

Alpine County Unified School District



Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees

Amy Mecak, President of the Board

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This Governance Handbook was initiated during a board study session in August 2009 with the assistance of Christopher Maricle, Governance Consultant for California School Boards Association.

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Table of Contents

I.	Unity of Purpose	
	Governance in Alpine County USD	2
II.	Role of the Board and the Superintendent	3
III.	Leadership Culture	
	Governance Team Values and Norms	5
IV.	Structure and Process / Governance Protocols	6
V.	Signature Page	12

I. Unity of Purpose

Unity of Purpose is a common focus, overarching goals, and the values and beliefs governance team members share in common about children, the district and public education that help them transcend their individual differences to fulfill a greater purpose.

Governance in Alpine County USD

The board accepts four fundamental principles of district governance:

- providing guidance and oversight
- policy leadership to guide administrative leadership
- making collective judgments
- ensure fiscal solvency

The board recognizes that its work consists of five over-arching responsibilities:

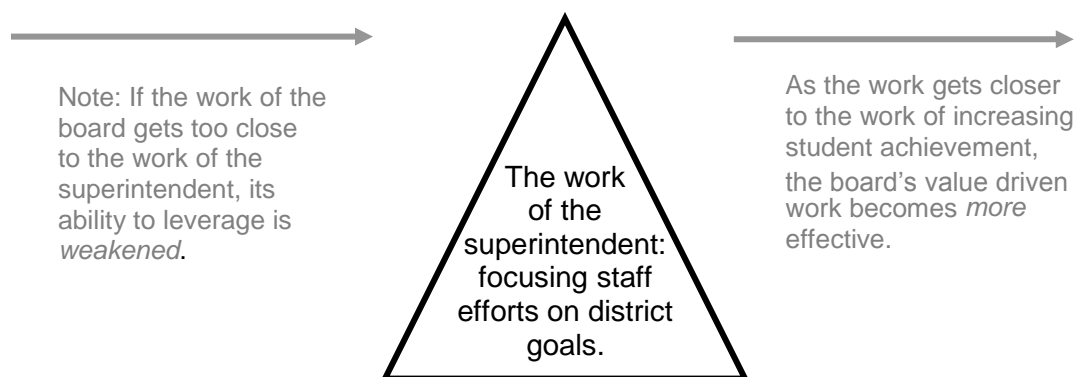
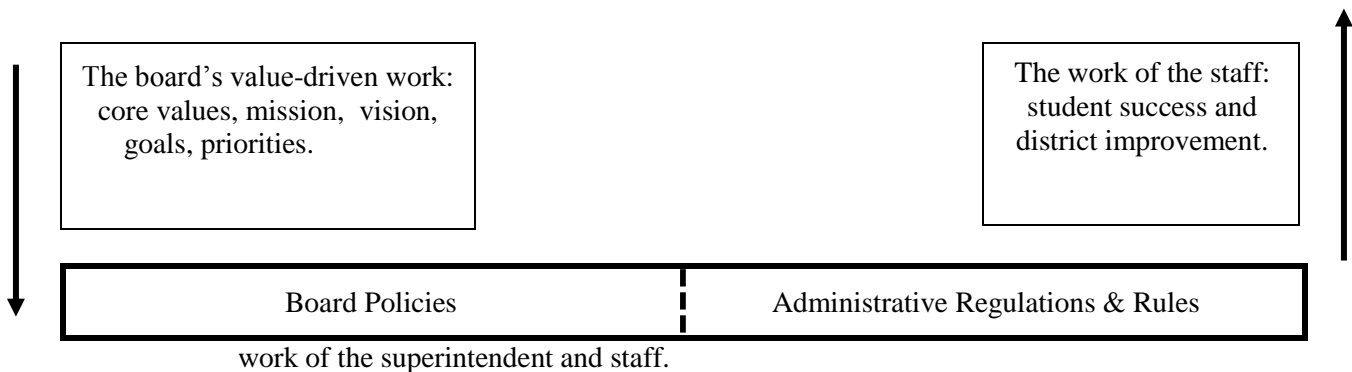
1. Setting Direction
2. Providing Structure
3. Providing Support
4. Ensuring Accountability
5. Engaging the Community

The board recognizes that governing the district requires the board to make judgments that balance four forces that affect the district.

- Community interest & concerns
- Legal requirements
- Educational best practices and research
- District capacity

II. Role of the Board and the Superintendent

- The board leverages the work of the staff through the superintendent, by clarifying and communicating the district's mission, vision, priorities, goals, and policies; this is their value-driven work.
- The superintendent translates all goals and policies into action.
- The lever's strength is **increased** when:
 - the fulcrum, the work of the superintendent, is close to the work of district improvement and increasing student success, AND
 - the board is focused on its value-driven work, and more distant from the skill-driven work of the superintendent
- The strength of the lever is **decreased** when:
 - the fulcrum is too distant from the work of district improvement, OR
 - the trustees become less focused on their value-driven work, and more focused on the skill driven



How the fulcrum moves

To have confidence in their ability to direct the superintendent, trustees need to receive sufficient communication, and to understand the basis for decisions or recommendations. At the same time, the frequency of communication with trustees and the degree of detail in their inquiries move the fulcrum to the left – *pulling the superintendent away* from the work of the district. Striking this balance of sufficient communication to meet the needs of trustees with maximizing the superintendent’s attention on district goals is essential to increasing the effectiveness of the governance team.

III. Leadership Culture

Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other.

The board trusts:

- The intent of staff (trust of character)
- The professional expertise of staff (trust of skill)

The board requests *reasonable* and *sufficient* information to judge that staff recommendations:

- have a sound basis
- are supported by education literature / best practices
- are aligned with district goals and priorities

Governance Team Core Values & Norms for Behavior

Values	Governance Team Norms
Commitment – Dedicated to working as a team, being prepared and participating in the work of the board.	1. No surprises; ask question in advance. 2. Be on time for meetings. 3. Ensure all members have the same information.
Effectiveness – Ensure meetings focus on the right work of the board and in a timely manner.	4. Focus on the topic at hand – no distractions. 5. Keep the discussion at the governance level.
Openness – Listen actively and consider the opinions of each member of the team.	6. Acknowledge all opinions in a positive manner. 7. Practice open and honest communication.
Civility – Be respectful and kind to all.	8. No disparaging comments 9. Allow others to speak without interruption. 10. Act with dignity and understand the implications of demeanor and behavior. (BB 9005)
Courage – Have confidence to speak the truth, share ideas and do the right thing even when it is difficult.	11. Stay focused on our goals and student achievement.

Meeting Norms

We will:

- ☐ Be on time for meetings
- ☐ Come to meetings prepared to participate
- ☐ Model expected behaviors
- ☐ Ensure that all members have the same information
- ☐ Acknowledge all opinions in a positive manner
- ☐ Practice open and honest communication
- ☐ Accept differences in experience, culture, and value priorities
- ☐ Give and receive constructive feedback civilly
- ☐ Allow others to speak without interruption
- ☐ Listen attentively
- ☐ Have no side conversations (including text messages)
- ☐ Stay focused on our goals and student achievement
- ☐ Go the extra mile to support each other in our work
- ☐ Maintain flexibility in difficult situations
- ☐ Committee reports will be a standard part of our agenda and included in the packet
- ☐ Address fellow governance team members as Trustee (last name) or Superintendent (last name)

IV. Structure: The Board's Protocols

Efficient teams discuss and agree on the formal structures used by the board and superintendent in their functioning as a team, how boards operate, and how they do business.

Preparing for Meetings	
Issue	What is our process?
1. Developing the Board Meeting Agenda (BB9322)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Trustees submit requests for agenda items to superintendent or board president fourteen days prior to scheduled meeting B. District Office prepares a draft agenda C. Superintendent reviews the agenda with the board president no later than eight days prior to the scheduled meeting,. D. Superintendent informs trustees of the status of the requested agenda items, and then publishes the final agenda within 72 hours of the scheduled meeting. E. District delivers agenda and materials to trustees within 72 hours of the scheduled meeting. F. Trustees call / email the superintendent at any time with questions. G. The superintendent or assigned staff will respond to the trustee and share the information with the full board as appropriate. H. Trustees will inform the superintendent if they intend to ask the question at a board meeting. I. The superintendent may bring any requests for additional information to the board to approve the request if, in the superintendent's judgment, the request will require substantial resources.
2. Agenda Questions answered before a meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. If a trustee asks a question during a meeting without prior notice to superintendent or the staff, the trustee will acknowledge this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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..."
Conduct of Meetings	
Issue:	What is our Process
3. Attention to Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Protocols concerning the conduct of meetings will be provided to each member of the governance team. B. The board president will remind the governance team of the protocols that guide the conduct of the meeting. C. If a member of the governance team believes that these

	<p>protocols are not being followed, he or she may raise the concern by saying: “Point of order: Are we operating according to our protocols?”</p> <p>D. The president may respond by re-focusing the meeting or calling a short recess.</p>
4. Management of the Meeting	<p>A. The president is responsible for presiding over the board meeting.</p> <p>B. The president manages the meeting in a manner consistent with board bylaws and these protocols.</p> <p>C. All governance team members agree to support the president in the enforcement of the bylaws and protocols that guide meeting conduct.</p>
5. Staff Reports	<p>The board recognizes the commitment and expertise of staff and appreciates their effort in providing the board with accurate and timely information. To balance its time to address all the issues it must deal with, the board directs the superintendent to give clear guidelines to staff regarding board presentations. These include:</p> <p>A. Use executive summaries or highlights and get to the point quickly.</p> <p>B. Avoid jargon or acronyms.</p> <p>C. Avoid reading slides to the board.</p> <p>D. Staff should address these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is this issue important to the district? • What are the research-based criteria the board should know? • What is the board’s authority on this issue? • What policies are related to the issue? • What are the pros and cons of the recommendation? • How will the recommendation affect student achievement? • What is the impact on the budget?
6. Trustee Requests for information from or direction to staff during meetings	<p>A. If a trustee makes a request of the superintendent or staff, the board president will ask the superintendent to comment on the impact on staff.</p> <p>B. Direction will be given to the superintendent by board consensus.</p>
7. Deliberation at board meetings / Rosenberg’s Rules of Order	<p>A. Chair announces item.</p> <p>B. Sponsor introduces item.</p> <p>C. Board asks technical questions for clarification purposes.</p> <p>D. Public comment on the item.</p> <p>E. Chair asks for a motion.</p> <p>F. Chair asks for a second.</p> <p>G. Board debates the motion in light of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on students

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District values, mission, goals and priorities • Constituent perspectives and interests • Legal requirements • Cost <p>H. Chair brings the deliberations to a close or calls for the vote.</p> <p>I. Possible language: “Unless there are any new ideas...”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair announces result.
8. Moving the meeting (BB 9323)	<p>A. The board generally strives to conclude its business within two hours.</p> <p>B. The trustees agree the chair may end comment or discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.” <p>C. Regular board meetings will be adjourned by 8 pm unless extended to a specific time determined by the majority of the board and may not be extended more than once.</p>
9. Abstention	<p>From Board Bylaw 9270, “The Governing Board desires to maintain the highest ethical standards and help ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of the district and the public. Accordingly, no Board member, district employee, or other person in a designated position shall participate in the making of any decision for the district when the decision will or may be affected by his/her financial, family, or other personal interest or consideration.”</p>
10. Majority Rule	<p>Each board member accepts the democratic principle and agrees to support the board’s decision, regardless of their position prior to the vote.</p>
11. Board Member Comments	<p>A. Board members try to keep comments to two (2) minutes or less.</p> <p>B. Trustees avoid repeating comments already made.</p> <p>C. Trustees focus their comments on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at district / school functions • Attendance at community events • Board / trustee professional development activity
12. Use of Study Session, Scheduling Study Sessions	<p>A. The board will schedule study sessions as needed.</p> <p>B. Study sessions will be scheduled with sufficient notice to promote attendance by all trustees.</p>
13. Minimizing Potential Conflict	<p>Recognizing that we do not have different board values, we have different board value priorities. Because there are rarely single-value problems, we seek the best rather than the right solution.</p>

The Board, Trustees and Superintendent - Between Meetings	
Issue:	What is our Process?
14. Superintendent – Trustee Communications	<p>A. Trustees use their judgment in keeping the superintendent informed.</p> <p>B. Trustees trust the superintendent in exercising judgment in informing the board of district issues.</p> <p>C. Board members may call the superintendent with questions or additional information.</p> <p>D. The superintendent will inform the board of pertinent activities of the district. If it's likely to be in the newspaper, the board should know about it. The superintendent will use e-mail to communicate routine matters to the board on a regular basis. During crisis situations, the superintendent will send out an e-mail alert and then attempt to reach board members via telephone beginning with the board president.</p>
15. Trustee – Trustee Communications	<p>A. Trustees may contact one other board member and the superintendent in discussing district issues or matters before the board.</p>
The Trustee In Public	
Issue:	What is our Process?
16. Role in Public	<p>In public, the role of trustees is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for our district. • Support board decisions <p>The board recognizes that it represents all students and all facets of the community and, as such, it has an obligation to pursue different points of view with honesty and vigor. Each board member commits to hearing one another out. By doing so board members model for students the honest and respectful expression of different points of view.</p> <p>If a member of the Governance Team cannot support the decision of the Board because it offends a moral or personal code, the member is expected, at a minimum, to refrain from undermining the decision or directive.</p>
17. Visiting Schools	<p>The board understands that periodic visitations to the school site are a valuable tool in understanding the culture of the school and increasing board member visibility. Such visits are for the purpose of becoming acquainted with school programs, personnel, operation, and facilities. Board members shall not go into teachers' classrooms or campuses for the purpose of evaluation or investigation. Board members will not give directions, or make suggestions to personnel during their visit.</p>

	<p>Trustees wishing to visit a school site will inform the superintendent in order to arrange a date and time for the visit. The superintendent will accompany the trustee when visiting classrooms and departments.</p> <p>When visiting with teachers of their own children, board members will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than board members.</p>
18. Speaking for the Board to the Media (<i>BB9010</i>)	<p>A. Superintendent and Board President are spokespersons for the district.</p> <p>B. The Superintendent is the primary spokesperson for the district or other designated representative.</p>
19. Responding to (informal) complaints / concerns from the staff/community <i>outside of board meetings</i>	<p>In responding to complaints, board members will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive – Listen, smile and thank them. • Repeat - Explain their point to their satisfaction. • “Do you believe that I understand?” • “What would you like me to do for you?” • Remind – Explain that you have no authority as an individual. • Re-Direct –Direct them back into the system at the appropriate level. • Report – to Superintendent <p>Note: If the matter involves personnel, go straight to Step 5. You may add that your judicial review responsibility should remain unbiased and so you cannot become involved.</p> <p>The Superintendent trusts the board to use their judgment in determining what to report. The superintendent does want to know about any issues that involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student & staff safety concerns • Anything Illegal • Anything potentially litigious • Anything that might end up in the newspaper
20. Annual Board Orientation	<p>As soon as possible after a new trustee is elected or appointed or a new superintendent is hired, the governance team will meet to orient all team members to the work of the governance team. The review should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Bylaws • Governance Agreements that guide the board’s work and meetings • Long-range priorities • LCAP • Superintendent goals and success indicators

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Budget • Key reform policies
21. Self-evaluation of the governance team's effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The board will assess its own effectiveness annually at a study session held by April. B. The board will be given the evaluation tool by one month prior. C. Trustees will complete the instrument in preparation for the self-evaluation. D. The board may direct the board president to tabulate the results prior to the self-evaluation discussion.
22. Superintendent Evaluation Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Each year between June 1 and July 1 the Board and Superintendent shall meet to discuss and establish agreed upon goals and objectives for Superintendent evaluation. B. Prior to Oct 1 each year, Board and Superintendent shall agree upon an evaluation instrument. C. Prior to May 31 of each year, Superintendent shall provide Board with an annual report regarding the state of the District. D. Prior to June 1 of each year, Superintendent shall present Board with a written self-evaluation. E. Prior to June 30 of each year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Board member shall individually complete the evaluation instrument • Board will devote portion of at least one meeting in closed session to a discussion of Superintendent's performance and working relationship between Superintendent and Board • Board President shall be responsible to prepare a single evaluation document that communicates Board's collective feedback and expectations. • Board meets with Superintendent in closed session to review the evaluation.

We have reviewed and agree to abide by and institutionalize the aforementioned governance team standards and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Alpine Unified School District/County Office of Education Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at each Annual Organizational Meeting of the Board of Education.

Affirmed on this _____ day of _____, 2019

Amy Mecak, Trustee

Nani Ellis, Trustee

John Baker, Trustee

Amber Bill, Trustee

Board Vacancy

Matthew Strahl