



MORELAND
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Moreland School District

Governance Handbook

Board approved: November 14, 2017

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Heather Sutton, President

Brian Penzel, Clerk

Julie Reynolds-Grabbe, Trustee

Robert Varich, Trustee

Karen Whipple, Trustee

SUPERINTENDENT

Mary Kay Going, Ed.D., *Superintendent*

Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements

This handbook reflects the governance team's work on creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, norms and coming to agreement on protocols for formal structures that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.

I agree with the elements of the Moreland School District Governance Handbook and agree to abide by its contents.

Superintendent

Date

Board President

Date

Board Clerk

Date

Board Member

Date

Board Member

Date

Board Member

Date

Unity of Purpose

School districts and county offices of education are governed by boards, not by individual trustees. While understanding their separate roles, the board and superintendent work together as a “governance team.” This team assumes collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture in order to govern effectively.

Unity of purpose is a common focus, superordinate goals, and the core values and beliefs governance team members share in common about children, the district and public education. Unity of Purpose helps us transcend our differences to fulfill a greater purpose.

To operate effectively, the Board must have a unity of purpose and:

- Prioritize students first.
- Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students.
- Communicate a common vision.
- Build and maintain trust in order to move the district forward.
- Operate openly, with trust and integrity.
- Govern as an effective team in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures.
- Take collective responsibility for the Board’s performance.
- Partner with the staff, parents, community, and government leaders in effecting positive change.
- Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness as a commitment to continuous improvement as a governance team.
- Maintain a positive culture and environment of open communication and trust.
- Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations.
- Maintain a strategic focus in decision making.

Mutual agreement on the roles of the board and superintendent

The role of our Governance Team is to stay focused on the big picture while fulfilling responsibilities in a series of job areas. These responsibilities are:

- Setting a direction for the district.
- Providing a structure by establishing policies.
- Providing support.
- Ensuring accountability.
- Provide community leadership on behalf of the district and public education.

To fulfill these responsibilities, there are a number of specific jobs that we must carry out. Effective Boards:

- Involve the community, parents, students and staff in developing a common vision for the district focused on learning and achievement and responsive to the needs of all students and consider all four of these stakeholders when making decisions.
- Adopt, evaluate and update policies consistent with the law and the district's vision and goals.
- Maintain accountability for student learning by monitoring student progress.
- Hire and support the Superintendent so that the vision, goals and policies of the districts can be implemented.
- Conduct regular and timely evaluation of the Superintendent based on the vision, goals and performance of the district, and ensure that the superintendent holds district personnel accountable.
- Adopt a fiscally responsible budget based on the district's vision and goals, and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the district.
- Ensure that a safe and appropriate educational environment is provided to all students.
- Establish a framework for the district's collective bargaining process and adopt responsible agreements.
- Provide community leadership on educational issues and advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local, state and federal levels.

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.

Creating and Sustaining a Positive Governance Team Culture

In California's public education system, a trustee is a person elected or appointed to serve on a school district or county board of education. Individual trustees bring unique skills, values and beliefs to their board. In order to govern effectively, individual trustees must work with each other and the superintendent to ensure that a high quality education is provided to each student.

Culture is atmosphere created by the way we treat each other. We have unwritten (implicit) and written (explicit) agreements about how we will behave with each other and others. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable us to build and maintain a positive culture.

To be effective as trustees, we agree to the following Governance Norms:

- Consider the impact of decisions on students as a first priority.
- Keep learning and achievement for all students the primary focus.
- Value, support and advocate for public education.
- Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community.
- Show respect, act with dignity, and understand the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- Refrain from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced and respected).
- Make a commitment to effective deliberation, each listening openly and allowing everyone to express his or her point of view.
- Make a commitment to open communication, honesty, no surprises.
- Commit the time necessary to govern effectively.
- Be collaborative.
- Keep confidential matters confidential.
- Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.
- Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.
- Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.
- Understand that authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individual members.

And -- above all --

- Focus on students' best interests - on what's best for all kids!

Protocols

Formal Structures and Processes

1. Effective Governance/Board Meetings

A. Preparation

- i. Staff will provide full information (including all attachments) three days in advance of a meeting or study session so it can be reviewed prior to the meeting. This includes presentation materials, background information, options/ramifications/implications, and recommendation or status.
Exception: the Board recognizes that some materials are time sensitive in nature and as such may not be provided in advance.
- ii. The Board will thoroughly read all material and provide questions or concerns regarding any issue to the Superintendent in advance of the meeting and no later than 8:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting.
- iii. Individual Board members will alert the Superintendent to any community concerns that have been brought to their attention. Additionally, the Superintendent will alert the Board to any community concerns that have been brought to his or her attention.
- iv. All requests for information from a Board member will be directed to the Superintendent. All requests will be considered by the Superintendent and president of the Board when applicable. Such requests are subject to the discretion of the Superintendent or must be approved by the majority of the Board especially but not limited to those that require more than 15 minutes of research or follow-up by staff.
- v. When substantive information is provided to an individual board member in response to a concern or question, it will be provided to all Board members.
- vi. The Superintendent will meet regularly with individual board members.
- vii. The Superintendent will provide regular reports to the Board that include:
 - (1) Follow up on requests made by the board.
 - (2) Preview of items that will be on a future board agenda.
 - (3) Communicate/update pertinent issues within the district.

B. Meeting Guidelines

- i. Board members will make every effort to attend all board meetings including work study, planning, and special meetings.
- ii. The Board agrees that when no conflict of interest requires abstention, its members have a duty to vote on issues before them.

- iii. Each Board member respects the right of other Board members to vote “no” on an issue. Board members are encouraged to explain and request that the record reflect the reasons for the “no” vote either during deliberations or before casting the vote.
- iv. Any action taken by the Board requires affirmative votes by a majority of the filled positions on the Board regardless of the number of Board members present at the time of the vote.
- v. Board members agree to accept and support the will of the Board majority even if it is contrary to their vote.
- vi. Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings. The public is welcome to attend and public comments may be addressed to the Board using the following guidelines:
 - (1) Any person wishing to speak on any item on the agenda will be granted three minutes at the time the item appears on the agenda, or in the case of a non-agenda item, may do so under Comments from the Public. Depending upon the topic and the number of persons wishing to speak, the president may modify the number of minutes and/or the total time allocated for public comment.
 - (2) Prior to addressing the Board, a blue card (located on the table at the rear entrance) must be completed and given to the Board Clerk. Cards should be turned in prior to the Board reconvening for open session but will be accepted until Comments from the Public specific to each agenda item has begun. Public comment is limited to speakers in attendance.
 - (3) Persons unable to attend the meeting may submit written correspondence. Written correspondence will be acknowledged in the record but will not be read orally.
 - (4) For items appearing on the agenda –
 - a) The item will be presented and staff reports made, prior to public input.
 - b) If multiple persons wish to speak on the item, the clerk will announce the order and call speakers to the podium.
 - c) If what someone wishes to say has already been covered by a previous speaker, the person may stand in their place and say that what they wanted to say has been addressed and do not wish to make further public comment at this time other than to state which side of the issue they are on.
 - d) Once public comment has been received, Board members will discuss the item among themselves. However, the Board may, at their discretion, ask questions of the Superintendent.
 - (5) For items not appearing on the agenda –
 - a) In compliance with Board policy and the Ralph M. Brown Act, the Board is not permitted to discuss or take action on non-agenda items.

- b) Depending upon the nature of the presentation, a Board member or the Superintendent may respond with questions of clarification or provide a reference to staff or other resources for factual information. If appropriate, a majority of the Board may direct the Superintendent to follow up on concerns expressed or schedule an item for a future board agenda.
 - c) It is the intent of the Board to allow the public to express concerns about an employee, while at the same time protecting the employee's right to privacy.
- vii. The Board will not direct questions to any member of the audience nor will any member of the audience direct a question to the Board.
- viii. Public hearings are legal events, which allow testimony from the community to help the Board reach a decision about an issue. Members of the Board do not generally comment during public hearings, but rather listen to the public's views on the issue. If members of the public offer erroneous information as fact, the Board or Superintendent can offer clarification, but will not engage in discussion on the issue.
- ix. The purpose of Board communications is for individual Board members to make brief announcements, report on specific observations or activities, and provide acknowledgments that would be of interest to the other Board members.
- x. The consent agenda is to consist of items of a routine or recurring nature that may be approved by one action of the Board. Prior to approval of the consent agenda, a Board member may ask questions about a particular item. Items should be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately when a vote may be cast differently than other Consent items or when a Comment from the Public request card has been submitted. If a Board member or member of the public would like an item to be considered separately, the item may be removed from the consent agenda when approving the agenda at the beginning of open session or immediately before approval of the consent agenda.
- xi. Board meetings are generally held the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, except as agreed in a formal board action. Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. in Open Session. In the event that a Closed Session is required, it will be held in advance.
- xii. Special meetings of the Board may be called at any time by the Board President or a majority of the Board members. Special Meetings should only be used to handle issues with time sensitivity or other unique needs.
- xiii. Although the Brown Act requires the majority of the Board's business to be conducted in public, there are several areas that must be conducted in Closed Session. These items are litigation, collective bargaining negotiations, student discipline and personnel. It is the responsibility of the Board President to ensure that Closed Session discussions stay limited to these topics.

- xiv. Written reports provided to the Board should not be repeated orally when presented. Staff should briefly highlight the report and then remain available for discussion and questions from the Board.
- xv. It is the responsibility of the Board President to ensure that discussions held prior to any action item is limited to the topic of the action item. Discussions that may be relative, but not relevant, to the item being considered should be deferred to another agenda.
- xvi. In the event of a work study style meeting, the Superintendent may include additional active participants at his or her discretion.

2. Setting Direction

A. District Strategic Plan

- i. The District will update the Strategic Plan every 3-5 years.

B. District goals and objectives

- i. Goals and objectives for the District will be developed from the Strategic Plan and set annually in the fall. The Superintendent will draft an initial proposal upon which the Board will provide input. The goals will be approved at a subsequent meeting.
- ii. The Superintendent will report progress towards these goals and objectives periodically to the Board, not necessarily presenting all goals each time. Progress of the goals and objectives will be based on predetermined measurements.

C. New Agenda Items

- i. The Superintendent and the Board president together will plan the agenda for each meeting.
- ii. Board members may request that items be placed on the agenda by:
 - (1) Contacting the Superintendent.
 - (2) Contacting the Board president.
 - (3) Making a request during Announcements/Reminders/Requests at the end of open session.
- iii. Outside requests made to the Board to pass Resolutions in support of a particular issue will be disseminated in a Friday Report prior to inclusion on a Board agenda. The proposed Resolution will be included on a future agenda if the Superintendent receives feedback to do so.
- iv. The Board president and/or Superintendent may ask for a Board consensus on whether to place any item on the agenda.

3. Establish Structure/Support and Ensuring Accountability

A. Board Self-Evaluation

- i. The Board will seek feedback on the Board's effectiveness periodically.
- ii. The Board will review and update the Governance Handbook annually. The Board may revisit the handbook as needed.
- iii. Governance Handbook updates shall be made and approved by the Board as necessary.

B. Selection of Board President/Clerk

- i. The Board will select a Board President and Board Clerk annually.
- ii. At the end of the Board's annual organizational meeting in December, the Superintendent will ask the Board for nominations which must then be seconded.
- iii. An individual nominated for either position has the opportunity to decline the nomination.
- iv. The Superintendent will then ask for a vote for each nomination. Once one person receives at least three votes, the vote is final.
- v. The new Board President and Clerk will immediately assume their duties.
- vi. The board desires to rotate the board leadership periodically. Ideally, the Board President would not serve more than 3 consecutive years.

C. Setting/Revising Board Policy

- i. Superintendent will ensure Board policies are kept up to date.
- ii. New and revised policies will be placed on agendas and approved by the majority of the Board throughout the year.

D. Collective Bargaining Process

- i. The Superintendent is responsible for proposing items to sunshine during Closed Session for the Board to review and provide input. These items are then placed on a later agenda to be sunshined publicly.
- ii. The Board delegates responsibility for negotiating to the Superintendent and will not actively participate in the collective bargaining process; however, the board will provide parameters for District Staff to work within. The Superintendent will provide the Board with regular updates on the status of negotiations, ask for guidance and direction when necessary, and receive Board approval for the final contract.

E. Superintendent Evaluation

- i. The Board will evaluate the Superintendent on an annual basis in the spring. As part of the evaluation, the Board will collect feedback from staff regarding the effectiveness of the Superintendent.

- ii. The Superintendent will prepare a packet consisting of an evaluation of personal goals and objectives, a self-evaluation, and a copy of the Superintendent's contract to discuss with the board.
- iii. The Board will review the Superintendent's packet and any other evidence of performance in closed session. After discussion, the Board will draft a single evaluation to present to the Superintendent at a subsequent meeting.
- iv. Subsequent to being presented the evaluation, the Superintendent will draft personal goals and objectives derived from the evaluation for the following year. The Board will review these with the superintendent in closed session.
- v. The Board and the Superintendent are committed to continuous improvement.

4. Community Leader

A. School Site Visits

- i. Whereas Board members are encouraged to visit school sites regularly, one to two Board members will visit each site at least twice a year.
- ii. Board members will work with the Superintendent or his designee to schedule site visits. The principal at each site will identify the best time for visits.
- iii. Ideally,, board members will visit every classroom once a year. In the other site visit, principals and staff will design the board visit so that fewer classrooms are toured, but the visit will be more in depth.

B. Involvement in the Community

- i. Board members are encouraged to attend as many school and community events as possible.
- ii. Committee appointments as well as school site and district organization designations are made prior to the start of each school year and as needed during the school year. The Board President will not be expected to serve on a committee. A Board member will also serve as the Board's representative to the Santa Clara County School Boards Association (SCCSBA). Each committee will have two Board designees with a minimum of one designee and an alternate. As a Board representative, Board members will attend related meetings, disseminate/solicit information when appropriate, educate participants on the reasoning and rationale behind Board decisions and current educational issues, and provide periodic updates to the Board and Superintendent. As an alternative, a representative from a committee may make periodic reports of their activities to the Board. Should the Board member be unable to attend a meeting, the member will request another Board member to attend on their behalf.
- iii. The Superintendent will serve as the spokesperson for the District and the Board President will serve as spokesperson for the Board. Any requests for information

from the media should be directed as such. When the Superintendent or designee responds to a community member, the board will be copied on the correspondence.

- iv. Communications written by any Board member that are signed as a representative of the Board must be reviewed by the rest of the Board and consensus received from a majority of the Board prior to being sent. This includes, but is not limited to, “Letters to the Editor” and any correspondence to legislative bodies.
- v. When approached by a member of the community with a complaint or concern, a Board member should listen and then direct the community member to the appropriate staff person or Superintendent responsible for the issue in question. The Board member should provide the staff person ~~or~~ and Superintendent with a “heads up” letting them know about the conversation. If appropriate, the Board member may ask for a follow up at a later date. If complaints on a particular issue persist, a Board member may consider asking to place the issue on the agenda of a future board meeting, as there may be a need to adopt a policy that would give staff further guidance on how to handle the particular issue.
- vi. When approached by a member of the district’s staff, a Board member should listen and direct the staff member to the Superintendent. The Board member should provide the Superintendent with a “heads up,” but should refrain from becoming involved in any issue between a staff member and the Superintendent.

5. Other

A. Confidentiality

- i. A board member must keep confidential information confidential. Items discussed in closed session are required to be kept confidential and a Board member can be subject to prosecution for revealing these discussions.
- ii. Failure to keep confidential information confidential can result in:
 - (1) A breach of the attorney/client privilege,
 - (2) Jeopardizing of the District’s legal position,
 - (3) Compromising the District’s bargaining position in negotiations,
 - (4) Destroying people’s lives,
 - (5) Undermining the District’s climate of trust, and
 - (6) Exposing the District to financial liability.

B. The Brown Act

- i. The Brown Act requires that all Board business, with the exception of certain items allowable in closed session, be discussed and acted upon in public. As such, no more than two members of the Board may meet outside of a Board meeting where Board business may be discussed.
- ii. Board members may not use email to communicate with more than one other Board member on any district business.

C. Workshops/Conferences

- i. Board members are encouraged to attend conferences and workshops to expand their capacity to serve effectively. These include, but are not limited to workshops sponsored by the California School Boards Association (CSBA) and School Services.
- ii. Board members should receive consensus from the rest of the Board before enrolling in any conference or workshop at the District's expense.

D. New Board Members

Newly expected/appointed board members will be expected to:

- i. Meet with the Superintendent or designee to receive orientation on the district
- ii. Meet with the Board President to receive orientation regarding the roles and responsibilities of being a Moreland board member.
- iii. Meet with key staff members to learn about their areas of responsibility and the district.
- iv. Visit all school sites at least once within their first year as a board member.
- v. Enroll in CSBA's Masters in Governance Program.
- vi. Fulfill all committee appointments of retiring board member whose position is being filled by the new board member.