TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Governance Handbook 2016

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ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance – A Definition

School boards are the democratic representation of the community and are charged with the legal responsibility to ensure all children in their community have the opportunity to achieve an equitable and excellent education.

School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.

There are three dimensions to effective governance. Governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school district and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement. This Governance Handbook documents the governance responsibilities of the board and superintendent of the Tamalpais Union High School District within these three dimensions.

1. Governing as a unified team with a shared vision to lead and serve the community
2. Mutual support for roles and responsibilities
3. Creating and sustaining a positive governance leadership culture

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of purpose of the governance team (trustees and superintendent) include a common focus, agreement on priority goals, and shared values about students, the district and public education that transcend individual differences and fulfill a greater purpose.

A unity of purpose exists when the commitment to achieving these goals becomes the guiding principle of all trustees and the superintendent. The focused efforts of the Tamalpais Union High School District are reflected in the mission and strategic plan adopted by the board.

The Tamalpais Union High School District Mission Statement

The Tamalpais Union High School District is dedicated to the development of creative, passionate, and self-motivated learners. Upon graduation, students will be prepared for engaged citizenship and able to contribute individually and collaboratively in order to address the challenges of a dynamic and diverse world. To these ends, all students will demonstrate mastery of core competencies and will be offered meaningful learning experiences to enable them to access and critically analyze information, pose substantive questions, and communicate effectively.

GOVERNANCE ROLES

There are important distinctions to be made between the board's role and that of the superintendent and staff. All board members are equal under the law, and authority rests with the board as a whole, not with individual members. The Board of Trustees sets direction and operates at a governance level. The Board does not manage or become involved in the day-to-day operations of the district. Direction is given to the superintendent only at board meetings through actions taken by the board. It is important for the board members and the superintendent to understand and respect the separate roles, yet work together as a "governance team" taking collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture.

GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Perhaps the most important governance principle is the agreement on the procedures the board and superintendent will utilize to govern the district. Exceptional boards make governance intentional and invest in structures and practices that can be thoughtfully adapted to changing circumstances. Protocols are tools to strengthen the capacity of the board to engage in a constructive relationship with staff – one that is grounded in a mutual understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. Explicit protocols, agreed to and upheld by the board and superintendent, provide transparency and stability in the governance relationship as the board carries out its roles and responsibilities.

The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of the district governance team and to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among board members, the superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. The protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

Protocols to Facilitate Governance Leadership

Topic	Agenda Questions Answered before a Board Meeting
Rationale	• Board members should be equally informed and knowledgeable on agenda items. • It is important that staff members know about and prepare to answer questions at the board meeting whenever possible. • Advance preparation by staff regarding informational questions from the board members enables board meeting time to be more effectively used. • All communications are a matter of public record, and must comply with the Brown Act and public meeting requirements.
Protocol	• Trustees will make every attempt to ask substantive questions prior to the board meeting. • Trustees will contact the superintendent and/or assistant superintendent with questions. Trustees will always copy the superintendent when questions are

	directed to other staff.
	• Written answers to clarifying or consent agenda questions will be distributed to all trustees at the discretion of the superintendent or assistant superintendent.
	• Other questions from trustees will be included in the presentation to the board at the board meeting.

Topic	**Board Meeting Management – Effective Deliberation**
Rationale	• Well-run, efficient meetings model leadership, promote trust and confidence and provide opportunities to demonstrate strategically moving the district forward and planning for the future.
	• The board wants to keep the tone of meetings respectful, while maintaining the focus on district priorities. The board has established a clearly defined structure to guide the discussion, to support equal participation by all trustees and to hear from the community.
Protocol	• The board president, board clerk, and superintendent plan each board meeting agenda to promote and support thoughtful deliberation and effective use of time.
	• During the board meeting, the board president will remind the public, if appropriate, that the purpose of the meeting is to conduct the district business in public.
	• The board president facilitates the board meeting and manages the public input.
	• The president will refer to the public input guidelines on the board meeting agenda. Each action item has a 20-minute time limit. Three minutes of public input are allotted per person per action item. The board president may ask the public to limit their comments to new information.
	• The board president has discretion to add time to the discussion, if the majority of the board agrees to additional time. The board president may be liberal in exercising this discretion when there are relatively few individuals seeking to provide input.
	• Open session meetings will not go beyond four hours in length. This can be overridden by a supermajority vote of the board.
	Managing Action items
	Step 1: The board president introduces the action item.
	Step 2: Staff presents the item, background information and a recommendation.
	Step 3: Board members and the student trustees ask clarification questions and/or make comments.
	Step 4: The board president thanks the presenter and the presenter returns to his/her seat.
	Step 5: The board president manages public input, inviting participants to the podium, asking them to introduce themselves and directing questions to the superintendent or board members, as appropriate.

	Step 6: The board discusses the item. **Step 7:** A motion and second are made. **Step 8:** The board votes.
Topic	**Establishing Multi - Year Goals**
Rationale	• Establishing district multi-year and annual goals is critical to a forward thinking, proactive board that is committed to continuous learning. • Important to the work of the board is the ability to track progress over multiple years. • Critical to governance work is data driven decision-making that promotes clarity of direction, focus and alignment. Setting goals ensures that the work of the district is focused.
Protocol	• Progress towards strategic goals is updated annually at an open session meeting. • Strategic goals are updated annually at an open session meeting.

Topic	**Designated Spokesperson**
Rationale	• It is essential that important and accurate information be communicated to members of the board, the staff, and the community in as timely a fashion as possible. • The governance team recognizes that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public.
Protocol	The governance team commits to speaking with one voice. The designated spokesperson will vary depending on the issue or situation: • **Crisis/Disaster:** The superintendent is the primary spokesperson and may involve the board president at his or her discretion. • **Meeting Information** (e.g. board meetings, agenda items, study sessions): The board president and the superintendent will serve as primary spokespersons or may choose a designee. • **Core Values /Vision / District Priorities / General District Information**: All governance team members may serve as spokespersons utilizing developed and agreed upon key messages. For requests via email: • If a trustee receives an email request from a member of the public, the trustee will respond and copy the board president and superintendent on the response. The trustee may elect to ask the board president to respond to the request. • If the request is sent to the superintendent, she will copy the answer to all trustees.

- If the e-mail is sent to some or all trustees, trustees will refer the request to the board president with a copy to the superintendent (if the superintendent is not already copied). The board president and superintendent will agree on which of them will respond. If the superintendent responds, she will copy all trustees. If the board president responds, he will copy the superintendent, and she will pass it on to all trustees.

For requests from the media:
- In general, the board president and superintendent will respond to requests from the media. This is especially important in the event of a controversial topic.
- A trustee may answer a request from the media on a topic that is not controversial or recommend that the request be directed to the board president or the superintendent. If the trustee answers the request directly via e-mail, he/she will copy the superintendent and board president. If the trustee answers the request directly via conversation or phone call, he/she will inform the superintendent and board president.
- The board clerk will perform the role of the board president if the board president is unavailable for an extended period.

Topic	Handling Complaints and Concerns from Staff
Rationale	- The board values open communication and timely resolution of issues. - The board wishes to be accessible, consistent, and fair in dealings with all complaints and concerns.
Protocol	When approached with an issue or concern from staff, trustees agree to: - Listen openly and with empathy, being careful to remain neutral. - To remind staff that no individual trustee has the authority to resolve the issue. - Ask the staff member to address their issue with the staff member who can most directly help them with their concern (teacher leader, principal, assistant superintendent, superintendent). - Notify the superintendent of the issue or concern. The superintendent will let the trustee know of the resolution. - If the concern is shared via e-mail, the trustee will copy the superintendent and board president on their response. If a board member is approached for one on one meetings with staff off campus the board member will: - Ask the staff member to address their issue with the staff member who can most directly help them with their concern (teacher leader, principal, assistant superintendent). - If the staff member has addressed their concern with the staff member most

	directly related, the trustee will ask if the staff member has shared the issue or concern with the superintendent. If the answer is no, the trustee will ask the staff to talk with the superintendent first, prior to any meeting with a trustee. If the staff member has already shared their concern directly with the superintendent, the trustee will say, "Under our protocol I can meet with you as long as I notify our superintendent. Our superintendent may attend our meeting as well."

Topic	Handling Complaints and Concerns from Community
Rationale	• The board wishes to be accessible, consistent, and fair in dealings with complaints and concerns from members of the community. • The board values open communication and timely resolution of issues. • The board represents the community. The board's role in hearing complaints and concerns is as a listener and to provide education that empowers a community member with potential next steps.
Protocol	When approached with an issue or concern that is outside of the formal complaint process, trustees agree to: • Listen openly, with empathy, being careful to remain neutral. • Remind community members that no individual trustee has the authority to solve the issue. • Validate the integrity of the complaint process. • Encourage addressing this with the person who can most directly help them with their concern, e.g. teacher, principal, superintendent. • Notify the superintendent of the issue or concern, as appropriate. The superintendent will let the trustee know of the resolution as appropriate.

Topic	Visiting Schools
Rationale	• The board wants to be visible to staff, and informed about instructional practices and the needs of the students and staff. • Visiting schools provides the opportunity to show appreciation and recognize staff for their work. Visits include school events, meetings, and classroom visits.
Protocol	• All trustees represent all constituents and will use their best efforts to visit each comprehensive high school campus at least twice a year and each small school campus once per year. • The superintendent will keep trustees informed of events and opportunities for board presence whenever possible. • As a professional courtesy, trustees will contact the principal and superintendent when they plan to visit a campus. • Trustees will give the principal a reasonable amount of lead time prior to the visit.

Topic	Visiting Schools
	• The purpose of classroom visits is not to evaluate teachers. Feedback regarding teaching practices will only be shared with the superintendent if there is a concern about student safety.

Topic	Board of Trustee Meeting Agenda Development
Rationale	• Effective meetings are the result of well-planned agendas. • Adequate time is needed for staff members to develop agenda items thoroughly and to post agendas in compliance with the Brown Act. • An established and transparent agenda development process enables all stakeholders to request that an item be agendized for board discussion or consideration.
Protocol	• All agenda items must be submitted to the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and Board of Trustees by noon on Tuesday the week prior to a board meeting. • The board president, clerk, and superintendent will meet on the Tuesday prior to the board meeting to determine the closed, open, and consent agendas. • All back up material for agenda items must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on the Wednesday prior to the board meeting. • All agendas must be publically posted 72 hours prior to the meetings. • All agendas and back up materials are posted on the district's Agenda Online website. A link is available on the front page of the district website. • Generally, agenda items will be discussed by the board at a meeting and brought back for action at a future meeting.

Topic	Board Governance Self-Assessment
Rationale	• Conducting a governance self-evaluation demonstrates accountability to the community and the willingness of the governance team to strengthen and improve governance practices.
Protocol	• The board supports continuous improvement through an evaluation of governance practices and effectiveness. • Annually, the board will schedule time to reflect on governance practices and participate in a self-evaluation process. • The process will identify commendations and recommendations for improvement. • The board may identify one or two annual governance goals for strengthening the governance team's performance.
Topic	**Closed Session Practices/Confidentiality**
Rationale	• The Brown Act established conditions for discussion of some board business in confidential, closed sessions. The Brown Act strongly supports

	the "public's right to know" but recognizes that some highly sensitive matters must be discussed in a confidential setting, in part to protect the legal rights of other parties.
	· The public's trust and the trust among board members are breached if confidential matters are shared in a public manner.
	· When closed session discussions are shared, there is potential for liability and violation of employee and student rights.
Protocol	· Only matters legally allowed by the Brown Act will be discussed in closed session. These matters include but are not limited to employee contract negotiations, district litigation, personnel matters, and the substance of the Superintendent evaluation.
	· The board will maintain confidentiality around all matters discussed in closed session.
	· If a board member violates the legal requirement to keep all closed session discussions confidential, the Board President and Superintendent will take immediate action to rectify the matter.
Topic	**Meeting Preparation and Attendance**
Rationale	· Individual trustees do not have authority to make decisions or give direction. A majority vote of the board at a board meeting provides direction to the superintendent.
	· The purpose of a board meeting is to conduct board business in public.
	· Regular attendance at board meetings allows the viewpoints of all trustees to be heard.
	· Issues are regularly discussed over a series of board meetings.
Protocol	· Board members will read board packets in order to come to meetings prepared to discuss and act on agenda items.
	· Board members will attend regularly scheduled board meetings unless an emergency situation occurs that makes attendance impossible.
	· Members will cooperate in scheduling special meetings and work sessions.

Topic	**Board Member Request for Information**
Rationale	· Oversight of the district is an important function of the Board of Trustees.
	· It is important for trustees to be well informed regarding student performance within programs and schools.
	· Trustees recognize that they have no power as individuals to direct staff actions.
	· Compiling information in response to trustee requests takes staff away from their duties of the day-to-day operations of schools and the district.
	· A protocol is necessary to balance these potentially competing interests.

Protocol	• Staff will make every effort to ensure that board agenda items include thorough background and information.
	• Requests for further information regarding an agenda item will be sent to the Superintendent or appropriate Assistant Superintendent. If the request is sent to the Assistant Superintendent, the Superintendent will be copied.
	• Staff will gather the requested information and distribute it to all trustees at the Board Meeting.
	• Trustees should self-regulate the amount of requests for information regarding issues not on the board agenda. If these requests do occur, they should be sent to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will inform the other trustees so that they understand the context for the information that will later be provided to them by the administration in response to the request.
	• All information provided by the administration in response to a request by a trustee shall be provided to all other trustees at the same time.
	• A trustee, as any other citizen, has the right to request information available under the California Public Request for Information Act (e.g., existing documents and records) regardless of the amount of staff time required to produce the information. However, trustees will self-regulate these requests based on the understanding that such requests divert staff time from the day-to-day management of the district.

Appendix A

PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

The California School Boards Association recommends the following descriptions of the responsibilities of school boards.

Set the direction for the community's schools
- Focus on student learning
- Assess needs/ obtain baseline data
- Generate, review or revise setting direction documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)
- Ensure an appropriate inclusive process is used
- Ensure these documents are the driving force for all district efforts

Establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district

- Employ and support the superintendent; set policy for hiring of other personnel
- Oversee the development of and adopt policies
- Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum
- Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facilities issues
- Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements

Provide support through our behavior and actions

- Act with professional demeanor that models the district's beliefs and vision
- Make decisions and provide resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals
- Uphold district policies the board has approved
- Ensure a positive working climate exists
- Be knowledgeable about district efforts

Ensure accountability to the public

- Evaluate the superintendent
- Monitor, review and revise policies and serve as a judicial and appeals body
- Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness and require program changes as indicated
- Monitor and adjust district finances
- Monitor the collective bargaining process
- Develop and implement board self-evaluation

Demonstrate community leadership

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

TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The Tamalpais Union High School District is dedicated to the development of creative, passionate, and self-motivated learners. Upon graduation, students will be prepared for engaged citizenship and able to contribute individually and collaboratively in order to address the challenges of a dynamic and diverse world. To these ends, all students will demonstrate mastery of core competencies and will be offered meaningful learning experiences to enable them to access and critically analyze information, pose substantive questions, and communicate effectively.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Curriculum & Assessment System
- Establish district wide curriculum that is coherent from the learner's perspective using the Understanding by Design frameworks
- Identify what each student should know and be able to do in each department or program and create courses or series of courses that align with established program goals
- Provide all students with access to an established guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Develop and use quality assessments that align to proficiency scales and guide instruction in all courses
- Support the development of cornerstone assessments that measures each student's understanding & transfer of knowledge within and across disciplines
- Ensure student mastery of 21st century skills
- Create accurate and consistent grading and reporting practices across TUHSD to support all learners in developing content and 21st century skill proficiency
- Strategically evaluate current and future course offerings to ensure alignment with the mission

Instructional Programs & Practices
- Develop a system of intervention to support the academic and behavioral success of all students
- Develop a routine approach to collectively review and respond to student performance while enhancing the district's organizational culture and climate
- Utilize SMART goals to create short- and long-term system, site, and team plans
- Support each student's emotional and social growth and work towards a community where all students feel safe and valued
- Guarantee student access to rigorous, relevant, and engaging courses
- Develop inclusive special education model that meets the needs of identified students

Human Resources
- Recruit a diverse applicant pool through innovative methods; assess effectiveness of earlier efforts, adjust planning and actions as necessary
- Improve HR department communications with all stakeholders; focus on two-way communication and soliciting input
- Promote and ensure a culture of appreciation, support, and understanding in which all staff members feel valued
- Collaborate with Educational Services department to support implementation of staff development plans

Leadership Development
- Actively recruit and hire teachers with leadership capacity and values aligned with the district mission
- Provide sustained and mission-focused coaching, professional, and leadership development for staff
- Continue to train and support Teacher Leaders as they work to facilitate the review and response to student data in collaborative groups
- Utilize Teacher Leader evaluation system to ensure growth and accountability of each leader
- Provide targeted training and support to develop the capacity of individual administrators at all levels and functions

Governance
- Provide direction and support for the superintendent and administrative team
- Continue to educate stakeholders regarding the role and work of the governance team
- Support mission-driven programs and practices through allocation of adequate resources
- Explore, develop, and implement appropriate opportunities for two-way communication and engagement with stakeholders
- Ensure smooth transition of the governance team as new members are elected and seated on the Board of Trustees

Community Relations
- Utilize the most effective means of communication with the district's internal and external stakeholders including websites and social media
- Develop understanding of the school district in all aspects of its operations by providing an honest, consistent, and comprehensive flow of information about policies, programs, and progress of the schools
- Actively seek information from the community regarding expectations and aspirations for our schools
- Bring about community understanding of the need for continuous improvement and what must be done to facilitate that improvement

Finance & Facilities
- Ensure long-term fiscal health of the district and maintain a balanced budget
- Continue active leadership role in the county and state to advocate for adequate school funding
- Develop short-term and long-term plans for the operational impact of increasing enrollment
- Maximize the remaining bond funds by developing and implementing a plan for the completion of the modernization program
- Develop and implement a comprehensive post-modernization maintenance plan to ensure safe school environments
- Develop agreements among school and community organizations for sharing resources and increasing efficiency
- Develop and implement a process to ensure community and staff awareness of the financial condition of the district