



Pathway to the Future

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

David Cohen, President
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Member

Superintendent

Will H. Ector, Jr.

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.

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 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. When a majority of the Board, sitting in a formal meeting, requests action, that request should be made in the context of the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.

Board Policies (BP 9000, 9200 and 9300) of the District relate to the role and responsibility of the Board collectively and Board members individually. “No individual member of the Board, by virtue of holding office, shall exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools; nor as an individual, command the services of any employee.” (CSBA) Board members are to channel their requests and/or concerns directly to the Superintendent (or if necessary through the Board President).

In responding to concerns, board members will:

Receive the information and listen carefully, remembering that only one side of the story is being presented and thank them for sharing their thoughts;

Direct the complainant to the staff most appropriate and able to help them resolve the concern;

Share with the individual that a board member has no authority as an individual and share the appropriate line of command to follow in addressing their concern.

Inform the superintendent as soon as possible.

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

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.

It is imperative 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; or complete any duty as requested. Management staff members 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, to either the staff or to individual Board members, a censoring of any private and informal conversations.

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 are normally held on Tuesdays, once each month. Each Board meeting will begin with Closed Session, beginning at 6:00 pm. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 7:00 pm. Study Sessions and Special Board meetings 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. 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.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

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.

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 potential conflict of interest.

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;
- Input from the Community;
- Board Discussion, Questions for Staff, and Deliberation

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

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;
- ❖ 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; and,
- ❖ 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 Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information. The Superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible of:

- serious disciplinary action
- serious safety concerns
- serious / unexpected personnel changes
- legal or liability concerns
- notable achievements

It is the Superintendent's responsibility to organize the staff in the manner that best serves the needs of the District. The Superintendent shall provide appropriate notice to the Board in advance of action being taken.

The Board designates the Superintendent as the official spokesperson for the District. The Board President is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

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

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent (continued)

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the Superintendent. The Board will set aside at least one special meeting for the purpose of developing and/or completing the mid-year and/or annual evaluation of the Superintendent. 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, 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 the Board, a special study session will be called for the purpose of reviewing/updating of the governance protocols of the Board.