



TORRANCE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Torrance Unified School District Governance Handbook

October 18, 2021

Board of Trustees

Betty C. Lieu, Esq. *President*

James Han, *Vice President*

Jeremy Gerson, Ed.D., *Clerk*

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Superintendent

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EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Unity of Purpose, Roles, Responsibilities, Norms and 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 July 21, 2021, Torrance Unified School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent participated in a workshop on Effective Governance with the California School Boards Association. This document reflects the governance team’s discussion about developing and sustaining a framework for effective governance and includes highlights of their conversations about unity of purpose, roles, norms, and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best serves all students.

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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 children, the district, and public education.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

What We Hope to Accomplish as a Team, to:

- Be united in the governance of our district for the benefit of our students, and to be a role model to others as a governance team.
- Be a transparent Board with clear communication, collaboration, and sharing diverse ideas with respect.
- Elevate student voices in governance and decision-making.
- Create a safe, inclusive, stable, loving environment for students to learn, explore and grow; empowering them to reach their full potential.
- Ensure development of the whole child; socially, emotionally, academically, and physically.
- Continue the district's strategic communication plan.
- Grow enrollment.
- Provide a workplace that effectively utilizes employee talents, promotes teamwork and collaboration, provides training and motivation, and maintains high morale
- Establish a culture of success and excellence for all students and staff.

GAINING CLARITY ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Role of the Board and Superintendent - CSBA:

School Board “trustees” are the representatives of the people, elected to ensure the district schools educate the children 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 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.

Performing Board Responsibilities - CSBA:

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 children, district programs and public education to the general public, community, and local, state, and national leaders

Torrance Unified School District Governance Team

AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

Governance Team Norms and Protocols:

The Board of Education for the Torrance 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 to 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 Torrance USD 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.

Our Agreements to Facilitate Governance Leadership:

Norms

We have adopted the following behavioral norms:

- We ensure that every voice is heard.
- Taking turns is valued and practiced.
- We demonstrate respectful, cordial, collaborative behavior.
- Trust is essential.
- All decisions are focused on the best interests of our students.
- Openness and transparency are essential.

To that end, we have developed the following Meeting Guidelines:

Meeting Guidelines

- We will keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- We will wait to speak until a team member has finished talking. We will keep our remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed.
- We will come to all meetings prepared.
- We will respect differences, show respect, and never dismiss or devalue others.
- We will give helpful feedback directly and openly, but gently.
- We will build upon the ideas of others and look for common ground. We will paraphrase for understanding.
- Each member will take responsibility for the work of the team. We will each be responsible for the success of the meeting – participate equally and address concerns.
- We will stay focused on our goals and avoid getting sidetracked.
- When we have a difference of opinion, we will debate the facts of the situation. We will address process -- not personalities.
- We will all work to make sure there are no hidden agendas and that all issues and concerns can be dealt with openly by all members.
- We will assume best intentions and ask clarifying questions if necessary to understand the speaker's intent.
- We will respect confidentiality.

Protocols

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

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>Responding to Staff or Community Concerns or Complaints</p>	<p><u>Rationale:</u> We care about our constituents concerns and want to hear them, but we recognize that individual Board Members do not have the authority to resolve issues and complaints, as stated in BB 9200, <i>Limits of Board Member Authority</i>.</p> <p>Therefore, when a Board Member is approached by a community or staff member with an issue or concern, he/she will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Receive</u> – Listen without interruption and without preparing a response to the person’s issues or concerns, unless it is an issue that may come before us in our judicial role - that information will be shared with the entire Board at the appropriate place and time - during the hearing. • <u>Repeat</u> – If it is appropriate for us to listen to the concern, we will paraphrase or ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding of what has been said. • <u>Request</u> – Ask what the person sees as the solution to the problem or concern. Ask what they would have us do with the information they have given us. • <u>Review</u> – The conversation (and next steps, if any). • <u>Redirect</u> – Put the person back into the system at the appropriate place. • <u>Report</u> - Notify the Superintendent of the conversation so that he has the full picture and can follow through as appropriate and/or necessary. • <u>Emails</u> – When a Board Member receives a concern or complaint via email, he/she will thank the sender for raising the issue and inform the complainant that he/she is forwarding the email to the Superintendent so that he may address the issue appropriately.

TOPIC:

PROTOCOL:

Adding Items to the Agenda

Rationale: A clear, transparent, consistent procedure is needed so that confusion is eliminated, and all Board Members understand the process and have the ability to add items to the agenda. This also allows the Board to prioritize items and focus on the most important issues.

Therefore, we agree that:

- Any Board Member may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting.
- Board Members may share new ideas or request information and/or future agenda items in writing to the Superintendent or at the meeting under “Board Reports.”
- The Board President and Superintendent will confer as to the appropriate response to the request, such as sending information to all Board members and/or placing on a future agenda, per BB 9322, *Agenda/Meeting Materials*.
- Items not within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board may not be placed on the agenda.
- 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 subject to Board vote, an information item that does not require immediate action, or a consent item that is routine in nature and for which no discussion is anticipated.
- Board Members will consider the following when requesting that an item be added to a future agenda:
 1. The impact that the item will have on district resources, and staff time and workload.
 2. The impact the item will have on achieving Board adopted district/LCAP goals.
- The Board President and Superintendent will determine when each new item will be agendized.

TOPIC:

PROTOCOL:

**Governance
Team
Communication**

Rationale: We wish to develop a strong, effective Governance Team built on trust, which requires transparency and open, honest communication.

Therefore, we agree to the following:

- Ensuring that there are no surprises between team members.
- An atmosphere of clear, open communication will be fostered.

To that end, the Superintendent shall:

- Keep the Board informed about community issues.
- Ensure that information requested by one Board Member will be shared with all.
- Keep the Board informed about critical, emergency, and controversial issues by sending out an email to the Board and a text alerting them to the situation and requesting that they read the email. Examples of situations that would require such action, include:
 1. Safety issues
 2. A death within the school district family
 3. An item that is about to appear in the media or on social media
- Call Board Members regarding confidential issues.
- Alert Board Members about new or controversial issues.
- Provide a recommendation on agenda items.

Board Members shall:

- Keep the Superintendent informed about issues and concerns within the community.
- Study their agendas and be ready to ask their questions during pre-meeting calls.
- Inform the Superintendent when they plan to ask a question during the Board Meeting for the benefit of the public.
- Give the Superintendent feedback for both the quality of information shared with the Board and the method of delivery of that information.

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 Torrance Unified School District Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students, and the community. We shall review and renew this document annually.

Affirmed on this _____ day of _____, 2021

Betty Lieu, Esq., - President

James Han - Vice President

Jeremy Gerson, Ed.D. - Clerk

Anil Muhammed, Ed.D. - Trustee

Jasmine Park - Trustee

Tim Stowe, Ed.D. - Superintendent