

ALAMEDA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Governance Handbook

Adopted on December 14, 2021

Board of Trustees

Ardella Dailey, Ed.D.

Heather Little

Gary K. Lym

Megan Sweet Ed.D.

Jennifer Williams

Superintendent

Pasquale Scuderi

This handbook reflects the governance team's commitment to effective governance. Effective governance requires ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, commitment to norms, and agreement on protocols and formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that benefits all children.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</u>	1
<u>AUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS</u>	2
<u>AUSD MISSION STATEMENT</u>	4
<u>AUSD VISION STATEMENT</u>	4
<u>GOVERNANCE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	5
<u>PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	6
Set the direction for the community’s schools.....	6
Establish an effective and efficient structure for the School District	6
Provide support through our behavior and actions	6
Ensure accountability to the public	6
Act as community leaders.....	6
<u>POSITIVE GOVERNANCE TEAM CULTURE</u>	7
<u>AUSD GOVERNANCE NORMS</u>	7
<u>STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</u>	8
AUSD Board of Education Protocols	8
Self-Monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness.....	8
Orientation of New Board Members	8
Development of Board Agenda.....	8
Placing Items on Board Agenda	8
Obtaining Information Regarding Board Agenda Items	8
Development of Board Agenda.....	8
Board Meeting Management.....	9
Introducing New Ideas for Board Consideration	9
Voting.....	9
Handling Concerns from the Public and Staff	9
Individual Board Member Requests for Information.....	10
Individual Board Member Requests for Action.....	10
Individual Board Member Comments During Board business	10
Roles and Responsibilities of the Board President	11
Designated Spokesperson(s)	12
Visiting Schools	12
Communications Between Board and Staff.....	12

Electronic Communications	13
Superintendent Evaluation	14
Board Professional Development	14
<u>AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP</u>	15
<u>AUSD GOVERNANCE TEAM NORMS AND PROTOCOLS</u>	15

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance – A Definition

School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes, and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization: the actions of the individual, individuals joining as a group to govern, and the performance of governance responsibilities by the group.

In a school district, the governing board and superintendent work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to:

- 1) maintain a unity of purpose,
- 2) agree on and govern within appropriate roles,
- 3) create and sustain a positive governance culture, and
- 4) create a supportive structure for effective governance.

Establishing and agreeing to basic tenets of effective governance enable the governance team members to create a climate for excellence in a school district and to maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement.

AUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

1. Keep the District focused on learning and achievement for all students

- Recognize that children come to school with diverse educational needs
- Base decisions on the District's vision; student needs; research; empirical data; and a balance of community expectations, legal constraints, and resources
- Ensure that the District has established academic standards and regularly measures growth in achievement for all students
- Ensure that the District provides opportunities for all students to succeed

2. Communicate a common vision

- Develop and adopt a written statement of the District vision and other direction-setting documents using collaborative processes that involve the staff, parents, students, and community
- Demonstrate commitment to the vision and goals by regularly communicating them to staff and the community
- Exhibit behaviors and make decisions that support achievement of the District vision
- Stay current on trends and emerging needs in education in order to proactively participate in renewing or reviewing the District's direction and policies
- Uphold Board decisions

3. Operate openly, with trust and integrity

- Conduct District business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner
- Consider the concerns and interests of the staff, parents, students, and community
- Encourage thorough consideration of issues, engage in dialogue for clarification, and withhold judgment until all perspectives are heard
- Ensure that all members of the Board have the same information—no secrets or surprises among members of the governance team
- Clearly communicate decisions to all those who are affected by them
- Keep confidential information confidential

4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect

- Treat the community, parents, students, and staff with dignity and respect
- Listen openly and respectfully to each other, members of the community, parents, students, and staff
- Welcome open discussion of different points of view
- Demonstrate ability to disagree on issues and still maintain trust, respect, and dignity
- Work together to build consensus for decisions

5. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures

- Maintain a policy development, approval, and update process that is understood and followed
- Understand the distinctions between the role of the Board and that of the superintendent and staff
- Have agreed-upon norms and protocols for carrying out Board responsibilities

6. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance

- Assume collective responsibility for Board conduct
- Function as a governance team with the superintendent
- Demonstrate a commitment to continually improving governance efforts
- Take responsibility for the orientation of new members

7. Periodically evaluate our own effectiveness

- Have procedures in place for regular, on-going self-evaluation
- Ensure meeting agendas provide for a sound order of business and facilitate a primary focus on matters related to student achievement
- Ensure that individual Board members understand their roles and the limits of individual responsibility and authority

8. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations

- Ensure Board policy enables parents, staff, and the public to participate in meaningful ways in District discussions, school programs, and activities
- Consider the concerns and interests of all segments of the community in deliberations

AUSD MISSION STATEMENT

Alameda Unified School District is committed to upholding our community's core values of equity and excellence for every student by providing inclusive and safe conditions for learning that challenge and support every student to be culturally competent and prepared for college, career, and community participation.

AUSD VISION STATEMENT

Each and every child is compassionate, confident, and feels successful, academically prepared, and able to make meaningful, positive impact in their lives, the lives of others, and the world around them.

AUSD GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We believe there is value in diversity, and that by providing equitable educational opportunities for all students, everyone can succeed.
- We believe that education should be student-centered and focused on the whole child.
- We believe that social, emotional, and mental well-being are crucial to the success of students.
- We believe that inequities exist within our current educational system and that it is our responsibility to diminish them.
- We believe that students deserve the opportunity to explore and pursue their interests and that it is the responsibility of employees to support them in this.
- We believe that clear and transparent communication with stakeholders is vital to the success of students.
- We believe that staff and administration should work alongside stakeholders to ensure that students are being given the services they need and are being challenged appropriately.

GOVERNANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. The role of the trustees who sit on locally elected school boards is to ensure school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities.

In the Alameda Unified School District, Board members are elected by the citizens of five separate “trustee areas.” Trustee area elections increase the opportunity for the Districts’ voters to select board members who reside in or near their local neighborhoods and schools. Nonetheless, each Board member exercises their responsibilities on a District-wide basis and represents the interests of the entire District and all of its schools, students, and families.

Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities: setting direction; establishing an effective and efficient structure; providing support; ensuring accountability; and providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district, and public education.

These five responsibilities represent core functions that are so fundamental to a school system’s accountability to the public that they can only be performed by an elected governing body. Authority is granted to the Board as a whole, not each member individually. Therefore, Board members fulfill these responsibilities by working together as a governance team with the superintendent to make decisions that will best serve all the students in the community.

The Board carries out these responsibilities in each of the following areas:

- Setting the District’s Direction**
- Establishing Policies and Procedures**
- Monitoring Student Learning and Achievement**
- Assuring Financial Stability**
- Maintaining Safe and Healthy Facilities**
- Establishing Effective Human Resources Practices**
- Assuring Compliance with Legal Requirements and Guidelines**
- Advocating for the Community**

The superintendent assists the Board in carrying out its responsibilities in each of the areas, and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed-upon District vision and goals. The following page provides more detail on how the Board performs its governance responsibilities.

PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

The members of the Alameda Unified School District Board of Trustees agree with the responsibilities of school boards as adapted from the California School Boards Association:

Set the direction for the community's schools

- Focus on student learning
- Assess needs and review baseline data
- Generate, review, or revise setting direction documents (mission, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators, and core beliefs)
- Ensure an appropriate inclusive process is used
- Ensure these documents are the driving force for all District efforts

Establish an effective and efficient structure for the School District

- Employ and work with the superintendent in support of an effective governance team
- Establish a human resources framework that includes policies for hiring and evaluating other personnel
- Oversee the development, review, and adoption of policies
- Adopt and support a curriculum that meets the District's mission and vision
- Establish budget priorities, adopt a responsible budget, and oversee facilities issues
- Provide direction for and approve collective bargaining agreements

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 and support staff implementation of Board direction
- Ensure a positive working climate exists for the governance team
- Be knowledgeable enough about District efforts to explain them to the public

Ensure accountability to the public

- Evaluate the superintendent and the president will ensure proper procedures and timelines are met for the superintendent's evaluation
- 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, and periodically review facilities issues
- Monitor the collective bargaining process
- Be responsive to concerns and interests of constituents in each member's trustee area and in the District as a whole.

Act as community leaders

- Communicate clear information about District priorities, goals, policies, programs and the fiscal condition of the District
- Engage and involve the community in District schools and activities
- Educate the community and the media about the issues facing students, the District and public education
- Advocate for children, District programs, and public education to the general public, key community members, and local, state, and national leaders

POSITIVE GOVERNANCE TEAM CULTURE

Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the interaction among the people in an organization. Teams have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture.

Because the community elects school Board members to set and monitor the direction of the school district, and the District superintendent translates all efforts into action, it is vital that the Board and superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open communication.

AUSD GOVERNANCE NORMS

We agree to...

- focus on the best interests of students
- respect and value each other's opinions/point of view
- listen to each member's ideas
- be open to new ideas
- maintain professional demeanor
- not interrupt, nor monopolize
- recognize the positive
- be willing to compromise
- focus on process, not personalities
- act by building on the thoughts and ideas of fellow governance team members
- come to Board meetings prepared
- commit the time necessary to govern effectively
- commit to open communication, honesty, and transparency
- address interpersonal relationships when necessary
- maintain confidentiality

STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Effective governance teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the trustees and the superintendent in their functioning as a team (e.g., processes or structures for agenda setting, set-up of board room and table, agenda structure, handling complaints or concerns from the community, bringing up a new idea); how governance teams operate, and how they do business. These agreements about how groups will operate are often called protocols.

AUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION PROTOCOLS

The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of our Governance Team.

Topic 1	Protocol
Self-monitoring of Governance Team effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board will annually schedule a date to review the Governance Handbook. • The Board will annually schedule a date to conduct a Board self-evaluation. • All Board members are encouraged to participate in professional development activities.
Orientation of New Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all new Board members receive adequate onboarding.

Board Meeting Preparation Protocols

Topic 2	Protocol
How the Board meeting agenda is developed and reviewed and by whom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board President and Superintendent work together to develop agenda. • A second Board member may be present to participate in agenda building meeting. • Reviewed by Cabinet.
Placing items on the Board meeting agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Board members may request that an item be placed on a future agenda by explaining their interest in a particular issue or requested action and shall receive a response in a reasonable amount of time • Email Superintendent and Board President.
Obtaining additional information/answers to questions about Board meeting agenda items before the meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer directly with the Superintendent or designee. • Board members will copy Superintendent on all emailed questions or requests to Cabinet members, Directors, or other senior staff members.

Obtaining additional information/answers to questions about Board meeting agenda items before the meeting, <i>cont.</i> ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members will submit questions about Board agenda items to Cabinet members via email with the Superintendent copied by Mondays at 9am. • Answers to submitted individual Board questions will go out to all Board members in the Board's weekly newsletter.
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During Board Meeting Protocols

Topic 3	Protocol
Board meeting management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum or town hall meetings. • The Board will allow the public to provide input at the time allotted to ensure the multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations. • The Board will review its policies, bylaws, and protocols relating to Board meeting management (for example, time limits on input from members of the public), and revise or reaffirm them as appropriate.
Introducing new ideas for the Board's consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Board comments/reports.
Voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Board member respects the other Board members' vote. • Board members agree it is a courtesy to the governance team to explain the reasons for a "no" vote either during deliberation or before casting the vote. • Board members are expected to cast a yes or no vote to indicate their preference and to abstain only when they have a conflict of interest.

Topic 4	Protocol
Handling concerns from the public and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When someone brings a concern to the Board, the Board will listen carefully, remembering it is only hearing one side of the story. The Board member(s) will refer the complaining party to the appropriate "site or district" personnel and keep the Superintendent informed. • The Board will assure that the complaining party is aware of any forms or policies that might assist them (for example, a written complaint form). • As representatives of the public, it is important that the Board member(s) invite the person with the complaint to ultimately get back to them if the concern is not resolved. • Board members will be mindful that they are a judicial and appeals body, so they will be appropriately cautious when hearing concerns regarding student and/or employee discipline matters. These should be referred to the Superintendent's office.

Topic 5	Protocol
Individual Board member requests for information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an individual Board member requests information it will be provided to all Board members in the Board’s weekly communication. • An individual Board member will – insofar as possible – work to let the Superintendent and staff know ahead of time when a request for information will be made in public so the staff can be prepared to provide a thoughtful answer. • Individual Board members will self-monitor to ensure one person’s request for information does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve District goals.

Topic 6	Protocol
Individual Board member requests for action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only authority to direct action rests with the full Board during public Board meetings. • A majority vote provides direction to the superintendent. • Individual Board members may request that an item be placed on a future agenda by explaining their interest in a particular issue or requested action.

Topic 7	Protocol
Individual Board member comments during Board business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board business allows Board members an opportunity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Highlight staff and student success – Recognize or congratulate team or individual achievements – Provide relevant information about our schools that the full Board should know – Report on commission, committee or other relevant meetings – Highlight school and community partnerships • In respect of audience and staff time, individual Board member comments should be limited to five minutes. • Board members will be mindful that they are a judicial and appeals body, so they will be appropriately cautious when hearing concerns regarding student and/or employee discipline matters. These should be referred to the Superintendent’s office.

Topic 8	Protocol
<p>Role and responsibilities of the Board President in managing Board meetings</p>	<p>The Board has an obligation to set an example of good government in action for our community. The Board will model dignified problem solving for our community and our children. The Board president works with the superintendent so that Board meetings proceed professionally, efficiently and effectively. District staff will have the opportunity to provide necessary background materials and information to the Board. Each Board member will have the opportunity to express his or her viewpoint during Board deliberations. Everyone in attendance at Board meetings will be treated with dignity and respect.</p> <p>The Board president has the primary facilitation role at Board meetings, and acts as spokesperson for the Board. S/he has no more authority than any other Board member outside of Board meetings.</p> <p>The role of the Board president is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chair the meetings, • work with the superintendent to ensure Board members have the necessary information and materials to make informed decisions • assure that pending agenda items are addressed appropriately, • confer with the superintendent before meetings to prepare, as necessary, for the upcoming meeting, <p>As meeting chair, the Board president will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open and preside over meetings, • introduce agenda items or ask Superintendent to introduce agenda items, • provide background information as appropriate, • call on speakers, • ask for motions at appropriate times during deliberation, • make sure all Board members have a chance to share in deliberation, • facilitate effective deliberation, • interpret and clarify motions or directives as needed, and articulate the "what" (purpose/desired outcome) and "why" (rationale) behind the Board's direction • call on other Board members to speak on issues before adding his or her own comments, • call for a vote restating the motion, • clarify and authenticate all action, orders and procedures of the Board, • adjourn meetings, • remind the governance team and audience members of any meeting guidelines the Board has adopted, as necessary, • work with the Superintendent to make sure there is appropriate follow-up and clarification of actions following the Board meeting, and serve as the spokesperson for the Board.

Other Protocols

Topic 9	Protocol
Designated Spokesperson(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is essential that important information be communicated to the staff and the community in a timely manner. Board members and the superintendent have an obligation to communicate clearly about District issues. It is important that the Board speak with clarity and consistency regarding Board actions in order to maintain the trust of the community. • The Board recognizes that some situations have legal, privacy, or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public. Confidential issues must remain confidential. • In most cases, the press may contact any Board member for comment. However, a sensitive or confidential issue may best be addressed by one chief spokesperson, the Board president. The Public Information Officer and/or the superintendent will advise Board members on media relations. • When the Board President is invited to speak to a community group or organization, s/he will make sure other Board members and • Superintendent know about the event beforehand invitation and will seek updated District information as appropriate.

Topic 10	Protocol
Visiting schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to schools are encouraged. • As a professional courtesy, Trustees notify the Superintendent of when they would like to visit a school site in advance. The Superintendent will ensure that notification to the sites, and arrangements for a tour, are made. • Trustees will also be cautious about encroaching on the learning environment. To assist in this matter, the superintendent will ensure principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his/her lesson when a Board member visits a classroom.

Topic 11	Protocol
Communications between the Board and other staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will go through the Superintendent. • Members may reach out to district staff for information directly. Board members will copy the Superintendent on these request. • If a staff member provides information requested by one trustee, it will be shared with all members.

Topic 12	Protocol
Electronic Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board recognizes that electronic communication among Board members, district administration, and members of the public is an efficient way to communicate. • Board members shall exercise caution so as to ensure that electronic communications are not used as a means for the Board to deliberate outside of an agendaed Board meeting. • A majority of the Board shall not, outside of an authorized meeting, use a series of electronic communications of any kind, to discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board. Board members may engage in conversations on social media to: 1) answer questions, 2) provide information to the public, or 3) solicit information from the public regarding a matter within the board's jurisdiction. However, a board member shall not respond directly to any communication on social media regarding a matter within the board's jurisdiction which is made, posted, or shared by any other board member. This includes prohibiting the use of emojis or the "like" or "dislike" reactions to a board member's post or repost of a social media communication. • In addition, in order to engage in the appropriate use of social media conduct described above, the social media site must be accessible to the public for free and the conversations or communications must occur in a forum where a member of the public cannot be blocked unless the social media platform blocks them for violating their rules. • Examples of permissible electronic communications concerning district business include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dissemination of Board meeting agendas; - Reports of activities from the Superintendent or his/her designee; and - Reminders regarding meeting times, dates, and places. • Board members may use electronic communications to discuss matters other than district business with each other, regardless of the number of members participating in the discussion. • Board members will be aware a Board member's electronic communication may be subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Topic 13	Protocol
When and how the Board evaluates the Superintendent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-annually in closed session.

Topic 14	Protocol
Participate in CSBA Master's in Governance training or similar professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is strongly encouraged for serving as Board President. • New Board members are encouraged to participate in CSBA's New Board Member training at the annual CSBA Educational Conference.

ALAMEDA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE TEAM

AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

A major difference between groups and teams is that teams have clear agreements (norms that identify expectations for behavior, and protocols that describe how the team will operate) set by the team's members. Once developed, these norms and protocols shape how team members behave with each other and how they perform their responsibilities.

Group expectations help a group work together to not only address difficult issues in an objective and consistent way, but also to confirm what each member will do in the normal course of business to help the team succeed.

- CSBA

AUSD Governance Team Norms and Protocols

The Board of Education for the Alameda 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. Common agreement about procedures and protocols support the efforts and effectiveness of the governance team.

The purpose of the AUSD governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among Board members, the Superintendent, District staff, students, and the community. These protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

The AUSD Board of Education has reviewed and agrees to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Alameda Unified School District Board of Education, staff, students and the community. This agreement shall be reviewed at the Annual Organizational Meeting of the AUSD Board of Education every election year.

We shall renew this agreement on an annual basis

Affirmed on this 14 day of December 2021

Jennifer Williams
Jennifer Williams, Board President

Heather Little
Heather Little, Vice President

Megan Sweet
Megan Sweet, Ed.D., Clerk

Ardella Dailey
Ardella Dailey, Ed.D., Trustee

Gary H. Lym
Gary Lym, Trustee

Pasquale Scuderi
Pasquale Scuderi, Superintendent

