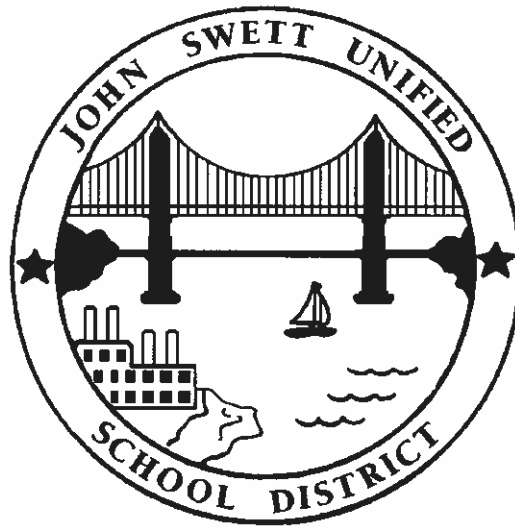


JOHN SWETT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



DRAFT GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

On November 16, 2019 and February 8, 2020, John Swett Unified School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent participated in workshops on Effective Governance with the California School Boards Association. This document reflects the governance team's discussions about developing and sustaining a framework for effective governance and includes highlights of their conversations about unity of purpose, roles, norms and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best serves all students.

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PUBLIC EDUCATION and CITIZEN GOVERNANCE

Principles behind public education in the United States:

- A tuition-free education for all students
- The promise of equal educational opportunities no matter race, religion, or ability
- A commitment to high standards and high expectations for all students
- A system of governance that ensures public accountability
- A benefit to society by teaching democratic principles and common values

Our Board and the Superintendent operate as a governance team and are the “keepers of the promise” of the five principles that are the founding concepts of public education in the United States.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF GOVERNANCE

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization. They are (1) The actions of an individual; (2) a group coming together to govern; and (3) the performance of governance responsibilities by the group.

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 (1) Maintain a Unity of Purpose, (2) Agree on and govern within appropriate roles, (3) Create and sustain a positive governance culture, (4) Create a supportive structure for effective governance, (norms and protocols).

Effective governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate and culture for excellence in a school district and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement.

DEFINING SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE

Locally elected school board members provide citizen oversight of the community's schools and protect the public's interest in preserving a free and equitable education for all students in the United States.

When governing effectively...

School boards ensure success for all students by making decisions that support the attainment of the district's vision, mission and goals, align district systems and resources, ensure the long-term fiscal stability of the district, and fulfill legal requirements.

In order to govern responsibly...

Boards must act collectively and openly, be guided by community interests, and informed by recommendations of the superintendent and professional staff.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of Purpose is a common focus, overarching goals, and the values and beliefs governance team members share about children, the district and public education that help them transcend their individual differences to fulfill a greater purpose.

OUR VISION

The John Swett Unified School District is a marvelously diverse, welcoming, and inviting community of learners.

OUR MISSION

The John Swett Unified School District provides every student...

- A safe, equitable and restorative culture and community;
- The opportunity to realize their full potential;
- Access to an excellent 21st Century education;
- The skills and knowledge to pursue lifelong learning.

OUR VALUES

The John Swett Unified School District values:

- Collaboration: We collaborate to promote a culture and climate that shares responsibility and accountability so that all students learn.
- Effective Teaching: Provide structured, ongoing staff development to improve effective professional practices so that all students can learn.
- Rigorous/Relevant Curriculum: We prioritize our resources to provide challenging and meaningful learning experiences so that all students can learn.
- Professionalism: Maintain high professional standards.
- Community: Partner with the community as fellow stakeholders.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

What We Are Most Proud of about Our District:

- The Board's commitment to our students
- Our shift toward focusing on students' needs
- Our diversity: We all have the opportunity to learn about and experience different cultures and orientations.
- Principals and teachers have a deep sense of commitment to our students – it is important that our students thrive.
- The current cultural shift to inclusion and trauma-informed restorative practices
- Our community engagement

UNITY OF PURPOSE

What We Hope to Accomplish, as a Governance Team:

- Having all of the district working together in a positive, constructive mode
- Bringing additional revenues to the district so that all of our students have the same opportunities that my brother and I had in the past.
- Having more time for the Board to talk about and understand roles and responsibilities
- Developing community and unity of purpose

- Valuing and respecting each person's voice in our decision-making process - parents, teachers, students and community members – avoiding personal biases
- Establishing Board coherence

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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 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 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. It is 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 THE BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITIES

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 an appropriate inclusive process is used to develop these 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
- Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facilities issues
- Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements

Create a supportive environment 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 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

Demonstrate community leadership

- 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

BP 2111, SUPERINTENDENT GOVERNANCE STANDARDS:

The Governing Board recognizes that effective district governance requires strong collaboration and teamwork with the Superintendent. Because the Board and Superintendent each have their unique roles and responsibilities, both contribute to the responsible governance of the district and the quality of education provided to the community's students. The Superintendent is expected to hold himself/herself to the highest standards of ethical conduct and professionalism.

To support the Board in the governance of the district, the Superintendent:

1. Promotes the success of all students and supports the efforts of the Board to keep the district focused on learning and achievement
2. Values, advocates and supports public education and all stakeholders
3. Recognizes and respects the differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents/guardians and the community and ensures that the diverse range of views inform Board decisions
4. Acts with dignity, treats everyone with civility and respect, and understands the implications of demeanor and behavior
5. Serves as a model for the value of lifelong learning and supports the Board's continuous professional development
6. Works with the Board as a "governance team" and assures collective responsibility for building a unity of purpose, communicating a common vision and creating a positive organizational culture
7. Recognizes that the Board/Superintendent governance relationship is supported by the management team in the district
8. Understands the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and respects the role of the Board as the representative of the community
9. Understands that authority rests with the Board as a whole; provides guidance to the Board to assist in decision-making; and provides leadership based on the direction of the Board as a whole
10. Communicates openly with trust and integrity, including providing all members of the Board with equal access to information and recognizing the importance of both responsive and anticipatory communications
11. Accepts leadership responsibility and accountability for implementing the vision, goals and policies of the district.

John Swett Unified School District Governance Team

AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

Governance Team Norms and Protocols:

The Board of Education for the John Swett Unified School District is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public's interest in the schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. To effectively meet district challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Agreed upon behaviors or norms, and operating procedures or protocols, support consistent behavior and actions among team members. The purpose of the John Swett USD governance team agreements is to ensure that a positive and productive working relationship exists among Board Members, the Superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. Norms and protocols are developed for and by the members of the governance team and may be modified over time as needed.

POSITIVE GOVERNANCE TEAM CULTURE - NORMS

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.

Our Agreements to Facilitate Governance Leadership:

Governance Team Norms:

Our Governance Team wishes to create a culture that demonstrates...

- **Being open**
- **Open, honest communication**
- **Listening**
- **Treating all people with respect**
- **Inclusiveness**
- **Being collaborative**
- **A collective voice**

To that end, we have developed and adopted the following Meeting Guidelines:

MEETING GUIDELINES

- When we have a difference of opinion, we will debate the facts of the situation and avoid personalities. We will address the process - not personalities.
- We will all work to ensure there are no hidden agendas and that all issues and concerns can be dealt with openly by all members.
- We will communicate openly and honestly with each other.
- We will work toward the future – learning from the past.
- We keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- Whenever needed, we will strive to provide translation services.
- We will work to minimize surprises at Board Meeting.

GOVERNANCE TEAM PROTOCOLS

Effective governance teams discuss and agree upon the formal structures and processes, or protocols, used by the Board and Superintendent in their functioning as a team. These structures and processes guide the operations of the governance team and determine how they do business. Protocols are the agreements that ensure that all members of the team are operating within their agreed upon roles.

Electronic Communication:

Rationale: To ensure we are following the Brown Act, ensure clarity, and maintain a positive perception of the District.

Protocol:

- All emails involving the Board will be sent using the blind copy (bcc) function. When an email is received by a Board Member, the “reply all” function will never be used. Responses may be sent to just the sender or a new email may be generated.
- This protocol will apply to text messages, as well.
- In cases where Board Members have an interpersonal issue or conflict, they will defer to direct communication, that is face-to-face or over the phone. Email or text messaging will not be used.
- With regards to **social media**, a derogatory or non-factual posting will be brought to the attention of the Superintendent. The Superintendent will assess the post and determine if a response is warranted. The District will use its own social media accounts to respond to the post. The Superintendent will regularly post positive information about the District.
- Board members are at liberty to share any item that the District posts on any of its own social media pages. However, Board members will never post any image or content on any social media site that has not been previously posted by the District.
- If a Board member receives an email complaint, the Board member may elect to reply, *“Thank you for your communication. I will forward this email to the Superintendent so that he can deal with this issue appropriately.”* In some cases, the Superintendent will update the Board as needed.

Responding to Concerns or Complaints

Rationale: The Board desires to be accessible to families and community members and to hear information about issues and concerns that impact student achievement. However, Board Members understand that they do not have the authority to resolve issues or concerns, as stated in BB 9200, *Limits of Board member Authority*, and want to assist constituents in reaching individuals in the district who can address their issues.

Protocol: Board members will follow the lines of authority and chains of command defined in district policies when listening to a concern or complaint. Board members must be fair and impartial when carrying out the Board's Judicial Review responsibility and will not engage in conversations about student or staff issues that may come before the Board.

Board members will follow this process when listening to concerns or complaints:

- **Receive:** Listen to what the person is saying without preparing a response
- **Repeat:** Repeat back, paraphrase, or ask questions to clarify for understanding without agreeing or disagreeing with what has been said.
- **Request:** Ask if they have spoken to anyone else about this matter, and what they would like you to do with this information.
- **Review:** Discuss how they may resolve their own situation by providing information about accessing the District reporting structure.
- **Redirect:** Redirect the person to the staff member closest to the situation following district lines of authority (for example: If they are angry with a teacher, the first person to speak with is the teacher. If they are still not satisfied, the next person to address would be the principal.)
- **Report:** Report the conversation to the superintendent so he is aware of the situation and can follow-through as necessary.

Board Meeting Management – Effective Deliberation, Public

Comment:

Rationale: The Board Meeting is a meeting to conduct district business in public. We honor people's thoughts and opinions and want to hear them, but an appropriate process must be in place in order to have orderly, efficient, effective meetings. Therefore, the Board needs to have a clear understanding of how to respond appropriately and legally to public comments. Public Comment procedures will be governed by Board Bylaw 9323, *Meeting Conduct*.

Protocol: Therefore:

- The Board President facilitates the Board discussion and manages public input.
- When opening public comment, the Board President will refer to the public input guidelines on the Board Meeting agenda, as stated in BB 9323.
- Each item will have a 20-minute time limit for public comment. Three minutes are allotted per person.
- The Board President may ask the public to limit their comments to new information, ask the audience to quietly raise their hands if they are in agreement with a speaker or merely say, "I agree with Speaker X," when their turn comes to facilitate the process and save time.
- The Board President may also ask a group to go out into the hall to select speakers for their group.
- The Board President shall not permit any disturbance or willful interruption of Board meetings. Persistent disruption by an individual or group or any conduct or statements that threaten the safety of any person(s) at the meeting shall be grounds for the president to terminate the privilege of addressing the Board.
- The Board may remove disruptive individuals and order the room cleared if necessary. In this case, members of the media not participating in the disturbance shall be allowed to remain, and individuals not participating in such disturbances may be allowed to remain at the discretion of the Board. When the room is ordered cleared due to a disturbance, further Board proceedings shall concern only matters appearing on the agenda. (Government Code [54957.9](#))
- Board Members will direct their questions/comments to the Board President and not communicate directly with members of the public.
- The Board President has the discretion to extend the time allotted for public comment, with the consent of a majority of the Board.

Managing Action items:

- Step 1. The Board President will introduce the item.
- Step 2. The Superintendent or other staff will provide a presentation of background information and a recommendation, if necessary.
- Step 3. Board Members may ask questions for clarification.
- Step 4. The Board President will open the issue for public comment.
- Step 5. After public comment is complete, the Board President will close public comment.
- Step 6. The Board will discuss the item and vote.

Asking Questions in Advance:

Rationale: It is important for Board members to be informed.

Protocol: Board Members will ask questions of the Superintendent, and seek clarity about issues, prior to Board Meetings.

Site Visits and Attending Meetings:

Rationale: Participating in site visits and attending meetings informs Board Members about school programs and activities.

There are occasions when Trustee visits can be a problem, as stated on page 45 in The Governance Core – Campbell & Fullan, 2019:

- In the case of a “drop by,” unannounced visit, staff may be “unprepared, may be in the middle of a difficult task or involved in stressful situations.”
- “Trolling for information from an unsuspecting staff” – which indicates a lack of trust and/or confidence in senior staff and erodes the chain of command.

Therefore, this protocol is necessary to avoid these issues and to ensure that Board Members are not disrupting instruction.

Protocol: Site visits and participation in meetings will be coordinated with the Superintendent.

We have reviewed and agree to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the John Swett Unified School District Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall review and renew this document annually.

Affirmed on this 11th day of March, 2020