

School Board Report

The Manteca Unified School District Board of Trustees is composed of seven elected officials: Board president Stephan Schluer, Vice President Eric Duncan, Board Clerk Kathy Howe, Trustee Michael Seelye, Trustee Marie Freitas, Trustee Cathy Pope-Gotschall, and Trustee Bob Wallace. There are four student representatives on the school board and their attendance to meetings rotates each meeting. The members include: Brooklyn Johnson, Jesse Moebius, Makenna Condit, Yasmin Ballew, and Armando Mendoza.

Of the Board of trustees, all members appear to be Caucasian with the exception of one who is African American. The gender of board members is 4 males and 3 females. The student representatives are three Caucasian students, one multi-racial student, and one Latino student. Of the five students, two are male and three are female. The Board of trustees is not at all representative of our school's demographics. Sierra High School's Caucasian population is just under 25%. What is noticeably absent from the board is any Latino representation which makes up 50% of our school population and 55% of Manteca Unified School District's population as a whole.

On Tuesday, February 12th, 2019, the Manteca Unified Board of Education convened for its monthly regular meeting. I attended this meeting and was pleasantly surprised at its efficiency and civility. Over the years, I have attended many school board meetings and was by far the best one I've been to. There were a number of items on the agenda however the items pertaining to direct student learner were low. However, there were quite a few items on the agenda that were driven by the mission and vision, which was refreshing. After hearing a presentation from a district vendor, the board dove into their regular work. The first item was a revision to their mission and vision. The board asked a committee of students to look at the

district's current mission and vision statements and make recommendations. The committee recognized the value of the statement but suggested edits that would allow for more student focused language. After a compelling presentation from the committee the board voted in favor of the new language and adopted a resolution that would officially do so.

The largest part of the agenda was focused on a bond that is allowing for school upgrades. Many of the district's facilities are old and in need of refurbishment, especially in the wake of a large influx of people from the Bay Area trying to escape high housing prices. The district is facing an increasing population and needs to update many of the facilities badly. The facilities team gave updates on these projects throughout a great deal of the meeting. While this topic does not appear to be directly related to student learning it is. Students' ability to feel safe and to be in a clean, inviting, modern facility can affect their motivation to learn greatly. The fact that the board was focusing on these facilities upgrades reports shows their commitment to ensuring the environment students are in is the best to facilitate their learning.

In addition to the facilities upgrades discussion, there was a review of the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) update. The district is in the process of gathering the necessary information needed in order to update their goals for the year. This item was definitely the most directly tied to student learning. The LCAP focusses on engaging student learning opportunities, maximizing individual potential, increasing the progress of our English Language Learners, and boosting our high school graduation rates. District staff updated the board on the meetings that have taken place and stressed the diversity of the population from which it was gathered: parents, administrators, teachers, classified staff, district office staff, etc...

According to the California School Board Association (CSBA) a Board of Education's role "is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their

communities” (“Roles and Responsibilities,” 2018). In a 2017 report titled “The School Board Role in Creating the Conditions for Student Achievement” CSBA outlines the 5 responsibilities of a Board of Education in order to fulfil their role: “board member responsibilities are to: 1) set direction for the school district or county office of education; 2) establish structure through policy; 3) provide support for implementation efforts; 4) ensure accountability through oversight and monitoring; and 5) act as community leaders” (Briggs, Buenrostro, Maxwell-Jolly, Flint, & Macklin, 2017, p. 34). Using this as the definition of what a successful school board looks like, Manteca seems to be running their board meetings well. When looking at the meeting through the lens of student learning the board was doing the right thing. Since they should not be involving themselves in the day to day business, curriculum, etc...then the way they can address student learning is through the oversight given, policy they set, and the resolutions they pass. By addressing issues such as facilities, the LCAP, and the Mission/Vision of the district they are in fact addressing the underlying needs of the district base their decisions on as they think through what is best for students. One thing that I would hope for in the future though, is a board that better represents the community it serves. With a changing demographic, there should be a shift in that demographic’s representation. This way, the board could have more first-hand perspectives on how the students body might be effected by their decisions and policies.

Works Cited

Briggs, M., Buenrostro, M., Maxwell-Jolly, J., Flint, T., Macklin, K. (2017). *The School Board Role in Creating the Conditions for Student Achievement* (Rep.), Sacramento, CA: California School Board Association.

Roles and Responsibilities (2018). Retrieved from

<https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/EffectiveGovernance/RoleandResponsibilitiesofSBMs.aspx>. Accessed 12 February 2019.