

Pomona Unified School District Board

League of Women Voters of Mt. Baldy Area

Observer Report by Dr. Elizabeth Landerholm
June 2019-May 23, 2020

Description of Pomona Unified School District

The Pomona United School District has 21 elementary schools, 5 K-8 schools, 4 middle schools, 8 high schools, and 3 other schools. The ethnic makeup is 86.54% Hispanic, 4.13% Afro-American, 0.19% American Indian, 3.39% Asian, 1.15% Filipino, 1.02% multiple, 0.15% Native Hawaiian, 0.41% declined to state.

The total of student enrollment for K-12 schools is 23,117 pupils.

Adult and Career enrollment is 2800. Child Development enrollment is 1919.

Members of the Pomona United School Board

Current board members as of Dec. 2019: *

President:	Adrienne Konigar-Macklin
Vice President:	Andrew S. Wong
Member:	Dr. Roberta A. Pearlman
Member:	Dr. Jason A. Rothman
Member:	Frank Guzman
Non-Voting Member:	Richard Martinez, Superintendent
Student member	Audry Ramos

*A new President and Vice President are elected each December.

Structure of the Board Meeting

The regular school board meetings are held monthly on Wednesdays, depending on the school calendar. The closed session begins at 5:00. The open session begins at 6:00pm. Agendas were available at every meeting and the public is invited to address the board. At every meeting special activities or honors for partner agencies, teachers, students and community members were presented. In addition, representatives of the California School Employees Association and of the Associated Pomona Teachers presented information about the progress of their collective bargaining. The meeting space was packed with parents, community supporters and union members at every meeting. I attended 8 out of 12 school board meetings including one on Zoom which was held on Zoom as a result of the school closing because of the corona virus pandemic.

Highlights and General Impressions:

I. Student Honors and Special Programs:

A wide range of student honors and special programs were presented to the board and community which gave the students an opportunity to be heard and valued for their work as well as gave the board the opportunity to see and hear the students. Some examples were:

- A. A student honor guard from various schools presented the pledge of allegiance at board meetings and afterwards each student gave a short talk about their educational goals.
- B. The high school student representative on the board had the opportunity to represent her high school peers' issues to the board each week.
- C. The honors for attendance enabled the students to be honored by the board in front of their parents and the community and have their pictures taken.
- D. The Longhorn Project, a middle school music group from Lorbeer Middle School played for the board.
- E. Cortez Math and Science Magnet School was honored as a Distinguished National Best Practice Showcase Site School for their 21st Annual Career Expo Lab Implementation and Practices.

II. Teacher Projects, Community Partnerships and Staff Reports

A wide range of teacher projects, community partnerships and staff reports gave diverse groups an opportunity to be heard and valued for their work as well as the opportunity for the board to see and hear about the many wonderful programs that were going on in the Pomona Unified School District. It was amazing how many different collaborative partnerships were sponsored by PUSD.

A. Teacher Honors and Collaboration

1. Dave Moss, APT, Association of Pomona Teachers, Teacher of the Year for 2019-20.
2. Partnerships with PUSD and Pomona Alliance of Black School educators and Latino/a Educators Association of Pomona (LEAP)

B. Staff Reports involving PUSD collaboration with schools or community agencies.

Staff reports were presented at each board meeting on programs at various schools in the district or district wide. Many included current & former students who had been involved in the program along with their parents and community, explaining how they had been helped by the program.

1. Mr. A Smith from PFMG Solar presented the Solar Energy Program at Diamond Branch High School, Cortez Math / Science Magnet School, and Ganesh High School.
2. The Director of the Equity/Professional Development Department at PUSD presented the Co-teaching model being implemented at Armstrong & Cortez magnet schools.
3. Ms. C. Hegele from the San Gabriel Mosquito and Vector control District presented a report on Eco Health Vector Education and the PUSD school sites.
4. Restorative Practices program was offered in the summer for PUSD teachers and was extended to community members.
5. Just Us 4 Youth, a community mentoring program collaborating with PUSD schools was presented.
6. The Department of Technology presented the Teacher Leader Project which was implemented in 29 schools and led to PUSD being one of the first 100 districts to sign the Future Ready Technology plan.

III. Proclamations

There were many proclamations of Awareness Days, Weeks, and Months, which often increased the audience attendance at the board meetings.

A. Community Awareness

1. Veterans Awareness Week
2. American Heart Month
3. Pomona Beautification Day
4. National Mental Health Month
5. September Awareness and Attendance Campaign
- 6 Patriot Day, September 11.
7. Restorative Practices
8. September Awareness Month and Attendance Campaign
9. National Nutrition Month
10. Arts Education Month
11. Women's History Month

B. Education and Teacher Awareness

- 1 Teacher Appreciation Week
2. California Day of the Teacher
3. Read Across America Day

IV. Union Representatives

The two unions were negotiating with PUSD during the months that I was observing. The representatives, as well as union members and community members, spoke at the meetings. . There was a lot of community support for the unions with the audience packed with community members as well as union members and parents. A public hearing and approval of a tentative agreement with the California School Employees Association was presented at a special board meeting on April 24, 2019. The APT reported a tentative agreement at the January 2020 board meeting.

All in all, I was pleasantly surprised and impressed with the size of the audience each month. I started in June and attended 8 out of 12 regular Board meetings. At each Board meeting, many audience members signed up to speak and gave their opinion and support for the program or issue being presented. There was clearly an atmosphere of willingness on the part of the Board to encourage all parties to participate in the discussion about the issues facing education in general and PUSD in particular.

In addition, I was impressed by the number of collaborative projects that were presented at the Board meetings. These types of projects do not happen easily unless there is a lot of support from the superintendent, including money resources, hiring resources and creative incentives for staff at all levels to work with outside agencies and programs.