



STUDENTS • PARENTS • EDUCATORS • COMMUNITY

Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees

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I. Effective Trustees

Effective Trustees ...

- Keeps learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus
- Values, supports and advocates for public education
- Respects differences of perspective and style on the board and among staff, students, parents and the community.
- Understands that manner and behavior make a difference.
- Keeps confidential information confidential.
- Commits the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.
- Understands the role and responsibilities of the board.
- Understands that authority rests with the board as a whole.
- Works hard to build and sustain an effective governance team.

The Four Essential Characteristics of Effective Trustees

- *Mindfulness*: Being intentionally thoughtful about governance – and the work of trustees and the board.
- *Focus*: Staying focused on the board’s work.
- *Preparation*: Reviewing all materials in advance, and asking necessary questions.
- *Manner*: Self-monitoring physical behavior.

II. Unity of Purpose

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

Core Values and Beliefs

We believe:

- That every child has a right to a quality education program in a safe and healthy environment.
- Children have a right to an education that equips them with the values and skills to live as responsible and productive adults
- In continuous improvement for every person
- That strong schools and strong families make strong communities, and the community plays a vital role in the quality of our schools.

III. Board Responsibilities

Set Direction for the community's schools

- Mission
- Vision
- District Values
- Long Range Priorities
- Annual Goals

Establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district

- Employ the superintendent and set policy for hiring of other personnel
- Oversee the development and adoption of policies
- Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum
- 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 by coordinating:

- Board / Trustee presence at key district events
- Trustee presence in the schools
- Acknowledgement of student / teacher / district achievement at public venues
- Modeling the behavior you expect throughout the district

Ensure accountability to the public

- Evaluate the superintendent
- Board Self-Evaluation
- Monitor student achievement
- Monitor, review and revise policies
- Monitor and adjust district finances
- Monitor the collective bargaining process
- Serve as a judicial and appeals body

Community Engagement

- Inform the Community of district status and needs *through LCAP*
- Solicit the community's ideas about district programs.
- Engage and involve the community in district vision and priorities.
- Invite the community to participate in district efforts.
- Educate the community and the media about the issues facing the district and public education
- Advocate for children, district programs and public education to the general public, community leaders and local, state and national leaders

IV. Leadership 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 together and with others. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift a negative one.

How we want our Governance Team to be perceived by the community

- We serve the Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District community as it pertains to the best interests of our students.
- We operate with honesty and integrity.
- We exercise legal and logical leadership.
- We are accountable for achieving district goals.
- We are polite and professional.

Meetings Norms

We Agree to...

- Keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- Listen openly and don't interrupt others.
- Paraphrase to check for understanding.
- Keep our remarks brief, to the point and focus on facts.
- Communicate openly and honestly with one another.
- Build upon the ideas of others and look for common ground.

V. Role of the Superintendent and the Board

Effective teams value and respect their essential roles, reach mutual agreement on the roles of the board and superintendent and strive to operate within them.

The 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.

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 pulls 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.

V. Board Governance Protocols

Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

Board Policies (BB 9000, 9200 and 9300) of the District relate to the role and responsibility of the Board collectively and Board members individually. "No individual member of the Board, by virtue of holding office, shall exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools; nor as an individual, command the services of any employee." Board members are to channel their requests and/or concerns directly to the Superintendent (or if necessary through the Board President).

The only authority to direct actions rests with the full Board sitting at the Board table. A majority vote sets such direction. Individuals can request action by bringing up a new idea, 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, that request should be made in the context of the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.

When a complaint is made to the Board, the members are encouraged to listen carefully, remembering that only one side of the story is being presented. Trustees will then direct the complainant to the staff most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern, making sure the person understands the appropriate order of who to contact (teacher, then principal, then District staff) and is aware of any formal forms or policies that might assist them (e.g., written complaint form).

In responding to concerns, board members will:

- Receive the information (listen)
- Repeat the information – paraphrase to ensure understanding

- Request – “What do you want me to do?”
- Remind the individual that a board member has no authority as an individual
- Re-Direct – Thank them for their sharing their thoughts, and direct them back into the system at the appropriate level.
- Report – As soon as possible, inform the superintendent

Board members will hold to the highest level of conduct, including emphasizing the positive when in public places or situations. Whenever appropriate, when responding to phone calls, emails, or visits from staff or community members, each Board member will channel concerns or complaints from such individuals to the Superintendent for action.

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

When individually visiting schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, Board members are to 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.

Staff members are directed to channel any requests made by individual Board members directly to the Superintendent. Such a direction does not imply, to either the staff or to individual Board members, a censoring of any private and informal conversations. The imperative is that a staff member is not placed in a position, by a Board member, to provide any information (beyond the information that would be provided to any regular community member) and/or complete any duty as requested. Staff members are directed to relay requests from Board members to the Superintendent to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members.

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 Trustees to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public.

Board meetings schedule will be voted on at the Organizational meeting annually. . Each Board meeting will begin with Closed Session at 5:00 pm. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 6:00 pm. Study 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.

Board members need equal access to information, and to operate within the Brown Act.

- The Agenda shall be communicated to the Board.
- Any trustee can submit questions to the superintendent.
- Trustees will inform the superintendent if they intend to ask the question at an open meeting.

- The superintendent will forward the question to all trustees and provide the answer, or when the answer will be available.
- Whenever possible, additional support documents on the Agenda should be provided to the Board, not later than Friday afternoon.
- Trustee should not ‘reply to all’.

Trustees 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 trustees’ questions at board meetings. If unforeseen questions arrive during the meeting, trustees 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.

Board members will read the information provided to them and commit to ongoing professional development and training.

Each trustee has the obligation, in serving the community, to vote on each item presented to the Board. Abstention from voting must only take place when required by law, due to a potential conflict of interest.

Board members will be encouraged to explain their “minority” vote.

To model the behavior of being polite and professional at board meetings, the governance team will address one another by their last name and appropriate prefix/title.

The governance team will strive for brevity in deliberations, keeping remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed and meetings can be efficient.

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

- Cell phones will be set for ‘silent’ or vibrate.
- Cell phones that are on the vibrate mode will not be placed on the table / dais.
- Trustees will be discreet in checking cell phones if necessary.

The Board’s Role in Collective Bargaining

Board members will be actively engaged 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;
- Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- Set the District’s collective bargaining constructs and 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 Board’s Relationship with the Superintendent

The Board will commit to work through and with the Superintendent on all issues regarding the running of the District. The superintendent informs the board regarding the implications of the request for staff capacity and work load.

The board trusts the superintendent to protect confidential information and to determine the most appropriate means of communicating with trustees.

The Superintendent will inform the board as soon as possible of:

- serious safety concerns
- serious disciplinary action
- serious / unexpected personnel changes
- legal or liability concerns
- notable achievements

The Superintendent is free to organize the staff in any way he or she deems appropriate to serve the needs of the District.

The board designates the superintendent as the official spokesperson for the district. The superintendent will inform the board, as appropriate, regarding media coverage for certain events and issues. When appropriate, with the majority support of the Board, the Board President may be directed to speak on behalf of the Board.

All conflicts between the Superintendent and the Board will be handled in Closed Session, with the Superintendent always being in attendance. Conflicts between individual governance team members will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict and will not involve the Board as a whole or part.

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 the first Board meeting in June. 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

A Study Session of the Board will be scheduled every January to review governance team agreements and protocols.