



Menifee Union School District Governance Handbook

2021

Board of Education

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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, commitment to norms, and coming to agreement on protocols/formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children

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Governance – Definition

School district governance is the process of setting organizational policies and standards that are adopted by the Board of Education and implemented by the Superintendent in order to provide strategic direction and ensure that objectives are met, risks are managed appropriately, and resources are used responsibly in order to ensure success for all students.

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization: the actions of an individual, a group coming together to govern, and 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; and (4) create a supportive structure for effective governance.

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

Unity of Purpose – CSBA

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

Menifee Union School District Mission, Vision, and Learner Profile

Vision Statement

Engaging Young Minds for Limitless Futures

Mission Statement

To inspire learning, exploration, and imagination

Learner Profile

Adaptable, Responsible, Empathy, Integrity, Collagoration, Perserverance

Menifee Union School District Governance Team Unity of Purpose

- Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students.
- We will continue to build trust and move the district forward.
- We will commit ourselves to operate as an effective team.
- We will carry out our collective responsibilities with respect and dignity.
- We will be a team with a unified purpose so that we are not a distraction to the work of the district or community, but a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees.
- We will ensure that the community sees evidence of this focused direction.
- We will lead by example in our commitment to continuous improvement.
- We will oversee the implementation of first-rate programs and facilities.
- We will perpetuate a legacy of a responsive, inclusive, positive, and kind culture.

Governance Role and Responsibilities as Defined by CSBA

Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. The role of board members 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 board carries 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. The following page provides more detail on how the board performs its governance responsibilities in each job area.

Performing Governance Responsibilities as Defined by CSBA

We agree with the responsibilities of school boards as described below by the California School Boards Association:

Set the direction for the community's schools

Focus on student learning
Assess needs and obtain baseline data
Generate/review/revise direction setting documents (mission, vision, goals, success indicators)
Ensure an appropriate inclusive process is implemented
Ensure these documents are the driving force for all district efforts

Establish an effective and efficient structure for the Menifee Union School District

Employ and support the superintendent
Establish a human resources framework that includes policies for hiring and evaluating personnel
Oversee the development of and adopt policies
Set a direction for, adopt the curriculum, and require data-producing assessment systems
Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget, and oversee facilities issues
Provide direction for and vote on collective bargaining agreements

Provide support through our behavior and actions

Act with professional demeanor that models the district's mission 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 and safe 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; require program changes as indicated
Monitor and adjust district finances and periodically review facilities issues
Monitor the collective bargaining process

Act as community leaders

Speak with a common voice about district priorities, LCAP goals and actions
Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities
Communicate clear information about policies, programs and fiscal condition of the district
Educate the community and media about issues facing students, the district and public education
Advocate for students, district programs, and public education to the general public, key community members, and local, state and national leaders

Positive Governance Team Culture as Defined by CSBA

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.

Because the community elects school board members to set and monitor the direction of the school district, and the district superintendent translates all efforts into action, it is vital that the board and superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open communications.

Governance Norms and Guidelines

The Board of Education for the Menifee Union School District is entrusted by the community to uphold the constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student, and to stay focused on what is best for students.

The Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team in order to effectively meet district challenges. Agreed upon behaviors or norms and operating procedures or guidelines support consistent behaviors and actions among team members. The purpose of the Menifee Union School District governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among board members, the superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. The following norms and guidelines were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

MUSD Norms that Support a Governance Culture of Trust and Respect

- We recognize that each board member brings unique experiences, values and beliefs to the table. We will work to understand and respect each other's concerns, perspectives, and interests.
 - We commit to operate within our roles and responsibilities in order to facilitate the efficient and effective running of the school district. We recognize and respect the unique role of the superintendent and will seek the superintendent's professional advice on all board business.
 - Based on board direction, we expect staff to present sufficient, timely, accurate information that supports the board's ability to make rational, thoughtful, responsible decisions to best serve students and community.
 - We will maintain open and honest communication with each other in order to develop strong and authentic board/superintendent relationship.
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Norms, continued

- We will maintain a focus on students' well-being and academic progress rather than on individual preferences. These are the touchstones that inspire our shared purpose.
- We each agree to commit the time necessary to govern effectively. This means being there, being prepared, participating, understanding the full scope and limitations of serving as a board member, and being willing to take on all the responsibilities involved.

Best Practices for Effective Governance Team Performance

The following guidelines were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of our governance team.

Visiting schools:

Principles: *Visiting schools reminds board members that the students and learning are our primary focus. We can observe programs that are moving us toward the achievement of our goals, and can show appreciation and recognize people for the good work that they are doing. Each board member should have the opportunity to get to know each of the school sites and have a range of experiences with each school. The board respects the busy schedule of staff and the anxiety that can be created by well-meaning, but unannounced visits to schools and/or committee meetings. It is important to follow a consistent process that is respectful of both staff and board member time.*

Best Practices:

- Board member visits to school sites are encouraged.
 - As a professional courtesy, board members should communicate with the superintendent and the principal to arrange the visit.
 - Board members will also be cautious about encroaching on the learning environment. To assist in this matter, the superintendent will ensure principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his or her lesson when a board member visits a classroom.
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Handling concerns from the public and staff:

Principles: Board members should be responsive to the community and be good listeners. It's important for members of the governance team to be consistent in their responses to staff and the community. Board members need to stay within their function and not attempt to personally resolve a problem. There are staff members whose job it is to remedy or deal with student and staff situations. Students and staff members have due process and confidentiality rights that cannot be violated. The school board is potentially the "Court of Last Resort" and members who have been too involved in the situation may not be able to participate in a final hearing.

Best Practices:

- When someone shares a concern with us, we will listen carefully, and then we will direct that person to the appropriate staff member.
 - We will make sure they understand our communication protocol (teacher, then principal, then district staff). This will ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the district are upheld. It will also clarify that one board member has no individual authority to resolve a problem.
 - We will send received correspondence to the superintendent when appropriate.
 - As a representative of the public, it is important that the board member invite the person with the concern to ultimately get back to him/her if the issue is not resolved.
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Individual board member requests for action:

All board members are equal under the law, and authority rests with the board as a whole, not with individual members of the board. Direction is given to the superintendent only at board meetings through actions taken by the board.

Best Practice:

- Individuals may 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.
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PROTOCOLS TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Effective governance teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the trustees and the superintendent in their functioning as a team (e.g., processes or structures for agenda setting, set-up board room and table, agenda structure, bringing up a new idea); how governance teams operate, how they do business. These agreements about how groups will operate are often called protocols.

Issue	Our agreement on how this issue will be handled
Board Structure and Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUSD is served by a five-member Board of Trustees. Trustees are elected to a four-year term with staggered elections of 2 and 3 members. • Each member is elected to represent a specific trustee area. • An organizational (annual) meeting is scheduled each December. • A trustee’s term of office starts mid-December at the annual meeting and ends mid-December four years later. • Officers of the Board of Trustees are elected at the annual meeting. • The Board approves the appointment of the Superintendent to serve as the Secretary to the Board. • Appointments to other committees are also made. • Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public in accordance with the Brown Act.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are required by law to maintain confidentiality of what is discussed in Closed Session and may not be discussed in Open Session.
Development of the Board Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board Agenda is developed by the Superintendent and Cabinet and reviewed by the Board President prior to posting.
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are encouraged to contact the Superintendent with any questions or concerns prior to the Board meeting. • When possible, Board members will let the Superintendent and staff members know ahead of time when a request for information will be made in public, so that staff can be prepared to provide a thorough and accurate answer.
Posting of Agendas and Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting agendas are posted as per education code requirements at school sites, at the district office, and online 72 hours before regular meeting. Minutes of held meetings are posted online.
Requesting Future Agenda Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a request from a Board member who wishes to place an item on a future agenda, it shall be placed in a timely manner by the Superintendent. • The items for future consideration can be requested at the Discussion by completing the form, “Suggested Item(s) for Future Governing Board Meeting(s)”. It requires at least three Board Members to move forward, or the Board president can make a request to the Superintendent when the agenda is being created. • The public may submit written requests for agenda items to any Board members, who will then forward the request to the Superintendent and Board President.
Consent Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the Consent Agenda is to expedite routine operational business with minimal discussion. • The Board will move and approve the Consent Agenda as a whole unless items are pulled. Items on the Consent Agenda may be pulled when approving the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Discussion and vote on particular items occurs only when an item is pulled. There are two specific

	<p>times that call for an item to be pulled: when a trustee plans to vote “no” or when a trustee needs further information before deciding how to vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to the vote seeking approval for the Consent Agenda, Board members may comment on an item without pulling it from the Consent Agenda.
Discussion/Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an item is up for Discussion/Action, the Board will hear the item and: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move for action and seek a second on the motion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If motion dies for lack of a second, no discussion or vote occurs on the motion, - If there is no second, the president may ask for a new, possibly related motion and seek a second on that motion. 2. Deliberation by Board members • Call for the vote
Information Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of an Information Item is to provide the Board with information regarding a relevant or time-sensitive matter. No action can be taken related to this information, however the Board may direct staff to place a Discussion/Action item on a subsequent agenda for consideration.
Tabling an Item and Abstentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a member feels that there is insufficient information to vote on a motion, that member should move that the motion be tabled for lack of information and request the item be placed on a subsequent agenda. If there is no second on his/her motion to table or if the motion does not pass, the member may abstain from a vote. However, agenda action items are known in advance providing Board members an opportunity to receive all information needed to vote intelligently and confidently on the motion in question.
Conflict of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members with personal conflicts with any motion are reminded of their obligation as Board members to provide direction and governance within the school district. Abstentions for personal conflicts should be extremely rare and only taken after due consideration of the possible outcomes. • If a Board member has a financial conflict of interest as defined by Government Code 1090, he/she shall make it known to the Board before discussion of the issues and shall recuse him/herself from discussion and/or action taken on the item. • “Conflict of Interest” is defined in Board Bylaw 9270. Before abstaining on any issue, a Board member should be thoroughly familiar with this Bylaw in its entirety.
Public Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two opportunities for public input at Board meetings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before Closed Session on topics related to Closed Session items 2. During the Public Session of the meeting on any topic • In both cases, blue sheets are provided to facilitate public input. Individuals must limit their comments to three (3) minutes for closed session items and three (3) minutes for public session items, with a total of twenty minutes per topic. • Board members listen to public input and take it into account during discussion and deliberation. • Board members have no direct interaction with the public during Public Comments. • It is incumbent on the Board President to acknowledge and thank members of the public for the input as appropriate. • Exception: If the Board feels additional public/staff input would be helpful in determining a course of action, the Board President may make such a request of the Superintendent.

Board Comments During the Board Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the Board Comments section is to allow for the board members to speak about event(s) they've participated in and/or to voice their opinion(s) on topics they deem appropriate for a future board meeting.
Communications Between and Among the Board, Board Members and the Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Superintendent is easily accessible through email, text and by phone. The Superintendent also sends out a weekly Board Update every Friday to communicate district events and issues. Board Updates are intended for the sole purpose to inform board members; they are not meant for distribution or for the general public.
Request for Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an individual Board member requests information, 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 the staff can be prepared to provide an answer. No surprises or “Got Ya’s” during board meetings! • Individual Board members will self-monitor to ensure one person’s request for information does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. If the Superintendent feels a request presents a significant diversion, he/she will seek direction from the Board President.
Communications Between the Board and Other Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always start with the Superintendent and if necessary, the Superintendent will contact the appropriate staff member to provide information.
Request for Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only authority to direct action rests with the Board at the Board table. • A majority vote sets such direction. • Individuals may 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, it should be done in the context of the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.
Role in Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members are reminded of their obligations as public servants. Board Bylaw 9010 provides great detail with regards to that obligation and should be reviewed periodically by Board members for compliance.
Self-Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual trustees agree to review and adhere to meeting norms, goals, and Board member roles as defined CSBA and Board Bylaws. • In order to conduct efficient and effective Board meetings, Board members will come to the Board meetings prepared and ready to do business. Board members agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and attend to fellow Board members respectfully. Points are to be made in as few words as possible; speeches at Board meetings are discouraged. • Key questions for Board members to consider for effective meetings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are Board members prepared for the meeting? 2. Do Board members refrain from monopolizing discussion? 3. Does everyone really understand the issues? • The Board will annually conduct a self-evaluation as a means of continuous improvement and to determine adherence to norms and guidelines.
Trustee Area Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although each trustee is elected by the voters of a defined trustee area, when all are seated at the Board table the needs and well-being of the entire district is the ultimate objective when making decisions, developing policy, directing resources, and setting goals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's appropriate for trustees to bring forward the unique needs and priorities of his/her zone as part of an informed and representative decision-making process. • Although trustees are elected by a specific area, members are encouraged to engage with all schools throughout the district. • Trustee zones will be periodically reviewed to ensure they continue to meet the intent and spirit of the California Voter Rights Act.
Spokesperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board President is the spokesperson in response to emails and communications addressed to the entire board. Therefore, he/she will provide an initial response confirming receipt of the communication, explaining how the Brown Act restrains us from conducting business/discussion in non-public communications, and encouraging the sender to attend a future board meeting where the Board's business is properly and publicly conducted. The Board President shall courtesy copy the superintendent and other Board members with any such response.
Request by Businesses or Vendors Made to Individual Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a vendor brings a request to sell a product or provide a service to a board member, he/she will refer the person to the Superintendent's Office to ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously and that government code, education code, and district procedures and policies are upheld. It will also clarify that no individual board member has the authority to grant a request. Vendors who circumvent district policy by going directly to a member of the Governing Board is at risk of being eliminated from consideration.
Orientation of New Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New trustees will be invited to participate in trainings designed to support his/her success "on-boarding."

We have reviewed and agreed to the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Menifee Union School District Board of Education, staff, students and the community.

Affirmed on this 13th day of July, 2021

Jacquelyn A. Johansen, President _____

J. Kyle Root, Vice President _____

Morgan Singleton II, Clerk _____

Xavier Padilla, Deputy Clerk _____

Robert O'Donnell, Member _____

Dr. Jennifer Root, Superintendent _____