Elk Grove Unified School District

Governance Handbook

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The Elk Grove Unified School District Board of Trustees and the Superintendent developed the Governance Handbook in 2017. The Governance Handbook outlines practices that build and sustain a positive Board/Superintendent relationship and define a culture of quality, equity and respect.

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ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization. The Elk Grove Unified School District Governance Handbook documents the governance responsibilities within these three dimensions.

1. **Governing as a unified team with a shared vision to lead and serve the community.**
2. **Governing within a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.**
3. **Creating and sustaining a positive governance leadership culture.**

MISSION STATEMENT

Elk Grove Unified School District will provide a learning community that challenges ALL students to realize their greatest potential.

CORE VALUES

Outcomes for Students

- Achievement of core academic skills
- Confident, effective thinkers and problem solvers
- Ethical participants in society

Commitments about How We Operate as an Organization

- Supporting continuous improvement of instruction
- Building strong relationships
- Finding solutions

High Expectations for Learning for All Students and Staff

- Instructional excellence
- Safe, peaceful, and healthy environment
- Enriched learning atmosphere
- Collaboration with diverse communities and families

GOALS FOR ALL STUDENTS
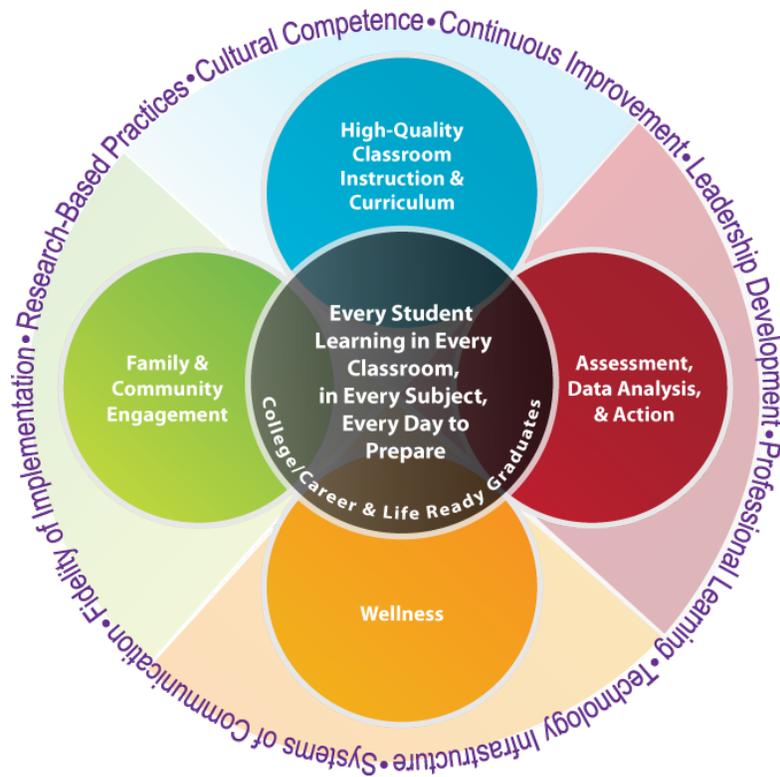
GRADUATE PROFILE

An Elk Grove Unified School District graduate demonstrates readiness to succeed in college, career, and life through:

Creative Problem-solving

- Analyzes problems by exercising critical thinking to formulate and ask pertinent questions
- Develops solutions using innovative, inventive, and intuitive ideas and approaches
- Utilizes resources and processes necessary to solve problems

Self-awareness, Self-reliance, Self-discipline

- Possesses and applies skills necessary for living independently
- Sets and meets realistic, measurable goals; makes adjustments as needed
- Articulates strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and limitations as these apply to achieving plans and goals after graduation
- Manages and balances time, resources, and responsibilities

Technical Literacy

- Demonstrates mastery of technology necessary for college and career success
- Exhibits willingness to learn and utilize new technology
- Understands the evolving role of technology in industry and society

Communication and Collaboration

- Articulates thoughts and ideas in all forms of communication: oral, written, and non-verbal
- Reads, listens, and observes effectively
- Relates to and collaborates with diverse groups to achieve a common purpose

Community Engagement

- Demonstrates knowledge about school, local, and global issues
- Respects cultural differences
- Participates in diverse school and community organizations willingly and cooperatively

Integrity

- Makes commitments and keeps them, giving full effort
- Takes responsibility for actions
- Acts with honesty, authenticity, and sincerity

SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The second essential element of effective governance is defining roles and responsibilities and working with leadership, commitment, and passion within those agreed upon roles.

Effective Governance Teams
- Communicate a common vision.
- Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for ALL students.
- Value, support and advocate for public education.
- Govern within board adopted policies and procedures.
- Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform board deliberations.
- Annually evaluate the governance team's effectiveness and handbook.

Effective Trustees
- Govern in a dignified, professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Operate openly with trust and integrity.
- Take collective responsibility for the governance team's performance; agree on behavioral norms and operational protocols.
- Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the board and among staff, students, parents, and the community.
- Understand the distinctions between board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the superintendent and staff.
- Understand that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individuals.
- Keep confidential matters confidential.
- Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be informed and effective leaders.
    - Preferred Sources: District Staff, Legal Counsel, California School Board Association
    - Other Sources: Other sources of professional development must be presented to a Board Sub-Committee and approved in advance.

Board Roles
The role of the Board is to provide each student with an education of the highest possible quality within the limits of financial support provided by the State of California and the Federal Government. To accomplish this, board members are responsible for five roles identified by the California School Boards Association (CSBA).
- Setting the direction for the District by involving parents/guardians, community, students and staff while focusing on student learning and achievement.
- Establishing an effective and efficient structure by employing the superintendent; developing and adopting policies; establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget; providing safe and adequate facilities to support student learning; and setting parameters for negotiations with employee organizations and ratifying collective bargaining agreements.
- Providing support to the superintendent and staff by following standards of responsible governance, making decisions and providing resources that support district priorities and goals, upholding board policies, and being effective spokespersons by being knowledgeable about district programs and goals.
- Ensuring accountability through evaluation of the superintendent; monitoring and evaluating policies; serving as a judicial and appeals body; monitoring student

achievement and program effectiveness; approving, monitoring and adjusting district budgets; and monitoring the collective bargaining process.
- Providing community leadership and advocacy on behalf of students, the educational program and public education.

PROTOCOLS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP
The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of the governance team.

Protocol	Agreement
Annual Organizational Meeting	The annual organizational meeting will be held within the required 15-day period commencing on the second Friday in December. At this meeting, the Board shall: ● Elect a Vice President/Clerk and President from its members ● Establish the regular school board meeting dates and starting/ending times for the year ● Appoint representatives to committees, and ● Determine locations of board meetings
New Board Members	● Sworn in at the annual organizational meeting ● Will meet with the Superintendent to receive all necessary materials including Brown Act information ● New board members will attend orientations offered by the Superintendent ● Strongly encouraged to attend CSBA new member trainings
Requesting Item on the Agenda	● Forward an agenda request to the Board President/Superintendent ● During "Other Items from the Floor", a member may request the Board to place an item on a future agenda. The request must be supported by a majority of the Board
Developing the Board Meeting Agenda	● The Board President will meet with the Superintendent to discuss the board meeting agenda the week before each board meeting. The planners will be mindful of time needed for staff to make any adjustments to the agenda or to prepare background information on issues/topics. ● Agreement will be reached at the agenda planning session on which items require additional background information in the agenda packet; a thorough staff briefing at the board meeting or a special meeting or study session to discuss the item in greater depth.
Agenda Questions Answered Before a Meeting	● The board meeting agenda will be posted on CSBA's Agenda Online (www.agendaonline.net) two times prior to the board meeting, when possible. The first posting will be two Friday's before the board meeting, when possible, and will be taken offline the Wednesday before the final posting for edits. The final posting of the agenda will be the Friday prior to the board meeting and will include all relevant presentation materials. From time to time additional information may become available after the Friday prior to the board meeting or on the evening of the meeting, however, this should be the exception rather than the rule. ● Board members agree to call or email the Superintendent with questions for clarification on items on the board meeting agenda as early as possible prior to the board meeting. The Superintendent will use judgment as to whether this information will be distributed to all trustees. ● The Superintendent may direct a trustee to the appropriate staff member for answers to questions. ● If possible, Board members should give staff advance notice of questions they plan to ask to ensure that staff can prepare the necessary information.

Protocol	Agreement
Individual Board Member Requests for Information	● Board members recognize the concept of "Nice to Know vs. Need to Know" information and will seek information only needed for effective decision-making. ● When an individual board member requests information pertaining to an agenda item, it will be provided to all board members. ● An individual board member will, insofar as possible, work to let the Superintendent and staff know ahead of time when a request for information will be made in public so that staff can be prepared to provide a thoughtful answer. ● Board members have a shared responsibility to ensure that individual requests for information do not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals.
Staff Reports	Board members will review staff presentations prior to the board meeting and call the Superintendent or staff in advance with questions as needed.
Board Deliberation	Each board member brings unique skills, values and beliefs to the board table. The best possible decisions are likely when all members of the team have been part of the discussion and everyone is operating within the same parameters. This protocol promotes making the "best" decision by welcoming all viewpoints, exploring all options, being efficient and avoiding repetition. ● The Board President introduces the item, explains how/when the public may comment, and how the board will deliberate. The agenda describes when and how the public may speak at any given item. ● The staff makes the presentation, including the staff recommendation. The Board asks clarification questions about the presentation. ● The Board President acknowledges any member of the public who wishes to speak. ● The Board may ask for further clarification following public comments on an agendized item. ● The Board deliberates and advocates. ● The Board votes. ● Board members are expected to cast a 'yes' or 'no' vote to indicate their preference and to abstain only when they have a conflict of interest. If a board member abstains, his/her abstention shall be considered to concur with the action taken by the majority of those who vote. (Chris will check legal statement.)
Public Comments	Members of the public shall have an opportunity to address the board on any item of interest that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the board. If the public comments on items not appearing on the posted board agenda, the board cannot take action or discuss the public comments other than the Board President briefly acknowledging the comments.
Allowing the Majority to Set the Direction	● The Board agrees there are multiple "right" answers in addressing issues. Dissenting opinions are listened to respectfully. The final authority for board decisions rests with the board as a whole. ● Prior to a board decision, if a member of the public asks a trustee about a future board decision, the trustee will clarify that he/she is voting as an individual ("I" message). ● Following a board decision, the trustee agrees to fully support the majority and if approached by media shall refer them to the Board President or Director of Communications.

Protocol	Agreement
Electronic Communications	● The governance team recognizes that electronic communication is an efficient and convenient way to communicate and expedite the exchange of information. ● Board members shall exercise caution to ensure that electronic communications are not used as a means for the board to deliberate outside of an agendized board meeting. Board members will not use the "reply all" function in electronic communications. ● Electronically transmitted suggestions or issues will be sent to the Superintendent for appropriate response and distribution. The Superintendent may handle the issue or forward on to staff. ● A trustee may respond, as appropriate, to an electronic communication received from a member of the community and should make clear that his/her response does not necessarily reflect the views of the board as a whole. ● Any complaint or request for information should be forwarded to the superintendent with a 'cc' to the appropriate member of cabinet so that the issue may be handled through the appropriate process. ● Like other writings concerning school district business, a trustee's electronic communication is subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.
Requests for Action	● Only the Board, by formal board action, may direct the Superintendent. No individual trustee has the authority to either direct the Superintendent or staff to take action, or to cause action to be taken by staff indirectly. ● Individual trustees shall take great care to ensure that communication to staff does not imply direction nor assume that staff should take action based upon individual trustees' comments.
Addressing Conflict Among Board Members	● The Board values and supports differences of perspective from individual board members. ● The Board understands that conflict will exist and recognizes the importance of thoughtful and timely conflict resolution for effectiveness and the health of the Board. The Board and individual trustees will address issues as they arise, working together in a professional manner to prevent unresolved conflicts from undercutting the effectiveness of the Board. ● When addressing conflicts, verbal communication is preferred to electronic communication. ● Participate in annual Board self evaluation to strengthen Board effectiveness and working relationships
Handling Concerns from the Community	General concerns: ● The Governing Board is the unit of authority over the District and trustees understand that a board member has no individual authority to solve an issue or complaint. ● When approached by a community member with an issue or concern, board members will listen openly and seek understanding of the issue or concern. ● Trustees will call and/or email the Superintendent when they become aware of potential District issues, and when they direct a community member to contact him/her. For formal complaints: ● The trustee will explain that the District has complaint policies in place and if appropriate, will let the community member know what the complaint policy is and how they may access the process or procedure. ● All complaints should be handled first at the level where the issue occurred. Board members will use judgment in responding, being mindful of their role in judicial review.

Protocol	Agreement
Role in Public	● The Board understands the importance of being visible and accessible to the public. Trustees will demonstrate their dedication and commitment to the governance team by clarifying their authority as one of seven in all Board decisions and actions. ● Trustees represent the Board in what they say and do and will set an example of professionalism.
School Site Visitations	● The Board understands that visitations to school sites are a valuable tool in understanding the culture of the school and increasing board member communication with staff. ● Trustees wishing to visit a school site will contact the site principal in order to arrange a date/time for the visit. ● During visits, members should be cautious of interrupting the learning or working environment.
Spokesperson for the Board	● We believe it is important that we speak with one voice in order to maintain the trust of our community. The designated spokesperson will be the Board President, Superintendent, Communications Department or a person identified by the Superintendent.
Self-Monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness	● Conducting a governance self-evaluation demonstrates accountability to the community and the intention of the governance team to strengthen and improve governance practices. ● Annually, the Board will schedule a conversation/study session meeting to reflect on governance practices, to review operating protocols and participate in a self-evaluation process. ● (Tool to be developed.) ● All Board Members are encouraged to earn CSBA's Masters in Governance Certificate. (added on 8/18, Board Workshop)
Individual Board Member Comments at Meetings during Board Member and Superintendent's Reports	● Highlight staff, student, team or individual achievements. ● Report on Board sub-committee or other relevant meetings. ● Comments on routine school visits or events will be omitted. ● In respect of audience and staff time, individual board member comments may be limited to five minutes.
Quorum	● A quorum is the minimum number of voting members who must be present at a properly called board meeting in order to conduct business in the name of the Board, and is established when a majority of the board members (at least four of the filled positions) are in attendance (Education Code 35164)
Board Appointed Committees	● Board members appoint community members to the Finance Committee. Newly elected board members will be given the option to appoint their own committee member or allow the current member to finish their term.
Requesting Resolutions	● There are three (3) types of Board Resolutions including ● (1.) Mandated by Law; (2.) Promulgated by Official Educational Entity; and (3.) Discretionary. ● Board member or member of the public who wish to propose a Discretionary resolution, should submit a request to the Superintendent and Board President who will determine whether to refer the request to a standing three (3) person committee. ● The committee will make its determination based on the established matrix in consultation with legal counsel and will identify any potential legal, educational and/or fiscal impacts connected to the proposed resolution. The committee's recommendation regarding the proposed resolution will be communicated to the Board.

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Requesting Resolutions continued	● Resolutions must comply with all legal and constitutional requirements including, but not limited to those related to compliance with the Equal Protection, the Establishment and the Free Exercise clauses of U.S. Constitution.
Support and Opposition of State and Federal Legislation, Legislative Updates	● As locally elected representatives Board members have significant influence with state and federal representatives and as such Board members should be knowledgeable regarding legislative proposals affecting the District. ● The Superintendent or designee will provide legislative updates to the Board Legislative Subcommittee and the full Board as deemed appropriate by legislative cycles and actions. ● Trustees will email the Superintendent and Board President to request information pertaining to legislative matters and/or to request the full Board to consider a position on a legislative matter. ● The full Board, by formal board action, may take a position on a legislative matter. A majority of the Board, through action, will represent the Board's position on a legislative matter. ● Legislative matters and processes sometimes require nimble and rapid responses and action. When action by the full Board is not logistically possible to affect critical and urgent legislative matters, the Superintendent will advise the Board Legislative Subcommittee. ● The Board Legislative Subcommittee may make recommendations for support or opposition regarding legislative matters to the full Board. ● The Board and Superintendent will follow the procedures outlined in the State and Federal Legislation Position and Update Process.