

Position Description

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September 2026

San Francisco Unified School District
San Francisco, California



The San Francisco Unified School District ("SFUSD" or the "District") has engaged Major, Lindsey & Africa on an exclusive basis to conduct a national search for a **General Counsel**. SFUSD is an equal opportunity employer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – GENERAL COUNSEL

Overview: Reporting to the Board of Education and serving as a key member of the District's executive leadership team, the General Counsel is the District's chief legal officer and primary legal advisor to the Board of Education, Superintendent, and senior leadership. The General Counsel leads all legal affairs for one of California's largest and most complex public school districts, providing strategic counsel across governance, labor and employment, litigation, student matters, public contracting, investigations, regulatory compliance, and enterprise risk.

This is a highly visible and strategic leadership opportunity requiring an accomplished legal executive who combines exceptional legal judgment, political acumen, and executive presence with the ability to shape policy and organizational strategy. The General Counsel will be expected not only to respond effectively to the District's immediate legal needs, but also to anticipate emerging issues, strengthen legal and compliance systems, and proactively advise the Board, Superintendent, and executive leadership on the policies and practices that will position SFUSD for long-term success.

The District: Founded in 1851, the San Francisco Unified School District is one of California's premier public education systems and serves approximately 50,000 students across more than 100 schools and educational programs. With an annual operating budget exceeding \$1.1 billion and approximately 8,000 employees, SFUSD is the seventh-largest school district in California and one of San Francisco's largest public employers.

The District is committed to providing every student with an equitable, high-quality education while preparing students to thrive academically, socially, and professionally. Operating within one of the nation's most dynamic and diverse cities, SFUSD works in close partnership with educators, families, labor organizations, community leaders, and public officials to advance educational excellence and opportunity for all students.

Experience: The ideal candidate will be an accomplished legal executive with approximately fifteen (15) or more years of progressive legal experience, including significant experience advising executive leadership and governing boards within large, complex K-12 school districts. Prior experience successfully navigating sophisticated governance structures, labor and employment matters, investigations, litigation, and highly visible stakeholder environments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – GENERAL COUNSEL

The successful candidate will bring the perspective of a true in-house legal leader—someone who can move beyond responding to individual legal matters to proactively identify risk, shape policy, strengthen compliance systems, and build an effective and integrated legal function. Experience evaluating and developing legal teams, implementing processes and infrastructure, partnering across organizational functions, and guiding strategic policy decisions in a highly regulated and publicly scrutinized environment will be particularly important.

Location: The General Counsel will be based in San Francisco, California, and is expected to be in the office five days a week to regularly meet and partner with the Superintendent, Board of Education, executive leadership, legal team, and other key stakeholders. Given the collaborative and highly visible nature of the role, consistent in-person engagement is considered important to the District's success.

Relocation: The District welcomes interest from outstanding candidates nationwide. Relocation assistance may be considered for the successful candidate, although individuals with existing ties to the San Francisco Bay Area or prior experience serving large California K-12 school districts will be particularly well positioned for success.

Bar: Admission to the State Bar of California is required.

Position Summary

The General Counsel serves as a trusted strategic advisor to the Board of Education and Superintendent on the District's most significant legal, governance, operational, and policy matters. The successful candidate will provide practical, business-oriented legal advice while helping District leadership navigate a highly visible, politically complex, and heavily scrutinized public environment. As a member of the Superintendent's executive cabinet, the General Counsel will have a meaningful voice in the District's highest-level discussions and will help shape policies and practices that advance SFUSD's educational mission while ensuring compliance with a complex legal and regulatory framework.

Leading the District's legal function, the General Counsel will oversee internal legal staff and outside counsel while remaining actively involved in many of the District's most important legal matters. Success will require the ability to balance legal risk with practical solutions, navigate the distinct responsibilities of the Board and Superintendent, and build trusted relationships across a broad and diverse stakeholder community.

Key Responsibilities

- Serve as chief legal advisor to the Board of Education, Superintendent, and executive leadership.
- Advise on Board governance, Brown Act compliance, public meetings, ethics, and fiduciary matters.
- Provide strategic counsel on labor and employment matters, including collective bargaining, investigations, employee discipline, and workforce issues.
- Oversee litigation strategy, claims management, and outside counsel.
- Advise on student matters, special education, civil rights, constitutional issues, and regulatory compliance.

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- Counsel District leadership regarding public contracting, procurement, real estate, construction, and operational matters.
- Lead internal investigations involving sensitive legal, employment, and governance issues.
- Partner with the Board, Superintendent, and executive leadership to shape and refine District policies and practices, providing proactive legal guidance that advances organizational priorities while ensuring compliance with applicable law.
- Build strong working relationships with elected Board members, labor organizations, governmental agencies, and community stakeholders.
- Lead, mentor, and develop the District's legal department while fostering a collaborative, service-oriented culture.

Experience and Qualifications

The successful candidate will possess many of the following qualifications:

- Juris Doctor from an accredited law school and membership in good standing with the State Bar of California (or ability to reactivate California license).
- Approximately 15 or more years of progressively responsible legal experience, including significant leadership responsibility.
- Experience advising governing boards, executive leadership, or elected officials within a large, complex organization.
- Demonstrated expertise in California Education Code, federal laws governing K-12 education (including IDEA, ADA, and constitutional protections), labor and employment law, governance, litigation management, investigations, and public-sector legal issues.
- Experience leading legal teams and managing outside counsel.
- Outstanding judgment, communication skills, and executive presence.
- Ability to navigate politically sensitive matters with diplomacy, integrity, and sound judgment.
- Commitment to public service and a collaborative, solutions-oriented approach.
- Experience within a California public school district is preferred.

Personal Characteristics

The successful candidate will be:

- A trusted advisor who earns credibility through sound judgment and integrity.
- An exceptional communicator capable of engaging effectively with diverse stakeholders.
- Calm under pressure and comfortable operating in a highly visible public environment.
- Strategic while remaining practical and action-oriented.
- Collaborative, approachable, and service-minded.
- A legal leader with experience leading a team of lawyers.
- Ability to balance time-sensitive matters that arise unexpectedly with long-term projects.
- Mission-driven and passionate about advancing educational excellence and public service.

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Why Join SFUSD?

This is a unique opportunity to serve as General Counsel for one of California's largest and most consequential public school districts at an important moment in its evolution. With greater financial stability, a new executive cabinet, and meaningful operational progress underway, SFUSD is building the leadership team that will guide its next chapter. The General Counsel will have a seat at the table for many of the District's most significant decisions and an opportunity to help shape not only its legal strategy, but also the policies, systems, and practices that support the District's long-term success.

Highlights of the opportunity include:

- Serve as the chief legal advisor to one of California's largest and most complex public school districts.
- Partner directly with the Board of Education and Superintendent on the District's most important strategic initiatives and governance matters.
- Lead a sophisticated legal function spanning labor and employment, governance, litigation, investigations, public contracting, student matters, and enterprise risk.
- Make a meaningful impact on the educational experience and future success of approximately 50,000 students and the broader San Francisco community.
- Join a District with strong momentum and the opportunity to help shape its next chapter through collaborative leadership, sound judgment, and trusted legal counsel.

Process

Interested candidates should submit a resume in Microsoft Word format addressed to:

Anna Gorodetsky

Partner

In-House Counsel Recruiting

agorodetsky@mlaglobal.com

Joanna Herman

Partner

In-House Counsel Recruiting

jherman@mlaglobal.com

Amie Elliott

Lead Search Coordinator

In-House Counsel Recruiting

amelliott@mlaglobal.com

You may be required to complete additional documents to be considered for this position.

Please do not contact the Company directly; all resumes sent to the Company will be routed to MLA for handling and will create delays.