



SCOTTS VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Governance Handbook 2011/12

Board of Trustees

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The Scotts Valley Unified School District Governance Handbook, was originally developed in 2006 with the assistance of Babs Kavanaugh Governance Consultant, California School Boards Association. The Board and Superintendent participate in regular review and updates of the Handbook. The Governance Handbook outlines practices and understandings that build and sustain a positive Board-Superintendent relationship and define a culture of quality, equity, and respect.

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ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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.

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, (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.

The SVUSD governance team defines governance as...

- Alignment and focus
- Representing the broader community in establishing the educational direction for the school district
- Developing the mission, vision, values and priorities for the school district
- Setting the tone for the way the district operates
- Setting policy
- Spending taxpayers' money wisely
- Ensuring compliance
- Providing community leadership and promoting community engagement
- Setting aside personal interests to serve all children

UNITY OF PURPOSE

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

Who Are We?

We are a group of citizens who share interests, concerns and commitment for public education. We are elected community leaders in public education, entrusted by the public to represent their interests. We are stewards who hold the interest of ALL the community's children in trust. We serve as liaisons to the community. We are active in service and business organizations and provide connections between those groups and the district.

What Is Our Purpose?

- Our purpose is to provide effective leadership and guidance to fulfill the mission of the district. We proactively establish the educational road map and provide a structure that leads to successful experiences for students and offers opportunities for them to reach their potential.
- We demonstrate our leadership through policies that facilitate achievement of our goals through the most efficient and effective use of district resources. We are fiscally and socially responsible and accountable. We are ever mindful of the need to balance competing needs for limited resources. We understand and work within our resources and constraints. We provide clear direction to district staff so that we may serve our students well.
- We are accessible to all stakeholders for open, two-way communication in order to center our decisions on the best interest of all students.

To Whom Are We Responsible?

- We are responsible to all of the students, their parents and families in our community. We are responsible to all district employees. We are responsible to the local taxpayers and the public who elected us. We are responsible to the business community, public health, safety agencies, and civic leaders.
- We are responsible to one another to engage in honest, open two-way communication; to assume the positive intent of all members of the team; and to support one another.
- We seek to engage and hear from all stakeholders including the silent members and those who have newly arrived in our community.

District Mission

Scotts Valley Unified School District will provide each student with quality educational opportunities by maximizing the use of all of our resources.

District Vision

Our students will achieve their personal best, and will be socially responsible, contributing members of their communities.

Core Beliefs and Values

We Believe that

- We are a unified school district, working together to provide an optimal K-12 experience for our students.
- Our focus is student centered and forward looking to meet the needs of individual students.
- Our role is to develop academically capable students who are socially responsible.
- Continuous school improvement is necessary to meet the needs of students in a changing economy and society.
- We are accountable to our public for setting clear expectations and aligning our fiscal and human resources to meet our goals.
- There is strength and value in diversity.
- Quality educational opportunities must be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.
- Learning occurs best in a safe and nurturing environment.
- Decisions will be fair, equitable and transparent.
- A highly skilled and dedicated staff has a direct and powerful influence on students' lives and learning.
- Commitment from students, home, school, and community is essential to student success.
- Active timely communication is needed to inform engage, inspire, and build alliances with the entire community.
- Trust, respect and teamwork among board members, the superintendent and staff contribute to effective decision-making.
- The district appreciates, welcomes and encourages responsive, constructive, informed leaders. It is important and valuable to acknowledge contributions and successes and promote a positive environment.
- Our respect for the unique characteristics of each employee and student is demonstrated through our relationships with them.

District Strengths and Future Direction

In considering the Unity of Purpose, the Trustees and the Superintendent provided individual responses to the following statements:

One of the things I'm most proud of about this district is...

- The highest achievement in Santa Cruz County despite fiscal and facilities limitations.
- The District reputation for a high quality education attracts students throughout the County.
- The ideal we strive for is a high quality education for all of our students.
- We are a K-12 unified school district. Our curriculum is aligned.
- We have established Professional Learning Communities, which include weekly meetings among colleagues to review data and discuss student performance.
- Active parental involvement. Education is a priority in our community.
- The dedication of our teachers to our students. Administrators go the extra mile to deliver a quality education.
- The many strengths demonstrated throughout the District.
- The board is diverse and committed. We are willing to do what is right for our students and for the community.

What I want to accomplish as a member of the governance team...

- To maintain financial solvency.
- To maintain and strengthen the reputation of our schools.
- To ensure that all students get the quality education they deserve.
- To develop quality leadership. To be a catalyst of change.
- To move beyond constant turmoil and focus on what is really important.
- For the high school to achieve an API score over 850.
- A stable system where operations are smooth and effective. The district infrastructure is transparent and people perceive the system as fair.
- To maintain the overall morale in spite of having few resources.

What we want to accomplish as a unified governance team...

The Board of Trustees, with the help of over one hundred community members, developed the Scotts Valley Unified School District Strategic Plan in the spring of 2006. This document, which is publicly reviewed, monitored and updated each spring, reflects what we want to accomplish as a team. For the 2011-12 school year, focus areas include the following:

- Student Achievement
- Fiscal Stability

- Facilities Needs
- Human Resources
- Public Relations

GOVERNANCE ROLES

There are important distinctions to be made between the board's role and that of the superintendent and staff. Boards and superintendents must team together to ensure a district has effective leadership. Just as board members should govern and not manage a school district, superintendents should not administer a district in isolation from the representatives whom the public has entrusted with the schools. School board "trustees" are the representatives of the people, elected to ensure that a community's schools educate the community's children in accordance with the wishes of the local community.

Discussion of Roles

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 therefore vital that the board and superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open communications.

What does the Board need from the Superintendent in order to fulfill its responsibilities?

- To stay focused on the strategic plan and the goals of the District
- To abide by the norm of 'no surprises'
- To help us to be optimally prepared for each meeting
- Provide timely and accurate information
- Provide warnings and advance notice about issues in the educational community
- Provide opinions on relevant issues
- Clear guidance for trustees and community members on processes and procedures
- Represent one another positively
- Feedback on the performance of the board and the performance of individual trustees
- Make recommendations for training and professional development
- To maintain confidentiality

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

- To maintain the focus on ALL students and the strategic goals of the district
- To abide by the norm of 'no surprises'
- Provide warnings and advance notice about issues in the broader community with specific information

- Thoughtfully consider information in the board packets; ask questions ahead of the board meetings; ask for information as needed
- Know processes and provide guidance for addressing issues
- Honest opinions and speaking your mind
- Stand behind decisions and support them in the community
- Represent one another positively
- Support ongoing professional development
- Maintain confidentiality
- Provide recommendations for committee participation
- Develop a system for annual and ongoing performance evaluation

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

We want to be perceived by our community as a Governance Team that:

- Keeps ALL students as our focus in decision making
- Is trustworthy, law abiding, honest, and fair
- Is responsible, effective and consistent
- Is open and transparent in decision making
- Operates professionally
- Makes decisions that are policy based
- Is accountable and financially prudent
- Is informed, open-minded, and deliberative
- Cares

GOVERNANCE CULTURE

The governance team's agreements include a set of guidelines for the operation of its board meetings.

Meeting Guidelines

- We are guided by what is best for ALL students.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- Listen openly
- Everyone's opinion counts. Be open to ideas of others
- Work toward the future, learning from the past
- Promote a stable and consistent environment

- Share responsibility for the success of the meeting

PROTOCOLS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

Effective teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the trustees and the superintendent in their operations. Protocols are the agreements that ensure that everyone is operating within agreed upon roles. The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of the governance team.

Protocol	Agreement
Board/Board and Board/Superintendent Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical to effective governance is good communication. The board wants to be informed and aware of what is positive and any issues or concerns. • Trustees are knowledgeable about and operate within Brown Act guidelines. • The superintendent will share questions as appropriate from one trustee with all trustees and provide the answers. • The superintendent communicates at least weekly with the board to keep all informed of issues, concerns and successes.

Protocol	Agreement
Trustees Requesting Future Agenda Items	<p>Any Board member or member of the public may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the board meeting agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members will submit agenda item requests directly to the superintendent and/or the board president or will make the request during the board comment section during the board meeting. Requests made during the board comment section may also result from public comments made during the board meeting. A request will include reasons for the agenda item. • If the item is designated as a future agenda item, the superintendent and the board president will determine the appropriate placement. • If the item is not to be placed on the agenda, the board president will notify the trustee. If the trustee continues to want the item on the agenda – the trustee will revisit the request in the board comments section at the board meeting. If one additional trustee shares interest in this item, the item will become a part of future agenda planning.

Protocol	Agreement
Public Requests for Agenda Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the public may submit an agenda item request to any trustee or to the superintendent. The same process will be followed as described above. • If an item is not placed on the agenda, the board president or the superintendent will notify the member of the public. If the member still wants this agenda item,

	he/she may bring that request to the board at a board meeting. If two trustees agree, the item will be placed on a future agenda.
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Protocol	Agreement
Handling Requests for Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical to board members’ ability to make informed decisions is timely access to information. The superintendent wants to be responsive to requests for information, maintain the focus on district priorities and balance the management of staff time. • Board members will contact the superintendent with information requests. • Individual board members will self-monitor to ensure one person’s request for information does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. Requests requiring inordinate amounts of time will be brought to the board to decide whether to support the request. • All prepared reports or responses to requests for information will be distributed to all board members.

Protocol	Agreement
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsibility of our board includes being privy to closed sessions or confidential information about negotiations, district litigation, personnel, superintendent evaluation, or other issues permitted under the Brown Act. • We will maintain the public’s trust by not breaching confidentiality. • If we inadvertently or accidentally violate a confidential issue, we will take immediate responsibility for our action.

Protocol	Agreement
Board Meeting Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meetings are held in public and are structured to facilitate the orderly conduct of the school district business. • The Board will make decisions that are principle-based and focused on what is best for students. • The meetings are addressing issues not people. If a complaint is made about district staff and/or board members, the board president will remind the complainant of the district process for handling complaints. • Questions for the public shall be directed to the board president. Questions from the Board are directed to the superintendent who will answer the question or delegate responsibility for answering the question. • Comments from individual members of the public should be concise to

	<p>respect the needs of others and to ensure board business can be completed in a timely manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open public comment time shall be limited to fifteen minutes unless the majority of the board determines whether to extend the public comment period. • Trustees will consistently abide by agreements and protocols in relation to this issue so that all persons are treated fairly and equally. <p>The process for board discussion and public input on Action Items is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board discussion 2. Public input facilitated by the board president 3. Opportunity for board discussion 4. Board votes
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Protocol	Agreement
Handling Complaints from the Community, Staff and Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board wishes to be accessible, consistent, firm and fair in all dealings with complaints. • When approached by an individual or group with concerns and complaints, it is best practice to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen openly, being careful not to imply agreement, since only one perspective is being expressed. • The trustee will explain that the district has complaint policies in place and direct people to the policies or processes (<i>e.g.</i>, complaint process) or person in the district (<i>e.g.</i> teacher, principal, superintendent) that can most directly help them with their concern. • If the comments/concerns are specific to a past board decision, the trustee will confirm that the board stands by its decisions until and unless the board majority expresses a need to change the decision.

Protocol	Agreement
Spokesperson for the Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is essential that important information be communicated to members of the board, the staff and the community in a timely manner. • In order to maintain the trust of the community, trustees will speak with one voice. <p>The designated spokesperson will vary depending on the issue or situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis: -The superintendent and/or the Public Information Officer will be the primary spokesperson for any emergencies. • Meeting Information (<i>e.g.</i>, board meetings, agenda items, study sessions): The board president and the superintendent will serve as primary spokespersons. • Core Values /Vision / District Priorities / General District Information: All governance team members may serve as spokespersons utilizing developed and agreed upon key messages.

Protocol	Agreement
Visiting Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School visitations are encouraged. As a professional courtesy, trustees will obtain a board member’s visitors pass and will sign-in before visiting individual classrooms. • Trustees will let the superintendent know about visits to the schools, and keep the superintendent informed of what is working well, and any issues or concerns.

Protocol	Agreement
Community Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees understand the importance and value of being visible and accessible to the community. • Trustees will share responsibility for attending community events, as their availability allows. • Trustees will make visible their dedication and commitment and clarify their authority as one of five in all decisions and actions. • Trustees will strive to educate the public about their role as public servants, entrusted with the education of all the children of the community. • The superintendent will keep trustees informed of events and opportunities for board presence by preparing a calendar at least two months in advance, whenever possible. • Trustees will inform the superintendent and Board president by email or calling when they are participating in community events.

Protocol	Agreement
Self-monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board will schedule workshops twice a year to review governance team agreements and processes and to participate in a governance self-evaluation process. During the annual evaluation, governance goals will be agreed upon for the next year.

Superintendent and Governance Team Evaluation Processes

Schedule	Superintendent Evaluation	Governance Team Self Assessment
May/June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete written superintendent evaluation process per contract. • Establish performance expectations for district goals and board/superintendent relations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule and complete evaluation of governance team performance, utilizing the District governance goals and CSBA governance standards. • Establish one or more governance goals and

		expected outcomes.
January/ February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid year check in and progress report. Opportunity to do mid year corrections or adjustments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid year check in and progress report of governance goals

APPENDIX A

PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

California School Boards recommends the following descriptions of the responsibilities of school boards.

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 an appropriate inclusive process is used
- Ensure 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; set policy for hiring of other personnel
- Oversee the development of and adopt policies
- Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum
- 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 district policies the board has approved
- Ensure a positive working climate exists
- Be knowledgeable about district efforts

Ensure accountability to the public

- Evaluate the superintendent
- Monitor, review and revise policies and serve as a judicial and appeals body
- Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness and require program changes as indicated
- Monitor and adjust district finances
- Monitor the collective bargaining process
- Develop and implement board self-evaluation

Demonstrate community leadership

- 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
- Educate the community and the media about the issues facing the district and public education
- Advocate for children, district programs and public education to the general public, community leaders and local, state and national leaders