

# Lennox School District Board of Education

## 2025 Governance Handbook



***Dr. Angela Fajardo, President***  
***Angeles Gonzalez, Vice President***  
***Karina Cordero, Clerk***  
***Marisol Cruz, Trustee***  
***Julio C. Vargas, Trustee***

***Gabriela Tavitian, Superintendent***

*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, norms, and protocols that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

|                                                                              |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <u>EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</u> .....                                            | 3     |
| <u>UNITY OF PURPOSE</u> .....                                                | 4     |
| Our District Core Values, Mission, Vision.....                               | 4     |
| Our Governance Team Beliefs.....                                             | 5-6   |
| <u>GOVERNANCE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES</u> .....                            | 7     |
| Performing Governance Responsibilities .....                                 | 8     |
| Setting the Direction .....                                                  | 8     |
| Establishing the Structure .....                                             | 8     |
| Providing Support .....                                                      | 8     |
| Ensuring Accountability .....                                                | 8     |
| Demonstrating Community Leadership .....                                     | 8     |
| <u>AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP</u> .....                  | 9     |
| Our Governance Norms .....                                                   | 10-11 |
| <u>STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</u> .....        | 11    |
| Our Protocols .....                                                          | 12    |
| Agenda questions answered before a meeting .....                             | 12    |
| Speaking with a common voice .....                                           | 12    |
| Handling concerns or complaints from the community or staff .....            | 12-13 |
| Individual Board member requests for information, materials, or action ..... | 13    |
| Board members visiting schools .....                                         | 13    |
| Placing items on the Board meeting agenda .....                              | 13    |
| Study sessions .....                                                         | 14    |
| Developing Board member leadership skills .....                              | 14    |
| <u>SIGNATURE PAGE</u> .....                                                  | 15    |

## EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE—CSBA

---

*There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization. The actions of an individual, a group coming together to govern, and the performance of governance responsibilities by the group.*

*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 (1) Maintain a Unity of Purpose, (2) Agree on and govern within appropriate roles, (3) Create and sustain a positive governance culture, and (4) Create a supportive structure for effective governance.*

*Effective governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school district and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement.*

### **Governance – A Definition**

*School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.*

## UNITY OF PURPOSE—CSBA

---

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

The Lennox School District Governance Team's Unity of Purpose is to: **Create an environment where every student is supported, challenged, and inspired to reach their full potential.**

## OUR DISTRICT'S MISSION, VISION

---

### VISION

Every Lennox School District student successfully transitions to college or career.

### MISSION

The Lennox School District is dedicated to providing our students an education that emphasizes:

- Cradle to College – Preparing students academically from birth to career.
- Community – Embracing the role of parents as partners in the educational process.
- Culture of Caring – Encouraging committed employees to support students and their families socially, emotionally, and academically.
- Career Bound – Preparing students with 21st Century Skills to successfully compete in our global society as creators, collaborators, communicators, and critical thinkers.

## OUR GOVERNANCE TEAM'S BELIEFS

---

We have an obligation to set an example of good governance in action for our community. We will model dignified problem-solving for our community and our children. The Board President works with the Superintendent to ensure Board meeting effectiveness. We intend that our Board meetings proceed professionally, efficiently, and effectively and that District staff will have the opportunity to provide necessary background materials and information to the Board in a respectful environment. Each Board member must have the freedom to express their viewpoint during Board deliberation. Everyone in attendance at Board meetings will be treated with dignity and respect.

It is essential that important information be communicated to members of the Board, the staff, and the community in as timely a fashion as possible. Board Members and the Superintendent have an obligation to communicate clearly about District issues to the staff and community. We recognize that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public. Confidential issues must remain confidential. It is important that the Board speak with clarity and consistency regarding Board actions in order to maintain the trust of our community.

## **Governance Team's Personal Beliefs**

Board Members, the Superintendent, and Cabinet Members identified a range of personal beliefs, and four beliefs were held in common:

### **Freedom, Honesty, Integrity, and Leadership**

The additional beliefs were identified by at least one governance team member:

- **Accountability**
- **Close relationships**
- **Country**
- **Effectiveness**
- **Ethical practice**
- **Excellence**
- **Fun**
- **Growth**
- **Having a family**
- **Helping other people**
- **Independence**
- **Influencing others**
- **Loyalty**
- **Personal development**
- **Realism**
- **Reputation**
- **Responsibility**
- **Time freedom**
- **Truth**

---

### **OUR GOVERNANCE TEAM IS MOST PROUD OF:**

- ✓ Strong team that wants to stay strong
- ✓ Fiscal stability
- ✓ The community we serve
- ✓ Professional growth
- ✓ Love, care, compassion for children
- ✓ Opportunities for parent engagement
- ✓ Positive reputation

## GOVERNANCE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES—CSBA

---

*Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. The role of the trustees, who sit on locally elected school boards, is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities. Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities. These are (1) setting direction; (2) establishing an effective and efficient structure; (3) providing support; (4) ensuring accountability; and (5) providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools.*

*These five responsibilities represent core functions that are so fundamental to a school system's accountability to the public that they can only be performed by an elected governing body. Authority is granted to the Board as a whole, not each member individually. Therefore, board members fulfill these responsibilities by working together as a governance team with the Superintendent to make decisions that will best serve all the students in the community.*

*The Board carries out these responsibilities in each of the following job areas:*

*Setting the District's Direction*

*Student Learning and Achievement*

*Policy & Judicial Review*

*Finance*

*Facilities*

*Human Resources*

*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. The following page provides more detail on how the Board performs its governance responsibilities in each job area. It's important to remember that boards who inadvertently get involved in staff functions undercut their ability to hold the Superintendent accountable for the results of those efforts.*

## PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES—CSBA

---

We agree with the responsibilities of school boards as described below by the California School Boards Association:

### ***Set the direction for the community's schools***

*Focus on student learning*

*Assess needs/ obtain baseline data*

*Generate, review or revise setting direction documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)*

*Ensure that an appropriate inclusive process is used to develop the above listed documents*

*Ensure that these documents are the driving force for all district efforts*

### ***Establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district***

*Employ and support the Superintendent*

*Establish a human resources framework that includes policies for hiring and evaluating other personnel*

*Oversee the development of and adopt policies*

*Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum and require data-producing assessment systems*

*Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facilities issues*

*Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements*

### ***Provide support through our behavior and actions***

*Act with professional demeanor that models the district's beliefs and vision*

*Make decisions and provide resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals*

*Uphold Board-approved district policies and support staff implementation of Board direction*

*Ensure a positive working climate exists*

*Be knowledgeable enough about district efforts to be able to explain them to the public*

### ***Ensure accountability to the public***

*Evaluate the Superintendent*

*Monitor, review and revise policies*

*Serve as a judicial and appeals body*

*Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness and require program changes as indicated*

*Monitor and adjust district finances and periodically review facilities issues*

*Monitor the collective bargaining process*

### ***Act as community leaders***

*Speak with a common voice about district priorities, goals and issues*

*Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities*

*Communicate clear information about policies, programs and fiscal condition of the district*

*Educate the community and the media about the issues facing students, the district and public education*

*Advocate for children, district programs and public education to the general public, key community members and local, state and national leaders*

## AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP –CSBA

### ***Governance Team Norms and Protocols:***

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

*The Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team in order to effectively meet district challenges. Agreed upon behaviors, or norms, and operating procedures, or protocols, support consistent behaviors and actions among team members. The purpose of the Lennox School District's governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among Board members, the Superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. The following norms and protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team and may be modified over time as needed.*

### **What Board members need from one another:**

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Trust
- Assume positive intentions
- Respect
- Be informed/be prepared
- Challenge each other
- Transparency

### **What Board members needs from the Superintendent:**

- Accountability
- Leadership
- Communication

- Solutions
- Options
- Implementation = results
- Not shying away from conflict/difficult situation
- Logistics
- Self-reflective

**What the Superintendent needs from Board Members:**

- Trust
- Collaboration/partnership
- Ongoing communication
- Accessibility
- “No surprises “
- Be a united front/common voice
- Follow process and procedures with community/employees/complaints
- Ask questions prior to Board meeting
- Respect or expertise to do the “how” to achieve the “what”

---

OUR GOVERNANCE NORMS – CSBA

---

*Teams have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave toward each other and other individuals. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift a negative one.*

*Because the community elects school board members to set and monitor the direction of the school district, and the district superintendent translates all efforts into action, it is vital that the board and superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open, honest communications.*

***We agree to:***

- ✓ Keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- ✓ Listen actively to all ideas.
- ✓ Listen openly without preparing responses.
- ✓ Communicate openly and honestly with each other.
- ✓ Respect differences. / We will show respect – never dismiss or devalue others.
- ✓ Give helpful feedback directly and openly.
- ✓ Build upon the ideas of others and look for common ground. / We will paraphrase for understanding.
- ✓ Take responsibility for the work of the team. / Be responsible for the success of the meeting – participate equally – address concerns.
- ✓ Stay focused on our goals and avoid getting sidetracked.
- ✓ When we have a difference of opinion, we will debate the facts of the situation and avoid personalities. / We will address process -- not personalities.
- ✓ Work to make sure there are no hidden agendas and that all issues and concerns can be dealt with openly by all members.
- ✓ Take responsibility to question, investigate, and communicate matters of public concern, and exercising such independence should not be construed as a violation of governance norms.

## STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE—OUR PROTOCOLS – CSBA

---

*Effective governance teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the trustees and the Superintendent in their functioning as a team (e.g., processes or structures for agenda setting, set-up of board room and table, agenda structure, handling complaints or concerns from the community, bringing up a new idea). These agreements about how groups will operate are often called protocols.*

The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of our governance team:

| Issue                                                       | Protocol                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Agenda questions answered before a meeting                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members should not play “gotcha” at Board meetings by surprising the Superintendent of Cabinet members with questions that may require background research to answer.</li> <li>• Board members may attempt to communicate with the Superintendent via phone or email by 7:00 p.m. the Monday night before a Board meeting to allow for complete answers.</li> <li>• This protocol does not preclude any Board Member from asking any additional questions during the meeting but acknowledges that it may require a delayed response.</li> <li>• Board members who have had questions answered prior to a meeting shall assure that the public knows the answer to your questions at the meeting. This could take the form of answers in staff reports or re-asking the question in the meeting.</li> </ul> |
| Issue                                                       | Protocol                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Speaking with a common voice                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members and the Superintendent shall have a common voice when speaking as a Board member after an action has been taken on an item, even if a Board member has voted in the minority on that item.</li> <li>• When expressing a personal opinion, which is not in compliance with a Board action, Board members should preface their comments with an exclamation that they are not speaking on behalf of the Board.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Issue                                                       | Protocol                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Handling concerns or complaints from the community or staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When someone brings an issue or complaint to a Board member, listen carefully and remember that one is only hearing one side of the story. Paraphrase what was heard for understanding and review the conversation with the complainant.</li> <li>• Board members, who are made aware of a community or staff concern or complaint, shall recommend the complainant to have a conversation with an employee closest to the problem to attempt to resolve it.</li> <li>• The Board member should also consider referring the complainant to the Uniform Complaint procedure at the District Office or online.</li> <li>• The Board member should always notify the Superintendent of the concern or complaint so that they may follow-up as appropriate. If the</li> </ul>                                         |

|                                                                        | matter involves the Superintendent, then the matter should go to the Board President.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Issue</b>                                                           | <b>Protocol</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Individual Board member requests for information, materials, or action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members' requests for information or materials should be responded to as quickly as possible. Should information not be readily available, the Superintendent or staff should prepare the information and deliver it to the requesting Board member as soon as possible and report it to all Board members.</li> <li>• Individual Board members should not direct action from any employee in the school District, as the only authority to direct action rests with the Board as a whole, when they are seated at a Board meeting.</li> <li>• Individuals may request action by proposing a future agenda item and, when it is placed on the agenda, explaining their interest in a particular course of action during the discussion of that item.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Issue</b>                                                           | <b>Protocol</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Board members visiting schools                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School visits are encouraged.</li> <li>• Board members should provide a reasonable courtesy notice when stopping by at a school site.</li> <li>• Board members should contact the Superintendent ahead of time to arrange a visit to a school or classroom and the Superintendent will attempt to accompany the Board member on the visit, if available.</li> <li>• Trustees will also be cautious about encroaching on the learning environment. To assist in this matter, the Superintendent will ensure principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt their lesson when a Board member visits a classroom.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Issue</b>                                                           | <b>Protocol</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Placing items on the Board meeting agenda                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members may suggest future agenda items at a Board meeting or by contacting either the Board President or Superintendent between meetings.</li> <li>• The Board President and Superintendent shall discuss requested agenda items and place them on a future agenda when a staff report can be provided.</li> <li>• Items of an emergency nature shall have precedent.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

| <b>Issue</b>                              | <b>Protocol</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Study sessions                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board shall provide Board study sessions with fewer agenda items on complex issues for deeper discussion and understanding of the Board and the public, as needed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Issue</b>                              | <b>Protocol</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Developing Board member leadership skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Board members should participate in the CSBA Orientation for New Trustees in their first year.</li> <li>• All Board members can participate in Masters-in-Governance, Parliamentary procedures such as Robert's Rules of Order.</li> <li>• All Board members must participate in Ethics/Conflict of Interest.</li> <li>• The frequency of trainings should be determined after completion of the initial training.</li> <li>• If one member asks for training, the training should be offered to all Board members.</li> <li>• After attending professional development, members should report on the benefit they have received.</li> </ul> |

|  |                                                     |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                                     |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul> |

|  |                                                     |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                                     |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul> |

|  |                                                     |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                                     |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul> |

## *Signature Page*

We have reviewed and agreed to the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Lennox School District Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew these agreements annually.

Affirmed on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

---

Dr. Angela Fajardo, Board President

---

Angeles Gonzalez, Vice President

---

Karina Cordero, Clerk

---

Marisol Cruz, Trustee

---

Julio C. Vargas, Trustee

---

Gabriela Tavitian, Superintendent



***California School Boards Association***

3251 Beacon Boulevard  
West Sacramento, CA 95691  
800/266-3382  
FAX 916/669-3277

**[www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org)**