

Best Practices for Effective Governance

Exceptional Boards spend time talking about how they will govern effectively. They clearly define roles and responsibilities and agree upon practices that will support the mission of the District. Agreeing upon best practices helps the Board and the Superintendent work as a unified, mutually supportive team.

* Required

1. Name *

Communications

The Superintendent and Board members are committed to open and respectful dialogue with one another in a continuing effort to strengthen working relationships within the Governance Team.

2. 1. Board members are asked to inform the Superintendent of the most effective one-on-one method of verbal communication, e.g., cell, home telephone, office phone during business hours, private line voice message, etc. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

3. 2. The Superintendent will provide timely and relevant information to Board members. The Governing Board will make concerted efforts to read and understand information provided by the Superintendent and his/her team so that they are fully informed about significant issues of importance to the District. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

4. 3. In order to ensure that all Board members are well informed, Board members will each receive the same information and responses to issues and questions as appropriate. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

5. 4. Board members and the Leadership team will always practice the “no surprises” rule with one another in order to avoid surprises to anyone. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

6. 5. The Superintendent will endeavor to keep the Governing Board informed of important issues that are likely to be featured in the newspaper or other reputable media sources. Individual Governing Board members will be careful to avoid making statements that can be misinterpreted as the consensus opinion of the entire Board or the District when speaking to the media. When reasonably possible, individual Board members will consult with the Board President and the Superintendent before making statements to the media on significant or controversial issues for the District. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

7. 6. The Superintendent will establish communication protocols should an emergency situation arise within the school district. During crisis situations, the Superintendent or his/her designee will send an email or text alert to Board members and then attempt to reach Board members via telephone beginning with the Board President.

*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

Individual
Board
Member
Requests

All Board members are equal and authority rests with the Board as a whole. Direction is given to the Superintendent only at Board meetings through actions taken by the Board. Board members should have the opportunity to bring up new ideas or subjects of interest for future Board meeting agendas.

8. 1. Individuals may bring up an item at a Board meeting for future consideration, explaining their interest in a particular course of action or topic. After the discussion, the Board may direct staff to prepare materials for a deeper Board discussion and/or take action on it at a future Board meeting. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

9. 2. The Board President and the Superintendent will determine items appropriate for open or closed session; whether the item should be an action item subject to Board vote, an information item, or a consent item that is routine in nature; and determine the appropriate time to place the item on the agenda at the agenda setting meeting. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

10. 3. All new ideas or agenda item topics will be weighed against their effect on staff's ability to accomplish the District vision and goals. The Board will be respectful of the District staff's time based on the impact of the new agenda item or topic on agreed upon District priorities, the shift of staff time and energy, and any reallocation of District resources. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

Handling Concerns/Suggestions

It is essential for Board members to be responsive to the community and be good listeners, while not attempting to personally resolve a problem. It is also important to recognize there are staff members whose responsibility it is to remedy or deal with these situations.

11. 1. The Board and Superintendent are committed to having parent and/or staff concerns handled at the lowest possible level in the organization. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
☐ Disagree

12. 2. When someone shares a concern with a Board member, he/she will listen carefully and direct that person to the appropriate staff member or refer the parent or staff member to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will follow up in a timely manner and provide information to Board members on the status of the concern. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
☐ Disagree

13. 3. It is acceptable for a Board member or the Superintendent not to have the answer to a specific operational matter when asked by a constituent. A good response is, "I or a staff member will get back to you in a timely manner with an answer to your question." Board members are asked to call the Superintendent when this occurs, and a process will be put in place to respond. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

14. 4. If the complaint involves a personnel issue, a Board member will not explore the details of the complaint in order to maintain neutrality. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

15. 5. A Board member forwarding a complaint will not be perceived to be endorsing the complainant. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

16. 6. Suggestions or ideas related to operational matters given to Board members by staff or constituents will be referred to the Superintendent. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

Maintaining Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is essential to protecting the interests of the District as well as individuals. The Governance team values, respects and honors those matters shared with the Governing Board and Leadership team and will maintain and hold that sacred trust.

17. 1. The Board, Superintendent, and Cabinet members agree to maintain the confidentiality of all closed session and privileged communication as required by Education Code. Such matters relate to personnel issues, litigation, real property negotiations, and labor relations. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

18. 2. Board members should contact the Superintendent regarding personnel concerns and/or issues that may arise. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

19. 3. The Board will provide clear parameters to the District's negotiation team members and will not address issues of negotiations with employee bargaining unit members. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

Board Member
Role in Public

As elected officials, Board members play an essential role in the community and serve as liaisons to the public they serve.

20. 1. Site and community invitations for Board members to attend events will generally be coordinated through the Superintendent's office. The Superintendent's office will provide details for Board members regarding cost and expenditures for attendance. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

21. 2. Board members will make the administrator in charge of an event aware of their attendance when they arrive. Board members will be introduced at all school and District events, unless they are attending as a parent or spectator. When in doubt, the administrator in charge will ask the Board member whether he/she wishes to be introduced. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

22. 3. Individual Board members understand that they represent the District in an official capacity only when they are appointed by the Board to serve in that capacity. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

23. 4. On high profile issues, the Superintendent or his/her designee will be the spokesperson for the District in order to communicate a unified message. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

Board
Members
Visiting
Schools

School visits remind Board members that the students and learning are the primary focus of the District. School visits allow Board members to observe programs that are moving the team toward the achievement of District goals and show appreciation for the good work being done.

24. 1. Board members are encouraged to visit school sites and observe instructional activities, events and school programs. As a courtesy to the school, Board members should contact the principal's office and the Superintendent prior to the visit. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

25. 2. The purpose of a Board member's visit is generally to observe and educate, not to investigate or give direction to personnel. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

26. 3. The Superintendent will ensure principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his or her lesson when a Board member visits a classroom. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

27. 4. When visiting with teachers of their own children, it is understood that the Board member is there as a parent, unless otherwise stated. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

Prior to
Board
Meetings

Much preparation goes into an effective Board meeting by the Superintendent, staff and Governing Board. In order to maximize the effectiveness of Board meeting, we agree on the following:

28. 1. The Superintendent and staff will be available prior to the Board meeting to answer any questions and/or discuss agenda items in need of clarification. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

29. 2. Board members will thoroughly read materials before the Board meeting and will make every attempt to contact the Superintendent at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

30. 3. Board member questions will be answered in advance of the Board meeting, with a response provided back to all Board members, as appropriate. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

31. 4. Board members will make an effort to notify the Superintendent in advance of their intent to remove an item for discussion from the Consent Calendar. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

32. 5. When a high profile item is being considered by the Board, any disagreements or concerns should be discussed with the Superintendent before the meeting. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

At Board Meetings

Board meetings are the Board's meeting held in public. Effective Board meetings require the Board, staff and community to have a clear understanding of the structures and processes needed and required under the law and the Brown Act so as to effectively operate the business requirements of the school district.

33. 1. Each Board member will respect the right of other Board members to hold an opposing point of view. Following a vote, all Board members will respect the decision made by the Board. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

34. 2. All team members will be respectful and attentive during public comments. The Board President may acknowledge a public speaker's comment and indicate that the Superintendent will follow up on a concern or issue, if appropriate. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

35. 3. If an individual Board member cannot support the decision of the Board, the member is expected, at a minimum, to refrain from undermining the decision. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

36. 4. The commitment to either support or refrain from undermining majority decisions does not preclude the member from asking for consideration at a future time of a more acceptable alternative; however, the decision of the Board should be considered final. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

37. 5. Whenever possible, Board action items of a significant nature will be presented as a discussion item prior to action. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

38. 6. Board items that are routine in nature may be placed on the Consent Calendar. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

39. 7. Use of personal electronic devices should not be used during a Board meeting, with the exception of family safety concerns or emergencies. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

Use of Study Sessions

Study sessions serve as a unique opportunity for the Governing Board and staff to engage in important conversations on District programs, future trends, and innovations, or to simply inform the Governing Board and Leadership team members on current or future issues that the District may face.

40. 1. Study sessions will be developed throughout the year to ensure coverage of the timely and urgent issues which require extensive discussion before a possible Board action. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

41. 2. Study sessions will be organized with a brief staff presentation followed by Board discussion and questions. Materials should be provided to Board members in advance of the study session. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure/Let's Talk
- ☐ Disagree

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