

Ravenswood City School District

Governance Handbook 2021

Board of Education

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This handbook reflects the governance team's work on the creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about a unity of purpose, member roles, commitment to norms, and developing consensus on protocols and formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits the children and families of Ravenswood City School District.

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EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance - A Definition

School district governance is the process of setting organizational policies and standards that are adopted by the Board of Education and implemented by the Superintendent in order to provide strategic direction and ensure that objectives are met, risks are managed appropriately, and resources are utilized responsibly in order to ensure the best education possible for all students.

Governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school district and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement. This Governance Handbook documents the governance responsibilities of the Board of Education and Superintendent of the Ravenswood City School District within these three dimensions:

1. Governing as a unified team with a shared vision to lead and serve the community
2. Mutual support for roles and responsibilities
3. Creating and sustaining a positive governance leadership culture

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of purpose is a common focus, agreement on priority goals, and shared values about students and the district that transcend individual differences and fulfill a greater purpose.

A unity of purpose exists when the commitment to achieving these goals becomes the guiding principle of all trustees and the superintendent. The focused efforts of the Ravenswood City School District will be reflected in the Mission, Core Values and Antiracist Commitment statements, and the strategic plan adopted by the Board.

Mission:

Ravenswood City School District empowers every student to fully engage critically and creatively in their education with the skills and mindsets necessary to successfully fulfill their unique potential.

Core Values:

Integrity: We model transparency and honesty to build trust, relationships and community.

Student-centered: We ensure students are at the center of every decision we make

Innovation: We promote and celebrate the creativity and curiosity that sparks the learning and growth in all of us

Excellence: We hold high expectations for ourselves and for all students

Empowerment: We work in partnership with children, families and our community to encourage self-advocacy and engage in decision-making

Respect: We build upon the strength of our diversity and individuality to create an equitable and just community.

Antiracist Commitment

The Ravenswood City School District acknowledges that racism has an inherent and permanent impact on our students' lives. We actively work to systematically dismantle the racist structures and practices in our schools.

In order to be antiracist, we must:

- Rely on the communities we serve to guide and inform the decisions we make about our curriculum, program and practice
- Examine every policy, curriculum, assessment and personnel decision and make changes as necessary
- Root our work in and centered around the rich cultures of our students, families, and community
- Provide learning environments and opportunities that help students and staff be self-aware, to self reflect, have empathy, understand societal context and practice abolitionist teaching
- Develop students' self advocacy to be an agent of change through explicit antiracist discussion, practice and action

GOVERNANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in America. The role of the trustees who sit on the board is to ensure school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of their communities. Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities. These are:

- Setting Direction
- Establishing an effective and efficient structure
- Providing support
- Ensuring accountability
- Providing community leadership as advocates for children and the school district

These responsibilities represent core functions that are so fundamental to a school system's accountability to the community it serves, they can only be performed by an elected governing body. Authority is granted to the board as a whole, not each member individually. Therefore, board members fulfill these responsibilities by working together as a governance team with the superintendent to make decisions that best serve all the students in the community.

The superintendent assists the board in carrying out its responsibilities and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed upon district vision and goals.

BOARD GOVERNANCE PROTOCOLS

Board Protocols

The purpose of these protocols is to provide a basic set of professional standards by which the Board of Education and the Superintendent are to function as a team. There is no intention to abridge the rights and obligations of board members to oversee the operation of the district, nor to interfere with the superintendent in her role as the chief executive officer of the district.

1. Act with a professional demeanor that models the district's vision and mission
2. Make decisions and provide resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals
3. Uphold district policies and all actions the board has approved
4. Ensure a positive working climate exists
5. Be knowledgeable about district efforts
6. Evaluate the superintendent
7. Monitor, review and revise policies and serve as a judicial and appeals body
8. Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness and require program changes as indicated
9. Monitor and adjust district finances
10. Monitor the collective bargaining process
11. Develop and implement board self-evaluation at least once a year
12. Speak with a common voice about district policies, goals, and issues
13. Advocate for children and district programs to the general public, key community members, and local, state, and national leaders
14. Educate the community about the issues facing students and the district
15. Communicate clear information about policies, programs, and fiscal condition of the district
16. Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities
17. Focus on student learning
18. Ensure these protocol documents are the driving force for all district efforts

19. Ensure an appropriate inclusive process is used
20. Generate, review or revise setting direction documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, LCAP goals, success indicators)
21. Receive needs assessment/baseline data
22. Employ and support the superintendent; set policy for hiring of other personnel
23. Oversee the development of and adopt policies
24. Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements
25. Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facilities issues
26. Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum
27. Model the value of life-long learning

Superintendent Protocols

1. Work toward creating a team with the Board dedicated to students
2. Respect and acknowledge the Board's role in setting policy and overseeing the performance of the Superintendent
3. Work with the Board to establish a clear vision for the School District.
4. Communicate the common vision
5. Recognize that the Board/Superintendent governance relationship requires support by the District's management team.
6. Understand the distinction between Board and staff roles
7. Respect the role of the Board as the representative of the community
8. Accept leadership responsibility and be accountable for implementing the vision, goals, and policies of the District.
9. Prepare preliminary district goals annually for the Board's consideration.
10. Provide data to Board members so data- informed decisions can be made
11. Make personnel recommendations and changes in consultation with the Board
12. Inform the Board prior to critical information becoming public; apprise all Board members in a timely manner of any major incident or when they may be called upon to answer or explain.
13. Distribute information fully and equally to all Board Members.
14. Provide the information requested by one Board member to every Board member
15. Distribute the Board agenda in a timely manner and with enough time for Board study and clarification prior to scheduled meetings.
16. Never bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise for the Board.
17. Provide requests for additional information through a Board update, special report, Board agenda items, or as a Board workshop.
18. Present major decisions initially as a discussion item, then place it on an upcoming Board agenda (if necessary) for action.
19. Treat all Board members professionally.
20. Communicate with individual Board members to determine if concerns exist prior to a possible problem developing and respect the right of board members to disagree with each other.

21. Keep the Board informed regarding issues and/or situations that could possibly concern parents, student, staff or community.
22. Bring to the attention of the Board matters that affect Board Member relationships
23. Visit schools regularly
24. Represent the School District by being visible in the community.
25. Model the value of life-long learning.

Procedures to Facilitate Governance Leadership

Requesting Information from the Superintendent

Principle

- Critical to the ability of board members to make informed decisions is timely access to information.
- The superintendent wants to be responsive to requests for information, maintain the focus on the district priorities and balance the management of staff time.
- This will provide clarity about the organizational structure for board members and staff

Procedure

- Board members will always work through the superintendent when asking questions or requesting additional information on board meeting agenda items.
- The superintendent will ensure timely responses to requests and will provide the information or direct board members to the correct source. As appropriate, the superintendent will distribute answers to all board members.
- 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. Requests requiring inordinate amounts of time will be brought to the board to decide whether to support the request.

Meetings as Strategic Leadership

Principle

- The board meeting is a meeting to conduct school district business in public. Well-run efficient meetings model leadership, promote trust and confidence and provide opportunities to demonstrate strategically moving the district forward and planning for the future
- The governance team wants to demonstrate to the public that the board maintains focus on priorities and that deliberation and discussion are conducted with professionalism and respect.

- The board meeting provides opportunities to share educational philosophy among the governance team and with the community

Procedure

- The superintendent reports will explicitly demonstrate the relationship to the district goals
- The board members agree to share accountability for board deliberations that demonstrate that the 'right' amount of time is spent on the 'right' things while valuing the input of each member of the governance team.
- Board member comments at the board meeting will focus on goals, professional learning or educational trends.
- Annually and as needed the board will schedule study sessions and board conversations linked to the district's strategic priorities

Role of the Board President

Principle

- The board has an obligation to set an example of good government in action for the community
- The board intends for meetings to proceed professionally, efficiently and effectively
- The board president sets the tone and shapes the public's perception of the school board
- Each board member must have the opportunity to express his or her viewpoint during board deliberation

Procedure

- Confer with the superintendent before the board meeting to prepare, as necessary for the board meeting
- Facilitate the board meeting, supporting the effective flow of the discussion and encouraging input from all trustees while staying on task, moving forward, and maintaining proper meeting decorum
- Model the tone and behavior the board wishes to convey to the community
- Following the board meeting, the board president with the superintendent will ensure appropriate follow-up and clarification of possible options for the board
- The board president serves as the primary spokesperson for the board.

Board Deliberation and Motions on Agenda Action Items

Principle

- The tenets of parliamentary procedure help ensure the orderly conduct of board meetings

- Establishment of clear and simple rules leads to wider understanding and participation, fostering a healthier exchange of ideas
- Motions are the vehicles for orderly decision making by the board

Procedure

- The board president will introduce the agenda item and present the opportunity for the superintendent and staff to report on the issue at hand and to provide staff recommendations
- The board president will open the item for discussion so that board members may exchange thoughts or ask the superintendent and staff for further clarification if necessary
- Members of the public will be afforded the right to address the board before or during consideration of the item
- The board president will call for a motion. A board member may act by saying “I move that . . .”
- Another board member may second the motion by saying “I second the motion”
- The board president will acknowledge the motion and second and ask if any further discussion by the board is necessary
- In person meetings: The board president will call for a vote saying “All in favor please respond by saying aye”. “Any opposed please respond by saying no”
- Virtual meetings: The board president will call for a “Roll Call” vote by the superintendent
- The president announces the result of the vote and clarifies Board direction by the superintendent and the record keeper.

Amended Motions and Substitute Motions

Principle

- A motion is a formal proposal put before the board by a member of the board
- Any motion can be amended before board consideration
- There can be multiple motions on the flow at the same time

Procedure

- A recommendation to amend a motion can be made by any member of the board
- When a board member recommends amending a motion on the floor, if the maker and person who seconded the motion accept the amendment, that now becomes the pending motion on the flow
- If a recommended amendment is not accepted by the maker of the motion and person who seconded it, the person proposing the amendment must make a “substitute” motion and it must be seconded before the board can consider it. A substitute motion is a second motion separate from the first motion.

- When multiple motions exist simultaneously, the board should first consider the last motion made that is seconded. If this motion passes the action is final for this topic and the previous motion(s) becomes moot. If the motion fails, the motion made prior to the failed motion then becomes the pending motion for consideration by the board. The first motion made is the last to be considered.
- Substitute motions shall be limited to three to avoid confusion and unwieldy conversations

Board Meeting Agenda Consent Calendar

Principle

- A consent calendar allows the board to approve items together without discussion or individual motions
- Consent calendars help streamline meetings by allowing procedural decisions that are likely to be noncontroversial to be made through a single motion.

Procedure

- Board members, staff, or members of the public can request an item to be pulled from the consent calendar for individual consideration.
- Typical reasons to remove an item from the consent calendar are: to discuss the item, to ask questions about the item, or to register a vote against the item
- Ideally requests to remove an item from the consent calendar and the reason for the request should be made during the approval of the agenda. Items may also be removed when the consent calendar is considered by the board.
- Consent items should include, but are not limited to: approval of minutes, field trips, conference requests, inter-district transfers, volunteers, personnel
- An agenda item “items removed from The Consent Calendar” will follow the consent calendar on the agenda to facilitate consideration of removed items.

Candidates for Board of Education upon County Certification

Principle

- Newly elected members to the Board of Education will likely be unfamiliar with state open meeting laws, meeting procedural policies, board bylaws, the district budget goals and other district related issues
- The governance team wants to provide all the tools necessary to help new board members reach their potential to be a productive and effective member of the team.

- Having resources related to board meeting procedure and pertinent district information will help prepare new board members for their first board meeting and facilitate integration into the governance team.

Procedure

- Board Member candidates will meet with the superintendent to review the following resources upon election and prior to their first board meeting:
 - Brown Act Handbook; RCSD Governance Handbook; Annual Board Meeting Calendar; Board Bylaws; CSBA Professional Governance Standards; LCAP; Budget and additional documents as needed
- The superintendent and Board President will schedule a meeting at the first board meeting held with all newly elected board member(s). This should include a mock meeting scenario to help familiarize new board members with board meeting procedures.

Designated Spokesperson

Principle

- It is essential that important and accurate information be communicated to members of the board, the staff and the community in as timely a fashion as possible
- The governance team recognizes that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public

Procedure

- The governance team commits to speaking with one voice. The designated spokesperson will vary depending on the issue or situation:
 - Crisis/Disaster: The superintendent is the primary spokesperson and may involve the board president at their discretion
 - Meeting Information (e.g. board meetings, agenda items, study sessions): the board president and the superintendent will serve as primary spokespersons or may choose a designee
 - District Priorities/General District Information: All governance team members may serve as spokespersons utilizing developed and agreed upon key messages
- For requests via email/social media:
 - If a board member receives an email request from a member of the public, the board member will respond and copy the board president and superintendent on the response
 - If the email is sent to some or all board members, board members will refer the request to the board president with a copy to the superintendent. The board president or superintendent will agree on which of them will respond, copying all board members.
- For requests from the media:

- A board member may recommend that the request be directed to the board president or the superintendent
- If the board president is unavailable for an extended period, the vice president will perform the role of president.

Confidentiality

Principle

- The governing board recognizes the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of information acquired as a part of a board member's official duties
- Board members will maintain the public's trust by not breaching confidentiality

Procedure

- The responsibility of the board includes being privy to closed sessions or confidential information about district litigation, personnel, negotiations, superintendent evaluation or other issues permitted under the Brown Act
- If a board member inadvertently or accidentally violates a confidential issue, the board member will take immediate responsibility for their action
- Confidential items will be reserved for full board discussion

Handling community or staff concerns and/or complaints

Principle

- Board members want to be accessible, responsive, consistent and fair in dealings with complaints and concerns from staff and the community
- The board values open communication and timely resolution of issues
- Board members may take receiving complaints as an opportunity to explain the role of the Board
- Board members understand they do not have the authority to resolve complaints as individual members of the board of education.

Procedure

When approached with an issue or concern, board members agree to:

- Listen openly, being careful to remain neutral

- Remind staff and members of the community that no individual board member has the authority to solve the issue/concern
- Encourage addressing the issue or concern with the person who can most directly help with their concern, e.g.: teacher, principal, superintendent
- Board members will notify the superintendent of the issue or concern

Board Governance Self-Assessment

Principle

- Conducting a governance self-evaluation demonstrates accountability to the community and the willingness of the governance team to strengthen and improve

Procedure

- The board will conduct Annual Self-Evaluations in June.

Visiting Schools and Attending School Events

Principle

- The board wants to be informed about instructional practices, and the needs of students and staff with regard to school programs.
- The board respects the busy schedule of staff and the anxiety that can be created by well-meaning, but unannounced visits to schools.

Procedure

- As a professional courtesy, board members will schedule school visits
- The superintendent and/or principal will accompany board members on classroom visits
- Board members requesting a meeting with school staff or administration will schedule this meeting through the superintendent.
- The superintendent will ensure that staff is aware of the process and protocols for board members visiting classrooms
- Board members are encouraged to visit schools and attend events after notifying the superintendent's office

Collective Bargaining

Principle

- Board member's involvement in the collective bargaining process ensures that the District is represented by those selected to negotiate on behalf of the board and the community, while also ensuring that the ethical, fiscal and educational goals of the RCSD community are represented in the actions taken throughout the collective bargaining process.

Procedure

- To achieve this principle, board members should:
 - Participate by providing direction and guidance to those selected to represent the Board (District Negotiating Team). Board members will not participate in the individual negotiation sessions
 - Create the most positive environment possible to support the negotiation process
 - Work with fellow board members to 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
 - Expect, as the representative of the board, that the superintendent will recommend for approval of the board, the Lead Negotiator and the members of each of the District's negotiation teams
 - Expect, while the negotiating process is taking place that the superintendent will be available to address the challenges related to the district. As the representative of the board, the superintendent will guide the development of the bargaining strategy and will be primarily responsible for facilitating the collective bargaining process.