

William S. Hart Union High School District Governance Handbook 2021/22



Governing Board Members

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Exceptional boards make governance intentional and invest in the structures and practices that address changing circumstances, allowing Board members and the Superintendent to effectively function as a team. This document is a reflection of the Board's work throughout the spring and summer of 2021 to establish best practice protocols and identify core values. This handbook will be reviewed and updated annually.

District Mission Statement

We prepare students to meet the challenges of the future as lifelong learners and responsible citizens. In partnership with families and community, we create meaningful and diverse learning opportunities for all students so they develop the knowledge, skills, and character necessary to succeed. In all of our work, we demand fairness, honor quality, and expect achievement at each person's highest level of ability.

Governing Board Role and Responsibilities (Board Bylaw 9000)

The Board is elected by the community to provide leadership and citizen oversight of the district's schools. The Board shall work with the superintendent to fulfill its major roles, which include:

1. Establishing a long-term vision for the district.
2. Establishing and maintaining a basic organizational structure for the district, including selection of the superintendent and adoption of policies, curriculum, the budget, and collective bargaining agreements.
3. Ensuring accountability to the local community, including personnel, programmatic and fiscal accountability, and service as a judicial and appeals body as needed.
4. Providing community leadership and advocacy at the local, state, and national levels on behalf of children, district programs, and public education.

Governance Standards (Board Bylaw 9005)

The Governing Board believes that its primary responsibility is to act in the best interests of every student in the district. The Board also has major commitments to parents/guardians, all members of the community, employees, the state of California, laws pertaining to public education, and established policies of the district. To maximize Board effectiveness and public confidence in district governance, Board members are expected to govern responsibly and hold themselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The Board expects its members to work with each other and the Superintendent to promote a high-quality education for each student. Each individual Board member shall:

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus
2. Value, support and advocate for public education
3. Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community
4. Act with dignity, and understand the implications of demeanor and behavior
5. Keep confidential matters confidential
6. Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader
7. Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff
8. Understand that authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individuals

Board members also shall assume collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture. To operate effectively, the Board shall have a unity of purpose and:

1. Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students
2. Communicate a common vision
3. Operate openly, with trust and integrity
4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect
5. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures
6. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance

7. Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness
8. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations

Core Values

Core values are the central, essential values of an organization. They define an organization's foundation and values, what it stands for, and how it is seen. Throughout the spring and summer of 2021, the Governing Board discussed and identified preliminary core values for the District. The next step in the process will be to obtain community input through the upcoming strategic planning process in fall 2021.

The Board has identified preliminary core values and grouped them into categories:

Excellence <i>"A talent or quality which is unusually good and surpasses ordinary standards"</i>

Courage <i>"The ability to do something difficult while overcoming fear."</i>
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Perseverance <i>"The quality that allows someone to continue trying to do something even though it's difficult. Courage."</i>
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Boldness <i>"Showing a fearless or daring spirit."</i>

Innovative <i>"Clever, creative, imaginative, ingenious, inventive, original."</i>

Equity <i>"Giving people the resources and support they need to succeed, recognizing that everyone doesn't need the same thing."</i>

Fairness <i>"Marked by impartiality and honesty: free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism."</i>

Inclusiveness <i>"Including everyone - allowing and accommodating people who have historically been excluded."</i>

Kindness <i>"The quality or state of being gentle and considerate, sympathetic, helpful, thoughtful, empathetic."</i>
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Respect <i>"To recognize the inherent worth of a person or thing. To consider worthy of high regard. Esteem."</i>
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Integrity <i>"Doing the right thing all the time no matter who is watching."</i>

Collaboration <i>"Working together to achieve a common goal."</i>
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Accountability <i>"Willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions"</i>

Governance Protocols

The agreements established below serve as our tools to strengthen the capacity of the Board and Leadership team as we engage in constructive and positive interactions grounded in a mutual understanding of our respective roles and responsibilities.

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 team.

- 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, voice message, etc.
- 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.
- Board members and the Leadership team will strive to practice the “no surprises” rule with one another so that everyone has necessary, relevant information.
- 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 alert the Board President and the Superintendent about making statements to the media on significant or controversial issues for the District.
- 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.

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.

- At Board meetings, individuals may bring up an item for future consideration,

explaining their interest in a particular course of action or topic. After the discussion, the Board may request that the Superintendent prepare materials for a deeper Board discussion and/or take action on it at a future Board meeting.

- At Board agenda setting meetings, the Board President and the Superintendent will review each item and determine if it is 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.

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 student and staff situations.

- The Board and Superintendent are committed to having parent and/or staff concerns handled at the appropriate school or district level.
- 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 the Board member(s) on the status of the concern.
- 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.
- If the complaint involves a personnel issue, a Board member will not explore the details of the complaint in depth in order to maintain neutrality.
- A Board member forwarding a complaint will not be perceived to be endorsing the complainant.
- Suggestions or ideas related to operational matters given to Board members by staff or constituents will be referred to the Superintendent or Cabinet.

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.

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

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.

- 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. When in doubt, the administrator in charge will ask the Board member whether he/she wishes to be introduced.

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.

- The purpose of a Board member's visit is generally to observe and educate, not to investigate or give direction to personnel.
- 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.
- When visiting with teachers of their own children, it is understood that the Board member is there as a parent, unless otherwise stated.

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:

- 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.
- Board members will read the agenda and supporting materials before the Board meeting and will make every attempt to contact the Superintendent with questions prior to the meeting as appropriate.

- Board member questions will be answered in advance of the Board meeting, with a response provided back to all Board members, if appropriate.
- 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.
- When a high profile item is being considered by the Board, any or concerns should be shared with the Superintendent before the meeting.

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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Whenever possible, Board action items of a significant nature will be presented as a discussion item prior to action.
- Board items that are routine in nature may be placed on the Consent Calendar.
- Use of personal electronic devices should not be used during a Board meeting, with the exception of family safety concerns or emergencies.

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.

- Study sessions may be developed throughout the year as necessary to ensure coverage of the timely and urgent issues that require extensive discussion before a possible Board action.
- 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.

Special Note:

Should a Board member not adhere to the protocols established by the Governing Board, the Board President, along with the Superintendent shall meet with the Board member to address the issue. Should the Board President not adhere to the protocols established by the Governing Board, the Superintendent along with the Clerk of the Board shall address the issue.