



Enter to Learn...
Leave to **Achieve**

Governance Handbook

The Board of Education is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, and to ensure that a high quality education is provided to each student.

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Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements

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Building a Governance Team

Unity of Purpose

School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes, and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.

In a school district, the Board and Superintendent work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to: Maintain a unity of purpose; agree on and govern within appropriate roles; create and sustain a positive governance culture and; create a supportive structure for effective governance.

What do we as a governance team want to accomplish? What do we stand for?

- Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students.
- We want to build trust and move the District forward.
- We want to be an effective team.
- We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.
- We want to be a team with a common focused direction so we are not a distraction to the District or community but a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees, and the community can see evidence of this focused direction.
- We want to be partners with the staff in positive change.
- We want to oversee the putting together of a first-rate program and first-rate facilities, making sure we continue to improve – never resting on our laurels.
- We want to perpetuate a legacy of positive culture as people come and go.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mutual agreement on the roles of the Board and Superintendent

The role of Trustees is to stay focused on the big picture while fulfilling five responsibilities in a series of job areas. These five responsibilities are:

1. We set the direction.
2. We establish the structure.
3. We provide support.
4. We ensure accountability.
5. We act as community leaders.

We carry out these responsibilities in each of the following job areas:

- Setting the District's Direction
- Student Learning and Achievement
- Finance
- Facilities
- Human Resources
- Policy
- Judicial Review
- Collective Bargaining
- Community Relations and Advocacy

The Superintendent supports the Board in carrying out its responsibilities in each of the job areas, and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed upon District vision and goals.

Creating and Sustaining a Positive Governance Team Culture

Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other. Teams have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave with each other and others. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift to a negative one.

Governance Norms

In addition to meeting the norms below and in order to create a positive culture and atmosphere, we agree to adhere to the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Professional Governance Standards.

WE AGREE TO –

- Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, respected).
- Show respect (never dismiss/devalue others).
- Make a commitment to effective deliberation, each listening openly while everyone is allowed to express his or her point of view.
- Make a commitment to open communication, honesty, no surprises.
- Commit the time necessary to govern effectively. This means being there, being knowledgeable, participating, understanding the full scope of being a Board Member and being willing to take on all the responsibilities involved.
- Be collaborative (this is the way we operate)!
- Maintain confidentiality (builds trust).
- Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.

AND – ABOVE ALL –

- Focus on students' best interest – on what's best for the students! This is what we do! And it is the touchstone that allows us to have our differences.

Board Governance Protocols

Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

The authority to direct actions rests with the full Board sitting at the Board table. A majority vote sets such direction. Individuals can request action by bringing up a new idea, explaining their interest in a particular course of action and working to get a Board majority to support moving in that direction. The Board is to be focused on the intended results and the staff should implement the strategies to reach the intended results.

Board Bylaws (BB 9000, 9200 and 9300) of the District relate to the role and responsibility of the Board collectively and Board members individually. “Unless agreed to by the Board as a whole, individual members of the Board shall not exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools or command the services of any employee.” Board members are to channel their requests and/or concerns directly to the Superintendent or, if necessary, through the Board President.

When a complaint is made to a Board member, the member is encouraged to:

- ❖ Listen carefully, remembering that only one side of the story is being presented;
- ❖ Direct the complainant to the staff most appropriate and able to help them resolve the concern and as soon as possible.
- ❖ Make sure the person understands the appropriate order of whom to contact (teacher, then principal, then District staff)
- ❖ Inform the Superintendent
- ❖ Tell the complainant that if the complaint is not resolved to their satisfaction, the complainant may notify the Board member and, when appropriate, refer them to the district’s complaint process;
- ❖ Board members will hold to the highest level of conduct, including emphasizing the positive when in public places or situations.

The Board’s Role and Relationship with the Staff and Community

Board members may visit any campus after checking with the principal about the best time to visit. Board members are required to check in with the principal’s office and follow campus guidelines for visitors.

As a professional courtesy, when officially visiting schools or departments, Board members are encouraged to notify the Superintendent of the visit, and may provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.

When visiting their own children’s teachers, board members will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than board members.

Such visits are for the purpose of becoming acquainted with school programs, personnel, operation and facilities. Board members shall not go into teachers’ classrooms or campuses for the purpose of evaluation or investigation. Board members will not give directions or make suggestions to personnel during their visit.

Staff members are directed to channel any requests made by individual Board members directly to the Superintendent. Such a direction is not intended to inhibit any private or informal conversations. The intention is that a staff member is not placed in a position, by a Board member, to provide any information beyond the information that would be provided to any regular community member and/or complete any duty as requested by the Board member. Staff members are directed to relay requests from Board members to the Superintendent to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members.

In the event that a staff person or member of the community has a concern or complaint that involves the superintendent, that person shall be directed to contact the Board President. The President will handle the situation with support from appropriate legal advisors.

Board Meetings and the Agenda

Meetings of the Board are held in public, but are not open-forum town hall meetings. Meetings will be conducted in such a way as to allow the public to provide input in the time allotted to ensure that multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Board shall receive public comments on items not on agenda. At the direction of the President, questions or concerns may be referred to the superintendent for appropriate future consideration.

The design of the Board agenda will follow the historical structure utilized by the Board. The design of the agenda may only be altered with the approval of the Board.

The superintendent, with the support of staff, will create each Board Agenda. Board members may request items to be placed on the agenda. The Board President, Vice President and the Superintendent will discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting, in advance of the Board Meeting.

When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. An individual Board member will, insofar as possible, work to let the Superintendent and staff know ahead of time when a request for information will be made in public so the staff can be prepared to provide an answer. Individual Board members will self-monitor to ensure one person's request for information does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. Trustees will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the Superintendent and district staff have the opportunity to prepare and answer trustees' questions. If unforeseen questions arise during the meeting, trustees will acknowledge their question or comment as spontaneous and that they understand that staff may not have the information on hand to answer the question.

Individual Board members are expected to self-monitor compliance to the Brown Act, including limiting Closed Session to the agenda item(s). Board members need equal access to information, and to operate within the Brown Act. The use of email communication is subject to the Brown Act. The superintendent shall forward questions and answers to all Board members. Board members, when responding, shall not "reply to all."

Board members will read the information provided to them and commit to ongoing professional development and training.

Each trustee has the obligation, in serving the community, to vote on each item presented to the Board. Abstention from voting must only take place when required by law, due to a conflict of interest, and the Board member must explain the reason for the abstention. The Board member shall not participate in any manner or be present in the Board Room.

The governance team will strive for brevity in deliberations, keeping remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed and meetings can be efficient. Addressing each agenda item the Board shall, normally, adhere to the following process:

- Staff Presentation/addressing questions from the Board
- Input from the Community
- Board Discussion and Deliberation

If a question is posed during public comment, it is at the direction and discretion of the President on how to respond. The President may choose to have staff respond immediately or defer the response to a future time. If another board member wishes to respond to the question, they should do so through the President's approval before public comment period is closed, and avoid a dialogue with the community member.

If a board member would like clarification regarding input made during public comment, they should do so through the President's approval, before public comment period is closed and avoid dialogue with the community member.

If a board member would like to respond to comments made during public comment, they should avoid direct dialogue with the community member and should wait to respond until Board discussion and deliberation occurs.

Each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote in the opposing position. If so doing, each trustee agrees, as a courtesy to the team, to explain the reason for their opposition vote, either during deliberation or before casting the vote.

To model the behavior of being polite, respectful, and professional at board meetings, the governance team will strive to address one another by their last name and appropriate prefix / title.

The board wishes to maintain a culture of professionalism, stay focused, and respect the need of trustees to be available to their families and work place. Whenever possible, the personal use of texting and cell phone communication will minimize disruption of the meeting. Cell phones will be set on vibrate and or silent.

The Board's Role in Collective Bargaining

Board members will be actively involved in the collective bargaining process to ensure that the District is represented well by those selected to negotiate on behalf of the Board and the Community. The involvement of the Board will be to:

- Ensure that the ethical, fiscal and educational goals of the Community are represented in the actions taken throughout the collective bargaining process;
- Participate by providing direction and guidance to those selected to represent the Board (District Negotiation Team);
- Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- Set the District's collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team; and,
- Expect, as the representative of the Board, that the superintendent will ensure that the Board, collectively and individually, is informed on the issues and strategies implemented within the collective bargaining process.

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent

The Board will commit to work through and with the Superintendent on issues regarding the running of the District. The Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information. The Superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible of:

- ✓ serious safety concerns
- ✓ serious disciplinary action
- ✓ serious / unexpected personnel changes or disciplinary issues
- ✓ serious illness or death of a student, staff member or members of the staff member's immediate family
- ✓ legal or liability concerns
- ✓ notable achievements

In all matters, the Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information.

It is the superintendent's responsibility to organize the staff in the manner that best serves the needs of the District. As a professional courtesy, the superintendent shall provide appropriate notice to the Board in advance of action being taken.

This should occur through regular communication such as:

- Weekly Friday Communications
- Timely responses to individual inquiries shared with all Board members
- Publishing and updating a calendar of events and Superintendent activities
- Providing rationales or reasons for decisions or actions
- Immediate responses about serious issues and notification of emergencies
- Providing staff reports in a timely manner

As the norm, the superintendent or designee speaks on behalf of the Board. The Board President or designee is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board.

All conflicts between the Superintendent and the Board will be handled in Closed Session, with the Superintendent being in attendance, when appropriate and necessary.

Unless it impacts the function of the Board, conflicts between individual governance team members (including the superintendent) will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict and will not involve other members of the team.

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the superintendent. The Board will set aside at least two meetings for the purpose of completing the annual evaluation of the superintendent. If the evaluation process and instruments are modified, the Board will consult with the superintendent. The modified evaluation process and associated documents will be developed and approved by the Board, not later than the first Board meeting in September. The evaluation process and instrument is designed to bring about the collective view of the Board. Thus, the evaluation will reflect the majority view of the Board, as a whole.

Board Member Elections

Sitting board members have the right to be active participants in the election campaigns of fellow board members or opposition candidates. However, the Board can only accomplish its stated goals and provide the best possible education for the district's students if they act as a group, following the principles and guidelines in this handbook. Therefore, board members are expected to temper their participation in election campaigns so as to maintain the effectiveness of the Board as a whole, regardless of the outcome of the election.

The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols

Following the election/appointment of a new Board member or appointment of a new Superintendent, a study session of the whole Board will be held for the purpose of reviewing/updating the governance protocols of the Board.

Upon the request of two or more Board members, a special study session will be called for the purpose of reviewing/updating of the governance protocols of the Board.

Board Self-Evaluation

The Governing Board shall annually conduct a self-evaluation in order to demonstrate accountability to the community and ensure that district governance effectively supports student achievement and the attainment of the district's vision and goals.

The evaluation may address any areas of Board responsibility, including by not limited to Board performance in relation to vision setting, curriculum, personnel, finance, policy, collective bargaining and community relation. The evaluation also may address objectives related to Board meeting operation, relationships among Board members, relationships with the Superintendent, understanding of Board and Superintendent roles and responsibilities, communication skills, or other boardsmanship skills.