



# **OROVILLE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## **Governance Handbook**

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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, commitment to norms and coming to agreement on protocols/formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.

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## **Effective Governance**

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization: the actions of an individual, a group coming together to govern, and the performance of governance responsibilities by the group.

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
- Create a supportive structure for effective governance.

Effective 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.

### **Governance – A Definition**

School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.

## **Board of Trustees** **Professional Governance Standards**

### **1. Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students**

- Recognize that students come to school with diverse educational needs.
- Base decisions on the district's vision, student needs, research, empirical data and a balance of community expectations, legal constraints and resources.
- Ensure that the district has established academic standards and regularly measures growth in achievement for all students.
- Ensure that the district provides opportunities for all students to succeed.

### **2. Communicate a common vision and mission**

- Develop and adopt a written statement of the district vision and mission along with other direction-setting documents using collaborative processes that involve the staff and community.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to periodically review the Strategic Plan and other direction-setting documents.
- Demonstrate commitment to the vision, mission and goals by regularly communicating them to staff and the community.
- Exhibit behaviors and make decisions that support achievement of the district vision, mission and goals.
- Keep current on trends and emerging needs in education in order to proactively participate in renewing or reviewing the district's direction and policies.
- Support board decisions.
- Speak with a common voice.

**3. Operate openly, with trust and integrity**

- Conduct district business in a fair, respectful and responsible manner.
- Consider the concerns and interests of the staff and community.
- Encourage thorough debate, seek to engage in dialogue for clarification and withhold judgment until all perspectives are heard.
- Ensure that all members of the Board have the same information—no secrets or surprises among members of the governance team.
- Clearly communicate decisions to all those who are affected by them.
- Keep confidential information confidential.

**4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect**

- Treat the Superintendent, staff, students, parents and community with dignity and respect.
- Listen openly and respectfully to each other, to staff, students, parents and members of the community.
- Welcome open discussion of different points of view.
- Demonstrate ability to disagree on issues and still maintain trust, respect and dignity.
- Work together to build consensus for decisions.

**5. Govern within board-adopted policies and regulations**

- Develop, update and approve policies and regulations that are understood and followed.
- Understand the distinctions between the role of the Board and that of the Superintendent and staff.
- Do not become involved in the day-to-day operations of the district.
- Have agreed-upon norms and protocols to carry out Board responsibilities.

**6. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance**

- Assume collective responsibility for Board conduct, behavior and conflict management.
- Function as a governance team with the Superintendent.
- Demonstrate a commitment to continually improving governance efforts.
- Take responsibility for the orientation of all new members.

**7. Periodically evaluate the Board's effectiveness**

- Have procedures in place for regular, on-going self-evaluation.
- Ensure meeting agendas provide for a sound order of business and facilitate maximum focus on matters related to student achievement.
- Have norms and protocols in place to ensure that individual Board members do not get involved in the day-to-day management of the district.

**8. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations**

- Ensure board policy enables parents, staff and the public to participate in district discussions, school programs and activities in meaningful ways.
- Consider the concerns and interests of all segments of the community in deliberations.

## **Unity of Purpose**

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

## **Core Beliefs**

We believe:

1. When provided an engaging, inspiring and challenging learning environment, every student will have the opportunity to achieve at their maximum potential.
2. Active engagement of students by caring adults is key to helping students achieve.
3. Every student learns at their own pace and will have access to educational services and supports to enhance their learning experience.
4. Every student will have a goal for college and/or careers, and our district will prepare each for participation in those opportunities.
5. Every member of the learning community deserves to be part of a safe, caring, equitable and nurturing learning environment and should be treated with respect, dignity and worth.

## **Vision and Mission Statements**

### **Mission**

OUHSD is committed to providing every student with equitable educational and extra-curricular opportunities that prepare them to be college and/or career ready. Every school will have a positive climate that focuses on being safe, responsible and respectful.

### **Vision**

Preparing Students for the future today.

## **Governance Team Unity of Purpose**

- We will provide high quality educational opportunities for all students.
- We will build trust and confidence with our community, our staff and our students.
- We will function as an effective team.
- We will understand our collective responsibilities to our heritage, current challenges and community values.
- We will be a team with a common vision and act as a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees and the community.
- We will be partners with the staff in carrying out the mission of OUHSD.
- We will oversee the continuous development of quality programs, staff and facilities.
- We will perpetuate a legacy of positive culture.
- We will support our staff as they endeavor to enhance the lives of our students.

## **Governance Role and Responsibilities**

Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. The role of the trustees who sit on locally elected school Boards 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: setting direction; establishing an effective and efficient structure; providing support; ensuring accountability; and providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools.

These five responsibilities represent core functions that are so fundamental to a school system's accountability to the public that 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 will best serve all the students in the community. The Board carries 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. The following page provides more detail on how the Board performs its governance responsibilities in each job area. It is important to remember that Boards who inadvertently get involved in staff functions undercut their ability to hold the Superintendent accountable for the results of those efforts.

## **Duties and Responsibilities**

The Superintendent shall have the discretion to organize, reorganize, and arrange the administrative and supervisory staff, including instruction, personnel, and business affairs, which in his/her judgment best serve the interests of the district.

The board recognizes that it is a collective body and each board member recognizes that his/her power as a board member is derived from the collective deliberation and action of the board as a whole in a duly constituted meeting.

## **Performing Governance Responsibilities**

We agree with the responsibilities of school Boards as described below by the California School Boards Association:

**Set the direction for the community's schools**

- Focus on student learning
- Assess needs/obtain baseline data
- Generate, review or revise setting direction documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)
- Ensure an appropriate inclusive process is used
- Ensure these documents are the driving force for all district efforts

**Establish an effect and efficient structure for the school district**

- Employ and support the Superintendent
- Establish a human resources framework that includes policies for hiring and evaluating other personnel
- Oversee the development of and adopt policies
- Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum and require data-producing assessment systems
- Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facilities issues
- Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements

**Provide support through our behavior and actions**

- Act with professional demeanor that models the district's beliefs and vision
- Make decisions and provide resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals
- Uphold Board-approved district policies and support staff implementation of Board direction
- Ensure a positive working climate exists
- Be knowledgeable enough about district efforts to explain them to the public

**Ensure accountability to the public**

- Evaluate the Superintendent
- Monitor, review and revise policies
- Serve as a judicial and appeals body
- Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness and require program changes as indicated
- Monitor and adjust district finances and periodically review facilities issues
- Monitor the collective bargaining process

**Act as community leaders**

- Speak with a common voice about district priorities, goals and issues
- Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities
- Communicate clear information about policies, programs and fiscal condition of the district
- Educate the community and the media about the issues facing students, the district and public education
- Advocate for children, district programs and public education to the general public, key community members and local, state and national leaders

## **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.

Because the community elects school Board members to set and monitor the direction of the school district, and the district Superintendent translates all efforts into action, it is vital that the Board and Superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open communications.

## **Governance Norms and Protocols**

### **We agree to:**

- Focus on students' best interest
- Consider the welfare of all stakeholders (students, staff and community)
- Respect each other's opinions
- Listen "actively" to each member's ideas
- Value each member's point of view
- Be open to new ideas
- Exhibit positive body language
- Not interrupt, nor monopolize
- Encourage everyone to verbalize
- Disagree agreeably
- Recognize the positive
- Be willing to compromise
- Focus on process, not personalities
- Act by building on the thought of a fellow governance team member
- Arrive to meetings on time and prepared
- Commit time necessary to govern effectively
- Commit to open communication, honesty, no surprises
- Maintain confidentiality

## **Structures and Processes to Support Effective Governance**

Effective governance teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the trustees and the Superintendent in their functioning as a team (e.g., processes or structures for agenda setting, set-up of Board room and table, agenda structure, handling complaints or concerns from the community, bringing up a new idea); how governance teams operate, and how they do business. These agreements about how groups will operate are often called protocols.

The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of our governance team.



### **Self-monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness**

We will schedule a workshop every January to review governance team agreements and processes by reviewing the Governance Handbook.

### **New Board Member Orientation**

We will provide opportunities for new board members to attend training and meet with the Superintendent.

### **Visiting Schools**

Visits are encouraged. As a professional courtesy, trustees will call the principal ahead of time to arrange the visit. Trustees will also be cautious about encroaching on the learning environment. To assist in this matter, the Superintendent will ensure principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his/her lesson when a Board member visits a classroom.

### **Handling Concerns from the Public and Staff**

When someone brings a concern to the Board, we will listen carefully, remembering we are only hearing one side of the story, and will then direct that individual to the employee in the district most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern. We will make sure they understand the appropriate order of who to contact (i.e., teacher, then principal, then district staff) and are aware of any formal forms or policies that might assist them (e.g., written complaint form). The Superintendent and principal(s) will be copied on correspondence. This will ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the district are upheld. 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 if the issue is not resolved.

### **Individual Board Member Requests for Information**

When an individual Board member requests information pertaining to an agenda item, it 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 a thorough 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 Member Requests for Action**

The only authority to direct action rests with the full Board sitting at the Board table. A majority vote sets such direction.

Individuals may request an item for a future agenda by 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, it should be done in the context of the intended results. It is the duty of OUHSD staff to determine the methods used to achieve those results.

### **Board Meeting Management**

We understand that Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings.

We will keep this in mind as we conduct our meetings, allowing the public to provide input at the time allotted to ensure the multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations. However, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Board to listen and learn from each other, taking the public input into consideration, not a time to re-engage with the public. We will consistently abide by our formal processes relating to this issue so that all persons are treated fairly and equally.

We will review our policies, bylaws and protocols relating to Board meeting management (e.g., time limits on input from members of the public), revising or reaffirming them as appropriate.

### **Email**

We will use email carefully to insure 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
- Advance ultimate resolution

We understand that:

- Board members shall exercise caution so as to ensure that electronic communications are not used as a means for the Board to deliberate outside of an agendaized Board meeting.
- Board members shall make every effort to ensure that their electronic communications conform to the same standards and protocols established for other forms of communication.
- A Board member may respond, as appropriate, to an electronic communication received from a member of the community and should make clear that his/her response does not necessarily reflect the views of the Board as a whole.
- Like other writings concerning district business, a Board member's electronic communication may be subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

## **Role and Responsibilities of the Trustees, Board President and Clerk**

### **Our Beliefs:**

- We have an obligation to set an example of good government in action for our community.
- We will model dignified problem solving for our community and our children.
- The Board President works with the Superintendent to ensure Board meeting effectiveness.
- We intend that our Board meetings proceed professionally, efficiently and effectively and that district staff will have the opportunity to provide necessary background materials and information to the Board in a respectful environment.
- Each Board member must have the opportunity to express his or her viewpoint during Board deliberation.
- Everyone in attendance at Board meetings will be treated with dignity and respect.
- The Board president has a facilitation role relative to Board meetings, and acts as a spokesperson for the Board. S/he has no more authority than any other Board member outside of Board meetings.

### **Our Agreement:**

The role of the Board president is to:

- Attend CSBA Board President's Workshop or other appropriate trainings if serving as president for the first time
- Chair meetings
- Work with the Superintendent as necessary to help ensure Board members have the necessary information and materials to make wise decisions
- Make sure that pending agenda items are addressed appropriately
- Confer with the Superintendent before meetings to prepare, as necessary for the upcoming meeting
- Model the tone and behavior the Board wishes to convey to the community

As meeting chair, the Board president will:

- Open and preside over meetings
- Introduce agenda items, providing some background information as appropriate, different from background information that is provided by staff (e.g., "This is an item we have had on our agendas four times in the last three months. We have given it a great deal of consideration and appreciate all of the input we have received from the public and the information staff has provided on the issue. Tonight we will receive additional public input, deliberate further and hope to make a final decision.").
- Call on speakers
- Make sure all Board members have a chance to share in deliberation
- Work to facilitate effective deliberation
- Interpret and clarify for understanding to ensure that all Board members have an accurate understanding as the deliberation proceeds
- Wait until all other Board members who wish to speak on an issue have done so before adding his or her own comments

- Call for a vote restating the motion, clarify and authenticate all action, order and procedures of the Board
- Adjourn meetings
- Remind the governance team and audience members of any meeting guidelines and Professional Governance Standards the Board has adopted, as necessary.
- Work with the Superintendent to make sure there is appropriate follow-up and clarification of possible options for the Board following the Board meeting.
- Serve as the spokesperson for the Board – always bearing in mind the direction and commitment of the Board given during Board meetings.

The role of the Board Vice President is to:

- Assume the duties of the Board President in his/her absence.

The role of the Board Clerk is to:

- Lead the Pledge of Allegiance
- Make the motion on expulsion cases
- Sign documents on behalf of the district
- Sign the minutes of Board meetings following their approval
- Serve as presiding officer in the absence of the president and vice president

### **Designated Spokesperson(s) for the Board of Trustees**

#### **Our Beliefs:**

It is essential that important information be communicated to members of the Board, the staff and the community in as timely a fashion as possible. Board Members and the Superintendent have an obligation to speak with a common voice about district issues to the staff and community. We recognize that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public. Confidential issues must remain confidential. It is important that we speak with one voice in order to maintain the trust of our community.

#### **Our Agreement:**

In most cases, everyone is comfortable having the press contact any Board member. However, occasionally an issue requires there be one chief spokesperson. The Board member who fills this role may vary from year to year and from issue to issue. The designated spokesperson will vary depending on the issue or situation:

**Crisis:** The Superintendent will be the primary spokesperson and may involve the Board president at his/her discretion.

**Meeting Information** (e.g., Board meetings, agenda items, study sessions): The Board President and the Superintendent will serve as primary spokespersons.

**Core Beliefs / Vision / District Priorities / General District Information:** All governance team members may serve as spokespersons utilizing developed and agreed upon key messages. When speaking on behalf of the district or the School Board, Board members have an obligation to adhere to agreed upon key messages. Examples of District Key Messages:

- Core Beliefs
- District Mission / Vision
- Progress Toward District Goals
- Student Learning Goals
- Budget Objectives / Financial Plan
- Parent Involvement
- Facilities

During the Annual Governance Workshop in January the governance team will discuss which team members are going to be networking with which community groups and organizations. If a Board member is invited to speak to a community group or organization, s/he will make sure other team members know about the invitation, will ask for agreed upon key messages and any updated district information from the Superintendent, and will communicate back to the governance team after the presentation.

### **OUHSD Governance Team Agreements to Facilitate Governance Leadership**

A major difference between groups and teams is that teams have clear agreements (norms that identify expectations for behavior, and protocols that describe how the team will operate) set by the team's members. Once developed, these norms and protocols shape how team members behave with each other and how they perform their responsibilities.

Group expectations help a group work together to not only address difficult issues in an objective and consistent way, but also to confirm what each member will do in the normal course of business to help the team succeed. - CSBA

### **OUHSD Governance Team Norms and Protocols**

The Board of Education for the Oroville Union High School District 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.

To effectively meet district challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Agreed upon behaviors (or norms) and operating procedures (or protocols) support consistent behaviors and actions among team members. The purpose of the OUHSD governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among Board members, the Superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. The protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

We have reviewed and agree to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Oroville Union High School District Board of Trustees, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at the Annual Governance Workshop of the OUHSD Board of Trustees held in January.