



## **Dos Palos Oro Loma Joint Unified School District**

# **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.*

### **Board of Trustees**

Bill Van Worth, President  
Richard Hogue, Clerk  
Lisa Areias, Member  
Jeff Chase, Member  
Fred Coronado, Member  
Marilyn Cox, Member  
Maria Davis, Member

### **Superintendent**

William Spalding, Superintendent

### **Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements**

*This handbook reflects the governance team's work on creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, norms and coming to agreement on protocols for formal structures that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.*

# 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 assists 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 a negative one.*

## **Governance Norms**

*In addition to meeting the norms below in order to create a positive culture and atmosphere, we agree to act in ways that will help us meet the CSBA Professional Governance Standards.*

### **WE AGREE TO –**

- Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, respected).
- To 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 only authority to direct actions rests with the quorum of the Board sitting at the Board table. Board members carry authority only as a Board, not as individuals. However, when in public, members are seen as individual representatives of the School Board, and by extension, the District. The Board encourages every member of the Governance Team to maintain visibility at District and community events and to participate in activities and community-based committees or groups that impact the District.

In order to be effective representatives of the Board and District, members will:

- Behave at all times in a manner that reflects positively on the District.
- Refrain from obligating the Board and/or administration by actual speech or implication, unless authorized to do so by the Board.
- Represent the Board at various school events, particularly those held at specific sites assigned annually on a rotating basis.
- Refer any concerns, questions, or comments to the Superintendent as specified in the protocol on Responding to Concerns.
- Reinforce with the community the key messages agreed upon by the Board.

In responding to concerns regarding the work of the District, Board members will:

- ❖ *Receive* the information, remembering that only one side of the story is being presented (listening)
- ❖ *Repeat* the information – paraphrase to ensure understanding
- ❖ *Remind* the individual that a Board member has no authority as an individual and share the appropriate line of command and process to follow to address their concern.
- ❖ *Re-Direct* – Thank them for sharing their thoughts and refer them to the appropriate staff member and, if necessary, encourage them to initiate the formal complaint process.
- ❖ *Report* – In a timely manner, inform the Superintendent.

When interacting with the public and their constituents, Board members will hold to the highest level of professional and ethical conduct, including emphasizing the positive aspects of the District.

## **The Board's Role and Relationship with the Staff and Community**

Board members shall not request any information from staff beyond that which would be provided to any regular community member. Staff members are directed to relay requests from Board members to their supervisor to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members.

Management staff are directed to relay requests from Board members to the Superintendent to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members.

This protocol does not imply a censoring of any private and informal conversations.

When individually visiting schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, Board members are encouraged to notify the Superintendent that they will be visiting a school or department, and may provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.

At no time, while visiting schools shall a member interfere or disrupt the educational process, make promises, either overt or implied, interfere with administration, or involve him or herself in personnel issues, student records, or union activities.

## **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; however, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Trustees to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public.

Board meetings will be on the Third Thursday's of each month. Each Board meeting will begin with Closed Session at 6:00 pm. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 7:00 pm. Study Sessions may be scheduled and shall be scheduled at the discretion of the Board.

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. In advance of the preparation of the Board Agenda, Board members may request items to

be placed on the agenda. The Board 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.

Whenever Board members are appointed or elected to serve on the Board, the Superintendent shall administer the Oath Office at a meeting of the Board.

### **Chart of Policy Revision Process**

**Step 1**

- District Receives Policy Update Packet from CSBA

**Step 2**

- Administrative Assistant Prints Policies for Superintendent Review and Comments

**Step 3**

- Superintendent Reviews Updated Recommended Policy Changes Superintendent provides to the Board at Board Meeting 1, in handwritten form, appropriate comments and edits.

**Step 4**

**Board Meeting 1**

- The Original Packet of Updated Policies, with the handwritten comments from the Superintendent, is placed on the Board Agenda (Board Meeting 1), under Reports and Information, and is considered as First Reading by the Board

**Step 5**

**Board Meeting 1**

- Before the Board meeting, if a Board member would like to discuss one or more of the policies provided, the Board member will request specific said policies be pulled for discussion at the next Board Meeting (Board Meeting 2) and placed under the Action Section of the Agenda.
- The polices presented to the Board, on which they have no concerns or questions, will be placed under the Consent Agenda (Second Reading and for Approval) at the next Board Meeting (Board Meeting 2) for action.

**Step 6**

**Board Meeting 2**

- The policies requested by individual Board members to be discussed shall be place under the Action Section of the Board Agenda (Second Reading and Approval) Discussion will take place prior to a motion to approve said policies. The polices presented to the Board, on which they have no concerns or questions, will be placed under the Consent Agenda (Second Reading and for Approval) for action.

### **Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)**

Board members will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the Superintendent and district staff has the opportunity to prepare to answer Board members' questions at Board meetings.

When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. If unforeseen questions arrive 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 Public Meeting laws, including limiting Closed Session to the legally appropriate agenda item(s).

Board members need equal access to information, and to operate within the boundaries established within the Public Meeting law.

The use of email and social communication is subject to the Public Meeting Law. The Superintendent shall forward questions and answers to all Board members. Board members, when responding, may not "reply to all."

Board members shall maintain the confidentiality of Executive Session and shall not release confidential information unless the release of said information is directed by the action of the Board.

Board members will read the information provided to them. Upon the request of a Board member, the Superintendent, in advance of the Board meeting, will be available to answer agenda related questions.

Board members are encouraged to attend professional development and training.

Board members will model professional behavior by being polite and respectful of the points of view held by their fellow Governance Team members. The Governance Team, in Public Session, will address one another by their last name and appropriate prefix/title.

## Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

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

(Staff members, when presenting items to the Board, are to provide appropriate back-up material for the Board to review prior to the Board meeting. If it is necessary to provide a presentation to the Board, presentations are to be limited to not more than 10 minutes, unless prior approval of the President is received.)

- Input from the Community
- Board Discussion and Deliberation

The Board wishes to maintain a culture of professionalism, stay focused, and respect the need of trustees to be available to their families:

- Cell phones will be set for 'silent' or vibrate.
- Trustees will be discreet in checking cell phones if necessary.

## 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). Board members do not attend at-the-table negotiations. The Board believes that the collective bargaining process shall be as transparent as possible. Accordingly, the Board recommends that both the district and the associations agree to broadcast negotiations, via closed circuit video, for both the Board and the association members.
- Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- Set the District's collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team;
- 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 Superintendent is the Collective Bargaining Spokesperson for the Board.

## 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 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, a 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.

As the norm, the Superintendent speaks on behalf of the Board. The Board President is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

The Superintendent will inform the Board when media contacts the Superintendent.

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

Conflicts between individual Board members and/or the Superintendent will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict and will not involve other members of the Board or the public (community, staff, media etc.).

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the Superintendent. The Board will set aside at least one special meeting in October for the purpose of completing the annual evaluation of the Superintendent. The evaluation of the Superintendent will be completed by November 1 of each year. In consultation with the Superintendent, the 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.

### **The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols**

Within 90 days of 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.