

Mount Pleasant School District

Administrative Office 3434 Marten Avenue, San Jose CA 95148 Phone (408) 223-3710 Fax (408) 223-3715

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FILED

SEP 30 2009

NANCY F. HOPKINS
GAIL A. TREMAINE
BETTY MARTINEZ
DARRELL KOIDE
ROBERT RAMIREZ

DAVID H. YAMASAKI
Chief Executive Officer/Clerk,
Superior Court of CA County of Santa Clara
BY D. ALDYCKI

DISTRICT RESPONSE TO THE 2008-2009 SANTA CLARA COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT,

**"Who really Benefits from Education Dollars?
(Hint: It's Not the Students)"**

Finding 1

Boards of Trustees approve overly generous benefits to themselves which include the following:

- *Fully paid health benefits for trustees and their families (often exceeding those of teachers and/or with no payment ceiling)*
- *Excessive travel and conference costs*
- *Pension contributions*

District Response

The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District disagrees with the finding. We find this to be a subjective conclusion without basis of comparison and substantiated data.

Recommendation 1

Boards of Trustees should carefully review the benefits listed in Finding 1 and:

- *Eliminate health benefits for Board Members*
- *Minimize travel and conference costs*
- *Eliminate pension contributions*

District Response

The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District will not be implementing this recommendation. The Board determined that benefits for members was appropriate compensation, consistent with statewide practice, and the level of responsibility that board members have for providing a quality educational program.

The Board has previously restricted individual conference and travel expenses.

The only payroll benefits paid for by the district are those required by law.

Finding 2

Boards of Trustees are approving overly generous benefits to Superintendents and Chancellors, including the following:

- *Auto allowances (auto leases/purchases, insurance, maintenance, etc.) to superintendents*
- *Housing allowances*
- *Million dollar housing loans at zero or below market interest rates*
- *Guaranteed annual step and/or longevity increases*
- *Signing bonuses*
- *Contract buyouts*
- *Excessive performance bonuses*
- *Per diem payments when out of the district*
- *Personal technology allowances*
- *Professional memberships and subscription allowances*
- *Excessive travel and entertainment expenses*
- *Salary increases automatically triggered by increases in teacher's salaries which are in addition to other guaranteed salary increases*
- *Pension allowances (in addition to regular STRS/PERS contributions)*
- *Advance degree stipends*
- *Lifetime medical insurance benefits*
- *Annual physicals*

District Response

The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District disagrees with the finding. We find this to be a subjective conclusion without basis of comparison and substantiated data.

Recommendation 2

Boards of Trustees should carefully review and renegotiate the Superintendent/Chancellor benefits listed in Finding 2 for possible reduction and/or elimination.

District Response

The Board of Trustees and Superintendent will consider the opinions of the Grand Jury in future negotiations. The Board and Superintendent have, and will continue to negotiate contracts that are of mutual benefit.

Finding 3

Superintendent salaries and increases appear to bear no relationship to the number of schools, students, and employees they oversee, nor their district's academic improvement.

District Response

The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District disagrees with the finding. The factors in determining a Superintendent's salary are much more complex than the four mentioned in the finding.

Recommendation 3

The Board of Trustees should ensure that Superintendent/Chancellor salaries and increases take into account the number of schools, teachers, and students they oversee, and are tied to the district's student's progress and quantifiable metrics.

District Response

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. In an area known to have one of the most expensive costs of living a small must district must be somewhat competitive to draw qualified candidates. In a smaller district the Superintendent usually wears many more hats, has less support staff and the same responsibility.

Finding 4

Boards of Trustees hire costly search firms to recruit successors for retiring or dismissed Superintendent/Chancellors.

District Response

The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District disagrees with the finding. We find this to be a subjective conclusion without basis of comparison and substantiated data. This is one of the most important functions of a Board primarily made up of elected non-educators, not familiar with personnel procedures and effective recruitment efforts in public education.

Recommendation 4

Boards of Trustees should conduct a preliminary search within the local area prior to hiring search firms.

District Response

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The Silicon Valley does not have a corner on the best Administrators in the state nor would you ask any business in the private sector to limit itself in such a fashion in its search for a CEO.

Finding 5

Boards of Trustees approve the hiring of multiple private attorneys, in some cases at a tremendous expense.

District Response

The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 5

All Boards of Trustees should engage County Counsel whenever possible and leverage their buying power to negotiate lower fees with private law firms.

District Response

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. School districts are involved in complex legal issues that require specialized legal expertise and considerable legal capacity. The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District will continue to use legal counsel it feels best will meet our legal needs.

Finding 6

The operation of 34 K-12 schools districts and four (4) community college districts creates excessively high management and administrative costs. Five K-12 school districts have excessively high Superintendent costs per student which is reflected of the district's having only one or two schools

District Response

The Mount Pleasant Elementary School District disagrees with the finding. The cost per student is an arbitrary measure of cost for administrative expenses in a small school district. In many small school districts the Superintendent is not only Superintendent he is also principal, or Director of Human Resources or Director of Curriculum without all the support staff of a big district. Administrative costs are not just the Superintendent's salary. This is a too narrow a look at running a school district.

Recommendation 6

A consolidation of districts should be considered to reduce the numbers and costs of Superintendent/Chancellors, Boards of Trustees, administrative staff and overhead.

District Response

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. The California state education code entrusts this decision to the public residing within the district. Current research shows that smaller personal settings are better for students and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Ramirez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" being more prominent than the last name "Ramirez".

Bob Ramirez
President Board of Trustees
Mount Pleasant Elementary School District

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George L. Pérez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" being more prominent than the last name "Pérez".

George L. Pérez
Superintendent