



Goleta Union School District

Governance Handbook

Adopted February 24, 2021



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Board of Trustees

Vicki Ben-Yaacov, Trustee
Dr. Carin Ezal, Trustee
Sholeh Jahangir, Trustee
Dr. Richard Mayer, Trustee
Luz Reyes-Martin, Trustee

Superintendent

Dr. Donna S. Lewis

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Unity of Purpose, Roles, Responsibilities, Norms and Protocols

This handbook was developed as a project to improve our Governance Team and to strengthen our leadership. It defines who we are and how we operate as a group.

Annually the team reviews and updates this Governance Handbook.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Mission

Our Mission

The mission of the Goleta Union School District is to maximize academic, intellectual, and personal growth in order for each student to prosper in, and positively influence, a diverse and dynamic world.

Our Vision

Powerful Instruction

Purposeful Individualization

Productive Partnerships

===== **EQUALS**

Solid Evidence of Student Success

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

School Board trustees are the representatives of the community, elected to ensure that each and every child in the district schools is educated in consideration of the interests of the local community. The role of the School Board is to govern the school district.

The superintendent is hired by the school Board to provide the professional expertise in the day-to-day management of the district. The role of the Superintendent is:

1. To work with the school Board to develop an effective governance leadership team.
2. To serve as the chief administrative officer for the school district.

The Board of Trustees:

Sets the direction for the community's schools by:

- Focusing on student learning
- Assessing district needs
- Generating, reviewing, and revising the following: beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators
- Ensuring an appropriate inclusive process is used to develop these documents
- Ensuring that these documents are the driving force for all district efforts

Establishes an effective and efficient structure for the school district by:

- Employing the superintendent
- Setting policy for hiring of other personnel
- Setting policies
- Setting direction for and adopting the curriculum
- Establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget
- Overseeing facilities issues
- Providing direction for and voting to accept collective bargaining agreements

Provides support through our behavior and actions by:

- Acting with a professional demeanor that models the district's beliefs and vision
- Making decisions and providing resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals
- Upholding Board policies
- Ensuring a positive personnel climate exists
- Being knowledgeable about district efforts and able to explain them to the public

Ensures accountability to the Public by:

- Evaluating the superintendent
- Monitoring, reviewing and revising policies
- Serving as a judicial and appeals body
- Monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness and requiring program changes as indicated
- Monitoring and adjusting district finances
- Reviewing facilities issues
- Monitoring the collective bargaining process

Acts as community leaders by:

- Speaking with a common voice about district priorities, goals and issues
- Engaging and involving the community in district schools and activities
- Communicating clear information about policies, programs and fiscal conditions of the district
- Educating the community and the media about issues facing the district and public education
- Advocating for children, district programs and public education to the general public, community, and local, state and national leaders

**Bylaws of the Board
GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

BB 9005

The Governing Board believes that its primary responsibility is to act in the best interests of every student in the district. The Board also has major commitments to parents/guardians, all members of the community, employees, the state of California, laws pertaining to public education, and established policies of the district. To maximize Board effectiveness and public confidence in district governance, Board members are expected to govern responsibly and hold themselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The Board expects its members to work with each other and the Superintendent to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. Each individual Board member shall:

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus
2. Value, support and advocate for public education
3. Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community
4. Act with dignity, and understand the implications of demeanor and behavior
5. Keep confidential matters confidential
6. Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader
7. Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff
8. Understand that authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individuals

Board members also shall assume collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture. To operate effectively, the Board shall have a unity of purpose and:

1. Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students
2. Communicate a common vision
3. Operate openly, with trust and integrity
4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating all stakeholders with respect and civility
5. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures
6. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance
7. Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness
8. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations
9. Represent all stakeholders in our district

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Our Core Values and Beliefs

- We value the importance of each child and seek to maximize the learning and development of each child
- We believe that powerful differentiated instruction, tailored to meet individual needs, leads to expanded achievement and increased mastery of rigorous learning objectives
- We believe powerful learning flows from the desire, effort, and personal responsibility of curious learners and committed teachers
- We value strong connections between instructional content and student experience as sources of motivation, perseverance, and engagement
- We regard self-direction, self-confidence, and self-esteem as positive outcomes of appropriate challenge, hard work, and achievement
- We value the whole child
- We believe a comprehensive elementary course of study includes a variety of cultural, artistic, physical, and social experiences
- We embrace, as essential outcomes of a well-rounded education, a deep understanding of the responsibilities of our democratic heritage, and the important attributes of personal character, including honesty, respect, integrity, and compassion
- We believe that providing a safe, healthy, and secure environment in our schools is a prerequisite to effective teaching and learning
- We value the opportunity to shape student conduct through high expectations and positive responses to challenging behavior
- We believe in the power of teamwork
- We value productive collaborative learning environments for students and teachers
- We respect the diverse skills and perspectives of parents, staff, and community through meaningful partnerships that support and shape our programs and priorities
- We believe a highly qualified and inspired workforce with committed instructional and fiscal leadership is the foundation of effective student learning and innovative practice
- We are committed to well-maintained and well-equipped facilities
- We value effective instructional materials aligned to rigorous standards to amplify student success
- We value instructional strategies informed by multiple forms of ongoing assessment that stimulate each child's critical thinking, problem solving, depth of understanding, creativity, and love of learning
- We believe the firm foundations of career and college readiness are formed in elementary grades and prepare our students for future success
- We value the strength of diversity in our schools and community and strive to provide equitable resources and experiences for each child and family we serve
- We work to eliminate prejudice and bias among our students and staff
- We strive to reach consistently high levels of achievement for each demographic group in our District and to dismantle systemic obstacles to success for all

Working Agreements

The purpose of these working agreements is to outline the professional standards by which the Board and the Superintendent are to function as a team. There is no intention to abridge the rights and/or obligations of Board Trustees to oversee the operation of the district, nor to interfere with the Superintendent in their role as the chief executive officer of the district. It is recommended that the Board of Trustees review these working agreements annually.

General

1. Every action by a member of the team should be directed toward improving the educational program for students. Learning and achievement for all students will be the primary focus of the team.
2. Team members will exhibit behavior that is honorable, honest, ethical, respectful and dedicated to the success of the students and personnel of the district.
3. Team members will ensure that communication regarding potential action items will comply with the Ralph M. Brown Act (California Government Code 54950 et seq.) requirements.
4. All district conversations on confidential matters, e.g. Closed Session, personnel, etc., will remain confidential.

Board of Trustees

5. Board trustees will govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility, dignity, and respect.
6. Board trustees will develop and communicate a unified vision and message to all stakeholders.
7. Board trustees will differentiate between their personal opinion(s) and the majority position when addressing the public and the media.
8. Board trustees will seek to compromise and achieve consensus while honoring the right of the individual members to express opposing views and vote their convictions.
9. Once an action is taken, Board trustees will respect the majority decision.
10. Board trustees will be mindful of the time, role, and responsibilities of the Superintendent and staff.

11. Board trustees are encouraged to visit schools and district sites, and to attend school functions.

12. Board trustees will establish annual expectations, goals, and outcomes consistent with the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and governance team action plans. These student outcomes will be presented by the Superintendent and staff.

13. Board Trustees will ask their questions regarding the meetings for staff before the meetings so as to minimize surprises.

Superintendent

14. All aspects of personnel are the responsibility of the Superintendent who will bring recommendations to the Board of Trustees for action.

15. Individual requests for updates, reports, surveys, projects, etc., will be directed only to the Superintendent and responses will be directed to the entire Board of Trustees.

16. New issues will be referred to the Superintendent.

17. Any new complaint or issue relayed to a Board Member is to be referred directly to the Superintendent who shall provide information and/or a resolution of the matter to the entire Board of Trustees.

18. The Superintendent will inform the Board Members in a timely manner of any significant district incident that may require a response or explanation.

19. Questions regarding Board agenda items are to be communicated to the Superintendent prior to the Board meeting and the Superintendent will respond in a timely manner. There should be no surprise topics or issues brought forward during a Board meeting.

20. Any rumor and/or information from anonymous sources are to be reported to the Superintendent who, upon review, will provide an update to the Board of Trustees.

Board Meeting Agreements

We agree to:

- Be on time, focused and prepared for our meetings
- Respect and learn from differences of opinions and philosophies
- Treat each other and our constituents with respect and courtesy
- Recognize and appreciate the professional judgment of our staff and their commitment to our schools, our programs, and our students. We will show mutual respect to our staff by having sensitive conversations confidentiality

- Communicate openly and with integrity
- Debate issues not personalities
- Put aside personal and political preferences and opinions in our deliberations
- Students' needs and priorities drive our decisions
- Acknowledge that the majority rules
- Abide by Robert's Rules of Order, Board Policies and Administrative Regulations, and agreed upon protocol

As a Governance Board, we agree to these principles:

- We will review all provided documents and back up materials before debating or deliberating an issue
- We clearly understand the recommendations presented or the implications of our pending decisions
- We ask questions for clarification
- We focus on the issues at hand and do not have side discussions or involve other issues
- We focus on the Board's role in making decisions
- We provide guidance and ensure that the administration has tools to handle the implementation
- We respect and expect differences of opinion and philosophy
- We will come prepared with our questions answered to our meetings
- We will be concise in our meeting remarks and will not grandstand
- We represent every stakeholder in the Goleta Union School District

Governance Team Protocols

The following processes guide the operation 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.

No Votes or Abstentions

When a member of the governing Board casts a "no" vote or abstains from voting on a particular issue; as a courtesy, the member offers a short statement as to the reason for his/her action. We only abstain for important reasons such as a serious conflict; not to get out of important decision making which is a critical part of our job as a trustee.

Agree to Disagree

Recognizing that leaders have different management styles and philosophies, differences of opinion are expected. When a controversy or split vote occurs on a significant issue, the Governance Team agrees to disagree out of respect for the other person and his/her right to that opinion. We also understand that majority rules.

Recognizing that district improvement requires change, the Board welcomes different opinions and ideas. However, the Board also takes great effort to avoid lingering animosities which can result from different viewpoints.

The Board actively solicits input and listens to all perspectives. The Board values diverse opinions among its members and realizes that by respecting that diversity and seeking common ground it becomes a more effective Board.

The Board recognizes that it represents all students, stakeholders, and all facets of the community and, as such, it has an obligation to pursue different points of view with honesty and vigor. Each Board member commits to hearing one another out. By doing so Board members model for students the honest and respectful expression of different points of view.

If a member of the Governance Team cannot support the decision of the Board because it offends a moral/personal code, the member is expected, at a minimum, to refrain from undermining the decision or directive.

The above commitment to either support or refrain from undermining majority decisions does not preclude the member from asking for consideration at a future time of a more acceptable alternative. However, the decision of the Board should be considered final.

Agenda Development

Any Board member or member of the public may request that a matter within jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting. The Board president and Superintendent shall decide whether a request is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board. If not, the item may not be placed on the agenda. Also, the Board president and Superintendent shall determine if the item is merely a request for information or whether the issue is covered by an existing policy or administrative regulation. The Board president and Superintendent shall decide whether an agenda item is appropriate for discussion in open or closed session and whether the item should be an action item or subject to Board vote.

Anonymous Information

Every effort will be made by the Governance Team and employees to use the agreed upon complaint procedures. Anonymous information can cast aspersions on character and integrity. We treat complaints seriously. We will request that the person sharing information with us follow the acceptable Goleta Union School District complaint procedures. We will communicate with our superintendent efficiently about concerns that we hear.

Chain of Command

We recognize that the only employee who answers directly to the Governance Team is the Superintendent. We value the chain of leadership and command for our District and will model the leadership we desire. We will annually evaluate our Superintendent based upon mutually agreed upon methods and standards.

Complaint and Inquiry Reporting

To facilitate the flow of information, we will adopt an agreed upon format for sharing complaints, concerns, praise and inquiries from the staff and public. We agree that we will inform the Superintendent of all complaints, or public inquiries and request that they inform us of outcome or complaint or inquiry.

Heads up Protocol

If any member of the Governance Team becomes aware of an issue or problem at a school site or program location, they will immediately inform the Superintendent. We are a team and we choose to support our team by sharing information and working cooperatively to address issues.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is vital to the health of our organization. We recognize that the items discussed in closed session as provided for in the Brown Act are confidential. We take this seriously and commit to maintaining the integrity of the process.

Site/Programs Visitations

When visiting a program or school site on behalf the Board of Trustees, as a courtesy, we inform the Superintendent and staff involved of the date and time of our visit. It is our desire to observe and support our programs and courses, not interfere with the operation.

Board trustees may visit any campus after checking with the superintendent or principal about the best time to visit. Board members are required to check in with the principal's office and follow campus guidelines for visitors.

Such visits are for the purpose of becoming acquainted with school programs, personnel, operation, and facilities. Board trustees shall not go into teachers' classrooms or campuses for the purpose of evaluation or investigation. Board trustees will not give directions, or make suggestions to personnel during their visit.

When visiting with teachers of their own children, Board trustees will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than Board members.

Personal Problem Solving

If a member of the Governance Team hears disturbing information that has supposedly come from another member of the Governance Team, we will act immediately to identify the issue and address the concern with the person or persons involved. We take it to the source of the issue for resolution. We recognize that insinuation and rumors can be false and may damage relationships.

Personal or Preferential Treatment

We do not seek or accept any special or favored treatment for ourselves, our children, family, or friends. We expect equal and respectful treatment of all people. We will model this behavior at all times.

Orientation of New Members

Immediately following the selection of a new member, members will be seated following the oath of office. As soon as possible, the Superintendent will schedule an orientation session with the newly constituted Board. The orientation session will include but not be limited to:

- Review the Governance Handbook protocols and agreements
- Review of Board agenda process and procedures
- Review of 9000 series of Board Policies
- Review of the Brown Act and discussion of confidentiality
- Review of CSBA Professional Governance Standards
- Review of ACSA/CSBA Professional Standards and job description for the Superintendent. Review contract provisions and evaluation procedures
- Discussion of pending litigation and critical issues
- Review of major programs and projects
- Meet with members of Cabinet and tour of district office/orientation with departments
- Review the strategic plan, LCAP, facilities master plan

Handling Concerns and Complaints from the Public and Staff

When someone complains to us, we will listen carefully, remembering that we are hearing only one side of an issue. We will direct the person or persons to the staff member most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern. We will make sure that they understand the appropriate order of whom to contact and will make them aware of any formal policies or procedures.

We will endeavor to ensure that everyone who brings a concern to us be treated fairly, equally, and expeditiously. We will work to maintain the proper adherence and implementation of district procedures and policies. We understand that as individuals we have no power to fix the problems. As representatives of the public, it is important that we invite the person with the complaint or concern to ultimately get back to us if the issue is not resolved.

If a Board trustee receives a complaint, s/he will refer the complainant to the appropriate staff member. Afterwards, the Board trustee will report the complaint to the superintendent.

While Board trustees may listen to complaints from staff regarding policies or procedures; members must be careful not to usurp the chain of command. Complainants are encouraged to discuss the matter with their supervisor or union representative.

However, with regard to the Board's Court of Appeals role, Board trustees may listen but will not respond to complaints against personnel.

For example, if a stakeholder wishes to speak to you about a certain situation, we will preface this conversation with the fact that we are an appeals body and it is best they follow the chain of command and the formal complaint form provided by the district.

Self-Monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness

We will schedule and participate in at least one workshop every year to review Governance Team agreements and processes and to participate in a self-evaluation process. On an annual basis we will review and if necessary, revise the Board Governance Handbook.

Individual Board Member Requests for Information

When an individual Board trustee requests information, it will be provided to all Board members. An individual Board trustee will - insofar as possible - work to let the Superintendent and staff know ahead of time when a request will be made in public. This will allow the staff member to be prepared to answer any questions or to prepare materials.

We will self-monitor our own requests to ensure that one member's requests will not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. We will seek information only as needed for effective decision-making.

Any individual Board trustee who desires a copy of an existing written report or survey will make such a request to the superintendent. A copy of the material may also be made available to each member of the Board.

The superintendent takes directions from the Board as a whole; therefore, requests for the generation of reports or information must be placed on a meeting agenda for Board consideration and approval. Because the Board also believes in "no surprises," Board members agree to notify the superintendent of the information request discussion prior to the meeting when possible.

Board member questions concerning material in the Board packet should be referred to the superintendent in a timely manner to afford staff the opportunity to prepare a response during the meeting. If the information requested requires an inordinate amount of staff time to generate, the superintendent will place the request on a future Board meeting agenda for discussion.

District staff is not expected to respond to direction or requests from individual Board members.

Individual Board Member Requests for Action

The only authority to direct action rests with the Board of Trustees when seated at a regular or special meeting of the Governance Team. Outside of this setting, we have no authority. A majority vote of the Board sets the direction.

Individuals can request action by bringing up a new idea, explaining their interest in a particular course of action, and by working at a meeting to gain majority support to approve the action at another meeting.

Board Meeting Management

We understand and agree that Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings. We will keep this in mind as we conduct our meetings,

allowing the public to provide input at the time allotted to ensure that multiple voices of the community are heard. We will consistently abide by our formal agreements and protocols in relation to this issue so that all persons are treated fairly and equally.

Managing Difficult Topics

Recognizing that the Board has been elected to conduct challenging conversations in public, members agree to discuss the issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Debate should only occur between Board trustees. The Board will not respond to questions or statements made by members of the audience. Only the chair will respond to public comment during the meeting and only if warranted.

We do not have different values. We have different value priorities. Rarely are there single-value problems. We seek the **best** rather than the right solution.

Board Notification

The superintendent will inform the Board of pertinent activities of the district. If it's likely to be in the newspaper, the Board should know about it. The superintendent will communicate routine matters to the Board on a regular basis.

During crisis situations, the superintendent will send out an alert and then attempt to reach Board members as soon as possible beginning with the Board president.

We have reviewed and agree to abide by and institutionalize the aforementioned governance team standards and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Goleta Union School District Board of Trustees, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at each Annual Organizational Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

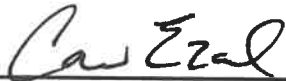
Affirmed on this 24th day of February, 2021



Vicki Ben-Yaacov, Trustee



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Dr. Richard Mayer, Trustee



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