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# Cold Spring School Board Governance Handbook

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## NORMS

We understand that the work of the Board is to establish the vision, create policies for the District, approve the budget, and hire and evaluate the Superintendent/Principal, Legal Counsel and Auditors. This Board emphasizes these purposes rather than becoming involved in the management of the school. The Board will set clear goals for the Superintendent. The Board and the Superintendent will facilitate goal setting for the District, and these goals will overlay the goals of the Superintendent.

The Superintendent, as the Chief Executive Officer, manages the day-to-day operations of the school and makes recommendations, proposals or suggestions on most matters that come before the Board. The Board has the right, as a whole, to give direction or clarification on matters and to approve or not approve items on the agenda.

We understand that Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings nor places to politicize personal agendas. We will keep this in mind as we conduct our meetings. As provided for in State law, the public may provide input at the time allotted during the Board meetings to ensure community input during Board deliberations. Each individual Board member should try to come to the meeting with a clear understanding of items on the agenda. Questions should be asked in advance, to ensure that staff has adequate time to provide a complete and accurate response and to limit the time spent on individual questions during the meeting. The Board's discussion of an agenda item should not be spent trying to persuade the other Board members during the meeting. The discussion time may include a few clarifying questions, but each Board member should be prepared to decide on the approval or non-approval of an agenda item and perhaps a short reasoning behind their decision.

The mission statement of our school and the goal of providing an excellent education to our students should be at the forefront of every decision that we make as a Board.

We will consistently abide by our formal processes so that all persons are treated fairly and equally. We will do our homework and improve leadership skills by attending Board training sessions.

The Board will lead by example. We agree to avoid words that create a negative impression of the School, the District, staff or our Board.

## PROTOCOLS

### Agenda Questions Asked Before a Meeting Protocols:

Board Members have an opportunity to email the Superintendent before the Board meeting to discuss comments/questions on the agenda. All emails/questions should be sent to the Board President, who will then forward to the Superintendent. The purpose is to prevent redundancy and excessiveness of questions. The Superintendent will email their responses to the whole Board.

Within Brown Act guidelines and to the extent possible, Board Members should attempt to have the Superintendent answer questions and resolve concerns prior to the meeting in order to save time at the public meeting. Board Members will, insofar as possible, let the Superintendent and staff know ahead of time when a request for information will be made in public so that staff can be prepared to provide a thorough answer.

### Bringing New Agenda Items Protocols

If there are at least two (2) Board Members who wish to place an item on the agenda, it shall be placed on a future agenda in a timely manner by the Superintendent. The best time to recommend items is during the period at the end of each meeting that is set aside for adding items to subsequent meetings.

The Board recognizes that from time to time issues may come up during the periods between scheduled meetings that require immediate presentation to the Board. In these cases, the President may give the Superintendent latitude to include these items on an upcoming agenda without the concurrence of a second Board member.

The Public may submit written requests, anytime, for agenda items to any Board member, who will then forward the request to the Superintendent and Board President. The Public may also make a verbal request for an agenda item at the meeting during public comments on non-agendized items. However, such requests must be supported by at least two Board Members per above guidelines.

### Consent Agenda

The purpose of the Consent Agenda is to expedite routine operational business with minimal discussion. The Board will move and approve the Consent Agenda, as a whole, unless items are pulled. Items on the Consent Agenda may be pulled when approving the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Discussion and vote on individual items occurs only when an item is pulled. There are two specific times that call for an item to be pulled:

1. When a trustee plans to vote “no”;
2. When a trustee needs further information or discussion before deciding how to vote.

### Timing of Board Meetings

The target time for regular meetings is 2.5 hours. The target time for workshops is 1.5 hours. Workshops are intended to shorten the time for regular meetings and to create interest and understanding in a single topic of discussion. Workshops should not add substantively to the workload of the administrative staff.

It is the responsibility of the Board President to keep the meetings moving in an efficient manner. Members of the public will be allotted three (3) minutes each to present their information. An individual's allotment of time may not be bestowed or conferred to another person.

Board members should try to keep their requests for information minimal during the meeting (questions should be asked in advance). However, each member is allotted three (3) minutes to highlight the importance of information, or their thoughts on an agenda item. If the discussion of an item appears to be taking longer than expected, the Board President may table the item for a future meeting.

### Hearing Agenda Items

The following order of events and timeline guidance shall apply:

1. Public comment (3 min each)
2. Superintendent/staff presents information
3. Board member comments/questions (approximately 3 min each)
4. Board acceptance of item

The above time limits are general guidelines and may be waived or adjusted at the discretion of the Board President (and/or through a motion approved by a majority of the Board).

Briefing materials (charts, statistics, PowerPoint, etc.) shall be provided to Board Members preferably 72 hours but not less than 24 hours in advance in order to give Board Members the opportunity to send questions to the Superintendent so that his/her responses can be incorporated into the respective Report(s). The Board understands that with limited staff, some materials may not be available until the meeting itself. In this situation, the Board may request more time for comments/questions or delay item discussion for the next meeting.

### Action Items

When the item is up for action, the Board will hear the item in the same way as above, except that before the board member comments/discussion, there needs to be a move for action.

1. Public comment (3 min);
2. Superintendent/staff presents information;
3. Move for action and seek a second on the motion;
  - a. If motion dies for lack of a second, no discussion or vote occurs on the motion;
  - b. If there is no second, the President may ask for a new, possibly related motion and seek a second on that motion;
4. Board member comments/questions (approximately 3 min); and,

## 5. Call for a vote by President

The board recognizes that some items may have a more informal discussion before a move for action. The President will use their discrepancy to determine if the action item should move forward using the above formal process or if a short informal discussion before a move to action is appropriate.

## Use of Abstentions

If a member feels that there is insufficient information to vote on a motion, that member should move that the motion be tabled for lack of information and request the item be placed on a subsequent agenda. If there is no second on his/her motion to table or if the motion does not pass, the member may abstain from a vote.

Also, in accordance with Board Bylaw 9323, Members are reminded that “When a member abstains, his/her abstention shall be considered to concur with (any) action taken by the majority.”

## Conflicts of Interest

Abstentions for personal conflicts should be extremely rare, and only taken after due consideration of the possible outcomes. If a Board member has a financial conflict of interest as defined by Government Code 1090, he/she shall make this known to the Board before discussion of the issue and shall recuse themselves from discussion and/or action taken on the item. “Conflict of Interest” is explicitly defined in Board Bylaw 9270. Before abstaining on any issue, a Board Member should be thoroughly familiar this Bylaw in its entirety.

## Community and Public Input Protocols

There are two opportunities for public input at board meetings:

1. Introducing non-agendized items during the time for public comment;
2. When an agenda item occurs

In both cases, blue cards are provided to facilitate public input. Individuals must limit their remarks to 3 minutes. When 5 or more cards on the same subject are submitted to address or introduce items not on the agenda, the Board President may hold these comments until after the meeting agenda has been heard. The Board President has the authority to limit the number of minutes per blue cards on an agendized item, if there are more than 5 blue cards submitted. The purpose of this would be to limit the length of the meetings.

Board Members listen to public input and take it into account during discussion and deliberation. However, except for specific questions on committee reports and general comments, Board Members have no direct interaction with the public during a regular Board meeting. It is incumbent on the Board President to acknowledge and thank members of the public for their input as appropriate.

Exception: If the Board feels additional public/staff input would be helpful in determining a course of action, the Board President may make such a request of the Superintendent. If desired the Superintendent may request public/staff to come forward to clarify the agenda item in question.

### Requests for Information

Requests for information from Board Members should be sent to the Board President. If it appears that a request for information will take considerable staff time (more than 10 minutes), the Board President will restate the request and ask the Superintendent for input regarding time and resources involved. The Board President, during a properly scheduled meeting of the Board, may seek consensus from the entire Board to determine whether the utilization of Staff resources for the request should be pursued.

Board Members will not direct questions to the staff/teachers. Board Members submit all questions directly to the Superintendent, via the Board president. When an individual Member requests information, the response will be provided to all Members.

### Requests for Action Protocols

The only authority to direct action rests with the full majority of the Board sitting at the Board table. Board Members may request action during Board meetings, explaining their interest in a particular course of action and asking that it come back as an action item. The Board President will then restate the request, seek consensus from the entire board to see if a majority supports having the item brought to an upcoming Board meeting for discussion/action.

### Self-monitoring Protocols

Individual trustees agree to review and adhere to meeting norms, goals and Board Member roles as defined by CSBA and Board Bylaws. In order to conduct efficient and effective Board meetings, Board Members will come to the Board meetings prepared and ready to do business. Board Members agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and attend to fellow Board Members respectfully. Facts and information needed from the administration will be referred to the Superintendent, via the Board President. Points are to be made in as few words as possible; speeches at board meetings are discouraged.

Key Questions for Members to Consider for Effective Meetings • How much work has already been done at preliminary Board committee sessions? • Are Members prepared for the meeting? • Do Members refrain from monopolizing discussion? • Does everyone really understand the issues?

### Spokesperson Protocols

The Board President is the spokesperson in response to emails and communications addressed to the entire board. Therefore, he/she will provide an initial response confirming receipt of the communication. The Board President shall courtesy copy the Superintendent and other Board Members with any such response. The Board President is also the initial spokesperson for the Board with respect to controversial or “hot-button” issues that may require explanation beyond confirmation of receipt. They should make every effort to offer information regarding a topic that is representative of the majority of the Board, including basic facts and votes taken.

Members of the Board, including the President, should refrain from mixing personal opinions with Board statements. If responding to community members individually, Board members should include a statement that this is their own opinion and not representative of the Board as a whole.

In addition, Board members should take care to remember the Brown Act and not cc each other in their emails (except for a community response prepared by the President).

### Evaluation of the Board Protocols

There are two opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of the Board. First, at the end of every meeting, there will be a meeting evaluation as an opportunity for Board members to discuss ideas on running the meetings more efficiently. Second, using a workshop setting, the Board will evaluate its effectiveness annually. This may also be part of the Goal setting workshop of the Board.

### Evaluation of the Superintendent Protocols

In accordance with their contract and prior to the September General Board meeting, the Superintendent will provide the Board with his written goals for the coming school year, in an agreed upon format. During closed session, the Board and Superintendent will review and discuss their written goals and agree on measurable outcomes. During closed session not later than the January Board meeting, the Board and Superintendent will check in to review the goals and progress. At this time, any other issues should be brought forward by either party to include any contractual issues.

During closed session not later than the July Board meeting, Board Members will meet without the Superintendent to evaluate his performance based on the aforementioned goals. Assigned Board Members may create a quantitative matrix and/or other helpful subjective tools to help rate and quantify the Superintendent's performance. This detailed evaluation will be discussed in closed session with the Superintendent and a written summary of overall performance will be presented to the Superintendent prior to July 30. A more general but no less accurate statement of performance will be read in the Open Session of a General Meeting, also prior to July 30.