



Tumwater School District

Continuous Student Learning in a Caring, Engaging Environment

Board Governance Handbook

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

Board of Directors

Jill Adams, Director District #1

Casey Taylor, Director District #2

TBD, Director District #3

Melissa Beard, Vice President, Director District #4

Darby Kaikkonen, President, Director District #5

Superintendent

Kevin Bogatin

Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements

This handbook reflects the governance team's work on the creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, and norms and agreeing 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

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

- We set the direction.
- We establish the structure.
- We provide support.
- We ensure accountability.
- We act as community leaders.

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

- Setting the District's Direction
- 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

To make meetings positive and productive experiences for all, we make the following collective commitments to each other.

WE AGREE TO –

- Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, and 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.
- Commit 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 (this is the way we operate)!
- Maintain confidentiality (builds trust).
- Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.

AND – ABOVE ALL –

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

Board Governance Protocols

1. Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

1.1. Board:

- Board members carry authority only as a 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

1.2. 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.

1.3 Responsibilities of Individual Board Members:

- Attend all Board and Board committee meetings and functions, such as special events.
- Be informed about the organization's mission, services, policies, and programs.

- Review agenda and supporting materials prior to Board and committee meetings.
- Serve on committees or task forces.
- Educate others about the district.
- Follow conflict-of-interest and confidentiality policies.
- Refrain from making special requests of the staff.
- Assist the Board in carrying out its fiduciary responsibilities, such as reviewing the annual budget and audit.

1.4 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, 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, with the superintendent appropriately responding to the individual and/or Board member.

2. Board Meetings and the Agenda

2.1. Meetings of the Board are held in public **but are not open-forum town hall meetings**. 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 Board members to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public.

- 2.2. Work sessions will be on the second Thursday of each month with regular Board meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month. The regular public meeting will begin at 6:00 pm. For any Board meeting scheduled to be 3 hours or more, a meal will be provided (generally during the executive session) to the Board and participating staff. Work sessions may be scheduled and shall be scheduled at the discretion of the Board.
- 2.3. Board members will review the information provided to them and be open to ongoing professional development and training.
- 2.4. The superintendent, with the support of staff, will create each Board agenda. In advance of the preparation of the Board agenda, Board members may make a request to the Board president for items to be placed on the agenda. The Board president and superintendent will discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting, in advance of the Board meeting.
- 2.5. The president of the Board will determine the seating arrangement for the Board, superintendent, and support staff for meetings of the Board.
- 2.6. The superintendent and Board believe that the need for information and/or clarification on agenda items is best accomplished by the submission of written questions/requests for such ahead of meetings. This will allow for in-depth consideration of items without unduly lengthening the meeting time.
- 2.7. Board members will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the superintendent and district staff have the opportunity to prepare to answer Board members' questions at Board meetings.
- 2.8. When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. If unforeseen questions arise during the meeting, the Board will acknowledge their question or comment as spontaneous and that they understand staff may not have the information on hand to answer the question.
- 2.9. Any request of the staff by an individual Board member, which will take more than 60 minutes to fulfill, must be made by the majority

of the Board so as not to detract staff from focused efforts that are meant to move the district toward achieving the year's goals.

2.10. Individual Board members will self-monitor compliance to Open Public Meeting laws, including limiting executive sessions to the legally appropriate agenda item(s).

2.11. During the portion of the meeting reserved for Board member reports/communications, Board members shall only provide information (i.e. activities or professional development they have attended as a Board member). They may request items to be placed on future agendas, but due to the Open Meeting Act, it is important that this time in the agenda not be used to engage in discussion items not on the agenda or for partisan political statements.

2.12. The use of social media by Board members will be limited to personal topics.

2.13. Board members 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
 - Staff members, when presenting items to the Board, are to provide appropriate back-up material for the Board to review 3 business days prior to the Board meeting. If it is necessary to provide a presentation to the Board, presentations are to be limited to 5-10 minutes unless prior approval of the president is received.
- Board discussion and deliberation

2.14. Public Participation

- Since the Open Public Meeting Act expressly prohibits discussion leading to action from being conducted **unless agendized**, Board members are strongly encouraged to refrain from engaging

members of the public in dialogue about issues not on the agenda.

- In general, citizens and residents wishing to “dialogue” with members should be encouraged to contact individual members and discuss issues of importance with them or the superintendent as appropriate.
- As a result of a public comment, a member may ask that the superintendent follow up with or without a report to the Board.

2.15. Public Comment

- Time limits, 3 minutes per speaker, a 30-minute total time limit will be imposed by the Board president. If a topic would be more suitably addressed at a later time, the president may indicate the time and place when it may be presented.

2.16. Board members individually and collectively demonstrate confidentiality as appropriate and as outlined through the mandates of the revised Code of Washington, the Open Meeting Act, and other compliance criteria established by law or legislation.

2.17. The use of electronic 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.”

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

- Electronic devices will be set for ‘silent’ or vibrate.
- Board members will be discreet in checking cell phones if necessary.
- When meeting virtually, whenever possible, Board member’s cameras will be on during the meeting.

2.19. The Board believes its members have a duty to vote on issues before them.

- Abstentions are most appropriate in cases where there is a personal relationship between a litigant and a member

(perception of bias), a decision that financially impacts the member or his or her immediate family (legal conflict), or a personal connection to the member that may bias a decision on discipline.

- When abstaining because there may be a perception of bias, the member is encouraged to so state.
- Where an actual legal conflict of interest exists, the member must publicly declare the conflict and recuse him or herself from voting at all.

2.20. Board members will model professional behavior by being polite and respectful of the points of view held by their fellow Board members. The Board members will address one another by director, (last name).

2.21. Each Board member respects the right of other Board members to vote in the minority position.

2.22. Parliamentary procedures are to be utilized as a guide to ensure for the most effective and efficient Board meeting possible. Accordingly, the Board utilizes Roberts Rules of Order as its guide to managing the agenda of each Board meeting.

2.23. Upon the request of an individual Board member, a roll call vote will be provided.

2.24. The protocol for recording the votes of the individual Board members shall follow the rotation established by the Board.

2.25. Decisions of the Board

- Board members are reminded that policy and decisions reserved to the Board must be made as a Board. Except where otherwise indicated in the Education or Government Codes, a majority consists of **3 of 5 members** of the Board voting for an item. Once the decision has been made, it becomes the decision of “the Board.”
- Under the concept of majority rule, each member is compelled to support the decisions of the Board 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.

2.26. Whenever Board members are appointed or elected to serve on the Board, unless otherwise requested by the Board member, the superintendent shall administer the oath of office at a meeting of the Board.

2.27. Chart of Policy Revision Process

Step 1:

- District leadership identifies essential policy/procedure changes that are needed.

Step 2:

- Administrative assistant provides editable electronic documents to the appropriate staff member.

Step 3:

- Staff member makes changes to current district policy based on suggested WSSDA model policy. The current district policy is marked up so the Board can easily see what changes have been made. Draft changes are emailed to the Board for review the Friday before a regular meeting.

Step 4 – Board Meeting 1:

- The original policy with mark up, is placed on the Board agenda under Reports to the Board, and is considered as the first reading. The appropriate staff member presents the changes to the Board.

Step 5 - Board Meeting 2:

- The policy is placed on the Board agenda, under Action Items and is considered second reading and for recommended approval. The staff member who was present

at the first reading will be available to answer questions from the Board. Any discussion will take place prior to a motion to approve policies.

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

- 3.1. Recognizing that the community elects leaders to serve as Board members, it is assumed that each Board member can serve as Board president. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the practice to be used to elect the officers of the Board will follow a seniority rotation into the leadership roles of the Board. Seniority is determined by the year in which an individual is elected. Due to personal circumstances (e.g., medical reasons), a Board member who is next in line to serve as vice president, may elect not to rotate into the vice president position at an organizational meeting. If this occurs, the member would go to the end of the order of succession. The rotation will start with the current vice president rotating into the president role, and the next senior Board member into the vice president role.
- 3.2. Board members will be actively involved in the district through observations and individual stakeholder engagement. Individual Board members will not serve on district committees.
- 3.3. 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.
 - When individually visiting schools or departments in your capacity as a Board member, as a professional courtesy, Board members are encouraged to notify 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.

3.4. 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.

4. The Board's Role in Collective Bargaining

4.1. 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 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 do not attend at-the-table negotiations.
- The Board believes that the collective bargaining process shall be as transparent as possible. Accordingly, the Board recommends the district and the associations agree to broadcast negotiations, via virtual technology, for both the Board and the association members.
- 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 is the collective bargaining spokesperson for the Board.

5. The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent

- 5.1. The Board will commit to working through and with the superintendent on issues regarding the running of the district. The superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible (under the concept of no surprises) of:
 - Serious safety concerns
 - Serious disciplinary action
 - Serious/unexpected personnel changes or disciplinary issues
 - Serious illness or death of a student or a staff member
 - Legal or liability concerns
 - In all matters, the Board and superintendent are expected to protect confidential information.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. The Board recognizes the success of the superintendent is critical to the success of students and the district. As such, the Board believes the superintendent should an experienced professional mentor/advisor who is not affiliated with the district.
- 5.4. As the norm, the superintendent speaks on behalf of the Board. The Board president is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.
 - The superintendent will inform the Board when the media contacts the superintendent or the district (when the superintendent is informed) or when they are on any district property (excluding sports coverage).

5.5. 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.).

5.6. The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the superintendent. The superintendent shall receive a formal written evaluation by June 1 of the first year of the contract and by March 1 of each year thereafter. In consultation with the superintendent, the evaluation process and associated documents will be developed and approved by the Board prior to the beginning of the school year.

- 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.

6. The Ongoing Implementation of Board-Approved Protocols

6.1. 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 the 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, superintendent contract, superintendent 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 on 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 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 the governance protocols of the Board.

7. What do we do when someone violates one of the protocols?

7.1 Principles/Assumptions

- We should expect that we will make mistakes.
- Self-monitoring our own behavior can be very difficult.
- Behavior in conflict with agreements erodes trust.
- Behavior that is not challenged is condoned.
- Confronting another team member can:
 - Be difficult. If done poorly, it can be damaging.
 - If done correctly, it demonstrates that the Board is a highly functional team!