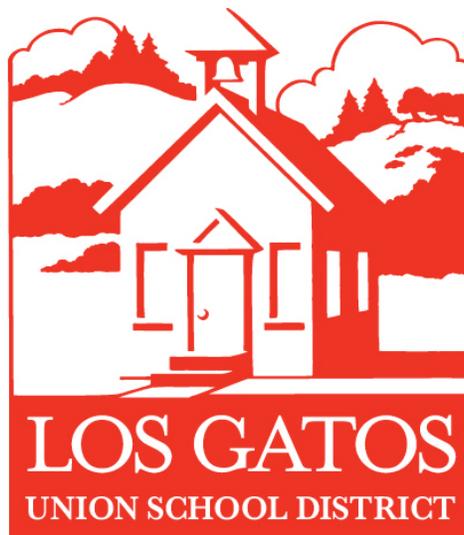


# **Los Gatos Union School District**

## **Governance Handbook 2018 Protocols & Procedures**



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# **Los Gatos Union School District**

## **Governance Team Handbook: Protocols and Procedures**

### ***Governance Commitments***

As a school board, we established and abide by governance commitments. We developed these commitments through deep discussions that resulted in a mutual understanding and common ground in the following areas: mission, vision, core beliefs, a partnership between the Board and our superintendent, and our values, norms, and protocols.

### ***Mission Statement***

Los Gatos Union School District (“District”) educates all children to their unique potential by teaching, modeling, and supporting the skills and attitudes that contribute to their development as globally and socially responsible citizens.

### ***Vision Statement***

All students know their individual learning styles and talents, think creatively and critically, act responsibly, communicate effectively, and apply knowledge in a diverse and ever-changing world.

### ***Core Values***

- We believe in educating the whole child (academically, socially, emotionally, and physically) through a well-balanced/rounded curriculum.
- We believe in the importance of schools, parents, and community partnering to support learning.
- We believe that high expectations for learning and teaching will result in academic excellence.
- We believe that students learn best in schools that are safe, nurturing, and responsive.
- We believe that students are best prepared for the future when they know how to learn, problem solve, collaborate, and respond to change.
- We believe in purposeful collaboration focused on learning.
- We believe in every child’s capacity to learn.
- We believe that quality teaching is the greatest predictor of student success.
- We believe in educating students for global citizenship.
- We believe that the diversity of our students, staff, and community strengthens and enriches our educational community.

### ***Who are we?***

The Los Gatos Union School District Governing Board is composed of five elected volunteers who represent the entire community, including children, students, parents, staff, and all members of the community, whether or not involved with our schools. The Governance Team composed of the five Board members and the Superintendent.

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### ***What is our purpose and our role?***

We are responsible for ensuring that the District is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the community, and the mission and vision of the District.

We are mandated to discharge any duty imposed by law ensuring the District complies with applicable State and Federal laws, and that our Board policies remain consistent with changes in the law. We set direction, establish the structure, create a supportive environment, ensure accountability, and provide community leadership on behalf of the District.

### ***What guides our Board in leading the District?***

There are four principal perspectives which guide us in fulfilling our role:

- *Community:*       What stakeholders want the schools to do?
- *Legal:*                What the laws say schools must do?
- *Professional:*      What educators say the schools should do and accomplish?
- *Fiduciary:*         What the schools are able to do and how we maintain the District's long term financial stability?

### ***Aligning the System***

The Board is focused on aligning all aspects of district operations to ensure that the district staff is pursuing the same goals in a coherent manner.

- Align resources.
- Understand the details of the budget as a direction-setting tool.
- Ensure that the allocation of staff supports the district operations within its priorities.
- Align policies.
- Create and improve district structures through policies that drive district operations and performance.
- Focus on policies that improve student achievement.
- Implement policies that drive changes to support student achievement.

### ***Setting Direction***

- The Board will focus on student learning and achievement and maintain that focus; coordinate programs and services to meet the diverse needs of the children and community.
- The Board will educate ourselves about the learning conditions in our district, current initiatives the District is implementing, and the District's goals.
- The Board will make fiscal responsibility a continued priority, and seek ways to engage the community's support in our programs.
- The Board will use the Strategic Plan to define clear goals and expectations for results to move the organization towards the District's vision.
- The Board will seek creative and meaningful solutions to problems as they arise.

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***Ensure Accountability***

The Board is responsible for monitoring organizational performance and reporting the results to stakeholders.

- Establish a Framework of district wide accountability systems to measure the performance of the Board, superintendent, and the district.
- Create a Cycle of Reporting and Review
  - Reporting will be in a consistent format to ensure board and community understanding
- Share the Responsibility
  - Create a standard of transparency to build trust in the community.
  - Include parents and community members to determine how to communicate and quantify progress.

***Engaging the Community***

The Board is responsible for clarifying their expectations for the community through District policy creating a respectful and productive environment for effective engagement between the community, and Board and District leadership.

The Board will...

- Understand the evolving context and perceptions of community engagement.
  - Determine the relevant and credible information the community needs.
  - Determine a shared understanding of what engagement looks like.
- Use an engagement process to support school improvement.
  - Focus on building trust with parents and community leaders with a shared concern for the children.
  - Create opportunities to hear the views of a diverse range of community members.
  - Build community partnerships and work as larger team to establish a vision and long-term plan.
  - Build the capacity of the community to support district reform through transitions in leadership.
- Create a clear community engagement process
  - ***Strategic:*** Focus on student achievement with enough specificity to give stakeholders confidence that the engagement will lead to change.
    - Focus on identifying problems.
    - Create a sense of urgency.

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- **Systemic:** Ensure participants understand the inter-connectedness and complexity of the school system.
  - Establish a list of priorities
  
- **Structured:** Establish processes that capture participants' insights regarding outcomes and courses of action.
  - Provide consistent opportunities for meaningful dialogue.
  - Establish structured conversations at regular intervals.
  
- **Cyclical:** Ensure engagement efforts are ongoing, providing continuous support and pressure for implementing change
  - Invest in teachers to help engage parents.
  - Work with community based organizations.
  - Utilize local school councils.

***Limits of Authority***

California law provides broad authority to school boards. Boards may “act in any manner which is not in conflict with or inconsistent with, or preempted by, any law and which is not in conflict with the purposes for which school districts are established.” The law also defines how and when boards exercise these governing powers. Boards are authorized to take action only at properly notice meetings which are open to the public, only, with limited exceptions, on items on the board’s agenda, and only by a formal vote of the board majority. The Board, and not its individual members, has the authority to act.

***Norms***

We expect the following behaviors from our board members to understand how we interact with one another.

- We focus on the best interests and academic achievement of ALL the children as a priority.
- We commit to being accessible and representing the entire community.
- We show respect to others in every interaction listening to people when they speak and responding professionally to verbal and non-verbal communications.
- We work as a cohesive unit with a unity of purpose, communicating a common vision.
- We come to meetings prepared, knowledgeable and agree to follow a process.
- We deliberate at the table.
- We are reasonable, reasoned, and thoughtful about decision making with a broad perspective and openness to a range of ideas and concerns.
- We (as individuals) respect and support the Board’s decisions.
- We understand that progress takes time, once a decision is made.
- We recognize the purpose of an individual Trustee’s public communication is to inform and educate.

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***Board-Superintendent Protocols for Effective Governance***

The Board of Trustees is the educational policy-making body for the District. To effectively meet the District's challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a leadership team. To ensure unity among team members, effective protocols-operating procedures-must be in place. There are general protocols for the Board and Superintendent, as well as some specifically for the Board, and still others for the Superintendent.

The board leads as a united team with the Superintendent, each from his or her own respective role, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.

**As Members of the Board and as Superintendent, We Will:**

1. Keep teaching and learning as the primary focus of our work.
2. Value, respect, and support public education in its varieties (including innovation).
3. Model good learning by participating in professional development.
4. Respect the differences between governance and management.
5. Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style of the Board and among staff, students, parents, and the community.
6. Operate with trust and integrity.
7. Keep confidential matters confidential.
8. Keep Fiscal oversight a priority and major responsibility.
9. Assume the best intentions in others.

**As a Board, We Will:**

1. Understand that the authority of the Board rests with the Board as a whole and not with individual Board members. (Individual Board members have no authority themselves).
2. Define the District's core values and beliefs.
3. Develop with the Superintendent a vision of a District with high-performing students and staff.
4. Establish clear expectations for student success that promote excellence for all students.
5. Establish a structure that moves the District toward achievement of its vision, mission, and strategic goals. This structure is established through the Board's policy-making, policy-review functions, and adopting a stakeholder driven strategic plan.
6. Make sure the agenda and behaviors reflect the District's core values and beliefs.
7. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
8. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance.
9. Develop positive relationships with the education community: staff, parents, and community members.
10. Evaluate on a regular basis the Board's effectiveness.

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11. Ensure there are opportunities for the diverse range of opinions and beliefs in the community to inform the Board.
12. Involve the community, parents, students, and staff in developing a shared vision of District success that focuses on the progress all students and staff make toward meeting high standards.
13. Adopt, evaluate, and update policies that enable the District to achieve its vision, mission, and strategic goals.
14. Adopt a budget that supports achievement of vision and mission and monitor on a regular basis the fiscal health of the District.
15. Ensure that the District operates within the legal parameters established by local, state, and federal government agencies.
16. Show a community presence.
17. Never bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise to the Superintendent.
18. Advocate our individual beliefs, but support the decision of the Board.
19. In consultation with the Superintendent, defer to the Board President as official spokesperson for the Board when responding to the press. (The Vice-President/Clerk is the back-up spokesperson.)
20. Keep the superintendent “in the loop” with regards to communication with administrators and staff.
21. Copy the Superintendent when contacting a district administrator for additional information or with questions about an agenda item.

**To Build a Strong Superintendent-Board Leadership Team, the Board Will:**

1. Hire and support a Superintendent who will strive to achieve the District’s vision, mission, and goals.
2. Establish with the Superintendent strategic goals that anticipate changes in the internal and external environments and reflect a commitment to continuous improvement.
3. Conduct regular and timely evaluations of the Superintendent based on agreed-upon goals, established Board directions, and District performance.
4. Commit time to building a team approach to governance based on open, honest communication.
5. Contact the Superintendent with any questions or issues as often as necessary to stay up to date with current issues.

**As Superintendent, I Will:**

1. Work toward creating a team with the Board dedicated to students’ success and well being.
2. Respect and acknowledge the Board’s role in setting policy and overseeing the performance of the Superintendent.
3. Work with the Board to establish a clear vision for the school District.
4. Take the lead in communicating the vision, mission, and strategic plan for the district to the education community.
5. Recognize that the Board-Superintendent governance relationship requires support by the District’s management team.

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6. Understand the distinction between Board and staff roles, and respect the role of the Board as the representative of the community.
7. Accept leadership responsibility and be accountable for implementing the vision, goals, and policies of the District.
8. Provide data to the Board so it can make data-driven decisions.
9. Distribute information fully and equally to all Board members.
10. Never bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise to the Board.
11. Provide requests for additional information through a Board update, special report, Board agenda item, or as a Board workshop or special meeting.
12. Represent the school District by being visible in the community.
13. Be the instructional leader of the District.
14. Share appropriate information conveyed by other Board members to ensure compliance with the Brown Act.
15. Communicate with Board members promptly and effectively using effective communications protocols and norms.

### ***Board Operating Protocols***

These operational procedures are used to clarify how we work as a Board to create an intentional and specific structure to fulfill essential governance duties and focus on organizational priorities. They define how we communicate between meetings, prepare for meetings, conduct meetings, and interact with community members in an outside of meetings. Both the history and culture of the District have provided for a great deal of exchange between the public and the Board. The following procedures are not designed to limit input, but rather to assist in considering everyone's ideas and facilitating effective decision-making.

### ***Board Meetings***

- The Board will strive for efficient well-ordered meetings.
- At the beginning of each regular meeting, the Board President will acknowledge any member of the public who wishes to speak on an agenda item.
- The Board will not engage in dialogue or address issues that are not on the agenda.
- The Board President will introduce each item, and explain how/when the public may comment.
- The public has three minutes to address the public.
- The Board President will ask that the public limit their comments to new information.
- District staff offers information and responds to questions from the Board on agenda items.
- All comments must be directed to the Board.
- Board members will listen with respect to public comments.
- Questions from the public will be directed to the Board President.
- The Board President will facilitate responses.
- A Trustee may ask a member of the public clarifying questions when applicable; Board members will not "debate" points or engage in discussion with members of the public.
- After hearing public comments, the Board may deliberate and/or vote.

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- Any Board action must be preceded by a motion and a second.
- Special Study Sessions will be scheduled periodically when the objective of the Board is to dialogue and have a conversation about a specific topic.
- The Board may hold closed sessions as permitted by law. All Board members commit to strict confidence.

***Role of the Board President (ref: Board Bylaws 9121)***

- The Board President provides leadership for the Board and the community.
- The Board President presides at and is responsible for the orderly conduct of all Board meetings.
- The Board President, with the Superintendent, represents the District as official spokesperson.
- All Board members share the responsibility for following Board norms, protocols, and bylaws regarding conduct and courtesy at Board meetings.

***Communication with the Community Stakeholders***

- Board members will be accessible to the community.
- Board members will not speculate on Board deliberation and outcome.
- Board members will maintain a calm professional demeanor when interacting with the public, and listen without judging.
- Board members will strive to be fair in all decisions with the focus on what is best for all children.
- When a Board member speaks to a community member or group, the Board member must clearly state that he/she is speaking in his/her personal capacity and not representing the opinion of the Board.
- When approached by an individual or group with concerns and complaints, it is best practice to:
  - Listen openly, being careful not to imply agreement.
  - Direct people to the policies or processes (e.g., complaint process) or person in the District (e.g. teacher, principal, Superintendent) who will be able to respond to their concern.
  - Inform Superintendent of concern or complaints so he/she can follow up with the appropriate action.
- If the comments/concerns are specific to a past Board decision, the Trustee will affirm the Board's decision.

***District Wide Committees (ref: LGUSD Board Bylaws 9140)***

Committee work enables the Board to make more informed decisions, incorporating the multiple voices of the community and staff.

- The Board will be involved in discussing the framework for District wide committees.
- Board members will receive committee reports and information as much in advance as possible as governed by the Brown Act.

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- Reporting from District wide committees may include an interim progress report and the final report with recommendations.

***Board Representatives on District and Community Committees and Other Agencies  
(ref: Board Bylaws 9140)***

- At its annual organizational meeting, the Board reviews the various committee responsibilities and expectations, and assigns members to represent the District on such committees and to other agencies and organizations
- When making such assignments, the Board will specify the authority and responsibilities of the representatives
- The Superintendent will notify the appropriate organization identifying the Board representative.
- The Board representative shall not exercise the authority of the Board without prior Board approval.
- If a Board member cannot attend a meeting to which she/he is assigned, it is his/her responsibility to contact other Trustees to find a replacement, and send a courtesy email to the Superintendent and/or Chair of the committee to inform them of his/her absence and replacement.

***Board Development***

The Board is dedicated to improving its capacity to govern (*ref: Board Bylaws 9240*)

- Board members commit to educating themselves on the latest educational trends and practices.
- Board members are encouraged to complete the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Master Governance Training and attend the annual CSBA conference.
- Board members will focus on learning about the organization, professionals in the district, and their roles and responsibilities.
- At Board meetings, Trustees will be present, participate, and be fully prepared for all meetings.
- The Board will create mechanisms for accountability within and across the system
- The Board will set governance performance targets, monitor performance, and move towards those targets.
- The Board will conduct an annual board self-evaluation every Spring.

***Revisions to Governance Protocols and Procedures***

- All changes in the Governance Handbook will be reviewed during the annually scheduled effective governance workshop and posted on the District website.

***Board Policies and Bylaws***

The Los Gatos Union School District Board Policies and Bylaws can be found on the district website at <http://lgusd.org>