

Scappoose School District's Board of Directors Governance Handbook



The Board of Education is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of Oregon and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student.

Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements

This handbook reflects the governance team's work on creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, norms and coming to agreement on protocols for formal structures that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.

Building a Governance Team

Unity of Purpose

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

In a school District, the Board and Superintendent work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to: Maintain a unity of purpose; agree on and govern within appropriate roles; create and sustain a positive governance culture and; create a supportive structure for effective governance.

What do we as a governance team want to accomplish? What do we stand for?

- Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students.
- We want to build trust and move the District forward.
- We want to be an effective team.
- We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.
- We want to be a team with a common focused direction so we are not a distraction to the District or community but a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees, and the community can see evidence of this focused direction.
- We want to be partners with the staff in positive change.
- We want to oversee the putting together of a first-rate program and first-rate facilities, making sure we continue to improve – never resting on our laurels.
- We want to perpetuate a legacy of positive culture as people come and go.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mutual agreement on the roles of the Board and Superintendent

The role of Directors is to stay focused on the big picture while fulfilling five responsibilities in a series of job areas. These five responsibilities are:

1. We set the direction.
2. We establish the structure.
3. We provide support.
4. We ensure accountability.
5. We act as community leaders.

We carry out these responsibilities in each of the following job areas:

- Student Learning and Achievement
- Finance
- Facilities
- Human Resources
- Policy
- Judicial Review
- Collective Bargaining
- Community Relations and Advocacy

The Superintendent assists the Board in carrying out its responsibilities in each of the job areas, and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed upon District vision and goals.

Creating and Sustaining a Positive Governance Team Culture

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

Governance Norms

In addition to meeting the norms below in order to create a positive culture and atmosphere, we agree to act in ways that will help us meet our Professional Governance Standards.

WE AGREE TO –

- Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, respected).
- To show respect (never dismiss/devalue others).
- Make a commitment to effective deliberation, each listening openly while everyone is allowed to express his or her point of view.
- Make a commitment to open communication, honesty, no surprises.
- Commit the time necessary to govern effectively. This means being there, being knowledgeable, participating, understanding the full scope of being a Board Member and being willing to take on all the responsibilities involved.
- Be collaborative
- Maintain confidentiality (builds trust).
- Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.

AND – ABOVE ALL –

- Focus on students' best interest – on what's best for the students! This is what we do! And it is the touchstone that allows us to have our differences.

Purpose

The Board of Directors is the educational policy making body for the Scappoose School District. To effectively meet the District's challenges, the School Board and Superintendent must function together as a leadership team to:

- Establish a long-term vision for the District.
- Establish and maintain a basic organizational structure for the District, including selection of the Superintendent and adoption of policies, curriculum, the budget and the collective bargaining agreements.
- Ensure accountability to the local community, which includes District personnel, and provide programmatic and fiscal accountability.
- Serve as a judicial and appeals body as needed.
- Provide community leadership and advocacy at the local, state and national levels on behalf of children, District programs and public education.
- Model democracy in action while ensuring transparency during decision making process.

Board Meeting Agreements

The Board of Directors agrees to:

- Uphold the legal requirement for confidentiality on all matters arising from the Board meeting in executive session.
- Start and end meetings on time.
- Cooperate in scheduling special meetings and/or work sessions for planning and training purposes, except under extenuating circumstances.
- Attend regularly scheduled Board Meetings and Study Sessions unless a situation occurs that makes attendance impossible. It is the responsibility of the Board member to notify the chair, vice chair, Superintendent and Board secretary prior to being gone.
- Make decisions as a whole Board only at properly called meetings.

Board Member Job Description

The Board of Directors is committed to:

- Work together as a team with the Superintendent and other Board members.
- Focus on policymaking, planning and evaluation, rather than day-to-day operations.
- Give careful consideration to all issues brought to you by individuals and special interests.
- Value the role we play in the community and represent the District, when possible, by attending school and community functions.
- Be an advocate for public education in the District, region and state level by speaking up for, and on behalf of, public education whenever required.
- When a situation is controversial, exemplify the governance role by showing transparency with all stakeholders, adherence to both Federal and State legislative requirements, existing policies, Board tenets, and in general modeling democracy in real-time; own the decision making process, the decision and support one another.

Board's Expectations of the Superintendent:

Board members expect the Superintendent to:

- Work toward becoming a team with Board members.
- Respect and acknowledge the Board's role in setting policy and overseeing the performance of the Superintendent.
- Provide the Board with accurate and timely financial information.
- Work with the Board to establish a clear vision for the school District.
- Prepare preliminary goals annually for the Board's considerations.
- Provide data to the Board members so that data-driven decisions can be made.
- Possess a working knowledge of all legal and local policies.
- Inform the Board of all critical information including relevant trends, anticipated adverse media coverage, or critical external or internal change.
- Distribute appropriate information to all Board members. Provide equal treatment and information to all Board members.
- Communicate with Board members promptly and effectively.
- Represent the school District by being visible in the community.
- Provide follow-up information to Board members on concerns and issues they have referred to the Superintendent - close the communication loop.
- Uphold integrity of the highest order.
- Avoid surprise items at Board meetings.

Superintendent's Expectations of the Board

The Superintendent may expect from the Board, that we will:

- Share the successes and failures of the school system with the Superintendent.
- Assist in gaining acceptance and support in the community.
- Abide by our own rules, policies and code of ethical conduct.
- Provide, within budget constraints, the Superintendent with adequate staff and clerical assistance.
- Resolve problems at the lowest level possible and follow the chain of command of the school District.
- Respect the confidentiality requirement of Board meeting executive sessions.
- Avoid seeking personal privilege.
- Participate in professional development activities at the local, state and national levels.
- Foster unity, harmony and open communications within the Board.
- Understand the relative or complementary role of the Superintendent and Board in policy making.
- Consider each recommendation made by the Superintendent.
- Insist on all available facts and data before making a decision.
- Study and evaluate educational issues affecting the school District.
- Avoid surprise items at Board meetings.
- Uphold integrity of the highest order.

Role of the Chair

The Board Chair shall:

- Speak for and about the Board and describe the Board's process and positions.
- Convene meetings and develop the agenda with the Superintendent and execute documents as appropriate.
- Consult Board members as practical to review potential changes to the Board calendar.
- Clearly communicate and announce Board meeting protocols, procedures and guidelines for speaking and or testifying at Board meetings.
- Partner with the Superintendent in anticipating issues and concerns of fellow Board members.
- Make thoughtful Board member work assignments, utilizing individual skills and talents, while ensuring equitably opportunities and providing professional development options. May sit as an ex-officio member of any committee.
- Involve the vice-chair in matters as appropriate in a consultative and collaborative role.
- Listen actively and work to understand all individual Board members' perspectives and ensure they are considered.

Role of the Vice-Chair

The Vice-chair is a support role for the Chair and Superintendent and will:

- Participate in activities requiring formal presence, including pre-Board meetings with the Superintendent.
- Serve as Board Chair in the Chair's absence.
- Participate with the Board Chair as necessary in representing the District at official functions.
- May sit as an ex-officio member of any committee.
- Help facilitate the orientation of new Board members.

Board Governance Protocols

Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

Board members carry authority only as Board, not as individuals. Individuals can request action by bringing up a new idea, explaining their interest in a particular course of action and working to get a Board majority to support moving in that direction. When a majority of the Board, sitting in a formal meeting, requests action, that request should be made in the context of the intended results (what is to be accomplished), not the methods used to achieve those results.

In order to be effective representatives of the Board and District, members will:

- ❖ Behave at all times in a manner that reflects positively on the District.
- ❖ Refrain from obligating the Board and/or administration by actual speech or implication, unless authorized to do so by the Board.
- ❖ Represent the Board at various school events.
- ❖ Refer any concerns, questions, or comments to the Superintendent as specified in the protocol on Responding to Concerns.
- ❖ Reinforce with the community the key messages agreed upon by the Board.

In responding to concerns regarding the work of the District, Board members will:

- ❖ *Receive* the information, remembering that only one side of the story is being presented (listening)
- ❖ *Repeat* the information – when appropriate, paraphrase to ensure understanding
- ❖ *Remind* the individual that a Board member has no authority as an individual and share the appropriate line of command and process to follow to address their concern.
- ❖ *Re-Direct* – Thank them for sharing their thoughts and refer them to the appropriate staff member and, if necessary, encourage them to initiate the formal complaint process.
- ❖ *Report* – In a timely manner, inform the Superintendent.

When interacting with the public and their constituents, Board members will hold to the highest level of professional and ethical conduct, including emphasizing the positive aspects of the District.

The Board's Role and Relationship with the Staff and Community

As a Board member, when individually visiting schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, Board members are encouraged to notify the school office and the Superintendent that they will be visiting a school or department, and may provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.

At no time, while visiting schools shall a member make promises, either overt or implied, interfere with administration, or involve him or herself in personnel issues, student records, or union activities.

To assist in this matter, the Superintendent will ensure that principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his/her lesson when a visitor is in his/her classroom.

Board members shall not request any information from staff beyond that which would be provided to any regular community member. Staff members are directed to relay requests from Board members to their supervisor to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members.

Management staff are directed to relay requests from Board members to the Superintendent to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members.

This protocol does not imply a censoring of any private and informal conversations.

Board Meetings and the Agenda

Meetings of the Board are held in public but are not open-forum town hall meetings.

(The Oregon Attorney General's Public Records and Public Meetings Manual states: "The Public Meetings Law is a public attendance law, not a public participation law....The right of the public attendance guaranteed by the Public Meetings Law does not include the right to participate by public testimony or comment.")

Meetings will be conducted in such a way as to allow the public to provide input in the time allotted to ensure that multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations; however, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Directors to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public. (Oregon Regulations do not mandate that community members have a right to provide testimony to the Board.)

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

Board meetings will be on the Second Monday's of each month. Each Board meeting will begin with Closed Session (with dinner provided to the Board) at 5:30 pm. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 6:30 pm. Study Sessions may be scheduled and shall be scheduled at the discretion of the Board.

The design of the Board agenda will follow the historical structure utilized by the Board. The design of the agenda may only be altered with the approval of the Board.

The Board Agenda will be distributed by Tuesday evening, whenever possible, prior to the regularly scheduled meetings on Monday of the following week.

The Board Chair, with the assistance of the Superintendent, with the support of staff, will create each Board Agenda. In advance of the preparation of the Board Agenda, Board members may request items to be placed on the agenda. The Board Chair and the Superintendent will discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting, in advance of the Board Meeting.

Whenever Board members are appointed or elected to serve on the Board, the Superintendent or designee shall administer the Oath Office at a meeting of the Board.

Chart of Policy Revision Process

Step 1

- District Receives Policy Update Packet from OSBA

Step 2

- Administrative Assistant Prints Policies for Superintendent Review and Comments

Step 3

- Superintendent Reviews Updated Recommended Policy Changes
Superintendent provides to the Board at Board Meeting 1, in handwritten form, appropriate comments and edits.

Step 4 - Board Meeting 1

- The Original Packet of Updated Policies, with the handwritten comments from the Superintendent, is placed on the Board Agenda (Board Meeting 1), under Reports and Information, and is considered as First Reading by the Board

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

Chart of Policy Revision Process (continued)

Step 5 – Board Meeting 1

- Before the Board meeting 2, if a Board member would like to discuss one or more of the policies provided, the Board member will request specific said policies be pulled for discussion at the next Board Meeting (Board Meeting 2) and placed under the Action Section of the Agenda.
- The polices presented to the Board, on which they have no concerns or questions, will be placed under the Consent Agenda (Second Reading and for Approval) at the next Board Meeting (Board Meeting 2) for action.

Step 6 - Board Meeting 2

- The policies requested by individual Board members to be discussed shall be place under the Action Section of the Board Agenda (Second Reading and Approval) Discussion will take place prior to a motion to approve said policies. The polices presented to the Board, on which they have no concerns or questions, will be placed under the Consent Agenda (Second Reading and for Approval) for action.

Board members will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the Superintendent and district staff has the opportunity to prepare to answer Board members’ questions at Board meetings.

When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. If unforeseen questions arrive during the meeting, Directors will acknowledge their question or comment as spontaneous and that they understand that staff may not have the information on hand to answer the question.

Individual Board members are expected to self-monitor compliance to Public Meeting laws, including limiting Closed Session to the legally appropriate agenda item(s).

Board members need equal access to information, and to operate within the boundaries established within the Public Meeting law.

The use of email and social communication is subject to the Public Meeting Law. The Superintendent shall forward questions and answers to all Board members. Board members, when responding, may not “reply to all.”

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

The Board wishes to maintain a culture of professionalism, stay focused, and respect the need of Directors to be available to their families:

- Cell phones will be set for ‘silent’ or vibrate.
- Directors will be discreet in checking cell phones if necessary.

Board members individually and collectively demonstrate confidentiality as appropriate and as outlined through the mandates of the Public Meeting Law, and other compliance criteria established by law or legislation. Respecting the confidentiality of information maintains the Board’s judicial review role.

Board members will review the information provided to them, actively solicit input and listen to all perspectives, operate as representatives, and make decisions in the best interest of the whole district.

Board members will participate in professional development activities at the local, state and national levels whenever possible.

Each Board member respects the right of other Board member to vote in the minority position. If so doing, each Board member agrees, as a courtesy to the team, to explain the reason for their minority vote during deliberation or after casting the vote.

The Board believes that when no legal reason exists of a conflict of interest, its members have a duty to vote on issues before them.

When a member abstains, his/her abstention shall not be counted for purposes of determining whether a majority of the membership of the Board has taken action.

Board members will model professional behavior by being polite and respectful of the points of view held by their fellow Governance Team members. The Governance Team will address one another by their last name and appropriate prefix/ title.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

Board members commit to support decisions of the majority, after honoring the right of individual members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions.

Under the concept of majority rule, each member is compelled to support the successful implementation of a policy decision, program, or procedure even when he or she does not agree with the decision.

If a member of the Board cannot support the decision of the Board because it offends a moral/personal code, the member is expected, at a minimum, to refrain from undermining the decision or directive.

The Board will strive for brevity in deliberations, keeping remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed, and meetings can be efficient. Addressing each agenda item the Board shall, normally, adhere to the following process:

- ❖ Staff Presentation/addressing questions from the Board
- ❖ Input from the Community via public comment
- ❖ Board Discussion and Deliberation

The Board's Role in Collective Bargaining

Board members will be actively involved in the collective bargaining process to ensure that the District is represented well by those selected to negotiate on behalf of the Board and the Community. The involvement of the Board will be to:

- ❖ Ensure that the ethical, fiscal and educational goals of the Community are represented in the actions taken throughout the collective bargaining process;
- ❖ Participate by providing direction and guidance to those selected to represent the Board (District Negotiation Team). Board members may attend at-the-table negotiations.
- ❖ Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- ❖ Set the District's collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team;
- ❖ Expect, as the representative of the Board, that the Superintendent will ensure that the Board, collectively and individually, is informed on the issues and strategies implemented within the collective bargaining process.
- ❖ The Superintendent or designee is the Collective Bargaining Spokesperson for the Board.

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent

The Board will commit to work through and with the Superintendent on issues regarding the running of the District. The Superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible of:

- ✓ serious safety concerns
- ✓ serious disciplinary action
- ✓ serious / unexpected personnel changes or disciplinary issues
- ✓ serious illness or death of a student, a staff member
- ✓ legal or liability concerns
- ✓ notable achievements

In all matters, the Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information.

The Board recognizes and respects the superintendent's responsibility to manage the school district and to direct employees in district and school matters.

It is the Superintendent's responsibility to organize the staff in the manner that best serves the needs of the District. As a professional courtesy, the Superintendent shall provide appropriate notice to the Board in advance of action being taken.

The Board recognizes that the superintendent is the educational leader of the school district and has responsibility for supervision, personnel assignments, and evaluation of district personnel.

As the norm, the Superintendent speaks on behalf of the Board. The Board Chair is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

The Superintendent will inform the Board when media contacts the Superintendent.

All conflicts between the Superintendent and the Board will be handled in Closed Session, with the Superintendent being in attendance, when appropriate and necessary.

Conflicts between individual Board members and/or the Superintendent will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict and will not involve other members of the Board or the public (community, staff, media etc.).

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent (continued)

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the Superintendent. The Board will set aside at least one special meeting for the purpose of completing the annual evaluation of the Superintendent. In consultation with the Superintendent, the evaluation process and associated documents will be developed and approved by the Board, not later than the first Board meeting in September. The evaluation process and instrument is designed to bring about the **collective view of the Board**. Thus, the evaluation will reflect the majority view of the Board, as a whole.

The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols

New Board Members (Elected or Appointed)

An administrative orientation by the Superintendent and senior staff will be provided to new members of the Board. Training may be provided by County and State organizations, consultants, or led by staff. The training shall, whenever possible, take place prior to first Board meeting of the new Board member.

The orientation is intended to be a conversation and overview of the things members need to know immediately. Questions will be answered, and the Board meeting structure, CEO contract, CEO objectives, Board policies, overview of the services and programs, and the major challenges being faced will be outlined and discussed.

Each orientation may be slightly different depending upon the needs and interests of the incoming members and the major issues before the Board.

Within 90 days of the election/appointment of a new Board member or appointment of a new superintendent, a Study Session of the whole Board will be held for the purpose of reviewing/updating the governance protocols of the Board.

Upon the request of two or more Board members, a special study session will be called for the purpose of reviewing/updating of the governance protocols of the Board.