



Santa Clara Unified School District

Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees

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EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Unity of Purpose, Roles, Responsibilities, Norms and Protocols

This document reflects the governance team's work on the creation of a framework of effective governance. This process involves ongoing discussions and agreements about unity of purpose, roles, responsibilities, norms and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.

On November 14, 2017 and January 20, 2018, the members of the Santa Clara Unified School District Board of Trustees participated in workshops on Board self-evaluation and effective governance with the California School Boards Association. On August 6, 2019, the Board held their Annual Retreat and updated various areas. This document reflects the governance team's discussion on developing and sustaining a framework for effective governance. This Governance Handbook reflects highlights of their ongoing conversations about unity of purpose, roles, responsibilities, norms and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best serves all students.

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UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of purpose is the common focus, overarching goals and the core values, beliefs and principles governing body members share in common about children, the district, and public education. The following was discussed at the Board's Self Evaluation meetings ~~held on 11/14/2017 and 1/20/2018~~ on 8/6/2019. Goals were clarified and prioritized. Additionally, the Board identified the goals of TOP PRIORITY and how success towards these goals and benchmarks will be evaluated.

2015-2020 Strategic Plan

Santa Clara Unified School District (SCUSD) is very pleased and proud to share our bold vision and strategic plan for the next five years— *"Rising Above in Silicon Valley!"*

SCUSD's strategic plan is the product of an intensive, yearlong, community-driven planning process. Approximately 200 people participated on our nine planning teams throughout the 2014-2015 school year—parents, teachers and classified staff, students, administrators, and members of the general public. The teams analyzed a wide range of data and trends, in addition to incorporating input provided by over one thousand community members responding to surveys and attending our monthly Community Conversations.

The planning teams worked diligently to craft ambitious aspiration statements and supporting objectives to guide the District over the next five years. The strategic plan services as the guidepost for the District's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), as wells as other required district-wide plans. We sincerely hope that all members of our community are as inspired as we are by our vision and the strategic priorities outlined in the Executive Summary!

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following are suggested guidelines on Board Roles and behaviors.

The Role of the Board and Superintendent

School Board “trustees” are the representatives of the people, elected to ensure the district schools educate the students in consideration of the interests of the local community. The role of the School Board is to govern the school district.

The Superintendent is hired by the school board to provide the professional expertise in the day-to-day operations of the district. The role of the Superintendent is:

1. To work with the school board to develop an effective governance leadership team.
2. To serve as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the school district.

Performing Board Responsibilities

We Set the Direction for the Community’s Schools by:

- Focusing on student learning.
- Assessing needs/obtaining baseline data.
- Generating, setting direction, reviewing or revising documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators).
- Ensuring an appropriate inclusive process is used to develop these documents.
- Ensuring that these documents are the driving force for all district efforts.

We Establish an Effective and Efficient Structure for the school district by:

- Employing the Superintendent.
- Setting policies for hiring of other personnel.
- Overseeing the development of and adopting policies.
- Setting direction for an adopting the curriculum.
- Establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget.
- Providing parameters for a voting on collective bargaining agreements.

We provide Support through Our Behavior and Actions by:

- Acting with a professional demeanor that models the district’s beliefs and vision.
- Making decisions and providing resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals.

- Ensuring a positive personnel climate exists
- Being knowledgeable about district efforts and able to explain them to the public.

We Ensure Accountability to the Public by:

- Evaluating the Superintendent.
- Monitoring, reviewing and revising policies.
- Serving as a judicial and appeals body.
- Monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness.
- Monitoring and adjusting district finances.
- Monitoring the collective bargaining process.

We Act as Community Leaders by:

- Speaking with a common voice about district policies, goals and issues.
- Engaging and involving the community in district schools and activities.
- Communicating clear information about policies, programs and fiscal conditions of the district.
- Educating the community and the media about issues facing the district and public education.
- Advocating for students, district programs and public education to the general public, community, local, state, and national leaders.

Board/Superintendent's Needs

What the Board needs from the Superintendent

- Reasonable follow up to questions.
- Information uniformly provided to all.
- Follow up on email – even if it's just an acknowledgement of receipt.
- Recommendation on direction and background information.
- A person who sets the standard for other in words and deeds.
- Heads up on issues.
- Trust.
- Benefit of the doubt.

What the Superintendent needs from the Board:

- Good faith.
- Consistency – adhering to rules – protocols and norms.
- Calm deliberation and professional leadership.
- The trust that all staff have the best interests of students at heart.
- Benefit of the doubt.

What the Trustees and Staff are Most Proud of

The trustees and staff are most proud of:

- Equity work they have accomplished and continued to keep on the radar.
- Acquisition of the Agnew property.
- The student's compassion, achievement, service, and leadership
- Versatility of staff.
- Financial strength.
- Retention of staff.
- New programs.
- Retired staff coming back to help.
- Low pupil to counselor ratio.
- Free lunch-free programs-free science camp, all due to financial stability.
- AP and SAT test scores – starting to close the gap.
- Evolving Culture – recovering.
- A happy, healthy culture that is student focused.

POSITIVE GOVERNANCE AGREEMENTS AND ACTIONS

The Governing Board believes that its primary responsibility is to act in the best interests of every student in the district. The Board also has major commitments to parents/guardians, all members of the community, employees, the state of California, laws pertaining to public education, and established policies of the district. To maximize Board effectiveness and public confidence in district governance, Board members are expected to govern responsibly and hold themselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The Board expects its members to work with each other and the Superintendent to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. Each individual Board member shall follow these agreed NORMS and PROTOCOLS developed at the Board Retreat 1/20/2018 [and reaffirmed at the Board Retreat on 8/6/2019.](#)

Board of Trustee NORMS

1. Focus time and energy on student best interests.
2. Listen Openly and Respectfully. We will listen to what other people have to say, recognizing that each individual opinion is as important as our own.
3. Speak Openly, Honestly, and Respectfully. We will not be afraid to say what we think. We will speak in a respectful and dignified manner, being mindful of our own body language, tone of voice, and the words we use. We will let each other know of the impact of their communication on us personally, so they are able to clarify their intent with us first hand. We will not attack another person verbally. We will not be harshly argumentative or personal in our comments.
4. Maintain confidentiality – it is agreed that the board president will remind the members during Closed-Session, both at the beginning and end of the session that all matters discussed must remain confidential. It is further agreed that all board members shall report any “leaks” of confidential matter to the board president who will discuss the matter with the individual breaching the confidentiality. This norm is of the highest priority to the board and will be conveyed to all new board members and staff during orientation.
5. Take collective responsibility – Board members shall stand behind the decisions of the majority vote.
6. Validate others’ communications and opinions. We will offer validation when other members of the team communicate with us individually or when team members make the effort to communicate honestly and respectfully during board meetings, even when we don’t agree with what the other person is saying. Accept differences in experience, culture, and values.
7. Ask questions when we don’t understand. We will ask questions when we do not understand, paraphrase other team member comments in order to clarify for understanding, and strive to build on each other’s comments and ideas whenever possible during our discussions.
8. Don’t take disagreements personally.
9. Talk Straight – get to the point.
10. Provide specific and constructive direction. Provide direction so that staff may present sufficient, appropriate, specific information that helps the Board make rational, thoughtful, responsible decisions.

11. Behave Professionally. Respect meeting times, come prepared for the meetings and ask cabinet questions about the agenda items before the Board meetings so they are prepared to respond.

Board of Trustees Protocols

Purpose: Efficient teams discuss and agree on the formal structures (protocols) used by the Board and Superintendent to function as a team. Protocols detail how boards operate, and how they agree to do business. The following sample protocols were discussed in response to areas for improvement as indicated by the Board Self Evaluation. The Board Self Evaluation conducted 11/14/2017, 1/20/2018 and 8/6/2019 identified need for the following suggested Protocols.

Board Meeting Agenda organization as follows:

- Pledge
- Recognition events
- Public Comment on non-agenda items
- Consent agenda – vote
- Action items vote
- Reports – including Board and Staff

Agenda Questions and Requests for Information

1. All questions will be directed to the Superintendent and Executive Assistant. All responses to questions will be noted and shared with the entire Board.
2. The Superintendent or assigned staff will try to respond to the Trustee within a reasonable time frame and share the information with the full Board as appropriate.
3. Trustees will inform the Superintendent if they intend to ask the question at a board meeting.
4. The Superintendent may ask the full Board to approve the request if, in his her judgement, the request will require substantial time or resources.
5. If a Trustee asks a question during a meeting without prior notice to Superintendent or the staff, the Trustee will acknowledge this.
 - a. Possible language: “I want to apologize to staff because I did not give them advance notice, and I know you may not have the information here today, but I’m just wondering...”

All Reports

In an attempt to streamline meetings all staff reports should conform to the guidelines below:

1. Reports should be focused on highlights (executive summary).
2. Full reports can be provided in written form.
3. Reports shall follow these guidelines, whenever possible:
 - a. Three Rules
 1. 10, 20, and 30 Rule: Presentation should be 10 minutes maximum, 20 slides maximum, and 30-point font minimum
 2. Do not read slides to the audience.
 3. Number the slides
 - b. Two suggestions
 1. Understand the audience. Consider the message in the context of what the audience already knows
 2. Good presenters rehearse their presentations
 - c. One Warning: Avoid the “ejection button”. Presentations have a time limit; don’t get cut off.

Board Member Information

It is a goal that all Board members come to meetings with the same critical information. If an individual Board member meets with or asks for information from staff or committee, on an agenda item, the entire board should receive the information provided to that board member and on responses to board member questions.

Action Items as Additions to the Agenda

It is agreed that the Superintendent will strive not to add items to the agenda for action. The Board will have adequate time to review and ask questions on said action items. Board members may exercise their right to ask for items to be tabled if they do not feel adequately informed.

All items for Board discussion and action will follow a three-step of Discussion, Planning and then Action prior to a Board vote.

Staff Board Communication

The Board agreed that they would like to be informed by staff on any issues prior to hearing about it in the press or social media. The Board further agreed that if any member becomes aware of an issue, that member will inform the Superintendent, who will then inform the rest of the Board.

Attention to Protocols

1. The Board President will remind the Board of the presence of the protocols to guide the Board in the conduct of the meeting.
2. If a Trustee believes that these protocols are not being followed, he or she may raise the concern by saying: "Point of order" (i.e. "Are we operating according to our protocols?").
3. The Board President responds by re-focusing the meeting.

Example: If the concern was regarding lengthy comments, the President may encourage a Trustee to conclude his/her comments within a reasonable time frame.

Board members who violate protocols will receive a first warning from the Board President. A second violation may result in a formal warning at a Board meeting from the entire Board. A third violation may result in a Censure.

Board Meeting Management, Length of Meetings

1. The Board generally strives to conclude its business within two hours.
2. The Trustees agree the Board President may end comment or discussion.
Possible language: "Excuse me. I want to be mindful of our time constraints. I'm going to propose we conclude the item and move on."

Deliberation at Board Meetings

1. The item is introduced.
2. President calls for motion and second.
 - a. IF no motion OR 2nd, the motion dies.
 - b. IF the motion carries: go forward.
 - c. Allow for public comment.
3. Trustees use the opportunity to deliberate and reflect on the item in light of :

- a. Impact on Students
 - b. District values, mission, goals, and priorities
 - c. Constituent perspectives and interests
 - d. Legal requirements
 - e. Cost
4. Trustees give the Board President permission to bring the deliberations to a close by inviting for a call for the vote.

Possible language: "Unless there are any new ideas...."

Public Input During Board Meetings

Every agenda for regular meetings shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to directly address the Board on non-agenda items at the meeting onset and on any agenda item, before or during the Board's consideration of the item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board. (EC 35145.5). The Board has an expectation that community members will abide by the same Norms and Protocols that govern the behavior of the Board.

Explaining No Votes

Trustees present their ideas and questions during deliberation; they do not explain their votes after the vote is taken. Board members agree to stand behind the majority vote of the Board and not be an impediment to implementation.

Informal Board Reports at Board Meetings

1. Trustees try to keep comments to two (2) minutes or less.
2. Trustees may expand upon their report in written format submitted to staff per staff provided calendar to be included with the agenda.
3. Trustees try to avoid repeating comments already made by other Trustees.
4. Trustees focus their comments on matters related to the District, such as:
 - a. Attendance at school functions
 - b. Attendance at community events
 - c. Board/Trustee development activity

Superintendent/Trustee Communications

1. Trustees use their judgement in keeping the Superintendent informed.
2. The Superintendent shall communicate regularly with the Trustees regarding District related items or concerns.
3. Trustees trust the Superintendent in exercising judgement in informing the Board of District issues.

Trustee/Trustee Communications

Trustees may contact up to two other Board members and the Superintendent in discussing District issues or matters before the Board. Communications between and among Trustees should not be used to reach an agreement or consensus on an item related to District business.

Trustees Role in Public

1. In public, Trustees have the responsibility to:
 - a. Involve parents and the community in meaningful ways.
 - b. Advocate for students, the District's programs, and public education.
2. Trustees must maintain confidentiality at all time.

Trustees Visiting Schools and Other District Facilities

1. Trustees will contact the school principal or facility director, as appropriate, and Superintendent in advance of visiting schools or facilities for any reason.
2. Trustees will check in the office whenever visiting schools.
3. Trustees will not make surprise visits to schools.

Speaking for the Board or to the Media or Public

1. Superintendent and Board President are designated spokespersons for the District. The District's Director of Public Information may speak on behalf of the Superintendent and Board President.
2. The Superintendent is the primary spokesperson for the District.

3. The Board President will address Board positions and actions.
4. The Superintendent shall develop, and Board shall approve a comprehensive communication plan focused on community outreach as well as internal communication for the district.

Board members Handling Complaints/Concerns from the Staff/Community- Outside of Board Meetings

Note: Uniform Complaint Policy BP/AR 1312.3, 3312 Uniform Complaint Procedure is required by law.

In responding to complaints, Board members will:

1. Receive-Listen, smile, and thank any community member registering a complaint.
2. Confirm understanding of the complaint
 - a. Maybe ask: “As I understand what your have said, your complaint is ... Is that accurate.
 - b. Option: “What would you like the next steps to be?”
3. Remind – Explain that you have no authority as an individual.
4. Re-Direct – Direct the community member back into the system at the appropriate level.
5. Report – Report the complaint to the Superintendent.

Note: If the matter involves personnel, go straight to Step 5. You may add that in your role as a Board member you must remain neutral.

The Superintendent trusts Board members to use their judgment in determining what to report. The Superintendent does want to know about any issues that involve:

- a. Student & staff safety concerns.
- b. Anything that may be illegal.
- c. Anything potentially litigious.
- d. Anything that might end up in the newspaper, TV, or social media
- e. Complaints against District employees

Board Self Evaluation

The Board will engage in a self-evaluation process annually.

New Board Member and Staff Orientation

The Board is committed to developing a formal onboarding process for new Board members, potential Board candidates, and staff to ensure their understanding of district wide policies, procedures, goals, and strategic plan. The Board commits to pairing new Board members with experienced Board members to create a mentorship.

Superintendent Evaluation

The Board agrees that the Superintendent's evaluation is an ongoing process. The Board will strive to have a quarterly dialogue to follow process toward Board goals. The Superintendent will be formally evaluated in writing by consensus of the Board annually.

EXHIBIT A

Board Goals

1. Create a college-going culture in which all students have a pathway to college success.
 - a. Graduation rate.
 - b. Reading by third grade.
 - c. Attendance rates.
 - d. Suspension rates.
 - e. A-G readiness.
 - f. College and/or Career Readiness. [Prioritize and update as needed.](#)
2. Ensure that all students—pre-K to adults—participate in a variety of learning experiences that enable them to develop and demonstrate 21st Century skills, while exploring career pathways that are responsive to industry needs and personal aspirations.
3. Cultivate a positive, solution-oriented environment that nurtures communication, compassion, competency, and consistency.
4. Foster a sense of belonging for all families, with the goal of supporting each student in realizing his or her maximum potential.
5. Ensure that all students are educated in safe learning environments that support greater opportunities for student-teacher interaction, school connectedness, and the social well-being of each learner.
6. Develop classrooms, workplaces and technically proficient staff and operations that reflect the rapidly evolving Silicon Valley environment, leveraging technology to prepare students to be successful, responsible members of our global society.
7. Develop environments for the 21st Century learner, while allowing each site and department to plan responsibly and with funding assurance.
8. Cultivate and implement mutually beneficial business, community, and government partnerships to support student success and a thriving district.
9. Provide maximum services to all students within available financial resources, allowing each site and department to plan responsibly and with funding assurance.

*In addition to the goals above the board expressed the following “Legacy” goals for consideration – stars **indicate the number of “votes” each goal was awarded by board and staff.*

Legacy Goals:

- Agnew Schools, Middle and Elementary open by August of 2020 with High School to follow shortly behind
- Improving student readiness for college without remediation
- Manage growth well
- Achieving a 93% graduation rate by Fall of 2018 repost period (up from 87.2% in 2017)
- Develop a culture of community service (Nordstrom Model)
- A lower suspension rate
- Every student who walks through the door graduates ready of college or career
- 100% English proficiency by third grade for ESL students
- Reduce the chronic absentee rate
- 2-3 year Expense stability
- Board develop more efficient and effective work plans
- Board adopt and adhere to Norms and Protocols
- Equity in Education with information and programs accessible to all children. Strive for children to be able to start the same point toward success
- Community perception matches reality – celebrate successes.
- All student achieve one or more things that give them individual notoriety
- An Emersion Immersion School
- Improving results for students with disabilities
- Prepare more students for S.T.E.M. fields
- Data dashboard for student success
- 8th Grade Algebra proficiency

GOVERNANCE AGREEMENT SIGNATURE PAGE

We have reviewed and agree to follow the aforementioned governance teams Norms and Protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Santa Clara Unified School District Board of Trustees, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement annually.

Affirmed on this _____ day of _____ 2019

Michele Ryan, Ph.D., President

Jodi Muirhead, Vice President

Mark Richardson, Clerk

Jim Canova, Trustee

Vickie Fairchild, Trustee

Albert Gonzalez, Trustee

Andy Ratermann, Trustee

Stella M. Kemp, Superintendent