



# **Auburn Union Elementary School District**

## **Board 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**

Julann Brown, President  
Michelle Sierra-Sammons, Vice President  
Sarah Brichler, Clerk  
Debbie Goodrich, Trustee  
Jamie Ross, Trustee

### **Superintendent**

Amber Lee-Alva

### **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 rather a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees so that 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 past accomplishments.
- 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

Board members carry authority only as Board, not as individuals. 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 (what is to be accomplished), not the methods used to achieve those results.

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.
- 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.

When someone brings a concern to the Board member, we will listen carefully, remembering we are only hearing one side of the story, and then we will direct that person to the person in the district most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern. We will inform the superintendent of any such concerns.

We will make sure they understand the appropriate order of whom to contact (i.e., teacher, then principal, then district staff) and, if necessary the appropriate written complaint form.

Board members carry authority only as Board, not as individuals. It will also clarify that one Board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.

As a representative of the public, it is important that the Board member invite the person with the complaint to ultimately get back to him/her if the issue is not resolved.

When an email is sent to all trustees by a stakeholder, the superintendent will respond on behalf of the Board and Cc the Board in their response.

## **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.

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

To assist in this matter, the Superintendent will ensure that principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his/her lesson when a visitor is in his/her classroom.

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.

## **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 diverse populations 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.

Regular Board meetings will generally be on the Second Wednesday of each month. Each Closed Session will begin prior to the Public Session. The Regular Public Session will begin at 7:00 pm. Study Sessions may be scheduled and shall be scheduled at the discretion of the Board.

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

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 or designee shall administer the Oath of Office at a meeting of the Board.

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

#### **Step 1**

- District Receives Policy Update Packet from CSBA

#### **Step 2**

- Superintendent Review and Comments on proposed policy changes/updates

#### **Step 3**

- Superintendent Reviews Updated Recommended Policy Changes  
Superintendent provides to the Board at Board Meeting 1 with 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**

- If a Board member or Community Member would like to discuss one or more of the policies provided, they 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 policies 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 placed under the Action Section of the Board Agenda (Second Reading and Approval)  
Discussion will take place prior to a motion to approve said policies.

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

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. If the project exceeds workload, the Superintendent will ask the Board to prioritize projects.

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.

Any request of the staff, which will take more than 30 minutes to fulfill, must be made by the majority of the Board so as not to detract staff from focused efforts that are meant to move the district toward achieving the year's goals.

Individual Board members are expected to self-monitor compliance to Public Meeting laws, including limiting Closed Session to the legally appropriate agenda item(s).

We will use technology carefully to ensure that we do not violate the Brown Act, which prohibits Board members from exchanging facts to develop collective concurrence, advance or clarify an issue, facilitate agreement or compromise, or to advance an ultimate resolution.

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.”

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

- Electronic devices will be set for ‘silent’ or vibrate.
- Trustees will be discreet in checking electronic devices.
- When meeting virtually, whenever possible, Trustee’s cameras will be on during the meeting

Board members individually and collectively demonstrate confidentiality as appropriate and as outlined through the mandates of the California Education Code, the Brown Act, and other compliance criteria established by law or legislation. Respecting the confidentiality of information maintains the Board's judicial review role.

Each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote as they see fit on an issue. Everyone agrees it is a courtesy to the team to explain the reasons for their vote either during deliberation or before casting the vote.

The Board believes that when no legal reason exists of a conflict of interest, its members have a duty to vote on issues before them.

When a member abstains, his/her abstention shall not be counted for purposes of determining whether a majority of the membership of the Board has taken action

When there is a tie and an abstention, the motion passes.

Abstentions are most appropriate in cases where there is a personal relationship between a litigant and a member (perception of bias), a decision that financially impacts the member or their immediate family (legal conflict), or a personal connection to the member that may bias a decision on discipline.,

When abstaining because there may be a perception of bias, the member is encouraged to so state.

Where an actual legal conflict of interest exists, the member must publicly declare the conflict and recuse themselves from voting at all.

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 will strive to address one another by their last name and appropriate prefix/ title.

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

Governance Team members are reminded that policy and decisions reserved to the Board must be made as a Board. Except where otherwise indicated in the Education or Government Codes, a majority consists of three of five members voting for an item. Once the decision has been made, it becomes the decision of “the Board.”

Under the concept of majority rule, each member is compelled to support the successful implementation of a policy decision, program, or procedure even when he or she does not agree with the decision.

If a member of the Governance Team cannot support the decision of the Board because it offends a moral/personal code, the member is expected, at a minimum, to refrain from undermining the decision or directive.

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:

- ❖ Input from the Community
- ❖ 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 at least 48 hours 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.)
- ❖ Board Discussion and Deliberation

Parliamentary procedures are to be utilized as a guide to ensure for the most effective and efficient Board meeting possible. Accordingly, the Board utilizes Rosenberg's parliamentary procedures as its guide to managing the agenda of each Board meeting.

## **Public Participation**

Since the Public Meeting Law (Brown Act) expressly prohibits discussion leading to action from being conducted unless agendized, Governance Team members are strongly encouraged to refrain from engaging members of the public in dialogue about issues not on the agenda.

In general, citizens and residents wishing to “dialogue” with members should be encouraged to contact individual members and discuss issues of importance with them or the Superintendent as appropriate.

As a result of a comment under public communication, a member may ask the Superintendent to briefly comment for clarity or correction. The member may also ask that a matter be investigated, with or without a follow-up report to the Board.

If a Governance Team member feels compelled to speak to the issue, the member must first be recognized by the Board President. The comments must be brief and only clarifying or correcting. Any further discussion should be agendized.

Upon the request of an individual Board member, a roll call vote will be provided.

The protocol for recording the votes of the individual Board members shall follow the rotation established by the Board, with the first vote recorded being that of the Past President and the last vote would be that of the current President of the Board.

### **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.
- The Superintendent is the Collective Bargaining Spokesperson for the Board. The Superintendent will not be at the table.

## **Board Officers**

Recognizing that the Community elects leaders to serve as Board members, it is assumed that each Board Member has the ability to serve as Board President. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the practice to be used to elect the officers of the Board will follow a seniority rotation into the leadership roles of the Board. Seniority is determined by the year in which an individual is elected. If multiple members are elected in the same year, then the greater number of votes received in the election establishes seniority. Due to personal circumstances (e.g., medical reasons), a Board member who is next in line to serve as Clerk, Vice President, President or President, may elect not to rotate into the Clerk, Vice President, President, President position at an organization meeting. If this occurs, (due to medical reasons) the member would remain in the order of succession with future first right of refusal. The rotation will start with the current (2021) Vice President rotating into the President role, the Clerk into the Vice President role and the next senior Trustee into the Clerk role.

## **The Board's Role on Committees**

Board members will be actively involved in the District through observations and stakeholder engagement. The involvement of individual Board members on committees will only be by official appointment by the Board on committees such as:

- 2+2 Committee with the City and School District

## **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.

### **The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent (continued)**

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. 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 December. 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**

An administrative orientation by the Superintendent and senior staff will be provided to new members of the Board. Training may be provided by County and State organizations, consultants, or led by staff. The training shall, whenever possible, take place prior to the first Board meeting of the new Board member.

The orientation is intended to be a conversation and overview of the things members need to know immediately. Questions will be answered, and the Board meeting structure, Superintendent contract and objectives, Board policies, overview of the

services and programs, and the major challenges being faced will be outlined and discussed.

Each orientation may be slightly different depending upon the needs and interests of the incoming members and the major issues before the Board.

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.