



# Reef-Sunset Unified School District

## Governance Handbook

2013

### Board of Trustees

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Gail Monohon, President  
Jose Barrera, Trustee  
Christopher Collins, Trustee  
Leticia Lopez, Trustee  
Ricardo Verdugo, Trustee

### Superintendent

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David East, ED.D



# Reef-Sunset Unified School District Governance Handbook

2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### UNITY OF PURPOSE

Reef-Sunset Unified School District Mission, Vision, Core Values .....	1
Reef-Sunset Unified School District Priority Areas .....	2
Purpose of the Reef-Sunset USD Board of Education .....	3
What We Are Proud of about the District .....	3
What we Want to Accomplish as a Team .....	4

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Three Essential Roles in School Districts .....	5
A Discussion of Role .....	5
Reef-Sunset USD BB 9000 – Role of the Board.....	6
Reef-Sunset USD BB 9200 – Limits of Board Member Authority .....	8
Performing The Board’s Responsibilities .....	10
An Effective Trustee.....	11
What the Board Needs from the Superintendent .....	12
What the Superintendent Needs from the Board .....	12
What Board Members Need from Each Other .....	13

### AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Agreements Signature Page .....	14
<u>Norms to Sustain a Positive Governance Culture</u>	
Meeting Guidelines .....	15
Operating as a body with collective authority.....	16
<u>Protocols to Govern Effectively</u>	
Board – Superintendent Communication .....	17
Individual Board Member Questions on Agenda Items.....	17
Individual Board Member Requests for Action.....	17
Bringing-up New Ideas or Agenda Items .....	18

Responding to Constituency concerns or Complaints .....	19
Superintendent Evaluation .....	19
<u>Planning and Evaluation Cycle .....</u>	<u>20</u>

*The Reef-Sunset Unified School District Governance Handbook was developed during effective governance workshops in 2007 and 2008 facilitated by Babs Kavanaugh, in October of 2011 facilitated by Leslie DeMersseman, and in May of 2013 facilitated by Luan Burman Rivera, Senior Governance Consultants, California School Boards Association*

# UNITY OF PURPOSE

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

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## Reef-Sunset Unified School District

### Mission Statement

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Reef-Sunset Unified School District is committed to providing a rigorous, inspiring, and nurturing educational program.

### Vision

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Our students will achieve their personal best and become well-rounded contributing members of their communities.

### Core Values

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- We maintain high standards and expectations for every student.
- We are committed to providing a safe, secure learning environment.
- We support English literacy as a means to achieving academic success.
- We believe in a well-executed, continuous improvement process that maintains the focus on the best interests of the students.
- We are committed to recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff that support stability and quality in our educational program.
- We believe “It Takes a Village” and promote shared responsibility to support all students.

# UNITY OF PURPOSE

## Reef-Sunset USD Priority Areas:

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1. Student Achievement
  - Exit from PI status
  - Enhance the vocational curriculum and provide more offerings
  - Increase the number of students passing CAHSEE
  - Focus on high school graduation for all students
  - Maintain the focus on high quality instruction
  - Continue to focus on student motivation
  - Increase the number of students who pursue post secondary education opportunities
  - Increase the number of college graduates
  - Provide a broad well-rounded curriculum that meets state standards
2. Fiscal Resources
  - Develop a three year facilities master plan for maintenance and renovations of current facilities
  - Improve custodial services, allocate sufficient dollars for maintenance, hire sufficient personnel and provide them with training and development opportunities
3. Communications
  - A. Reach understanding and consensus within the school system.
    - Increase communications from the governance team to the community
    - Increase visibility of district mission, core values, and goals
    - Update website consistently
    - Provide information to local and regional media
    - Provide information to parent advisory committee
    - Communicate needed resources to community
  - B. Gather input from the school system
    - Surveys, public meetings, and suggestion boxes
    - Restructure the climate committee
    - Better use ELAC, etc. to inform parents
    - Learn from exit interviews why staff leave the district
    - Schedule joint meetings with the City at least twice a year, with specific agenda
4. Youth Opportunities
  - A. Youth opportunities
    - Gather information about available programs
    - Network with the city and other agencies to promote youth opportunities
  - B. Community Service Opportunities
    - Work with local businesses to provide work experience
    - Facilitate student volunteer and employment opportunities

## UNITY OF PURPOSE

### Purpose of the Reef-Sunset USD Board of Education

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- Providing a well-rounded education to all of our students that prepares them to be successful in life:
  - life-long learners
  - productive community members
- Providing a safe, nurturing, supportive environment for every child.
- Exposing students to as many different learning opportunities and enriching experiences
- Providing staff with the resources necessary to achieve the district vision and goals.
- Holding the system accountable to the community.

## UNITY OF PURPOSE

### What We Are Most Proud of about Our District:

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- The community's willingness to support our schools.
- We are self-sufficient; we do well within ourselves despite being the "stepchild" of the county. (Due to distance between us and the other districts in the county.)
- The commitment and desire of everyone to see our students be successful.
- The sincere care and concern that has always been shown to our students and employees.
- There are great stories of inspiration and success in each graduation class.

## UNITY OF PURPOSE

### What We Hope to Accomplish as a Team:

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- To work together as a team:
  - a) By establishing clear goals and objectives
  - b) By establishing focused norms and goals and holding each other accountable – “lateral accountability.”
- To be agile and responsive to the rapid changes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- To foster improved leadership at all school sites.

# ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

*There are important distinctions to be made between the board's role and that of the superintendent and staff. Boards and superintendents must team together to ensure a district has effective leadership. 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.*

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## Three Essential Roles in School Districts:

The school board works collaboratively with school district staff to see that the best possible education is provided to district students. Three distinct roles are required within the district to make this happen:

The Governance Team (*Board and Superintendent*): visionary, strategic, leadership: Set the direction: a strategic charge or target for change, and hold the system accountable for results. Visionary leadership leads to transformational change.

Administration: tactical leadership, planners, alignment: Create and launch plans to meet the strategic charge. Administration is the link between vision and implementation.

Teachers and other Staff: day-to-day operations and implementation: Carry out the plans to achieve intended results. During implementation transitional change occurs.

All three of these roles have to be aligned and integrated. None of the roles can be successful without the others. The Superintendent is the link between the roles: he supports the Board's governance responsibilities, and as the District's Chief Administrative Officer, works with administration to see that plans are developed in alignment with the vision, and oversees district staff to see that district work is carried out in ways that will achieve the ultimate intended results.

## A Discussion of Role:

The Board is the elected representation for the community, provides big-picture visionary leadership, and establishes the framework for all district work by adopting fair and responsible policies and procedures that guide district operations. The board provides leadership on educational issues to the community, and fosters an environment within the district where excellence can be attained.

The Superintendent is hired by the board to be the chief executive officer for the district, manages day-to-day operations, and sees that board direction is implemented. The superintendent works with the board to support effective governance and provides leadership on educational matters to the community and staff.

# Reef-Sunset USD

## Board Bylaw

### Role of the Board

**BB 9000**

The Board of Trustees has been elected by the community to provide leadership and citizen oversight of the district. The Board shall ensure that the district is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the community.

The Board shall work with the Superintendent to fulfill its major responsibilities, which include:

1. Setting the direction for the district that involves the community, parents/guardians, students, and staff and is focused on student learning and achievement.
2. Establishing an effective and efficient structure for the district by:
  - a. Employing the Superintendent and setting policy for the hiring of other personnel
  - b. Overseeing the development and adoption of policies
  - c. Establishing academic expectations and adopting the curriculum and instructional materials
  - d. Establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget.
  - e. Providing safe, adequate facilities that support the district's educational program
  - f. Setting parameters for negotiations with employee organizations and ratifying collective bargaining agreements
3. Providing support to the Superintendent and staff as they carry out the Board's direction by:
  - a. Establishing and adhering to standards of responsible governance
  - b. Making decisions and providing resources that support district priorities and goals
  - c. Upholding Board policies
  - d. Being knowledgeable about district programs and efforts in order to serve as effective spokespersons
4. Ensuring accountability to the public for the performance of the district's schools by:
  - a. Evaluating the Superintendent and setting policy for the evaluation of other personnel
  - b. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies
  - c. Serving as a judicial (hearing) and appeals body in accordance with law, Board policies and negotiated agreements
  - d. Monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness and requiring program changes as necessary.
  - e. Monitoring and adjusting district finances
  - f. Monitoring the collective bargaining process

## **Role of the Board**

**BB 9000 b**

5. Providing community leadership and advocacy on behalf of students, the district's educational program, and public education in order to build support within the local community and at the state and national levels.

The Board is authorized and finance any program or activity that is not in conflict with, inconsistent with, or preempted by law. (Education code 35160)

### Legal Reference:

#### EDUCATION CODE

5304 Duties of governing board (re school district elections)  
12400–12405 Authority to participate in Federal programs  
17565–17592 Board duties re property maintenance and control  
33319.5 Implementation of authority of local agencies  
35000 District name  
35010 Control of district; prescription and enforcement of rules  
35020–35046 Officers and agents  
35100–35351 Governing boards, especially:  
35160–35185 Powers and duties  
35291 Rules

### Management Resources:

#### CSBA PUBLICATIONS

Maximizing School Board Leadership  
Professional Governance Standards, November 2000  
School Board Leadership: The Role and Function of California's School Boards, 1996  
NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION PUBLICATIONS

The Key Work of School Boards, 2000

#### WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org/gi>

National School Boards Association: <http://www.nsba.org>

Bylaw REEF-SUNSET UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Adopted: November 20, 2008 Avenal California

# Reef-Sunset USD

## Board Bylaw

### Limits of Board Member Authority

**BB 9200**

The Governing Board recognizes that the Board is the unit of authority over the district and a Board member has no individual authority. Board members shall hold the education of students above any partisan principle, group interest, or personal interest.

Unless agreed to by the Board as a whole, individual members of the Board shall not exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools or command the services of any school employee. Individual Board members shall submit requests for information to the Superintendent. Board members shall refer board-related correspondence to the Superintendent for forwarding to the Board for placement on the Board's agenda, as appropriate.

Individual Board members do not have the authority to resolve complaints. Any board member approached directly by a person with a complaint should refer the complainant to the Superintendent or designee so that the problem may receive proper consideration and be handled through appropriate district process.

A Board member whose child is attending a district school should be aware of his/her position as a Board member when interacting with district employees about his/her child. Because his/her position a Board member may inhibit the performance of school personnel, the Board member should inform the Superintendent or designee before volunteering in his/her child's classroom.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide a copy of the state's open meeting laws (Brown Act) to each Board member and to anyone who is elected to the Board but has not yet assumed office. (Government Code 54952.1)

#### Legal Reference:

##### EDUCATION CODE

200–262.4 Prohibition of discrimination

7054 Use of district property

35010 Control of district; prescription and enforcement of rules

35100–35351 Governing boards, especially:

35160–35184 Powers and duties

35291 Rules

35292 Visits to school (Board members)

51101 Rights of parents/guardians

**Limits of Board Member Authority**

**BB 9200 b**

GOVERNMENT CODE

54950–54962 The Ralph M. Brown Act, especially:

54952.1 Member of a legislative body of a local agency

54952.7 Copies of chapter to members of legislative body

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

CSBA Professional Governance Standards, 2000

Maximizing School board Leadership; Boardsmanship, 1996

WEBSITES:

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

Bylaw REEF-SUNSET UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Adopted: November 20, 2008 Avenal, California

# PERFORMING THE BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

## **We set the direction for the community's schools**

- Focus on student learning
- Assess needs/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

## **We establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district**

- Employ the superintendent and set policy for hiring of other personnel
- Oversee the development of and adopt 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

## **We 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
- Ensure a positive personnel climate exists
- Be knowledgeable enough about district efforts to explain them to the public

## **We 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
- Monitor the collective bargaining process

## **We 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 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

## An Effective Trustee:

The Governance Team determined that the following characteristic describe an Effective Trustee:

- **BEING MINDFUL:**
  - Being fully aware of the District’s scope and responsibilities
  - Thinking deeply and thoughtfully about issues throughout the district.
  - Being open-minded about everyone’s opinion.
  - Being aware of the impact that every decision we make has on all of our stakeholders.
  - Focusing on the governance perspective – “The buck stops here.”
  
- **BEING PREPARED:**
  - Reviewing Board information, asking questions and getting clarification prior to Board meetings
  - Staying current with changes in Ed. Code, curriculum, etc. – anything that might prompt changes in Board Policy
  - Reviewing the minutes from the prior Board Meeting
  - Participating in training
  
- **CONFIDENTIALITY:**
  - Needs to be well-defined: All closed session items are confidential – student discipline, personnel issues and litigation are some primary examples of confidential items.
  - Is necessary and important for:
    - a) Protection
    - b) Financial reasons
    - c) Building trust
  - Is expected
  - Is difficult; it is emotional – it affects people’s lives.
  
- **BEING FOCUSED ON:**
  - **The students** – Developing students who will be well-educated, contributing and productive citizens.
  - Curriculum and instruction
  - The **“whole student”** – Ensuring that a positive school climate and healthy environment exist.
  - Where we are at and where we want to be – our mission, vision and goals
  
- **MAINTAINING AN APPROPRIATE MANNER:**
  - A private and public “persona” that reflects respect and dignity toward **all** people regardless of background or status.

- **BEING COMMITTED:**
  - Having perseverance
  - Being engaged – committing the time, energy and resources needed to improve the district.
  - To the students
  - To decision-making
  - To adapting to change

## GAINING CLARITY ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

### What the Board needs from the Superintendent:

**The superintendent will support trustees in fulfilling their responsibilities by keeping us informed through:**

- Friday emails
- Phone calls
- Updating the website
- Maintaining an open-door policy; allowing our visits
- Providing reports:
  - a) Reducing the amount of education lingo
  - b) Remembering that quality is more important than quantity
  - c) Explaining your recommendations

### What the Superintendent needs from the Board:

**The trustees can support the superintendent in fulfilling his responsibilities by doing the following:**

- Giving clear direction; providing direction at Board meetings, only, after careful thought.
- Being focused
- Knowing our place and staying where we belong – not coming between the Superintendent and other staff. Allowing him to administer the District – staying “out of the weeds.” Getting in the weeds weakens his authority.
- Listening to concerns and reporting them to him.

## What the Board Members need from each other:

**The trustees can support each other in fulfilling their responsibilities by doing the following:**

- Increasing discussions about decisions
- Listening to each other carefully and respectfully
- Having honest conversations about our views.
- Being open and honest
- Being open-minded

## Governance Agreements (norms and protocols)

*Effective teams create a framework within which they can work respectfully and competently with each other, district staff, parents, students and the broader community. The team does this by developing, agreeing on, and committing to standards for behavior, (norms), and processes, (protocols), that describe the structures and procedures used by the trustees and the superintendent in their operations. Norms and protocols are the agreements that ensure governance team members are operating within defined roles and responsibilities.*

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The Board of Education for the Reef-Sunset Unified 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 Reef-Sunset Unified School District 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.

## Our Agreements to Facilitate Governance Leadership:

### NORMS:

- Meeting Guidelines
- Operating as a Body with Collective Authority

### PROTOCOLS:

- Board – Superintendent Communication
- Board Member Questions on Agenda Items
- Board Member Requests for Action
- Bringing up New Ideas or Agenda Items
- Responding to Constituent Concerns or Complaints
- Superintendent Evaluation

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 Reef-Sunset Unified School District Board of Education, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at the annual governance workshop of the Board of Education.

Affirmed on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2011

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Gail Monohon, Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jose Barrera, Trustee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher Collins, Trustee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leticia Lopez, Trustee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ricardo Verdugo, Trustee

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David East, Ed.D, Superintendent

# Norms to Sustain Positive Governance Team Culture

*Establishment and adherence to team norms helps build team discipline, creates trust between team members and supports a safe environment. Ineffective relationships and interactions sabotage the team's work. Norms provide a series of boundaries within which members of the team agree to work to be productive.*

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## Meeting Guidelines:

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### *We agree to...*

- Keep our focus on the best interest of our students!
- Build on the ideas of others and find common ground.
- See that all team discussions occur in an environment of respect and trust.
- Keep all confidential matters confidential.
- Stay focused on our goals and avoid getting sidetracked.
- Each assume responsibility for the work of the team and take responsibility for the success of our meetings.
- Disagree agreeably.
- Work to be sure there are no hidden agendas and see that concerns are dealt with openly by all members.
- We will respect meeting times: start on time, return from breaks promptly and avoid unnecessary interruptions.
- We will demonstrate the “**4C’s**” at the Board table:
  - Critical thinking
  - Effective Communication
  - Collaboration
  - Creativeness and innovation
- We will work toward the future – learning from the past.

## Norms for operating as a board with collective authority:

### *We agree...*

- The authority of the Board of Education rests with the collective body – not with individual Board members. Individual Board members are not granted any authority by Education Code or any other government code.
- The authority of the Board exists only at legally noticed Board meetings.
- The Board exercises authority by taking action during a Board meeting. An "action" by the Board means:
  - A collective decision by a majority of the Board members
  - A collective commitment or promise by a majority of the members to make a positive or negative decision
  - A vote by a majority of the members on items that are identified for action on a Board Meeting Agenda.
- The Board of Trustees acts by a majority vote of all of the membership constituting the Board, unless otherwise required by law.

# Protocols to Support Effective Governance

*Protocols are process agreements boards and superintendents put in place to work together effectively. They are agreements about how they operate and do business as a governance team and may deal with topics as varied as handling a complaint from a community member, to the seating arrangement at the board table. Protocols help board members operate within their role as trustees of the district and not insert themselves into the day-to-day operations.*

Issue	Protocol/Agreement
<p><b>Board and Superintendent communication</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical to the effectiveness of the governance team are open channels of communication between the superintendent and the trustees.</li> <li>• The superintendent will publish, every week, the Superintendent letter with areas of interest, issues being monitored and tracked and other important information needed by all board members.</li> <li>• Each principal will provide a brief written summary every other month in the board report about site level activities including site council, ELAC, DLAC, migrant support and other committees.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Individual board member requests for information or questions on board meeting agenda items</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees will make every attempt to discuss concerns and questions about the materials in the board packet with the superintendent before the board meeting.</li> <li>• Any concerns that a trustee may have should be submitted to the superintendent.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Individual Board Members requests for Action</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the board, by formal board action, may direct the superintendent. No individual trustee has the authority to either direct staff to take action or to cause action to be taken by staff indirectly.</li> <li>• Individual trustees shall take great care to assure that communication to the superintendent and/or staff not imply direction nor assume that staff should take action based upon individual trustees' comments.</li> <li>• An individual board member will inform the superintendent of issues / things that may need attention, or are of concern. Depending on the topic, the superintendent may report the status of the issue to all board members in the Superintendent's communication letter.</li> </ul>

# Protocols to Support Effective Governance

Issue	Protocol/Agreement
<b>Bringing up New Ideas or agenda items</b>	<p><b>The governance team looks for ways to improve and encourages fresh and innovative thinking. The governance team agrees to a process that will support bringing forward new ideas while maintaining the focus on district goals. When bringing forward a new idea, trustees will proceed according to these guidelines:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Step 1: Introduction.</b> Discuss the concept/idea with the superintendent prior to bringing it up a board meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Step 2:</b> Bring up the new idea during the board comments / report at a board meeting.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Board President will ask the Superintendent for any comments on the item</li> <li>- A majority of board members need to concur to place a new item on a future agenda</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Step 3:</b> All new ideas or agenda item topics will be weighed against their affect on staff’s ability to accomplish the district vision and goals. Consideration will include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The impact of the new agenda item or topic on agreed upon district priorities, and goals</li> <li>- The shift of staff time, and energy away from their primary responsibilities relative to achieving district goals</li> <li>- The reallocation of district resources away from agreed upon district priorities and goals.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Issue	Protocol/Agreement
<p align="center"><b>Responding to Staff or Community Concerns or Complaints</b></p>	<p><b><u>Rationale:</u> We recognize that individual Board Members do not have the authority to resolve issues and complaints. Therefore, when a Board Member is approached by a community or staff member with an issue or concern, he/she will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Receive</u></b> – Listen without interruption and without preparing a response to the person’s issues or concerns.</li> <li>• <b><u>Repeat</u></b> – Paraphrase or ask a clarifying question to ensure understanding of what has been said.</li> <li>• <b><u>Request</u></b> – Ask what the person sees as the solution to the problem or concern. Ask what they would have us do with the information they have given us.</li> <li>• <b><u>Review</u></b> – The conversation (and next steps, if any).</li> <li>• <b><u>Redirect</u></b> – Put the person back into the system at the appropriate place.</li> <li>• <b><u>Report</u></b> - Notify the Superintendent of the conversation so that he has the full picture and can follow through as appropriate and/or necessary.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Superintendent Evaluation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The superintendent evaluation process is a critical tool for direction, support, speaking with one voice and accountability. The evaluation of the superintendent will align with the district goal setting and budget setting processes.</li> <li>• Annually the trustees will discuss, reach agreement and communicate clear performance expectations for the superintendent. At the closure of the school year the board will prepare and deliver the superintendent’s performance evaluation.</li> <li>• The superintendent will prepare quarterly check-in progress reports for the board.</li> </ul>

## PLANNING AND EVALUATION CYCLE

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The following evaluation processes have been established to ensure that the district is working to accomplish established strategic goals.

### District Goal Setting and Goal Evaluation Process

Given the challenges associated with overlapping planning cycles, the board has outlined the following annual calendar for goal setting.

### Superintendent and District Planning and Evaluation Cycle

Schedule	Superintendent Performance Expectations and Evaluation	District Goals Development, Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>July/August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete written superintendent evaluation.</li> <li>Establish district goals and clarify superintendent expectations based on district goals and board relations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish district goals</li> </ul>
<b>November</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly progress reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly progress reports</li> </ul>
<b>February</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Midyear check in and progress report. Opportunity to do midyear corrections or adjustments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Midyear check in and progress report. Opportunity to do midyear corrections or adjustments</li> </ul>
<b>March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations from superintendent for annual goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate goal setting for next school year.</li> </ul>
<b>April</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly progress reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarterly progress reports</li> </ul>