

# Knights Ferry Elementary School District



## Governance Handbook

*The Board of Education is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, and to ensure that a high quality education is provided to each student.*

### Board of Trustees

Kym Cassaretto, President  
Sean McCarthy, Clerk  
Sherron McCarthy, Member  
Maureen McKibban, Member  
Diane Noon, Member

### Superintendent

Cheryl Griffiths

### 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.*

This Governance Handbook was developed in a Board Governance workshop conducted on October 27, 2012, with the assistance of Walt L. Hanline, Ed.D., Executive Director of the National Center for Executive Leadership and School Board Development. The Governance **Handbook** was initially approved on November 8, 2012. It was revised and approved on March 13, 2014.

# **Building a Governance Team**

## **Unity of Purpose**

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

In a school district, the Board and Superintendent work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to: Maintain a unity of purpose; agree on and govern within appropriate roles; create and sustain a positive governance culture and; create a supportive structure for effective governance.

### **What do we as a governance team want to accomplish? What do we stand for?**

- Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students.
- We want to build trust and move the District forward.
- We want to be an effective team.
- We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.
- We want to be a team with a common focused direction so we are not a distraction to the District or community but a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees, and the community can see evidence of this focused direction.
- We want to be partners with the staff in positive change.
- We want to oversee the putting together of a first-rate program and first-rate facilities, making sure we continue to improve – never resting on our laurels.
- We want to perpetuate a legacy of positive culture as people come and go.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## *Mutual agreement on the roles of the Board and Superintendent*

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

1. We set the direction.
2. We establish the structure.
3. We provide support.
4. We ensure accountability.
5. We act as community leaders.

We carry 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.

# Creating and Sustaining a Positive Governance Team Culture

*Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other. Teams have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave with each other and others. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift a negative one.*

## Governance Norms

*In addition to meeting the norms below in order to create a positive culture and atmosphere, we agree to act in ways that will help us meet the CSBA Professional Governance Standards.*

### WE AGREE TO –

- Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, respected).
- To show respect (never dismiss/devalue others).
- Make a commitment to effective deliberation, each listening openly while everyone is allowed to express his or her point of view.
- Make a commitment to open communication, honesty, no surprises.
- Commit 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 (this is the way we operate)!
- Maintain confidentiality (builds trust).
- Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.

### AND – ABOVE ALL –

- Focus on students' best interest – on what's best for the students! This is what we do! And it is the touchstone that allows us to have our differences.

# Board Governance Protocols

## Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

The only authority to direct actions rests with the quorum of Board sitting at the Board table. A majority vote sets such direction. When a majority of the Board, sitting in a formal meeting, requests action, that request should be made in the context of the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.

All members of our community can request items be placed on a future agenda by bringing up a new idea and explaining their interest in a particular course of action.

As a Board, we recognize that no individual member of the Board, by virtue of holding office, shall exercise any administrative or investigatory responsibility with respect to the schools; nor as an individual, command the services of any employee. Board members are to channel their requests and/or concerns directly to the Superintendent (and, if necessary, through the Board President).

Board Policies (BB 9000, 9200 and 9300) of the District relate to the role and responsibility of the Board collectively and Board members individually.

When a complaint is made to a Board member, the member will:

- ❖ *Receive* the information (listen), remembering that only one side of the story is being shared.
- ❖ *Repeat* the information – paraphrase to ensure understanding.
- ❖ *Remind* the individual that a board member has no authority as an individual and share the appropriate line of command and process to follow in addressing their concern.
- ❖ *Re-Direct* – Thank them for sharing their thoughts and direct them to the appropriate staff member.
- ❖ *Report* – In a timely manner, inform the superintendent.

When interacting with the public, Board members will hold to the highest level of professional conduct, including emphasizing the positive aspects of the District.

## **The Board's Role and Relationship with the Staff and Community**

When individually visiting classrooms, as a professional courtesy, Board members are encouraged to notify the Superintendent, and may provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.

To ensure that the Board works as an effective team, communications between individual Board members and any staff member regarding the work of the District, shall be appropriately communicated to the rest of the Board.

It is imperative that a staff member is not placed in a position by a Board member to provide any information beyond the information that would be provided to any regular community member. Unless directed by the Board, an individual Board member will not direct staff members.

Staff members are directed to relay requests from Board members to the Superintendent to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members.

This protocol does not imply, to either the staff or to individual Board members, a censoring of any private and informal conversations.

## **Board Meetings and the Agenda**

A Board meeting is held in public, but is not a public meeting (e.g. open-forum town hall meeting).

Meetings will be conducted in such a way as to allow the public to provide input in the time allotted to ensure that multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations; however, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Board to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public.

Board meetings will be on the Second Thursday of each month. Each Board meeting will begin with Closed Session. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 5:30 pm.

Study Sessions may be scheduled and shall be scheduled at the discretion of the Board.

The design of the Board agenda will follow the historical structure utilized by the Board. The design of the agenda may only be altered with the approval of the Board.

## Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

The superintendent, with the support of staff, will create each Board Agenda. In advance of the preparation of the Board Agenda, Board members may request items to be placed on the agenda. The Board President and the Superintendent will discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting, in advance of the Board Meeting.

The Governing Board recognizes the importance of developing a system of internal control procedures in order to help fulfill its obligation to monitor and safeguard district resources and to ensure that invoices are paid expeditiously. The warrant process protocol is as follows:

Step 1 - The Board shall receive, via email, each warrant register.

Step 2 - Each Board member shall review the warrant register, within 72 hours of receipt.

Step 3 - Each Board member shall communicate to the Superintendent the warrants that are of concern. Said warrants shall be held by the Superintendent and placed under a separate action item for the next Board meeting.

Step 4 - Staff will mail the remaining (not held) warrants to each vendor, in advance of the next Board meeting. Said register of "not held warrants" shall be placed and formally approved under the Consent Agenda of the next Board meeting.

Board members will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the Superintendent and district staff has the opportunity to prepare to answer Board members' questions at Board meetings.

When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. If unforeseen questions arrive during the meeting, Trustees will acknowledge their question or comment as spontaneous and that they understand that staff may not have the information on hand to answer the question.

Individual Board members are expected to self-monitor compliance to the Brown Act. The use of email communication is subject to the Brown Act. The superintendent shall forward questions and answers to all Board members. Board members, when responding, shall not "reply to all."

Board members will read the information provided to them and commit to ongoing professional development and training.

Each trustee has the obligation, in serving the community, to vote on each item presented to the Board. Abstention from voting must only take place when required by law, due to a potential conflict of interest.

## Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

The governance team will strive for brevity in deliberations, keeping remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed and meetings can be efficient. Addressing each agenda item the Board shall, normally, adhere to the following process:

- ❖ Staff Presentation/addressing questions from the Board
- ❖ Input (comments) from the Community
- ❖ Board Discussion and Deliberation

Each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote in the minority position. If so doing, each trustee agrees, as a courtesy to the team, to explain the reason for their minority vote, either during deliberation or before casting the vote

The governance team will strive for brevity in deliberations, keeping remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed and meetings can be efficient.

## The Board's Role in Collective Bargaining

Board members will be actively involved in the collective bargaining process to ensure that the District is represented well by those selected to negotiate on behalf of the Board and the Community. The involvement of the Board will be to:

- Ensure that the ethical, fiscal and educational goals of the Community are represented in the actions taken throughout the collective bargaining process;
- Participate by providing direction and guidance to those selected to represent the Board (District Negotiation Team).
- Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team. The desire of the Board is to hold collaborative negotiations with the union. If the approach to collective bargaining is adversarial, the District will utilize legal representation.
- Set the District's collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team;
- Expect, as the representative of the Board, that the superintendent will ensure that the Board, collectively and individually, is informed on the issues and strategies implemented within the collective bargaining process.
- The Superintendent is the Collective Bargaining Spokesperson for the Board.



## The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent

The Board will commit to work through and with the Superintendent on issues regarding the running of the District. The Superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible of:

- ✓ serious safety concerns
- ✓ serious disciplinary action
- ✓ serious / unexpected personnel changes or disciplinary issues
- ✓ serious illness or death of a staff member or members of the staff member's immediate family
- ✓ legal or liability concerns
- ✓ notable achievements
- ✓

In all matters, the Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information.

It is the superintendent's responsibility to organize the staff in the manner that best serves the needs of the District. As a professional courtesy, the superintendent shall provide appropriate notice to the Board in advance of action being taken.

As the norm, the superintendent speaks on behalf of the Board. The Board President is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

The superintendent will inform the Board when media contacts the superintendent.

All conflicts between the Superintendent and the Board will be handled in Closed Session, with the Superintendent being in attendance, when appropriate and necessary.

Conflicts between individual governance team members (including the superintendent) will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict and will not involve other Board members.

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the superintendent. The Board will set aside at least one special meeting in January for the purpose of completing the annual evaluation of the superintendent. In consultation with the superintendent, the evaluation process and associated documents will be developed and approved by the Board, not later than the first Board meeting in March. The evaluation process and instrument is designed to bring about the collective view of the Board. Thus, the evaluation will reflect the majority view of the Board, as a whole.

## **The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols**

Within 90 days of the election/appointment of a new Board member, a Study Session of the whole Board will be held for the purpose of reviewing/updating the governance protocols of the Board.

Upon the request of two or more Board members, a special study session will be called for the purpose of reviewing/updating of the governance protocols of the Board.