

# **SECTION TWO**

## ***Assessment & Recovery Plans***

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

As part of this study, the California School Boards Association (CSBA) has assessed the baseline performance of and developed improvement plans for the Oakland Unified School District in Community Relations. The association has performed similar work and extensive audits of school boards, their roles, meetings, and policy in districts throughout California. For the Oakland review, FCMAT established guidelines and provided coordination of the overall project.

The CSBA study team reviewed three principal areas of community relations: (1) Board Policies, Responsibilities and Boardmanship; (2) Communications System; and (3) Community Collaboratives and Advisory Councils. This report addresses 51 standards of performance related to these areas, including 38 professional standards and 13 legal standards.

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

### 1. Communications

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

### 2. Parents/Community Relations

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

### 3. Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

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

#### **4. Policy**

- the currency, 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

#### **5. Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

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

#### **6. Board Meetings**

- legal requirements related to board calendars, agendas and minutes
- board preparation for meetings
- rules used to conduct board meetings
- opportunities for public input during board meetings

The baseline performance of the district in implementing the standards was determined through a variety of assessments which included interviews, surveys, focus groups, observations of board meetings and reviews of district documents. Many of the standards were assessed on the basis of interviews with board members; the interim superintendent; district office administrators; principals and teachers from elementary, middle and high schools; classified staff; union representatives; and community members. Altogether, 110 interviews were completed, including: seven board members; 16 district office administrators, including the interim superintendent; 19 principals; 27 teachers; 17 classified staff; and 24 individuals representing community, business, government, media and labor organizations.

Telephone interviews were conducted with 421 parents, 199 teachers and 201 classified staff. Among the teachers surveyed, one-quarter (25.1 percent) had an emergency/waiver credential. Classified staff surveyed were predominantly permanent employees (85.1%), with 47.8% working 36-40 hours a week.

Demographic information for the survey respondents showed that over two-thirds of the respondents in each category were female. The majority of parents and classified staff who responded to the survey were African American, whereas Whites made up the largest group of teacher respondents.

## Gender and Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

	Parents	Teachers	Classified Staff
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	13.5%	31.2%	21.4%
Female	86.5	68.8	78.6
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
African American	56.8	26.6	55.2
Latino	15.4	7.5	15.9
White	10.7	42.2	9.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.9	7.0	11.4
Other	7.6	6.0	4.5
No answer	3.6	10.6	4.0

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

- information is available and communication is adequate;
- there is agreement and clarity throughout the system on policy and goals;
- education is impacted by the turnover of principals and by politics in the administration;
- the board does not interfere with district operations and daily decisions;
- the board encourages public participation and supports staff;
- the community and parents support the schools;
- board and administration efforts have resulted in improvements;
- parents are involved in their child's school and in decision making;
- the site council plays an important, active role;
- the media paint an unfair picture of the district and schools; and
- respondents are optimistic about the future of the district.

The parent and teacher surveys each contained 33 items plus demographic items. The classified staff survey contained 40 items plus demographic items. Most responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A set of items in the parent survey asked parents to grade their child's school (A-F) on such conditions as safety and teacher commitment.

To obtain the perspective of parents on some of the standards, four parent focus groups were conducted in three different schools — two at one elementary school, one at a middle school and one at a high school. Although the focus groups were conducted at specific schools, parents represented a broader spectrum of both schools and grades.

### Gender and Ethnicity of Focus Group Participants

	Focus Group #1	Focus Group #2	Focus Group #3	Focus Group #4
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	100%	92%	70%	70%
Male		8	30	30
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
African American	0	20	30	70
Latino	100	0	0	0
A/PI	0	80	60	0
White	0	0	5	30
Native American	0	0	5	0
Translation Provided	Yes	Yes	No	No

The focus groups were arranged with the assistance of PTA presidents and community liaisons. Project staff facilitated the meetings. In addition, one student focus group was conducted with the assistance of Youth for Oakland United (YOU), a local community-based organization. The focus group took place after a regularly scheduled YOU meeting and consisted of four high school students, one student services coordinator and one social worker.

To allow comparison of responses within a school site, the assessments described above included an in-depth study of 14 schools in which principals, teachers, classified staff and parents were assessed using interviews, parent focus groups and surveys. These included six elementary schools, five middle schools and three high schools. The remainder of the interviews, parent focus groups and surveys were randomly distributed across a broad range of schools.

Because the board's meetings are televised on cable, it was possible to obtain videotapes of eight board meetings. In addition, project staff had an opportunity to attend three board meetings, three community meetings, and one Education Commission meeting.

Project staff reviewed a variety of district documents, including: the district's policy manual; administrative bulletins; school accountability report cards; board agendas; board minutes; Coordinated Compliance Reviews; parent handbooks; district newsletters, news releases, press clippings and other communications; school plans; collective bargaining agreements; and various district reports.

Project staff responsible for each subject area analyzed the assessment results, recorded findings, and determined the extent to which each standard has been implemented by the district.

### **Executive Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

This study is designed to encourage the Oakland Unified School District to place a high priority on community relations, review its current efforts, and implement changes as needed. This study is only a first step. It will be necessary to take more time to build the strong support and buy-in of all stakeholders. Their willing-

ness to accept the challenges ahead will have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of the district's community relations program.

In addition, it will be necessary for the district to prioritize its efforts. Manageable goals need to be established. However, with time, strong leadership, and the dedication of staff, parents and the community at large, both the district and community can benefit from a strong partnership focused on the needs of the community's children.

### **1. Communications**

There are many examples of successful communication systems or communication successes within the Oakland Unified School District. However, improvement is still needed in the district's overall internal and external communications.

The quality of internal communications varies widely, as would be expected in any organization, particularly one of this size. It varies from school to school and from individual to individual. Those who place a high value on communications and are willing to be more assertive in both obtaining and providing information have better results. It is clear, however, that there are too many instances throughout the district where communications are breaking down. It is also clear that, where effective communications are lacking, there are significant negative consequences on staff performance and morale. The district must expand and coordinate its internal communications efforts to ensure that all staff have the information they need to perform their responsibilities effectively. The district also must recognize the contribution that can be made by those working directly with students and programs, and improve opportunities for staff members to provide input regarding school and district operations.

External communications, especially relations with the media, have also caused problems in the district. Negative media coverage of high-profile controversies within the district has hurt the public image of the district and from time to time has created divisions within the board and staff. In addition, public statements are made by some individual board members and staff members without regard for the overall message and image of the district. The district has taken important steps to develop a cohesive strategy by adopting a two-year strategic plan which sets priorities and goals related to communications, but implementation of the plan has only recently begun.

The district must make a commitment to implement all the elements of its comprehensive communications plan in order to move the public's opinion about the district and build awareness in the community about the mission, goals and accomplishments of the district. As part of the implementation, attention must be paid to presenting a consistent message on behalf of the district, improving the quality of media relations, and using other means in addition to the media to communicate directly with the community.

### **2. Parent/Community Relations**

Besides providing information to parents and the community, it is important that the district listen and be responsive to their concerns. The district must implement effective and appropriate methods of handling complaints by the public. The district has uniform complaint procedures in accordance with law, but has had difficulty implementing procedures for complaints against employees. More informal complaint procedures are used for most concerns raised by the public, with concerns being referred to the principal, superintendent, public information office, or other appropriate staff. However, many parents feel that their concerns

are ignored, and they may approach a board member seeking resolution as advised by the parent handbook. Board members want to demonstrate that they care, and some may try to handle public concerns on their own.

There are other, more systematic ways of determining the needs of students, staff, parents and the community on a larger scale. The district does not appear to have conducted a broad needs assessment nor developed a cohesive vision or direction based on such an assessment, but it has engaged in WASC accreditation and Program Quality Review (PQR) processes which include an assessment of needs and conditions at the schools. In addition, the FCMAT study authorized by the school board and state legislature is serving to assess the district in the areas of pupil achievement, financial management, facilities management, personnel procedures and community relations. Surveys conducted by CSBA as part of the community relations assessments provide some data regarding perceived priorities by various stakeholder groups (e.g., board members, district staff, teachers, classified staff, and community members). A broad-based, community-wide effort to develop a set of agreed-upon goals and priorities would help increase the buy-in of parents and community members.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to increase the involvement of parents and community members in the schools. In this district, there is no systematically administered type of liaison program at the district level. Individually, all board members are personally involved in community relations, but community outreach tends to be within their trustee area rather than district-wide, and there is no coordinated outreach plan. Efforts to involve parents and community members are primarily initiated and implemented at the school-site level. Teachers and schools report a variety of approaches they use to engage in parent outreach.

When surveyed, parents overwhelmingly reported that they are encouraged to become actively involved at their child's school, that they have felt they are really wanted there by the teacher and teacher's aides when they visit their child's classroom, and that their child's teacher is always respectful of parents and their questions. The majority assigned a grade of A or B to their child's school on its performance in getting parents involved in school activities.

Furthermore, classified staff said parents and community members are generally very supportive of the district and its activities, and both classified staff and teachers disagreed when asked if the community is less supportive now than it ever was. Teachers, on the other hand, were more likely to say that parents are not generally very supportive of the district and its activities and that neither parental nor community support has increased during the past couple of years.

While parents feel encouraged to participate, involvement of parents and community members is inconsistent throughout the district, with the affluence of the school, the leadership of the principal and the availability of a site-level community liaison being significant contributing factors. Addressing barriers to parent/community participation, including insufficient translation services for parents whose primary language is not English, must be a priority.

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

This district is engaged in a number of collaboratives and partnerships with community groups, local agencies and businesses. Many are designed around specific projects or grants, and include different combinations of partners with a common interest. Most of the collaboration appears to be initiated and implemented by individual school sites and are therefore dependent on the school's leadership for success. Because of the many benefits of collaboration and the limited capacities of school sites to organize these efforts, the

district could play a greater role in working with other community agencies and organizations to develop and implement plans to provide needed services to parents and families in a coordinated manner. This will ensure an equity of resources in the district.

Broad participation of interested stakeholders is also sought on district-led advisory councils, committees and task forces. However, the advisory groups in this district, as is true in most urban districts, are generally perceived as not being racially balanced. The district and school sites must increase efforts to recruit council and committee members who represent the ethnic and economic diversity of the student population and the community, and who are dedicated to playing an active role on these groups.

The district also needs to increase the level of support it provides to these advisory groups to enhance their effectiveness. Opinions about the current impact of these groups vary widely depending on the group and the school, but in general many advisory groups are not viewed as very active, visible and/or effective.

The extent and quality of training provided to advisory councils also vary widely across school sites and type of council. Many site-level staff interviewed mentioned the need for training related to the new site-based management policy and the duties of site-based management teams.

The district should update its policies and regulations to clarify the responsibilities of district and school-site advisory groups, and should determine how to communicate these duties to all members more effectively so that members are able to accurately describe their major functions. District and school-site councils and committees must perform their stated roles, and possibly be given expanded roles as sounding boards on critical issues and as a source of input on policies and district operations. To increase the level of accountability, the district should provide feedback to the councils/committees regarding the status of their recommendations and should schedule regular reports to the board from district-level groups.

Some councils, such as the school site council for purposes of School-Based Program Coordination, are required by law and have specific requirements regarding membership and duties. In this district nearly all district schools that are engaged in School-Based Program Coordination have established school site councils. All district schools participating in School-Based Program Coordination have school site plans in accordance with law, and a review of most of the school site plans in the district showed that they were thorough and met the statutory obligations in terms of content. Finally, it appears that all school plans are ultimately approved by the board in accordance with law, although Coordinated Compliance Reviews found no evidence that some school site plans were first reviewed and approved by the applicable advisory groups in several schools.

#### **4. Policy**

About half the sections of the district's policy manual have been adopted since 1996, and the district has adopted about 70% of those policies mandated by state or federal law. Nevertheless, there are still many examples of policies that do not reflect current law. In addition, administrative bulletins were largely adopted in the late 1970s to mid-1980s. Some staff and parents interviewed expressed frustration with trying to determine correct district procedures. Thus, reviewing and updating the district's policies and regulations should be a high priority. The district should engage in a process of reviewing its entire policy manual to bring it up to date, using the resources of an outside consultant if necessary. At the same time, the district should review and revise its coding system to align policies and administrative bulletins and make both easier to use. Once the district's policy manual is brought up to date, the district should develop a process for continual review of the policy manual.



Equally important is ensuring that the district's policies and regulations are implemented as envisioned. A number of examples were found indicating a disconnection between policy and actual practice. The superintendent and staff need to be held accountable for implementing district policy. The board can help by publicly supporting the district's policies, providing resources necessary for implementation, and monitoring the results of critical policies. Only then can the district's policies become a real resource for district and board decision making.

## **5. Board Roles/Boardsmanship**

The Oakland Unified School District Board in this district is described by many interviewees as not unified. In large part this appears to be due to legitimate differences in perspective regarding what is best for the district, with some recent controversial issues serving to further divide the board. Some board members sometimes express their personal opinions in the press rather than speak on behalf of the board, further contributing to the perception of a splintered board. Yet, despite differing viewpoints, board members express respect for each other, believe they work well together, and conduct board meetings with decorum. They are generally supportive of a board committee structure which allows most of the discussion and debate on issues to occur in committees. They also show a strong commitment to the district and spend a significant amount of time on board business.

Relationships between the board and superintendent also are generally positive. Despite some concerns about the conditions under which the interim superintendent was appointed, most board members believe that he is doing a good job. The superintendent likewise reports functional working relations with the board.

However, greater attention needs to be paid to the division of authority between the board and superintendent. As a whole, the board is not viewed by most interviewees as "micromanaging" though there are instances that have caused concern among site-level and district staff. Board members should respect the chain of command among district staff and address questions or concerns to the superintendent.

The board also needs to pay greater attention to its relations with the public. Although the board provides opportunities for public input (even ignoring its own established time limits on such input), the verbal and nonverbal behavior of some board members during board meetings sometimes relays a message that the board is indifferent about the public's input. The problem is frequently exacerbated by the nature and manner of the comments from the public.

Several other factors work against the board being perceived as representative of the entire community and all students:

- Because board members are elected by trustee area, the pervasive perception is that they represent the narrow interests of their area.
- Racial/ethnic issues are another part of the equation, with feelings that the board pays greater attention to the interests of one racial/ethnic group (which varies depending on the respondent).
- A vast disparity between the "hill" schools and "flatland" schools supports the perception that resources are allocated differently.

Some interviewees believe that board members are more focused on reaching their own political aspirations than on the education of Oakland students and that they are susceptible to the influence of city government or other political figures. To overcome some of these difficulties, board members must maintain a respectful relationship with each other and focus on their common interest in serving students. The board must unite

around a vision for the district's schools and students that will allow the board to consider issues in terms of how they fit with stated goals. They must make a commitment to respect the board majority's decisions and ensure that a unified district message is presented to the community. Participation in board workshops designed to specifically address board roles and boardsmanship issues can help enhance the board's teamwork and public image. To maximize the effectiveness of such workshops, the board should work together and with the superintendent to develop an annual schedule of workshops which will meet the board's needs.

## **6. Board Meetings**

Efficient, focused board meetings enhance the board's credibility in the eyes of the community, allow the public sufficient opportunities to provide input into the board's decision-making process, and continually move the district forward toward its vision and goals. Although this district receives some of the usual complaints about board meetings (e.g., "they're too long," "they tend to lose focus," "we need to deal with more important topics"), the district fulfills many of the nuts-and-bolts requirements related to board meeting operations.

In both a substantial and sustained manner, the district has met the standards of adopting a calendar of board meetings; making agendas, minutes and other public records available to the public; conducting meetings in accordance with the Brown Act; allowing placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public; and providing members of the public an opportunity to address the board.

The district also has adopted a set of bylaws to guide the conduct of its meetings and there are no significant concerns about the fairness of the procedures used. However, the board does not enforce its own rules in a few cases (e.g., does not adhere to bylaws that set time limits for comments by each member of the public and that specify that board members can speak only once until everyone has spoken). Enforcement of existing board rules would contribute to the efficient operation of board meetings. Furthermore, race-baiting, name-calling, physical threats and defamation from members of the public interfere with the meeting process and contribute to an uncomfortable atmosphere. Although board rules do not limit the public's speech, the board must continually reinforce (and model) the expectation of appropriate behavior.

Board members' preparation for board meetings and their knowledge of the issues are generally good. The content of board agendas appears adequate and board members did not express any concerns about the quality or timeliness of agenda materials. Board members spend a considerable amount of time on board business, including time spent in board committees which are where "the real work gets done." The committee structure is highly valued by the board and is perceived as making board meetings more efficient in that much of the debate and information gathering is done in committees. The potential downside is that many substantive issues come to the board meeting as consent items and may not receive the attention they deserve by either the full board or the public. The board and superintendent need to ensure that regular meetings of the full board continue to provide adequate opportunity for discussion of important issues. Also, some staff interviewed appear to be frustrated by the committee structure because the need to refer matters to committees slows down their ability to act. The timing needs of staff need to be considered.

Maintaining a strong committee structure and ensuring board preparation require not only a considerable amount of board members' time but also considerable staff support. The district should determine whether additional staff support is needed and/or whether procedures and materials can be streamlined. Also, board meetings should be focused on issues that impact student learning, delegating as much other business as possible to the superintendent and district staff.

**FCMAT 2910**

## **Recovery Plan**

Based on the analysis of the district's current implementation of each standard, project staff developed recommendations for improvement with the goal of helping the district fully and substantially implement each standard and then sustain that level of performance.

The improvement plan includes a variety of recommendations addressing board and staff training, updates of the district's policy manual and administrative bulletins, greater coordination of communications, clarification of roles and responsibilities, improved use of existing structures for internal communications and decision making, accountability mechanisms and other strategies.

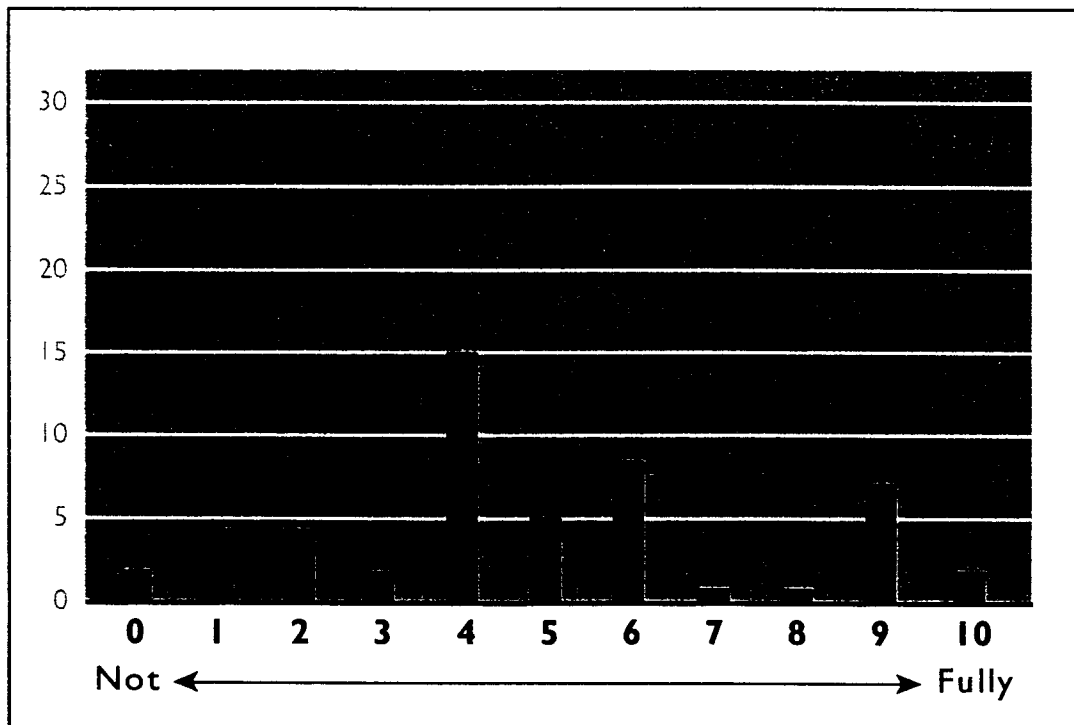
The following standards have been identified as priorities or principal focus points in the area of Community Relations as the district begins implementation of its recovery plan.

<b>Community Relations</b>	
<b>Standard to be addressed</b>	<b>Score</b>
1.1 – Decisions and other information are effectively communicated throughout the system in a timely manner.	2
1.3 – The board has a proactive communications and media relations plan.	3
1.5 – Media contacts and spokespersons who have the authority to speak on behalf of the district have been identified.	0
2.4 – Charges or complaints against any employee will be addressed in a timely manner.	1
3.1 – The board supports partnerships with community groups, local agencies and businesses.	5
3.2 – Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district all have identified specific outcome goals that are understood by all members.	4
3.3 – The membership of community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district reflects the full cultural, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic diversity of the student population.	1
3.6 – Community collaboratives and advisory councils led by the district effectively fulfill their responsibilities.	4
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.	4
4.6 – The district has established a system of securing citizen input in policy development and district operation.	2
5.4 – Functional working relations are maintained among board members.	5
5.9 – Board members respect confidentiality of information by the administration.	6
5.11 – No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.	1
5.13 – The board acts for the community and in the interests of all students in the district.	4



# Standards Implemented

## Community Relations



The total number of assessment standards for this study area was 51  
The average rating of assessment standards for this study area was 4.88  
The average rating of assessment standards for all study areas was 4.23

## **I.1 Communications**

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. The public information officer distributes a Friday e-mail which includes information on current issues and events, as well as copies of memos that have already been sent to district staff (to increase the likelihood that staff will read the memos). However, not all site staff members have convenient access to e-mail at the site. Also, the district distributes a newsletter, "News and Notes," to all staff. The district has established leadership academies that allow for articulation across all grade levels K-12. Some district administrators recognize that face-to-face contact with staff is preferable and schedule site visits and meetings as possible, but find it difficult in a district this size.
2. The district's communication plan (see CR1.3) includes the following key objectives related to internal communication: (a) improve communication among all internal audiences regarding school district policies, programs and activities; (b) Friday e-mail; (c) Transformations; (d) "News and Notes" in paychecks; and (e) fax or e-mail releases to the sites.
3. Despite these significant efforts, information does not appear to flow regularly within the district office, from the district to its staff, or from the staff to the district. In addition, some board members have presented their personal viewpoints directly to the media rather than speaking on behalf of the district (see CR1.5 – identification of media contacts and spokespersons), which makes it difficult for the district to send a consistent message. The absence of effective internal communication sometimes causes low morale, frequent rumors, and a perception that the district is not following through on promised actions.
4. Communication between district departments sometimes is described as poor, with interviewees indicating that little information passes between offices. In addition, district staff members feel they receive little training, and there is a perception that many do not know what is happening in the schools.
5. While many significant efforts are made to communicate between the district and school sites, many sites are overburdened with teacher absences, student discipline and other crisis issues that make it difficult or useful for them to access more long-term, strategic communication.
6. Working relationships between district-level and site-level staff vary considerably. Some interviewees reports positive relationships and adequate support from the district. More frequently, however, staff members report the need to be proactive and assertive in order to obtain

needed information and follow-through from the district. Frustration was expressed that, in some departments, employees cannot be reached, and phone calls to the district office are not returned.

7. A principals' retreat held during the summer received some favorable reviews. In general, communication between the district office and principals are described as particularly problematic. Meetings with principals occur once a month, but do not seem to meet the needs of many of the principals interviewed; the meetings provide information but do not offer sufficient opportunities for principals to provide input or talk to each other. Some principals interviewed would prefer more interaction with others at the same grade level, in addition to the leadership clusters K-12. Some district administrators interviewed shared similar concerns about not knowing what is happening with the principals.
8. Principals and teachers interviewed cite a lack of information about the district's site-based management policy as an example of inadequate communication from the district. Staff had high hopes that the new policy would result in greater flexibility at the school site, but many felt they were not given sufficient information as to the resources they would receive, the decisions that were being delegated to them, or the accountability mechanisms. As another example, some school sites were surprised by the "Get on the Bus Tour" of school facilities.
9. The frequency and quality of communication at the school site level vary across campuses. Teachers interviewed said they seek support and information from their principals and from other teachers, and generally are satisfied with the quality of information they receive pertaining to site-level issues. Year-round schools face special challenges as a portion of the staff is not on site at any given time. Contact between teachers and the district office is limited. Teachers interviewed report many problems with specific departments with which they do interact.
10. Teachers surveyed expressed several concerns about internal communication: 62.8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that the district administration is very clear about the kind of school it wants and communicates that view well to teachers, and 52.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that changes in board or district policy are communicated to them in writing on a regular basis.
11. Classified staff receives most information at the school site. Some of those interviewed, however, feel that they receive scant training and are not involved in school meetings, yet are expected to keep parents informed.
12. Classified staff surveyed tended to agree or strongly agree (60.2 percent) that the district administration is very clear about the kind of schools it wants. However, 50.2 percent felt that staff members do not get adequate information about what is going on throughout the district.
13. The school sites communicate directly with parents, to varying degrees. Most of that communication is specific to school site events and school site programs rather than districtwide information. Also, as might be expected, most parents tend to connect directly with their child's school rather than with the district.
14. Most parents surveyed generally were satisfied with the level and quality of communication from the district and school. When asked whether they receive regular communication from the school



district about changes in school policy that affect their child, 68.2 percent of the parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed. An even higher percentage (83.5 percent) said the materials and information they receive from the school are very clear and understandable.

Parents surveyed were more divided in their opinions as to whether they feel adequately informed on how their child's school is performing relative to other schools, but more agreed or strongly agreed that they feel adequately informed (48.0 percent agreed or strongly agreed; 43.7 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed).

The majority of parents surveyed agreed that the district seems to make a big effort to let them know what's going on in the schools (54.0 percent agreed or strongly disagreed; 42.5 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed).

The majority of parents surveyed (59.1 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that district staff is well informed and courteous in providing information to parents.

Approximately two-thirds of parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that it is easy for parents to find out when and where school board or other school meetings are being held (65.1 percent) and that they are given full and complete information when asking questions of teachers or school officials (66.0 percent).

When asked whether there appears to be adequate communication between teachers, principals, administrators and parents throughout the district, the majority (53.7 percent) agreed or strongly agreed.

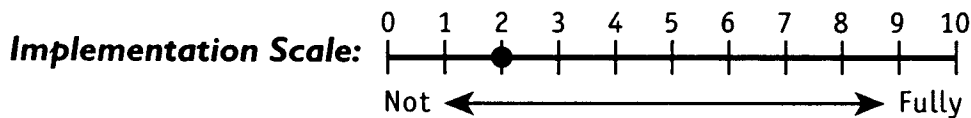
15. A lack of translation services makes it difficult for limited-English-speaking parents to receive information (see CR2.7 – parent and community involvement).
16. Some community members and organizations interviewed reported difficulty obtaining information from the district.
17. Also, see CR 3.4 – training and information for collaborative and advisory council members, and CR4.1– distribution of district policies and procedures.

## **Recommendations**

1. The district must coordinate its internal communication efforts to ensure that all staff members have the information they need to perform their responsibilities effectively.
  - a. The board and Superintendent need to establish internal communication as a priority and communicate the importance of delivering information throughout the system.
  - b. The flow of information should be managed and charted, e.g., organizational flow chart, from the district to the school site principals to the staff. To facilitate this coordination, the internal communication strategies included in the district's comprehensive communication plan (see CR1.3) must be implemented.

2. The district must provide additional, more effective opportunities for all staff, from classified and certificated to the cabinet level, to receive and send information.
  - a. District messages need to be communicated directly with all staff. All staff members should be given the necessary tools to reinforce messages and goals for communication. By giving each position a function of responsibility in the delivery of district messages, all staff members will hear the same message and receive the same information across the district and across all school sites.
  - b. The district should take advantage of its current communication assets – the classified and certificated staff members who live in the community and work for the schools. These staff members are critical players in how schools are perceived and they must have a role in the overall communication strategic plan. They must have access to information and the opportunity to provide input in how decisions are made. These employees are responsible for setting the tone, the culture and the message. The district needs to recognize their value in this role and allow them to help build a positive image of the district.
  - c. Structures such as standing committees, ad hoc committees, and school site staff meetings should be used to deliver information throughout the system.
  - d. The district should be more visible at school sites. The district can accomplish this in a number of ways, including but not limited to: involving high-level administrators in the process and having them attend school site meetings as part of a larger strategic communication effort; making sure that school site councils understand their roles and providing them with accurate and timely information; and providing site staff with the district's key messages, mission and goals.
  - e. The goals of the current newsletter should be revised to include information about being an employee, the mission and goals of the district, key messages developed by the district, and major policy and program issues. The newsletter should serve to speak to all employees at all levels in the same way.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



### **Professional Standard**

Staff input into school and district operations is encouraged.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Staff interviews and surveys
2. WASC accreditation reviews
3. Program Quality Reviews
4. Coordinated Compliance Reviews

### **Findings**

1. The perceived ability to provide input into school and district operations varies widely across school sites and individuals.
2. Structures are in place to hear staff input, e.g., district advisory committees, school site councils, staff meetings.
3. Many interviewees feel that their input is not encouraged or welcome by the district office, and that individuals must be proactive in order to be heard. They want to receive more appreciation and to feel a part of the team.
4. The district's site-based management policy is intended to delegate decision-making responsibilities to school sites, but has not been fully implemented. Site-level staff interviewed frequently expressed concerns about the lack of information and training related to the policy.
5. District-level staff members often were perceived by interviewees as out of touch with what's happening at school sites.
6. Contact between schools and the district is channeled through the district representative to the leadership council that represents each high school and its feeder schools. Some site administrators interviewed are satisfied with this arrangement; others feel that this arrangement separates them from the Superintendent and other district staff.
7. Many principals interviewed would like to have more opportunities during monthly principals' meetings for collegial sharing of problems and best practices.
8. Some teachers interviewed reported that, while their opinion matters, their ideas rarely are followed-up on. Others felt that the district responds more to parental and community pressure without giving teachers equal time.
9. A survey of classified staff, however, revealed generally positive feelings that their input is encouraged. The majority (52.8 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that the district administration is interested in seeking new ideas from staff members about how to do a better job (35.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed; 11.9 percent were neutral/didn't know). The majority (53.7 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that staff members are involved in helping make decisions that

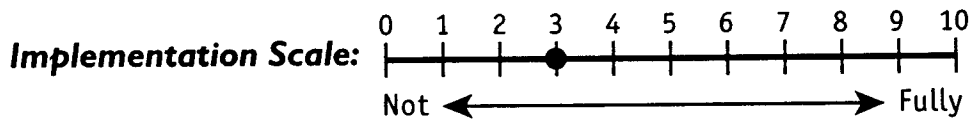
affect them (34.8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed; 11.4 percent were neutral/didn't know), and that people above their supervisor are receptive to ideas and suggestions (54.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed; 26.8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed; 18.9 percent were neutral/didn't know).

10. Also see CR4.5 – staff involvement in policy reviews.

## **Recommendations**

1. The district must expand opportunities for those working directly with students and programs to provide input regarding school and district operations.
  - a. The internal communication strategies included in the district's comprehensive communication plan (see CR1.3) must be implemented.
  - b. Staff meetings and other existing structures should include discussions of important issues and greater opportunities for staff to provide recommendations.
  - c. The district's site-based management policy must be clarified before implementation.
  - d. District-level staff should visit school sites more often and use these visits as opportunities to learn about site issues and concerns and to solicit input as to how the district can improve its level of support and services.

### **Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **I.3 Communications**

### **Professional Standard**

The board has a proactive communication and media relations plan.

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Superintendent interview
2. Board member interviews
3. Staff interviews and surveys
4. News articles/other media

### **Findings**

1. In May 1999, the district approved a Strategic Communication Plan entitled "Building the Reputation of the Oakland Public Schools, 1998-2000." The plan is well developed and addresses internal and external communication, public engagement, relationship building, public information and media relations. The plan lists the need to strengthen professional relationships with local, national and educational media and identifies goals relative to media relations, such as conducting regular briefings with education reporters, quarterly briefings with editorial boards of local media, a special focus on non-English-speaking media, etc. This plan is in the beginning stages of being implemented.
2. For the most part, news reporting has been negative for the district due to several controversial and political issues, e.g., school bus tour of facilities, mayoral attempt to appoint school board, Superintendent turnover, ebonics controversy, and hiring of a "high-priced" graphic designer to develop a new district logo. The majority of teachers (59.2 percent) and classified staff (58.2 percent) surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the media never paints a fair picture of the district, and that district schools are better considerably than they are shown in the media (55.2 percent and 58.2 percent, respectively). Although there is occasional positive coverage of district activities, e.g., district efforts to clean up graffiti, and some interviewees feel the media climate is improving, the district general has been unable to neutralize these negative impressions partly due to the lack of a fully implemented, strategic, proactive plan for communication and media relations. In fact, some district and site administrators interviewed said they avoid talking to the media because of the media's negative treatment of the district and the time spent responding to situations created by or through the media.
3. The district appears to conduct a standard communication and media relations program of issuing news releases, holding press conferences, communicating to parents through mailings, and tracking newspaper clippings.
4. In 1996, the district established a position, special assistant to the Superintendent for communication, in support of the district's goal to improve the image of the district. Goals were established by the public information officer after gathering input from the district's Public Information Advisory Committee and the Executive Council.
5. The district does not have a policy or regulation that pertains specifically to the establishment or maintenance of a communication and media plan. However, general policies on the importance of media access (BP 4015) and the assignment of the public information officer as the point of

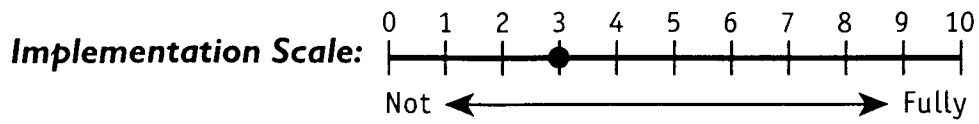
contact (AB 4016) do exist (see CR1.5 regarding the extent to which the latter policy is followed). BP/AB 4015 states that the “Board of Education recognizes the fundamental right of the public and press to have access to documents and information maintained by the District concerning the conduct of the public business.” Further, “each department shall adopt procedures to facilitate the dissemination of the information which permits the inspection of public records at all times during the office hours of the department.” AB 4015 further states that the district is committed to making such information regarding the conduct of public business readily available to the public either by active dissemination or by providing for access to such information at the Publications Office. Finally, AB 4016 states that the board desires to promote a positive relationship between the schools and the media.

## **Recommendations**

1. The district must implement its comprehensive communication plan in order to move the public’s opinion about the district and build awareness in the community about the mission, goals and accomplishments of the district.
  - a. The district’s communication plan must be reinforced by the district’s board, Superintendent, senior administrators, staff, parents and students. The plan should identify appropriate and relevant roles for all of these persons, including the opportunity to provide strategic input during the implementation process.
  - b. The Superintendent and board should determine whether staff support and other expenditures for the critical public information function should be increased.
  - c. The board should consider adopting a district policy addressing the review, evaluation and subsequent revisions of the comprehensive communication plan.
  - d. Through program and personnel evaluation processes, the board must hold the Superintendent accountable for implementation of the district’s communication plan, and the Superintendent likewise must hold other appropriate staff accountable.
2. The communication plan must include a coordinated effort to improve the skills of board members and administrators in working with the news media, the public and community groups (see CR1.6).
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide media training for board members, the Superintendent, senior administrators and principals to help them assume some degree of proactive media relationship building and representation of the district’s messages.
  - b. Board members and appropriate staff must be given a support system to empower and assist them in assuming responsibility for this critical function. This support system should include, but not be limited to, ongoing information about the district, key messages and “talking points.”
3. The quality of relationships with the news media (reporters, editors and producers) must be improved. The communication challenges of the district appear to be too great for one person to handle.
  - a. The district should provide regular media briefings to inform the press about issues in the district.
  - b. The district should plan strategic public events designed to highlight district programs and issues.

- c. The district must answer questions from the media honestly, completely and in a timely manner so that misinformation will not be generated and escalate.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **I.4 Communications**

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

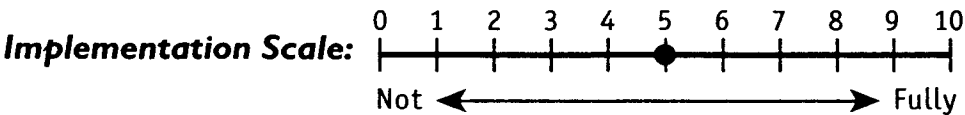
### **Findings**

- 1. The district produces and distributes news releases and advisories to the news media.
- 2. Currently, the district's news releases are not tied to the district's communication plan. News releases are more effective when driven by a strategic communication plan and the content of news releases supports the district's efforts to inform the public and develop community support for the schools.
- 3. The content of many news releases distributed by the district is not useful to the news media. Many are written about nonsubstantive items, e.g., the pool hours of the high school, high school dances, and the hiring of a new staff member in the district. While these may be necessary to inform the public, the emphasis of news releases should be on supporting the district's key messages and priorities.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. The development of news advisories and news releases must be driven by a strategic communication plan and be part of a cohesive strategy (see CR1.3).
  - a. News releases and advisories should be prepared to further the key messages and communication goals established in the district's communication plan.
- 2. The district should not depend on the media as the gatekeeper of public information, but should develop its own means for communicating directly to the community.
  - a. News releases should be distributed through an internal system so that the messages carried by the news releases can be understood and reinforced by staff and parent leaders. Then, even if the information contained in the news release does not appear in the media, the release itself becomes a vehicle for delivering information to internal audiences and these audiences receive a steady means of important district news.
  - b. The district should identify key opinion leaders in the community who should receive the media message through the news release in order to ensure that community leaders receive news about the district even when it does not appear in the media.

### **Standard Implemented: Partially**





## **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. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Policy manual
5. News articles/other media

### **Findings**

1. The district has an administrative regulation (AB 4016) which identifies the public information officer, the special assistant to the Superintendent for communication, as the only media contact. The regulation notes that the public information officer is the Superintendent's designated spokesperson for the district on districtwide matters. The public information officer is responsible for maintaining positive relations with the media and for facilitating its access to school and district staff and facilities in the interests of legitimate "news gathering." The public information officer is charged with coordinating all contact with the media. Reporters are asked to contact the department first with requests so that the public information staff may facilitate communication with school sites and district departments. No board policy on this issue appears to be available.
2. From time to time, some board members have stated personal opinions to the media.

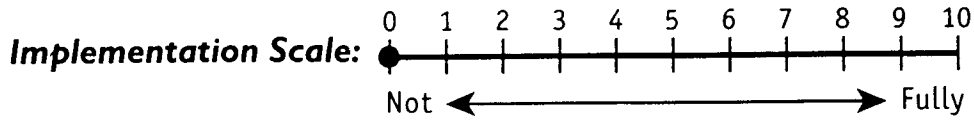
### **Recommendations**

1. The district must establish a well-defined chain of command as to who talks to the media on behalf of the district to ensure that the district's messages are consistent.
  - a. Policies in this area must be developed clearly, and understood and respected by the cabinet, all staff and board members. The board should adopt policy addressing the importance of presenting a united front and identifying the media contact and primary district spokespersons. These persons also should be identified in the district's comprehensive communication plan.
  - b. The roles and responsibilities of the media contact should be delineated clearly. In most organizations, the public information officer is the media contact. The media contact should provide a major benefit to the media as the "go-to" person when the media calls the district for information or for a news story. This person's role is to ensure that calls are returned to the media and that appropriate information is provided. The media contact builds a reputation as a resource to the media. The added benefit to the district is that all information flowing to and from the media is tracked and managed more efficiently.
  - c. The identity and responsibilities of district spokespersons also should be addressed in board policy and the district's comprehensive communication plan. The public information officer should serve as the clearinghouse for requests by the media, and should be able to refer inquiries to appropriate spokespersons based upon their specific subject-matter knowledge, e.g., curriculum, human resources, and legal. Elevating key staff members in the

media's and public's view serves to demonstrate that progress in the district is due to the efforts of many and therefore is systemic.

- d. A single person should be designated as the primary spokesperson for crisis management or crisis communication throughout the event.
- e. The Superintendent should hire a permanent public information officer.

**Standard Implemented: Not**



## 1.6 Communications

### Professional Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

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

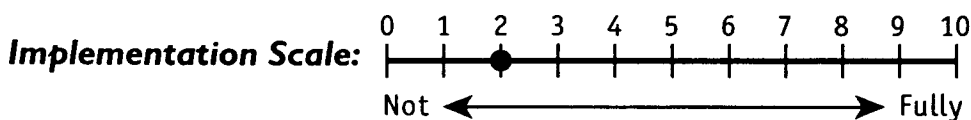
### Findings

1. There is a diversity of skill and experience in public speaking and media relations among the board members with most being very effective and articulate communicators. Most are very knowledgeable about district programs, particularly those in their own trustee areas.
2. Some board members' effectiveness as *district* spokespersons is affected adversely sometimes when individual actions or statements are made to the media that do not reflect the district's position.
3. There appears to be minimal developmental work or training that provides board members with concise and accurate information to enable them and senior staff to speak with confidence about key issues in the district.
4. Board members are knowledgeable about issues in their own trustee areas, but not always knowledgeable about district issues outside their trustee area.

### Recommendations

1. District spokespersons must recognize the importance of presenting a consistent message to the media and the public on behalf of the district.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide individual and group workshops to the board and Superintendent on all aspects of communication, including spokesperson training and media relations.
  - b. The public information officer or other appropriate staff members should develop fact sheets and informational issue sheets on all its major topics that contain key messages as well as brief and persuasive data that can be used by board members, senior staff, other staff members and key community opinion leaders.
  - c. Board members must speak on behalf of all students in the district rather than their individual trustee areas.

### Standard Implemented: **Partially**



FCMAT 2927

## 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 another language. (EC 48980)

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. Parent handbook
3. 1999 language census of each school site, OUSD Department of Research and Evaluation

### **Findings**

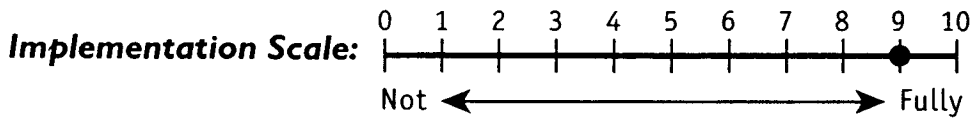
1. Although various state laws require numerous notifications to parents, Education Code 48980 specifically deals with those parental notifications related to:
  - student discipline;
  - student absences for religious purposes;
  - excused absences;
  - residency for home/hospital instruction;
  - parental responsibility to notify school regarding student's presence in hospital within district;
  - consent for immunizations;
  - parental request for school assistance in administering medications;
  - exemption from physical exams;
  - consent for accident insurance;
  - right to nonparticipation in health, family life and sex education;
  - right to refrain from harmful or destructive use of animals;
  - the availability of individualized instruction for students with temporary disabilities;
  - schedule of minimum days and student-free staff development days;
  - the district's fingerprinting program, if any;
  - the district's sexual harassment policy;
  - student access to Internet and online sites; and
  - current statutory and local attendance options.
2. Education Code 48985 requires that parental notices be provided in languages other than English when 15 percent or more speak another language. Overall in this district, 57 percent of the students in 1999 were Spanish speaking, 15 percent spoke Cantonese, 8 percent Vietnamese, 6 percent Cambodian, 5 percent Mien, 2 percent Tongan, 1 percent Laotian and 6 percent other. This varied widely from site to site, e.g., at six elementary schools, over half the students spoke Cantonese. The district provides written translation services in four languages for districtwide documents.
3. The district develops a parent handbook which contains the required notifications along with other information. The handbook is distributed annually to students and parents in their primary language to the extent practicable.

4. Although included in the parent handbook, the district's policy on parental notifications (BP 5066) does not list some of the specific provisions of Education Code 48980, such as notifications regarding sexual harassment, access of students to the Internet, and individualized instruction for students with temporary disabilities as prescribed by Education Code 48206.3

**Recommendations**

1. The district should revise its policy on parental notifications to reflect all current legal requirements.

**Standard Implemented: Fully-Substantial**



## 2.2 Parent/Community Relations

### **Legal Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. School accountability report cards
2. Staff interviews

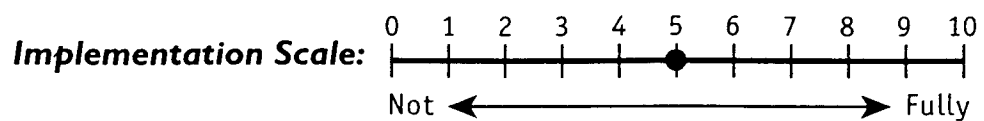
### **Findings**

1. Education Code 35256 requires that the board annually issue a school accountability report card for each school site. These report cards are required to report all the conditions listed in Education Code 33126 and 41409.3. In addition, Education Code 35256 requires that parents be notified that a copy of the report card will be provided upon request, 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. The district has not issued the SARC on the Internet.
2. The district last issued school accountability report cards in the 1994-95 school year. Subsequently, the district worked with community-based organizations to develop an "annual report" which contained similar information and which was inserted into local newspapers.
3. For the current school year (1999-2000), the district again is preparing school accountability report cards. The district is using an interactive web site service to organize common district data and collect unique information from each school site. The report cards will be available on the Internet.
4. The policy manual reviewed did not contain a policy or administrative regulation addressing the process to be used by the district to develop the report cards or the required elements of the report card.

### **Recommendations**

1. The district must issue school accountability report cards each year in accordance with law.
  - a. The district should adopt an administrative bulletin addressing the process to be used by the district to develop the report cards and the legal requirements pertaining to the report cards, including required elements.
  - a. The Superintendent or designee must hold staff members accountable for meeting time lines and addressing the required content elements.
2. The district must distribute school accountability report cards in accordance with law.
  - a. The Superintendent or designee must make the information contained in the school accountability report cards available on the district's Internet web site as required by law.
  - b. The Superintendent or designee must notify parents that a copy will be provided upon request as required by law.
  - c. District staff members should explain the school accountability report cards to district and school site councils and committees, school PTAs, the media and others.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



**FCMAT 2931**

## 2.3 Parent/Community Relations

### Legal Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

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

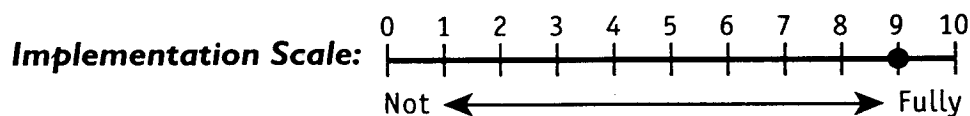
### Findings

1. Districts are required to use uniform complaint procedures consistent with the state's uniform complaint procedures when addressing complaints alleging unlawful discrimination based on ethnic group identification, religion, age, gender, color, or physical or mental disability in any program or activity that receives state financial assistance. Districts also are required to use uniform complaint procedures when addressing complaints alleging failure to comply with state or federal law in adult basic education, consolidated categorical aid programs, migrant education, vocational education, child care and development programs, child nutrition programs and special education programs.
2. The district's uniform complaint procedures are contained in an administrative bulletin (AB 2014). The procedures are fairly complete, but do not reflect a requirement to inform a complainant of the right to seek civil remedies (California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 4622).
3. Complaint procedures are outlined in the parent handbook and provide a formal and informal process for resolving complaints. A hotline is available for complaints, as well as a compliance officer and ombudsperson who have independent authority to investigate complaints.

### Recommendations

1. District legal counsel and other appropriate staff members should monitor changes in law related to uniform complaint procedures and recommend revisions in the district's procedures as necessary.
  - a. The district should update its uniform complaint procedures to reflect the Title 5 requirement to inform a complainant of the right to seek civil remedies.

### Standard Implemented: **Fully-Substantial**





## **2.4 Parent/Community Relations**

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Uniform complaint procedures
2. Staff interviews
3. Board member interviews
4. Parent focus groups
5. Community member interviews
6. Observations of board meetings
7. Parent handbook

### **Findings**

1. According to district policy and regulation (BP 2075 and AB 2014), charges or complaints against district employees are addressed using the district's uniform complaint procedures (see CR2.3) but subject to the applicable collective bargaining agreement, if any.
2. The investigation and resolution of claims of employee misconduct are handled by the human resources department. A key district administrator cites serious problems stemming from the lack of a formal process to handle misconduct claims. These processes are addressed in the Personnel section of the FCMAT report.
3. Many parents interviewed were not familiar with district procedures for complaints about employees. They reported it is not unusual for parents to take their complaints about site-level staff directly to a board member as advised in the parent handbook. Board members usually refer these complaints to the Superintendent or district staff, but sometimes become involved in trying to resolve the complaint themselves (see CR2.5 - referral of informal public concerns and CR5.11 - individual board members exercising administrative responsibility). In addition, because very few principals speak a language other than English, limited-English-speaking parents may be reluctant to lodge complaints; many of those interviewed were unaware that they can have a translator present when complaining to the principal.

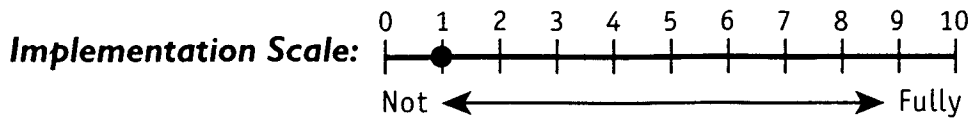
### **Recommendations**

1. The district should reevaluate the effectiveness of using uniform complaint procedures for complaints against employees.
  - a. Employees and district representatives participating in uniform complaint procedures for complaints against employees should be asked to provide feedback on the procedures.
  - b. When the district negotiates new collective bargaining agreements, it should consider a different procedure for complaints against employees—one which does not involve a potential appeal to the California Department of Education as does the process for uniform complaint procedures.

**FCMAT 2933**

2. Board members should refer all complaints they receive about employees to the Superintendent or designee and advise complainants about the availability of appropriate complaint procedures.
3. District staff should distribute and explain the uniform complaint procedures to all staff, school site councils and other interested persons in several languages.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 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 interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups
5. Policy manual
6. Parent handbook

### **Findings**

1. The parent handbook, which contains formal and informal complaint procedures, includes a provision that parents can call the board member representing their area if they have a concern.
2. Although district protocol is for board members to refer such concerns to the Superintendent and most cases are handled in this way, a number of interviewees indicate that some board members have attempted to address concerns directly. Also see CR5.11 - individual board members exercising administrative responsibility.
3. The district's policy manual does not appear to contain policy language addressing the referral of informal complaints to district staff. However, BP 2073 does contain a provision that the board will refer written communication on administrative matters to appropriate district staff.

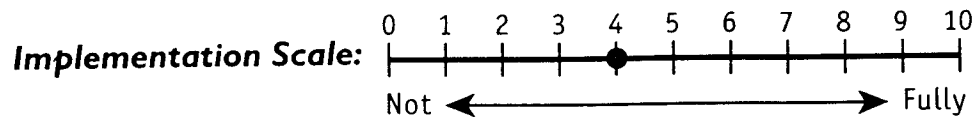
### **Recommendations**

1. Board members must refer staff or public concerns to appropriate channels rather than attempting to deal with issues themselves individually.
  - a. The Superintendent should determine the appropriate staff person(s) to receive complaints and the procedures that will be used to ensure that concerns are routed appropriately and addressed in a timely manner. "Customer service" training should be provided to district office staff so that the members of the public are treated respectfully when they have complaints.
  - b. The district should adopt policy language regarding the referral of public comments and requests to the Superintendent or designee.
  - c. Parent handbooks should be revised to encourage parents to take their complaints to site-level or district-level staff rather than board members.
  - d. Board members should communicate with members of the public in a way that shows the board member cares without becoming involving in the resolution of the problem. If staff members, students, parents or community members approach an individual board member with concerns, the board member should listen respectfully, suggest the appropriate staff person with whom to discuss the issue, or offer to forward the concerns to the Superintendent.
  - e. Appropriate staff members should follow up by providing information back to the complainant about the actions taken in response to the complaint.

FCMAT 2935

- f. The Superintendent or designee should report back to the board regarding the action taken in response to those concerns.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 2.6 Parent/Community Relations

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. WASC accreditation
2. Program Quality Reviews
3. Teacher survey
4. Board member interviews
5. District administrator interviews
6. Teacher interviews
7. Classified staff interviews
8. Community member interviews

### **Findings**

1. The district has engaged in WASC accreditation and Program Quality Review (PQR) processes which include an assessment of needs and conditions at the schools.
2. No other documentation of a needs assessment was provided, and the district does not appear to have engaged in the development of a comprehensive vision statement which would begin with the identification of needs.
3. Although not gathered as part of a formal needs assessment process, public input on issues and concerns is obtained through a variety of means. See CR1.2 - extent to which staff input into school and district operations is encouraged; CR3.5 - appropriate input from parents, community members and agency policymakers in collaborative/advisory council processes; CR4.6 - citizen input in policy development and district operations; and CR5.8 - respect for public input at meetings and public hearings.
4. In accordance with the FCMAT study authorized by the school board and state legislature, the district is being assessed in 1999 in the areas of pupil achievement, financial management, facilities management, personnel procedures and community relations.

The teacher survey conducted by CSBA as part of the FCMAT study identified teachers' views of the 24 most important problems facing the schools; the five most frequently named problems concerned administration, lack of support for teachers, lack of funding, overcrowded classes and insufficient materials and supplies.

Interviewees also were asked to identify their priorities for the district. The most frequently cited priorities included the following:

#### *Board Members:*

- Facilities repair and/or new facilities
- Recruitment and retention of good teachers, improvement of teaching
- Site-based management, decentralization

**FCMAT 2937**

Increased student achievement, improved test scores

*District Staff:*

- Support for the children of the district
- Greater focus on principals' training and guidance
- Development of a common focus
- Consistent review of departmental policies
- Accountability through all levels of the district
- Selection and retention of qualified staff

*Teachers:*

- Facilities repair/plant improvements/new sites to relieve overcrowding
- More/adequate classroom or student materials
- Increased community and parent involvement, more volunteers
- Class size reduction
- Improved teacher training and support

*Classified Staff:*

- Training for all staff
- Recruitment of competent personnel/dedicated teachers
- School site visits by district office staff
- Facilities repair and/or new sites

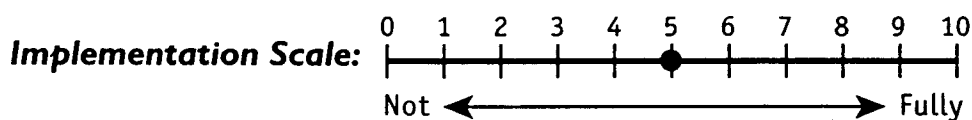
*Community Members:*

- Community/parent/student involvement
- Recruitment, training and retention of good teachers
- Clean facilities, adequate space, new sites
- Selection and assessment of principals

## Recommendations

- Needs assessments must be used by district and school site decision makers to identify priorities and plan programs.
  - The district should review and use the results of the FCMAT study, WASC accreditation reviews and Program Quality Reviews in developing a district vision or direction.
  - The district should conduct regular surveys of staff members and the community to identify priority issues and concerns, and find other meaningful ways for genuine and valued participation in determining district goals and priorities.

### Standard Implemented: *Partially*



## 2.7 Parent/Community Relations

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Parent focus groups
2. Parent survey
3. Community member interviews
4. Staff interviews and surveys
5. Board member interviews
6. Superintendent interview
7. Policy manual
8. Annual Assurances for Consolidated Application Programs
9. Coordinated Compliance Reviews
10. WASC accreditation report
11. Parent handbook
12. District memo on requests for translation services (11/4/99)

### **Findings**

1. Most efforts to involve parents and community members are initiated and implemented at the school site level. Teachers and principals interviewed report a variety of approaches they use to engage in parent outreach, e.g., calls to parents, home visits, a community awareness day, parent newsletter, parent conferences, “back to school” nights, carnivals, school clean-up days, cultural activities, contests, and a multischool parent involvement program. Classified staff interviewed support the need to reach out to parents and involve them in schools; many classified staff members are or were parents of children attending district schools. Bilingual classified staff, regardless of their position at the school site, say are often called upon to provide translation services to children and families.
2. Examples of district activities include districtwide sponsored events at schools or throughout the city, “parent universities” and parent conferences sponsored by the District Advisory Committee. The district office published and distributed a “Parent Involvement Education Supplement for Principals and Staff” which includes information and techniques on engaging parents, conducting parent-teacher conferences, organizing a parent center, etc. However, this handbook was not mentioned in any school site interview, and site interviews did not reveal any information regarding district training on customer service. Some district staff members interviewed described outreach efforts in terms of having parents come to sites for registration, but did not provide lists of other outreach techniques and approaches.
3. Yet, when asked in a survey whether parents and community members are encouraged to become actively involved at their child’s school, parents overwhelmingly said “yes”: 53.9 percent strongly agreed and 30.6 percent agreed (total 84.5 percent in agreement).
4. Similarly, parents said that every time they visited their child’s classroom, they have felt they were really wanted there by the teacher and teacher’s aides (55 percent strongly agreed and 28.0 per-

cent agreed; total 83.1 percent in agreement). They said that their child's teacher is always respectful of parents and their questions (55.6 percent strongly agreed and 30.2 percent agreed; total 85.8 percent agreement).

5. Almost two-thirds of the parents surveyed (64.6 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that the principal or teachers at their child's school have asked them to participate in school activities or to serve on an advisory council.
6. When asked to grade their child's school on its performance in getting parents involved in school activities, 61.3 percent assigned a grade of either A (34.0 percent) or B (27.3 percent).
7. According to many interviewees, involvement of parents and community members is not consistent throughout the district. In more affluent communities, parent involvement is highly encouraged and evident, particularly for fundraising, classroom aides and school clean-up days. In less affluent neighborhoods, parents usually are recruited for the same roles but participation is described as relatively low. Cultural issues appear to impact the level of parent participation.
8. PTAs tend to be most active at the more affluent "hill schools." Where they are well established, turnout and support for the PTAs is strong.
9. The existence of community liaisons at school sites depends upon the site; it is not a district-funded position.
10. School sites' annual assurances for the consolidated application programs include numerous ways in which parents and community members are involved and outreach is conducted by schools. They cite parent newsletters, monthly calendars, parent handbooks, "back to school" nights, parent-teacher conferences, parent appreciation nights, the mayor's "reading buddy" program, workshops on curriculum issues, etc.
11. Some Coordinated Compliance Reviews indicate that parents were involved inadequately in the development or review of school site comprehensive plans and policies, e.g., "no written documentation to support an annual review by staff and parents of the site criteria for selecting Title I students," "no written documentation to confirm parents of Title I students were involved in the development of the existing site parent involvement policy," and "no evidence that parents of students identified for the GATE program are involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the program." Several CCRs also found no evidence that teachers and administrators received training on how to effectively communicate with parents, with one CCR citing the lack of available substitutes and the number of teachers who need to do after-school credentialing programs as barriers to participation in training on parent involvement.
12. Parent surveys completed for WASC accreditation in 1995, 1996 and 1997 showed that the vast majority of parents who participated in the surveys felt either excellent or good about the school wanting parent participation, understanding their child's curricular goals and offering parents opportunities to be involved in school improvement activities, including parent-teacher conferences. However, parent participation in the surveys was low. The WASC self-reviews and site-visit reports add that "more parent involvement is needed," there is a need to "increase effective parent participation in designing and implementing programs and policies to increase student perfor-



mance, school safety, climate and cleanliness,” and “parents would like a parent handbook which lists resources, graduation requirements, homework policies, schedules, report card periods, vacations and so forth.” Such a parent handbook is now provided by the district.

13. Parent/community involvement is encouraged through several board policies. In BP 4000 (see also AB 4010), the board encourages the involvement of parents, residents and interested representatives of local business, religious, civic and community groups in activities of the public schools. The board recognizes that a variety of participation opportunities at school sites and citywide levels are crucial to meeting the needs of the community. Participatory patterns at school sites may take any of a number of forms, such as parent-teacher associations, community councils, or advisory committees when required by federal or state agencies. AB 4010 also states that involvement may take place in many ways. The board specifically encourages members of the community to become involved in the development of board policies and programs to support the district’s educational efforts. Furthermore, in BP 4010, the board encourages the enlistment and use of community volunteers centrally and at schools to supplement and enrich the educational program.

BP 4011 encourages projects involving the improvement of physical facilities in the district undertaken by volunteers. Such volunteer projects require coordination with individual school site personnel and with central office personnel responsible for school construction and building maintenance.

AB 4040 encourages community participation in the educational process and provides five specific purposes for community involvement.

14. Translation services are essential to communicate with parents whose primary language is not English. Some district administrators view the district as responding well to the need for translation services. The district offers to provide written translation of districtwide documents in four languages (Spanish, Cantonese, Cambodian and Vietnamese), but is unable to provide translation of school-specific documents. Oral translation is offered in five languages for limited-English-proficient parent education meetings, meetings of the Bilingual Advisory Council, and meetings for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The district employs three full-time and one half-time translators. Others saw services very lacking, reporting that translation services are most needed for translation of district policies, notices, and parent-student guides.
15. Comments during parent focus groups included acknowledgments that staff members encourage involvement by making telephone calls and mailing flyers. Many parents also expressed feelings that parents are not always welcome. Some report being tired of having to contribute money to buy supplies for the school and resent having their support solicited to help with basic needs such as custodial care. They would prefer their involvement to be in the classroom or helping to tutor.
16. Comments about community involvement included feelings that some district staff members talk about community partnerships but do not engage in them, and that the district does not always utilize effectively community organizations to engage parents. Many community members noted that there is no systematically administered liaison-type of program at the district level and that outreach depends on the staff at individual sites.

**FCMAT 2941**

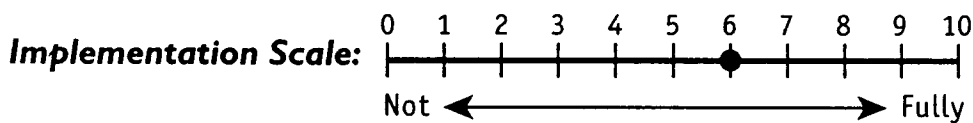
17. Survey results show that teachers were more likely to disagree that parents generally are very supportive of the district and its activities (53.7 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed) or that either parental or community support has increased during the past couple years (39.7 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed that parent support has increased compared with 36.2 percent who agreed or strongly agreed; 40.7 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed that community support has increased compared with 34.6 percent who agreed or strongly agreed). However, when asked if the community is less supportive now in the district than it ever was, teachers tended to say “no” (42.2 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with 28.6 percent not sure).
18. Classified staff members surveyed were more likely than teachers to believe that parents and community members are supportive: 52.7 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that parents are supportive of the district and its activities; 50.8 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that parent support has increased in the past couple years; 50.8 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that community support has increased in the past two years; and 49.3 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the community is less involved than ever (with 28.9 percent not sure). However, almost three-fourths (73.7 percent) of the classified staff members surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the board has encountered increased public criticism and hostility from Oakland residents in the past few years.
19. Teachers interviewed noted a variety of problems that hinder efforts to involve parents, including increasing impoverishment, limited time to contact parents, limited interest in contacting parents, and the prevalence of very young parents whose own educations have often been interrupted and who do not feel they can help prepare their children educationally.
20. Also see CR2.8 - school access for visitors; CR3.5 - appropriate input from parents, members of the community and agency policymakers in collaboratives and advisory councils; CR1.1 - communication throughout system (including communication to parents); and CR4.1 - distribution of policy information.

## **Recommendations**

1. While many significant efforts currently are underway, the district should develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated plan to improve parent and community involvement and support.
  - a. The district should consider establishing a committee, with strong representation of parents and community members, to develop recommendations to improve parent and community involvement. This plan should be approved by the Superintendent and ratified by the board.
  - b. The district should increase the number of community liaisons at the district office and at school sites.
  - c. Parent education programs should include training to help parents understand how the educational system works.
  - d. The district should increase the availability of translation services and its outreach to parents whose primary language is not English, especially at school sites.
  - e. The district should expand the availability of parent centers at school sites.
  - f. The district should provide staff development to principals, teachers, front-office staff, site

- liaisons and other classified staff in effective communication, the principles of “customer service,” and ways to deal with conflicts.
- g. Job descriptions and performance evaluations for principals, teachers and appropriate classified employees should include staff’s responsibilities for parent and community relations.
  - h. The district should coordinate and integrate parent and community relations efforts throughout the district. Site liaisons or other designated staff members should notify principals and a single district staff person regarding their activities, and regular meetings of all site liaisons or other appropriate persons should be organized by the district.
2. The district and school sites should enhance the role of parent and community volunteers in the schools.
    - a. District and school staff should review the current roles and responsibilities of volunteers and ensure that volunteers play a meaningful role which contributes to the educational program, enhances student safety or provides another critical service.
    - b. School staff, parents and community members, working with appropriate district staff, should develop and implement a plan for recruiting volunteers. The recruitment plan should include strategies for reaching underrepresented groups of parents and community members.
    - c. District and school staff should participate in diversity training to increase sensitivity to alternative perspectives.
    - d. District and school staff should track the number of volunteers and provide an annual report to the Superintendent and the board regarding the increase or decrease in the number of volunteers and the efforts undertaken to recruit volunteers.
    - e. Volunteers should receive training in the specific responsibilities they will be asked to perform, particularly those that involve student contact or instruction.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 2.8 Parent and Community Relations

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews
3. Parent focus groups
4. Community member interviews
5. On-site visitations

### **Findings**

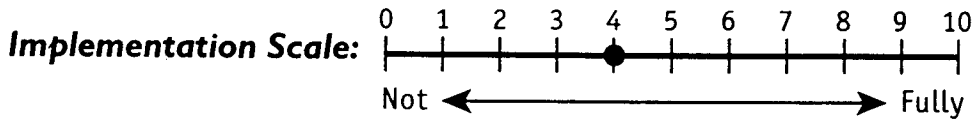
1. The policy manual did not appear to contain specific policy or regulatory language pertaining to visitors.
2. Interviewees' comments regarding the reception a visitor might receive at the district office or school site varied widely, from poor to welcoming. Particular difficulty was noted with parents whose primary language is not English.
3. The experience of project staff during on-site visitations was that, overall, office personnel at school sites were very welcoming and friendly.
4. While granting access to visitors, schools are inconsistent in their attention to security issues. Most schools visited by project staff members had signs saying that visitors had to sign in, as required by Penal Code 627.6. At some schools, project staff members were accompanied while on campus, but at most schools they were not even required to register as required by Penal Code 627.2 and were allowed to wander freely.
5. Safety issues related to volunteers are addressed in AB 4040. The principal is expected to make sure that each volunteer meets tuberculosis testing requirements. Potential volunteers also complete a registration form which asks them to swear that they have never been convicted of any child-related or sex-related criminal offenses. The administrative bulletin cites Education Code 35021, which prohibits registered sex offenders from serving as nonteaching volunteer aides, but not Education Code 45349, which prohibits registered sex offenders from serving as volunteer instructional aides. No mention is made regarding any requirement for sex offender checks.

### **Recommendations**

1. The district and individual school sites must make parents and community members feel welcome in the schools.
  - a. School staff, including front-office staff, should receive "customer service" training in order to better greet and serve visitors (see CR2.7 - encouragement of parent and community involvement).
  - b. District and school staff should develop and implement a plan to recruit volunteers and ensure that they play a meaningful role (see CR2.7).

2. The district and individual school sites must address safety issues related to visitors and volunteers.
  - a. The district should adopt a policy and administrative bulletin related to visitors and update its administrative bulletin related to volunteers. These policies should continue to encourage parent and community involvement while addressing safety issues related to visitor registration, sex offender checks, tuberculosis testing and related issues.
  - b. 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.
  - c. School staff should accompany visitors while they are on school grounds unless the principal determines on a case-by-case basis that it is unnecessary.
  - d. Safety issues related to visitors and volunteers should be included in the district's and school site comprehensive safety plans.
  - e. Visitor registration procedures should be included in the parent handbook with any new requirements highlighted.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 2.9 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 focus groups

### **Findings**

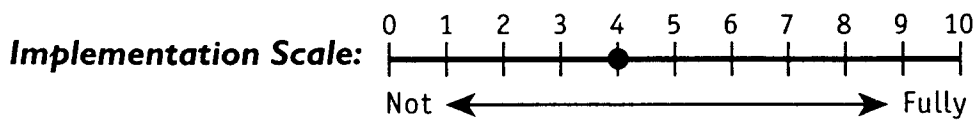
1. When asked about outreach to parents and community members, board members did not refer to a districtwide outreach plan but did cite their individual efforts. These efforts include a range of monthly, quarterly and biannual meetings; monthly or quarterly newsletters; and visits to school sites.
2. Community outreach by board members tends to be within their trustee area rather than district-wide.
3. Board member attendance at district events and participation in other community relations efforts do not appear to be coordinated, as some board members do not always know what other board members are doing and do not always notify the district's public information office.
4. School site staff interviewed reported very little interaction with board members and generally said board members are not very visible on campuses. Others noted that, when some board members do visit schools, they may try to influence school site decisions (see CR5.11 - individual board members exercising administrative responsibilities).

### **Recommendations**

1. Board members, the Superintendent and the district's communication staff must understand and appreciate the role of board members, as public figures and community leaders, in building community relations on behalf of the district.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide a workshop on the board's role in providing community leadership, including the need to keep parents and the community informed about school issues, be responsive to parent and community concerns and interests, encourage parent and community involvement in school activities and programs, and engage in advocacy on issues that impact schools.
2. Board members must be provided adequate information about district messages and issues in order to effectively serve as spokespersons (see CR1.6 - board spokesperson skill in public speaking and communication).

3. Board members' participation in community relations efforts must be linked to an overall, coordinated strategy to improve the understanding and knowledge base of the community in order to provide consistent, accurate messages.
  - a. The participation of board members in community relations should be addressed in the district's comprehensive communication plan (see CR1.3 - comprehensive communication plan).
  - b. Board members, coordinated with the district's public information officer, should seek opportunities for board members to speak to civic groups and organizations and other target audiences to present the district's messages on priority issues.
  - c. The public information officer should establish a clearinghouse function in order to manage the outreach function and allow the district to know who is speaking to which groups at what time. Board members (and administrators) should notify the public information officer whenever they are invited to speak in the community. The public information officer should be aware of which community groups are meeting in Oakland and whether the district will have a presence at those meetings.

**Standard Implemented: *Partially***



**FCMAT 2947**

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

### **Professional Standard**

The board supports partnerships 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. Board minutes

### **Findings**

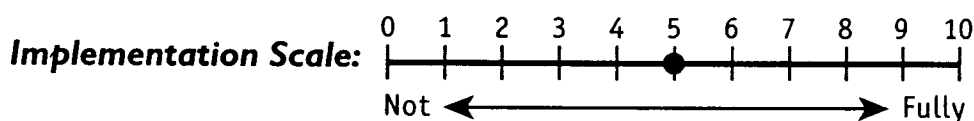
1. There are a number of collaboratives and partnerships between district schools and community groups, local agencies and businesses. Examples include, but are not limited to, the City Schools Education Partnership Committee, a number of Healthy Start projects, representation on the city's Community Policing Advisory Board, the Bay Area Urban League partnership to provide an academy program for high school students, collaboration with the city to provide support for the year-round school lunch program, a Gear Up grant with California State University Hayward, a partnership with the Alameda County Public Health Department for assistance with school-based health centers, a memorandum of understanding with the Oakland Community Partnership Community Health Academy, a school-city partnership to provide Chabot's Observatory and Science Center, and a collaborative to construct sports fields at two schools.
2. Much of the collaboration is site-driven rather than districtwide. Board members are aware of many partnerships, but many interviewees report that the board does not appear to be very involved in seeking these partnerships.
3. All comments by interviewees about business partners and foundations were positive, as were most comments about community-based organizations. Only one reference was made to collaboration with county agencies, and this was in respect to one school only. Some board members believe that the city could do more than it is currently doing.
4. Most board members believe that district staff must be committed to working with those who would help, but some also believe that community organizations and others must be "dedicated at some level through financial support." Some board members view organizations as only interested in coming in and providing services in return for money.
5. Some community members said that the district does not develop and pursue grant opportunities in a coordinated way and that, in the absence of money, ignores the need for services at the schools.
6. Also see CR2.7 - efforts to involve individual parents and community members in the schools and CR2.9 - board involvement in building community relations.

### **Recommendations**



1. The district should play a greater role in working with other community agencies and organizations to develop and implement plans to provide needed services to parents and families.
  - a. The district should conduct or work with other community agencies and organizations to conduct a needs assessment to determine parent and community needs that currently are not being met in the community (see CR2.6), including educational, health and social services needs.
  - b. The Superintendent and board should initiate contacts with appropriate community agencies and organizations to invite their participation in meetings designed to develop a common vision for the community and consider ways in which community services may be coordinated.
  - c. The board and appropriate staff should hold a workshop on interagency collaboration and develop objectives for collaboration.
  - d. The district should support site-level efforts by providing technical assistance, resources and other incentives for participation in collaboration.
  
2. The board should expand its role in building community relations and business partnerships by actively seeking opportunities to speak to civic groups and community organizations and linking its efforts to a coordinated district strategy (see CR2.9).
  
3. The district should work with its partners to evaluate the effectiveness of community collaboratives.
  - a. The Superintendent or designee should provide regular reports to the board on the progress of collaborative efforts. Such reports should include, but not be limited to, feedback from staff, parents and the community.
  - b. The Superintendent or designee should ensure that formal evaluations of collaboratives are conducted on a regular basis. An evaluation component, including a time line and specific measures, should be included in the original plans for the collaborative.
  - c. The district should share the evaluation results with the staff and community through board meetings and other district communication.

**Standard Implemented: *Partially***



**FCMAT 2949**

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

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. District advisory committees include the District Advisory Council, English Language Learner District Advisory Council, District Budget Advisory Committee, African American Education Task Force, Latino Education Task Force, Asian/Pacific Islander Education Task Force, Sexual Orientation Task Force and Measure C Advisory Committee. In addition, the district has a strong structure of board committees, consisting of three board members each, which conduct much of the board's work and then bring recommendations to the full board for a vote. These include committees on facilities, curriculum and technology, personnel, labor relations, business and finance, student safety and services, and intergovernmental relations.
2. Administrative Bulletin 4010 (March 1978) establishes general principles for advisory committees, including provisions that the committee charge be sufficiently broad to permit a comprehensive study and that the community be encouraged to identify areas of special interest for study. AB 4010 does not include any other details for these councils and committees. More detailed guidelines are provided, however, for the Principal Selection Committee (BP and AB 4020) and the Program Affirmative Action Committee (BP 10980 - Local Minority, Women and Disabled Veteran Business Participation Program).
3. The focus of the District Advisory Council is on parent training. The DAC sponsors an annual conference for parents which drew about 400 parents in 1999. It also sponsors a "parent university" every other Saturday, a television show called Parent Talk, and monthly meetings attended by about 70-80 representatives of site councils and community councils. Programs focus on how parents can help at school and with their child's learning at home. The DAC does not advise the district about policy issues. Many members of the board interviewed were unaware of the activities of the DAC.
4. The mission of the African American Education Task Force and Latino Education Task Force is described by interviewees as "identifying strategies for improving education" or "addressing equity" for the race of students represented by their task force. The focus of the recently reconvened Asian/Pacific Islander Education Task Force is on advocacy. The Superintendent is reportedly taking the initiative to set goals for the task forces.
5. The board has made significant efforts to enhance and define the roles of site advisory councils by

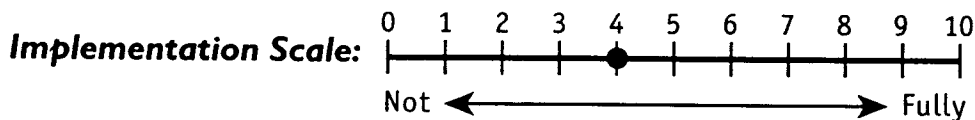
adopting a policy on site-based management. This policy will delegate certain decision-making responsibilities to school site teams. A draft copy of the district's School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) handbook (September 1999) provides the district's directive for the involvement of community, parents and staff in individual site planning. This document describes all aspects of setting up the SDMT, which is essentially the school site council and which also may be intended to function as the school-based program coordination committee. The overall goal for the SDMT is described as "improved student learning." Ways that the committee can influence site operations for the improvement of student learning are not included.

However, the responsibilities to be delegated to school site teams under the new policy are unclear to most site staff interviewed. District staff interviewed explained that the central office is still determining which responsibilities are best performed at the site level.

### **Recommendations**

1. The district should clarify the responsibilities of district and school site advisory groups and decision-making bodies.
  - a. The district should update its policies and regulations to include the responsibilities of district and school site advisory groups and decision-making bodies.
  - b. The district should, with input from school site staff, parents and community members, determine the authority of site-based management teams under the district's new site-based management policy. Until these roles are clearly identified and communicated, implementation should not proceed.
  
2. The district must determine how to communicate these duties to all members more effectively so that members are able to accurately describe their major functions.
  - a. Candidates for election or appointment to councils and committees should receive a detailed description of the duties they would be expected to perform. Detailed information about the roles of school site groups also should be distributed to voters so they can select the most qualified person to perform those duties. This becomes even more critical when the district's site decision-making policy is fully implemented.
  - b. Appropriate district staff members periodically should assess members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and tailor training opportunities to meet those needs (see CR3.4 - training for advisory council members).
  - c. The board must ensure that advisory committees understand the district's vision and strategic objectives. The board then should elicit from the committees direction in support of the district's objectives within their own areas of responsibility.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



**FCMAT 2951**

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

#### **Professional Standard**

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

#### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Community member interviews
2. District advisory council/committees interviews
3. Staff interviews
4. Parent focus groups
5. CBEDS student demographic data for 1997-98

#### **Findings**

1. The district's student population is 50.9 percent African American, 23.1 percent Hispanic, 19.3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 6.1 percent Caucasian, and 0.6 percent American Indian.
2. Administrative Bulletin 4010 (March 1978) includes a general principle for advisory committees that the committee members should represent the diversity of Oakland's population.
3. The guidelines for selection/recruitment of School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) members are addressed in the SDMT handbook and generally appear to comply with Education Code requirements; see CR3.7 - establishment of school site councils.
4. In general, the advisory groups are perceived by interviewees as not reflecting the full cultural, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic diversity of the student population, e.g., parent participation on Bilingual Advisory Committees is largely Latino, school site councils and the District Advisory Council draw African American parents, Caucasian parents participate in community parent groups, and Asian/Pacific Islander parents interviewed do not have comfortable venues for participation at the district level.

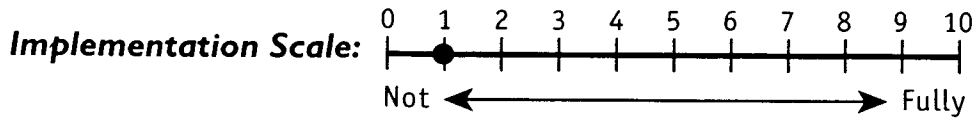
#### **Recommendations**

1. The district and school sites must increase efforts to recruit council and committee members who represent the diversity of the student population and the community and who are dedicated to playing an active role on these groups, and to building cross-cultural alliances.
  - a. District staff, principals, and existing school site councils and committees should obtain input from parents, community members and staff in order to identify barriers to participation by some segments of the community, e.g., time commitment, transportation needs, language barriers, and a belief that they are not welcome.
  - b. District staff, principals, and existing school site councils and committees should develop a plan to address those barriers. For example, translation must be provided for all parents who wish to participate.
  - c. The district and school sites should disseminate information about the purpose, responsibilities and successful results of these groups throughout the community and to all parents and staff in order to generate interest in the activities of these groups.
  - d. District staff and principals should develop a list of community leaders, dedicated staff

persons and other qualified persons who might be personally recruited to run for election to school site groups.

- e. In working towards greater diversity on advisory councils, district staff and principals must ensure that legal mandates regarding membership are fulfilled, e.g., number of parent and teacher representatives.
- f. Advisory committee chairs and staff members should receive training on how to effectively include all segments of the population in a welcoming and productive manner.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## **3.4 Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, 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. Parent focus groups
2. District advisory council/committee interviews
3. Staff interviews

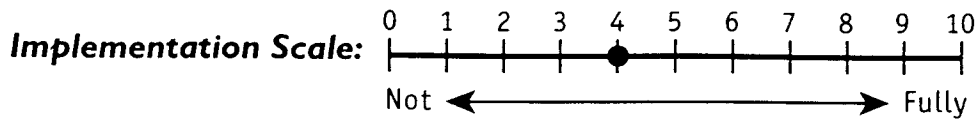
### **Findings**

1. Administrative Bulletin 4010 (March 1978) includes a general principle for advisory committees that, when possible, staff members provide training and skill development activities for the community members involved.
2. The extent and quality of any training provided to advisory councils vary widely across school sites and type of council.
3. The District Advisory Council offers significant parent training, but such training is focused on how parents can help at school and with their child's learning at home (see CR3.2 - outcome goals of advisory councils) rather than their roles as council members or program processes.
4. Many site-level staff interviewed mentioned the need for training related to the new site-based management policy. General guidelines will be provided in the School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) handbook (including sample bylaws, agendas and forms for minutes for the team's use), but teams did not receive the training promised in fall 1999.

### **Recommendations**

1. The district should provide training and information to assist members in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.
  - a. The district and school sites should ensure that candidates for election or appointment to councils and committees receive the district's policies or regulations describing the duties they would be expected to perform.
  - b. District staff members periodically should assess members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and tailor training opportunities to meet those needs.
  - c. The district should provide training to site-based management teams related to their roles and responsibilities. If the district has not yet determined those roles and responsibilities to be delegated (see CR3.2 - outcome goals of advisory groups), then it must communicate this to school sites and provide realistic time lines for implementation of the site-based management policy.
  - d. Members of district and school site councils and committees must receive sufficient and timely information about the purpose and issues to be discussed at each meeting.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



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

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. In general, most interviewees who are a part of a committee felt they had the opportunity to be heard within the structure of the committees. Widespread input was reported by several groups.
2. The few negative comments among interviewees included concerns about the membership of specific advisory groups, e.g., too few members on Bilingual Advisory Committees representing languages other than Spanish; too few parents involved in school site councils at selected school sites; and the District Advisory Council is comprised primarily of African Americans, and a perception that, depending on the school, some school site council members are expected to rubber-stamp the principal's agenda rather than have an independent voice.
3. Some principals interviewed are in the process of restructuring one or more coordinating councils, with the goal of expanding into the community and including classified staff and other groups in the decision-making body.
4. Some schools have established leadership or management teams whose members represent every major site committee and each constituency on campus, as well as parent and classified staff representatives.

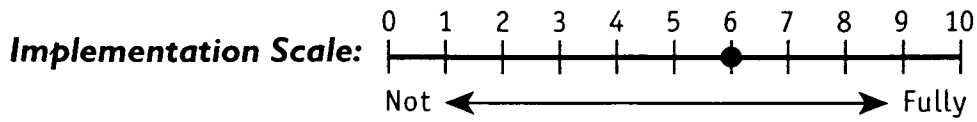
### **Recommendations**

1. Each individual council or committee member must be encouraged to play an active and meaningful role.
  - a. The district should provide training to all council and 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 also should 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 must be aware of individuals who dominate the discussion and ask the other members what they think about the issue.
  - c. The chair should ensure that members receive adequate background information on an issue and have an opportunity to hear divergent viewpoints.



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

**Standard Implemented: *Partially***



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

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews and surveys
3. Community member interviews
4. District advisory council/committees and school site council member interviews
5. Board minutes

### **Findings**

1. The District Advisory Council is viewed by some interviewees as not very effective. Awareness of the activities of the DAC is low, even among board members. None of the teachers or classified staff interviewed mentioned the DAC.
2. The English Language Learner District Advisory Council (ELAC) is generally seen by interviewees as more visible, active and effective. The ELAC submits quarterly reports to the board. Some interviewees noted that, when the board was considering eliminating positions in the bilingual office, the issue was first reviewed by the ELAC. Some felt the ELAC is able to affect political decisions because the district is under a court mandate that requires bilingual education issues to go through the ELAC. However, a few interviewees felt that the committee is ignored by the district.
3. The African American Education Task Force, Latino Education Task Force and Asian/Pacific Islander Education Task Force are seen by some interviewees as a good opportunity to address equity issues. The Asian/Pacific Islander Education Task Force has been trying, as yet unsuccessfully, to obtain disaggregated data from the district in order to assess programs for Asian/Pacific Islander students and develop effective programs for working with families, reduce violence and gang activity, develop mentor programs, develop curriculum, and develop a multicultural approach.

The Latino Education Task Force received very little mention in interviews, except for a few comments that the task force is relatively new.

However, the African American Education Task Force is perceived by some as having played a big role in the district's discussion of the ebonics issue (the task force resulted from the ebonics debate), and as having raised issues related to the high numbers of African American students being placed in special education and being suspended. The task force reportedly receives more district resources, staff and research assistance than the other task forces.

4. The Sexual Orientation Task Force has existed for about one year and, according to interviewees, is still struggling to get resources.
5. Having a Bilingual Advisory Council (BAC) at each school site is part of the bilingual education

compliance agreement and the district has difficulty meeting this standard. BACs at some schools are very active and are seen as ways to get parents involved, especially Latino parents. Some principals interviewed consider it good participation if 20-30 parents attend the monthly meeting, although one school reported that the BAC meeting draws 50-60 people. On many campuses the BAC is not at all active, however.

6. The effectiveness of school site councils (SSCs) varies considerably from school to school. Where they exist and were established early in the school year, most interviewees believe “they do well.” Coordinated Compliance Reviews at several school sites indicated there is no evidence that SSCs reviewed or approved the school plan.
7. Some interviewees expressed frustration that SSC actions are sometimes unable to be implemented because of district policies and practices. For example, one SSC member reported that, after raising money and purchasing a security system, the system has not been installed because of district rules that require a particular union group to do the installation even though it has been unable to do so.
8. Many principals interviewed hope their councils will be significantly involved in the site-based management process.
9. The majority (52.7 percent) of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that site councils are *not* very visible or active in the district (30.6 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 16.6 percent didn’t know). Classified staff members surveyed were more likely to agree or strongly agree that site councils are not visible or active (39.8 percent vs. 29.8 percent), but a large number did not know (30.3 percent). On a 5-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, the mean response for teachers was 3.39 and the mean for classified staff was 3.17.

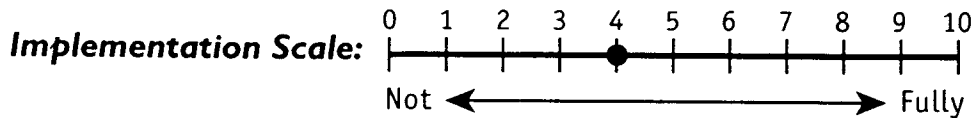
These findings are consistent with reports from the classified staff members surveyed that most have not served on a school site council or advisory committee (60.2 percent vs. 30.9 percent) and that they were not aware of or have had contact with a site council as an employee (44.7 percent vs. 39.4 percent).

## **Recommendations**

1. The district must clarify the roles and responsibilities of district and school site advisory groups and decision-making bodies.
  - a. In consultation with district and school site advisory groups, the board and Superintendent should review the roles and responsibilities of these groups to determine whether they can be used more effectively.
  - b. The district should update its policies and regulations that define the roles and responsibilities of district and school site councils and committees (see CR3.2 - outcome goals for advisory councils).
  - c. The district should provide training to district staff, principals, council and committee chairs and members regarding the roles and responsibilities of councils and committees and the appropriate role of the district office and principal in working with councils and committees (see CR3.3 - training for advisory council members).
2. District and school site councils and committees must perform their stated roles.

- a. The district should utilize district and school site advisory committees as opportunities to gather input on policies and district operations. The Superintendent or designee should refer proposed policies and critical issues to district-level and site-level advisory groups as appropriate to obtain their input and their advice regarding implementation.
- b. The Superintendent or designee should report back to the councils and 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. Regular reports to the board by district advisory councils and committees and task forces should be scheduled.

**Standard Implemented: *Partially***



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

#### Legal Standard

Policies exist for the establishment of school site councils. (EC 52852.5)

#### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) Handbook
3. School site plans
4. Coordinated Compliance Reviews

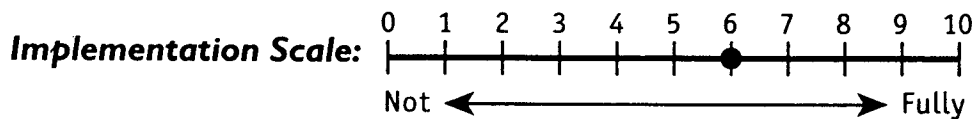
#### Findings

1. The establishment of a school site council for purposes of School-Based Program Coordination (Education Code 52852.5) is not addressed in the district's policy manual provided to CSBA, but is contained in the School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) handbook. The guidelines for selection and recruitment of SDMT members generally appear to comply with Education Code requirements. The handbook also provides sample bylaws, agendas and forms for minutes for the team's use.
2. Although nearly all district schools that are engaged in School-Based Program Coordination have established school site councils, the Coordinated Compliance Review for one school found no evidence of the establishment of a School Site Council. The CCR for another school found no evidence of peer selection in the establishment of the school site council.

#### Recommendations

1. The district should develop a policy and administrative bulletin addressing school site councils and School-Based Program Coordination for inclusion in the district's policy manual.
  - a. Because policy on this topic is mandated by law for districts participating in the program, the district should develop a policy and administrative regulation that address the need to establish a school site council for purposes of School-Based Program Coordination.

#### Standard Implemented: *Partially*



FCMAT 2961

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

### Legal Standard

School plans for School-Based Program Coordination exist at each school participating in the program. (EC 52850)

### Sources and Documentation

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

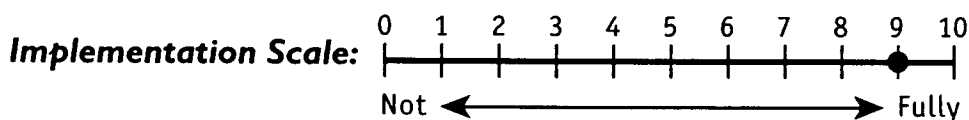
### Findings

1. All district schools participating in School-Based Program Coordination have school site plans.
- 2.. Although the policy manual did not contain a policy or regulation on School-Based Program Coordination, the district's draft School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) handbook includes a reference to the requirement for a comprehensive site plan.

### Recommendations

1. The district should develop a policy and administrative bulletin addressing School-Based Program Coordination in order to provide consistent direction to school sites and access to program information to all interested persons.
  - a. When reviewing and updating the district policy manual, the district should develop a policy and administrative regulation that address the purposes, goals and legal requirements of School-Based Program Coordination.

### Standard Implemented: *Fully-Substantial*



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

#### **Legal Standard**

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

#### **Sources and Documentation**

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

#### **Findings**

1. Education Code 52853 requires that school plans include an explicit statement of what the school seeks to accomplish by the coordinated use of categorical funds. It also requires that school plans address:
  - curricula, instructional strategies and materials responsive to the individual needs and learning styles of each student;
  - instructional and auxiliary services which meet the special needs of non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking students, educationally disadvantaged students, gifted and talented students, and students with exceptional needs;
  - a staff development program for teachers, other school personnel, paraprofessionals and volunteers, including those participating in special programs;
  - ongoing evaluation of the school's educational program;
  - the proposed expenditures of funds available to the school through this program, including but not limited to expenditures for salaries and staff benefits for persons providing services for those programs; and
  - other activities and objectives established by the site council.
2. A review of most of the school site plans in the district showed that they were thorough and met the statutory obligations.
3. Although the policy manual did not contain a policy or regulation on School-Based Program Coordination, general information on the content of the comprehensive site plan is included in the district's draft School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) handbook. It explains that the plan must describe specific educational goals, plans for meeting those goals, budget requirements, and criteria for assessing achievement of the goals.
4. Coordinated Compliance Reviews found no evidence that the school site plan was reviewed and approved by the applicable advisory groups in several schools; see CR3.10.

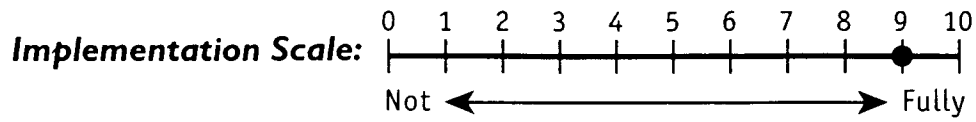
#### **Recommendations**

1. The district should provide easily accessible information to school sites about the content required to be included in school site plans for School-Based Program Coordination.
  - a. The district should develop a policy and administrative bulletin on School-Based Program Coordination which includes the elements required to be addressed in the school plan pursuant to Education Code 52853.

**FCMAT 2963**

- b. The district's SDMT handbook should include the specific elements required to be addressed in the school plan pursuant to Education Code 52853.

**Standard Implemented: Fully-Substantial**





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

### **Legal Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

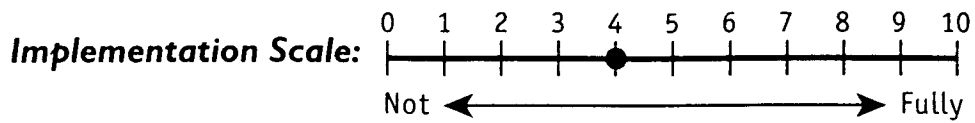
### **Findings**

1. The district policy manual did not contain a policy on School-Based Program Coordination, but the district's draft School Site Decision-Making Team (SDMT) handbook states that the site plan must be "adopted" every four years and evaluated and modified each subsequent year. This is consistent with Education Code 52853 and 52857, which provide that the site council must review the school plan annually, revise it as necessary to reflect changing needs and priorities, and establish a new budget. Any changes made by the site council must be approved or disapproved by the board, with specific reasons stated for disapproval.
2. Coordinated Compliance Reviews found no evidence that the school site plan was reviewed and approved by the applicable advisory groups in several schools. In addition, some CCRs found no evidence that the school site council had approved to even participate in School-Based Program Coordination as required by Education Code 52852.5.
3. It appears that all school plans ultimately are approved by the board in accordance with law.
4. One school reportedly lost a considerable amount of money because its annual school plan was not submitted on time.

### **Recommendations**

1. School site councils must annually review their comprehensive site plans and make revisions as necessary in accordance with law.
  - a. The district should develop a policy and administrative bulletin on School-Based Program Coordination which includes the approval process required by Education Code 52853 and 52855.
  - b. The district's SDMT handbook should include the approval process for site plans pursuant to Education Code 52853 and 52855.
  - c. The principal at each school participating in School-Based Program Coordination should ensure that the school site council is appropriately involved in the annual review of site plans.
  - d. When the board approves each school's site plan, it should determine whether or not the school site council was appropriately involved in the approval process at the site level.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 4.1 Policy

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Policy manual
2. Staff interviews and surveys
3. Parent focus groups
4. Parent survey
5. Project staff's own experience requesting policies

### **Findings**

1. Policies are written and contained in a manual, but the coding system can be confusing. Topics generally are grouped within each section, but the order of topics within the section is not clearly organized. It appears that the coding system has been in use since the 1970s. In addition, the numbers assigned to board policies may not correspond to the numbers in the administrative bulletins, e.g., BP 5010 addresses Detention while AB 5010 addresses Required and Prohibited Instruction. References in the administrative bulletins may not be the correct citation or may not exist.
2. Policy manuals are placed at each school site and at the district office.
3. The public information officer is responsible for distributing new or revised policies. There are plans to put the policy manual on the district's Internet web site.
4. Nothing in the policy manual addresses the process that will be used to distribute policies and update policy manuals.
5. When asked whether policy changes are conveyed to them in writing, the majority of teachers surveyed said they are not (52.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that changes are communicated in writing; 38.9 percent agreed or strongly agreed; 9.0 percent were neutral/didn't know), while the majority of classified staff members surveyed said they are (60.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed; 32.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed; 8.0 percent were neutral/didn't know). On a scale of 1-5 with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, the mean response for teachers was 2.68 and the mean response for classified staff was 3.48.
6. Some principals interviewed commented that administrative bulletins are distributed to them within large monthly information packets, making it easy for them to get lost.
7. Many people are informed of board policies by watching the board meetings televised on the district station.
8. Some district administrators interviewed reported that parents often are not aware of the changing requirements for middle school and high school graduation. Parent surveys show positive reaction from parents about the information they receive regarding district policies: 45.6 percent

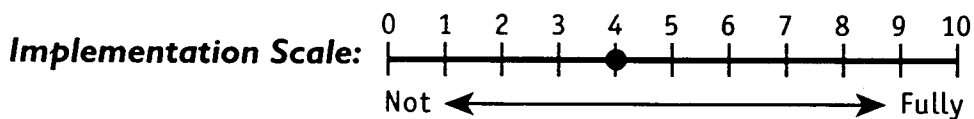
strongly agreed and 34.7 percent agreed (total 80.3 percent) that they have been informed in writing of district policies regarding attendance, grades, health or other matters affecting their child's education.

9. District staff members were responsive in providing the policy manual to project staff, but the manual is missing a number of policies that are known to exist.

### **Recommendations**

1. The district should review and revise its policy coding system to improve access to district policies and ease of use.
  - a. District staff should review the index of CSBA's sample policy manual and determine if the district wishes to align its numbering system with CSBA's current coding system.
  - b. District staff should align the numbering system for administrative bulletins with the numbering system for board policies.
2. The district must develop an organized system for distributing policies and procedures to staff and making them available for public viewing.
  - a. The Superintendent or designee should assign appropriate staff to oversee and implement the district's policy distribution process. In addition, staff at each school site should be assigned the responsibility of inserting updates into the policy manual located at that site.
  - b. The Superintendent or designee should work toward simplifying the distribution of new and revised policies through the use of technology, such as placing the district's policy manual on the Internet or on a compact disk, and ensuring that appropriate district staff and principals have access to computers with online and CD-ROM capability.
  - c. As new policies are adopted or existing policies revised, the Superintendent or designee should use a variety of means to notify staff, parents and other interested persons regarding major content changes. Depending on the policy topic, these might include in-service, flyers, the district newsletter, the district's Internet site, the parent handbook, news releases or other appropriate means.

### **Standard Implemented: *Partially***



## 4.2 Policy

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. Policies in the 1000, 4000, 7000 and 9000 sections of the district manual do not include adoption dates so it is difficult to determine their recentness. Other policies, however, have been reviewed fairly recently. Policies in the 3000, 5000, 6000, 8000, 10000 and 11000 sections generally seem to have been adopted between June and November 1996. Policies in the 2000 section were last revised in March 1997.

The approval dates of the administrative bulletins are listed in the table of contents, and reveal that most were approved in the late 1970s and mid-1980s. If these are the most current bulletins available, one might expect a disconnect between the policies, adopted more recently, and the procedures intended to implement those policies.

2. It might be expected that the older policies and administrative bulletins might not reflect current law, but a thorough audit of the district's policy manual would be needed to confirm this finding. A sampling of seven policies and regulations showed that three complied with law and four did not. On the other hand, most (about 65 percent) of the policies mandated by law (see CR4.3) have undergone some change in the last four years.
3. Some parents expressed frustration dealing with the district because there is not a common understanding of procedures and regulations.
4. The district subscribes to CSBA's Policy Reference Update Service and CD-ROM policy service, which provide sample policies and regulations three times a year. The policy manual received by CSBA does not incorporate these updates.

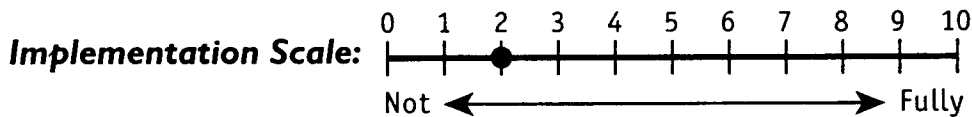
### **Recommendations**

1. The district must place a high priority on reviewing and updating its policies and procedures in order to provide consistent direction to staff, students and the public.
  - a. District staff should use the sample policies it obtains as a subscriber to CSBA's policy services as a starting point for reviewing the district's policies and administrative bulletins. If staff time is limited, the district should consider contracting with an outside entity to provide the services of a policy consultant to work with district staff; this consultant must be knowledgeable about current law and appropriate policy content.

**FCMAT 2969**

2. Once the district's policy manual is brought up to date, the Superintendent or designee must develop a process for continual review and updating of the policy manual.
  - a. As each new or revised policy is adopted, the board should determine the means by which the policy will be evaluated in the future, being as specific as possible about the information the board would like, e.g., quarterly reports on the number of students suspended, transferred between schools or referred to alternative programs under a new student discipline policy. Although it would be impractical to require reports on each policy, the board must monitor the effectiveness of those policies that are of special interest to the community or that may have a substantial impact on student learning.
  - b. Appropriate staff members from each department should be assigned and held accountable for recommending new or revised policies and procedures related to their area of operation, and one staff person should be assigned to oversee the entire policy manual and notify appropriate staff when policies or administrative bulletins have not been reviewed in a timely manner.
  - c. The district might consider holding regular and routine reviews of sections of the policy manual at board meetings.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 4.3 Policy

### Legal Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual

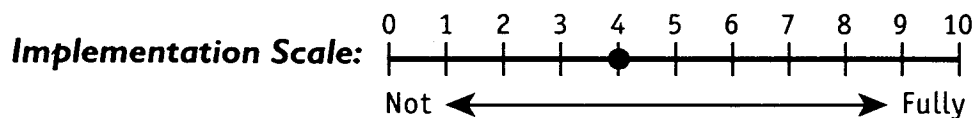
### Findings

1. CSBA has identified 51 cases in which state or federal laws require the board to adopt a policy or specific policy language. The district has fulfilled 36 of these mandates (70 percent) (see Attachment D). Of the 36 mandated policies found in the district policy manual provided to CSBA, 11 need to be updated to conform to current law.
2. An additional 32 policies are mandated if the district participates in certain state or federal programs, e.g., if a district operates a Gifted and Talented Education program, it must have a related policy. A thorough audit of the district's policy manual would be necessary to determine whether the district participates in those programs which would require those policies.

### Recommendations

1. In reviewing and updating the district's policy manual (see CR4.2), the first priority should be on ensuring compliance with policy mandates.
  - a. The district should review the list of mandated policies from CSBA (the district is currently entitled to this list as a subscriber to CSBA's policy services) and consult district legal counsel about any additional known mandates.
  - b. District staff should determine which additional policies are mandated based on the programs offered by the district.
  - c. The district should use available resources described in CR4.2 to develop new policies as needed and to review existing mandated policies to ensure that the policy language reflects current law.
2. To ensure that the district continues to adopt policies in accordance with law, the district must establish a process for identifying new mandates.
  - a. The district should review updated lists of mandated policies available through CSBA for districts which subscribe to the association's policy services and direct the district's legal counsel to notify the Superintendent and board of any new mandated policies.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



FCMAT 2971

## 4.4 Policy

### Legal Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Board agendas
3. Board minutes
4. Parent focus groups

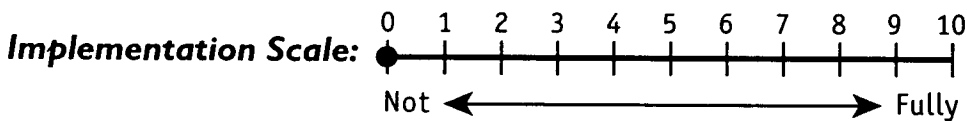
### Findings

1. Policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular and cocurricular activities were not found in the policy manual provided to CSBA.
2. A review of board agendas and minutes from 1997 to 1999 did not find annual reviews of these policies.
3. Most parents interviewed in focus groups seemed to know the process for transferring children to other schools.

### Recommendations

1. The board must annually review those policies for which annual review is mandated by law.
  - a. The district should develop policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular and cocurricular activities.
  - b. The Superintendent or designee should schedule an annual review of the district's policies on intradistrict open enrollment and extracurricular and cocurricular activities at a designated board meeting each year.
  - c. The Superintendent or designee should assign staff and committees to recommend any changes needed at that time.

**Standard Implemented: Not**





## 4.5 Policy

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

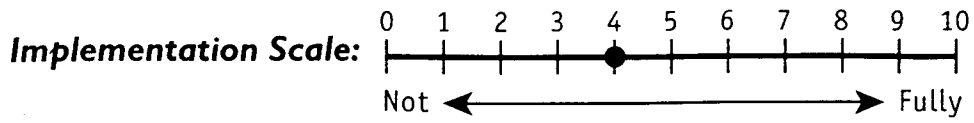
1. Anyone in the district or community may initiate a policy or suggest revision of an existing policy. Policy review then begins within the board committee structure with the involvement of district-level staff. In some cases depending on the policy topic, the district may establish a special task force consisting of staff, community members and experts. Such a task force was appointed to develop the district's site-based management policy. A district administrator who was involved in crafting the district's site-based management policy said a lot of input on the draft policy was obtained from school sites and from the two employee organizations. On the other hand, a principal cited board decisions regarding course requirements as an example of a case in which the board made policy without sufficient discussion or input from schools.
2. The policy manual does not contain a policy, administrative bulletin or bylaw addressing the process of policy development and review.
3. Staff was surveyed regarding the extent to which they believe staff and district administrators are in close agreement on school policy. The majority of classified staff (58.3 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that there is close agreement on school policy (28.8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed and 12.9 percent were neutral/didn't know). The majority (56.3 percent) of teachers, on the other hand, disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is close agreement on school policy (33.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed and 10.1 percent were neutral/didn't know).
4. Also see CR1.2 - staff input into school and district operations.

### **Recommendations**

1. The district must implement an effective process that uses staff expertise to develop policy recommendations and policy drafts for the board's consideration.
  - a. The district should adopt a policy and administrative bulletin addressing the process of policy development and review. This process should include opportunities for district staff, site administrators, teachers and classified staff to provide input on proposed policies.
  - b. The district should ensure that staff has access to a variety of sources of policy information to use in reviewing and developing policy recommendations.
  - c. Board committees should schedule policy discussions as a regular part of committee meetings. Similarly, the board president and Superintendent should schedule policy discussions as a regular part of board meetings.

**FCMAT 2973**

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 4.6 Policy

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

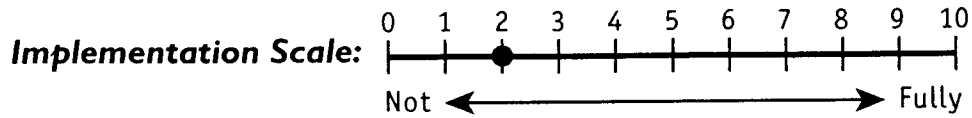
1. Policy review tends to occur within the board committee structure, which provides opportunities for public comment during committee meetings. In addition, members of the public have an opportunity to speak on any issue during regular board meetings (see CR6.7).
2. The district policy manual does not contain a policy, administrative bulletin or bylaw addressing the process of policy development and review.
3. District advisory councils/committees typically are not used to solicit input on district policies and operations. See CR3.5 - appropriate input from parents and community members in collaboratives and advisory councils and CR3.6 - effective fulfillment of collaborative and advisory council responsibilities.
4. The district has recently established a policy on site-based management which is intended to give school sites (including parents) a greater say on issues that affect school sites. The policy has not yet been fully implemented.
5. When asked in a survey whether board members pay attention to the needs of parents, parents had mixed opinions, with more tending to say that the board does not pay attention to parents' needs: 15.4 percent strongly disagreed that the board pays attention, 20.0 percent disagreed, 19.2 percent were neutral/didn't know, 22.3 percent agreed and 23.0 percent strongly agreed.
6. The majority of teachers surveyed (51.2 percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that parents have a large say in board decisions (30.1 percent agreed or strongly agreed and 18.6 percent were neutral/didn't know). Classified staff members were more likely than teachers or parents to believe that parents do have a large say in board decisions (47.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 38.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 14.4 percent were neutral/didn't know). The mean response for teachers was 2.59 compared with a mean of 3.13 for classified staff on a 5-point scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.
7. Although the policy has been adopted, there is not a common understanding within the district and community on what site based management represents.

FCMAT 2975

**Recommendations**

1. The district must follow an effective policy development process that includes opportunities for input from parents and community members.
  - a. The district should adopt a policy and administrative bulletin addressing the process of policy development and review. This process should include opportunities for parents and community members to be involved in the early stages of policy development.
  - b. The district should maximize the use of existing structures, such as district and school site councils and committees, to gather input on policies and district operations.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 4.7 Policy

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews
4. Board minutes
5. Parent focus groups
6. Observations of board meetings

### **Findings**

1. The board typically adheres to the policies in its policy manual. However, there have been recent controversial policies that some perceive have not been implemented.
2. Some interviewees expressed concerns about the extent to which some individual board members do not publicly support the decisions made by the board as a whole; see CR5.5 - Individual board members respect the decisions of the board majority and support the board's actions in public.
3. A two-hour discussion about truancy during a board meeting did not include articulation of the district's existing policy on truancy.
4. "Supporting" policies also means facilitating their implementation by providing the necessary funding, considering the policy implications of collective bargaining agreements, evaluating the effectiveness of policies and making adjustments as necessary, etc. Yet some interviewees said that some policies were adopted without consideration for the availability of teachers and facilities, and confusion about what decisions are being delegated in the district's site-based management policy has caused considerable frustration among site-level staff.
5. Although the board needs to uphold its own policies, it needs to hold the Superintendent accountable for implementing board policies and the Superintendent needs to hold other staff accountable. A number of interviewees believe that the breakdown in district policy occurs at the implementation level, where the connection between programs and policies is "stretched" and often the program is not developed to support a given policy. Specific examples of the failure to follow adopted policies were cited, including policies related to social promotion, mandatory summer school and truancy. One district administrator noted that the board and district staff members lose sight of the original meaning of a policy and suggested that "if we can't follow [a policy], go back and change it."

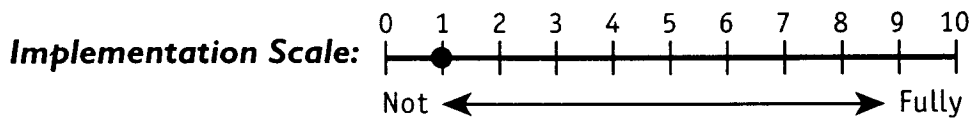
### **Recommendations**

1. The district's policies must become a resource for district and board decision making.
  - a. District staff should include in the board agenda any existing policy language that is pertinent to the current issue being addressed by the board.

**FCMAT 2977**

- b. As policies are being considered by the board, district staff should provide information about the potential impact of the policy on the district's budget, collective bargaining agreement, curriculum, staffing and facilities needs, and other operations.
- c. The Superintendent or designee should ensure that plans and administrative procedures are developed to support each board policy adopted, that appropriate staff members are assigned to carry out related responsibilities, and that those staff members are held accountable through the evaluation process.
- d. If the board continues to approve administrative regulations, it should ensure that those procedures conform with the intent of the policy adopted by the board, recognizing that there is more than one way to implement each policy and that deciding *how* to implement policies is the Superintendent's responsibility.
- e. The board should direct the Superintendent to provide periodic reviews of selected policies at board meetings to determine whether policies are being implemented and whether they are achieving the desired results.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.1 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

### Legal Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. Board member interviews
2. County registrar information
3. District roster of employees

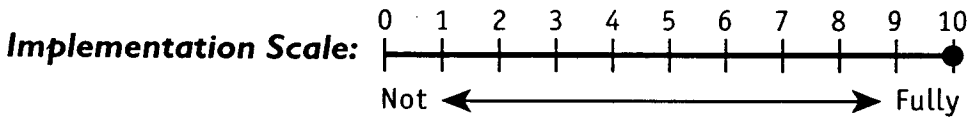
### Findings

1. Each board member meets the eligibility requirements of Education Code 35107, which include requirements that a board member be: (1) 18 years or older; (2) a citizen of the state; (3) a resident of the school district; and (4) a registered voter.
2. Education Code 35107 also specifies that district employees may not be board members; none of the board members is an employee of the district.

### Recommendations

None needed.

### Standard Implemented: Fully-Sustained



## 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. CSBA records on conference attendance

### **Findings**

1. Some board members feel that most board workshops are not relevant to urban districts.
2. Participation in CSBA board development events has been sporadic in the past five years. In that time district representatives (either board members or staff) have attended CSBA's Annual Education Conference, New Board Member Institute, Forecast Conference, Legal Symposium, Back to School Conference, Curriculum Institute, School-to-Career Seminar, Class Size Reduction Seminar, Brown Act Seminar, and conferences designed to address the unique needs of Asian/Pacific Islander and African American students. However, not all board members attend these events. One board member attended multiple events in 1995 and 1998, but participation by other board members is very low. District staff members have attended more CSBA events than board members have.
3. The district also is entitled to two seats on CSBA's Delegate Assembly, the association's primary policy-making body. The district has sent delegates but participation is spotty. The same board member who participates the most in CSBA training is the one who generally represents the district at the Delegate Assembly, and also in CSBA committees and task forces.
4. Board members sometimes attend workshops conducted by the National School Boards Association. One board member serves as president of NSBA's urban council.
5. Some interviewees feel that this board has less experienced members compared with past boards and could benefit from continuing training on board roles and responsibilities.

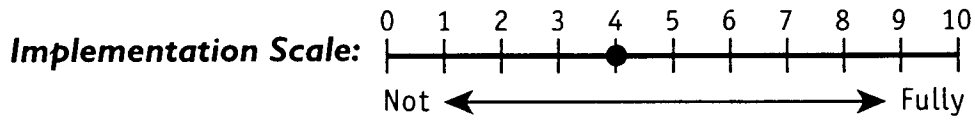
### **Recommendations**

1. All district board members must participate in continuing education specifically designed to increase board members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities, boardsmanship and critical education issues that affect the schools.
  - a. The district's board development agenda should be coordinated by the governance team. The board should work together to develop an annual schedule of workshops which will meet the board's needs. The Superintendent or designee should assist in identifying and recommending educational opportunities.
  - b. The district might contract with an outside firm to conduct a single-district workshop tailored to meet the district's needs or to provide board development on an ongoing basis.
  - c. Board members and the Superintendent should attend workshops and conferences together whenever possible for team building and equal access to information.



- d. The Superintendent and other appropriate staff should provide an orientation session for each new board member in order to become familiarized with district policies and practices.
- 2. To maximize the benefits of board development events, board members should share their knowledge and experiences with each other and the Superintendent.
  - a. After participating in a board development activity, board members should report to the full board about what they learned and possible implications for the district. Ideas about successful programs and practices also should be forwarded to the Superintendent.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 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. Superintendent interview
3. Staff interviews

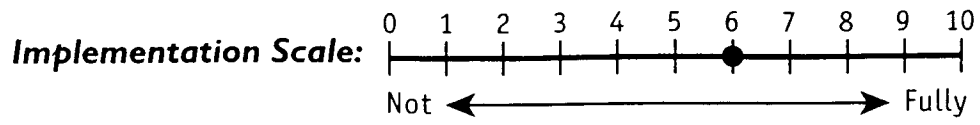
### **Findings**

1. The district's legal office includes three full-time attorneys, a contract attorney and a risk analyst. Legal counsel attends all board meetings and board committee meetings, has provided training to the board, and offers informal advice upon request. It is estimated that 15 percent of the office's support goes to the board while 85 percent goes to district administration.
2. The district is a member of CSBA and thus obtains CSBA publications and other informational services which include information about the roles and responsibilities of school boards.
3. The district subscribes to CSBA's policy services and thus has access to that source of information about board authority and relevant statutes.
4. Some individual board members have attended CSBA board development events which address board roles and responsibilities, although participation by other board members is low (see CR5.2 - participation in conferences and workshops).
5. Board members generally are viewed as knowledgeable, but some interviewees noted the need for the board to adhere to its appropriate policy-making role (see CR5.10 - the board restricts itself to a policy-making role and does not attempt to administer policies and CR5.11 - no individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility) and to enhance its boardsmanship skills in order to work together better as a team (see CR5.4 - functional working relations among board).

### **Recommendations**

1. The board must continually enhance its knowledge and understanding of board roles and responsibilities.
  - a. The district should contract with an outside firm to conduct a pre-assessment of the board's current level of knowledge and understanding of board roles and responsibilities. Such a pre-assessment would help to target training on issues that would be most beneficial to the board and district. A self-evaluation component would allow board members to evaluate their own areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
  - b. Depending on the results of the pre-assessment, the district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide training to the board on its responsibilities in vision setting, curriculum, program accountability, policy, finance, school facilities, human resources, collective bargaining, community leadership and boardsmanship (see CR5.2 - participation in conferences and workshops).

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



**FCMAT 2983**

## 5.4 Board Roles/Boardmanship

### **Professional Standard**

Functional working relations are maintained among board members.

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. The board is often described by interviewees as not unified. The board is sometimes split 4-3 based on their philosophy about how to move the district forward.
2. Recent political issues have included the dismissal of the previous Superintendent, the decision to dismantle the risk management office, and budget issues. However, board meetings are described by some interviewees as less tumultuous and more peaceful in recent months.
3. Despite differing viewpoints, the board members report that they respect each other and work well together. Five of six board members reported courteous working relationships with fellow board members; one of these believes that, though respectful, board members should collaborate more. Observations of board meetings confirm that board members generally are respectful of one another even when they disagree.
4. Because of the board committee structure, the board conducts most of its debates in committee. Thus, much of the agenda for the regular board meetings consists of consent items.
5. Board members show a strong commitment to the district and take their responsibilities seriously, as evidenced by the amount of time they spend on board business. Board work may comprise one-half to three-quarters time work. Four board members reported from 15 to 30 hours a week on board business.
6. In staff surveys, the majority of teachers (54.2 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that there seems to be a lot of conflict among board members about the goals of the district (a large percentage, 32.2 percent, were neutral/didn't know and 13.5 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed). A similar pattern was found among classified staff surveyed: 51.8 percent agreed or strongly agreed that there is a lot of conflict among board members, 38.8 percent were neutral/didn't know, and 9.5 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.
7. When asked in a survey whether board efforts in the past year or two have been generally helpful in terms of improving the district's educational programs, the majority of classified staff (54.2 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that board efforts have been helpful (most of the rest were neutral/didn't know). Teachers surveyed tended to have the opposite opinion: the majority (51.2

percent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that board efforts have been helpful (28.1 percent agreed or strongly agreed and 20.6 percent were neutral/didn't know).

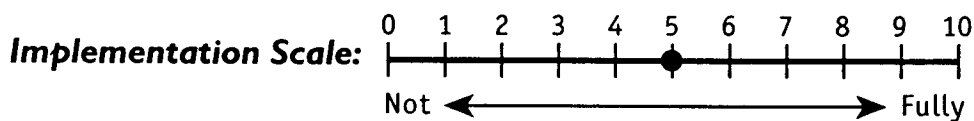
Like classified staff, the majority of parents (52.3 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that board efforts have been helpful in the past year or two (with 19.5 percent neutral/didn't know). However, more parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that board members never seem to get anything done (47.0 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 33.5 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 19.5 percent were neutral/didn't know).

8. Some interviewees felt the board is not as effective as it could be because there is no unified vision.
9. The lack of a single board spokesperson and the tendency for individual board members to state their own personal opinions to the media (see CR1.5 - spokespersons have been identified and 1.6 - spokespersons are skilled at public speaking and communication) create the impression of a board that is not united.
10. Also see CR5.5 - board member support for majority decisions; CR5.13 - board acts for the community; and CR4.7 - board supports and follows its own policies.

### **Recommendations**

1. Board members must maintain a respectful relationship with each other and focus on their common interest in serving students.
  - a. The board should consider conducting a board retreat with an outside facilitator for the purpose of studying leadership/personal/management styles, agreeing on tenets of effective boardsmanship and developing norms of conduct, and focusing on a common task.
2. The board president should exhibit leadership skills, model desirable behaviors, and conduct board meetings in a way that keeps the board on task.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide the board president with a workshop designed to enhance leadership skills in keeping the board functioning as a team.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



**FCMAT 2985**

## 5.5 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

NOTE: Maintaining a united front is difficult for many school boards. Members are elected as individuals, must be responsive to their constituencies, and have a right to their own beliefs and values. To be effective, however, these individuals must make the difficult transition to being a member of a governance team. This does not mean giving up one's own convictions. There is a distinction between supporting the board majority's action and not undercutting that action. Individual board members do not need to advocate what they do not believe. The time to state one's opinion is during the board discussion. Then, once a decision has been reached, all board members need to accept the majority's decision and not undermine it.

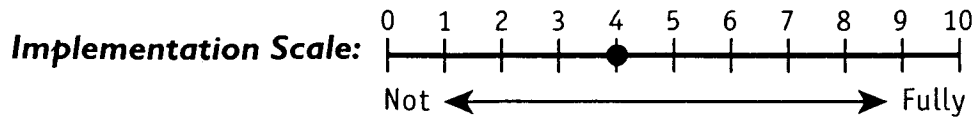
1. Some individual board members have direct contact with members of the media and sometimes present their personal viewpoints which may differ from the board's decision on an issue (see CR1.5 - spokespersons have been identified and 1.6 - spokespersons are skilled at public speaking and communication).
2. Many interviewees stated that the board is not a cohesive body and board members are not on the same page; see CR5.4 - functional working relations among board. Although disagreement and debate are to be expected during board meetings, the board does need to move forward in unity once a decision is made.
3. The district policy manual does not include a policy or bylaw addressing public statements by board members.

### **Recommendations**

1. Board members must make a commitment to respect the majority's decision regardless of their own personal opinions.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm for a boardsmanship workshop. Among the issues addressed in such workshop should be the authority of the board as a whole to take action vs. the role of individual board members, and the public spokesperson role of board members.
  - b. The district should clarify who has authority to speak to the media on behalf of the district (see CR1.5 - spokespersons have been identified).
  - c. If an individual board member must publicly present a personal opinion, which is contrary to the board position, that board member must clarify that this is a personal viewpoint that does not represent the board's position.

- d. The district should counteract contrary statements by engaging in proactive media relations to ensure that accurate position statements are available. In addition, proactive media relations should highlight those issues on which there is strong consensus among the board.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.6 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 and surveys
4. Community member interviews
5. Parent focus groups
6. Observations of board meetings
7. News articles/other media

### **Findings**

1. A number of interviewees felt that the board treated the previous administration unfairly, describing the previous Superintendent as the scapegoat for other problems.
2. Despite some concerns about the conditions under which the interim Superintendent was appointed, board members generally believe that he is doing a good job. Relations with the Superintendent are stronger with some board members than others, but the majority believe the Superintendent is credible and “works for us now.”
3. Board members similarly express support for the entire management “team of three.” One board member noted that different people seem to have different expectations of the management team and they may have thought that a change in management would “do everything.” Still, each manager is seen as doing a good job by the board.
4. The Superintendent reports functional working relations with the board. He feels that the board as a whole has not tried to micromanage the district and that the board has not tried to undermine his authority regarding employee dismissals.
5. However, a lack of trust is indicated when individual board members attempt to resolve problems themselves rather than refer matters to the Superintendent; see CR5.11 - individual board members exercising administrative responsibility.
6. There are examples of a lack of communication between the administration and the board. For example, the board did not appear knowledgeable about the reasons for the delay in implementation of the site-based management policy.
7. Also see CR5.7 - public respect and support for district staff.

### **Recommendations**

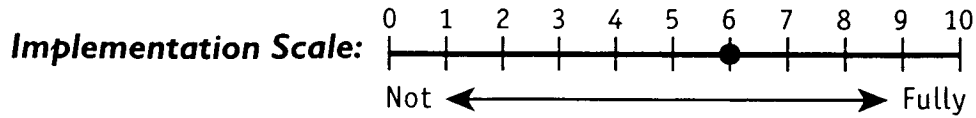
1. The board and administration must continually work towards increasing their level of trust and cooperation in order to move the district forward.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide a workshop to the



board and Superintendent on boardmanship in general and board-Superintendent relations in particular.

- b. The board and Superintendent must engage in regular, proactive communication with each other. For example, the Superintendent should notify the full board whenever one board member has a request for information or action.

**Standard Implemented: *Partially***



## 5.7 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 and surveys
4. Observations of board meetings
5. News articles/other media

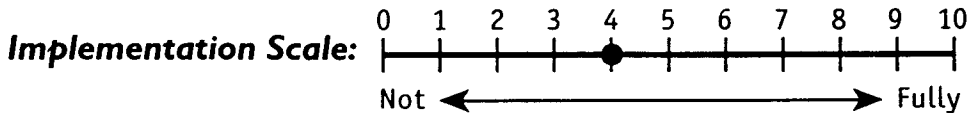
### Findings

1. Observations of the public treatment of staff by the board at board meetings show that staff reports were well received and pertinent questions asked. However, some district staff interviewed said they felt unsupported by the board.
2. Few site-level staff members report interaction with the board except on those occasions when individual board members visit the school, and few attend or watch televised board meetings. Dealing with the board is seen as the Superintendent's job. On occasion, some staff members report "interference" when some board members get involved in those problems reported directly to them by parents or others (see CR5.11 - individual board members exercising administrative responsibility).

### Recommendations

1. The board and Superintendent must be sensitive as to how their statements influence staff morale and the public's perception of the district.
  - a. Board members must be careful not to show disrespect to staff members in public or to undermine their authority for the day-to-day operations of the schools. Rather, the board should direct any concerns to the Superintendent and have the Superintendent report back on how the problem is being resolved or the reasons it is not being resolved.
  - b. Board members should increase their visibility at school sites throughout the district, using those visits as opportunities to thank staff for the successes happening on school sites as well as obtaining staff input on issues. In doing so, board members must be careful not to "side" with a staff person or to make promises to fix a problem.
  - c. The board and Superintendent should praise publicly staff for a job well done and should consider other rewards and incentives to encourage staff to do their best.

### Standard Implemented: **Partially**



## 5.8 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. Board meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. and typically end anywhere between 10:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. Although the late hour might discourage the public from attending the entire meeting, public input is usually the second or third item, beginning close to 7:30 p.m. About two hours of public comments is typical. Attendance at board meetings appears to be high, with audiences of 50-100.
2. Only a couple of board members at a time appear to be attentive during the public input sessions. Sometimes board members speak among themselves, look bored, leave the room, shuffle through paper, etc. Some interviewees feel that some members of the board belittle or dismiss the comments of speakers.
3. Although public input is high, there is not a broad group of people addressing the board; the same individuals appear to speak at most meetings. These persons may speak several times in one night on a variety of issues, and are highly critical of the board and district.
4. Some interviewees reported that there is a lot of name-calling and defamation that occurs during board meetings directed toward board members by members of the public. It is perceived that this is beginning to improve.

District policy (BP 2075) states that each speaker, under law, is responsible for comments made in a meeting of the board or a committee. While the board will not censure any person's speech, speakers are expected to present all remarks courteously within the time limit permitted for such comments. At the same time, board members are free to express criticism of remarks they believe are prejudicial or biased against other groups. They are free to remind speakers that prejudicial speech is antithetical to the aims of the educational endeavor. If a speaker uses obscenities or speaks in a demanding, loud, insulting and demeaning manner, the chair may calmly and politely admonish the speaker to communicate civilly.

5. Participation by Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders is low. The board meetings do not appear to have translation services available, or the translation is inaccurate when someone in the audience tries to translate.

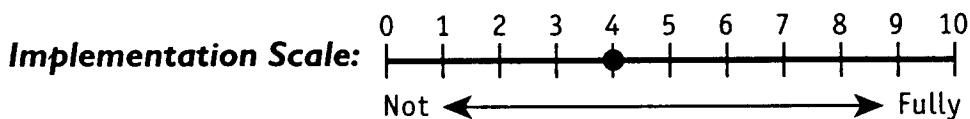
FCMAT 2991

6. When asked whether the board actively welcomes parents to give their opinions during board meetings, the majority of parents (64.4 percent) agreed or strongly agreed (19.2 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed and 16.4 percent were neutral/didn't know). Also see CR4.6 for survey results about the extent to which parents believe that board members pay attention to the needs of parents.
7. Teachers and classified staff surveyed had very mixed opinions as to whether or not public participation is not really encouraged by the board, with both being slightly more likely to believe the board does *not* encourage public participation. Among teachers, 42.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed that participation is not encouraged, 30.6 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 26.6 percent were neutral/didn't know. Among classified staff, 33.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed that participation is not encouraged, 30.8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 35.8 percent were neutral/didn't know.
8. Also see CR6.7 - legal requirements for providing public input opportunities during board meetings, and CR4.6 - citizen input in policy development and district operation.

### **Recommendations**

1. The board must ensure that its behaviors and actions invite public input and relay the message that the board is truly interested in the public's viewpoints.
  - a. The district should provide or contract with an outside firm to provide board training on communication with the public. Such training might include an opportunity for board members to view themselves in a videotaped board meeting to watch for instances in which their words or nonverbal actions were disrespectful to speakers. It also should include ways to deal with confrontations or criticisms.
  - b. Because the members of the public who speak at board meetings tend to be the same individuals each time, the board needs to develop other mechanisms to ensure broad input from the public, e.g., better use of advisory groups as sounding boards.
  - c. Effective translation must be provided at board meetings to facilitate participation of limited-English-speaking individuals. The district should consider the use of headset translation so the translation can occur simultaneously.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.9 Board Roles/Boardmanship

### **Professional Standard**

Board members respect confidentiality of information by the administration.

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

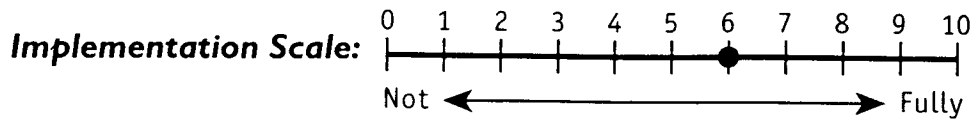
### **Findings**

1. Most interviewees felt that confidentiality is “occasionally” or “sometimes” a problem with a few of the board members.
2. Several specific examples were noted that gave the impression confidentiality was being violated, including a board member’s comment to the press regarding salary increases during a time of negotiations, and board members leaving a controversial closed session and immediately talking on their cell phones. Breaches appear to involve primarily negotiations issues; there appear to be no leaks about student or teacher discipline issues.
3. Lack of experience with the media was sometimes cited by interviewees as a reason for breaches of confidentiality; the media is sophisticated at getting board members to provide information.
4. Board Policy 2054 - Closed Sessions (in the 1978-83 Board Operations manual) included a statement reflecting state law that “all matters discussed in closed session shall be kept confidential unless a majority of the board membership agrees not to hold such matters confidential.” However, in the 1997 Board Rules packet, the rules on closed sessions are contained in Rules 2041 and 2042, neither of which addresses the issue of board member disclosure of confidential information.

### **Recommendations**

1. The board must be knowledgeable about legal requirements and consequences pertaining to the release of confidential information, and must make a commitment to abide by the principles of confidentiality.
  - a. The district should adopt a bylaw addressing the disclosure of confidential and privileged information. Such a bylaw should include the definition of confidential and privileged information as provided in Government Code 1098, and should specify that confidential information from closed sessions shall not be divulged unless a majority of board members agree to release the information subject to applicable laws regarding closed sessions.
  - b. When the board is in doubt about the appropriateness of disclosing any information, it must consult its legal counsel.
  - c. Individual board members must demonstrate personal integrity in the handling of confidential matters. They must refrain from discussing such issues in public meetings, with friends or colleagues, or with the media.
  - d. Board members must be aware of perceived breaches and avoid situations which may appear to onlookers as a breach of confidentiality, e.g., using cell phones coming out of a closed session.

**Standard Implemented: *Partially***



## 5.10 Board Roles/Boardmanship

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

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

### **Findings**

1. Existing board policies spell out the appropriate distinction between the board's policy-making role and the Superintendent's implementation role. Board Policy 2002 reserves the authority for formulation and adoption of policies with the board, while BP 2003 delegates implementation of policies to the Superintendent. However, BP 1002 provides that board policies and administrative regulations are subject to board adoption and approval.
2. To determine whether or not the board attempts to "administer" policies in practice, the content of the existing policies was reviewed to determine if policies are overly prescriptive or administrative. The district's policies appear to be appropriate in terms of not including details that would be more appropriate in administrative regulation.
3. Most items included on board agendas are not too "administrative" although some interviewees expressed feelings that the board is not spending enough time on policy issues that impact student learning.
4. Teachers surveyed tended to agree or strongly agree (65.4 percent) that the board is not involved in the day-to-day operations of schools (21.6 percent were neutral/didn't know and 13.0 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed). Classified staff surveyed felt similarly (47.3 percent agreed or strongly agreed and 21.4 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, with a larger percentage, 31.3 percent, neutral/didn't know). It is impossible to say, however, if they were responding to the item with the full board or individual board members in mind.
5. Also see CR5.11 regarding the extent to which *individual* board members attempt to get involved in operational issues.

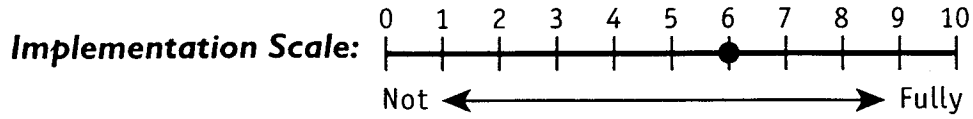
### **Recommendations**

1. The board must continue to focus on broad policy issues rather than administrative operations.
  - a. The board and Superintendent should design board agendas that provide the board with opportunities to discuss issues related to student achievement and educational programs, and that minimize discussion of operational issues.
  - b. As district policies are updated, careful attention must be paid to ensure that policies are not made overly prescriptive or administrative.

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- c. If the board continues to approve administrative bulletins, it should ensure that those procedures conform with the intent of the policy adopted by the board, recognizing that there is more than one way to implement each policy and that deciding *how* to implement policies is the Superintendent's responsibility.

**Standard Implemented: *Partially***





## 5.11 Board Roles/Boardmanship

### **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. Policy manual

### **Findings**

1. Board Policy 2012 addresses the limits of board authority and states that board members have no individual authority to commit the district to any policy, act or expenditure.
2. When individual board members are contacted by staff members or constituents about an issue, they tend to refer first-time callers to a principal or to the appropriate district staff person. If the caller calls again with an unresolved issue, the board member may refer the matter to the Superintendent or may try to take care of it personally or make a personal site visit. The parent handbook recommends that parents go to their board member when they have a concern. Also see CR2.5 - referral of informal public concerns.

Some board members may take the same approach to concerns expressed during public meetings. For example, when a student complained during a board meeting about conditions at his school and a teacher complained at a community meeting about the lack of textbooks, a board member offered to take care of the problems even though the Superintendent was in attendance and could have been asked to look into the concerns.

3. Some district staff members interviewed reported that, when they are called by board members, most often it is not to get a “heads-up” but rather to be confronted about problems reported by constituents or site staff. Many interviewees said that individual board members sometimes attempt to provide direction to staff.
4. Some principals interviewed expressed concerns about board members appearing on campuses when someone has gone to their school board member rather than the appropriate channels.
5. Trustee area elections seem to confuse community members about how to resolve their problems. The board member is seen as their direct advocate and intermediary.

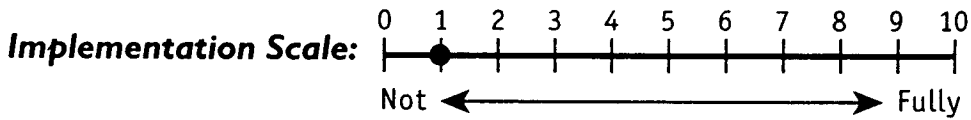
### **Recommendations**

1. Board members should respect the chain of command among district staff and address their questions or concerns to the Superintendent.
  - a. The Superintendent should clarify when, if ever, it is appropriate for board members to call district staff directly. For example, if a board member has a simple request for materials or a question about an agenda item, it might be more practical to go directly to the appropriate staff person. Similarly, if the Superintendent is unavailable, a board member might be

encouraged to contact another staff person. However, if the board member has a complaint or has a request that involves staff research or a significant amount of time, board member always should communicate directly with the Superintendent. It is the Superintendent's obligation to ensure that staff members are focused on the board's priorities, not the priorities of an individual board member.

- b. The Superintendent should instruct district staff as to how to respond to requests or calls from individual board members. They might be instructed to answer simple questions but to tell the board member that they will discuss more significant questions with the Superintendent. In addition, district administrators might be asked to notify the Superintendent regarding any questions or requests they receive from board members, whether big or small.
- c. The parent handbook should be revised to clarify that parents first should go to appropriate district or school staff rather than their board member if they have a concern. If staff, students, parents or others approach individual board members with a concern, they should offer to forward the concerns to the principal or Superintendent. They should not promise to "fix" it themselves or express an opinion that might be viewed as sympathetic or an implicit promise to assist.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 5.12 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board minutes

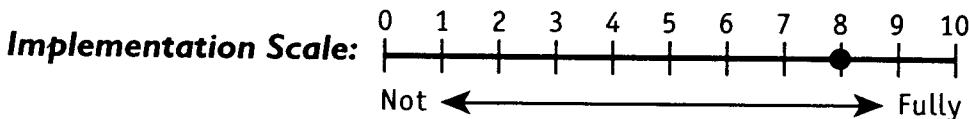
### **Findings**

1. Board minutes show that the previous Superintendent's employment contract was amended to extend time to establish "mutually agreeable performance criteria" for 1997-98. Discussions of the evaluation occurred at several board meetings, with the final evaluation conducted in September 1998 and the employment contract extended to June 30, 2000. That contract reflected plans to meet on mutually acceptable performance criteria for 1998-99 and to discuss progress toward district goals and objectives.
2. Subsequent minutes from February to April 1999 show several discussions of the Superintendent's evaluation and a public discussion of the appointment of an acting Superintendent, but do not reflect any problem with the Superintendent's performance. The perception by some interviewees was that the Superintendent was a "scapegoat" for the district's problems, but because the discussion was appropriately held in closed session, it is impossible to determine the reasons for the Superintendent's dismissal or the grounds upon which she was evaluated.
3. The current, interim Superintendent was appointed in August 1999 so has not been evaluated as yet.

### **Recommendations**

1. As the district engages in the selection of a new Superintendent, the board must establish criteria for Superintendent selection and evaluation which are aligned with the district's vision and goals.
  - a. Based on a vision for what the district hopes to achieve in the next few years, the board must identify criteria for Superintendent selection which specify the general characteristics, traits and qualifications desired. The board must use an effective selection process that allows it to identify and employ a candidate who shares its vision.
  - b. Upon hiring the Superintendent, and annually thereafter, the board should collaborate with the Superintendent to set priorities for the year among the district's goals and use those priorities to establish realistic annual performance expectations.

**Standard Implemented: Fully-Substantial**



FCMAT 2999

## 5.13 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. Staff interviews and surveys
3. Community member interviews
4. Parent focus groups

### **Findings**

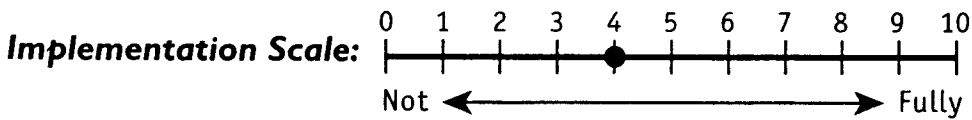
1. The most frequently stated reason that board members ran for office was the belief that they could make a difference and follow up on their ideas as to what might improve the district. Board members express desires to involve the community in schools and to protect the public's rights.
2. Because board members are elected by trustee area, the pervasive perception is that they represent the narrow interests of their area. This feeling is confirmed by interviewees who talk about "their" board member, by the visibility of board members at the schools in their area but not in the rest of the district, and by the way that constituent calls are made to the board member who is viewed as representing their interests. An exception occurs along racial and ethnic lines. Some constituents will contact board members on the basis of their race and ethnicity rather than their geographical area.
3. The district has established task forces to address issues related to specific racial and ethnic groups, but the effectiveness and impact of these task forces vary (see CR3.6 - effectiveness of community collaboratives and advisory councils). However, many interviewees believe that the interests of their racial and ethnic group are ignored. Some Latinos believe they are being discriminated against and that the bulk of the resources are going to African Americans; the ebonics debate was perceived as another example of an attempt to increase language resources for African American children (presumably at the expense of other students). Some African Americans note a disproportionate number of African American students in special education and suspensions, and express concerns about the underperformance of African American students.
4. A vast disparity between the "hill" schools and "flatland" schools supports the perception that resources are allocated differently. Some hill schools raise close to \$100,000 a year through fundraising but appear to receive the textbooks they need, have a more stable teaching and administrative staff, have better maintained campuses, and ability to obtain substitute teachers. Some of the differences fall under district authority, which makes it appear that hill schools receive favorable treatment.
5. Some interviewees believe that board members are more focused on reaching their own political aspirations than on the education of Oakland students. Board members are viewed as politically savvy but susceptible to the influence of city government or other political figures.

6. Also see CR5.4 - functional working relations among the board; CR4.6 - citizen input in policy development and district operations; CR2.6 - needs assessment; and CR2.9 - board member involvement in building community relations.

### **Recommendations**

1. The board must consider the needs and viewpoints of the entire community, as well as its own judgments and experiences, before making decisions.
  - a. The board and Superintendent should identify resource inequities across school sites and develop a plan and a budget to correct the deficiencies.
  - b. The board and Superintendent should evaluate programs in terms of their effectiveness with subpopulations of students to ensure that the needs of all students are being met.
  - c. The board and Superintendent should increase opportunities for broad-based input from community members (see CR4.6 - citizen input in policy development and district operations).
  
2. Board members must make a concerted effort to eliminate the perception that they represent a narrow geographical area rather than the entire district.
  - a. Board members should increase the number of visits to schools outside their trustee area.
  - b. District publications, the district web site, board agendas and minutes, other materials and public statements should avoid references that link schools with a single board member.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 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. (EC 35140)

### Sources and Documentation

1. Policy manual
2. Adopted board calendar
3. Board agendas and minutes
4. District web site

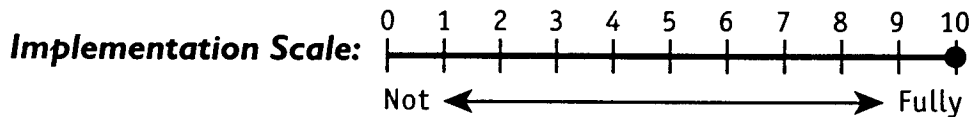
### Findings

1. Education Code 35140 requires that the board, by rule and regulation, fix the time and place for its regular meetings. The district's Board Policy 2029 provides that a schedule of meetings will be adopted at the board's annual organizational meeting. Board Policy 2035 states that regular meetings of the board shall be two Wednesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m., and gives the address of the meeting location.
2. The district's published calendar shows that meetings are held two Wednesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. in accordance with the district's own policies.

### Recommendations

None needed.

### Standard Implemented: Fully-Sustained



## 6.2 Board Meetings

### **Professional Standard**

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

### **Sources and Documentation**

1. Board member interviews
2. Staff interviews
3. Policy manual
4. Board agendas and minutes
5. The experiences of project staff

### **Findings**

1. Government Code 54954.2 requires that the agenda be posted at least 72 hours prior to a regular meeting and 24 hours prior to a special meeting at one or more locations freely accessible to the public. The district's Board Policy 2035 reflects this requirement for regular meetings. It states that the agenda for all meetings of the board and of its committees shall be posted five days in advance of a meeting.
2. Government Code 54954.1 requires the district to mail the full agenda packet to any person upon request, charging a fee if desired to cover costs. The district maintains a mailing list of approximately 250 persons who wish to receive the agenda by mail or e-mail. The district does not charge a fee.
3. According to Board Policy 2068, minutes of the board and of committees shall be recorded in writing, maintained in the board office, and preserved in perpetuity.
4. Agendas and minutes of the board and board committees are included on the district's Internet web site.
5. The content of agendas and minutes appears adequate. A notable exception is the lack of mention in board minutes regarding the departure of the former Superintendent.
6. Board Policy 4015 states that the board recognizes the fundamental right of the public and press to have access to documents and information maintained by the district concerning the conduct of public business. It further states that the district is committed to making such information readily available to the public either by active dissemination or by providing for access at the public information and publications office. If such information is directly available from that office, staff will direct inquiries to the proper sources and provide all necessary assistance in obtaining the requested information. Each department shall adopt procedures to facilitate the dissemination of information that permits the inspection of public records at all times during the office hours of the department.

Administrative Bulletin 4015 states that the district complies with all state and federal laws respecting release of information contained in records and requiring dissemination to parents and students of information concerning their rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, AB 4015 states

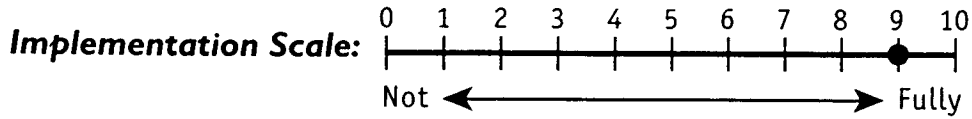
that the budget, analysis of proposed legislation relating to school concerns, fact bulletins relating to the rights and responsibilities of students and parents, and minutes from board meetings will be made available.

7. The inaccessibility of the district office in terms of parking etc. may inhibit individuals from visiting the office to obtain materials or conduct business.

**Recommendations**

None needed.

**Standard Implemented: Fully-Substantial**





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

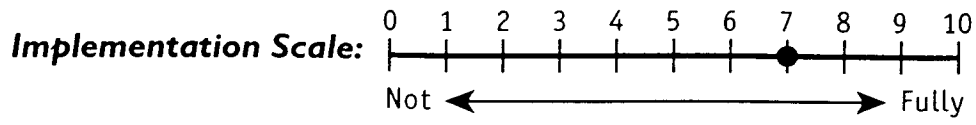
### **Findings**

1. Board members generally are prepared for board meetings in terms of understanding the issues on the agenda. Much of the board's work is conducted prior to board meetings in board committee meetings, which offer members an opportunity to talk with staff, ask questions and gather information.
2. The content of board agendas is adequate and board members did not express any concerns about the quality or timeliness of agenda materials.
3. Board members spend a considerable amount of time on board business. The number of hours comprise from one-half to three-quarter time work. Four board members reported over 15 hours a week on board work and as much as 30 hours. Another uses all three weeks of vacation time as well as free time during the week. Most board members sit on several board committees, and one estimated attending about 20 meetings a month.
4. Each board member is entitled to a half-time assistant but only two are using them.

### **Recommendations**

1. The district must provide adequate support to the board to enable it to conduct its business efficiently.
  - a. Given the amount of time that board members are spending on board business, the district should determine whether the committee structure and other procedures and materials can be streamlined.
  - b. Board meetings should be focused on the "important" issues that impact student learning, delegating as much other business as possible to the Superintendent and district staff.

**Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 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 member interviews
3. Board minutes
4. Observations of board meetings

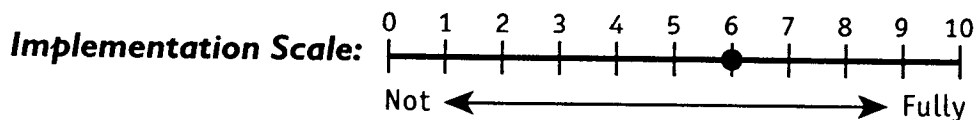
### **Findings**

1. The district's operational guidelines, referred to as "rules," are contained in Chapter 2, Board Operations (adopted March 1997, amended June 1999). These cover most areas of board operations based on state statutes and the Charter of the City of Oakland. They cover such topics as agenda posting, agenda order, the use of Robert's Rules of Order, limits on the time for board member comments and the frequency of individual participation in discussion on each issue, the public input process and time limits, and disruptions to board meetings.
2. The board does not enforce its own rules which set time limits for comments by members of the public and specify that board members can speak only once until everyone has spoken.

### **Recommendations**

1. To ensure the efficiency of board meetings, the board should adhere to a set of operational guidelines.
  - a. The district should review its rules and bylaws regarding board meeting operations to ensure that they reflect desired district practice.
  - b. The board president should assume a leadership role in ensuring that board meetings are operated in accordance with agreed-upon rules.

### **Standard Implemented: Partially**



## 6.5 Board Meetings

### Legal Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. District bylaws
2. Board minutes
3. Board agendas
4. Observations of board meetings
5. Board member interviews
6. Superintendent interview

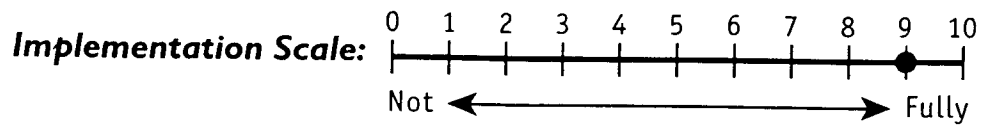
### Findings

1. Generally, the district's rules (bylaws) cover the legal requirements for open and closed sessions.
2. The district holds regular and special meetings inside district boundaries in accordance with the Brown Act.
3. The district posts the agenda at least 72 hours before a regular meeting in accordance with law (see CR6.2).
4. The district keeps a mailing list of persons interested in receiving the full agenda packet, and makes the packet available at the district office. The district does not charge a fee as allowed by law (see CR6.2).
5. The district does not ask persons attending board meetings to register their name, provide other information or complete a questionnaire in order to attend board meetings.
6. The district's agendas for closed sessions conform to law. For example, agenda items related to personnel evaluations list the title of the employees being reviewed, and agenda items related to personnel discipline, dismissal or release do not list any other information.
7. Reports of closed session actions appear to be given during open sessions in accordance with law.
8. The board recently attended a workshop on the Brown Act.
9. Also see CR5.9 - confidentiality of information.

### Recommendations

None needed.

**Standard Implemented: Fully-Substantial**



## 6.6 Board Meetings

### Professional Standard

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

### Sources and Documentation

1. District bylaws
2. Staff interviews

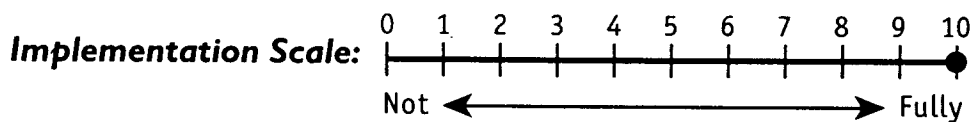
### Findings

1. Education Code 35145.5 expresses legislative intent that the board adopt rules for the placement of items on the board agenda by members of the public. Board Policy 2074 gives members of the public authority to place matters on the agenda. It requires that the request be in writing and be received not later than noon on the Wednesday preceding the next regularly scheduled meeting of the board. Public requests to add items to the agenda are infrequent.
2. Even if an item is not formally placed on the agenda, there is a place on the agenda for members of the public to raise issues (see CR6.7).

### Recommendations

None needed.

### Standard Implemented: Fully-Sustained



## 6.7 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. (EC 35145.5)

### Sources and Documentation

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

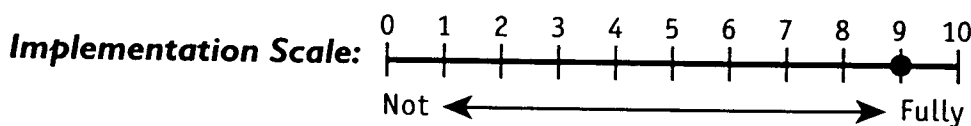
### Findings

1. Members of the public are provided an opportunity to comment on matters directly related to district business. About two hours of public comments is typical. The agenda states that this is an opportunity for members of the public to directly address the board on any item of interest to the public that is not on the current agenda, but is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the board.
2. According to Rule 2075, public comment is limited to 5 minutes per individual and 30 minutes for the total discussion on an issue.
3. Board Policy 2073 and 2075 deal specifically with written and oral presentations to the board. No restriction is made on the content of public comments. BP 2075 states that each speaker, under law, is responsible for comments made in a meeting of the board or a committee. While the board will not censure any person's speech, speakers are expected to present all remarks courteously within the time limit permitted for such comments. At the same time, board members are free to express criticism of remarks they believe are prejudicial or biased against other groups. They are free to remind speakers that prejudicial speech is antithetical to the aims of the educational endeavor. If a speaker uses obscenities or speaks in a demanding, loud, insulting and demeaning manner, the chair may calmly and politely admonish the speaker to communicate civilly.
4. Also see CR5.8 regarding the level of respect demonstrated by the board for members of the public at board meetings and the extent to which members of the public are made to feel welcome in providing input.

### Recommendations

None needed.

### Standard Implemented: Fully-Substantial



FCMAT 3011

