North Monterey County Unified School District

Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees

Sandra Ruiz, President
Martha Chavarria, Vice President
Angelo DiMarco, Clerk
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Adriana Melgoza-Ramirez, Member

Superintendent

Dr. Matt Turkie

Effective Governance

The North Monterey County Unified School District (NMCUSD) Governance Handbook reflects the Board of Trustees and Superintendent's shared work to create and sustain a framework for effective governance. This framework is built on:

I. Unity of purpose

II. Roles and responsibilities

III. Team agreements and protocols

This handbook is informed by governance workshops and updated through successive effective governance workshops in collaboration with governance consultants. It is designed to be reviewed regularly and updated as needed to reflect current practice and Board direction.

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I. Unity of Purpose

Unity of purpose is the common focus, and the values, beliefs, and deeply felt goals that governance team members share about students, the District, and public education. It helps the team transcend individual differences to fulfill a greater purpose on behalf of all students.

NMCUSD Mission / Vision

"To ensure that all students graduate college, career, and life ready"

This mission guides the work of the governance team. Every decision, policy, and priority should be aligned to preparing all students for success in college, career, and life.

Core Values

NMCUSD is guided by the following core values:

1. To have high expectations for all and to provide the necessary support so that each student receives what they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.
2. To be culturally responsive, human-centered, and kind. To be inclusive, collaborate across differences, and find common ground.
3. To engage in continuous Improvement and Data-Based Decision-Making

2024–2027 LCAP Goals

The Board affirms the District's adopted goals within the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) for 2024–2027. These goals inform and align with the work of governance:

1. Rigorous and Equitable Instruction
2. Student Engagement and Connectedness
3. Parent / Community Engagement and Connectedness
4. Staff Engagement and Connectedness
5. Academic Achievement (ELA and Math): Improve academic achievement in English Language Arts and Mathematics for all students, particularly English Learners (including Long-Term English Learners), socioeconomically disadvantaged students, Hispanic students, homeless youth, and students with disabilities, as measured by the California School Dashboard by the end of 2027.
6. By 2026, reduce suspensions for all students, and particularly for homeless and foster youth, through implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), as measured by Dashboard suspension rates.
7. By 2026, increase college and career readiness for all students—with particular focus on English Learners (districtwide and at NMCHS), Hispanic youth (NMCC for Independent Study), low-income students (NMCC for Independent Study), and all students at NMCC for Independent

Study—through strategic use of tools and strategies within CaliforniaColleges.edu, as measured by A–G completion rates and dual enrollment participation.

8. By 2026, Central Bay High School and North Monterey County Center for Independent Study will reduce chronic absenteeism for low-income students by implementing actions that promote engagement, relationships, and student connectedness.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

Effective governance requires clarity about the distinct but complementary roles of the Board and Superintendent, and respect for professional staff. The Board and Superintendent function together as a governance team, each operating within defined roles to ensure strong leadership for the District.

Role of the Board	Role of the Superintendent
School board trustees are the representatives of the community. They are elected to ensure that district schools educate students in a manner that reflects community values and interests. The role of the Board is to govern the school district, not to administer its day-to-day operations.	The Superintendent is hired by the Board to provide professional leadership and expertise in the daily operations of the District. The Superintendent: ● Works with the Board to develop and maintain an effective governance team ● Implements Board policy and direction ● Manages instructional and non-instructional operations ● Provides the Board with accurate information, professional analysis, and recommendations

The Board of Education at a Glance

- The Board of Education consists of **five members**, elected to staggered four-year terms.
- Terms commence on the second Friday in December following the election.
- The Superintendent serves as **Secretary to the Board**.
- At least one **Student Board member** is selected by the District's high school students to represent student interests, in accordance with Board-approved procedures. The term of the student Board member is one year, and the student attends all Board meetings except closed sessions.

Major Responsibilities of the Board (CSBA-Aligned)

The role of the Board is to provide leadership and citizen oversight, ensuring that the District is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the community. Major responsibilities include:

1. Setting the Direction. The Board:

- Focuses on **student learning**
- Assesses district needs with stakeholder input
- Generates, reviews, and revises direction-setting documents (Local Control and Accountability Plan: mission, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)
- Ensures appropriate, inclusive processes are used to develop these documents
- Ensures these documents drive all district efforts

2. Establishing an Effective and Efficient Structure. The Board:

- Employs the Superintendent
- Sets and adopts policies for items such as hiring and employment, curriculum, budget, facilities planning and use.
- Provides direction for and votes to accept collective bargaining agreements

3. Providing Support Through Behavior and Actions. The Board:

- Acts with a professional demeanor that models the District's beliefs and vision
- Makes decisions and provides resources that support agreed-upon priorities and goals
- Upholds Board-approved policies
- Fosters a positive personnel climate
- Remains knowledgeable about district efforts and able to explain them to the public

4. Ensuring Accountability to the Public. The Board:

- Evaluates the Superintendent
- Monitors and revises policies as needed
- Serves as a judicial and appeals body when required by law or policy
- Monitors student achievement and program effectiveness and requires changes when indicated
- Reviews and adjusts District finances
- Monitors the collective bargaining process

5. Acting as Community Leaders. The Board:

- Speaks with a common voice about district priorities, goals, and issues
- Engages and involves the community in district schools and activities
- Communicates clear information about policies, programs, and fiscal conditions
- Educates the community and media about issues facing the District and public education
- Advocates for students, district programs, and public education at the local, state, and national levels

What the Board Needs from the Superintendent

The Board needs the Superintendent to:

- Take direction from the Board as a whole, not from individual Board members
- Provide guidance and “teach up” to the Board regarding complex issues and processes
- Communicate effectively and regularly, providing updates and context
- Adhere to applicable laws, policies, and established processes
- Consider community perspectives when making recommendations
- Share data and research that support recommendations and decisions
- Provide common talking points for the Board on complex or “hot” topics
- Have all of the agenda items in and ready before meeting with the board president to finalize.

What the Superintendent Needs from the Board

The Superintendent needs the Board to:

- Provide direction as a unified body rather than through individual requests
- Communicate community concerns and requests directly so they can be addressed appropriately
- Ask questions and seek clarity in a timely manner
- Allow the Superintendent and Cabinet to manage the operational aspects of the District and hold them accountable for results
- Share and focus on Board-adopted priorities
- Stand united on adopted decisions and direction, while remaining open to adjusting when new information arises
- Highlight positive developments and act as merchants of hope for students, staff, and the community

What Board Members Need from the Board President

Board members need the Board President to:

- Keep fellow Board members informed
- Maintain order and uphold meeting norms and protocols
- Facilitate processes and procedures fairly and consistently
- Keep discussions focused on the topic at hand
- Support strong onboarding protocols for new Board members

What Board Members Need from Each Other

Board members agree to:

- Build and maintain trust and unity in decision-making
- Follow through on norms, agreements, and commitments
- Respect and adhere to governance protocols and procedures

- Put the community and students first, engaging the community appropriately
- Be prepared for Board meetings (reviewing agendas, asking clarifying questions, reviewing relevant documents)
- Focus discussions on the agenda item at hand
- Maintain confidentiality, particularly regarding Brown Act and closed session matters. If there is a leak of information from closed session it will be brought up in closed session.

III. Governance Team Agreements and Protocols

Effective governance teams establish clear **agreements** (expectations for behavior) and **protocols** (agreed-upon procedures) that guide how they interact and conduct business. These agreements are consistent with District policies, bylaws, and applicable law, and are reviewed periodically.

A. Community Agreements

As a governance team, the Board and Superintendent agree to:

1. Respect one another and be self-aware
2. Be hard on issues and soft on people
3. Assume positive intent
4. Ensure decisions are student-centered
5. Allow input from all governance team members
6. Be transparent in conduct and decision-making
7. Demonstrate integrity, including self-reflection and accountability

B. Communication Agreements

Superintendent-to-Board Communication	**Board-to-Superintendent Communication**
The Superintendent will keep Board members informed of important matters by: ● Providing weekly email updates as needed ● Using text messages, emails, and phone calls as appropriate for timely issues ● When there is a question from one board member, provide the answer to all board members	● Board members will keep the Superintendent informed of important matters and concerns they hear from the community. ● The Board President will gather input from Board members on potential future agenda items and share that information with the Superintendent. ● The Board President and Superintendent will hold regular one-on-one meetings (generally weekly, on Fridays).

• Aiming to publish Board meeting agendas by Friday afternoon prior to the Thursday Board meeting	• The Superintendent will hold meetings with other Board members as needed or as requested. • Board members will contact the Superintendent with questions about an agenda item in a timely manner

C. Meeting Agreements

The Board commits to running meetings that are student-centered, efficient, and respectful. To that end, we agree to the following:

1. **Start and end on time**
    - Arrive prepared and ready to begin at the scheduled time.
    - Return promptly from breaks.
2. **Stay on the agenda and on topic**
    - Speak to the current agenda item only.
    - Use the “future agenda items” process for new topics.
3. **Keep students at the center**
    - Frame comments and questions around impact on students and learning.
    - Avoid personalizing issues or making decisions based on isolated anecdotes alone.
4. **One person speaks at a time**
    - Do not interrupt or speak over others.
    - The Board President recognizes speakers and manages the speaking order.
5. **Be concise and solution-focused**
    - Keep remarks brief and avoid repeating what has already been said.
    - Offer questions or suggestions that move the discussion toward a decision.
6. **Model respect and professionalism**
    - Disagree on issues without attacking individuals.
    - Refrain from side conversations, multitasking, or distracting behavior.
7. **Honor the role of public comment**
    - Listen respectfully to all speakers.
    - Do not engage in debate with members of the public during public comment; respond, if needed, through staff or at a later agenda item.
8. **Support Board decisions once made**
    - Engage in open and honest discussion before the vote.
    - Once a decision is made, speak about it as a Board decision, not as individual positions.

Protocols

The following protocols formalize how the Board and Superintendent will handle key recurring situations.

Protocol 1: Responding to Staff or Community Concerns or Complaints

Rationale
The governance team values hearing from constituents while also respecting established processes and legal requirements. Individual Board members have no authority to resolve complaints and must not undermine established complaint procedures or Board Bylaws, including BB 9200.

Protocol
When a Board member is approached by a community or staff member with an issue or concern, the Board member will:

1. **Receive**
    - Listen actively
2. **Repeat**
    - When appropriate, paraphrase or ask clarifying questions to ensure accurate understanding of the concern.
3. **Redirect**
    - Refer the person back into the appropriate **District process or chain of command** (e.g., teacher, principal, department, Human Resources, formal complaint process).
4. **Report**
    - Notify the Superintendent of the conversation so that the Superintendent has a complete picture and can follow up as appropriate.
5. **Respond (Superintendent)**
    - The Superintendent will, when appropriate, follow up with the Board member regarding how the issue was addressed.

Protocol 2: Board Meeting Management – Effective Deliberation and Public Comment

Rationale
The purpose of Board meetings is to conduct District business in public. The Board values input from constituents but recognizes that orderly, effective meetings require clear process.

Protocol

1. The Board President facilitates Board discussions and manages public input, following the adopted parliamentary procedures, Rosenberg's Rules (guide is here)
2. When opening public comment, the Board President will refer to the public input guidelines printed on the agenda, consistent with BB 9323.
3. For each agenda item, public comment will generally be limited to 20 minutes, with three minutes per speaker. The Board President may:
    - Encourage speakers to focus on new information
    - Extend public comment time when appropriate with Board consent

4. Board members will not direct their questions and comments directly to members of the public.
5. A timer will be used to manage public input.
6. The Board President may extend discussion time if a majority of the Board agrees.

Managing Action Items: Rosenberg's Rules (This guide is not exhaustive)

1. The Board President introduces the item.
2. The Superintendent or staff provides background information and any recommendation.
3. Board members ask clarifying questions.
4. The Board President opens the item for public comment.
5. The Board President invites a motion and a second. If there is no motion, we end here and the agenda item does not pass.
6. The Board president ensures everyone understands the motion.
7. The board discusses the item.
8. The Board votes on the motion.

Protocol 3: Responding to Emails and Texts from Community and Staff

Rationale
The Board wishes to maintain consistent, lawful, and professional communication practices. Trustees seek to hear from constituents while avoiding Brown Act violations and maintaining a clear, unified process.

Protocol

1. **Forward, then (optionally) respond**
    - Forward the message to the Superintendent so it can be logged, routed, and addressed.
    - If responding, keep it brief, neutral, and non-committal.
2. **Reply appropriately**
   An example of a reply:
   "Thank you for reaching out and sharing your perspective. I have forwarded your message to our Superintendent so it can be reviewed and followed up on as appropriate."
3. **Direct people into the right process**
    - When appropriate, refer the person to the established chain of command or complaint process (teacher → principal → District office, etc.).
    - Avoid promising specific outcomes or intervention.
4. **Use District email**
    - If contacted through a personal email account, reply once to redirect:
      "For District-related matters, please contact me at my District email address: [name]@nmcusd.org."

Protocol 4: Social Media and Public Platforms

Rationale
Social media and other public platforms can help Board members stay connected with the community and share information about the District. At the same time, online activity can easily be misunderstood as an official Board position, escalate conflict, or raise legal and confidentiality concerns. This protocol is

intended to support responsible, professional use of social media and public platforms by Board members.

Protocol

1. **No Board deliberation on social media**
    - Trustees will not use social media to discuss, debate, or build consensus on items that are or may be before the Board.
2. **Clarify personal vs. Board views**
    - When speaking in a public forum, Trustees will clarify when they are expressing a personal viewpoint, not an official Board position, unless authorized to speak on behalf of the Board.
3. **Do not respond to online arguments**
    - Trustees will generally not engage in back-and-forth exchanges in comment threads or debates on social media.
    - If a response is required, it will typically be provided through the District's official communication channels.
4. **Protect confidentiality**
    - Trustees will not share or allude to confidential information (e.g., closed session items, student or personnel matters) in any public or electronic forum.

Protocol 5: Site Visits

Rationale
Board member visits to sites are important for understanding conditions, supporting staff and students, and informing governance decisions. At the same time, visits must respect staff roles and daily operations.

Protocol
When a Board member wishes to visit a school site, the Board member will inform the Superintendent who may accompany the Board member when possible. To avoid Brown Act violations, school site visits are limited to a maximum of 2 board members at a time.

During site visits, Board members act as observers and supporters, not evaluators, and will not direct staff, promise specific actions, or bypass established channels.

Protocol 6: Board Reports

Purpose
Board reports at Board meetings exist to inform the entire governance team and the public about Board members' activities and observations.
Content
During Board reports, trustees may share:

- Events they have attended
- Positive developments and notable successes
- Information about community partnerships and collaborations

- Key information learned at conferences or trainings

Board reports are not used to debate agenda items, direct staff, or introduce new action items outside of established processes.

Protocol 7: Managing Conflict Between Board Members

Rationale

Disagreements are a normal part of governance work. However, unresolved or personalized conflict between Board members can damage trust, distract from student-focused work, and erode public confidence. The Board commits to addressing conflict early, directly, and respectfully.

Protocol

1. **Address concerns directly, first**
    - When a Board member has a concern about another Board member's words, actions, or behavior, they will first make a good-faith effort to address it directly with that person, in a timely manner and in a private setting.
    - The goal of the conversation is understanding and resolution, not blame.
2. **Use respectful, solution-focused language**

    In direct conversations, Board members will:
    - Focus on specific behaviors or incidents, not personal traits.
    - Use "I" statements (e.g., "I felt… when…") rather than accusations.
    - Seek to understand the other person's perspective by asking clarifying questions and listening actively.
    - Aim to identify what each person can do differently going forward.
3. **If unresolved, seek facilitation**

    If the conflict is not resolved after a direct conversation OR if a Board member does not feel safe or comfortable addressing it alone:
    - The concerned Board member may ask the Board President to help facilitate a follow-up conversation.
    - If the conflict involves the Board President, another officer (e.g., Vice President) or a neutral third party (e.g., CSBA governance consultant) may be asked to assist.
    - The Superintendent may participate only as appropriate and agreed upon, recognizing that the Superintendent is accountable to the full Board and should not be put in the middle of Board member disputes.
4. **Escalation to the full Board (rare)**
    - If a conflict persists and interferes with the governance team's ability to function, the Board President (or designee) may place a governance team item on a future agenda (e.g., closed session if legally appropriate, or an open study session on norms and roles).
    - The focus of such an agenda item is on team norms, roles, and processes, not on publicly criticizing individual Board members.
5. **Maintain professionalism in public meetings**

    Regardless of unresolved disagreements, Board members will:

- Refrain from personal attacks or disparaging comments in public meetings or on public platforms.
- Keep discussions focused on agenda items and issues, not individuals.

6. **Honor confidentiality and trust**
   - Direct conflict conversations are treated as confidential, unless both parties agree to share details.
   - Board members will avoid "side conversations" with others that escalate tension or create factions.
   - When discussing concerns with the Board President or Superintendent, Board members will do so with the intention of seeking resolution, not building support against another member.
7. **Use governance training and retreats proactively**
   - The Board will use study sessions, workshops, and retreats to revisit norms, clarify roles, and strengthen working relationships.
   - When conflict has occurred, the Board may agree to specific follow-up actions (e.g., revising norms, adding a check-in protocol) to prevent recurrence.

Protocol 8: Board Members Hosting or Attending Community Meetings

Rationale

Board members have an important role as visible leaders in the community. Attendance and participation in community meetings can strengthen trust and improve understanding of district needs. At the same time, Board members must avoid creating confusion about their authority, must not violate the Brown Act, and must ensure that concerns are routed into appropriate district processes.

Protocol

1. **Clarify your role at the meeting**
   When hosting or attending a community meeting (including neighborhood gatherings, civic groups, or school community meetings), Board members will:
   - Clearly state whether they are:
     - Attending as an individual Board member,
     - Attending at the request of the Board (rare—only when explicitly authorized), or
     - Attending in a listening/learning role only.
   - Avoid implying that they are speaking on behalf of the entire Board unless the Board has explicitly authorized a message or position.
2. **Board members can meet with their constituents on an as needed basis**
   - If in conjunction with staff, it can be on district property. The meeting would be organized and communicated by the Superintendent to the board.
   - If not done in conjunction with staff, it would need to be off district property, and the Board member will inform the Superintendent in advance. The Board member would communicate the meeting to other board members during board reports at a board meeting.
3. **Avoid Brown Act violations and serial meetings**
   To ensure compliance with open meeting laws:

- No more than a quorum of Board members will attend the same community meeting to discuss District business, unless the meeting has been properly posted as a Board meeting under the Brown Act.
- Board members will not use community meetings to deliberate together on matters within the Board's jurisdiction.
- Board members will avoid using community meetings to directly or indirectly build consensus among a majority of the Board on upcoming agenda items.

4. **Listen, don't promise specific outcomes**
   At community meetings, Board members will:
   - Listen actively and respectfully to concerns, suggestions, and questions.
   - Avoid making promises about specific actions (e.g., "We will change this," "We will remove that staff member," "The Board will vote this way.").
   - Use phrases such as:
     - "I appreciate you sharing this."
     - "I will make sure this is shared with our Superintendent so it can be reviewed."
     - "The Board acts as a whole, so I cannot commit to a particular outcome, but I can explain our process."
5. **Direct people into appropriate district processes**
   When concerns or complaints arise:
   - Board members will explain and reinforce the appropriate chain of command (teacher → principal → district office, or specific department/complaint process).
   - When appropriate, Board members will encourage use of formal complaint procedures and ensure people know how to access them.
   - Board members will not investigate individual complaints or attempt to resolve personnel or student issues on their own.
6. **Follow-up with the Superintendent**
   After attending or hosting a community meeting related to District business, Board members may provide a brief summary to the Superintendent
7. **Communicate with the rest of the board**
   - Board members may use reports to communicate any upcoming meetings being attended or hosted

IV. Governance Affirmation Page

We, the members of the North Monterey County Unified School District Governance Team, hereby affirm that we have reviewed and agree to follow the foregoing governance norms and protocols. We do so in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students, and the community. We will review and renew these agreements annually.

Affirmed on: _11/20/25_____

Board of Trustees

Adriana Melgoza-Ramirez, Board President

Angelo DiMarco, Vice President

Martha Chavarria, Clerk

Ricardo Diaz, Member

Sandra Ruiz, Member

Superintendent

Dr. Matt Turkie, Superintendent

V. Appendices

The following Board Bylaws and Board Policies from the NMCUSD Policy Manual are incorporated by reference and guide the governance work of the Board and Superintendent:

- **Appendix A** – Role of the Board (BB 9000)
- **Appendix B** – Limits of Board Member Authority (BB 9200)
- **Appendix C** – Administration: Concepts and Roles (BP 2000)
- **Appendix D** – Superintendent Responsibilities and Duties (BP 2110)
- **Appendix E** – Board President (BB 9121)
- **Appendix F** – Board Governance Standards (BB 9005)
- **Appendix G** – Superintendent Governance Standards (BP 2111)
- **Appendix H** – Agenda / Meeting Materials (BB 9322)
- **Appendix I** – Meeting Conduct (BB 9323)

The full text of these bylaws and policies is maintained in the NMCUSD Policy Manual and on the District's website.