



“Where students are family and learning comes to life!”

# 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.**

## **Vision**

Denair Unified School District empowers tomorrow’s leaders through exemplary instruction and powerful innovative programs. Our exceptional school environments are the best educational choice for ALL students.

### **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.*

## **Board of Trustees**

Kathi Dunham-Filson, President  
Ray Prock Jr., Clerk  
Carmen Wilson, Member  
Regina Gomes, Member  
Crystal Sousa, Member

## **Superintendent**

Dr. Terry Metzger

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#### Governance Workshop History

June 1, 2016, November 1, 2016, January 23 & 24, August 3 & 4, 2018 and July 11, 2019

## **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 we are most proud of about our District...**

- Our students and staff – everyone is striving and motivated.
- The commitment of our staff, families and community is evident in our resilience.
- The authentic pride in our schools.
- The sense of community over generations and a positive outlook for the future.

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

- Our shared purpose is having optimal learning environments and educational opportunities for all students.
- Moving Denair Unified School District forward by developing innovative programs and promoting growth.
- Supporting and strengthening our focus on exemplary education and academic success.

## **Board of Trustees – Shared Values**

Shared Values are those beliefs that are central to the mission of our District. They are stable and all members of our District rely on them for guidance and decision-making. They are used to help our District achieve its vision and mission.

### **Responsibility**

- Establish a sense of shared responsibility
- Balance the needs of students, employees and operational requirements.
- Define and pursue common vision with common sense.
- Ensure shared accountability for and ownership of agreements made.

### **Respect**

- Promote positive professional relationships.
- Listen to and consider ideas based on their merit in a fair and honest process.

### **Commitment**

- Establish priorities and follow through strategies aligned with our mission and vision.
- Demonstrate positive, supportive commitment to our District's shared vision and values.
- Work collaboratively at all times to solve problems.
- Hold to a commitment that will inform, educate and support the shared values of our District.

### **Honesty and Trustworthiness**

- Share accurate, timely verbal and written communications.
- Establish mutual trust with all stakeholders based on openness, consistency and reliability.
- Build trust in an honest and straightforward manner founded on our shared values.
- Emphasize actions that are fair and equitable as we work together.

### **Caring and Compassion**

- Display mutual respect and support of others.
- Respond unselfishly to the needs of others and treat others with kindness, concern and generosity.
- Value similarities and differences of others.

## **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.

# Understanding Roles



# 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 Believe that a strong governance team is one that...**

- Works cooperatively toward consensus decisions
- Congeals to achieve a common vision and accompanying goals
- Shares a common goal and invests the time to achieve that goal
- Brings different ideas and approaches to achieve a common goal
- Understands the art of compromise in debate
- Brings diverse knowledge and backgrounds together to guide an entity
- Keeps the best interest of the kids at all times – **The kids win!**

### **Therefore, 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 what is best for students! *The children are waiting...*

*To this end, we have adopted the following meeting guidelines:*

### **Meeting Guidelines**

- We will keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- We will stay focused on our goals.
- We will listen actively to all ideas.
- We will communicate openly and honestly.
- We will respect differences and show respect.
- We will each be responsible for the success of the meeting, participate equally and take responsibility for the work of the team.

We will work toward the future while learning from the past!

# Board Governance Protocols

## Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

The only authority to direct actions rests with the quorum of the Board sitting at the Board table. Individuals can request action by bringing up a new idea, explaining their interest in a particular course of action and working to get a Board majority to support moving in that 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.

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 and 9200) of the District relate to the role and responsibilities of the Board collectively and Board Members individually.

## Responding to Concerns

In responding to concerns regarding the work of the District, Board Members will:

- *Receive* the information (listen), unless the issue is one that might come before the Board in its Judiciary role.
- *Repeat* the information – paraphrase to ensure understanding, when it is appropriate to listen to the concern.
- *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* – At the earliest possible time, 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 schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, Board Members are encouraged to notify the Superintendent of such a visit, and may provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.

Board Members will direct all requests for information to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will distribute the information to all Board Members.

This protocol does not imply a censoring of any private and informal conversations.

## **Board Meetings and the Agenda**

A Board meeting is held in public, but is not the public's 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.

Regular Board meetings will be on the second Thursday of each month. Normally, each Board meeting will begin with Closed Session at 5:30 pm. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 7:00 pm. Study Sessions are scheduled for the fourth Thursday of each month and shall be held 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.

The Superintendent, with the support of staff, will create each Board Agenda. In preparation of the agenda, Board Members may request items to be placed on the agenda.

For Regular Board meetings, the Board President, Clerk and the Superintendent will, at least seven days prior, review the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting and make appropriate revisions.

## **Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)**

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 – Once a week, 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, via email, to the Superintendent the warrants that are of concern.

Board Members will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the Superintendent and district staff have 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 arise 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, including limiting Closed Session to the agenda item(s). Board Members need equal access to information, and to operate within 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.

## **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 from the Community
- Board Discussion and Deliberation

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

To model the behavior of being polite and professional at Board meetings, the governance team should address one another by their last name and appropriate prefix/title.

Recognizing that the Community elects leaders to serve as Board Members, it is assumed that each Board Member has the ability to serve as Board President. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the protocol to be used to elect the officers of the Board will follow a seniority rotation into the leadership roles of the Board. Seniority is determined by the year in which an individual is elected or appointed. If multiple new members are elected in the same year, then lots shall be drawn to establish seniority. Due to personal circumstance (e.g., medical reasons), a Board Member who is next in line to serve as Clerk or President, may elect not to rotate into the Clerk/President position at an organizational meeting. If this occurs, (due to medical reasons) the member would remain in the order of succession with future first right of refusal.

The protocol for recording the votes of the individual Board Members shall follow the rotation order established in the election of officers, with the first vote recorded being that of the Past President and the last vote would be that of the President of the Board.

The Board wishes to maintain a culture of professionalism, stay focused, and respect the need of trustees to be available to their families:

- Cell phones will be set for 'silent' or vibrate.
- Trustees will be discreet in checking cell phones if necessary.

## **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). Board Members do not attend at-the-table negotiations.
- Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- 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 student, 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.

## **The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent (continued)**

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 members of the team.

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. Normally, 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 or appointment of a new Superintendent, 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.

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 Denair Unified School District Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement annually.

Affirmed on this 14<sup>th</sup> day of January 2021

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Kathi Dunham-Filson, President

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Ray Prock Jr., Clerk

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Carmen Wilson, Trustee

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Regina Gomes, Trustee

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Crystal Sousa, Trustee

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Dr. Terry Metzger, Superintendent