



# BARSTOW UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Governance Handbook, December 2025

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### Board of Trustees

Leonard Williams, President  
Aaron Heldreth, Vice President  
Anthony Yslas, Clerk  
Raymond Perea, Trustee  
Elizabeth Givens, Trustee

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### Superintendent

Deanna Swearingen

*This handbook reflects the governance team's efforts to create a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, norms, and protocols that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.*

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## **BUSD Statement of Principles**

The goal of our district is to ensure that each of our schools treats students fairly, equitably, is safe, and maintains an environment conducive to learning. To reach that goal, our Barstow Unified School District is committed to:

- Nondiscrimination in discipline consistent with state and federal law and our district's Board-approved policies acknowledging the rights of all students and parents to appeal unfair disciplinary practices, and effective training for all staff in culturally responsive Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports and restorative justice principles, practices, and values.
- Treatment of all students fairly and equitably in the administration of discipline, without regard to any protected characteristic, through ongoing data analysis and implementation of a district-wide behavior support guide, consistent with education code and federal law that is published and acknowledged by all staff, students, and parents.
- Ensuring consistent and equitable implementation of research-based alternatives to punitive discipline through data analysis to ensure other means of correction are implemented, evaluated, improved upon, and supported by a culturally responsive system that promotes restorative practices with research-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline.
- Working with students who exhibit behavior issues to ensure that students remain engaged in school through the elimination of exclusionary practices and the implementation of supportive Social-Emotional Learning and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, including academic supports that build strong, authentic relationships between students and staff and foster teacher confidence and student understanding and achievement.
- Taking effective and prompt steps to prevent and eliminate harassment, and remedy its effects on students based on any protected characteristic or category through implementation and advertisement of a clear process of reporting any type of harassment or bullying incidents with effective training and clear roles for all staff members in the prevention and elimination of any harassment or bullying.

\*\*\*For more information, contact the Director of Supportive School Climate: Dr. Vinney Williams.  
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# OUR DISTRICT'S VISION STATEMENT & MISSION

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**Vision Statement:** Barstow Unified School District will provide a safe, fair, equitable, and quality educational experience to ensure each student reaches their full potential and makes positive contributions to their communities.

**Mission:** Barstow Unified School District's continuing mission is to provide a foundation for sustained educational excellence for all students. By setting clear goals and expectations, the Barstow Unified School District will create innovative learning environments that prepare and inspire all students and staff; by adhering to our Statement of Principles, our students will thrive academically, contribute to society, and lead healthy, purposeful lives.

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# **Unity of Purpose**

## **Who We Are**

We operate as a "Governance Team." This team consists of the elected Board of Trustees and the Superintendent. While we have unique roles, we work together to create a framework for successful leadership that benefits all children.

## **Core Values:**

### **1. Integrity**

We are committed to earning and maintaining trust through accountability, fairness, and serving the best interests of the students by consistently acting with honesty, upholding ethical standards, and making responsible choices.

### **2. Student Achievement**

We are committed to helping students achieve the highest levels of success, utilizing data-driven decision-making in line with the Barstow Unified School District Statement of Principles.

### **3. Fiscal Responsibility**

We are committed to being educated and responsible stewards of the funds entrusted to us to maximize the greatest student success through transparency with all stakeholders and to maintain long-term fiscal solvency.

### **4. Equal Opportunity and Inclusionary Processes**

We are committed to ensuring students, staff, and the community receive equitable opportunities through district policies.

### **5. Safety**

We are committed to providing safe and healthy environments for all students and staff.

### **6. Collaborative Teamwork with Staff and Unions**

We are committed to collaborative teamwork with our employees to advance student achievement and staff interests.

### **7. Building Community Partnerships**

We are committed to fostering strong partnerships and maintaining regular communication with families and the community to enhance students' learning options and interests.

# **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board and Superintendent function as a team, but our roles are distinct.

## **The Board of Trustees**

The Board governs as a collective body; individual members have no power outside of legal Board meetings. The Board's five major responsibilities are:

1. **Setting the Direction:** Focusing on student learning, assessment, and the district vision.
2. **Establishing the Structure:** Employing the Superintendent, adopting policies, and setting the budget.
3. **Providing Support:** Acting with professional demeanor and upholding the district's vision, mission, and core values.
4. **Ensuring Accountability:** Evaluating the Superintendent and monitoring student achievement and finances.
5. **Acting as Community Leaders:** Communicating clear information to the public and advocating for children.

## **The Superintendent**

The Superintendent serves as the chief executive officer and educational leader.

- **Tactical Leadership:** While the Board sets the "strategic charge" (the what and why), the Superintendent creates and launches the plans to meet that charge (the how).
- **Operations:** The Superintendent manages day-to-day operations, personnel, and the implementation of Board policy.

# **Norms (Our Positive Culture)**

To function effectively, we agree to the following behavioral ground rules:

**1. No Surprises** We value open communication. We keep the Superintendent and fellow Board members informed of concerns or issues *before* meetings. We do not "blindside" one another.

**2. United Voice** Once a vote is taken, we support the decision of the Board, even if we voted against it. We may explain our reasons for voting "no," but we will not undermine the collective decision of the board.

**3. Respectful Deliberation**

- We listen actively to all sides of an issue.
- We focus on the issues, not personalities.
- We assume the good intentions of other team members.
- We maintain confidentiality regarding Closed Session items.

**4. Professionalism** We prepare for meetings by reviewing materials in advance. We treat everyone with dignity and civility.

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# **Protocols (Standard Operating Procedures)**

These agreed-upon procedures handle common governance situations.

## **A. Handling Complaints from the Public**

Board members do not fix problems individually. When approached with a complaint, we listen, but we remember that we are hearing only one side of the story. We utilize the "6 R's" method:

1. **Receive:** Listen without preparing a response.
2. **Repeat:** Paraphrase to ensure understanding.
3. **Request:** Ask what solution the person is seeking.
4. **Review:** Discuss available options.
5. **Redirect:** Direct the person back to the appropriate staff member or chain of command.
6. **Report:** Notify the Superintendent of the conversation.

## **B. Visiting Schools**

Visits are encouraged as a professional courtesy. Board members must:

- Notify the Superintendent (and/or Principal) ahead of time.
- Not encroach on the learning environment or interrupt lessons.
- Remember, they do not have administrative authority during visits.

## **Protocols (Standard Operating Procedures) continued...**

### **C. Requesting Information**

- **Process:** Individual requests for information or action must be directed to the Superintendent, not to other staff members.
- **Equity:** Information provided to one Board member will be provided to *all* Board members.
- **Efficiency:** If a request requires excessive staff time, the Superintendent may bring it to the full Board to decide if it is a priority.

### **D. Board Meeting Management**

- **Questions:** We submit questions on agenda items to the Superintendent in advance (e.g., by Monday noon) to allow staff time to prepare responses.
- **Public Input:** We listen to public comments to inform our deliberations, but generally do not engage in back-and-forth debate with the public during meetings.

## **Building Trust & Effectiveness**

We recognize that trust is a function of two things: **Character** (integrity/intent) and **Competence** (skills/results).

### **Working Styles**

We acknowledge that our team is made up of different working styles, all of which are valuable:

- *Analyticals*: Data-driven and methodical.
- *Drivers*: Focused on results and action.
- *Amiables*: Relationship-focused and team builders.
- *Expressives*: Visionary and big-picture thinkers.

### **Continuous Improvement**

We are committed to continuing education and annual self-evaluations to review our effectiveness as a governance team.