

MARCOLA SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK 2017-18



Marcola School District Shared Beliefs and Core Values

- We believe education should prepare students to succeed academically and socially so they can compete for quality jobs and become productive members of society.
- We believe the involvement of the parents and community in the schools is critical to the education of students and sets an example for children to grow as responsible citizens.
- We believe a safe learning environment is a right and responsibility for all stakeholders.
- We believe effective education develops the whole person - ethically, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.
- We believe our community must set positive examples for our students.
- We believe an exemplary school district aims to promote an environment of academic excellence and pride in the school community.
- We believe children do their best when they are mentored through their failures as well as their successes.
- We believe students learn at different rates and in different ways, it is essential to recognize each student's needs and interests when creating opportunities for continuous progress.
- We believe children are our community's most valuable asset and each child has intrinsic worth.
- We believe service to others encourages students to develop an understanding of an appreciation for other people and encourages them to become contributing members of society.

Marcola School District

Governance Handbook



Vision

“Students, Staff and Community Dedicated to Excellence”

Mission

The Marcola School District promotes academic excellence and ethical and responsible citizenship for all its students in a safe, supportive and enriched learning environment

The Marcola School District Board of Trustees and the Superintendent developed the Governance Handbook to strengthen their leadership skills, improve their organizational effectiveness and communication with all constituents, and keep all District efforts focused on student learning and the strategic initiatives.

The Governance Handbook outlines practices and understandings that help build and sustain a positive Board-Superintendent relationship and define a culture of excellence, equity and respect.

The Governance Team, comprised of the Board of Trustees and Superintendent annually review and evaluate governance practices and strategic initiatives for the betterment of the professional learning community.

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Who are we?

The Marcola School District Governance Team members are leaders. As representatives of the public, we represent the entire community: children, parents, staff, businesses, and all members of the learning community. We are a team comprised of trustees and the Superintendent. We hold the interest of ALL children in trust. When we hold a trust, we protect and take reasonable risks. We are responsible for the outcome. We must take this responsibility seriously and always be cognizant of our purpose. It is our moral commitment to achieve the mission of the district.

What is our Purpose?

We are a leadership team, responsible for the realization of the mission of our District. We choose and maintain the focus. We take initiative and are forward thinking. We consider the future, honor the past, and focus on the present. We narrow the focus and prioritize according to values and beliefs. As a Board, we set the tone and climate. We create policies congruent with values and beliefs. We provide leadership on pertinent issues, model dialogue, and discussion of important topics.

To whom are we responsible?

We are responsible to the children, their parents, and the entire community. We are responsible to ourselves for our individual commitment to governance leadership, and to one another on this team. We are responsible to the District employees and the state and federal governments.

The Governance Team's Hopes for the Future

- We will continue to hold student learning and achievement for ALL students as the District's priority.
- We will establish a focus on student learning and achievement and maintain that focus; coordinate programs and services to meet the diverse needs of the children and community.
- We will consider the whole child; develop talents and skills, understand the need for extra-curricular and extended day programs, STEM programs and the arts in order to enhance educational opportunities.
- We will come together as an educational community, Governance Team, District and community to consolidate our skills and talents to best serve the children of our District.
- We will build on our accomplishments and look to the future.
- We will make fiscal responsibility a continued priority and seek ways to engage the community's support in our important programs.
- We will include and celebrate the diversity of our community, which enriches our district.
- We will use the strategic plan and accreditation recommendations to build on the hopes of the District and bring focus and direction to our important work.
- We will seek creative and meaningful solutions and see problems as opportunities.

What do we want to accomplish as a Governance Team?

- Improve the quality of education for ALL students, to focus the District's resources, personnel, time and money to promote achievement for ALL students and engage the community and parents in support of this important effort.
- Be fiscally viable and maintain the quality of the educational programs
- Address the needs of ALL children, including but not limited to Special Education, Gifted & Talented Education, and all varieties of learning needs and styles.
- Involve and actively lead our community in improving our public education system and to extend it to ALL children.
- Develop well-educated, well-rounded, productive, and happy citizens who will utilize their skills and abilities to build community and who will respect the earth and all its inhabitants.
- Increase public understanding of how the District operates including roles and responsibilities, and how funds are allocated in support of the strategic goals.
- Encourage public discussion concerning what the public wants the District to provide the community.
- Work toward integrating the schools more fully into the general community. Schools should be the centers of activities for our neighborhoods.
- Foster and nurture the joy and eagerness children have for learning.

Characteristics by which the Governance Team wants to be known:

- Focuses on the best interests and academic achievement of ALL our children.
- Is accountable and financially prudent
- Is stable and solid, yet honest, fair and approachable.
- Agrees to and follows a process
- Is reasonable, reasoned, and thoughtful about decision making with a broad perspective.
- Is willing to slow down to make thinking explicit and provide time for everyone's buy-in.
- Is willing to take reasonable risks for significant benefit for children's education.
- Is cohesive with unity of purpose
- Admits and corrects errors and has a sense of humor.
- Is accessible to ALL members of the community
- Is respectful, unified, and a hard working team.
- Is open to a range of ideas and concerns
- Acts as good leaders who are worthy of being followed

Norms by which the Governance Team is characterized are as follows:

- We keep the best interests of ALL the children as a priority.
- We give respect and dignity to every interaction.
- We listen when people speak.
- We respond with respect in verbal and nonverbal communications.
- We come to meetings prepared.
- We deliberate at the table.
- We communicate a common vision and purpose.
- We respect and support the Board's decisions.
- We carefully consider the words we choose and what we say outside of the Boardroom.
- We understand that progress takes time, once a decision is made.
- We commit to representing the entire community
- We recognize the purpose of an individual Trustee's public communication is to inform and educate. Information is objective and without intent to undermine.

Discussion of Responsibilities

What does the Board need from the Superintendent in order to fulfill its responsibilities?

- Accurate information - as fully detailed as possible about any topic presented included, but not limited to, issues related to the safety of the students, staff and community.
- The Superintendent to bring alternatives, options, and the reasoning behind those options. The Board appreciates hearing the Superintendent's recommendations and reasons as the Board respects the Superintendent's expertise and experience.
- To receive information in a timely manner so that good decisions can be made.
- To receive copies of appropriate e-mails, letters, and especially press releases. In this way, the Board will be informed and current when asked questions by community members.
- To hear from the Superintendent directly by phone if something is at the crisis level in order to eliminate any confusions or miscommunication.
- To share information with the Superintendent and the Superintendent can then inform the other Board members when a Board member has important information to convey to the entire Board. The Trustees are knowledgeable about and operate within the Brown Act guidelines
- To know that once a Trustee has referred a complaint to the Superintendent, it will be addressed and follow-up information will be provided to the Board member. If it is an issue of which the entire Board needs to be aware, the Superintendent will provide that information to the board.

Discussion of Responsibilities

What does the Superintendent need from the Board in order to fulfill his/her responsibilities?

- The Board members to call the Superintendent with any questions or issues. All phone calls are welcome and will serve to help communicate and clarify.
- The Board to contact the Superintendent with all requests for information or copy the Superintendent on all Board-to-District requests. In this way, the Superintendent can be aware of all requests and ensure that if one Board member receives information, the entire Board can receive the same information. This arrangement also ensures that the Superintendent can be aware of a Board member's need for further information on a particular topic or agenda item. This enables a system that provides all Board members with pertinent information.
- Individual Board members to copy the Superintendent on e-mails or community communications, which relate to District matters.
- To forward requests by Board members to the most appropriate person. An e-mail response will be sent back to the person requesting the information and other Board members when appropriate.
- Each Trustee to call the Superintendent with any questions or concerns early so the lines of communication are open and frequent.

Protocols and Procedures to Facilitate Governance Leadership

The following procedures are not designed to limit the input, but rather to assist in considering everyone's ideas and facilitating effective decision-making.

Board Meetings

- Board members recognize the importance of participating in all meetings and strive to be fully prepared and present for all meetings.
- The beginning of each meeting is a time for staff to provide quick updates and for the public to comment on items not on the agenda. This is not a time for the Board to engage in dialogue. The Board cannot address issues that have not been placed on the agenda for discussion.
- Updates, which may require questions or discussions, are placed on the agenda as reports.

Role of the Board Chairperson (President)

- The Board Chair is the facilitator of the Board meeting process and must be allowed the license to change the procedure under special circumstances by announcing the changes in process and the reason for the changes.
- The Board Chair will regularly remind the Board and the public of the Board norms, and will clarify the deliberation process for the Board and the public at the beginning of an agenda item discussion.
- The Board Chair will strive to ensure the Board members do not interrupt one another during deliberations.
- If a Board member does not follow the agreed upon process, the Board Chair can remind the Board by saying something as simple as "I would to remind the Board . . . "

Role of the Trustees in Board Deliberation

- Members of the Board will assist the Board Chair by not redirecting requests to members of the community or staff, but by asking the Board Chair, thereby giving him/her the control of the meeting process.
- If the Board Chair misses a step, a Trustee can respectfully remind the Board Chair that a step needs to be re-considered.

Board Deliberation

- The Board Chair introduces the item, explains how/when the public may comment, and how the Board will deliberate. The agenda reflects when and how the audience may speak to any given item.
- The staff offers information and responds to questions from the Board of Trustees.
- The Board Chair acknowledges any member of the public who wishes to speak. A Trustee may ask a member of the public clarifying questions when applicable.
- After hearing public comments, the Board deliberates.
- The public may be invited to comment a final time on the Board's discussion before a vote is taken, at the discretion of the Board Chair.
- The Board then makes the decision.

Time Limits

- If necessary, the Board may establish a time limit at the beginning of the meeting for people addressing them in order to facilitate input and manage time effectively.
- When a time limit is used, a timing device will manage it and initial public comments will be limited to THREE minutes. The Board Chair will ask that the public limit their comments to new information.

Input from the Public

- The Board Chair may remind the public that all business is conducted in a respectful manner. As individuals address the Board, members listen with respect in both verbal and nonverbal language. Questions from the public will be directed to the Board Chair. The Board Chair will facilitate responses.

Study Sessions - Workshops

- Meetings will be scheduled periodically when the objective of the Board is to dialogues with the public, such as special study sessions.

Closed Sessions of the Board Meeting

- All closed sessions operate according to the Brown Act. All Board members commit to strict confidence.

Visiting Schools

- If a Board member is going to make a school site visit as a Board member, the Board member will call or notify the Superintendent before visiting the site. In this way, the Superintendent can share information before or after the visit.

Handling Community Complaints

When approached by an individual or group with concerns and complaints, it is best practice to:

- Listen openly, being careful not to imply agreement, since only one perspective is being expressed.
- Direct people to the policies or processes (Complaint process) or person in the District who can most directly help them with their concern.
- Inform Superintendent of concern or complaints so he/she can ensure follow up.
- If the comments/concerns are specific to a past Board decision, the Trustee will confirm the the Board stands by its decisions until and unless the Board majority expresses a need to change the decision.

District Wide Committees

- Committee work enables the Board to make more informed decisions, incorporating the multiple voices of the community and staff.
- The Board will be involved in discussing the framework for District wide committees.
- Board members will receive committee reports and information as much in advance as possible.
- Reporting from District wide committees will include an interim progress report and final report with recommendations

Board Member Committee Assignments

- At the annual reorganizational meeting, various committee assignments are discussed with the Board of Trustees. In order to ensure effective governance, the responsibilities and expectations of these committee assignments shall be made clear at the annual reorganizational meeting.
- The Superintendent will notify the appropriate organization identifying the Board of Trustees who will represent the Board on the committee

Revisions to Governance Protocols and Procedures

- All changes in written Governance Team protocols and/or procedures will be reviewed during the annually scheduled effective governance workshop and posted on the District website..

Board-Superintendent Communication

The Board and the Superintendent will try, as much as possible to inform each other early on important situations. This “heads up” will provide information so that timely decisions can be made. The Board would like to hear any sensitive information directly from the Superintendent to avoid any miscommunications.

It is helpful for the Board to receive copies of appropriate e-mails, letters from schools, or press releases. The Board wants to be informed and aware of what is positive in the District and any issues of concern.

The Superintendent should receive copies of communication from Board members to the public.

If a trustee forgets one of these procedures, the Superintendent may call them individually to review the steps of the procedure.

Board Communication

- Trustees are knowledgeable about and operate within Brown Act guidelines.
- Critical to effective governance is good communication
- A Trustee may contact the Superintendent for clarification purposes through email or phone

Communication with the Community

- Board members agree to reserve speculation on Board deliberation and outcome. Board members agree to say when asked, “We do not know and we will discuss this issue in public at the Board meeting.”
- The Board Chair is the official representative for the Board of Trustees.
- Board members will promote a calm professional demeanor and strive to assure the community that they are accessible, open to listening and share hope about the future.
- Board members will communicate to the community that decisions are always made with the focus on what is best for all children, and will strive to be fair in all decisions.
- When Board of Trustees speak to a community member or group, the trustee must clearly state that he/she is expressing a personal opinion and not representing the opinion of the Board.

Requests for Information

- Board members may contact the next administrator in line to the Superintendent directly; however, the Superintendent should be notified of these requests. If there is a question

Supplemental Board Workshop Protocols

The process for Board discussion and public input on Board action agenda items will be as follows:

- Introduction of the agenda item
- Staff explanation; and expression of a recommendation, if appropriate.
- Public comment, including questions by Board members to clarify the public comment; Board members will not “debate” pints with people testifying before the board.
- After hearing public comments, the Board deliberates.
- Motion and a second;
- Board discussion and deliberation (expression of intention to vote a certain way);
- Vote

about an agenda item or a general question, Trustees will call or copy the Superintendent when contacting another administrator in the district directly. In this way, the Superintendent can be aware if a question comes up at a later time.

- If the Superintendent receives a request for information, the Superintendent will forward the message to the appropriate person. The Superintendent will then send the response directly to the Trustee. Board members should notify the Superintendent if they need to speak with another administrator.