

Claremont Unified School District Board of Education
League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area Observer Report
By Observer Judith Tanenbaum
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According to the District website, the “Board of Education is the policy-making body for the District that conducts its work in public. To effectively meet the District’s challenges, the Board and the Superintendent must function together as a governance team. To ensure unity among team members, effective operating procedures, or protocols, must be in place. There are general protocols and those that are specific for the Board and the Superintendent.” A list of expectations, in both English and Spanish, for the Board and the Superintendent follows this statement.

The members of the school board have remained the same for four years, although their positions have changed since the organizational meeting in December. The current members (with term expiration dates in parentheses) are President Steven Llanusa (11/2018), Vice President Hilary LaConte (11/2020), Clerk Dr. Beth Bingham (11/2020), Member Nancy Treser Osgood (11/2018), and Member David S. Nemer (11/2018). Each member has a minimum of more than four years of experience on the Board.

Superintendent Dr. James Elsasser has been serving Claremont for almost six years. The assistant superintendents have either been in their positions for a significant period or have worked for the District previously in different roles. Dr. Julie Olesniewicz has been the director of Educational Services for less than a year, but she has served as a principal with the district for almost seven years. Mike Bateman has been leading Student Services for many years, but as of July 1, 2018, Brad Cuff, a former CUSD teacher and current CUSD principal, will transition into Student Services. Lisa Shoemaker in Business Services and Kevin Ward in the Human Services Department complete the cabinet.

CUSD Board meetings are generally on the first and third Thursdays of the month with exceptions noted clearly and often related to the academic calendar. Occasionally there are special meetings, often to approve field trips. Usually there is one Board workshop to have time to spend on issues in depth. In September there will be a joint meeting with the Claremont City Council; community meetings are held when appropriate, such as a meeting this past spring with the police department. I attended all these meetings except for the first of the academic year and the most recent meeting.

In November 2016 voters approved Measure G, which was a general obligation bond providing \$58 million to specific projects, including roof repair, replacement of identified portable buildings, and repairs to the swimming pools. CUSD has regularly provided updates at meetings and online. They recently held an event to allow the community to take a tour of the changes on the high school campus.

Three elementary schools have been recognized as Apple Distinguished Schools: Condit, Oakmont, and Sycamore. Not only do the students have access to technology, they demonstrate how it is used for inspiration, creativity, and collaboration. CUSD proudly notes that, "There are only 400 Apple Distinguished Schools across 29 countries, and Claremont has three of them."

Partnerships with local colleges and area community colleges are often highlighted, with CUSD students going to these campuses to participate in workshops, perform, and learn about the process of preparing for college. College students go to CUSD sites to learn from teachers, volunteer in classrooms, and study CUSD practices.

Every meeting has multiple opportunities for public comment. There was occasional public comment at meetings. A state senator discussed a bill he is introducing about mandating a later start time for schools. Members of the community commented on this issue also. After the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, there were several parents who spoke at meetings about school safety.

During the first semester a Pomona College student was working for the *Claremont Courier* and attending school board meetings. That student took on a large role at the campus paper and no longer attends and now there is seldom a news reporter covering the meetings.

The only issue that I raised as League Observer this year related to the use of microphones. Not only is it hard to hear some of the discussion over the noise of the air handling fans, but there is an additional problem when meeting participants turn to address others at the dais and thus do not speak directly into the microphones that are mounted in front of them.

The Board is following good government standards. It operates transparently, welcomes public input, and members appear well prepared. This year the meetings have been quite short, but discussion is held when needed and there is plenty of time for both public comment and for the Board members to ask questions of the staff.

I hope I will be able to continue observing the CUSD Board of Education. Thank you for allowing me to be of service.