

GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

Welcome to Your Future!

Together with stakeholders, we provide Alum Rock students with high-quality twenty-first-century learning that builds upon our culturally diverse community to prepare our students to be lifelong learners and compete for the careers of the future.



Board of Trustees

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Superintendent

Hilaria Bauer, Ph.D.

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A. BOARD OF TRUSTEES' VISION, MISSION, COMMITMENTS, PURPOSE, AND CORE BELIEFS

OUR VISION FOR THE DISTRICT:

All Alum Rock students will be ready for the future, in a diverse and competitive world.

OUR MISSION FOR THE DISTRICT:

Together with stakeholders, we provide Alum Rock students with high-quality twenty-first-century learning that builds upon our culturally diverse community to prepare our students to be lifelong learners and compete for the careers of the future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Our students are always at the center of our thinking and decision-making. We focus on producing students who will become valuable and productive members of our community by emphasizing practical skills and cultural activities.
- Our great diversity – students, employees, and school board are from linguistically and culturally rich backgrounds – which is one of our District's greatest strengths.
- We acknowledge that our community is confronted with many challenges and we choose to see those challenges as opportunities to build resourcefulness, creativity, and resilience in order to better be prepared to take on our future.
- Attracting, hiring, and supporting a diverse group of high-caliber employees who bring a variety of life experiences and skills that add vibrancy and spirit to our school community.
- Our administration is made up of a diverse group of knowledgeable, competent, high-skilled leaders who work collaboratively to move the district forward.
- Engaging parents, families community, and government organizations that support our District in order to enhance student achievement.
- Focusing on continuously improving academic achievement through creative thinking and innovative school designs and programs.
- Making decisions that are data-driven and based on objective, relevant, and current information about a child's individual progress.
- Maintaining a collaborative, respectful, open, and honest atmosphere throughout the District in order to create an environment that supports individual student success.
- Professional development for all District staff and the board in order to enhance student learning and achievement.
- We foster a culture of accountability where we strive to view mistakes as opportunities for growth.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- To represent the community and advocate for our children and high-quality public education.
- To create a shared vision for the school district.
- To operate with honesty, integrity, passion, and respect as a governing body.
- To use district resources wisely on behalf of our students and ensure the accountability of the Alum Rock Union School District.
- To act with the understanding that authority rests with the collective school board and not with individuals.

- To value the background, experience, skills knowledge, and personality that each member brings to our team.
- To model continuous and life-long learning.
- To value open communication.
- To make conscientious and informed decisions on behalf of students and families.
- To learn from the past and work in the present for the future.

OUR CORE BELIEFS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

We believe all students will achieve academic success, learn critical thinking skills, and develop personal talents skills through daily attendance at district schools which:

- Provide a rigorous core curriculum that includes the fine arts (music, art, dance, drama) and physical education.
- Foster a nurturing parental partnership.
- Provide positive recognition and encouragement to all stakeholders.
- Provide practical skills-building for success in society such as leadership, cross-cultural appreciation, and communication.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We believe parental involvement and community support are essential to student success. Parents can and will be involved in their children's education.

HUMAN RESOURCES

We believe in attracting, hiring, retaining, and promoting highly qualified and talented teachers, support, and administrative staff with diverse backgrounds, experience, and abilities to create and sustain a positive environment that fosters mutual trust, respect, and openness and allows for thoughtful, informed risk-taking.

COMMUNICATION

We believe in maintaining a competent and professional environment where open, candid, ongoing communication occurs with all staff through transparent, honest, respectful dialogue and the ability to disagree respectfully and courteously at all levels.

BUSINESS SERVICES

We believe in utilizing our resources wisely and maintaining sound, efficient, and effective accountability systems including auditing that support district goals and sustain improvement.

ENVIRONMENT

We believe in providing our students a nurturing, caring, emotionally and physically safe, healthy, clean, and well-maintained environment with friendly, professional, knowledgeable, courteous service that contributes to each student's academic and personal success.

B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Role of the Board and Superintendent

The role of the School Board is an elected representative of the people and governance role:

1. To ensure the district school educates the children in consideration of the interests of the local community.

The role of the Superintendent is:

1. To facilitate the effective governance of the School Board.
2. To be the chief administrative officer for the school district.

Performing Our Responsibilities

We set the direction for the community's schools:

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

We establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district:

- Employ the Superintendent and set policy for hiring of other personnel.
- Oversee the development of and adopt policies.
- Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum.
- Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facilities issues.
- Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements.

We provide support through our behavior and actions:

- Act with a 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.
- Ensure a positive personnel climate exists.
- Be knowledgeable enough about district efforts to explain them to the public.

We ensure accountability to the public:

- Evaluate the Superintendent.
- 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.
- Monitor the collective bargaining process
- Conduct timely annual Board Self Evaluation.

We act as community leaders:

- Speak with a common voice about district priorities, goals, and issues.
- Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities.
- Communicate clear information about policies, programs, and fiscal conditions of the district.
- Educate the community and the media about issues facing the district and public education.
- Advocate for children, district programs, and public education to the general public, community, and local, state, and national leaders.

What the Board Needs from the Superintendent

- Treat all Board members equally.
- Continue to communicate the top issues and priorities in the weekly report to the Board.
- Facilitate the ability of Board members to operate within our role and responsibilities.
- Make sure all Board members receive the same information.
- No surprises.
- Provide sufficient information and ample time for discussion of information so we can make informed, educated decisions.
- Create opportunities to discuss the format, timelines, objectives, and content of the Superintendent's evaluation.
- Be open to new and innovative ideas.
- Respect Board members' individual differences, styles, and perspectives.
- Remain open-minded to feedback.
- Lead with courage.
- Network and communicate with all stakeholders including staff, parents, corporate entities, community groups, and educational associations.
- Maintain focus on the agreed-upon priorities and goals.
- Accountability.
- Provide the Board with requested information in a timely matter.

What the Superintendent Needs from the Board

- Operate as collective governance in a respectful environment.
- Maintain focus on the agreed-upon priorities and goals.
- Have strong sensitivity to the superintendent position.
- Be supportive, cohesive, and stand behind Board decisions.
- Operate within the role and responsibilities of the Board at all times.
- Maintain open and honest communication – and bring things of concern directly to the Superintendent.
- No surprises.
- Give direction to the Superintendent only through duly notice board meetings.
- Respond to requests from the Superintendent in a timely matter.

C. POSITIVE GOVERNANCE TEAM CULTURE -NORMS

Governance Team Meeting Guidelines

We agree to:

- Keep our focus on students.
- Be responsible for the success of the meeting: participate equally, address concerns, make sure the team agrees.
- Look for common ground: Everyone's opinions count.
- Listen carefully without interruption.
- Operate with mutual respect.
- Give helpful feedback openly and directly so there is no confusion.
- Debate facts, not personalities.
- Make sure there are no hidden agendas – all issues need to be dealt with by all team members.

Norms for operating in a Governance Culture of Trust and Respect:

A strong Board-Superintendent partnership gives direction, stability, and confidence to the staff and community. Where this exists, morale is high, people work effectively and efficiently, and most importantly, good things happen for students. A strong relationship is based on having a common vision, developing trust, demonstrating sensitivity and caring, and being motivated to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to work successfully together.

We agree to:

- Operate within our respective roles and responsibilities in order to facilitate the efficient and effective operation of the Alum Rock Union School District.
- Recognize that each Board member brings unique experiences, values, and beliefs to the table and that we must work with each other and the Superintendent to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to all students.
- View the Superintendent as a key player on the Governance Team, understand the Superintendent's role and responsibilities, respect the expertise of the Superintendent, and seek professional advice from the Superintendent on all Board business.
- Maintain open and honest two-way communication with each other in order to develop a strong Board/Superintendent relationship.
- Provide direction so that staff presents sufficient, appropriate, specific information that supports the Board's ability to make rational, thoughtful, responsible decisions on behalf of students and the community.
- Take collective responsibility for the success of our Governance Team and be willing to respectfully discuss personal concerns or issues with other individuals on the team if necessary.
- Work to understand other team members' concerns, perspectives, and interests.
- Give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion.
- Support each other, and demonstrate mutual respect and understanding for our respective responsibilities and time constraints, recognizing that the Superintendent is doing the best to treat every Board member equally.
- Focus time and energy on important issues, not pettiness or politics.

D. GOVERNANCE TEAM PROTOCOLS

Topic and Rationale:

Board Authority and Giving Direction

We believe all Board members are equal under the law. Authority rests with the Board as a whole, not with individual members of the Board. Direction is given to the Superintendent only at Board meetings through actions of the Board. The direction of the Boards needs to be clear to the Superintendent. Chaos and confusion result within the district if we don't work as a team. Individual Board members are not "consultants" to either the Superintendent or other members of district staff. It is important to understand and respect the separate roles of the Board and Superintendent, yet work together as a governance team taking collective responsibility for building and creating a positive organizational culture. The best possible decisions are likely only when all members of the team have been part of the discussion. Everyone can participate productively when team members can trust that everyone is operating on the same page. We have an obligation to respect staff time and responsibilities. It is important for staff time and effort to be dedicated to moving the district in the direction set by the full Board. Clarifying the structure for people outside the governance team protects individuals (Board members, Superintendent and other staff) and the school district.

Protocols:

We agree:

- Board members understand that the Board collectively gives direction to the Superintendent only through actions taken at a legally noticed board meeting.
- The Board and Superintendent will agree on the goals that will become the basis for all district efforts.
- The Superintendent will define processes and timelines to assist the Board in effectively carrying out its responsibilities.
- All action items on board agendas will include a recommendation from the Superintendent.
- Following Board action, the Board President will clarify the direction of the Board for the Superintendent and fellow board members.
- The Superintendent will work with staff to translate all board direction into action consistent with the agreed-upon priorities and goals.
- Board members will support the implementation of board decisions /actions.

Topic and Rationale:

Bringing Up New Ideas or Agenda Items

We believe it's important for all members of the governance team to feel prepared to discuss any new topic in the public arena. Individual board members connections, a variety of skills and experiences, and may have attended workshops or obtained information or materials they would like to share. Individual board member interests can divert staff time, energy, and attention away from their ability to achieve district priorities. Board and staff time, effort and energy, and district resources are best spent in efforts to achieve agreed-upon district priorities and goals.

Protocols:

We agree to follow the provisions in Board Bylaw 9322:

- Any Board member or any member of the public may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting. The request must be in writing and be submitted to the Superintendent or designee with supporting documents and information, if any, at least one week before the scheduled meeting date. Items submitted less than a week before the scheduled meeting date may be postponed to a later meeting in order to allow sufficient time for consideration and research of the issue.
- The Board President and Superintendent shall decide whether a request is within a request is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board. Items not within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board may not be placed on agenda. In addition, the Board President and Superintendent shall determine if the item is merely a request for information or whether the issue is covered by an existing policy or administrative regulation before placing the item on the agenda.
 - The Board President and Superintendent shall decide whether an agenda item is appropriate for discussion in open or closed session, and whether the item should be an action item, informational item, or consent item.

Topic and Rationale:

Sufficient Information to Make Informed, Educated Decisions on Agenda Items

We believe Board members should be knowledgeable and equally informed about district programs and issues. The Board's ability to make rational, thoughtful, responsible decisions on behalf of students and the community is dependent upon receiving sufficient, appropriate, specific information from the district staff. We believe there should be open lines of communication between the Board, the Superintendent, and the staff and that there should be no surprises for either the Superintendent or staff. In order to strive for the efficient and effective use of Board and staff time, and to respect the time and efforts of district staff in preparing board-meeting presentations, we have an obligation to make our expectations for staff reports clear.

Protocols:

We agree that:

Board members will let the Superintendent know if they need additional information or background information on an agenda item. The Superintendent may:

- Direct an individual to the appropriate staff person.
- Schedule a report at a board meeting.
- Schedule a study session on the topic.

In order to make informed decisions in the best interest of students and the district, the board requires the following kinds of information in reports from staff on topics or issues of primary importance to the district:

- **Background information:**
History-What brought us to this point? What are we doing it? Who was involved in the planning/preparation/implementation, and how were they involved?

- **Options/Alternatives considered by staff. Purpose:**
What is the intended result? What are the goals?
- **Financial and Operational impact:**
What resources are necessary in order to achieve the goals?
financial/people/time/materials/supplies/facilities/staff development, etc.
How many people were affected? What are the perspectives of the people involved?
(administration/teachers/other staff/students/parents/community members, etc.)
- **Timelines**
- **Progress Toward Goals:**
What are the deliverables and success indicators and benchmarks leading to accomplishment?
What data or information is necessary to measure success?
Are we making progress toward the goals?
What are the challenges, barriers to success, issues or concerns?
- **Recommendation of the Superintendent** ~ Justification for the recommendation.

Topic and Rationale:

Discussion or Deliberation on Complex or Difficult Topic or Issues

We believe before a complex topic is discussed, the Board needs the history of the situation, background information, and any clarification administration can present. It is important that all team members have the opportunity to share individual knowledge, experience, and points of view and that all viewpoints are heard. We have an obligation to understand stakeholder interests and to see that all of the issues are aired and considered in an open, honest, respectful environment without fear of recrimination or retribution.

Protocols:

We believe that:

- The governance team will determine how and when to engage the community and/or obtain stakeholder input.

Once the item is on the agenda for action, the Board will consider all of the following as criteria for decision-making:

- Serving the needs of all students.
- District vision and goals.
- District resources.
- Laws and regulations.
- Civic responsibility.
- Stakeholder interests.

Topic and Rationale:

Speaking with a Common Voice-Developing and Utilizing Key Messages

We believe it is essential that important information is communicated to members of the Board, the staff, and the community in as timely a fashion as possible. We recognize that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public. We believe that confidential issues must remain confidential. We believe it is important that we speak with one voice in order to maintain the trust of our community.

Protocols:

We agree:

(to be considered by the Board)

- Developing Key Messages about the topic.

Topic and Rationale:

Board President-Role and Responsibilities

We believe we have an obligation to set an example of good government in action for our community. We intend that our Board meetings proceed professionally, efficiently, and effectively and that district staff will have the opportunity to provide the necessary background materials and information to the board in a timely manner. We believe each Board member must have the opportunity to express his or her viewpoint during board deliberation. We believe the board president has a facilitation role relative to board meetings and that he or she has no more or less authority than any other board member outside of board meetings.

Protocols:

The role of the Board President is to:

- Consult with the Superintendent or designee on the preparation of board meeting agendas.
- Chair Board meetings.
- Work with the Superintendent as necessary to help ensure Board members have the necessary information and materials to make wise decisions.
- Make sure that pending agenda items are addressed appropriately.
- Confer with the Superintendent before meetings to prepare, as necessary, for the upcoming meeting.
- Model the tone and behavior the board wishes to convey to the community (*e.g., one of cooperative leadership focused on all students*)

As for the meeting chair, the Board President will:

- Open and preside over the meetings.
- Introduce agenda items, providing some background information as appropriate. (*different from background information that is provided by staff. e.g., "This is an item we have had our agendas four times in the last three months. We have given it a great deal of consideration and appreciate all of the input we have received from the public and the information staff has provided on the issue. Tonight we will receive additional public input, deliberate further and hopefully make a final decision"*).
- Call on speakers
- Not typically make a motion him or herself, but ensure that there is one made at an appropriate time during deliberation.
- Make sure all Board members have a chance to share in deliberation proceeds.
- Wait until all other Board members who wish to speak on an issue have done so before adding his or her own comments.
- Call for a vote after restating the motion.
- Clarify and authenticate all actions, orders, and procedures of the board.
- Adjourn meetings.

As necessary, the Board President will also remind the governance team and audience members of any meeting following the Board meeting, the Board President will work with the Superintendent to make sure that there is appropriate follow-up and clarification of possible options for the Board.

Topic and Rationale:

Welcoming New Board Members to the Team

We believe new Board Members should feel welcomed and have opportunities to get to know other members of the governance team. It is important to have opportunities to “heal any wounds” from the election process. New Board Members need educational support and training from the governance team and outside sources (i.e., CSBA New Board Member Institute). New Board Members need to learn about the district and understand the district's vision, purpose, and culture. New Board Members need to feel that they are part of our team and should participate in developing agreements about how we will work together.

Protocols:

We agree:

- New Board Members will receive a New Board member Packet and Governance Handbook that includes relevant information about the school district and the governance team operations.
- The Board may select a “board mentor” to provide support to a new Board Member as s/he becomes familiar with the governance team operations and the governance role and responsibilities.
- The Superintendent will meet with each new Board Member individually to answer any questions and familiarize him/her with district operations.
- Each seated Board Member is encouraged to arrange a time to have an informal meeting with each new board member as soon as possible after the swearing-in ceremony (i.e., coffee or lunch, etc.).
- The whole governance team will participate in a New Board Member Orientation workshop in January following an election of new Board Members. The orientation will include but not be limited to discussions of:
 - Discussion Vision, Purpose, and Goals.
 - Key District Personnel.
 - District Operations.
 - Special District Projects or Programs.
 - Current Issues Facing the District.
 - Governance Team Operations.
 - *Board Bylaws (9000 Series of the Policy Manual).
 - *Alum Rock Union School District Governance Handbook.

Topic and Rationale:

Responses to Emails or Other Communications Sent to Individual Board Members

We believe the School Board Is a representative body, and Board Members have a responsibility to be accessible and responsive to members of the staff and community. It is important to respond effectively and uniformly to email and other written correspondence from staff or community members. Credibility and trust are developed in the community when we are consistent in our communication about important district issues.

Protocols:

We agree:

Topic and Rationale:

Governance Team Process for Negotiations

We believe the Board's responsibility is to represent the district's interest during negotiations. An agreed upon process is in place for negotiations with district bargaining units. We have a competent negotiating team for the district. The governance team defines the district parameters for negotiations based on district goals and district resources. Board members should not be directly involved at the negotiations table. District bargaining units have a job to do and a role to play in negotiations. The union's function is to obtain the best salaries, benefits, and working conditions for union membership. Union negotiating teams represent the interest of union members. It is the Board's responsibility to negotiate a fair and equitable contract for the unions and the district.

Protocols:

We agree:

- Always keep students' best interests in mind throughout the negotiations process.
- Represent the district's interest(s) during negotiations.
- Establish clear philosophical and financial parameters for negotiations based on district priorities, goals, and resources.
- Trust and support the district negotiating team.
- Recognize and communicate to staff and the public that the district negotiating team is accurately reflecting the progress of negotiations to the Board.
- Remind staff and community that there is an agreed upon process in place, that the staff and district each have an identified negotiating team, and that any issues or questions about negotiations need to go through the defined and agreed upon processes.
- Adopt and stand behind the final contracts.

E. CODE OF CONDUCT

The Board and its members will conduct themselves lawfully with integrity and high ethical standards in order to model the behavior expected of staff and students and to build public confidence and credibility.

1. Board members will serve the interests of the people of the entire school district. Members recognize this responsibility to the whole to be greater than:
 - a. Any loyalty a member may have to any other advocacy or interest groups or individuals.
 - b. Loyalty based upon membership on other Boards or staffs;
 - c. Conflicts based upon the personal interest of any board member who is also a parent of a student in the district;
 - d. Conflicts based upon being a relative of an employee of the district; or
 - e. Conflicts based upon the member's election from or identification with a subsection of the district.
2. Board members will not attempt to exercise individual authority over the operation of the school district.
 - a. Members will not attempt to assume personal responsibility for resolving operational problems or complaints but may monitor through the superintendent the disposition of complaints;
 - b. Members will not personally direct any part of the operational organization.
3. To build trust among members and to ensure an environment conducive to effective governance, members will:
 - a. Focus on issues rather than personalities;
 - b. Respect decisions of the full Board;
 - c. Exercise honesty in all written and interpersonal interaction, never intentionally misleading or misinforming each other;
 - d. Criticize tactfully, praise publicly;
 - e. Make every reasonable effort to protect the integrity and promote the positive image of the district and one another;
 - f. Never embarrass each other or the district;
 - g. Demonstrate respect for the public as a whole and community members individually at all times and in all situations;
 - h. Demonstrate courtesy and respect in your communications by being responsive to one another and the Superintendent and all staff;
 - i. Refrain from personal comments and attacks against each other, staff, and members of the community;
 - j. Listen first, and respect each Board Member's opinions and opportunity to speak;
 - k. Show deference to Board leadership in the conduct of Board meetings. Wait your turn to speak.
4. Board members will exercise personal discipline in the performance of their duties, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as board members.
5. Board members shall maintain confidentiality appropriate to sensitive issues and information that otherwise may tend to compromise the integrity or legal standing of the board, especially those matters discussed in Closed Session.

The community entrusts the Board of Trustees of the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District to uphold and defend the Constitutions of California and the United States, protect the public interest in schools, and ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student within the District. To effectively meet district challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Agreed upon operating procedures, or protocols, support unity among team members. The purpose of the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District governance team norms and protocols is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among Board members, the Superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. The protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team and may be modified over time as needed.

APPROVE BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES THIS 7 DAY OF December, 2021.

Corina Herrera-Loera:

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Corina Herrera-Loera

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Andrés Quintero:

Andres Quintero

DocuSigned by:

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Ernesto Bejarano:

Ernesto Bejarano

DocuSigned by:

Linda Chavez:

Linda Chavez

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