



2300 Highway 166, New Cuyama, California 93254  
(661) 766-2482 • FAX: (661) 766-2255

August 8, 2019

## **RESPONSE OF CUYAMA JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Finding 1:** The frequent turnover in the Superintendent position has created inefficiencies.

Response to Finding 1: Agree.

**Recommendation 1:** That the Cuyama Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees, within six months, identify the reasons for frequent turnover at the Superintendent position and develop a corrective action plan.

Response to Recommendation 1: The reasons identified for frequent turnover of superintendents in the Cuyama Joint Unified School District (“CJUSD”) mirror other rural school districts in the United States. Researcher R. J. Tekniepe (2015, Identifying the factors that contribute to involuntary departures of school superintendents in rural America. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 30(1), 1-13) used data compiled from 618 rural superintendents across 48 states to look into this very matter. As is the case with CJUSD, this study shows that lack of governance training, insufficient employment contract provisions, internal and external stakeholder pressures, and fiscal stress can affect rural school superintendent turnover.

Cognizant of these factors, the CJUSD has completed or will complete the following steps:

- A. The CJUSD has retained a governance advisor that visited the Board of Trustees in a study session meeting in January 2019 where a number of Board Protocols and Norms were established. These protocols were approved at the August 2019 meeting and have been posted on the District website.
- B. The two newly elected Trustees and the Superintendent participated in and completed the California School Boards Association’s (CSBA) 16-hour Institute for New and First-Term Board Members training in San Diego in January 2019. This training focused on effective finance governance and human resources.
- C. Four Trustees and the Superintendent participated in the California School Boards Association’s (CSBA) 40-hour Masters in Governance (MIG) training at the Santa Barbara County Education



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Office in May to July 2019. The MIG training consisted of the following topics: Foundations of Effective Governance, Setting Direction, Policy and Judicial Review, School Finance, Human Resources, Collective Bargaining, and Community and Superintendent Relations. One Trustee and the Superintendent graduated the MIG training. Three Trustees attended from eight to 24 hours of training.

- D. Additionally, the CJUSD is supporting the success and longevity of the superintendency by facilitating the superintendent's participation in the California Rural Superintendent Principal Academy (CRSPA) through the Humboldt County Office of Education starting July 1, 2019. Additionally, the Trustees have offered a family-friendly 220-day/year three-year contract for the superintendent (2018-2021), as well as providing a house in the Cuyama community at no charge.

**Finding 2:** The Board of Trustees has not kept the Board Policies and Administrative Regulations current.

Response to Finding 2: Agree.

**Recommendation 2:** That the Board of Trustees, within six months, develop and adopt a plan to annually review and revise Board Policies and Administrative Regulations to ensure they are kept current.

Response to Recommendation 2: The continuous update of Board Policies (BP) and Administrative Regulations (AR) has been underway since July 2018. Approximately 6-10 BPs and Ars are heard at each regular Board of Trustees meeting. Changes are based on California School Boards Association recommendations and aligned with the BP/AR repository Gamut. CJUSD maintains a CSBA and Gamut membership/subscription and the Superintendent and the Superintendent's Secretary will be the lead on this project. This is a continuous update cycle.

**Finding 3:** The Business Office staff relies routinely on the County Education Office School Business Advisory Service staff to provide notice of key events and dates.

Response to Finding 3: Agree

**Recommendation 3:** That the Board of Trustees direct the Superintendent to ensure a district calendar, which includes required reports, budget, and payroll deadlines, is



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developed within 90 days and annually adopted by the Board.

Response to Recommendation 3: The CJUSD is developing a fiscal calendar in consultation with the Santa Barbara County Education Office and recommendations from the California School Boards Association. The District has parted ways with the prior District Chief Business Official and has contracted with the Santa Barbara County Office of Education for business services, through the School Business Advisory Services (SBAS) unit. This will continue until at least until June 30, 2020, during which time a region-wide search for a permanent school fiscal manager will be conducted. Included in scope of services in that agreement is the obligation to advise the District on upcoming deadlines and otherwise provide notice of key events and dates. Following resumption of the District performing its own business functions, the District will calendar significant dates on an ongoing basis. Additionally, the Santa Barbara County Education office provides the Superintendent and CJUSD fiscal manager with regular fiscal information, updates, policies and procedures, and deadlines.

**Finding 4:** Neither procedural guides nor cross-training for critical tasks exist in the District Business Office, creating disruptions when there are unexpected or extended absences.

Response to Finding 4: Agree.

**Recommendation 4:** That the Board of Trustees direct the Superintendent to develop procedural guides and a training program for critical tasks in the District Business Office within 90 days.

Response to Recommendation 4: As of July 1, 2019, The District has parted ways with the prior District Chief Business Official and has contracted with the Santa Barbara County Office of Education (SBCEO) for business services. Included in scope of services in that agreement is the obligation to advise the District on upcoming deadlines and otherwise provide notice of key events and dates. Additionally, the SBCEO will be providing training and procedural guides for future use by the District.

**Finding 5:** The District Business Office staff requires ongoing training on the specialized Escape software program and day-to-day duties.

Response to Finding 5: Agree.

**Recommendation 5:** That the Board of Trustees direct the Superintendent to develop



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and implement an ongoing training plan for each position within the District Business Office within six months.

Response to Recommendation 5: Training in “Escape” software has been conducted throughout the spring 2019 semester and will be continuous and ongoing for the CJUSD account clerk, administrators, superintendent’s secretary, business manager. The District will provide the recommended training in that software before taking over business services from SBAS by June 2020.

**Finding 6:** The appropriate responsibilities of the District Business Office are not accurately reflected in the current job descriptions.

Response to Finding 6: Agree.

**Recommendation 6:** That the Board of Trustees direct the Superintendent to evaluate the District Business Office positions and develop job descriptions for the staff within 30 days.

Response to Recommendation 6: The CJUSD will evaluate the potential District Business Office positions that may become filled in the future, while utilizing the services of the SBAS until June 2020. Some non-business duties of the prior-CBO will be tasked to other employees such as governance communication (to the Superintendent) and Human Relations (to the Superintendent’s Office).

**Finding 7:** Due to a lack of oversight and timely correction, multiple negative audit report findings recurred in succeeding years.

Response to Finding 7: Agree

**Recommendation 7:** That the Board of Trustees and Superintendent ensure that negative findings identified in the audit report are corrected on a timely basis.

Response to Recommendation 7: The District has parted ways with the prior District CBO and has contracted with the Santa Barbara County Office of Education for business services, through the School Business Advisory Services unit. This will continue until at least June 30, 2020. It is anticipated no new negative audit findings will arise, and further anticipated that the SBAS unit will drive resolution of any findings arising from prior to their watch. Additionally, the SBAS unit will provide recommendations for policies and protocols for avoiding negative findings. The District will adopt appropriate policies and protocols to prevent repetitive negative findings, and prompt resolution of any negative

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findings, prior to resuming internal performance of its own business services. Additionally, business office staff and certificated staff at both sites have attended a FCMAT training in 2018 (and scheduled to attend again next month) on properly administering student body finances, fiscal accountability, legal compliance, transparency, and accuracy in student body accounts

**Finding 8:** The District Business Office staff members have not received annual performance reports.

Response to Finding 8: Agree

**Recommendation 8:** That the Board of Trustees and Superintendent ensure the District Business Office staff receives annual performance reports that identify strengths, weaknesses and performance goals.

Response to Recommendation 8: The District has parted ways with the prior District CBO and has contracted with the Santa Barbara County Office of Education for business services, through the School Business Advisory Services unit. This will continue until at least June 30, 2020. Part of the services to be rendered include recommendations on business office job descriptions, required training, appropriate policies and protocols for efficient operation of a small school district business office, and the District will adopt, prior to resuming internal performance of its own business services, policies and protocols to ensure annual evaluations are conducted

These responses of the Cuyama Joint Unified School District to the Santa Barbara Grand Jury Findings and Recommendations were adopted upon motion by Trustee W. Goller, seconded by Trustee H. Lomax, at a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Cuyama Joint Unified School District this 8th day of August 2019, by the following vote or abstention of each Trustee present:

AYES:	<u>5</u>
NAYES:	<u>0</u>
ABSENCES:	<u>0</u>
ABSTENTIONS:	<u>0</u>

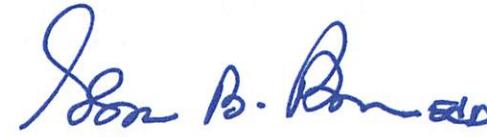
DATED: August 8, 2019

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Mr. José Valenzuela, President, Board of Trustees  
Cuyama Joint Unified School District

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Michael Mann, Clerk, Board of Trustees  
Cuyama Joint Unified School District

ATTEST:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Stephen Bluestein, Secretary to Board of Trustees  
Cuyama Joint Unified School District