improving student achievement and then describes specific actions to improve educational practice, as related to:
    *   Alignment of instruction with content standards
    *   Improvement of instructional strategies and materials
    *   Extended learning time
    *   Increased educational opportunity
    *   Staff development and professional collaboration
    *   Involvement of staff, parents and community
    *   Auxiliary services for students and parents
    *   Monitoring program implementation and results

    The 12 school plans provided to project staff were comprehensive and included the content required by Education Code 64001.

    The evaluation of student achievement data was rather extensive in most of the school plans, and included disaggregated achievement data by various subgroups of students, including English-language learners, low-income students and students of racial and ethnic minorities. Instructional strategies, curriculum, materials and professional development opportunities were described in all of the school plans, and information on funding expenditures was also provided.

3. Any school that receives funding for School-Based Program Coordination is also required to address how the school will meet the needs of non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking students, educationally disadvantaged students, gifted and talented students,
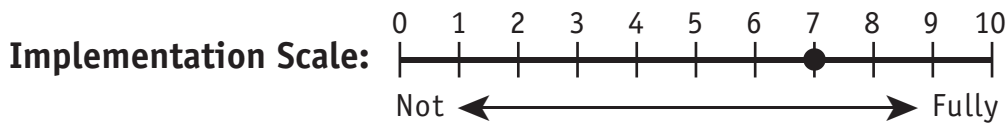
and students with exceptional needs. None of the school plans addressed all four of these student populations, however, it could not be determined if these provisions were applicable to the district.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. School-site councils, the Superintendent or designee, and the board must all accept responsibility for ensuring that school plans exist in accordance with law and that they contain the required components.
   a. School-site councils should be notified of the legal requirements regarding the content of school plans, including the additional requirements for School-Based Program Coordination if applicable, and have these requirements accessible when reviewing and revising the plan each year.
   b. As the school plan goes through the approval process (see CR3.10), thee district staff should analyze the plan's content to ensure that is has the required components and advise the board as to whether the plan meets all legal requirements.
   c. The board should not adopt any school plan that fails to fully meet the legal requirements.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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3.10 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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
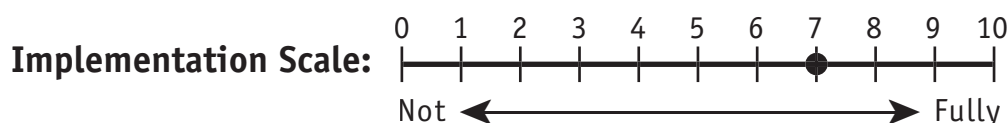2. School plans
3. Board agendas and minutes

Findings

1. School-site council minutes indicate that most school-site councils actively reviewed the school plans and that the board made recommendations about how to strengthen these plans.

2. In September 2002, the board reviewed the 2002-03 school plans for 12 of the 13 district schools. The board returned some to the school-site councils for further development, and nine were reviewed for approval in April 2003.

3. Half the teachers surveyed for this project agreed or strongly agreed that school staff works regularly with the school-site council to review and update the school plan (36 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 14 percent were neutral or didn't know).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. School plans must be annually reviewed and approved in accordance with law.
    a. The Principal at each school should ensure that the school-site council fulfills its responsibility for annual review of school plans.
    b. When the board reviews each school's site plan, it should determine whether the school-site council was appropriately involved in the approval process at the site level.

2. To increase support for the school plan, school-site councils might seek the comments of all school staff in the development and review of the plan.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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          Not ◄───────────────► Fully
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3.11 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School-site councils

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

Sources and Documentation
1. School plans
2. School-site council minutes
3. Board minutes
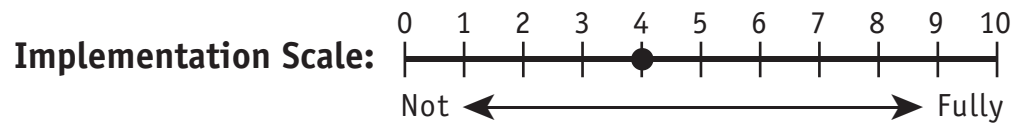4. Staff interviews
5. Teacher survey

Findings

1. A review of school plans indicated that most were comprehensive and had sufficient content to drive school operations (see CR3.9).

2. Teachers surveyed for this project tended to agree that the school staff consults the school plan when making decisions about programs or budgets (41 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 32 percent were neutral or didn't know, 27 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed).

3. Several interviewees commented that the use of the school plan as a mechanism to drive school operations depends on the principal's leadership.

4. There was no indication in board minutes, interviews or school-site council minutes that there is any accountability for fulfillment of school plans.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Principals and school-site councils should work to increase all the site staff's knowledge of and support for the school 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 school-site council annually submits a revised plan and budget to the board for approval, the Superintendent or designee and the board 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: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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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. District policies
2. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
3. Principals Resource Guide
4. Board member interviews
5. Staff interviews
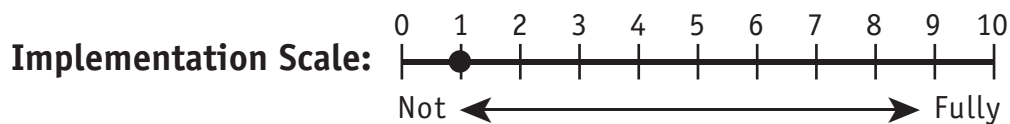6. Teacher survey

Findings

1. District policies are written, but are not organized into a centralized policy manual that is easily accessible to all staff members or the public. Some policies are missing and others are not current. The district was unable to provide a comprehensive policy manual for this project. When asked for a district policy, the staff sometimes provided CSBA with sample policies or policy drafts that were not adopted by the board. A few current policies/procedures appear in the Principals Resource Guide and the Student/Parent Handbook (e.g., complaint procedures, acceptable use of technology).

2. Some district policies appear to be coded using an alphabet-based system, while others are coded using the CSBA's numerical coding system. When the district began the process of updating policies several years ago, it renumbered policies to correspond to the CSBA's coding system. However, since the policies were not adopted at that time, it appears that the renumbering also was not consistently applied. In any case, without an index or guide, neither code is useful.

3. The district does not appear to have an organized and systematic approach to the collection, organization and distribution of policies as they are adopted by the board.

4. More than half (59 percent) of the teachers surveyed for this project disagreed or strongly disagreed that changes in board/district policy are communicated to them in writing (27 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 14 percent were neutral or didn't know).

5. The site-level staff generally does not appear to be concerned about the lack of accessibility to current policies or administrative regulations. In the absence of policy, site-level staff either acts autonomously or contacts the district staff to inquire about appropriate procedures. The district staff is reported to be responsive to such requests.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should keep all its policies and procedures together in an easily accessible format.
   a. The Superintendent or designee should determine locations within the district office and/or school sites where policies would be easily accessed by staff and the public.
   b. The Superintendent or designee should ensure that staff members assigned to maintain and update the policy manuals understand the process, and should hold the staff members accountable.
   c. All the staff should be notified of the locations of policies.
   d. The Superintendent or designee should consider the use of technology, such as the Internet or a compact disk, to make policies more accessible.

2. The district should determine and consistently apply a coding system and index that make it easy to locate policies.

3. As new policies are adopted or existing policies revised, the Superintendent or designee should distribute the updated policy to all staff members maintaining policy manuals and should determine whether and how the policy changes need to be communicated to other staff, parents or interested persons.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 1

Implementation Scale:

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4.2 Policy

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

Sources and Documentation
1. District policies
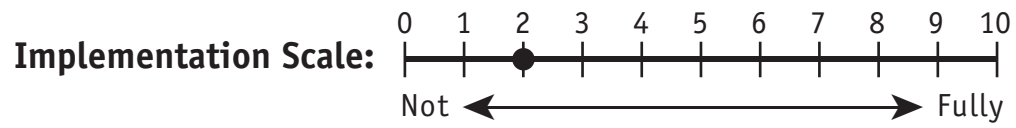2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews

Findings

1. The district did not provide a comprehensive policy manual for this project. Of the 19 individual policies provided, two had no adoption date, 15 were adopted on or before 1992, one was adopted in 2000, and one was adopted in 2002.

2. The district staff and board members acknowledge that policy review has not been a high priority in the past for the district and many policies are outdated. The district has begun the process of reviewing and updating its policies, basing them on CSBA sample policies. Board representatives are working with a consultant on this process. The district began by reviewing those policies that are mandated by law (see CR4.3) and those that address the roles of district committees (see CR3.2).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board should continue systematically reviewing its policies in order to provide consistent direction to staff, students and the public and ensure that the district is complying with current law.
   a. After the adoption of mandated policies, the board and Superintendent should determine priorities for reviewing and updating other policies and establish a review schedule.
   b. Board meetings should regularly include policy reviews.

2. The district should establish a process for regularly reviewing and updating policies.
   a. The district should consider delineating the policy review and development process in its policies, regulations or bylaws.
   b. Staff members should be encouraged to recommend policy needs within their areas of operation.
   c. As each new or revised policy is adopted, the board should consider whether, and how, the policy will be monitored and evaluated in the future, giving priority to those policies that are of special interest to the community or that may substantially affect student learning.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 2

Implementation Scale:

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4.3 Policy

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

Sources and Documentation
1. District policies
2. Staff interviews
3. Board agendas and minutes

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. An additional 33 policies are mandated if the district participates in certain state or federal programs (e.g., 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).

   The district has been working with a policy consultant and using CSBA sample policies in order to review and update the mandated policies. By May 2003, the board had adopted nearly all of them. A couple of policies had been held for further revision and were expected to be adopted in June.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district must ensure full compliance with policy mandates of state and federal law.
   a. The district should complete the review of its mandated policies to ensure that they fulfill the requirements of law, including those policies that may be mandated depending on the programs offered by the district.

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, other district staff members, or the list of mandated policies provided to the district as a subscriber to CSBA's policy services.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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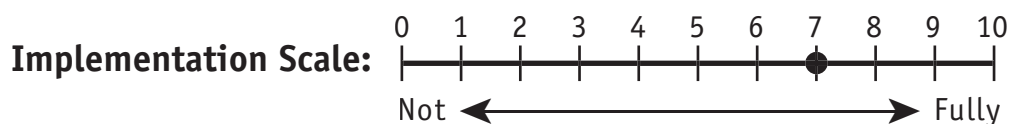
Legal Standard

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

Sources and Documentation

1. District policies
2. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
3. Board minutes

Findings

1. The district's Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 5116.1 Intradistrict Open En-rollment were reviewed and adopted in April 2002 and then again in May 2003 as part of the district's review of all mandated policies; see CR4.3. Thus, the annual review require-ment has been satisfied for the current and previous year.

   The policy itself reflects the requirement for annual review. The student assignment process is also outlined in the Student/Parent Handbook.

2. The district's policy on Student Participation in Extracurricular and Cocurricular Activi-ties, Grades 7 through 12, also was reviewed and adopted in May 2003 as part of the district's review of all mandated policies. The previous version provided to project staff was a policy adopted in 1989, and it could not be determined whether the board had con-ducted an annual review of this policy prior to the current year. As adopted in May, the policy now reflects the requirement for annual review.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board must continue to annually review those policies for which annual review is mandated by law.
   a. To ensure sustained compliance with the legal requirements for annual review of these policies, the district should consider scheduling an annual review of these policies at a designated board meeting each year.
   b. Even if the board does not revise these policies following review, the review itself should be reflected in board minutes and/or the board should readopt the policies with a new adoption date so that the district's compliance with the annual review requirement can be evidenced.

Standard Implemented: Partially
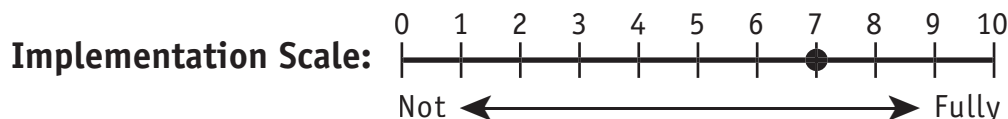
July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Professional Standard

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

Sources and Documentation

1. District policies
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
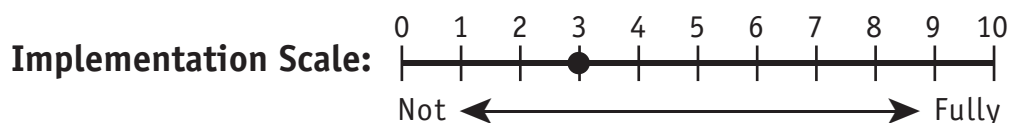4. Teacher survey

Findings

1. The district does not appear to have a systematic process that allows for the development, adoption, review and/or monitoring of policies and regulations.

2. The district's policy on Policy Development (1981) does not address the process of obtaining staff or citizen comments.

3. The district's committee structure is intended to provide public comments on district issues, and the district's policy on Administrative Councils, Cabinets and Committees appears to provide for citizen comments.

4. Board meetings provide opportunities for public comments on policy issues and other district operations; see CR6.8. The district has a policy on Public Participation in Board Meetings.

5. As the district has recently begun to review policies, involvement of district staff and the public has been limited. The goal has been to complete the mandated policies as quickly as possible (see CR4.3). It is anticipated that greater comments will be sought when the district reviews policies with which the district has greater discretion.

6. Teachers surveyed for this project assigned an average grade of about a "C-" to both the board and administration in the area of encouraging parent/public participation in district policymaking.

7. Some interviewees expressed frustration that, although comments from committees and the public are heard, the comments are not used by the board in making decisions about district operations; see CR3.7.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The district should implement a policy development process that includes opportunities for comment from staff, parents and community members.
   a. The district should consider revising its policy and procedures on policy development to more fully describe the district's process for reviewing and developing policy, including the processes by which the district will secure staff and/or citizen comment as appropriate depending on the topic of the policy.
   b. The staff should be notified of appropriate channels to submit suggestions for issues that require new policies or policy revisions.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 3

Implementation Scale:

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     Not ←————————————————————————→ Fully
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4.6 Policy

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
4. Board agendas

Findings

1. Because most of the district's policies were unavailable for this project, it is difficult to assess whether the board adheres to specific policies. Board policy has generally not been a priority for the district, and board members may not have access to current policies; see CR4.1.

2. Board agendas include a reference to the board policy or Education Code section related to each agenda item. Thus, structures are in place for the board to review policy and law when making related decisions.

3. Individual board members appear to support decisions of the board majority, even when they personally voted against the action; see CR5.8.

4. Some interviewees stated that the board will occasionally make a decision that is inconsistent with existing policy.

5. Several focus groups expressed a perception that the district culture is one where "people follow the rules they like" and disregard others. Others believe the board has one set of adopted policies and a different set of actual practices.
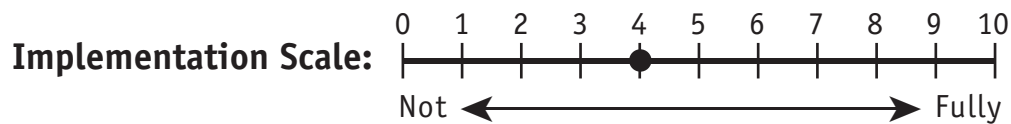
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board should set an expectation that policy will be a driving force in the district.
   a. The board might consider discussing and/or participating in continuing education on the importance of policy and the board's policymaking role.
   b. Policy discussions should focus on issues that will most affect student learning, consistent with the district's vision and goals.
   c. The board, Superintendent and other district staff members should ensure alignment of district policies, collective bargaining agreements, administrative regulations and other district documents in order to provide consistent direction.
   d. The board should hold the Superintendent accountable for implementing district policies.
   e. The board should set an example by consistently adhering to existing policies. If a policy no longer meets the district's needs, the board should initiate a review and revision of the policy.

2. Current district policies should be available as a reference for the board.
   a. The district should maintain an updated policy manual at an easily accessible location; see CR4.1.
   b. Board agendas should continue to include any existing policy language that is pertinent to the issue being addressed by the board.

3. As appropriate, the board should direct the Superintendent to provide periodic reviews of critical policies to determine whether they are achieving the desired results; see CR4.2.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating:4

Implementation Scale:

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5.1 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Legal Standard

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

Sources and Documentation
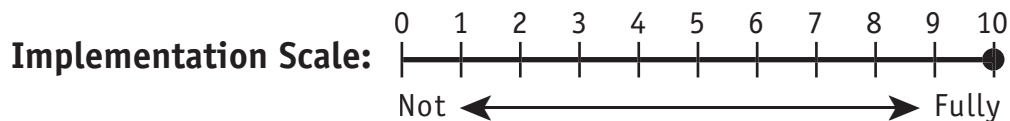
1. Board member interviews

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

None needed.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained

July 2003 Rating: 10

Implementation Scale:

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5.2 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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. Superintendent interview
3. CSBA records on conference attendance
4. District records on conference attendance

Findings

1. Participation in board education does not appear to be coordinated among the governance team.

2. During the past four years, board members have participated in formal continuing education offered by CSBA. Three of the five board members have attended CSBA's Annual Education Conference in recent years (all three attended the conference in 1999 and 2000, and one attended in 2001). Two board members attended CSBA's Legislative Action Conference (one in 2000 and one in 2001). The board president has participated in CSBA's Masters in Governance program (2002). Neither of the newest members (elected in November 2000 and November 2002) has yet participated in CSBA continuing education, except for the one-day New Board Member Orientation offered prior to the Annual Education Conference. The district's fiscal crisis has posed an extra challenge in terms of supporting this type of continuing education.

3. Individual board members serve as representatives to or members of several school board, education or locally elected official organizations or bodies where information is regularly shared and networking opportunities exist, including the Alameda County School Boards Association, Association of California Urban School Districts, and the CSBA Urban School Districts Council and Delegate Assembly.

4. During the past two years, the board has held a number of special meetings and workshops focused on specific topics of concern to the district, such as budget and finance, collective bargaining, and student assignment policies. These workshops provide a helpful opportunity for board members to gain a deeper understanding of key issues and the board's role in addressing them.

5. Individual board members attend general workshops and orientation sessions held in the district or at school sites on topics such as No Child Left Behind and student assessment.

6. The district did not provide any formal policy or process for providing an orientation to new members of the board of education. Informally, new board members consult most often with the board president and Superintendent, as well as the senior staff. Often newly elected board members had previously been active on other district committees (e.g., the

BSEP Planning and Oversight Committee), where they were able to gain a strong basic understanding of individual school sites and/or the district.
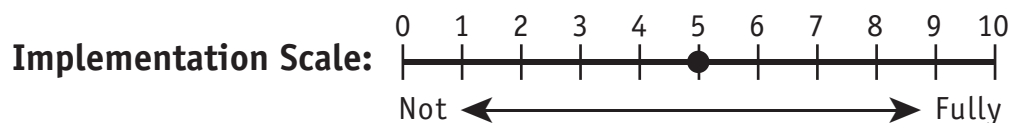
7. The Superintendent is available to meet with board members to provide them with information. Board members also seek information from senior staff members.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. All district board members should participate in continuing education to keep abreast of education issues and improve their governance skills.
   a. The governance team should consider coordinating its board development agenda and developing 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 Superintendent or designee should assist in identifying and recommending educational opportunities.
   b. Board members and the Superintendent should consider attending workshops and conferences together whenever possible for team building and equal access to information.
   c. The board should continue to hold regular workshops on critical education topics.

2. The board 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

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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5.3 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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. Staff interviews
3. Parent/community member interviews
4. District policies/bylaws
5. Board minutes
6. Observations of board meetings

Findings

1. In fall 2002, the board reviewed revisions to board policies related to the Role of the Board and Members (Powers, Purposes, Duties) and Role of the District Superintendent. These policies describe the common understanding among the board and Superintendent about appropriate roles. These policies were not adopted at that time and have not yet come back to the board for adoption.

2. The district is a member of CSBA and has access to CSBA publications and resources as sources of information about board functions and responsibilities. The district also has contracted with CSBA to provide assistance with the development of its district policy manual.

3. One member of the current board has attended CSBA continuing education programs that address board roles and responsibilities (see CR5.2).

4. Staff expertise is not always utilized as effectively as possible. At times, the staff is unable to provide specific information or data requested by the board. At other times, board members appear to indicate that even if staff has provided information or a recommendation, they desire additional "validation" or comment from other individuals or committees.
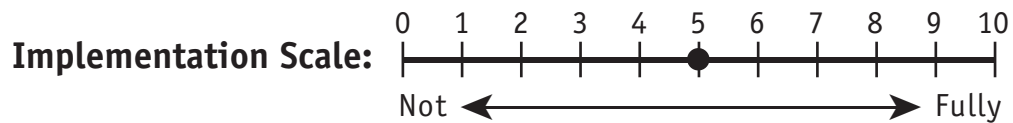
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board should adopt and adhere to revised policies/bylaws related to the Role of the Board and the Role of the Superintendent.
    a. 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 and Superintendent.

2. The board and Superintendent should make greater use of available literature on district governance. The board should regularly discuss and assess issues in the context of the board's role and the overall vision and goals of the district.

3. Board members and the Superintendent should participate in governance-related continuing education as needed (see CR5.2).

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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5.4 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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. Staff interviews
3. Parent/community member interviews
4. Teacher survey
5. Board agendas and minutes

Findings

1. The board has not established a formal framework or a process to conduct a regular needs assessment of students, staff and the community.

2. Most districtwide needs assessments are informal. For example, board members learn about issues by talking to people in the community.

3. The Superintendent initiated a process last fall to begin identifying needs and priorities among the staff and parents as a first step in developing a districtwide vision and goals. This process included a number of initial meetings and forums.

4. The board's overriding focus has been to address the district's fiscal crisis. In doing so, it was apparent to the board and Superintendent that they were addressing the district's most immediate needs, specifically, the need to balance the budget and build or improve internal systems and structures such as those related to payroll and maintenance. In addition, during this process, the district sought comment from staff and the public on budget priorities.

5. Extensive site-level needs assessments are conducted for many school site plans and by BSEP site committees.

6. At the direction of the previous board, an extensive community and parent survey was conducted during the search for a new Superintendent two years ago. The firm conducting this search commented that it was the most community comment the firm had ever received. This survey assessed what parents, staff and community members felt were the highest priorities for the district.

7. The comprehensive FCMAT study process is currently assessing district needs in the areas of pupil achievement, financial management, facilities management, personnel procedures and community relations.
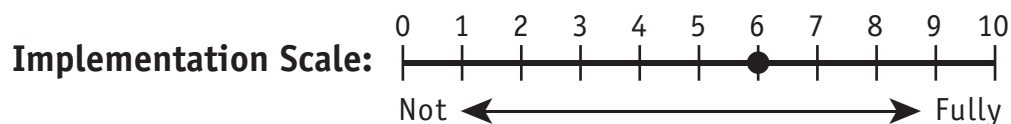
8. Half of the teachers surveyed for this project (50 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the board has done a good job identifying the needs of students, staff and the education community. Most of the others were neutral or didn't know (45 percent) and only five percent agreed or strongly agreed.

9. When teachers were asked in the survey to name the three most critical problems facing the district, one of the most frequent themes involved the budget crisis, fiscal management issues, state funding cutbacks, and the consequences of funding difficulties (e.g., teacher layoffs). Other multiple responses included problems with the size or quality of administration, poor teacher morale, and the achievement gap.

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. To the extent possible, the district should build on and maximize the use of existing structures and communications tools to obtain opinions on district programs and needs.

2. Results of needs assessments should be reviewed by the board, Superintendent and staff to recommend any necessary changes in the district's vision and goals, policies, budget allocations or educational programs.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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5.5 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
The board has established a districtwide vision/mission and uses that vision/mission as a framework for district action.

Sources and Documentation
1. District documents
2. Board member interviews
3. Superintendent interview
4. Staff interviews
5. Parent/community member interviews
6. Board agendas and minutes
7. Observations of board meetings
8. District policies
9. Teacher survey

Findings

1. The board has not adopted a vision, mission or goals in at least the last five years.

2. The board adopted a Statement of Beliefs in 1998. Before that, the last extensive strategic plan was developed in the early 1990s.

   The Statement of Beliefs describes four core beliefs related to student achievement, equity, diversity and opportunities. A few of the board members could describe in general terms the core beliefs. They are not posted or communicated in any formal way. Some interviewees referenced the notion that there are shared or "core" Berkeley community values that are not written down anywhere.

3. Site-level staff, parents and community members interviewed for this project made frequent reference to the lack of a districtwide vision. They noted that schools currently act autonomously and that there is no consistency of goals across the district. While some acknowledged that site-level autonomy is valued by the community, there was at the same time an overwhelming call for board/Superintendent leadership in setting a districtwide vision and goals.

4. Only five percent of the teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that board members appear very clear about district goals (57 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 38 percent were neutral or didn't know).

5. The board has expressed that addressing the district's financial crisis is the top priority. The staff and parents understand that this is the board's top priority. Decisions about budget allocations and cuts have not been explicitly linked to any formal district vision and goals.

6. The Superintendent initiated a process last fall to begin identifying needs and priorities among staff and parents, intending to use these as a basis for developing a districtwide vision and goals.

7. During the past two years, board meetings have included reports, reviews and discussions of goals related to specific districtwide programs and activities, including an annual BSEP Goals and Budget report; an annual Early Literacy Plan report; annual school plans; district technology plans; STAR test results, plan for Facilities Operations and Maintenance (and Facilities Division Goals); student assignment policies; and annual reports from committees such as the Citizens Construction Advisory Committee.
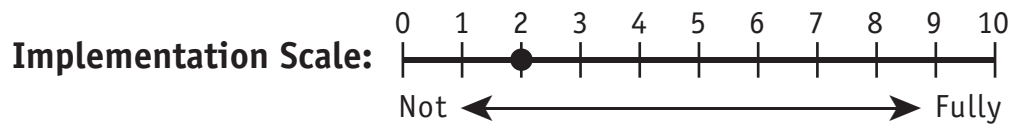
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Despite the current constraints on the district's budget, the board and Superintendent must take a leadership role in involving staff, parents and the community in developing a vision and goals for the district that are focused on student achievement.
   a. The board and Superintendent should ensure that the needs of all district students are considered and addressed.
   b. Goals should be specific enough to allow for adequate measurement and evaluation.

2. Once adopted, the vision and goals should be widely publicized throughout the system to ensure support from all staff members, parents and the community.
   a. As the district develops its comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), it should identify methods of communicating the district's mission and strategic priorities to key audiences.
   b. The vision and goals should be posted at each school site, and included on board materials such as agenda packets.

3. The Superintendent should develop implementation plans for achieving the goals.
   a. Each major department should work with the Superintendent to develop short-term objectives aligned with the overarching vision and goals.

4. The board and Superintendent should use the district's vision and goals as a guiding force for district actions.
   a. The board, Superintendent and district staff should re-evaluate district programs, policies and activities to determine the extent to which they support achievement of the district's vision.
   b. Budget decisions, collective bargaining agreements and Superintendent evaluation criteria (see CR5.15) should align with priorities established in the district's vision.

5. The board should continually monitor progress toward the district's vision and periodically review the vision itself to determine its continuing relevancy.
   a. The Superintendent should provide regular reports to the board regarding district performance (see CR5.17).

b. The board and Superintendent should consider scheduling a formal review of the district's vision and goals at least every three years using a process that invites comment from students, parents, the staff and the community. Following this review, the board should either reaffirm the existing vision or make adjustments as needed.

c. The governance team should informally review the vision every time a new board member or Superintendent joins the team.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 2

Implementation Scale:

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      Not ◄─────────────────────────► Fully
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5.6 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Board agendas and minutes
7. Observations of board meetings

Findings

1. Back-up materials for items on the board agenda are included in the agenda package (see CR6.3). Typically, this information is provided in the form of a memorandum from the Superintendent or associate Superintendents, or reports from committees.

2. In the past two years, the board agenda materials have included a section noting the staff's recommendation under each item.

3. In general, board members indicated in their interviews, that they would like to base their decisions on more reliable data and research, but sometimes information is either not available or not provided. Certain data and information have apparently not been available due to a lack of internal systems. The Superintendent has indicated that it is a top priority to improve the systems so that relevant data will be available.

   During board meetings, it is fairly common for board members to ask for additional data or analysis. Occasionally, individual board members make requests for data or information that would require considerable resources in time and personnel to fulfill, with debatable relevance.

4. Most individual board members spend a significant amount of time preparing for board meetings by contacting parents and community members to understand their perspectives. Some individual board members frequently attend school and community events and meet with individuals and groups to further enhance their knowledge about issues. This commitment to information gathering and preparation is often reflected in the types of questions or comments made by the board members at the meetings.

5. The Superintendent and staff are available to respond to questions or provide requested information (if available) before and during meetings.

6. The board appears to place appropriate value on the Superintendent's recommendations regarding major district topics such as the district's recovery plan. The board does not ap-

pear to place as high a value on the Superintendent's recommendations regarding other topics such as resolutions and specific policy discussions. On some occasions, board members question the Superintendent or staff as to how many other people or committees were involved in developing a recommendation.
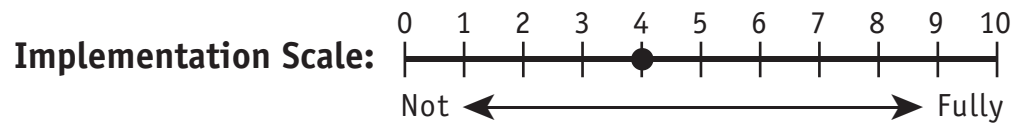
7. The Superintendent and top district administrators sit with the board at meetings. The exchange between the board and the Superintendent and her administrative staff is respectful and informative. The board openly asks questions and receives responses from the district staff.

8. Most staff interviewees felt that board members' and the Superintendent's understanding of district issues in general would be enhanced if they visited schools more often and at different locations, and if they talked to more school staff.

9. There is a perception among parents and community groups that the board is influenced more by certain parents and segments of the community than by others.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board and Superintendent should form agreements as to the level of information and data that is desired and expected for effective decision-making. Once agreed upon, the Superintendent should ensure that appropriate materials and information are provided to the board, and board members should refrain from requesting detailed levels or types of information inconsistent with the agreement.
   a. To establish and sustain a culture of responsiveness, the Superintendent or appropriate staff should track all requests for information from the board and public to ensure that they are either followed up in a timely manner or discussed to a point of mutual understanding or satisfaction.
   b. Board members should be respectful of the time and capacity involved in fulfilling certain information and analysis requests.

2. The Superintendent should continue to focus on building and sustaining internal systems that enable the district staff to generate accurate and reliable data.

3. 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).
   a. Board members should use school visits as an opportunity to hear from a variety of staff and students, while being careful not to become involved in administrative matters or promise actions outside the scope of their authority.
   b. Board members should participate in continuing education on current education issues and board responsibilities (see CR5.2).

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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5.7 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
Functional working relations are maintained among board members.

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Observations of board meetings
7. News articles/other media

Findings

1. Members of the board appear respectful of one another. They recognize that there is a wide range of perspectives and values represented on the board, and that individual members may and do strongly disagree on particular issues, however, these disagreements do not appear to significantly inhibit the functionality of the board. Diversity of viewpoints appears to be valued by this board and community.

2. Board members and the Superintendent recognize strengths that each member brings to the board.

3. Generally, board members are regarded as dedicated, committed, well-intentioned and "trying to do a good job."

4. Board members appear to put in a significant amount of time each week to carry out their responsibilities.

5. Board members generally appear to be receptive to constructive opinions and comment from the Superintendent and, increasingly, from each other.

6. Most staff and community members who monitor board activities are aware of personal and/or policy differences among two board members, but publicly, the demeanor of these members is civil and courteous to one another. There is no established means for dealing with conflicts among board members.
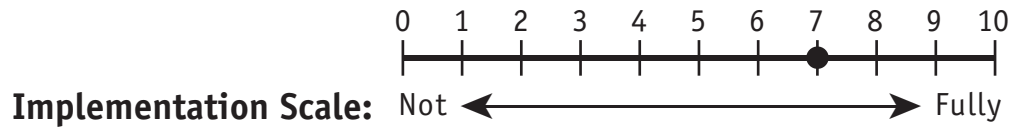
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. 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. Adoption of an agreed-upon set of professional standards should be publicized in district communications to illustrate the board's commitment to working together as a team.

2. The board should continue to hold workshops and study sessions on particular issues in order to allow adequate time for discussion and dialogue among members.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

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Implementation Scale: Not ←——————————————→ Fully

5.8 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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. Superintendent interview
3. Media interviews
4. News articles/other media
5. Observations of board meetings
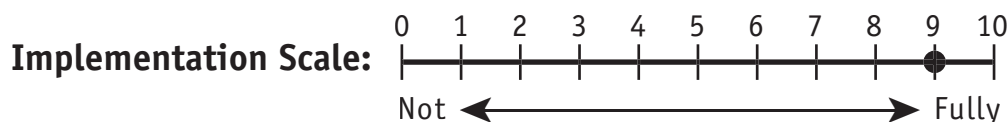6. Board minutes

Findings

1. Board members demonstrate an understanding of the importance of not undercutting majority decisions. There is no evidence that board members engage in this negative behavior.

2. During meetings, the board president attempts to ensure that every board member is adequately heard on issues. Board interviews indicate an appreciation for individual points of view, and votes are made on the basis of individual considerations rather than voting-bloc loyalty.

3. After split votes on issues, board members do not express dissenting opinions to the news media.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

None needed.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantial

July 2003 Rating: 9

Implementation Scale:

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5.9 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Media interviews
7. Observations of board meetings
8. District policies

Findings

1. Board members demonstrate their respect and support for the Superintendent. Members also acknowledge a significant difference in management styles between the current and previous Superintendents. One difference is that the current Superintendent prefers that the board channel its questions and requests through her office instead of going directly to the staff. This is an appropriate governance-and-management practice, and the board is striving to respect it.

2. The Superintendent generally maintains a positive working relationship with each of the board members. There is mutual respect for the talent and dedication of each individual. The Superintendent talks to board members frequently and is accessible by e-mail. There are perceptions by a few staff that the Superintendent may "filter" too much information before it reaches the board, however, this was not evident from interviews and observations. More typically, the Superintendent and board members desire more data and information than the district's current internal systems have been able to generate.

3. Some community members and site-level staff members perceive that the board does not assert its authority in its relationship with the Superintendent. However, when specific examples are provided, it is apparent that the board and Superintendent generally act in appropriate roles. For example, when individual board members refer a complaint from a parent to the district office instead of trying to take action directly, this behavior is sometimes misperceived as a board member being "afraid" or "unable" to do anything without first checking with the Superintendent.

4. Most board members indicate that they would like to receive more regular communication from the Superintendent.

5. Interviews with the staff and media representatives generally indicate that these groups believe the board and Superintendent work closely together.
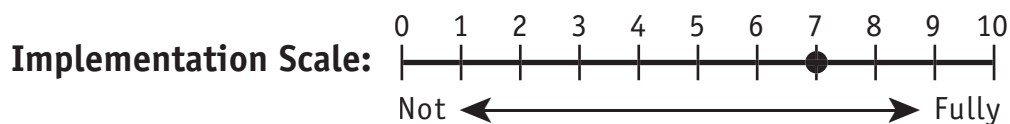
6. The board has reviewed, but not yet adopted, revisions to board policies related to the Role of the Board and Members (Powers, Purposes, Duties) and Role of the District Superintendent.

7. District office administrators state that they generally have good relationships with board members. Board members also report generally positive relations with the top district staff.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board and administration must continually work on maintaining positive relationships.
   a. The board and Superintendent must engage in regular, proactive communications with each other. The Superintendent must be careful to ensure that board members receive equal information and access.
   b. Board members must respect established processes and channels of communication.

2. The board and Superintendent should adopt an agreement or policy clarifying board and Superintendent roles and responsibilities.

3. The Superintendent or designee might consider assigning additional staff to support the district's governance operations to ensure effective coordination with all district and community activities, and ongoing responsiveness to the board while also enabling the Superintendent to devote additional time to management and communication functions.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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5.10 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Media interviews
5. Observations of board meetings
6. Teacher survey

Findings

1. At board meetings, the board and Superintendent frequently compliment the staff and thank staff members for their efforts. Individual members make a point to acknowledge outstanding achievements and the efforts of the staff (and students) during their board member reports at meetings. Board agendas and minutes reflect regular acknowledgement of school site staff, including recognition for awards and honors, as well as recognition of retiring staff and volunteers.

2. Board members attempt to respect district staff by asking questions in advance as much as possible so as not to catch the staff off-guard at board meetings.

3. Many teachers and classified staff who were interviewed and surveyed felt that the district did not support or value them enough, especially in the middle of the district's current budget crisis and after the issuance of lay-off notices. In the survey of teachers, low morale was indicated multiple times as one of the district's three most critical problems. Teachers assigned an average grade of 1.5 on a scale of 0-4) to their overall level of satisfaction in teaching at the district. Their satisfaction in teaching at their school was higher at 2.4.

4. In general, the site staff members desire more contact with the board and Superintendent, and a greater connection with the district, although there is a historical culture in the district of sites operating with a high degree of autonomy. Principals and the site staff indicate that they do not often see board members or the Superintendent on their campuses, and they would like more frequent visits.
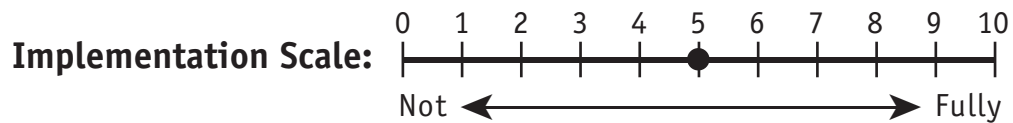
Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board must continue to support staff in order to build employee morale and retain quality staff.
   a. The board and Superintendent should continue to publicly praise staff for a job well done and should consider other rewards and incentives to encourage staff to do their best.

b. The district should consistently promote the accomplishments of staff to the media and community (see CR1.4, recommendation #7).

2. Board members and the Superintendent should attempt to visit school sites more frequently, and use these visits as opportunities to thank the staff for the successes happening on school sites as well as obtaining staff comment on issues.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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5.11 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
The board demonstrates respect for public comments at meetings and public hearings.

Sources and Documentation
1. Parent/community member interviews
2. Parent focus groups
3. Board member interviews
4. Staff interviews
5. Observations of board meeting
6. Board minutes

Findings

1. Open sessions of regular board meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. and typically end after 11 p.m. or midnight. Public comment on all topics that are on the agenda and not on the agenda is solicited at the start of the meeting (see CR6.8). To increase opportunities for public comment, the board also holds public hearings and forums on critical issues such as the budget.

2. Many interviewees raised concerns that board meetings run too late into the night. Some members of the public are likely to give their comments at the beginning of the meeting and not stay to hear the board discuss the item. However, there is general agreement that the board attempts to place the most important items toward the front of the agenda.

3. At the beginning of the meeting, the board president clearly speaks to the visitors, ensuring that people know how and when they are allowed to speak to the board. There is a written form, available to everyone, and a process identified specifically and clearly by the board president on how to speak with the board (see CR6.8).

4. It appears that most people in the community feel comfortable addressing the board. Frequently 10 or more individuals address the board per meeting. Members of the public who provide testimony include a diversity of ages and ethnicities, with a handful of individuals being somewhat regular speakers.

5. Parent attendance at board meetings is varied. During the past two years, with many significant budget-related decisions on the agenda, meetings might attract as many as 50-100 parents and community members, or as few as a half-dozen.

6. Most school administrators, teachers, classified staff, community liaisons and community members interviewed said they seldom attend board meetings unless they have a particular item on the agenda. Representatives of employee organizations regularly attend board meetings.

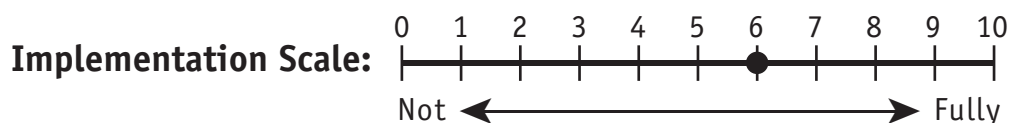7. Translation services are not regularly available at board meetings.

8. The current board president extends courtesy to members of the public who wish to address the board. Members of the board and the Superintendent appear to exercise respect and to listen attentively during public testimony.

9. Some parent leaders felt the board treated them disrespectfully at a past meeting when the group intended to propose a new policy. The board chose not to discuss or consider the group's proposal. Union representatives have also expressed a desire to conduct a public dialogue with the board at a meeting, but the board believes this would not be appropriate.

10. Many interviewees commented on the "Berkeley culture" which includes broad consultation and public comments on issues (see CR2.7). Some felt that there is too much involvement and discussion, but most felt that the board appropriately responds to the community's desire to be actively involved.

11. Some parents stated that they are not certain the board truly considers or pays attention to their comments at meetings, in part because board members rarely respond either at the meeting or afterward. The board's practice is to reserve the allotted time for public testimony and not to respond to particular comments. Some parents also voiced frustration that the public comments session occurs at the beginning of the meeting while particular agenda items might occur an hour or two later, preventing their comments from being delivered in direct context.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board president should balance the need to respect established time lines and maintain the flow of meetings with the need to ensure adequate public comments on district issues.
   a. The president should explain that the board's main role during testimony is to listen, not to respond.
   b. Each year, the incoming board president should receive specific training in how to run an effective meeting and promote positive public participation.

2. The district should ensure that translation services are provided at board meetings to facilitate participation of limited-English-speaking individuals.

3. The district should continue to sponsor public hearings and forums on critical issues to allow additional opportunities for members of the public to provide comments. The district should widely publicize these events.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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5.12 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
Board members respect confidentiality of information by the administration.

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
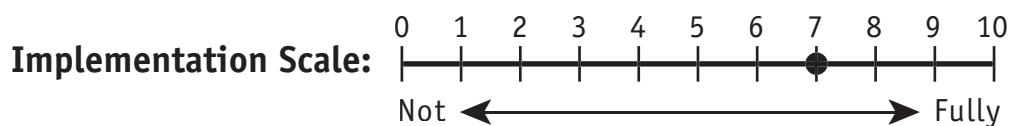2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews

Findings

1. Board members exhibit an awareness of the importance and legal necessity of maintaining confidentiality. However, it is unclear whether any formal training or information on this subject is provided to members or if the board has a bylaw addressing confidentiality.

2. The board believes it generally does a good job of maintaining confidentiality.

3. Staff interviews suggest that confidential, closed session information does occasionally get disclosed, particularly on issues related to collective bargaining. However, there is no evidence of any patterns of violating confidentiality.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board should consider adopting a specific policy/bylaw regarding the disclosure of confidential information.

2. The Superintendent or designee, or legal counsel should provide the board with an annual briefing or training on the legal requirements of closed sessions and confidentiality, including updates on new or amended provisions to the Brown Act.
   a. This briefing would serve to help all board members to understand or remember the severe legal and fiscal damage that may result when breaches of confidentiality occur, as well as potential damage to the board's image, staff morale, and accuracy of media information.
   b. This briefing might occur as part of the annual organizational meeting. The information should be readily shared with the public and staff.

3. When the board is in doubt about the appropriateness of disclosing any information, it should consult legal counsel.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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5.13 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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

Sources and Documentation
1. District policies
2. Board member interviews
3. Superintendent interview
4. Staff interviews
5. Board agendas and minutes
6. Observations of board meetings
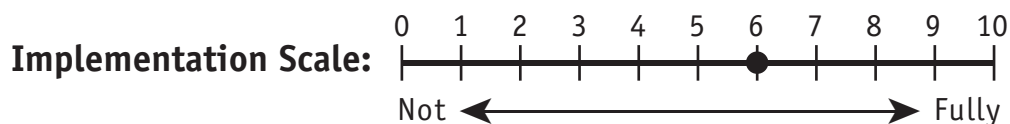7. Teacher survey

Findings

1. The board has reviewed, but not yet adopted, revisions to board policies related to the Role of the District Superintendent and the Role of the Board and Members (Powers, Purposes, Duties.)

2. Interviews and observations indicate that the board understands the general distinction in roles and responsibilities of the board and the Superintendent and staff.

3. In the past the board appears to have been more involved in some administrative operations, but the current Superintendent is working to define appropriate roles.

4. Board members' questions at meetings occasionally tend to get into operational details instead of focusing on overall policies and oversight. Board members also have a tendency to seek frequent explanations from the Superintendent about particular decisions or courses of action.

5. Neither principals nor teachers interviewed indicated any current problems with board involvement in operational areas.

6. Teachers surveyed for this project assigned the board an average grade of 2.5 on a scale of 0-4 (midway between a B and C) on the board's willingness to let administration manage day-to-day operations without excessive interference. When asked whether principals are allowed to make plans and set priorities without excessive board interference, the largest percentage of teachers were neutral or didn't know (41 percent); 35 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed and 23 percent agreed or strongly agreed. However, the majority (68 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school board often tries to involve itself in day-to-day school operations (14 percent were neutral or didn't know, 18 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board must focus on broad policy issues rather than administrative operations.
    a. Adopting a vision and goals, a process for assessing progress toward those goals, and a board policy articulating the roles and responsibilities of the board and Superintendent will help to formalize this practice.

2 The board president and Superintendent should design board agendas that help maximize opportunities for the board to discuss issues related to student achievement and educational programs within the board's appropriate scope of responsibilities, and that minimize discussion of operational issues.

3. As district policies are updated (see CR4.2), careful attention must be paid to ensure that policies are not made overly prescriptive or administrative.

4. The board should conduct periodic self-evaluations that would include an assessment of board-Superintendent relationships, including the board's ability to avoid micromanagement of district operations.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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5.14 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
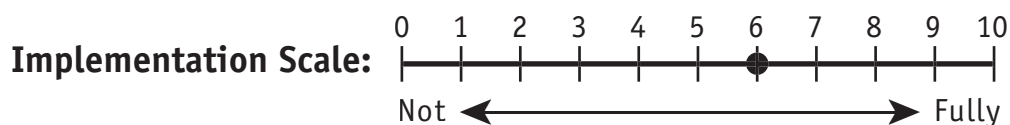3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups

Findings

1. All board members demonstrate an awareness of their proper role, and there is not any significant concern about individual board members exceeding their authority. Several interviewees cited past examples of an individual board member attempting to be engaged in site-level administrative areas, however, this matter appears to have been appropriately addressed.

2. Some parents indicated that they wish board members would do more to address their individual concerns, even though this is not the appropriate role of individual board members.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board and Superintendent should clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of the board and professional staff.
    a. The board should finalize the review and adoption of its board policies related to the role of the board and Superintendent.
    b. The board should consider adopting a code of ethics and/or CSBA Professional Governance Standards to reinforce how important it is for each member to understand the distinctions between board and staff roles and understand that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individuals.
    c. Board members and the district should promote greater awareness about the role of the board and individual members, so that parents and members of the public do not have expectations that fall outside of the appropriate role.

2. The board and Superintendent must maintain open communications in order to maintain the level of trust necessary for each to allow the other to play the appropriate roles.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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     0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
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5.15 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Superintendent interview
2. Board member interviews
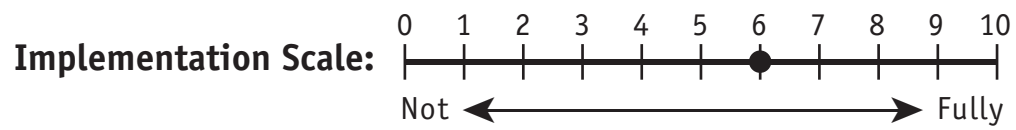3. Superintendent contract

Findings

1. The Superintendent's contract establishes a time line for an annual evaluation process. The process calls for the Superintendent and board to mutually develop goals and objectives for the Superintendent's performance, an evaluation monitoring calendar and an evaluation format.

2. The board has established and followed a process during the past two years for conducting the annual evaluation of the Superintendent. This process included an opportunity for each board member to identify priority areas or share feedback. The board and Superintendent agreed upon specific goal areas, and the Superintendent reported on progress toward achieving these. A midyear evaluation meeting was also held.

3. Individual board members had slightly different understandings about the process, and some would like to see it further formalized and refined.

4. The Superintendent is open to listening to the concerns of the board.

5. Several board members indicated that they regularly offer informal feedback to the Superintendent.

6. The evaluation does not appear to be formally aligned with a district vision and goals, or departmental goals.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board and Superintendent should continue to conduct an annual evaluation and to refine and formalize the process.

2. Evaluation criteria should be aligned with the district's vision and goals to ensure a focus on student achievement.
   a. Each year, the board should collaborate with the Superintendent to set priorities for the following year among the district's goals and use those priorities to establish realistic annual performance expectations.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

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5.16 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent/community member interviews
5. Media interviews
6. Parent focus groups

Findings

1. Perspectives are mixed as to whether the current board is fully representative of the community. Racially and ethnically, the board does not view itself and is not viewed by the community as fully representative of the Berkeley community, mainly due to the lack of any board members who are African-American. However, in terms of experiences and range of viewpoints, the board views itself as representative, and many, though not all, parents and community members concur. Each current board member has strong ties to the community. Several board members have children who attend district schools. Each member was active in school or districtwide committees, councils or activities before being elected. One member taught in the district for nearly 30 years. Another teaches at the community college level.

2. When asked about their motivations for running for the board, members offered reasons such as: to respond to a past frustration with aspects of the district's performance, management and/or accountability; to offer relevant background and experience; to act on a deep interest and background in educational and/or budget issues; to help build consensus and meaningful public participation; to strengthen district accountability; to help get things done or fix things; and to accelerate the pace of reform. When asked about the district's top priorities, board members offered priorities such as getting control of the district's budget; strengthening internal systems; addressing the achievement gap; improving the structure, systems and accountability at the high school; and handling the district's integration/student assignment policy.

3. While generally acknowledging the board's good intentions, a number of parents, staff and members of the community voiced concerns that the board has not demonstrated that it consistently acts in the interests of all students. In particular, serious concerns were expressed by some parents that the board has not provided adequate leadership to focus the district on meeting the needs of students of racial and ethnic minorities, students from low-income families, English-learner students, and low-achieving students. They perceive that affluent parents and parents of high-achieving students ultimately drive the decisions of the board. Many interviewees stated that addressing the achievement gap in the district should be a high priority.

4. Parents and the public perceive that individual board members sometimes act on behalf of specific parent, staff or community interests (i.e., "the squeaky wheel gets the grease"), rather than demonstrating a districtwide unity of purpose toward ensuring that the interests of all students are understood and addressed. Some interviewees commented that the board tries too hard to appease constituents rather than focusing on what's best for students.

5. Concern was raised by parents from some segments of the district such as the African-American community as to whether the Superintendent and board truly understand their issues and pay enough attention to them or their children's needs.

6. The board and Superintendent have focused most of their energy in the past two years on addressing the district's budget crisis. They firmly believe this is the most compelling immediate interest of the community and the district.

7. A handful of interviewees used terms such as "having a bunker mentality" or being "besieged" by the budget crisis, to describe the board's current state. These interviewees feel that while addressing the budget crisis is critical, the board has not been capable of focusing on other vital needs or interests. There is a worry among some in the community and at schools that by focusing so much on the budget situation, the district's ultimate emphasis on providing quality instruction and improving student learning has been neglected.

8. The lack of a clearly articulated district vision and goals (se CR5.5), an accountability system tied to progress on those goals, and frequent reports related to the goals, make it more challenging for the board to demonstrate that it is consistently acting on behalf of all students in the community.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The governance team must make a concerted effort to demonstrate that it acts in the interests of all students in the community.
   a. As it reviews and adopts a vision statement for the district (see CR5.5), the board should consider adding a prominent goal to meet the needs of all students.
   b. The district should use student achievement data to identify the extent and nature of the achievement gap in the district and develop plans to raise the achievement levels of low-performing students, involving parents and the community in board discussions on these issues.
   c. As the district develops a comprehensive communications plan (see CR1.1), it might develop strategies for communicating more effectively as to how board policies, actions, discussions and activities relate to the interests of the entire community and students.

2. The board and Superintendent should work cooperatively to mend and strengthen relationships with community and parent groups.
   a. The board and Superintendent should reach out to parent and community groups to invite their continued involvement with the district and schools. The governance team must recognize the frustration of some groups who perceive there has been too much talk and not enough action, and work to build continual dialogue.

b. The district should provide guidance to parents and the community as to how to best provide comments and participate in a constructive way that advances the vision and goals.

c. Every individual board member should proactively seek opportunities to meet with parents from all segments of the community to raise the board member's personal awareness and understanding about the interests of the community.

3. District programs should be evaluated for their effectiveness with subpopulations of students (e.g., based on race/ethnicity, gender or special needs).

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 3

Implementation Scale:

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Not ← → Fully
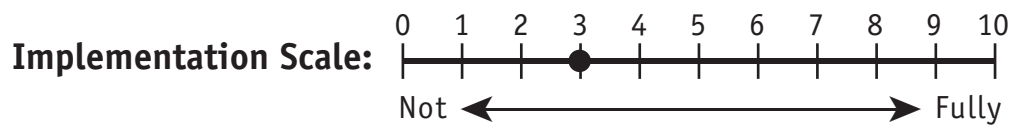
5.17 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Board agendas and minutes
4. District policies

Findings

1. During the past two years, the board has received and reviewed reports from the Superintendent and staff primarily related to the district's financial condition, recovery plans and the improvement of internal-operating systems.

2. Board meeting agendas and minutes reflect somewhat regular reports to the board from staff on a range of other topics and programs, such as facilities and maintenance, the district's Reading Recovery and Early Literacy programs, instructional materials, music and arts programs, the status of district safety and disaster plans, the district's Writers' Room project, the Village 9 program at the high school, WASC accreditation, high school issues in general, student testing and annual STAR test results, student assignment, new federal and state laws such as No Child Left Behind, and nutrition and food service. Reports on legal issues and collective bargaining are also regularly provided to the board in closed session.

3. The Superintendent provides a brief, regular report at each board meeting.

4. Currently, evaluation of most district programs and progress is informal and primarily verbal.

5. The Superintendent evaluation process provides an opportunity to review district accomplishments and needs, as well as reviewing individual roles and relationships (see CR5.14).

6. Some board members have indicated that they would like to receive more and higher quality information and data related to the district's performance.

7. The district's policy on Duties of the Superintendent does not contain any reference to providing regular reports to the board on the district's performance.

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 the board and staff information on which to base decisions about district programs.
    a. The board should consider adopting a policy that clarifies the board's role in reviewing program effectiveness and directs the Superintendent to regularly report to the board regarding progress toward reaching the district's vision and goals.
    b. The board and Superintendent agree in advance on indicators that will be used to measure district progress toward established goals.
    c. The board should exercise its authority to require additional progress reports as needed or desired in order to monitor district performance, recognizing that the number of reports required must be realistic.

2. Measures used to evaluate district programs should provide disaggregated data as appropriate to determine program effectiveness for various student populations.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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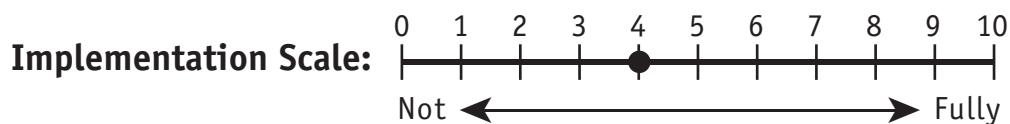
6.1 Board Meetings

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. District Web site
2. Student/Parent Handbook 2002-2003
3. District policies/bylaws
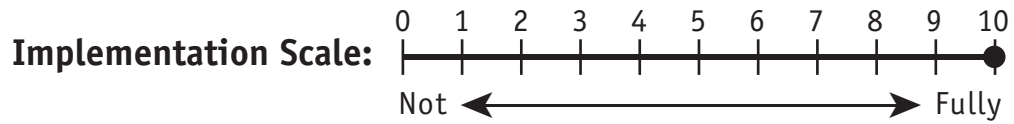4. Board agendas and minutes

Findings

1. The calendar of meetings is adopted by the board at its annual organizational meeting in December. This calendar includes information about the board's regular meeting time, place and dates. Generally, two meetings are held each month, on Wednesdays. Meetings begin at 6 p.m., and the board generally goes into closed session at that time. The public session begins at 7:30 p.m. Regular meetings are held at the district headquarters on 2134 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way in Berkeley.

2. The locations and dates of regular board meetings are available on the district Web site. The Student/Parent Handbook lists the location and approximate dates (i.e., "typically on the first and third Wednesdays of the month").

3. An updated bylaw (BB 9320) on meetings and notices, which may have been adopted by the board in May 2003 as part of the review of mandated policies (see CR4.3), adds the general statement that the annual calendar of regular board meetings would be established at the annual organizational meeting held in December and that this information will be disseminated in the usual ways.

4. The board holds special meetings, public forum meetings and single-issue workshops during the year. These meetings are scheduled and announced typically at least one month or more in advance. These meetings are held either at the district headquarters, or, in the case of public forums, at a school site or auditorium in the district with greater seating capacity.

5. Meetings are broadcast live (as well as re-broadcast at a later date) on both public access cable television and radio.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

None needed.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained

July 2003 Rating: 10

Implementation Scale:

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6.2 Board Meetings

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)

Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. District Web site
4. District bylaws
5. Personal experience of CSBA project staff

Findings

1. Government Code 54954.2 requires that the agenda be posted at least 72 hours before a regular meeting and 24 hours before a special meeting at one or more locations freely accessible to the public. Government Code 54954.1 requires the district to mail the full agenda packet to any person upon request, charging a fee if desired to cover costs. The district appears to fulfill these requirements.

2. Members of the board receive their full agenda packet on the Friday afternoon before a Wednesday meeting. Packets for union representatives are mailed on the Friday before board meetings. Full agenda packets are made available at the district office during regular working hours and are available at the door at actual meetings. In addition, the district posts the current agenda, along with agendas from approximately the past year, on its Web site. In about half the cases, the background information is also posted on the Web site.

3. Upon request, agendas were made available to project staff for viewing.

4. The board may have adopted an updated version of Board Bylaw 9322 on agenda/meeting materials, which addresses the dissemination of the agenda as part of the review of mandated policies in May 2003 (see CR4.3).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

None needed.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Sustained

July 2003 Rating: 10

Implementation Scale:

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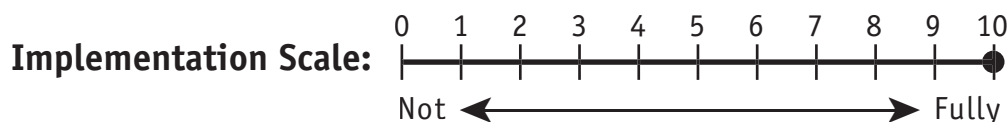
6.3 Board Meetings

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

Sources and Documentation
1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Parent/community member interviews
4. Board agendas and minutes
5. Observations of board meetings
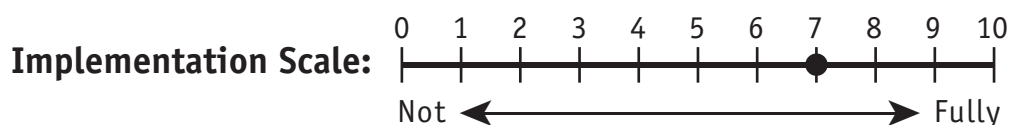6. District policies

Findings

1. Board members receive a full agenda packet on the Friday afternoon before Wednesday evening meetings. Board members will naturally vary in the amount of information they want in the agenda packet, but the packet provides reasonably sufficient background information on most items so that the board can gain a basic understanding of the topic.

2. The Superintendent is available to respond to questions from individual board members before meetings, and individual board members generally make it a practice to notify the Superintendent or staff about their requests for more information before meetings so that staff is in a position to be responsive. Staff members are available during board meetings to respond to questions.

3. Board members typically devote many hours to preparing for each meeting by reading the agenda packet, communicating with parents and others by phone and e-mail before meetings, and attending school and community events.

4. Special board meetings and board workshops are held throughout the year on important and emerging issues such as the district's budget, collective bargaining, and the district's student assignment policy. These meetings enable board members to gain a deeper understanding of an issue.

5. Board members' questions and participation during meetings generally reflect thoughtful preparation.

6. Board members often request more detailed information and background on some agenda items, such as more school-site and district data, district-to-district analyses and data, and history of an issue. In many instances in the past, the district's lack of updated internal systems or lack of administrative staff time have prevented the production of this type of data and analysis. Some of the board members' requests tend to be for very detailed or specific information (or data that would be very time-consuming for staff to generate), however, other requests are extremely appropriate given the board's policymaking and oversight functions.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. Board members should continue to strive to be as knowledgeable as possible about education issues in general and district issues in particular.

2. The board and Superintendent should agree on and abide by a protocol for requesting and providing information and data.
    a. Individual board members should demonstrate discretion in requesting large amounts of detailed data that are more appropriate to the Superintendent's responsibility for operational issues.
    b. The Superintendent and staff should seek to proactively provide more data, information and analyses that are relevant to the board's accountability for overall district performance.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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6.4 Board Meetings

Professional Standard

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

Sources and Documentation

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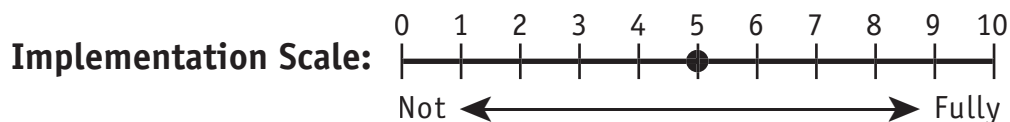3. Observations of board meetings

Findings

1. Until recently, it does not appear that the board has operated under a set of board-adopted written bylaws. However, some bylaws, such as Board Bylaw 9323 on meeting conduct, were reviewed and updated as part of the board's review of mandated policies (see CR4.3) and may have been adopted in May 2003.

2. The board has been conducting meetings according to a number of procedures that generally reflect good board meeting practices. The board appears to conduct its meetings in a professional manner following parliamentary procedure (see CR6.6).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. In order to communicate expectations for and consistency of board meeting conduct, the board should regularly review its written bylaws pertaining to meeting conduct.

2. Following adoption of the bylaws, the board president should assume leadership in ensuring that meetings are conducted in accordance with the bylaws in a consistent, fair manner.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

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6.5 Board Meetings

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

Sources and Documentation
1. District policies/bylaws
2. Board agendas and minutes
3. Board member interviews
4. Observations of board meetings

Findings

1. Board Bylaw 9323 Meeting Conduct, which addresses the conduct of open meetings, was reviewed and updated during the board's review of mandated policies (see CR4.3). Bylaws regarding closed sessions have not yet been reviewed and revised. The district has a 1981 policy on closed sessions, which does not reflect current law in terms of all the allowable purposes for closed sessions.

2. The district's agendas for closed sessions conform to law. Board agendas list the eight general topics that the board may discuss in closed session: conference with legal counsel, consideration of student expulsion, collective bargaining, public employee discipline/dismissal/release, public employment appointments, liability claims and property acquisition. Items related to personnel discipline, dismissal or release do not list any other information.

3. Reports of closed session actions are provided by the board president during open sessions in accordance with law.

4. The district holds regular and special meetings inside district boundaries in accordance with the Brown Act.

5. The district posts the agenda at least 72 hours before a regular meeting in accordance with law (see CR6.2).

6. The district does not ask persons attending board meetings to register their name, provide other information or complete a questionnaire in order to attend board meetings. Persons wishing to speak during the meeting are required to submit a request form, but it is the opinion of CSBA's legal counsel that this is not a violation of the Brown Act since the Brown Act specifically addresses sign-ups for meeting attendance only.

7. Written guidelines provided at each meeting to any individual interested in addressing the board clearly state that "any subject related to the district or its educational programs may be discussed" during public testimony, "except matters pertaining to individual employees" of the district.
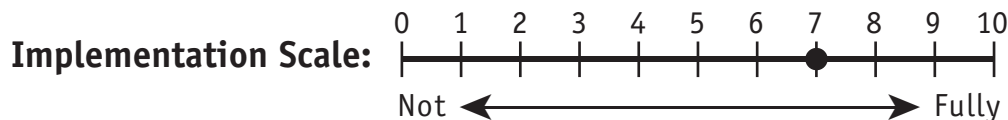
8. Observations and minutes of board meetings provide evidence that the board does not take action on issues that do not appear on the agenda.

9. Some parents expressed a desire for more informal gatherings of the full board to discuss issues, and representatives of employee organizations have requested a public dialogue on topics. Fulfilling either of these requests could pose serious challenges in terms of Brown Act compliance.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board should ensure that all board bylaws and policies reflect current requirements of the Brown Act and should make these policies easily accessible to the board, staff and the public in order to ensure awareness and compliance.
   a. The district should ensure that incoming board members are given a copy of the Brown Act and informed that they must conform to its requirements as if they had already assumed office.
   b. To foster greater understanding, the district should consider making proactive efforts to educate the community about key Brown Act provisions. This might include providing basic information about the Brown Act and district policies in an easy-to-understand format on the district Web site and as an attachment to meeting materials.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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6.6 Board Meetings

Professional Standard

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

Sources and Documentation

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

Findings

1. Board Bylaw 9323 Meeting Conduct, recently reviewed and updated as part of the board's review of mandated policies (see CR4.3), includes procedures for the efficient operation of board meetings.

2. The board president facilitates the board meetings and calls upon members to speak by request.

   The board presidency typically rotates each year. The ability to run an effective meeting differs depending on the individual serving as president. Some presidents have been able to facilitate and/or manage public comments and board discussion in a more constructive, inclusive manner than others.
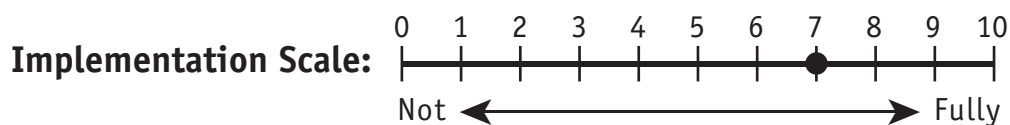
3. Currently, board meetings are generally well run with ample opportunities for public comments and board member discussion, as well as information and recommendations provided by staff. Each board member is provided the opportunity to give a report at each meeting. Each of the district's five union representatives is invited to speak for up to five minutes, as are the chairs of district committees and advisory councils.

4. Meeting agendas are organized in a reasonably efficient manner. However, time could often be maximized in places to allow for more attention to be devoted to discussions and decisions about board and district priorities; see CR6.9.

5. The board occasionally engages in lengthy discussions on topics that may not be directly related to student achievement or germane to the board's primary responsibilities; see CR6.10.

6. The open meeting often lasts four or more hours. Members of the board, staff and the community have expressed concerns about the length of meetings and the ability of board members to function optimally during late hours.

7. The board's tone during comments and discussions at meetings is generally respectful and professional (see CR5.11).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

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

2. 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 and Superintendent should review goals and streamline meeting procedures to ensure that the maximum amount of time can be devoted to priority discussions and decisions.

4. 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.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 7

Implementation Scale:

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6.7 Board Meetings

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. District bylaws
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews
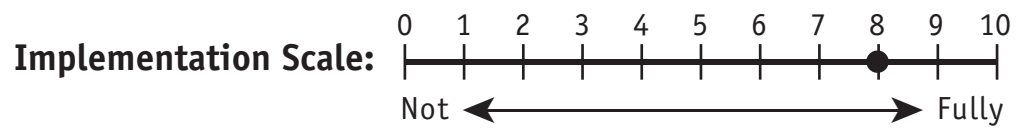4. Board agendas

Findings

1. Board Bylaw 9322 Agenda/Meeting Materials, recently reviewed and updated as part of the board's review of mandated policies, contains mandated language allowing members of the public the opportunity to submit items for board review and placement on the agenda.

2. According to practice, the Superintendent and board president are responsible for setting the board agenda.

3. The district's practice has been to allow any member of the board to request that an item be placed on the agenda. Any staff member may also request through the Superintendent or an Associate Superintendent that an item be placed on the agenda.

4. Members of the public may communicate with the Superintendent or individual board members to request that an item be placed on the agenda.

5. The public also has an opportunity during board meetings to raise issues concerning topics that do not appear on the agenda (see CR6.8).

6. Representatives from the district's committees and employee organizations have a built-in opportunity to address the board at each meeting.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. The board should consistently implement bylaws establishing a clear process for 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, other printed materials and/or the district Web site.
   b. The Superintendent or appropriate staff should be available to advise members of the public as to the correct process.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

July 2003 Rating: 8

Implementation Scale:

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6.8 Board Meetings

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. District policies/bylaws
2. Board agendas and minutes
3. Observations of board meetings
4. Board member interviews
5. Staff interviews
6. Parent/community member interviews

Findings

1. Members of the public are provided an opportunity to offer comments at the beginning of each regular meeting of the board. Individuals interested in addressing the board are asked to fill out a card at the start of the meeting and submit it to the executive assistant to the board. One-half hour at the beginning of the meeting is devoted to public comments. Each individual is allotted three minutes for comments. If there are more than 10 individuals who wish to address the board, names are selected at random. Individuals may yield some or all of their time to another speaker. The board president also allows additional individuals to speak if there is still time remaining after the first 10 speakers.

2. Ten or more individuals often address the board during the public testimony section of the meeting. During particularly significant times, such as the budget crisis, 20 or more individuals have addressed the board.

3. Additional time for public testimony is provided toward the end of each meeting.

4. Board agendas provide an opportunity for the public to address the board regarding closed session items before the board enters closed session.

5. Board agendas occasionally list significant issues as public hearing items so that public comments specific to the issue can be provided during that time of the meeting.

6. Individuals who wish to address the board are informed in writing that they may address "any subject related to the district or its educational programs" during public testimony, "except matters pertaining to individual employees" of the district.

7. Representatives from the district's many citizen committees, councils and task forces are provided with time to address the board at each meeting. Each union representative is also provided five minutes to speak at each meeting.
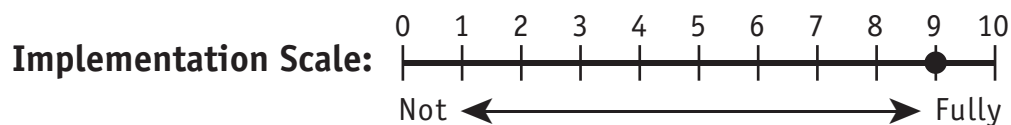
8. An agenda item in the past year specifically asked for "suggestions and ideas from the community, staff and students."

9. Members of the public are encouraged to submit questions or comments to the board via e-mail, and the e-mail address is posted prominently in the board meeting room.

10. Board Bylaw 9323 Meeting Conduct, recently reviewed and updated as part of the board's review of mandated policies (see CR4.3), includes mandated language providing appropriate times to hear public comment.

11. The board generally welcomes and is respectful of public comments (see CR5.11).

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

None needed.

Standard Implemented: Fully - Substantially

July 2003 Rating: 9

Implementation Scale:

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     0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
     ├───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───┼───●───┤
     Not ◄─────────────────────────►  Fully
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6.9 Board Meetings

Professional Standard
Board meetings focus on matters related to student achievement.

Sources and Documentation
1. Board agendas and minutes
2. Observations of board meetings
3. Board member interviews
4. Staff interviews
5. Parent/community member interviews
6. Parent focus groups
7. Teacher survey

Findings

1. Issues related to the district's financial condition have taken precedence at board meetings in the past two years. Although these issues definitely have an effect on student achievement, a proportionately moderate amount of time is devoted to reports, discussions and/or policies directly related to educational programs, curriculum, instruction and/or assessment. However, among the board discussions related to student achievement are annual reviews of the district's state test results, review and approval of textbooks, a regular report on the district's Early Literacy Plan, and occasional reports on site and district programs.

2. The board sometimes utilizes substantial portions of meeting time to discuss resolutions and topics that are more peripheral, rather than central to, student achievement.

3. Sometimes the board appears to engage in student achievement issues at a detailed level that is more appropriate to the Superintendent's and staff's responsibilities, rather than at a broad policymaking and oversight level appropriate to the board's role.

4. Teachers surveyed for this project assigned the board an average grade of 1.4 on a scale of 0-4 (about a D+) on its effectiveness in promoting student achievement.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan

1. In setting meeting agendas, the board president and Superintendent should emphasize topics that relate to the district's vision and goals for student achievement, including more frequent discussions of related district policies and reports/analysis of program effectiveness.
    a. The Superintendent or designee might highlight how the components of each agenda item relate to student achievement — and help the board, staff and public to understand better how all topics including the budget relate to achievement. This might be accomplished in part through the Superintendent's regular report at each meeting.

b. Board members should use greater discretion in proposing items for board discussion and approval that, while important, may be peripheral to student achievement.

Standard Implemented: Partially

July 2003 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

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    0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
    |———|———|———|———●———|———|———|———|———|———|
   Not ←——————————————————————→ Fully
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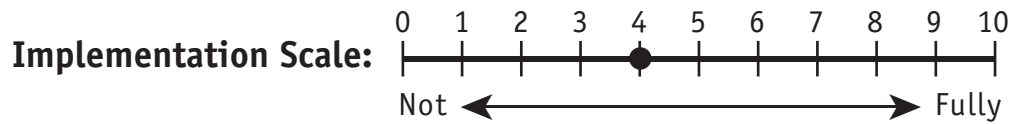
Chart of
Community Relations Standards

Progress Ratings Toward Implementation of the Improvement Plan

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.	2	❏
1.2	Information is communicated to the staff at all levels in an effective and timely manner.	4	❏
1.3	The staff's input into school and district operations is encouraged.	3	❏
1.4	The district effectively implements strategies for communicating with parents, the community and the media.	4	
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 making public comments on board decisions and district programs	5	
1.7	Board spokespersons are skilled at public speaking and communication and are knowledgeable about district programs and issues.	7	
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).	6	
2.2	A school accountability report card is issued annually for each school site (EC 35256).	3	❏
2.3	The board has developed and annually disseminates uniform complaint procedures (Title 5, Section 4621, 4622)	8	
2.4	Procedures are in place for addressing parents' and community members' complaints against employees in a fair and timely manner.	6	
2.5	Board members refer informal public concerns to the appropriate staff members for attention and response.	8	
2.6	Parents and community members are encouraged to be involved in school activities and in their children's education.	5	❏

Community Relations

	Standard to be addressed	July 2003 rating	Focus for January 2004
2.7	Parents and public input into school and district operations is encouraged.	7	
2.8	Volunteers receive appropriate training and play a meaninigful role that contributes to the educational program.	9	
2.9	The district has established procedures for visitor registration and posts registration requirements at each school entrance. (Penal Code 627.2, 627.6)	4	❑
2.10	Board members are actively involved in building community relations.	6	
3.1	The board and Superintendent support partnerships and collaborations with community groups, local agencies and businesses.	6	
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.	5	
3.3	Policies exist for the establishment of school site councils (EC 52852.5.	5	
3.4	Community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils all have identified specific outcomes goals that are undertood by all members.	5	❑
3.5	The membership of community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils reflects the full cultural, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic diversity of the student population.	3	❑
3.6	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.	6	
3.7	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	
3.8	Community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils effectively fulfill their responsibilities (e.g. researching issues, developing recommendations).	7	
3.9	School plans for the School-Based Coordinated Program exist at each school participating in the program (EC 52850).	7	

Community Relations

	Standard to be addressed	July 2003 rating	Focus for January 2004
3.10	School plans are comprehensive and have sufficient content to meet the statutory requirements (EC 52853).	7	
3.11	The school site council annually reviews the school plan and the board annually approves or disapproves all site councils' plans (EC 52853, 52855).	4	
4.1	Policies are written, organized and readily available to all members of the staff and to the public.	1	❏
4.2	Policies and administrative regulations are up to date and reflect current law and local needs.	2	❏
4.3	The board has adopted all policies mandated by state and federal law.	7	
4.4	The board annually reviews its policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular/cocurricular activities (EC 35160.5).	7	
4.5	The district has established a system of securing staff and citizen input in policy development and review.	3	❏
4.6	The board supports and follows its own policies once they are adopted.	4	
5.1	Each board member meets the eligibility requirements of being a board member (EC 35107).	10	
5.2	Board members participate in orientation sessions, workshops, conventions and special meetings sponsored by board associations.	5	
5.3	Pertinent literature, statutes, legal counsel and recognized authorities are available to and utilized by the board to understand duties, functions, authority and responsibilities of members.	5	
5.4	The board has identified the needs of the students, staff and educational community through a needs assessment process.	6	
5.5	The board has established a districtwide vision/mission and uses that vision/mission as a framework for district action.	2	❏

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.	4	❏
5.7	Functional working relations are maintained among board members.	7	
5.8	Individual board members respect the decisions of the board majority and do not undermine the board's actions in public.	9	
5.9	Functional working relations are maintained between the board and administrative team.	7	
5.10	The board publicly demonstrates respect for and support for the district and school site staff.	5	
5.11	The board demonstrates respect for public input at meetings and public hearings.	6	
5.12	Board members respect confidentiality of information by the administration.	7	
5.13	The board does not involve itself in operational issues that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.	6	
5.14	No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.	6	
5.15	The board evaluates the performance of the Superintendent regularly on criteria that will encourage student achievement.	6	❏
5.16	The board acts for the community and in the interests of all students in the district.	3	❏
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).	10	

Community Relations

Standard to be addressed		July 2003 rating	Focus for January 2004
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).	10	
6.3	Board members prepare for board meetings by becoming familiar with the agenda and support materials prior to the meeting.	7	
6.4	Board meetings are conducted according to a set of bylaws adopted by the board.	5	❏
6.5	Open and closed sessions are conducted according to the Ralph M. Brown Act (GC 54950 et seq.).	7	
6.6	The board president ensures that meetings proceed in a businesslike manner while allowing opportunity for full discussion.	7	
6.7	The board has adopted bylaws for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public.	8	
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).	9	
6.9	Board meetings focus on matters related to student achievement.	4	