



# Amador County

## Unified School District

# Governance Handbook

Governance Standards, Norms and Protocols

Adopted: March 8, 2017

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## **~~VISION STATEMENT~~**

~~Amador County Public Schools, in partnership with our community, will graduate students who have gained the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed and excel in higher education, careers, society and life. This vision will be achieved by adhering to rigorous academic standards, high expectations, a comprehensive curriculum, and a positive school climate.~~

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Enriched by the diversity and deep traditions of our unique community, Amador County Public Schools will prepare, support, and inspire each student to achieve career and college success in a rapidly evolving world through highly engaging teaching, rigorous learning and innovative pathways supported by strong partnerships in a safe, caring and collaborative environment.

## **“GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE BOARDS OF ACUSD AND ACOE”**

(From Board ByLaw 9001)

1. Guiding Principles are not rigid. They are a tool designed by those who will use them to advance their mutual interest in promoting effectiveness, civility, and willingness to compromise in their on-going work together on behalf of Amador County Public Schools and the success of its students.
2. It is understood that how the Board operates and engages with the Superintendent, school community, and public, impacts its effectiveness as well as the effectiveness of others in the school community, and the District’s and County Office of Education’s work and educational environments.
3. It is mutually understood that it is the intent of each Trustee and the Superintendent to act in good faith on behalf of the district.
4. There will be robust, honest, respectful and patient debate on any matter of concern to a Trustee or the Superintendent that is within the purview of the Board.
5. When disputes or disagreements occur, the governance team will work together to resolve them within the team and with a spirit of unity of purpose.
6. Decisions will be based on relevant data and other credible sources of information that have been made available to all members.
7. Trustees will avoid back-tracking; once the Board has heard and considered the views of its members and acted, all members will respect the action of the quorum, unless and until the Board takes up the matter again.
8. The Board will respect the requests of members to revisit issues when based on new information.
9. Trustees will hold each other accountable for following these guiding principles. No single Trustee can sidetrack the Board without the Board’s acquiescence.
10. Continued board development will occur through the purposeful application of these agreed-upon guiding principles during all board processes.
11. By engaging in transparent professional development activities, the Board and Superintendent lead by example.

It is the intent of this policy to provide an environment in which Trustees, the Superintendent and District staff are able to work in a proactive and dignified manner to provide solutions to the typical operational problems that districts and schools encounter, as well as, crafting policy for future challenges and educational needs. The Board believes that the best interests of students and the growth and development of the district’s employees are best served by an environment that is based on dignity, trust, integrity and civil treatment for all.

# Roles and Responsibilities of the Governance Team

## The Board of Education:

The role of the Board is to provide each student with an education of the highest possible quality within the limits of financial support provided by the State of California. To accomplish this, Board members are responsible for five roles identified by the California School Boards Association (CSBA):

- **Setting the direction** for the district by involving parents/guardians, community, students and staff while focusing on student learning and achievement.
- **Establishing an effective and efficient** structure by employing the superintendent, developing and adopting policies, establishing academic expectations and adopting curriculum and instructional materials, establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget, providing safe and adequate facilities to support student learning, and setting parameters for negotiations with employee organizations and ratifying collective bargaining agreements.
- **Providing support to the superintendent and staff** by following standards of responsible governance, making decisions and providing resources that support district priorities and goals, upholding board policies, and being effective spokespersons by being knowledgeable about district programs and goals.
- **Ensuring accountability** through evaluation of the superintendent; monitoring and evaluating policies; serving as a judicial and appeals body; monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness; approving, monitoring and adjusting district budgets; and monitoring the collective bargaining process.
- **Providing community leadership and advocacy** on behalf of students, the educational program, and public education.

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: setting direction; establishing an effective and efficient structure; providing support; ensuring accountability; and 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
  - Finance
  - Facilities
  - Human Resources
  - Policy
- Judicial Review
- 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 section 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**

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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 the 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

**The Superintendent of Schools:**

**Principle:**

The Superintendent of the Amador County Unified School District ~~serves at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees and is under contract to them.~~ He/She is a member of the governance team and is the only employee who reports directly to the Board. Because of this, it is expected that the members of the Board will communicate with the Superintendent to address any concerns, issues or projects with other staff in the District since he/she is their only direct line employee. The Superintendent’s duties and job description are outlined in Board Policy and his/her contract. The contract specifies an annual evaluation and times of contract renewal.

The Superintendent is hired and responsible to:

- Promote the success, safety and well being of all students through regular coaching visits to the schools, professional learning with teachers, staff and leaders, and ensure other appropriate actions and services;

- Lead, coach and supervise leaders, managers, and other support staff including assistant superintendents, directors, principals, and other managers so they can effectively lead, coach and supervise their teams and schools;
- Support the efforts of the USD Board of Trustees to keep the district focused on learning and achievement;
- Respond appropriately and honestly to concerns and complaints from stakeholders with the goal of listening and collaborative problem solving;
- Respect the role of the Board as the representative of the community;
- Respect the role of the Superintendent to supervise and support all staff;
- Provide guidance and recommendations to the Board to assist in policy development, decision making, and leadership based on the direction of the Board as a whole;
- Plan, implement, monitor, and modify as needed all educational programs to ensure success for all students including English learners, low income students, foster youth, and students with mild to moderate special education needs.

## Norms and Protocols

### **Norms Positive Governance Team Culture**

Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other. Teams, such as governance teams, have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements, or norms, about how members they will behave toward each other and others: individuals. Written norms establish clarity and mutually understood expectations that enable the team. 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.

### **Protocols**

The Board's effectiveness is enhanced through the establishment of formal structures and processes (i.e., protocols) that define how Board members and the Superintendent will operate within a team environment. Protocols define the governance principles, mutual expectations, and specific processes under which the team will operate and assess its effectiveness.

# Norms and Protocols

## Our Governance Norms

We agree to:

- Focus on the best interests of our students
- Show respect (never dismiss/devalue others)
- Commit to having effective deliberations; we will listen openly to the opinions of others.
- Devote the time necessary to govern effectively. This means being there, being knowledgeable, participating, understanding the full scope of being a board member and being willing to take on all the responsibilities involved.
- Be collaborative.
- Maintain confidentiality
- Learn from the past while focusing on the present and the future.

## **Norms**

### Open and Honest Communication

The governance team recognizes the value of mutual trust, open team dialogue, and being fully informed as a condition of mutual trust.

Toward the objective of open and honest communication:

- We will not be afraid to say what we think. We will let team members know what is on our minds in a respectful and dignified manner. We will let team members know the impact their communication has on us personally, so they can clarify their intent with us firsthand.
- We will listen openly and respectfully to what others have to say, recognizing that each individual's opinion is as important as our own.
- We will take responsibility for our individual communications and be mindful of our own body language, voice tone, and words. We will endeavor to ensure that our body language and voice tone match the message we intend to send.
- We will communicate in a manner that enhances the Board discussions and deliberations. We will take the time necessary, prior to the Board meetings, to become fully informed about issues before the Board.
- We will offer validation when an individual team member makes the effort to communicate honestly and respectfully with us individually or during Board meetings. We will be supportive of each other's attempts to be honest and open at Board meetings even when we don't agree with what the other person is saying.

## Norms

- We recognize that “respecting” and “attempting to understand” each other’s points of view are essential to building trust among team members. We will ask questions or paraphrase the comments of other team members to clarify for understanding.
- To enhance our deliberations during Board meetings, we will ask questions when we don’t understand, be respectful when we disagree, and build on each other’s comments and ideas whenever possible during our discussions.
- We will keep all closed session discussion confidential. Confidential information means a communication made in a closed session that is specifically related to the basis for the Board to meet lawfully in closed session. Team members will not disclose confidential information acquired in the course of their official duties, including confidential information that is not a public record subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act, information that by law may not be disclosed, and information that may have a material financial effect on the team member.

### **Creating and Sustaining a Positive Culture** (From Board ByLaw 9001)

#### **Operating as a Team**

Each Board member brings unique skills, values, and beliefs to the Board table. Board members must work together with the Superintendent to govern effectively and to ensure that a high quality education is provided to all students. Authority rests with the Board as a whole, not with individual Board members. Board members understand and respect the separate roles of the Board and the Superintendent. Together as a governance, the Board and the Superintendent will take collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture where there is acceptance of honest mistakes.

#### **Collective Authority of the Board**

- Individual Board members do not have authority and will not direct action or make individual requests of staff.
- Authority to direct action rests with the Board when seated at Board meetings.
  - A majority vote of Board members provides direction to the Superintendent.
  - Board members will not undermine the ability of staff to carry out Board directions.

# Norms

## **The Board Works With One Another at Public Board Meetings**

- Reports to the Board will focus primarily on accountability for student learning.
- The Superintendent is the chief executive officer of the district and will recommend, propose, or suggest on most matters before the Board.
- The Board will consider research, best practices, and public input in its decision-making process.
- Board meetings are for decision making, actions, and votes.
  - Board members agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and to be attentive to each other.
  - Board discussions should be concise and pertinent to the issues.
  - Facts and information needed for administration will be requested through the Superintendent.

## **The Practice of “No Surprises” Toward Each Other and District Staff**

- Surprises to the Board or the Superintendent will be the exception.
- There should be no surprises at Board meetings.
  - The Superintendent will be contacted before the meeting when a Board member needs additional information or has questions about an agenda item.
  - New ideas should not be brought up unexpectedly at a Board meeting. Board members will follow protocol for bringing up new ideas or for adding items to a Board agenda, such as during Board member reports and requests.
  - Board members will respect each Board member’s right to request that Board action be deferred in an instance where there is legitimate concern about the adequacy of information on which to make an “informed decision.”

# Norms

## **A Consistent Voice for the District [From Board ByLaw 9001(d)]**

- The Board president or designee will be the official spokesperson for the Board.
- When the Board president resigns or is absent or disabled, the clerk will perform the Board president's duties as spokesperson.
- Board members will remember that they represent the Board in everything they say and do and will endeavor to state the Board's opinion, not an individual perspective or position.
- Members of the governance team agree to avoid words or actions that leave a negative impression on an individual, the Board, or the district.

## **How We Will Operate in a Spirit of Moving Forward (From Board ByLaw 9005)**

Governance team members recognize the importance of establishing and sustaining "positive momentum" as the team endeavors to lead the district. In that spirit, we recognize that:

- We are people of good will with a common agenda for moving the district forward.
- Actions will speak louder than words and we will focus on building trust.
- As a district and as a governance team, we will be forgiving and strive to remember our successes. We will treat a step backwards as merely temporary.
- We will give each other the benefit of the doubt.
- We will strive to forgive errors in judgment and clumsy attempts.
- We will remind each other about why we are here and use the phrase "STUDENTS FIRST" when we falter.

# Protocols

## Orienting a New Board Member

### **Principle:**

A new member of the board will need to invest time in training, understanding the job in order to be effective. The more experienced Board members will mentor and support new members during their first year so the entire board can be efficient and effective.

### **Protocol:**

- The Board president and the superintendent will provide the new member resources, guidance and opportunities for training as soon as possible. The CSBA workshops for new Board members are one such opportunity.
- The Board president and superintendent will welcome the new member and provide him/her the “New Board Member Handbook” and the “Board Governance Handbook.” The Board president will provide support as needed regarding any questions about the information in the handbooks.
- The Board president and clerk will ask one of the experienced Board members to serve as a mentor for the new member and the mentor will meet/talk regularly with the new member to answer any questions and provide the support necessary.

## Board Role in Public [From Board ByLaw 9010(a)]

### **Principle:**

Board members have been elected by the community to provide leadership and oversight of the district. Board members understand the importance and value of being visible and accessible to the community and of ensuring the district is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the community.

### **Protocol:**

- Board members will strive to educate the public about their role as public servants, entrusted with the education of children in the district.
- Board members will demonstrate their dedication and commitment to public education and actively engage community members in discussions about critical, public education matters impacting the district.
- When speaking to community groups, the media, **social media**, or other members of the public, individual Board members will recognize that their statements may be perceived as views and positions of the Board and will act responsibly to identify personal viewpoints as such and not as viewpoints of the Board.
- Confidentiality will be maintained when communicating with members of the public regarding matters prescribed as confidential by law or Board bylaws.

# Protocols

## Speaking With a Common Voice

### Principle:

All public statements in the name of the Board are made by the Board president, or if appropriate, by the superintendent or designee.

### Protocol:

- When speaking to community groups, the media, or to the public, individual board members have a responsibility to identify personal viewpoints as such and not as the view point of the board.
- When a board decision has been reached, all board members shall support that decision until it is amended or rescinded by board action. Any board member who may wish to criticize or oppose any specific board action should do so in an open board meeting.

## Addressing Conflict Among Board Members

### Principle:

Because the governance team norms are designed to create open, respectful, collaborative culture, members will engage in dialogue while welcoming an open discussion with different points of view.

### Protocol:

Members will demonstrate an ability to disagree on issues without taking the disagreements personally. Members will endeavor to maintain neutral body language and tone during deliberations.

## **Bring Up New Ideas/Decide to Move New Ideas Forward**

### Principle:

- Board members have a responsibility to lead and bring forth new and fresh ideas that represent creative thinking **and problem solving.**
- ~~• The Board will be open to brainstorming discussions around any idea that a Board member may feel merits exploratory consideration.~~

“New ideas” are defined as any proposal brought forth by a Board member, at his or her own initiative or at the request of a constituent, which has not previously been discussed during a Board meeting. ~~A Board member’s perception that a new idea could be incorporated into existing staff work or an existing staff initiative does not preclude the~~ **It is the** Board member’s responsibility to first apprise the full Board of the individual Board member’s interests in the ~~new idea.~~ **communicate new ideas with the Board President or Superintendent before engaging the full Board or staff in an expectation that would increase staff work.**

## Protocols

- The Board will frame new ideas in ways that address agreed upon district goals and the ~~generally perceived~~ future focus of district efforts toward student learning and achievement.
- An individual Board member has no authority to commit the Board to a course of action or to initially develop a new idea to the point that it comes to the Board for the first time with a “request for action.” This would be disrespectful to the Board as a whole.

### **-Protocol:**

- Board members agree to follow a process that supports bringing forth new ideas while maintaining the Board’s primary focus on identified district goals.
- Board members will first notify the Board President and/or the superintendent of their interest in bringing forth a new idea. The preliminary discussion of new ideas will not require staff research. Initially, staff will be expected to respond to new ideas based on current knowledge.
- An individual Board member will not direct staff to conduct research regarding the exploration of a new idea. Only the full Board may direct the superintendent to take action. The superintendent will decide on the delegation of assignments to other district staff.
- New ideas ~~may~~ **will** be presented to the full Board at regular Board meetings during the “Request and Reports from Board Members” agenda item. The full Board will decide if the new idea should be further developed and studied and if staff time should be invested in researching or exploring new ideas. If the Board agrees, appropriate staff will be directed by the superintendent to research the idea and make a recommendation through the superintendent. Research by individual Board members does not follow protocol. Research is defined as the extensive or ongoing study or exploration of an idea, program or practice for consideration by the Board. Examples of research include wage/compensation studies, policies or practices implemented by other school districts, surveying teachers, staff and/or parents/guardians for input and feedback, etc.

## **Confidentiality/Closed Session Practices**

### **Principle:**

- The Brown Act establishes conditions for discussing some Board business in confidential, closed sessions. The Brown Act strongly supports “the public’s right to know” but recognizes that some highly sensitive matters are best discussed in a confidential setting, in part to protect the legal rights of other parties.
- The Board recognizes that decisions made in closed session must be reported out in public session.

## Protocols

- The public's trust and the trust among Board members are breached if confidential information is shared in a public manner.

Caution: If items not on the closed session agenda are discussed during closed session, the entire closed session becomes public.

### Protocol:

- The Board will maintain confidentiality around all matters so prescribed by the Brown Act, including matters about employee labor contract negotiations, district litigation, personnel matters, the substance of the Superintendent evaluation, and other matters permitted by the Brown Act.
- The Board will maintain the public's and each other's trust by not breaching confidentiality.
- If a Board member inadvertently or accidentally violates a confidential issue, the Board president and the superintendent will take immediate action to rectify the matter.
- At the conclusion of each closed session, the Board president will clarify for the entire Board that specific information is to remain confidential under the Brown Act.

### **Board Member Response to Complaints From the Community or Staff** [From Board ByLaw 9200(a)]

#### Principle:

- Board members will be responsive to the community and strive to be good listeners.
- It's important for Board members to be consistent in their responses to staff and to the community.
- Board members will stay within their function and not attempt to personally "fix" the problem. Designated staff members are assigned to remedy or deal with student and/or staff situations.
- Students and staff members have due process and confidentiality rights that must not be violated.
- The Board is potentially the "court of last resort" and Board members who become involved early in the situation may have to recuse themselves if they are unable to be impartial or would not be perceived as impartial.

#### Protocol:

- The Board will consider its judicial review responsibility, staff and student confidentiality rights, and due process issues to assess whether an issue is appropriate for Board members to hear.
- The Board will use empathetic listening skills when approached by community or staff members with questions or concerns.

# Protocols

- ◆ The Board will utilize the “6R’s” to ensure that they actively listen to the constituent:
  - Receive** — Listen to what the person has to say without preparing a response.
  - \* **Repeat**—Paraphrase or ask a question to clarify for understanding. Ask the person to identify those spoken to about the matter prior to contacting a Board member.
  - \* **Request** — Ask what the person would like the Board member to do with the information and/or what he or she sees as a solution to the problem.
  - \* **Review** – Go over options available to the person to remedy the situation.
  - \* **Redirect** – Put the person back into the system at the appropriate place—remembering lines of authority and chains of command. Remember: students and employees have legal and due process rights that must be honored. Confidential information will not be divulged to community or staff members.
  - \* **Report**— The Board will maintain open lines of communication between the Board and the superintendent and will notify the superintendent of the conversation as soon as possible, so the superintendent can verify or clarify the situation and follow-through as appropriate. This protocol also ensures the superintendent knows firsthand what the Board member said to the community or staff member.
- Any complaint or request for information should be forwarded to the superintendent in accordance with Board bylaws and protocols so that the issue may receive proper consideration and be handled through the appropriate district process. As appropriate, communication received from the press shall be forwarded to the designated district spokesperson.

## **Board Member Interaction with the TV, Radio, Newspaper and Social Media**

### **Principle:**

Board members will be courteous to the media. It is important for the Board and staff to have a consistent, clear message on issues.

### **Protocol:**

- Board members will refer all ~~members~~ **representatives of the press TV, radio, newspaper, and social media who have questions regarding the school district** to the ~~the~~ **Superintendent for comment.**
- Should a Board member choose to comment in response to a question ~~from the press~~, the Board member will preface the comment with “I am speaking as an individual and not for the Board of Education. My comments are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect those of other Board members or the Amador County Unified School District.” If the Board of Education has made a decision or approved a policy, a Board member may state what the Board of Education’s position is.

- The superintendent will communicate with members of the Board when issues occur that may entail media interest to explain what is happening and what his/her response/message to the community is.
- The superintendent will communicate with the Board members if it is necessary or appropriate to have a spokesperson for the Board on an issue to the media. In addition, the superintendent and designated spokesperson for the Board will confer on appropriate talking points for the media.
- If asked to comment on a matter of policy about which the Board has not reached a consensus or held a vote, the superintendent will state only that the matter has not yet been decided by the Board.

### **Board Member Use of Electronic Devices (Taken from Board Bylaw 9012)**

#### **Principle:**

The Governing Board recognizes that electronic communication among Board members and between Board members, district administration, and members of the public is an efficient and convenient way to communicate and expedite the exchange of information and to help keep the community informed about the goals, programs, and achievements of the district and its schools. Board members shall exercise caution so as to ensure that electronic communications are not used as a means for the Board to deliberate outside of an agendaized Board meeting.

#### **Protocol:**

A majority of the Board shall not, outside of an authorized meeting, use a series of communications of any kind, directly or through intermediaries, to discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board (Government Code 54952.2)

- Examples of permissible electronic communications concerning district business include, but are not limited to, dissemination of Board meeting agendas and agenda packets, reports of activities from the superintendent, and reminders regarding meeting times, dates, and places.
- Board members shall make every effort to ensure that their electronic communications conform to the same standards and protocols established for other forms of communication. A Board member may respond, as appropriate, to an electronic communication received from a member of the community and should make clear that his/her response does not necessarily reflect the views of the Board as a whole.

## Protocols

- In order to minimize the risk of improper disclosure, Board members shall avoid reference to confidential information and information acquired during closed session.
- Board members may use electronic communications to discuss matters other than district business with each other, regardless of the number of members participating in the discussion.
- Like other writings concerning district business, a Board member's electronic communication may be subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.
- During Board meetings Board members shall have electronic devices silenced and turned to "Airplane Mode" or similar settings.

### **Board Member Use of Electronic Media**

#### **Principle:**

The Board of Trustees will use electronic media (e.g., email, texting, social media) carefully to ensure that there is no violation of the Brown Act (Government Code sections 54950-54962). Board members will be aware of and follow district policy as it pertains to electronic communications. The district is subject to requests for public documents as provided by in the California Public Records Act. Public documents include emails and other correspondence from Board members as well as from employees.

#### **Protocol:**

The Brown Act prohibits Board members from exchanging information outside of a Board meeting to:

- Develop collective concurrence
- Advance or clarify an issue
- Facilitate agreement or compromise, or
- Advance an ultimate resolution.

The Board recognizes that by using "Reply All" in email responses, the email:

- Becomes part of the deliberative process
- Creates a Public Record, and
- Inhibits opportunity for any other two Board members to have a conversation topic.

# Protocols

## **Board Member Potential Conflict of Interest** (From Board ByLaw 9270)

### **Principle:**

The Governing Board desires to maintain the highest ethical standards and help ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of the district and the public. Accordingly, no Board member, district employee, or other person in a designated position shall participate in the making of any decision for the district when the decision will or may be affected by his/her financial, family, or other personal interest or consideration.

### **Protocol:**

- Even if a prohibited conflict of interest does not exist, a Board member shall abstain from voting on personnel matters that uniquely affect his/her relatives. However, a Board member may vote on collective bargaining agreements and personnel matters that affect a class of employees to which his/her relative belongs.
- Relative means an adult who is related to the Board member by blood or affinity within the third degree, as determined by the common law, or an individual in an adoptive relationship within the third degree. (Education Code 35107)

## **Acting as a Board Member with a Close Relative in the District**

### **Principle:**

Board members who have children or other close relatives enrolled in the district should articulate how their relative's experience in the schools may affect their opinions and judgment with regard to Board decisions. Board member's experience as relatives of students in the district can be helpful in informing the Board as they create policy and make decisions.

### **Protocol:**

- Board members should identify, in open session, any agenda items being discussed and voted upon that may impact the education of their relative(s).
- While Board members have the right to request that their relative's privacy be respected, it is acceptable for other Board members or members of the public to ask a Board member's opinion from a relative's perspective on agenda issues being discussed.

# Protocols

## **Board Self-Evaluation and Self-Monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness**

(From Board ByLaw 9400)

### **Principle:**

Board members understand the value of periodically assessing the Board's performance as part of a comprehensive approach to hold the entire district accountable to the public. The governance team should be committed to increasing its effectiveness. In addition, the process of self-monitoring should help raise community awareness about the role of the Board in the district and the community.

### **Protocol:**

- The Board will schedule at least one self-evaluation session annually to review governance team performance.
- Following the completion of the self-evaluation, the Board will set governance goals for the following year. The goals will identify areas in which the Board would like to improve its performance.
- Annually, the Board will review the Governance Handbook.
- Annually, the Board will conduct a survey of management staff that includes the self-evaluation survey completed by the Board members and any feedback they have to the Board with regard to the norms and protocols outlined in the Governance Handbook.

## **Board Role with Employee Bargaining Unit Leaders**

### **Principle:**

The Board has a responsibility to establish district parameters for collective bargaining with each bargaining unit and to adopt collective bargaining agreements on behalf of the district.

The Board has a strong interest in developing and sustaining positive and cooperative working relationships with designated leaders of each bargaining unit within the district.

### **Protocol:**

- The Board ~~will~~ **may** appoint one member to join the Superintendent in periodically meeting with the leadership of each bargaining unit within the district to share perspectives regarding district programs, activities, and the general state of the district culture and climate as it affects employees.

## **Protocols**

- These meetings will not be used to undermine the rights and responsibilities of either party under the Educational Employment Relations Act.
- Discussions will not address issues within the scope of negotiation or contract administration that specifically includes matters relating to wages, hours of employment, and other terms and conditions of employment.
- The Board member serving on any of these groups will periodically update the entire Board concerning issues discussed.

### **Visiting School Sites**

#### **Principle:**

Board members are encouraged to visit schools. These visits provide valuable insight into how Board policy is implemented at the school site level. Visits to schools help demonstrate Board support for the effort and accomplishments of district staff. Board members visit classrooms and other district offices to observe and learn, not to openly question operations and activities. Questions about specific events observed during school visits should be directed to the Superintendent.

#### **Protocols:**

- As a professional courtesy, Board members will inform the Superintendent of their intention to visit specific schools and functions and will apprise the Superintendent of their impressions following visits.
- Board members will advise school site administrators in advance of their planned visits and will follow all building protocols for sign-in and movement of visitors while on school grounds.
- Board members are free to choose which schools they will visit; however, consideration should be given to coordinating visitation schedules among all Board members to help ensure maximum Board exposure to every school in the district.

### **Board Members Participation in Meetings at School Sites**

#### **Principles:**

Board members may choose to attend meetings at schools such as PTA meetings in their outreach to the community and to better understand what is going on in the schools. Board members may also want to volunteer to help school activities to serve the community and learn more about the schools.

# Protocols

## **Protocol:**

- At meetings where discussions about school issues occur, a Board member should primarily be listening to the discussion and learning ~~with~~ **what** community members think.
- If a Board member is asked to give an opinion or chooses to give an opinion, she/he should make clear that the she/he is speaking as an individual community member, not on behalf of the Board.
- A Board member can explain and clarify decisions the board has made if asked to or if relevant to the discussion.

## **A District Wide Emergency**

### **Principles:**

Board members should be informed and updated about the state of emergency by the Superintendent or designee as soon as possible.

### **Protocol:**

The superintendent or designee will inform the Board president as soon as possible as to the nature of the emergency and will keep the Board president updated with regard to actions leading to resolution of the emergency. The Board president or designee is responsible for relaying information to all other Board members.

## **Censure Policy**

### **Principle:**

The Board of Education of the Amador County Unified School District has a strong commitment to ethical behavior. The public expects and must receive the highest standards of behavior from all of those in public service. In order to be able to enforce conformance to its policies, the Board of Education must have a procedure by which it can censure its own members for violations of the policies or bylaws of the Board of Education.

### **Protocol:**

Board bylaw BB 9401 provides the mechanism by which the Board of Education, acting as a whole, can censure any of its members who violate state or federal laws applicable to the District or for violation of the Board policies or bylaws of the Board of Education.

# Protocols

## Annual Reorganization of the Board:

### **Principles:**

It is in the best interest of the Board that its officers be both willing and able to carry out the relevant duties. Effective Board members are not necessarily effective Board presidents, nor do all members have the time needed to provide effective leadership.

### **Protocol:**

- At the first regular meeting in December, the Board elects a president and clerk to the governing board.
- At the reorganization meeting, the superintendent will preside over the election of the president. The newly elected president will preside over the election of the clerk.
- Any Board member may nominate any member, including the current officers, for either office.
- There is no limit to the number of times a member may serve as an officer, nor is there any expectation that all members will serve as officers or automatically rotate into either position.

## **Board Meeting Protocols**

### Board Meeting Guidelines

It is important to recognize that a Board meeting is the time for the Board to do their work in public view. After staff input and public comment, Board members are encouraged to ask questions and explain their thinking related to the topic at hand. The Board president recognizes members who desire to speak, alternating so that all members have the opportunity to speak. There is not a time limit or limit to the number of questions or comments that a Board member may make, but each Board member should be respectful of giving other members the opportunity to speak. Nothing in this section will preclude members from speaking multiple times until all discussion is concluded.

Unless a point is important to further understanding of the immediate discussion, the Board President will allow all other members to speak first and then add his/her comments or questions.

# Board Meeting Protocols

## Placing Items on Board Agendas

~~Any Board member may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting. The request should be in writing and be submitted to the superintendent or his/her designee, Board President, or Board Clerk with supporting documents and information, if any, at least one week before the scheduled meeting date; however to give staff time to prepare materials, it is helpful to make the request at a regularly scheduled meeting during "Request and Reports from Board Members." Items submitted less than a week before the scheduled meeting date may be postponed to a later meeting in order to allow sufficient time for consideration and research of the issue.~~

## **Requesting Items to be Placed on Board Agendas** [From Board ByLaw 9323.2(a)]

Board members and other stakeholders may request items to be placed on a Board agenda.

The following steps will be followed:

1. The interested party will complete the Request for Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda Item and submit it to the Superintendent.
2. A subcommittee of the Board including the Board President, Board Clerk, Superintendent, and two Cabinet members will meet to review the request and determine if the request is approved, denied, or could be addressed by staff.
3. If research is needed to fully understand or respond to the requested Board agenda item, the Superintendent or designee will communicate with the requesting party.
4. If the agenda item is approved by the subcommittee, the item will be placed on a future agenda.
5. If the approved agenda item request requires action to be taken by the Board, it will be placed on the agenda two times, the first for a report and Board discussion, and the second for discussion and potential action.
6. Whether approved or not approved, the Superintendent or Board President will respond to the requester in writing with an explanation as needed.

**Request to Place an Item on a Board Agenda**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Role in Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Request: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested Board Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Request:  Open Session

Closed Session – For Board Member use only

Cite Brown Act justification: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Item Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Type/Action Requested (choose one):  Discussion  Discussion/Action  Report

Public Hearing  Resolution

Background information:

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Please attach any additional information or items, such as PowerPoint slides, photos, or cited reports you wish to present to the Board.

Completed forms can be submitted via:

Email: [aslavensky@acusd.org](mailto:aslavensky@acusd.org)

Mail: 217 Rex Avenue, Jackson, CA 95642

Fax: 209-257-5360

# Board Meeting Protocols

## Using Board Meetings as Strategic Leadership Tools

Board meetings are opportunities to strategically move the district forward, and to communicate direction, district priorities and progress to the community. When the public understands the process and the thinking behind Board decisions, there is generally more community support for the decision.

- Board members and the superintendent will regularly link Board meeting agenda items and discussions to the district vision, goals and strategic plan.
- Board members will ask clarifying questions about agenda items in order to demonstrate and make as clear and transparent as possible the dialogue leading up to decisions made by the Board.
- At the end of each discussion, the Board president may sum up the points of view and any consensus reached and ask the members to confirm whether the summary is accurate.
- When a Board member makes a motion, if necessary the Board president will clarify the meaning of a yes or no vote on the motion. After a vote, the Board president will clarify for staff and the public the meaning of the vote. This clarification will be memorialized in the minutes along with the number of ayes, nays, and abstentions.

# Board Meeting Protocols

## **The Role of Board Members During Board Meetings**

The authority to direct action rests solely with the full board during public meetings. A majority vote provides direction to the superintendent. By carefully reviewing the board packet prior to the board meeting, Board members are encouraged to contact the superintendent for questions about an item prior to the Board meeting. All members share a common responsibility to ensure the Brown Act is followed.

## **Board Member Interaction With the Public at Board Meetings**

### **Principle:**

- The Board encourages members of the public to attend Board meetings and to address the Board.
- Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public for the purpose of accomplishing district business. They are not “town hall meetings” where elected officials and community members freely engage in an unstructured manner.
- The purpose of public participation at Board meetings is to inform Board deliberations.
- Board members want to ensure that all and multiple voices of the community are heard at the designated times during Board meetings.
- Meetings will be conducted in a civil, orderly, and respectful manner under the administration and discretion of the Board president.
- The Board president will not permit any disturbance or willful interruption of Board meetings.

### **Protocol:**

- Time will be scheduled at Board meetings for public comment on agenda and non-agenda items within the Board’s jurisdiction.
- The total time for public testimony will be limited to 20 minutes at the beginning of each regular board meeting. Any person whose name remains on the speaker list at the end of 20 minute time period will be granted no more than three minutes to speak at the end of the open session Board meeting.

## Board Meeting Protocols

During a special Board meeting, the Board is not required to provide a public comment section unless the Board wishes to do so. In recognition of the limited subject matter of special Board meetings, the time for public testimony at the beginning of special Board meetings may be less than 30 minutes at the discretion of the Board president and with Board consent.

Board members will strive to adhere to time limits to ensure sufficient time for Board members to conduct district business as denoted on the Board agenda.

The Board will establish and adopt guidelines for public comment that balance efficient Board meeting management and full participation of the public.

- The total time for public input on each agenda or non-agenda item will not exceed 20 minutes.
- Each speaker will be allotted a maximum of three (3) minutes.
- Each speaker may speak once at the podium on each agenda item.
- Each speaker requiring language translation will be allowed a maximum of three (3) minutes to speak and three (3) minutes for translation.
- With Board consent, the Board president may exceed or decrease the 20 minute time allotment on agenda and non-agenda items or make other modifications to the public comment period and process to accommodate special circumstances consistent with the Board's stated principles.
- The Board president may take a poll of speakers for or against a particular issue and may ask that additional persons speak only if they have something new to add.
- The Board will consistently abide by these agreements so all persons are treated fairly and equally.
- All public comments or questions should be addressed to the Board through the Board president.
- Speakers at Board meetings will be listened to with respect.
- Complaints and concerns will be responded to as quickly as possible. The Board president will delegate responsibility for a response when appropriate.
- The Board president may place a public initiated item on a future Board meeting agenda.
- The Board president will confirm that the Board stands by its decision if comments or concerns are specific to a past Board decision.

# Board Meeting Protocols

## **Individual Board Member's Request for Information, Materials or Action**

It is important for Board members to be well informed, as oversight of the district is one of the main functions of the Board. Board members recognize that they have no power as individuals to direct staff action, and that compiling information in response to Board member requests can take staff away from their day-to-day operations of schools and the district. An individual Board member will—insofar as possible—work to let the superintendent know in advance when a request for information will be made in a public meeting so staff can be prepared to provide a thorough response. Staff will make every effort to ensure that board agenda items include thorough background and information. Requests for information not on the board agenda should be made to the superintendent who will ensure the appropriate staff person responds. All information provided by the administration in response to a request by a Board member shall be provided to all other Board members at the same time. Board members should self-regulate the amount of requests for information regarding issues not on the board agenda.

## **Motion and Voting**

The Board president will accept a motion and a second on action items following the close of the regular public comment period. For action items which receive a motion and a second, the Board president will recognize each Board member for deliberation on the item. Comments will address substantive issues related to the action item and will be respectful of the Board's important deliberative responsibility. A vote will be taken following Board deliberations. The majority position will prevail and Board members agree to abide by the prevailing vote.

A majority vote of all Members of the Board is necessary for the election of officers or for any other action by the Board unless otherwise specified by law. Voting shall be by voice and the Board administrative assistant records the votes by member which is placed into the minutes of the meeting.

Unless otherwise provided by law, affirmative votes by majority of the board's membership are required to approve any action under consideration, regardless of the number of members present.

The Board shall take no action outside of a public meeting except on those matters and under those conditions authorized for closed sessions (Government Code sections 54957, 54957.7).

# Board Meeting Protocols

## **Voting or Abstaining**

Each Trustee respects the right of other Trustees to vote “no” on an issue. Everyone agrees it is a courtesy to the Governance Team to explain the reasons for the “no” vote either during deliberation or before casting the vote. If a Board member abstains, his/her abstention shall be considered to concur with the action taken by the majority of those who vote, whether affirmatively or negatively. If a member is absent at the previous meeting, he/she will abstain from voting on the approval of that meeting’s minutes.

## **Quorum**

A quorum is the minimum number of voting members who must be present at a properly called Board meeting in order to conduct business in the name of the Board, and is established when a majority of the Board members (at least three of the filled positions) are in attendance (Education Code section 35164).

## **Purpose of the Consent Agenda**

Board members should keep in mind that the purpose of the consent agenda is to expedite the handling of routine business.

- Board members should not discuss or pull any items unless it is very important to do so.
- Questions on the consent agenda, once asked and answered in advance of a Board meeting, should not be asked again at the meeting unless the Board member feels there is information that is important for the public to know, or unless the member wants a separate vote on the item. In the latter case, the member should ask that the item be pulled from the consent agenda.
- New contracts should not be placed on the consent agenda only recurring contracts.
- Consent agenda items should be routine and non-controversial.

# **Board Meeting Protocols**

## **Timing of Board Meetings**

The Board and the public should understand the relative importance of a meeting agenda item and know when to anticipate the discussion of an item of interest.

- Each item on the meeting agenda will include the time for the discussion and the amount of time reserved for that item.
- The Board president or designee will keep track of the time and if it appears that any item will take more than five minutes over the time allotted for it, the Board president will ask the Board to indicate by the showing of hands whether they want to continue discussion of the item and, if so, by how long.

## **Minimizing Environmental Impact**

The Board desires to minimize the environmental impact of the printing of Board agendas and ancillary materials. The district will distribute all Board-meeting-related materials electronically rather than on paper to the degree practicable and allowed by law.