Ukiah Unified School District

Governance Handbook

The Ukiah Unified School District Governance Handbook was initially developed during two effective governance workshops conducted in 2010 with the assistance of Babs Kavanaugh Governance Consultant, California School Boards Association. Subsequent revisions approved 11/15/11; 8/15/12;2/12/13;1/14/14;8/11/16;2/16/17

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ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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.

Governance Tenets
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. There are four dimensions to the effective governance of a school district. The governance responsibilities of Ukiah Unified School District Board of Education are organized into these four elements.

They are:
1. Governing as a unified team with a common vision and a shared purpose
2. Governing with a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
3. Creating and sustaining a positive governance culture
4. Developing protocols and procedures to facilitate governance leadership

I. UNITY OF PURPOSE - UKIAH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT MISSION, *VISION, AND GOALS*

The comprehensive Ukiah Unified School District Mission, Vision, and Goals can be found in the Strategic Plan Framework and the Strategic Plan Action Plan.

MISSION: How we'll get there
We will challenge and inspire our students to value different perspectives and become successful, contributing citizens in an increasingly interdependent world.

VISION: Where we are going
We are a dynamic and innovative learning community and our decisions are focused on the interests of our students. We recognize that for many students, our district can and must provide a solid path out of poverty. For all students, our school district must celebrate and cultivate their unique skills and talents.

GOALS:
Goal 1: To design and implement an educational program that prepares students for success in college and/or career.

Goal 2: To create a safe, positive, orderly, productive, healthy and respectful learning environment that values diversity and collaboration.

Goal 3: To engage our parents and community in a collaborative partnership that supports the success of our students.

II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – EFFECTIVE TRUSTEES

The Governance Team identified the four essential conditions of effective trustees.

Effective trustees are mindful
- They represent the entire community
- They hold the broad vision and understand the educational system
- They establish priorities and set the direction by majority decision
- They compromise
- They maintain confidentiality
- They understand the time commitment required to be effective

Effective trustees remain focused
- They set policy
- They make informed, responsible decisions
- They maintain responsibility for the agreed upon district core beliefs, vision and priorities

Effective trustees are prepared
- They dedicate the time needed to do the job and do their homework
  They are knowledgeable about trends and emerging issues that impact public education
- They are 'street wise' about community and community needs
- They contact the superintendent with questions prior to the board meeting to allow time to research answers

Effective trustees understand the importance of manner and behavior
- They listen respectfully
- When in the minority, they communicate their passion and move in the direction of the majority
- They are patient with one another

B. Five Board Governance Leadership Responsibilities

1.	**Set the direction for the community's schools**	• Focus on student learning and achievement • Define the mission, vision and core beliefs and ensure these documents are the driving force for all district efforts • Assess needs using established baseline data • Establish district priorities • Align district policies with the established direction
2.	**Establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district**	• Oversee development and adopt policies • Hire the superintendent • Set policy for hiring personnel and defining expectations for management competency • Set direction for and adopt curriculum • Establish budget priorities, adopt budget and oversee facilities issues • Provide direction for and adopt collective bargaining agreements • Establish governance protocols for board operations

3.	Provide support through our behavior and actions	• Ensure cultural norms support open, respectful communication with administration, one another and the community • Make decisions and provide resources to support mutually agreed upon priorities • Uphold district policies the board has approved • Ensure a positive personnel climate exists • Are knowledgeable about district efforts and able to explain them to the public
4.	Ensure accountability to the public	• Evaluate the superintendent • Monitor, review and revise policies • Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness and require program changes as needed • Monitor and adjust district finances • Monitor the collective bargaining process • Serve as a judicial and appeals body
5.	Demonstrate community leadership	• Speak with a common voice about district priorities, goals and issues • Communicate clear information about policies, programs and fiscal condition • Educate the community and the media about the issues facing the district and public education • Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities • Advocate for children, district programs and public education to the general public, community leaders and local, state and national leaders

III. CREATING AND SUSTAINING A POSITIVE GOVERNANCE CULTURE

To be effective, it is vital that the board and superintendent have a respectful and constructive working relationship based on trust and open communications.

Building a Constructive Relationship – Providing Support

A. What trustees need from the superintendent to fulfill their responsibilities…

- Current, timely and comprehensive information.
- Information about other policies and practices that may impact a decision.
- Issues from the school community, with history and background as appropriate.
- Open door for questions to the superintendent and other staff.
- Continue good communication that is direct, open and honest, e.g. board letter and calls.
- Succession planning - awareness of future voids and gaps in staff.
- Staff development and cultivation of our staff to contribute at a higher level.
- Sustainability: to identify and manage resources.
- Create and support good corporate culture, though policy, and practices.
- Trust and respect. A superintendent who is accessible. Comfort to talk honestly.

- Collectively look out for one another.
- Good decision making that combines data and heart.
- Be visible and share responsibility and insights.

B. *What the superintendent needs from trustees to fulfill his/her responsibilities…*

- Continue good communication that is direct, open and honest.
- Provide questions and concerns about information in advance of the board meeting. This practice promotes courtesy and efficiency, and prevents surprises.
- Clear expectations about district direction and priorities. Agreement about outcome measurements.
- Provide resources and support to ensure the superintendent has time to be the leader, to analyze and to think systemically. Provide resources to fill needed staff positions.
- To trust the expertise of the professional staff.
- Collectively look out for one another.
- Provide information and history and background about community issues.
- Be visible and share responsibility and insights.

IV. STRUCTURE TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

The following protocols were developed to support and promote the leadership and effectiveness of the governance team. They were developed for and by the members of the Ukiah Unified School District Governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

Protocols to Facilitate Governance Leadership

Topic I.	Structure of the Board Meeting Agenda
Rationale	• Important to the work of the school board is a meeting agenda that is efficient, understandable and clear. • The business of the District will be completed during the time specified or with special meetings as needed.

Protocol	• The superintendent will review the introduction statement on the board agenda at each board meeting to clarify how agenda items are linked to the district goals.
	• Board members will ensure that time is spent on the business of the district as well as discussing what is strategically important to the success of the students.
	• Specific topics may be highlighted such as facilities and the District Leadership Team.
	• Superintendent or designee will introduce an item:
	   Board will ask clarifying questions;
	   Public comment as described in Topic II will take place;
	   Board will make a motion;
	   Governance team will have discussion;
	   Board will vote.

Topic II.	Board Member Interaction with the Public at Board Meetings
Rationale	• Trustees want to ensure that multiple voices of the community are heard, that community members feel welcome at board meetings and that input is gathered at the appropriate forums. • The process for community input and engagement must be clearly stated and consistently and fairly managed. • Meeting agendas must be thoughtfully planned and time thoughtfully allocated. • Equal treatment fairness. • Process cards, public comments can result in board direction.

Protocol	• The board president will remind the public that board meetings are meetings of board held in public to conduct the district business.
	• Public input is valued and can result in board direction.
	• Guidelines for public input are listed on the meeting agenda and the speaker cards.
	• The board president will:
	  • Explain the public input process: Speakers will have up to five minutes for comments on items ON the agenda and a total of fifteen minute per agenda topic;
	  • Speakers can speak at the designated time during the agenda item;
	  • Speakers will have three minutes for comments on items NOT ON the agenda;
	  • Facilitate the public input and thank the members of the public for their input/comments.
	• Public input time limits may be extended by rule of the Chair unless a majority of the Board agrees otherwise.
	• Board members will be mindful of the agreed upon board meeting ending time and will remind one another as that time approaches.

Topic III.	Confidentiality/Closed Session Practices
Rationale	• The responsibility of our Board includes being privy to closed session or confidential information about district litigation, personnel, negotiations, superintendent evaluation, or other issues permitted under the Brown Act.
Protocol	• All trustees agree that information discussed in closed session is held in confidence until notified that it is no longer a confidential issue. • The board will work to maintain the public's trust by not breaching confidentiality. If trustees inadvertently or accidentally violate a confidential issue, we will take immediate responsibility for our action. • The board president summarizes sensitive issues at the end of closed session to remind all members about confidentiality

Topic IV.	Board Member Meetings with union officials/bargaining team members
Rationale	• The board's responsibility is to represent the district's interest during negotiations. The governance team defines the parameters for negotiations based on district goals and the staff implementation plan. The governance team must preserve and protect the things of greatest importance as we serve the needs of our students and maintain a climate of excellence throughout the district.
Protocol	• It is the board's responsibility to negotiate a fair and equitable contract for the unions and the district. Individual conversations with unions and board members are acceptable and encouraged. • When an issue arises requiring multiple conversations with multiple board members, those needs must be agendized as a public forum or in a legally accepted manner.

Topic V.	Spokesperson
Rationale	• We believe it is essential that important information be communicated to members of the board, the staff and the community in as timely a fashion as possible. • We recognize that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public.
Protocol	The governance team believes it is important that we speak with one voice in order to maintain the trust of our community. The designated spokesperson will vary depending on the issue or situation: • **Crisis/Disaster:** The superintendent will be the primary spokesperson and may involve the board president at his/her discretion. • **Meeting Information** (e.g. 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.

Topic VI.	Visiting Schools
Rationale	• Board members are encouraged to visit all schools and to attend school events.
Protocol	• Make appointment with principal and copy Superintendent to schedule a school visit. • Principals will inform the Superintendent and their school staff if a Board member is visiting the campus. • Principals may accompany the Board member during the visit. • Principals are encouraged to debrief with the Board member at the end of the visit to put in context what the Board member has observed and answer any questions.

Topic VII.	Receiving Community or Staff Concerns and/or Complaints
Rationale	- Board members need to follow an agreed upon protocol when receiving community or staff concerns and/or complaints in order to remain open and neutral. - Board members need to follow the Board's policy concerning complaints from their community and/or staff that encourages complaints to be resolved at the lowest level.
Protocol	When approached with an issue or concern, Trustees agree to the following: - Listen openly, being careful to remain neutral. - Remind staff and members of the community that no individual Trustee has the authority to solve the issue or concern. - Encourage the individual to solve the issue or concern with the appropriate staff member. - Respond in person or by phone rather than in an email. - Share with the Superintendent who will share with the remaining Board members, if appropriate.
Topic VIII.	Requesting Information from Staff
Rationale	- Staff need to have adequate time to gather information requested by board member. - Staff need to be focused on agreed upon board goals and district priorities.
Protocol	Information for the Board meeting or in the Board packet: - Call or email the Superintendent or Executive Assistant with cc to Superintendent who will answer or direct to appropriate staff. - Request information 24 hours before the meeting so that staff has an opportunity to get the information. - Staff must meet board packet deadlines so that Board members receive all meeting information in their packets on the Thursday or Friday before the regular board meeting. Information for items not on the board agenda: - Request the information from the Superintendent who will give to appropriate staff. - All Board members will receive the same information, if appropriate. - Board members will self –monitor individual requests to ensure one person's request will not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. - Requests determined by the Superintendent to require an inordinate amount of time will be brought to the Board to decide whether to support the request.

Topic IX.	Addressing Conflicts Among Board Members
Rationale	The Board Protocols are developed to support and promote the leadership and effectiveness of the governance team.

Protocol	If conflicts occur among individual Board members: The Board President will review and remind the Board member(s) about the following Governance Handbook sections:
	    II. - Role and Responsibilities – Effective Trustees
	    II.B - Five Board Governance Leadership Responsibilities, #3- Provide support

	through our behavior and actions
	• The Board President will follow-up after the board meeting with the Trustee or Trustees.
	• If necessary, the Board President may ask for a recess during the meeting.

Topic X.	Welcome New Board Members
Rationale	• New board members will be provided training and support in order to be best prepared for their new role as a UUSD Trustee
Protocol	• Once elected new Trustees will attend a new Board member orientation to fully understand the roles and responsibilities of a UUSD Trustee and the more detailed work of the Cabinet which will include information on the Brown Act requirements. • Trustees are encouraged to attend the CSBA training for new Board members and/or the County Office of Education new Board member workshop.

Topic XI.	Superintendent Performance Evaluation
Rationale	• Boards must have agreed upon district vision, core values and priorities in order to effectively evaluate the superintendent. • The evaluation process must be clear and fair. It should be goals based, data driven, collaborative and on going.

Protocol	• The board utilizes the superintendent evaluation as an important leadership tool to focus and align all district efforts.
	The evaluation process will follow the timeline listed below:
	  • The Board and Superintendent shall annually develop goals and objectives no later than September 15 of each year.
	  • The Board and Superintendent shall agree upon a written evaluation format which shall be used during the Term.
	  • The Board and Superintendent shall meet once during the course of the year, in closed session, to give oral feedback to the Superintendent regarding the Superintendent's progress towards meeting the mutually agreed upon goals and objectives, and making any agreed upon modifications to those goals and objectives, and to discuss the relationship between the Board and Superintendent.
	  • No later than May 31 of each year, the Board and Superintendent will meet to discuss the annual evaluation. After reviewing the performance of the Superintendent based upon the agreed upon goals and objectives established for the school year, the Board shall notify the Superintendent in writing whether the Superintendent has performed, in the Board's judgment, satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily.

Topic XII.	Board Governance Self-Assessment
Rationale	• Conducting a governance self-evaluation demonstrates accountability to the community and the willingness of the governance team to strengthen and improve

	governance practices.
Protocol	• The board supports continuous improvement through an evaluation of governance practices and effectiveness. • Annually the board will schedule a conversation/study session meeting to reflect on governance practices and participate in a self-evaluation process. • The process will identify commendations and recommendations for improvement. • The board may identify one or two annual governance goals for strengthening the governance team's performance. • The Board will conduct a self-assessment in November each year and discuss in January. • At the end of each meeting, the Board will complete a short self-assessment of the meeting. The results will be shared with the Board.

Topic XIII.	Board Annual Election of Officers
Rationale	• Board members shall meet annually to elect the officers of the Board and choose a President, Vice-President and Clerk; • Each officer will serve for 1 year.
Protocol	• The Board shall annually rotate officers. The Vice President will succeed the President and assume the Board President's role; the Clerk will succeed the Vice President and assume the role of Vice President at the annual organization meeting. The President then moves to the more junior spot on the Board. • The Clerk will be nominated and elected by a majority of the Board. • The Board shall designate the Superintendent as Secretary to the Board.

Topic XIV.	Board Member Request for Agenda Item
Rationale	• It is important to be clear about how a Board member requests an agenda item; • Additionally, prior to staff members completing a full analysis of a particular topic, it is important to ensure that the majority of the Board has interest in further study prior to having staff expend time on the matter.
Protocol	• At the end of a Board meeting under agenda planning, the Board President asks if there are any topics for future agendas. • If a Board member requests a topic for a future item, that item is added to a future agenda. • At the next Board meeting, staff will describe what work will be needed to fully analyze and research the topic. The Board will vote on whether or not to have staff come back with a report and/or action item at a future meeting.

Appendix A

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE [1]

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

As the governance team fulfills responsibilities in the areas of setting direction, human resources, policies, student learning and achievement, finance, judicial appeals, collective bargaining, and community relations and advocacy, the way in which governance team members perform the governance role is critical.

Whether in the boardroom, out in the community or at home, board members are always trustees for the district. The integrity of the school district's educational program is dependent upon the responsible and professional manner in which each board member, and the board collectively, fulfills governance roles and responsibilities with the superintendent. The demeanor of governance team members sends an important message to the public.

Utilizing effective governance techniques, private citizens, once elected to school boards, work with the superintendent to keep all district efforts focused on student learning. 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.

The community elects school board members to set and monitor the direction of the school district, and the district superintendent will translate 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.

Working as a group, board members and the superintendent leverage the efforts of the professional staff by setting a direction for the district reflective of the community's wishes for its children, by creating a supportive framework for action in the district, by holding the system accountable through mutually agreed upon mechanisms, by providing support to students and staff through behaviors and actions, and by demonstrating community leadership on behalf of children, district schools and public education. When this is done effectively, the chances of a climate for excellence being created in which students thrive increases dramatically.

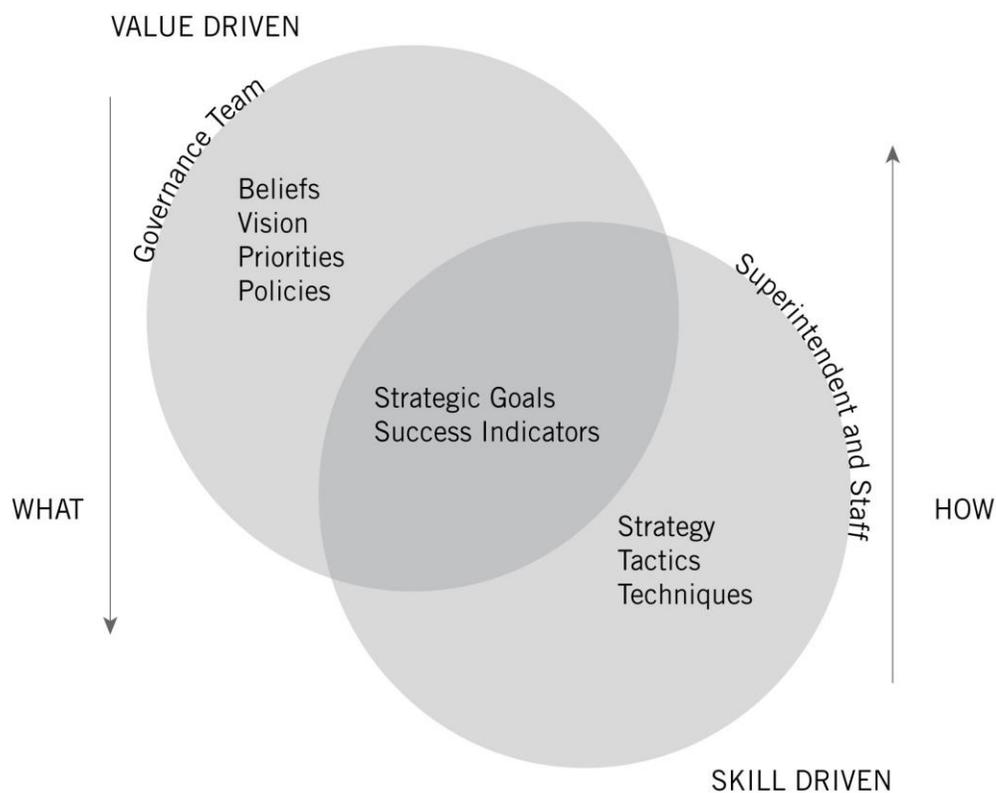[1] Source: California School Boards Association

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE TEAMS[2]

Effective teams value and respect their essential roles, reach mutual agreement on the roles of the board and superintendent, and strive to operate within them.

Boards and superintendents work together to ensure a district has effective leadership. There are important distinctions to be made between the board's role and that of the superintendent and staff. The role of the school board is not to run the schools, but to see that the schools are well run.

UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE ROLES

VALUE DRIVEN

Governance Team

Beliefs
Vision
Priorities
Policies

Superintendent and Staff

Strategic Goals
Success Indicators

WHAT

Strategy
Tactics
Techniques

HOW

SKILL DRIVEN

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[2] Source: California School Boards Association