

Governance Handbook

The Board of Trustees 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.

Board of Trustees

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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.

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Vision

All NUSD students graduate as college and career ready, productive, responsible, and engaged global citizens

Nat^omas
Unified School District

CORE BELIEFS

Nat^omas
Unified School District
Connecting students to their future

Every student can learn and succeed

Disparity and disproportionality can and must be eliminated

Our Diversity is a Strength

Staff must be committed, collaborative, caring, and exemplary

District Goals

1. Increase student success in ELA, math, science, and literacy
2. Prepare students to be college and career ready
3. Engage parents and families to support student success in school
4. Create safe and welcoming learning environments where students attend and are connected to their schools
5. Recruit, hire, train, and retain high quality staff who are committed, collaborative, caring and exemplary



Commitments

Every student can learn and succeed.

- We will ensure every student will learn and succeed.
- We will dedicate differentiated resources based on diverse and unique student and family needs.
- We will engage our families and community as partners for student success.

Disparity and disproportionality can and must be eliminated.

- We will eliminate the achievement gaps.
- We will utilize data to identify and eliminate disparity and disproportionality.
- We will increase access and raise expectations.

Our diversity is a strength.

- We will recruit, hire, and retain diverse staff.
- We will champion options and choices for our students.
- We will differentiate instruction and programs to meet the needs and potential of each student.
- We will provide services that meet the diverse needs of our parents and families.
- We will break down barriers and promote cultural understanding.

Staff must be committed, collaborative, caring, and exemplary.

- We will commit to on-going professional development, support, and accountability.
- We will institute collaborative work practices.
- We will value and acknowledge exemplary performance.
- We will demonstrate caring through responsive and quality customer service.
- We will maintain a culture of accountability.



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 Trustees 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 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 the CSBA Professional Governance Standards.

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.

AND – ABOVE ALL –

- Focus on students' best interest – on what's best for the students! This is what we do! And it is the touchstone that allows us to have our differences.

Board Governance Protocols

Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

The only authority to direct actions rests with the Board. 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.

Board Bylaws (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).

In responding to concerns, board members will:

- ❖ **Receive** the information (listen)
- ❖ **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 to follow in addressing their concern.
- ❖ **Re-Direct** – Thank them for sharing their thoughts and direct them to the appropriate staff member.
- ❖ **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 relate the concerns or complaints from such individuals to the Superintendent for action.

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

When individually visiting schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, Board members are encouraged to notify the Superintendent that they will be visiting a school or department. Board members will provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit. Staff members shall relay requests from Board members to the Superintendent to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members. 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.

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 will be on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month (exceptions are noted on the annual Regular Board Meeting Schedule). Each Board meeting will typically begin with Closed Session at 5:45 pm. The Regular Public Meeting will typically begin between 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 pm. Study Sessions and Special meetings 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 support of staff, will create each Board Agenda. Board members may request items to be placed on the agenda to the Superintendent or the Board President. The Board President and the Superintendent will discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting, in advance of the publication of the Agenda.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. 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.

Each Trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote in the minority position. If so doing, each trustee should, as a courtesy to the team, explain the reason for their minority vote, either during deliberation or before casting the vote.

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. Addressing each agenda item the Board shall, normally, adhere to the following process:

- ❖ Input from the Community
- ❖ Staff Presentation/addressing questions from the Board
- ❖ Board Discussion and Deliberation

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.
- ❖ Trustees will be discreet in checking cell phones, when necessary.

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);
- ❖ Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- ❖ Set the District's collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team; and,
- ❖ 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 issues regarding the running of the District. The Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information. 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; and,
- ❖ notable achievements.

The Superintendent shall organize the staff in any way he or she deems appropriate to serve the needs of the District. Where appropriate, the Superintendent shall proactively inform the Board of the action being taken.

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. The Board President or designee is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent (cont.)

All conflicts between the Superintendent and the Board will be handled in Closed Session. When appropriate, the Superintendent shall be in attendance. Conflicts between individual governance team members will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict.

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the Superintendent. The Board will set aside at least one special meeting for the purpose of completing the 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 September. The evaluation process and instrument is designed to bring about the collective view of the Board.

The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols

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