



Twin Hills School District

Governance Team Handbook

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of Purpose means a common focus, superordinate goals, values, and beliefs that governance team members share about children, the district, and public education, which help them transcend their differences to fulfill a greater purpose.

VISION STATEMENT

Our Vision is to foster a community where all children feel loved, respected, welcomed, and encouraged to develop to their fullest potential.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to work together to build a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment focused on maximizing each child’s sense of well-being and acquiring skills for life and learning.

WHAT WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH AS A TEAM

TO WHOM ARE WE RESPONSIBLE?

To Our Children:	To provide the best possible education in a safe, engaging, challenging, compassionate learning environment.
To District Staff	To provide necessary resources and a safe, supportive, challenging work environment.
To Families/Caregivers:	To provide an education for their children in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for children and their families and to provide avenues for their involvement in their children’s education.
To Voters and Taxpayers	To provide a high-quality education in our schools so that the community is a great place to live and to use public funds efficiently and effectively.
To Our Entire Community:	To keep them informed and promote an understanding of the benefits of our educational system, whether or not they have children in our schools.

To the State and Federal Government:	To obey the law, to be informed, to keep other elected officials informed about the effect of legislation on our district, and to advocate for our children and our schools.
To the Other Members of Our Team	To come to meetings prepared, to be interested and informed, to be committed to our work, and to be respectful and honest in our interactions.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Role of the Board

School Board members are the representatives of the people elected to ensure the district schools educate the children in consideration of the local community's interests. The role of the School Board is to govern the school district.

The Role of the Superintendent

The Board hires the Superintendent to provide professional expertise in the district's day-to-day operations. The Superintendent:

- Works with the Board to develop an effective governance leadership team
- Serves as the chief administrative officer for the school district
- Manages personnel activities (hiring, evaluation, and discipline of staff)

Board Responsibilities

1. Setting the direction for the community's schools by:
 - Focusing on student learning
 - Assessing district needs
 - Generating, reviewing, and revising guiding documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)
2. Employing the Superintendent
 - The Superintendent is the Board's only employee
 - Give direction to the Superintendent
 - Regularly evaluate the Superintendent to ensure progress with goals and accountability to the school community.
3. Policy and Structure
 - Set policies to ensure legal compliance and to support district goals/progress.
 - Set policy for hiring of other personnel
 - Set direction for and adopt the curriculum
 - Set a straightforward process for staff, students, and members of the public to share their thoughts, ideas, concerns, and complaints.
 - Establish budget priorities and adopt the budget
 - Oversee facilities and physical resources
 - Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements

4. Accountability
 - Create a governance calendar to receive reports from staff on progress toward goals
 - Evaluate the Superintendent
 - Monitor, review, and revise policies
 - Serve as a judicial and appeals body
 - Monitor and adjust district finances
 - Review facilities issues
 - Monitor the collective bargaining process
 - Approve or ratify contracts, agreements, settlements, and other

5. Community Engagement
 - Speak with a common voice about district priorities, goals, and issues
 - Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities to help ensure the voice of the community is thoughtfully considered when setting direction/priorities
 - 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

GOVERNANCE TEAM NORMS

The Board of Education seeks to reach full Board support when setting direction, approving action items, and assigning resources. We accept that only the Board as a collective body has authority to, for example, direct staff, commit District resources, or bind the District to a specific course of action. No individual Board member may do so -- we set direction through most of the Board. However, we do believe that it is in the district's best interest for the governance team to strive to achieve the support of the entire Board when making decisions, as this recognizes the voices of the community, for which the Board members are responsible for including in the District's work.

Communications	
Board – Superintendent Communication/Board Member Inquiries and Requests for Information	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent will provide the Board with efficient, accurate information before meetings and through the Friday letter. • Board members are encouraged to seek necessary information to do their work, including but not limited to asking questions regarding Friday's letter, upcoming agendas, and committee work. • Board members will demonstrate respect for the superintendent and staff in all communications. • Mindful that only the collective Board of Education may direct the superintendent, individual Board members will carefully distinguish between inquiries and direction. • All Board members will have access to the same information. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members will direct all district communication to the superintendent, which may include concerns or complaints from a school community

	<p>member, media inquiries, and official documents/requests for meetings from local organizations or government leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent will either answer or direct staff to answer Board member inquiries and requests for information and share the information with the entire Board when appropriate, as determined by the superintendent. • The Board encourages the superintendent to clarify how a request for information may impact staff–time demands. • Board members may direct communications to appropriate staff members and copy the superintendent.
Keeping the Board Informed	<p>Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members can access sufficient and equal information. <p>Agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible regarding serious issues that include but are not limited to liability exposure, media exposure, serious injury, staff issues, or other serious concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The superintendent exercises discretion and independent judgment on what to report to the Board. • Bi-weekly Friday Letter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The superintendent shall communicate bi-weekly with the Board through the Friday Letter. Information to be included, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist in backgrounding the Board to help facilitate productive Board meetings. ▪ Routine information regarding district operations. ▪ Alerts to upcoming activities/issues impacting the district or in which the Board may become involved. ▪ Calendar of Upcoming Board Meetings and Important District Activities. • Confidential Friday Letter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The superintendent shall also provide a Confidential Friday Letter to the Board on an “as needed basis.” Information placed in this separate correspondence shall be deemed confidential as defined in the Brown Act. ◦ Sensitive and confidential information will be opened with “Confidential. Do Not Reply All. Do Not Forward” to support compliance with the Brown Act. • The superintendent shall ensure that Board members receive copies of district communications and school newsletters.

Superintendent Messages to the Community	<p>Principle: The Board and superintendent agree that communication from the superintendent to the community should be relevant to school matters.</p> <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Superintendent will review messages with the president unless they are urgent and time-sensitive (student or staff safety). • The superintendent will consider messages with the Board for input, questions, or concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Feedback from Board members is to be provided via phone conversations only.
Email or Text Communication	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members wish to avoid unintentional violations of the Brown Act. • Board members wish to be courteous and responsive to one another. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the superintendent sends an email to all Board members and does not want a response, they may indicate this by placing the words “No Reply Needed,” “Do Not Reply All,” “Do Not Forward” in the subject header of the email. • If the superintendent emails all Board members and seeks a response, he/she may indicate this by placing the text “Reply Requested” in the email's subject header. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Board members will use the “reply” function so that <u>only the superintendent receives the response</u>. o Members will not use “reply to all.” o Board members will make every reasonable effort to respond to emails (and calls) within 24 hours. • Board members understand that any communication – including emails or text messages from a personal account or device – that is made in the course of their duties as an elected official may be disclosable as a public record under the California Public Records Act (“CPRA”), if subpoenaed or where otherwise required by law. Board members are encouraged to be respectful and professional in any written communication with each other, staff, or members of the public and be mindful that such communications could viewed by the larger community. • The District also has a data retention policy which, pursuant to applicable state and federal law, requires records to be retained for a prescribed period of time. Board members should consult with District staff before permanently deleting or destroying any documents in their position.

Serial Meetings/ Brown Act Compliance	<p>Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board members wish to avoid unintentional violations of the Brown Act. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When approached by one or two Board members regarding a matter within the Board's jurisdiction, both Board members will disclose that a discussion occurred with another Board member without providing details or positions that would cause the disclosure to become a serial communication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If two other members have discussed the issue, the Board members will stop the current conversation.
Use of Social Media	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board members wish to make information available to any member of the public. Board members understand that when they have a social media page (X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, etc.) on which they discuss or post matters that concern district business and permit the public to comment or post, they have created an open forum subject to First Amendment protections such that Board members cannot block, remove, or edit followers or their comments, content or posts which they disagree with or find offensive. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board members will not interact with one another on social media platforms regarding district business, including "liking" or commenting on other members' posts. Board members agree they will not use social media to conduct district business. Board members will make their official Board member social media pages available to everyone. If Board members maintain private social media accounts, it is recommended that they include an express disclaimer in a prominent area of their page/site that the account is private and refrain from including any indicia that might suggest otherwise (e.g., holding themselves out as a Board member or utilizing District logos or banners). Board members may de-activate features that allow others to comment or post on their social media accounts, but such practice shall be applied uniformly to all third parties. If commenting is allowed, Board members will not delete or hide comments on their official social media pages. Board members agree to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post a disclaimer that they are not posting on behalf of the district and not intending to create a public forum for school Board business. Set explicit decorum standards and expectations on their official social media pages, including a prohibition on profanity or threats.

Meeting Preparation

<p>Placing Items on the Agenda</p>	<p><i>Principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members have the right to request that an item within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the agenda. • The agenda belongs to the entire Board and should be managed to help advance the district's goals and service to students. • Items for consideration on the agenda must fall within the purview of the Board. • Members should understand the process for making these requests. <p><i>Agreements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board president and the superintendent shall meet to review the agenda before its publication and distribution. • The Board president and Superintendent have the final say on whether an item appears on the agenda and when it will be heard. • If a request by another Board member to place an item on the agenda is declined by the President or Superintendent, the requesting Board member may request that the decision be put to a vote on whether the item should be agendized. If approved, the item is placed on the subsequent agenda. • If items are requested to be placed on the agenda, they are reviewed in the context of the published governance calendar for appropriate placement. • The superintendent may determine that the request is best addressed by providing information in a Friday Letter. In this case, the superintendent will call the requesting Board member to discuss their recommendation. <p>Items for the agenda may be requested by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Board member may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Email or contact the superintendent or Board president with a request to place an item on the agenda. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board members will be mindful that email requests should not reveal a position or disposition to avoid opening before the complete Board discussion. • A member of the public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Must submit requests in writing/email to the superintendent or Board president and will be reviewed by the Board president and superintendent when setting the agenda. o The Board president and superintendent have sole discretion in these decisions.
<p>Board Packet for Meetings</p>	<p><i>Principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are prepared for Board meetings. • Board members have equal access to information. • Board members demonstrate respect for staff. <p><i>Agreements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members may email the superintendent or appropriate staff member anytime with questions regarding Board meeting materials. • If Board members email staff directly, they will copy the superintendent.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure question(s) can be answered before or at the Board meeting, question(s) will be submitted before the Board meeting when possible. • The superintendent will, if appropriate, share any questions and answers with all board members by email. The Board trusts the superintendent to make this judgment.
Efficient Meetings: Ask Questions in Advance	<p>Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure meeting efficiency, Board members agree that providing questions to staff before the meeting will allow them to be fully prepared for discussion and deliberation. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members will, if possible, inform the superintendent if they intend to ask questions at a Board meeting. • Board members may not always anticipate questions in advance. If so, Board members will inform the Board and community before asking. For example: "I did not ask this in advance, so you may not have the answer here, but here..."

Board Meetings	
Structure of Meetings	<p>Closed Session - (Closed session can either come before or after open session)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidential items – note: under the Brown Act, only specific topics may be discussed in closed session and must be appropriately agendaized. Sample topics may include personnel matters, labor negotiation updates, pending litigation, settlement, etc. • All topics during closed session are strictly confidential, and Board members cannot discuss or disclose any portion of closed session matters with another party unless the Board collectively has approved the disclosure. <p>Open Session: See the sample Board agenda at the end of this handbook.</p> <p>Purpose of Consent Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent is a portion of the open session agenda in which multiple matters are grouped, and the Board votes in a single action to approve them collectively and at once. The purpose of the Consent agenda is to allow for the efficient operation of District business. Appropriate items for the Consent agenda include but are not limited to, the approval or renewal of minutes, personnel reports, and standard contracts (service or purchase agreements, partnership MOUs, etc.) for which the Board would likely unanimously approve without modification or discussion. The Consent agenda should <u>not</u> include controversial subjects, require staff elaboration, formal hearings, or Board deliberation, are likely to draw substantial public

	<p>interest and comment, and/or are tentative or multi-faceted matters that are not conducive to a simple “Aye”/ “Nay” vote.</p> <p>Action Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Read – present item to the Board for discussion, deliberation, and direction to staff for possible additional study or revisions • Second Read – present item to the Board for discussion and action.
Role of the President	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board wants its meetings to be effective and efficient. • The president manages the meeting consistent with the Board’s agreements. • When the president is absent or cannot preside over a meeting, the clerk shall perform the president’s duties. • When the president and the clerk are absent, the next in line shall perform the president’s duties. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board permits the Board president to enforce the Board’s bylaws regarding the conduct of meetings. • Set agenda with superintendent. • Call meetings of the Board. • Call the meeting to order and preside over the meeting. • Announce the agenda items. • Recognize speakers and enforce Board protocols for protecting speakers from disturbance or interference. • Facilitate deliberations and votes at meetings. • The president has the same rights as other board members, including discussing and voting. • Perform other duties per the law and Board policy.
Role of the Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To fulfill the president’s duties in the president’s absence. • Perform any other duties assigned by the Board. • Certify or attest to actions taken by the Board when required. • Maintain such other records or reports as required by law. • Sign documents on behalf of the district as directed by the Board. • Serve as presiding officer in the absence of the president and vice president. • Notify Board members and members-elect of the date and time for the annual organization meeting. • Perform any other duties assigned by the Board.

Meeting Management	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board wishes to conduct business professionally. • The Board wants its meetings to be effective and efficient. • The Board seeks to maintain a warm and collegial tone to its meetings. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board president will recognize colleagues to speak. • The president may advance the meeting by saying, "Unless there are new ideas..." • No texting from the dais.
Meeting Management: Student Safety	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members want community members to have their concerns addressed appropriately. • Board members wish to protect student safety. <p>Agreements:</p> <p>Board president will use this sample wording to mitigate public comment referencing personal or identifying information about a minor:</p> <p>Student safety is a priority for Board members, including protecting their right to privacy. Though we prefer that community members do not disclose information that would identify a specific minor/student when addressing the Board in open session, there is nothing that stops them from doing it. There are, however, things that the Board president can say and do to help direct the conversation appropriately and protect the student(s).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario One: The Board president interrupts the speaker and politely and calmly says, "Clearly, this is very important to you. I can see how much you care and want to help you. To ensure we understand the circumstances or situation, we need to get this information to the right people to address it. The best way to do that is for me to arrange for someone from the staff to meet and help you right now. So, I'd like to ask XX staff members to please meet <<community member name>> in the back of the room for further discussion." • Scenario Two: The Board president says, "I'm so sorry <<insert community member name>>. I apologize for the interruption, but I need you to know that we prefer constituents not to publicly speak about minor students by name or other specifically identifying information. Protecting the privacy and rights of our students is important to us as a Board. If you feel the need to continue addressing this situation publicly, I ask that you please refrain from providing any identifying information about the student(s) involved. Alternatively, I can arrange for you to speak directly with staff."
Reports to the Board	<p>Principles:</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives sufficient information to do its work. • Values the contributions of district staff. • Keeps meetings focused and efficient. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff reports will be provided in advance unless unavoidable.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff reports should address as applicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Impact on students o District priorities o Policy o Cost o Options & Alternatives o Rationale for proposed action • Guidelines for staff, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Focus on the most important aspects of the issue. o Avoid jargon. (Provide a glossary.) o Please don't read slides or reports to the Board.
Public Comment at Meetings	<p>The public has the right to address the Board on agenda items or non-agenda items at the beginning or when the item is called.</p> <p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public will be treated respectfully. • The board and superintendent are responsive to public comment. • Board meeting is productive and efficient. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President opens the item. • Staff reports on the item. • The president calls for public comment. • The president opens public comments and reminds the community of the guidelines for public comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Three-minute time limit per person per topic, 20 minutes total. o The president may, in consultation with the Board, adjust the time to accommodate large groups. o Set a timer so the speaker(s) can monitor their time and the Board president can more easily enforce the time limit. o Comments must be within the purview/jurisdiction of the Board. o Comments should be directed to the full Board • The President will acknowledge each speaker and respond appropriately.
Deliberations	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are prepared for deliberation by advanced study of Board materials. • All Board members have an opportunity to participate. • All Board members work to demonstrate an understanding of the views of all other Board members. <p>Agreements:</p> <p>In deliberations and for responding to staff recommendations, the Board will reflect on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District mission, values, and priorities • Policy • Budget • Impact on students • The perspectives of the community

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on other systems: staff, facilities, etc. • Reasonableness
Board member Comments / Reports	<p>Principle: Board members wish to keep the public informed of their activities and participation in events and meetings.</p> <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members will attempt to keep comments to less than 3 minutes. • Board members will focus comments on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Board development activities (may include professional reading, training, etc.) o District activities they have attended.

Other Board Member Protocols	
Missing a Board Meeting	<p>Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of every Board member is important and expected at every meeting. <p>Agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members will notify the superintendent's office if they will be absent from a Board meeting. • Absent members are expected to read the Board Packet and to contact the superintendent if there are questions or comments regarding the agenda or supporting materials. • Board members are encouraged to contact the Board president or superintendent for Board meeting results upon returning from an absence.
Visiting Schools	<p>Principles: Board members visit schools to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate interest in student learning and support for staff work. • See the connection between the work of the Board and the experience of students and staff. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a courtesy, Board members inform the superintendent's office when they plan to visit schools. • Board members call principals to schedule a visit. • Board members follow the school rules regarding visitors (e.g., sign in at the school office.) • Board members are careful not to make evaluative statements to school staff or students.

Handling Concerns that Involve Board Members' Own Children	<p>In order to work effectively with district staff about our children, Board members agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the same process expected of all parents to follow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meet with the teacher first, and then follow the chain of command: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with the principal, ▪ Consider using the complaint policy. • Be clear that they are speaking to the teacher as a parent (i.e., “My child is having this problem How can I help them?”) • Understand that sometimes a spouse or significant other may be the better person to handle a situation. • Inform the superintendent of the situation before any meetings.
Handling Concerns	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat others with respect. • Support District policy and procedures regarding concerns or complaints. • Board members stay within their role. <p>Agreements:</p> <p>In responding to concerns, Board members will follow the steps below and be mindful that the Board may ultimately be considering the matter under the applicable complaint process, so the Board generally stays apart from the investigation stage of the complaint or concern to preserve neutrality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive – Listen and show gratitude • Repeat - Explain their point to their satisfaction. (“Do you believe that I understand?” and/or “What would you like me to do for you?”) • Remind – Explain that you have no authority as an individual. • Re-Direct –Direct them back to the appropriate person at the appropriate level. Be sure to acknowledge the speaker's emotion and express that you hear their concern. • If the person expresses concerns about speaking with staff members, then the Board members shall direct the person to the superintendent. In these situations, the Board member shall inform/prepare the superintendent. • Report – Board members shall share concerns that they are hearing from members of the public so that the superintendent may listen for trends and areas that require their attention. This should be handled through a phone call, not email. <p>Board members will forward email concerns from employees or community members to the superintendent for attention.</p> <p>Board members may respond, “Thank you for reaching out. I have forwarded your message to the superintendent for attention.”</p>

Structure of the Board Agenda at Board Meetings

A. Call to Order -President

1. Pledge of Allegiance-President
2. Roll Call-President

B. Adopt Agenda-President

C. Recognitions, if any-President

D. Public Hearing, if necessary-President

E. Consent Agenda: President

1. All matters of the consent agenda are considered routine and will be enacted by the Board in one motion without prior discussion.
2. When the Board adopts the agenda, the President asks if any consent item may be removed from the consent agenda by any member of the Board for a separate discussion.
3. Examples of consent agenda items may include:
 - Meeting minutes
 - Approval of warrants
 - Routine personnel matters
 - Routine district matters

F.. Communication/Reports: President

1. This may include reports from employee associations, the student Board member, the school's principal hosting Board meetings, the superintendent, and the Board members.
2. Particular school or district reports will be calendared as needed
3. Public Input –
 - This is when audience members may address the Board on items not listed on the agenda.
 - We request that anyone wishing to address the Board please state your name and address.
 - Due to limitations of The Brown Act, board members are not allowed to engage with the public or act on items not on the agenda.
 - Individuals addressing the Board will be limited to three minutes per person.

G. Discussion/Action Items-President opens each item and the Staff Presents.

President asks for questions from the Board

President and takes public comment

1. The sequence of departmental reports will vary based on the nature of the agenda items.
2. Department reports include personnel, finance, facilities, curriculum, and instruction.
3. Department reports normally will be agendized with discussion/action items first, followed by information items.

H.. Closed Session

1. Closed sessions may be scheduled either before the start of the regular Board meeting or at the end.
2. Consent agenda items are confidential and must meet the guidelines as established by the Brown Act, including, but not limited to, personnel and legal matters.

I. Adjournment