



Revised and
Adopted 10/13/21

Siuslaw School District

Board Governance Handbook

The Board of Education is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of Oregon and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student.

Board of Directors

Board Chair - Bob Sneddon, Position 3
Vice-Chair - John Barnett, Position 2
Director - Guy Rosinbaum, Position 1
Director – Maureen Miltenberger, Position 4
Director – Dennis King, Position 5
Director – Kady Sneddon, Position 6
Director – Dianna Pimlott, Position 7

Superintendent

Andy Grzeskowiak

Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements

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

Building a Governance Team

Unity of Purpose

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

In a school district, the Board and Superintendent work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to: Maintain a unity of purpose; agree on and govern within appropriate roles; create and sustain a positive governance culture and; create a supportive structure for effective governance.

What do we, as a governance team, want to accomplish? What do we stand for?

- Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students.
- We want to build trust and move the District forward.
- We want to be an effective team.
- We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.
- We want to be a team with a common focused direction so we are not a distraction to the District or community but a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees, and the community can see evidence of this focused direction.
- We want to be partners with the staff in positive change.
- We want to oversee the putting together of a first-rate program and first-rate facilities, making sure we continue to improve – never resting on our laurels.
- We want to perpetuate a legacy of positive culture as people come and go.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mutual agreement on the roles of the Board and Superintendent

The role of Directors is to stay focused on the big picture while fulfilling five responsibilities in a series of job areas. These five responsibilities are:

1. We set the direction.
2. We establish the structure.
3. We provide support.
4. We ensure accountability.
5. We act as community leaders.

We carry out these responsibilities in each of the following job areas:

- Setting the District's Direction
- Student Learning and Achievement
- Finance
- Facilities
- Human Resources
- Policy
- Judicial Review
- Collective Bargaining
- Community Relations and Advocacy

The Superintendent also assists the Board in carrying out its responsibilities in each of the job areas and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed upon District vision and goals.

Creating and Sustaining a Positive Governance Team Culture

Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other. Teams have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave with each other and others. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift a negative one.

Governance Norms

In addition to meeting the norms below in order to create a positive culture and atmosphere, we agree to act in ways that will help us meet Professional Governance Standards.

ABOVE ALL –

- Children’s education and well-being come first. The Board will represent the needs and interest of all the children in our District.

AND – WE AGREE TO –

- Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, respected).
- To show respect (never dismiss/devalue others).
- Make a commitment to effective deliberation, each listening openly while everyone is allowed to express his or her point of view.
- Make a commitment to open communication, honesty, no surprises.
- Commit the time necessary to govern effectively. This means being there, being knowledgeable, participating, understanding the full scope of being a Board Member and being willing to take on all the responsibilities involved.
- Be collaborative (this is the way we operate)!
- Maintain confidentiality (builds trust).
- Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.

Board Governance Protocols

Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

Individual Board members do not have authority. Only the Board as a whole has authority.

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In order to be effective representatives of the Board and District, members will:

- Behave at all times in a manner that reflects positively on the District.
- Refrain from obligating the Board and/or administration by actual speech or implication, unless authorized to do so by the Board.
- Reinforce with the community the key messages agreed upon by the Board.
- When discussing the work of the board with the news media ensure that personal opinions are attributed to the member and not the whole board.

The last stop, not the first, will be the Board. We agree to follow the chain of command and insist that others do so, too. While the Board is eager to listen to its constituents and staff, each inquiry is to be referred to the person who can properly and expeditiously address all the issues.

All personnel complaints and criticisms received by the Board or its individual members will be directed to the Superintendent.

In responding to concerns regarding the work of the District, Board members will:

- ❖ *Receive* the information, remembering that only one side of the story is being presented (listening)
- ❖ *Repeat* the information – paraphrase to ensure understanding
- ❖ *Remind* the individual that a Board member has no authority as an individual and share the appropriate line of command and process to follow to address their concern.
- ❖ *Re-Direct* – Thank them for sharing their thoughts and refer them to the appropriate staff member and, if necessary, encourage them to initiate the formal complaint process.
- ❖ *Report* – In a timely manner, inform the Superintendent.

The Board will encourage others to present their own issues, problems, or proposals when discussing issues.

The Board's Role and Relationship with the Staff and Community

When individually visiting schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, in their capacity as a Board member, are must notify the Superintendent that they will be visiting a school or department, and may provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit. Visits by board members, acting in their role as a board member, should be scheduled ahead of time.

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

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

Board members will request information only from the superintendent.

This protocol does not imply a censoring of any private and informal conversations.

Board Meetings and the Agenda

Meetings of the Board are held in public but are not open-forum town hall meetings. Meetings will be conducted in such a way as to allow the public to provide input in the time allotted to ensure that multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations; however, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Directors to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public.

We will conduct our Board meetings, emphasizing positive and constructive discussion and dialogue, doing so with care and respect.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

One regular Board meeting will be held on the second Wednesday of the month, unless the Board determines otherwise. The meeting schedule will be established at the organizational meeting in July, but may be changed by the Board with proper notice. Special Meeting – Work Sessions may be scheduled and shall be scheduled at the discretion of the Board.

The design of the Board agenda will follow the historical structure utilized by the Board. The design of the agenda may only be altered with the approval of the Board.

The Superintendent, with the assistance of the chair and vice-chair, will create each Board Agenda. In advance of the preparation of the Board Agenda, Board members may request items to be placed on the agenda. The Board Chair and the Superintendent will discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting, in advance of the Board Meeting.

Whenever Board members are appointed or elected to serve on the Board, the chair or vice-chair shall administer the Oath of Office at a meeting of the Board.

Policy is the work of the board. The leadership team (Board and Superintendent) will support the policies our district currently has in place. We will continue to annually study and review policies for effectiveness and appropriately engage key stakeholders in the development or deletion of policies and policy revisions. We will maintain and apply district policies consistently while being cognizant of and recognizing the potential uniqueness of any given situation. The board will refrain from being involved in the management of the schools.

The Superintendent and Board believe that the need for information and/or clarification on agenda items is best accomplished by the submission of written questions/requests for such ahead of meetings. This will allow for in-depth consideration of items without unduly lengthening the meeting time.

There should be no surprises at a Board meeting. Surprises to the Board or the Superintendent will be the exception, not the rule. We agree to ask the Board Chair and the Superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

Board members will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the Superintendent and district staff has the opportunity to prepare to answer member questions at Board meetings.

When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. If unforeseen questions arrive during the meeting, Directors will acknowledge their question or comment as spontaneous and that they understand that staff may not have the information on hand to answer the question.

Any individual member of the Board who desires a written report or a survey prepared by the administrative staff will make such a request to the superintendent. A copy of such material will be sent to each member of the Board. Requests for reports or information which require additional expense to the district must be submitted to the Board for consideration.

Executive sessions will be held only when specific needs arise. Board members will be extremely sensitive to the legal ramifications of their meeting and comments.

Board members need equal access to information, and to operate within the boundaries established within the Public Meeting law.

The use of email and social communication is subject to the Public Meeting Law. The Superintendent shall forward questions and answers to all Board members. Board members, when responding, may not “reply to all.”

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

- Cell phones will be set for ‘silent’ or vibrate.
- Directors will be discreet in checking cell phones if necessary.

Board members individually and collectively demonstrate confidentiality as appropriate and as outlined through the mandates of the Oregon Regulations, the Public Meeting Law, and other compliance criteria established by law or legislation. Respecting the confidentiality of information maintains the Board’s judicial review role.

Board members will review the information provided to them and be open to ongoing professional development and training.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

Each Board member respects the right of other Board member to vote in the minority position. If so doing, each Board member agrees, as a courtesy to the team, to explain the reason for their minority vote.

The only time to hear dissent or agreement on an action of the board is during deliberation (before vote).

To ensure efficient board meetings, points are to be made in as few words as possible; speeches at board meetings will be minimal.

Board meetings are for decision-making action and votes. We agree to move the question when discussion is repetitive.

Under the concept of majority rule, we agree to support the decision of the majority and that an individual board member will not take unilateral action.

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

The Board’s Role in Collective Bargaining

Board members will be actively involved in the collective bargaining process to ensure that the District is represented well by those selected to negotiate on behalf of the Board and the Community. The involvement of the Board will be to:

- Ensure that the ethical, fiscal and educational goals of the Community are represented in the actions taken throughout the collective bargaining process;
- Participate by providing direction and guidance to those selected to represent the Board (District Negotiation Team). Board members may attend at-the-table negotiations.
- Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- Set the District’s collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team;
- Expect, as the representative of the Board, that the Superintendent will ensure that the Board, collectively and individually, is informed on the issues and strategies implemented within the collective bargaining process.
- The Superintendent is the Collective Bargaining Spokesperson for the Board.

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent

The Board will commit to work through and with the Superintendent on issues regarding the running of the District. The Superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible of:

- ✓ serious safety concerns
- ✓ serious disciplinary action
- ✓ serious / unexpected personnel changes or disciplinary issues
- ✓ serious illness or death of a student, a staff member or members of the staff member's immediate family
- ✓ legal or liability concerns
- ✓ notable achievements.

In all matters, the Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information.

The Superintendent should make recommendations, proposals, or suggestions on matters that come before the Board.

It is the Superintendent's responsibility to organize the staff in the manner that best serves the needs of the District. As a professional courtesy, the Superintendent shall provide appropriate notice to the Board in advance of action being taken.

As the norm, the Superintendent speaks on behalf of the Board and District. The Board Chair is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

The Superintendent will inform the Board when media contacts the Superintendent.

All conflicts between the Superintendent and the Board will be handled in Executive Session, with the Superintendent being in attendance, when appropriate and necessary.

Conflicts between individual Board members and/or the Superintendent will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict and will not involve other members of the Board or the public (community, staff, media etc.).

The Board and Superintendent will set clear goals for the Siuslaw School District.

The Board will set clear goals for themselves and the superintendent.

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent (continued)

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the Superintendent. In consultation with the Superintendent, the evaluation process and associated documents will be developed and approved by the Board, not later than September. The evaluation process and instrument is designed to bring about the collective view of the Board. Thus, the evaluation will reflect the majority view of the Board, as a whole.

The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols

New Board Members (Elected or Appointed)

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

The orientation is intended to be a conversation and overview of the things members need to know immediately. Questions will be answered, and the Board meeting structure, CEO contract, CEO objectives, Board policies, overview of the services and programs, and the major challenges being faced will be outlined and discussed.

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

Within 90 days of the election/appointment of a new Board member or appointment of a new superintendent, a Special Meeting – Work Session of the whole Board will be held for the purpose of reviewing/updating the governance protocols of the Board. Upon the request of two or more Board members, a Special Meeting – Work Session will be called for the purpose of reviewing/updating of the governance protocols and the functioning of the Board.