



**DESERT
SANDS
UNIFIED
SCHOOL
DISTRICT**



DESERT SANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

Governance Handbook

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President Linda Porras

Vice President/Clerk Humberto Alvarez

Trustee Michael Duran

Trustee Patricia Pearce

Trustee Kailee Watson, OD

SUPERINTENDENT

Kelly May-Vollmar, Ed.D.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

- Unity of Purpose
- Roles
- Responsibilities
- Norms
- Protocols

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

On January 19, March 16, and May 5, 2023, Desert Sands Unified School District Board of Trustees and superintendent participated in a workshop on effective governance with the Riverside County Office of Education consultants. This document was updated during those workshops.

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Unity of Purpose

Unity of purpose is the common focus, overarching goals, and the core values, beliefs, and principles governing body members share in common about students, the district, and public education.

DEFINED PURPOSE

We are stewards of the community entrusted to ensure our organization reflects respect, kindness and service, characterized by excellence and teamwork.

MISSION STATEMENT

To inspire and nurture every student...one opportunity at a time.

VISION STATEMENT

We will be the district of choice to successfully prepare every student for college, career, and life.

VALUES

Relationships
Respect
Innovation
Inclusion
Teamwork
Kindness
Equity
Excellence
Service

Roles and Responsibilities

A DISCUSSION OF ROLES

School board trustees are the representatives of the people, elected to ensure that the district schools educate students 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 professional expertise in the day-to-day operations 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'S RESPONSIBILITIES

We set the direction for the community's schools by:

- focusing on student learning.
- assessing district needs.
- generating, reviewing, and revising setting direction documents (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.

We establish 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.

We provide 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 approved district policies.
- ensuring a positive personnel climate exists.
- being knowledgeable about district efforts and able to explain them to the public.

We ensure 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.

We act 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 students, district programs, and public education to the general public, community, and local, state, and national leaders.

WHAT THE BOARD NEEDS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The superintendent will support trustees in fulfilling their responsibilities by:

- providing information.
- providing effective leadership.
- being involved with the community.
- displaying professionalism.
- demonstrating empathy.
- clarifying norms and protocols for the governance team.

WHAT THE SUPERINTENDENT NEEDS FROM THE BOARD

The trustees can support the superintendent in fulfilling her responsibilities by:

- providing relevant information and timely feedback.
- looking outward and sharing best practices and trends.
- providing support and encouragement.
- paying attention to what happens inside the district – presence and visibility.
- expressing appreciation.
- displaying professionalism.
- ensuring members of the governance team follow our norms and protocols.

WHAT BOARD MEMBERS NEED FROM EACH OTHER

The trustees can support each other by:

- sharing our strengths.
- building trust within the team.
- showing appreciation.
- respecting all opinions.
- demonstrating professionalism.
- giving ourselves permission to hold each other accountable for following our norms and protocols.

Positive Governance Team Culture

The Board of Education for the Desert Sands 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 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 Desert Sands Unified School District 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.

NORMS

Our governance team wishes to create a positive culture by:

- being respectful and open to the opinions of others.
- being concise and prepared.
- following the “no surprises” standard.
- not taking things personally.
- making decisions and then moving on.
- having open and honest communication.
- demonstrating professionalism.

Supportive Structures and Processes (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.

The following protocols were developed at our governance workshop.

TOPIC	PROTOCOL
<p>Visiting Sites/ Attending School and District Events</p>	<p>It is important for us to have a protocol on this issue because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● we want to have a presence in the district and be knowledgeable about schools and district programs. ● we want to be considerate of our principals and school teams, their needs, and comfort level. <p>Therefore, we agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● when we wish to visit a school, we will call or email the superintendent and inform her of our desire to visit a particular site. ● the superintendent or designee will notify the principal about the visit. ● the superintendent will notify the board of upcoming events in the <i>Friday Letter</i>. ● board members are encouraged to attend special events. ● principals can reach out to individual board members to invite them to events but are asked to copy the superintendent on the invitation.

TOPIC

PROTOCOL

<p>Orientation of Board Candidates and New Board Members</p>	<p>It is essential to have a protocol on this topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● We wish to ensure that new board members are well informed so that they do not violate the Brown Act or other rules and laws.● We help our new members understand their roles and responsibilities.● We get to know the superintendent and board president.● We learn about our protocols.● We help them to get to know the district, its finances, trends, schools, and programs.● We want our new members to feel like a part of the team. <p>Therefore, we agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● the superintendent and cabinet will hold a formal candidate orientation workshop to provide potential board members with information about the district. If a candidate is unable to attend, the materials will be forwarded immediately.● the superintendent will register all new board members for CSBA’s Annual Education Conference (AEC) and New Board Member Orientation (NBMO).● the superintendent will accompany new members to the NBMO.● other board members will make an effort to meet individually with newcomers either at AEC or back in the district.● the superintendent and board president will have a dinner meeting with each new member to inform him/her about the district and board practices. This will also help to build relationships with new team members.● the district will provide new members with a laptop or other device and essential materials. Staff will provide training on accessing the agenda online.
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TOPIC**PROTOCOL**

<p>Board/ Superintendent Communication</p>	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The superintendent strives to provide the board with efficient, accurate, and timely information. ● The board strives to demonstrate respect for the superintendent. ● All board members will have access to the same information. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board members will direct all district communication to the superintendent or the superintendent’s executive specialist. ● The board will reach out to the appropriate cabinet member when necessary.
<p>Board Meeting Materials</p>	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trustees are prepared for board meetings. ● Trustees have equal access to information. ● The board demonstrates respect for staff. <p>Agreements:</p> <p>The superintendent will provide the board with full information so that board members come to meetings prepared; there will be no surprises. The board expects timely, complete information so that they can make informed decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board members may email or call the superintendent or appropriate cabinet member with questions regarding board meeting materials. ● To ensure questions can be answered prior to the board meeting, questions will be submitted by 9:00 am on Monday. ● The superintendent will, if appropriate, share any question and answer with all board members by email. The board trusts the superintendent to have discretion if this doesn’t seem appropriate to the situation.

TOPIC**PROTOCOL**

Questions in Advance - No Surprises	<p>Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The governance team demonstrates respect for staff. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board members will strive to ask questions in advance, giving the staff a heads up, if they are going to expect an answer during the meeting on a certain topic.• Board members may not always have questions in advance. They will be understanding if a staff member has to get back to them with an answer in a <i>Friday Letter</i> or subsequent board meeting.
Keeping the Board Informed	<p>Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The board members have access to sufficient, timely, and equal information. <p>Agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The superintendent will inform the board as soon as possible regarding serious issues that include, but are not limited to, liability exposure, media exposure, serious injury, unexpected/significant staff issues, or other serious concerns. The superintendent exercises discretion and independent judgment regarding this agreement.

TOPIC**PROTOCOL**

<p>Email/Text Communication</p>	<p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members seek to avoid unintentional violations of the Brown Act. • Governance team members seek to be courteous and responsive to each other. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the superintendent sends an email to all board members and needs no response, they may indicate this by placing the words “No Reply Needed” in the subject header of the email. • If the superintendent sends an email to all board members and seeks a response, they may indicate this by placing the verbiage “Reply Requested” in the subject header of the email. • Board members will not use “Reply All” in board communication. • Governance team members will make every reasonable effort to respond to emails/texts/calls within 24 hours.
<p>Avoiding Serial Meetings (Brown Act)</p>	<p>Principle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members wish to avoid unintentional violations of the Brown Act. <p>Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When contacted by one or two board members regarding a matter within which the board has jurisdiction, both members will disclose whether they have discussed the matter with another board member. • If the issue has been discussed by two other board members, the trustees will end the conversation.

Governance Agreements Signatures

We have reviewed and agreed to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Desert Sands Unified School District Board of Education, superintendent, staff, students, and the community.
This document will be reviewed annually.


Affirmed on this 16th day of May, 2023.



Board President Linda Porras



Vice President/Clerk Humberto Alvarez




Trustee Michael Duran



Trustee Patricia Pearce



Trustee Kailee Watson, OD



Superintendent Kelly May-Vollmar, Ed.D.