



SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION
DR. FARIS SABBAAH • SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

2023

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EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Unity of Purpose, Roles, Responsibilities, Norms, and Protocols

*This document reflects the governance team's work on the creation of a framework for effective governance. This process involves **ongoing** discussions and agreements about the unity of purpose, roles, norms, and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all students.*

On June 11, 2022, and May 20, 2023, the Santa Cruz COE Board of Trustees and Superintendent participated in a workshop on Effective Governance with the California School Boards Association. This document reflects the governance team's discussion about developing and sustaining a framework for effective governance and includes highlights of their conversation about the unity of purpose, roles, norms, and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best serves all students.

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UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of purpose is the common focus, overarching goals, values, beliefs, and principles board members share in common about students, the COE, and public education.

The County Board of Education for the Santa Cruz County Office of Education is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public's interest in the schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. To effectively meet challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as

a governance leadership team. Agreed-upon behaviors/norms, and operating procedures/protocols, support consistent behavior and actions among team members. The purpose of the Santa Cruz COE governance team agreements is to ensure that a positive and productive working relationship exists among Board Members, the Superintendent, staff, students, and the community. Norms and protocols are developed for and by the governance team members and may be modified over time as needed.

Our Vision

We envision a community with engaged learners and leaders who have the social, emotional, academic, and technical skills to thrive in a changing world.

Our Mission

To lead an equitable and innovative learner-centered educational system.

Our Values

Equity – We create or improve programs, practices, and policies to ensure that every learner has opportunities, experiences, and support systems that address their educational goals and needs.

Innovation – We foster communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking to generate new ideas and solutions.

Partnership – We listen to the needs of our learners, families, educators, and the community, and work with our partners to create networks of support and opportunities so all our learners can achieve and thrive.

Excellence – We hold ourselves to high standards of quality and professionalism and aim to exceed the expectations of our learners, community, partners, and staff.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Role of the Board

Trustees on the County Board of Education are representatives of the people, elected to ensure the Santa Cruz COE schools educate students in consideration of the interests of the local community.

The Role of the Superintendent

The role of the Superintendent is:

1. To work with the board to develop an effective governance leadership team.
2. To serve as the chief administrative officer for the COE.

The Superintendent Can Support the County Board By:

- Maintaining two-way communication – Board Members/Superintendent
- Encouraging Board Mentoring, especially as a group
- Sending alerts about news and issues before they become public whenever possible
- Sending monthly updates
- Sending answers to Board Members' questions and other information to all

The County Board Can Support the Superintendent By:

- Recognizing the Superintendent's role as a County-wide leader to address challenges for students and parents.
- Maintaining two-way communication – Board Members/Superintendent
- Developing an organized system to note COE events that are appropriate for Board Member attendance (Example: Develop a chart/calendar for graduation ceremony sign-ups)
- Participating as a unit at community events, discussions, and at organization events (Example: CCBE, CSBA)
- Developing an understanding of how the Board can support or take the lead on initiatives (Committee participation)
- Communicating concerns – checking in if there are questions or concerns
- Bringing questions and concerns directly to the Superintendent first

Board Members Can Support Each Other By:

- Participating in Board development and mentoring
- Creating more opportunities to develop personal/professional relationships
- Teaming-up for advocacy work - developing a system to pair up Board Members
- Participating in committees/sharing work
- When retiring from the Board, seeking out prospective new members

Board Bylaw 9000: The Role of the Board

The Santa Cruz County Board of Education provides leadership and citizen oversight for educational programs and services operated by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (COE), including services provided to school districts and the community. The primary objectives of the County Board are to work with the County Superintendent of Schools to establish direction and priorities for the COE and to provide the leadership necessary for the success of public education.

In fulfilling its objectives, it is the role of the County Board to:

1. Adopt and update policies for its own governance and programs under the statutory authority of the County Board
2. Ensure accountability for student learning in schools and programs under the statutory authority of the County Board
3. Fulfill responsibilities related to the local control funding formula (LCFF), including adopting the COE local control and accountability plan or update and the LCFF budget overview for parents/guardians
4. Provide community leadership on educational issues and advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local, state, and federal levels
5. Collaborate with the County Superintendent to ensure implementation of the shared vision, goals, and policies of the COE
6. Collaborate with the County Superintendent to ensure the provision of a safe and appropriate educational environment for all COE students
7. Adopt the annual budget and review interim reports of the County Superintendent
8. Approve the salary of the County Superintendent in accordance with the law

9. Adopt rules and regulations governing the administration of the office of the County Superintendent
10. Acquire, lease, lease-purchase, hold, and convey real property to house the offices and the services of the COE
11. Maintain a cooperative and supportive working relationship with local school districts, their school boards, and the community
12. Conduct appeals on the following actions by district governing boards: student expulsions; interdistrict transfer requests; denials, nonrenewals, or revocations of charter school petitions; and other matters when required by law
13. Conduct public hearings when appropriate
14. Consider petitions and provide oversight for charter schools approved by the County Board and fulfill other statutory responsibilities in connection with charter schools

The County Board is authorized to establish, carry on, and finance any program or activity that is not in conflict with, inconsistent with, or preempted by law and does not conflict with the purposes for which the County Board is established. (Education Code 35160-35160.

Board Bylaw 9200: Limits Of Board Member Authority

The County Board of Education recognizes that it has authority only as a unit and that a County Board member has no individual authority. County Board members shall hold the education of students above any partisan principle, group interest, or personal interest.

Unless agreed to by the County Board as a whole, individual members of the County Board shall not exercise any authority concerning any matter within the jurisdiction of the County Board. In appropriate circumstances, individual County Board members may independently submit requests for information to the secretary of the County Board.

Individual County Board members do not have the authority to resolve complaints. Any County Board member approached directly by a person with a complaint should refer the complainant to the County Superintendent or designee so that the problem may receive proper consideration and be handled through the appropriate process. To request information, County Board members shall also refer County Board-related correspondence to the president and the secretary of the County Board for dissemination to the rest of the County Board or placement on the agenda, as appropriate

A County Board member whose child is attending a school within the jurisdiction of the COE should be aware of his/her role as a County Board member when interacting with COE

employees about his/her child. The County Board member should inform the County Superintendent before volunteering in his/ her child's classroom.

POSITIVE GOVERNANCE TEAM CULTURE

Meeting Guidelines

- We will keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- We will listen actively and openly to each other.
- We will build upon the ideas of others and look for common ground. We will paraphrase for understanding.
- We will respect differences, show respect, and never dismiss or devalue others.
- We will be supportive rather than judgmental.
- We will come to meetings prepared to work, having reviewed the meeting packet, reports, etc.
- We will ask questions of the Superintendent and staff ahead of meetings. We will avoid surprises/"gotchas"
- We will offer ideas and take responsibility for the work of the team.
- We will work toward the future – learning from the past.

PROTOCOLS, STRUCTURES, & PROCESSES

Effective governance teams discuss and agree upon the formal structures and processes, or protocols, used by the Board and Superintendent in their functioning as a team. These structures and processes guide the operations of the governance team and determine how they do business. Protocols are the agreements that ensure that all members of the team are operating within their agreed-upon roles.

The following protocols were developed at our Governance Workshop:

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Protocols, Structures, & Processes:</u>
Welcoming / Onboarding New Board Members	<u>Rationale:</u> A comprehensive onboarding process for new members is essential to creating and maintaining a strong, effective governance team. New members need to feel welcomed, and they need to learn about the COE and their new role as Board Members. <u>Suggested Practices Include:</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Holding a candidate orientation before the election to help board candidates learn about the COE and their role. ● Offering each new board member a mentor. ● Encouraging each member of the governance team to welcome new members by reaching out to them and spending time getting to know them. (Inviting them to coffee, breakfast, lunch, etc.) ● Once elected, hold an orientation meeting with the Superintendent, perhaps other senior staff, and the rest of the Board. This might include a tour of COE campuses and departments. ● Scheduling a CSBA “Good Beginnings” Workshop with the entire team. ● Providing new members with a notebook containing information about the various departments/programs of the COE and relevant documents, such as the Governance Handbook, Bylaws, School Calendar, etc.
Board Committees	<p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <p>Because the Board only meets once a month, much preliminary work is done in the committees. This provides Board Members with the opportunity to collaborate with staff and discuss issues in a safe place.</p> <p>Board Members need to share the workload fairly and equally.</p> <p><u>Therefore,</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At the Board’s annual organizational meeting, the Board President will ask Board Members to share their input regarding preferred committee assignments to ensure coverage in all committees and that assignments are fair and equitable. ● Board Members will be assigned to the following committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agenda Committee ○ Budget Committee ○ Policy Committee ○ Charter Schools Committee ○ Community Outreach and Legislation Committee ○ Superintendent Compensation Committee ● Members have a responsibility to attend meetings regularly. ● Members will effectively engage in committee work – listen actively, ask questions, and share comments/ideas.

<p>Responding to Staff or Community Concerns or Complaints</p>	<p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <p>We wish to facilitate the best path for constituents in resolving their issues and we wish to maintain the integrity of our roles as Board Members by following Board Bylaw 9200: Limits of Board Member Authority.</p> <p><u>Therefore,</u> when a community or staff member approaches a Board Member with an issue or concern, Board Members will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Receive</u> – Listen without interruption and without preparing a response to the person’s issues or concerns. ● <u>Repeat</u> – Paraphrase or ask a clarifying question to ensure understanding of what has been said. ● <u>Request</u> – Ask what the person sees as the solution to the problem or concern. Ask what they would have the Board do with the information they have given. ● <u>Review</u> – The conversation (and next steps, if any). ● <u>Redirect</u> – Put the person back into the system at the appropriate place. ● <u>Report</u> - Notify the Superintendent of the conversation so that they have the full picture and can follow through as appropriate and/or necessary. ● <u>Email</u> – When we receive a complaint or concern via email, we will thank the constituent for the email and for raising the issue and inform the individual that we will be forwarding the message
<p>Attendance</p>	<p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <p>All Board Members must participate in decision-making; it is a fundamental aspect of their role and a responsibility that they have toward the community. Shared decision-making is a matter of respect and fairness for all.</p> <p>Attendance is crucial to maintaining a quorum.</p> <p><u>Therefore,</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will attend every Board meeting unless we have a valid reason for our absence. ● If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they will notify the Superintendent and Board President in advance, whenever possible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board members requesting compensation for missed meetings will follow the procedure outlined in BB 9250 and complete the appropriate form.
Selecting of the President / Vice President	<p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board chooses its officers by majority votes following open nominations for President and Vice-President at the Board's annual organizational meeting in December. The Board's usual practice has been to encourage the succession of its current Vice-President to accept nomination for President the following year; this practice is not binding on any Board member or nominee. <p><u>Therefore,</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any member may nominate another member or themselves for President. A Board member may decline consideration as a nominee. Upon the close of nominations for President, the Board shall hold successive voice votes until a nominee receives a majority vote of the quorum present; the Board may optionally conduct a final vote to ratify the majority outcome. The member so elected shall thereupon assume the role of President of the Board. Subsequent to the election of the President, any member may nominate another member or themselves, other than the newly elected President, for Vice-President. Upon the close of nominations for Vice-President, the Board shall hold successive voice votes until a nominee receives a majority vote of the quorum present; the Board may optionally conduct a final vote to ratify the majority outcome. The member so elected shall thereupon assume the role of Vice-President of the Board.
How to Review Board Packets, Budget Reports, etc	<p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure effective governance and decision-making, Board members are encouraged to thoroughly review agenda materials and reports in preparation for meetings. The following best practices enable Board members to review their board packets comprehensively, promote transparency, and make informed decisions that positively impact the education and well-being of students and the entire school community. <p><u>Therefore,</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read in advance: Review the board packet well in advance of the board meeting to allow enough time to thoroughly understand the content, ask questions, and seek additional information if needed. Understand the agenda and meeting structure: Familiarize yourself with the agenda and overall structure of the board packet.

	<p>Identify the key sections, such as the superintendent's report, financial updates, policy proposals, and any significant issues or decisions that require attention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze data and reports: Pay close attention to any data, reports, or metrics included in the board packet. Analyze trends, compare current information with past data if available, and identify areas that require further exploration or potential action. ● Seek clarity and additional information: If you encounter any ambiguities, uncertainties, or gaps in the board packet, don't hesitate to reach out to the Superintendent or designated staff for clarification or additional information. ● Connect with fellow board members: Subject to Brown Act restrictions, engage in discussions with your fellow board members before the meeting. Share insights, exchange perspectives, and collaborate to ensure a more thorough understanding of the topics to be discussed. ● Be proactive in seeking community input: Consider reaching out to relevant stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, students, and community members, to gather their input or feedback on specific issues or proposals. ● Align with district goals and policies: Always keep the district's goals, policies, and mission in mind as you review the board packet. ● Come prepared for discussions: Be ready to engage in constructive dialogue, listen attentively to others' perspectives, and work collaboratively toward the best outcomes for students and the entire educational community.
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GOVERNANCE AGREEMENTS SIGNATURE PAGE

We have reviewed and agreed to follow the governance mentioned above, team norms, and protocols to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Santa Cruz COE Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students, and the community. We shall review and renew this document annually.

Affirmed on this 20th day of July 2023




Ed Acosta, *Trustee*



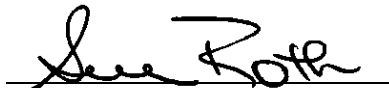
Alyssa Alto, *Trustee*



Rose Filicetti, *Trustee*



Sandra Nichols, *Trustee*



Sue Roth, *Trustee*



Abel Sanchez, *Trustee*



Bruce Van Allen, *Trustee*



Dr. Faris Sabbah, *Superintendent*