



San Mateo County Board of Education  
*and*  
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

# Governance Handbook

(Adopted June 25, 2025)

## **Our Vision:**

The San Mateo County Board of Education and County Superintendent of Schools strive for excellence and equity in education for every student, every educator, and every school.

# Governance Team

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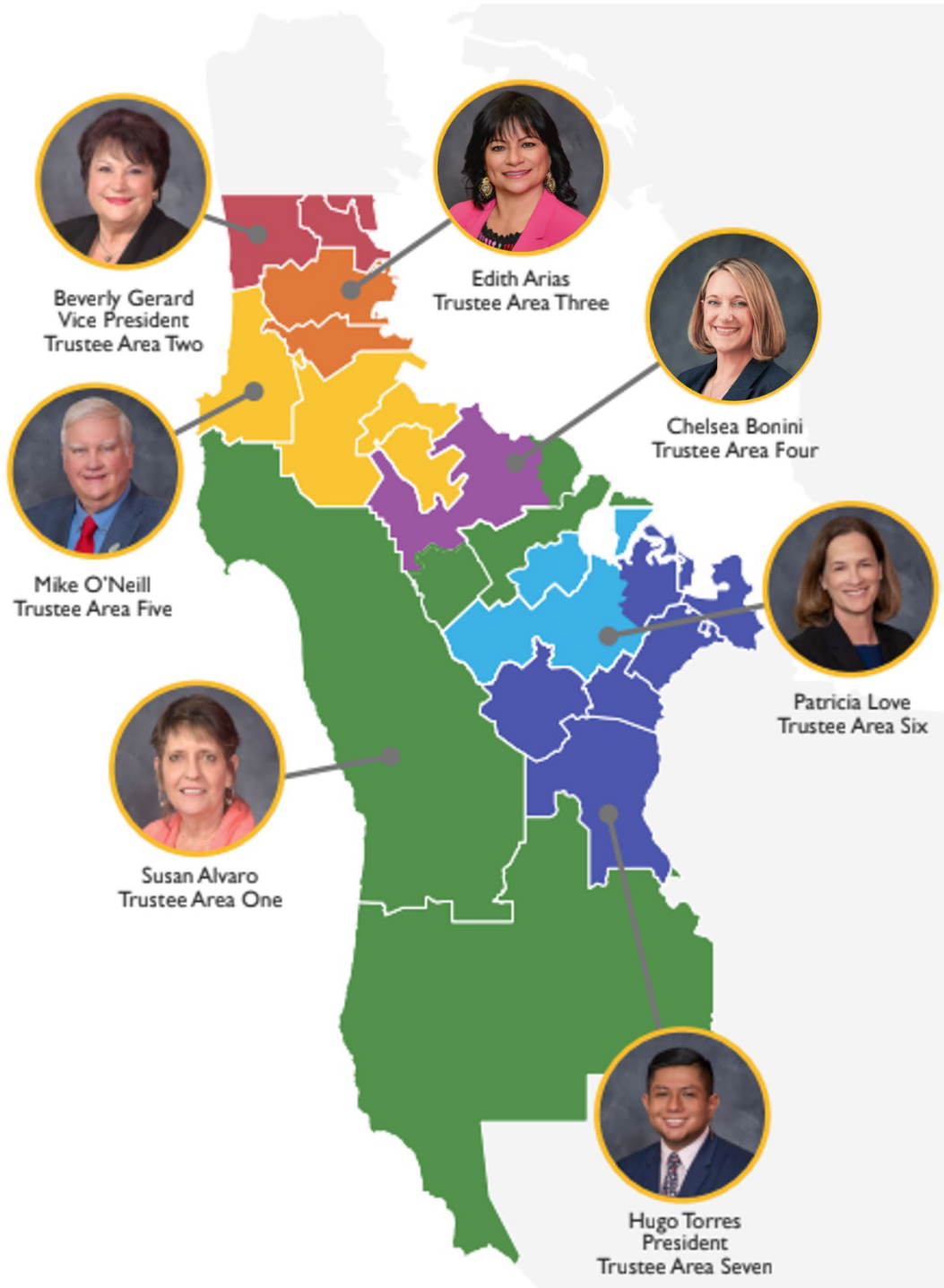
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This Governance Handbook outlines practices and understandings that help build and sustain a positive working relationship between the County Board of Education and the County Superintendent of Schools. The Governance Team will periodically review and evaluate its governance practices and update this handbook as deemed necessary.

# Trustee Area Map



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# Unity of Purpose

## Who We Are

The Governance Team is comprised of seven elected County Board Members representing seven distinct trustee areas across San Mateo County and the elected County Superintendent. As representatives of the public, we work on behalf of the entire community: children, parents, staff, businesses, and all community members.

Board Trustees hold the interest of ALL the children in trust. We must take this responsibility seriously and always be cognizant of our purpose. As our moral commitment, we strive to improve outcomes for all students through the shared vision of the County Board and Office of Education, “Excellence and Equity in Education: Every Student, Every Educator, Every School.”

The duties and responsibilities of the Board and the Superintendent are different, but it is essential we work in partnership.

## SMCOE Equity Statement

The San Mateo County Office of Education and Board of Education welcome and embrace individuals from all backgrounds, races, ethnicities, disabilities, gender identities, sexual orientations, immigration statuses, and religions. For our governance team, equity means providing every learner aged 0-22 with the education and support needed to thrive in school, career, and life, and every staff member with opportunities to grow and further deepen their impact.

To achieve equity, the San Mateo County Office of Education and Board of Education commits to:

- Disrupting inequitable practices and replacing them with equity-driven, transparent systems
- Improving outcomes for historically and currently underserved student groups, honoring their strengths and talents
- Continuing to educate ourselves so we are better able to confront and dismantle systemic inequities
- Centering voices of those who have been historically marginalized and underserved

# **Roles and Responsibilities**

## **The Role of the Board**

The major roles of the County Board include:

- Working with the County Superintendent to establish the direction and priorities for the County Office of Education through its budgetary responsibilities
- Providing community leadership on educational issues and advocating on behalf of students and public education at the local, state, and federal levels
- Maintaining a cooperative and supporting relationship with local school districts, their governing boards, and their communities
- Serving as the governing board for the SMCOE Court and Community Schools
- Serving as an appellate body for expulsions, interdistrict transfers, and charter school petitions, renewals, and appeals

## **The Duties of the County Board**

The County Board shall:

- Adopt rules and regulations not inconsistent with the laws of California, for its own government
- Keep a record of its own proceedings
- Approve the annual county school service fund budget of the County Superintendent before its submission to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Review, as a scheduled agenda item at a regular public meeting, the report of the annual audit provided for by the County Superintendent
- Hear appeals on the following actions by district governing boards: student expulsions; inter-district transfer requests; denials, non-renewals, or revocations of charter petitions; and other matters as required by law
- Fix the salary of the County Superintendent
- Consider charter school petitions as allowed by the Education Code, provide oversight for charter schools approved by the County Board, and fulfill other statutory responsibilities in connection with charter schools
- Fulfill responsibilities relating to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), including adopting the County Office of Education Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and any revisions and updates to it

## **An Effective Board**

To be an effective governance team, our Board agrees to:

- Strive to create a more child- centered County that better serves all youth
- Focus on the best interests and wellbeing of all students
- Ensure fiscally responsibility
- Uphold a culture of trust and accountability
- Ensure our County Court and Community Schools programs are of high quality, meet students' needs, and prepare students for future transitions
- Serve with the highest standards of ethical practices
- Slow down to make thinking explicit and provide time for the governance team buy-in
- Be accessible to all members of our community
- Be prepared for discussions at public meetings, having reviewed all materials in advance
- Remain open to a range of ideas and concerns
- Respect and support the Board's decisions despite individual votes

## **What do Board Members need from one another in order to fulfill their responsibilities?**

Board Members need:

- Mutual support and participation in performing the work of the Board, including participation in Board Subcommittees and in Liaison Roles
- Good communication
- Honesty
- Preparation for meetings
- Participation, focus, and presence at Board Meetings
- Mutual respect and accountability

## **What does the Board need from the Superintendent to fulfill its responsibilities?**

The Board needs:

- Accurate information on a timely basis that is as detailed as possible
- To receive copies of appropriate emails, letters, and press releases to keep the Board informed
- The Superintendent to bring alternatives, options, and the reasoning behind those options. The Board appreciates hearing the Superintendent's recommendations and reasons as the Board respects the Superintendent's expertise and experience
- To hear from the Superintendent directly by phone if something is at the crisis level
- The Superintendent to address Board inquiries and provide updates on the request to the requesting Board member and full Board, as needed, in an effort to be as transparent as possible
- Transparency in sharing the work of the County Office of Education, especially in regard to the cycles of improvement and monitoring of student outcomes
- Notice of any new or changed courses of study for students in the Court and Community Schools, such that the Board can approve such modifications
- Collaboration, transparency, and respect for the Board's role in ensuring accountability for improved outcomes for all students in the Court and Community School programs
- Constructive feedback from the Superintendent

## **The Role of the County Superintendent**

The County Superintendent is elected separately from the County Board and shall possess those powers and duties authorized or required by the State Constitution, Statutes, and rules of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Board of Education.

The County Superintendent:

- Operates the County Office of Education as the chief executive officer of the organization
- Is the employer of County Office of Education staff
- Educates specific student populations (i.e., early learners and caregivers, students who require targeted special education supports, and students who are at-risk or involved in the juvenile justice system)
- Works directly with the school districts within their jurisdiction to provide support and guidance for their successful operation, including oversight for district fiscal stability and review of school district Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)
- Provides technical assistance to school districts and implements regional support activities to assist district and school staff
- Provides direct service to small school districts
- Works collaboratively and in concert with the County Board of Education to support the mission and vision of the County Office of Education and the County Board

## **What does the Superintendent need from the Board in order to fulfill her responsibilities?**

The Superintendent needs:

- The Board to contact the Superintendent with questions and requests for information. All efforts to contact the Superintendent are welcome and will serve to help communicate and clarify information for the individual Board member and the full Board as needed
- Timely responses to email, texts, and phone calls from the superintendent
- Clarity, consensus, and patience of the Board regarding requests for information that will require a substantive time commitment from the County Office of Education to respond
- Board Members to acknowledge emails and other communications from the community and then forward to the Superintendent and Board President so they may address the issue, as appropriate
- Board Members to send all questions and concerns directly to the Superintendent who may respond or forward them to the appropriate person. The response will be sent to the entire Board
- Constructive feedback from the Board

## **Create and Sustain a Positive Governance Culture**

### **Our Norms**

We agree to:

- Keep the best interests of all students as a priority
- Follow this governance handbook
- Take reasonable risks for significant benefit for children's education
- Be respectful, unified, and hardworking
- Be prepared for discussions at public meetings, having reviewed all materials in advance
- Understand individual board members do not speak for the board, nor do individual Board Members have the authority to resolve issues and complaints

### **Meeting Guidelines**

- Respect everyone's time. Keep remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed
- Individually take responsibility for the work of the team and for the success of the meeting by engaging in discussion, addressing concerns, and supporting majority decisions
- Wait to speak until a member has finished talking
- Come to meetings fully prepared

## Meeting Processes

### Role of the Board President

- The County Board of Education shall elect a president from among its members to provide leadership on behalf of the County Board and the educational community it serves. The specific duties of the President are outlined in [Board Bylaw 9121: President](#).

### Creating the Board Agenda

- The County Board president and the County Superintendent of Schools, as secretary to the County Board, shall work together to develop the agenda for each regular and special meeting. Individual Board Members may request agenda topics during regular Board meetings under the standing agenda item: Suggested Topics for Future Board Agendas. More information is available in [Board Bylaw 9322: Agenda/Meeting Materials](#).

### Confidentiality

- The San Mateo County Board of Education recognizes the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of information acquired as part of a County Board member's official duties. Confidential/privileged information shall be released only to the extent authorized by law. Board Members are expected to keep confidential matters confidential. More information is available in [Board Bylaw 9011: Disclosure of Confidential/Privileged Information](#).

### Selecting a Board President

- The County Board of Education shall hold an annual organizational meeting, which shall be the first meeting on or after the second Friday in December. (Education Code 1009) More information is available in [Board Bylaw 9100: Organization](#).

### Board Governance Self-Assessment

- The County Board of Education is expected to take collective responsibility for the County Board's performance and periodically evaluate its own performance. Board evaluation is considered a best practice of effective governance. The citation in Board Policy can be found in [Board Bylaw 9005: Governance Standards](#).

### Attendance at Board Meetings

- Any County Board member who does not attend all County Board meetings during the month is eligible to receive only a percentage of the monthly compensation equal to the percentage of meetings they attended, unless otherwise authorized by the County Board in accordance with law. (Education Code 1090)

A County Board member may be compensated for meetings they missed when the County Board, by resolution, finds that they were performing designated services for the County Board at the time of the meeting or that they were absent because of

illness, jury duty, or a hardship deemed acceptable by the County Board. (Education Code 1090) The Board Policy citation can be found in [Board Bylaw 9250: Renumeration, Reimbursement, And Other Benefits](#).

## Responding to Staff or Community Concerns or Requests

- Individual County Board members do not have the authority to resolve complaints. Any County Board member approached directly by a person with a complaint should refer the complainant to the County Superintendent of Schools or designee so that the problem may receive proper consideration and be handled through the appropriate process. For the purpose of requesting information, County Board members shall also refer County Board-related correspondence to the president and the secretary of the County Board for dissemination to the rest of the County Board or placement on the agenda, as appropriate. The Board may adopt certain protocols, such as the [Protocol for Community Members and Groups Seeking Letters of Support](#). The Board Policy citation can be found in [Board Bylaw 9200: Limits of Board Member Authority](#).

## Student Board Members

- The San Mateo County Board of Education believes it is important to seek out and consider students' ideas and perspectives and to provide opportunities for student leadership and civic involvement. In the fall of 2019, the County Board took action to include one Student Liaison from the San Mateo County Youth Commission to sit with the Board
- The Board concurrently adopted Procedural Rules of the San Mateo County Youth Commission and of the San Mateo County Board of Education to guide the selection process and provide explicit responsibilities for the Youth Liaison
- Additionally, on January 1, 2022, AB 824 became law in California which provides a formal process for the appointment of student school board members to county boards of education
- The bill prioritizes inclusion of direct jurisdiction students (i.e., court and community school students) and respects the sensitivity of student matters that come to county boards under their appellate jurisdiction. More information is available in [Board Bylaw 9150: Student Board Members](#)

## Visiting Schools

The Board believes site visits are important. They provide Board Members with the opportunity to see the good things happening in SMCOE schools and help them stay informed by providing information about programs and instruction

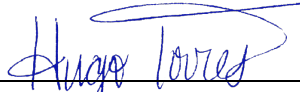
- Visits should not be disruptive to school staff and should not interfere with instruction and the operations within the school, which is part of the reason why visits will be limited to three Board members
- Set visiting dates will be calendared by County Office school program leaders at the beginning of each school year to ensure visits are scheduled at every school program each semester. This ensures Board Members have the opportunity to attend a minimum of two visits per school annually
- Board members shall contact County Office school program leaders directly to schedule additional visits as desired by individual Board members. Once scheduled, these dates will be offered to additional Board members to attend, however no school visits shall have more than three Board members attending at the same time in order to comply with the Brown Act
- County Office school program leaders need to know in advance that Board Members want to visit a school site so staff can prepare and are not surprised

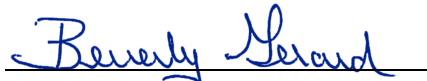
When arranging for and visiting a school, Board Members will:

- Inform the County Superintendent about the desire to visit a school, as a courtesy
- Ensure the visit is scheduled in advance with County Office school program leaders
- Upon arrival at the school, check-in at the office
- Wear identification badges
- When attending special events, approach and engage the principal and other appropriate staff

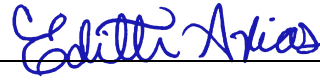
We have reviewed and agree to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the San Mateo County Board of Education, the San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools, staff, students, and the community.


Affirmed on this 25th day of June, 2025

  
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Hugo Torres, President

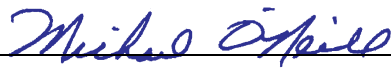
  
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Beverly Gerard, Vice President

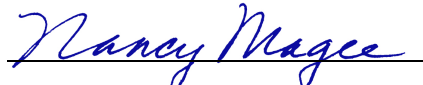
  
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Susan Alvaro, Trustee

  
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Patricia Love, Trustee

  
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Michael O'Neill, Trustee

  
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Nancy Magee, Superintendent