

May 7, 2019

To: Santa Barbara Unified School District Board of Trustees

From: Richard Rundhaug, Ph.D., Interim Principal, San Marcos High School

RE: Climate, Culture and My Experience as an SBUSD Employee

I want to begin by thanking the Santa Barbara Unified School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent Matsuoka for entrusting me with leading San Marcos High School for the 2018-2019 school year. Personally it was a very fulfilling year. Professionally, this year gave me the opportunity to round out my professional experience. I had been an elementary assistant principal and a middle school principal, but I had not been a high school campus administrator in my career. Having the opportunity to serve in this capacity has been nothing short of fun for me. Every day was exciting. I loved working with and to some degree entertaining the students. I enjoyed the experience far more than I ever expected.

The more time I spent at San Marcos, the more I was amazed at what takes place there every day. The academies, the athletic programs and the performing arts programs are each beyond the caliber of the programs I have worked with in the past. These programs are excellent because we have an excellent staff who is passionate about each of these areas. We have an administrative staff who are very determined to provide a high quality, transparent and legitimate experiences for our staff and students. The professional caliber of the administrative team is far beyond what I expected.

While I am amazed at what takes place every day, I am certain some significant changes took place this year that will improve the experience of students and staff at San Marcos High School. We made our process for teachers to access interpretation and translation services much more systematic. Rather this being a random set of requests between individuals, we have a system of making requests that includes the English and Spanish speaking party to set up and attend an appointment between parents and teachers. We increased our services to engage parents with our Title I funds. We made Title I funds more accessible by bringing the school to a schoolwide model. This helps with greater language access, more professional development and increased tutoring opportunities for students. By the end of this year, we will have increased PLC time with teachers, increased training for PLC effectiveness and placed about 50 students through very intense tutoring because of the change from being a Title I targeted assistance program to a Title I schoolwide program.

We have ensured our admission process to our academies is broader. The application process now considers more students and more student experiences. While working to make admissions to academies broader, we have strengthened relations with both the AAPLE Foundation, San Marcos PTSA, San Marcos ELAC and the Royal Pride Foundation. We have established a norm of having the Principal and the AAPLE Foundation meet on a monthly basis. We have developed a meaningful and healthy relationship with the Royal Pride Foundation and the PTSA. This is significant because following the re-assignment of our previous Principal, all three of these groups (AAPLE, PTSA and Royal Pride Foundation) were skeptical in their

relationship with the incoming Principal and especially district office personnel. Our new Principal will be able to begin her relationship with all of these groups without any relationship barriers.

We have made process at the San Marcos Campus much more transparent. Our professional development funding process, our hiring for stipended positions and our site budgeting goes through an open selection process by the entire administrative team. We are transparent in sharing with the staff that these opportunities exist. We publish criteria we will use to make our final decision on these processes and we share as an administrative team in the final decision.

My experience in interacting with other administrators throughout the district was also impressive. Other principals, administrators and district office personnel were all caring and responsive to needs I identified at San Marcos. Shawn Carey, the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, made herself available to me on a weekly basis. Superintendent Matsuoka checked in on me often to make sure my experience was going well. What struck me about the culture of SBUSD above all else was the lack of people having personal agendas. I have been a school administrator for 20 years and have held positions in seven different school districts and without question, SBUSD has the best internal culture among all of them. Every administrator I interacted with this year had the good of students as their highest priority. In my other experiences, I have found many administrators have personal and self-serving agendas. I am still in awe over the upfront and transparent way SBUSD operates.

I want to acknowledge a few individuals. First, in my interviewing and employment negotiation process, I experienced a high level of professionalism from Superintendent Matsuoka. He explained what the interview process would be like and the process unfolded precisely as he described. In discussing salary and initial expenses for the transition, again the process unfolded exactly as anticipated; coming to that point of agreement required no gamesmanship on my behalf. The process between Superintendent Matsuoka and myself was easily discussed and quickly settled. Again, this conversation was among the easiest I have had in my career.

I mentioned above that Assistant Superintendent Carey was by my side the entire year. I felt cared for that help was never far away. Most often, communication was responded to either immediately or within the same day whether that was by email or cell phone. Many times, the telephone call took place on her way home after a long day of work, but being sure my needs were met within the same day. I found a similar experience with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Student Services. At the cabinet level, I found the culture is one of service to the schools.

I onboarded on July 1st, which was a transition period for the HR Department. Still, Ann Peak was very diligent making sure my needs were met. She cared for me far beyond simply being an employee of the district. That care and concern was apparent during the onboarding process and throughout the school year. Ann walked me to the ETS Department where Mr. Ryckman personally set up my laptop and ipad for me. He did not assign it to someone else. Throughout

my entire onboarding process, I encountered a level of service and personal commitment unlike I have experienced in the past.

What I want to share most with the District Board of Trustees, from someone who has nothing to gain or lose at this point is the internal culture of SBUSD is not only healthy, it is amazingly personal and uplifting to its employees. I cannot identify a single occurrence that would have made my experience better.

I had an excellent year. My hope is that I left San Marcos High School in better condition than I found it. I am leaving San Marcos High School and SBUSD a better person and better professional for which I am immensely thankful.