

# Colusa Unified School District



## Board of Education Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees  
Erin Steidlmayer, President  
Kathie Whitesell, Clerk  
Kelli Griffith-Garcia, Trustee  
Chris Mcallister, Trustee  
Melissa Yerxa Ortiz, Trustee

Rebecca Changus, Superintendent

Reviewed by the Board of Trustees: March 8, 2022

Adopted by the Board of Trustees: March 21, 2022

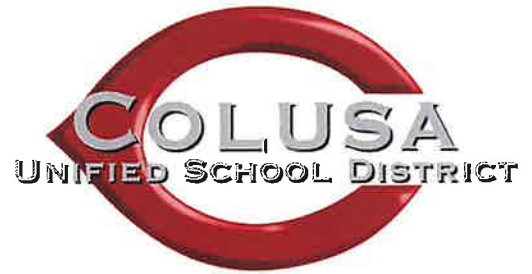
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### **Colusa Unified School District – Mission**

Our mission is to provide a safe, student-centered, high quality education to ALL students.



### **Colusa Unified School District – Vision**

Our vision is to provide, in cooperation with our families, an excellent, well-balanced education where students gain the skills necessary for success in an ever-changing world.



## **Our Beliefs:**

We have an obligation to set an example of good governance in action for our community. We will model dignified problem solving for our community and our children. The Board President works with the Superintendent to ensure Board meeting effectiveness. We intend that our Board meetings proceed professionally, efficiently and effectively and that District staff will have the opportunity to provide necessary background materials and information to the Board in a respectful environment. Each Board member must have the opportunity to express individual viewpoint's during Board deliberation. Everyone in attendance at Board meetings will be treated with dignity and respect, and individuals will have the opportunity to express opinions at designated times. Consistent with the Brown Act, the board may not respond to all opinions and comments to ensure that all side and representatives of an issue are heard.

It is essential that important information be communicated to members of the Board, the staff and the community in as timely a fashion as possible. Board Members and Superintendent have an obligation to communicate clearly about District issues to the staff and community. We recognize that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public. **Confidential issues must remain confidential.** It is important that the Board speak at publicized board meetings with clarity and consistency regarding Board actions in order to maintain trust of our community.

The role of the Board of Trustees is to ensure that the District is responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of the Colusa community, follow state education code and federal mandates. Trustees fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities:

- Setting vision and mission
- Establishing an effective and efficient structures
- Providing fiscal oversight to ensure solvency
- Maintain high academic standards and student academic progress
- Providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school District and support for public education

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, principals, and our talented teachers and staff to:

- Assure that Colusa Unified School District students have the opportunity to actively participate in a rigorous and rewarding academic environment enriched with visual and performing arts, technology, athletics and extracurricular activities.
- Utilizing available resources to their highest potential and best use.
- Working together to provide the vision, resources, advocacy, leadership, and accountability in a transparent, respectful, and collaborative manner to help students, their parents, and their teachers increase student achievement
- Recognize the talents, devotion, and extraordinary efforts of all District employees.
- Partner and collaborate with others who believe in student achievement and success, while distinguishing Colusa Unified School District as a leader in Colusa County.

## **CUSD Board of Education Standards**

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

Issue	Standard
Limits of Board Member Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="625 426 1446 772">• The Governing Board recognizes that the Board is the unit authority over the District and that a Board member has no individual authority. Board members shall hold the education of students above any partisan principle, group interest, or personal interest.</li><li data-bbox="625 810 1456 1228">• Individual Board members do not have the authority to resolve complaints. Any Board member approached directly by a person with a complaint should refer the complainant to the Superintendent or designee so that the problem may receive proper consideration and be handled through the appropriate District process.</li></ul>

Issue	Standard
Board Meeting Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings.</li> <li>• The speaker must address the Board. The Board President will read a statement regarding public comments at the beginning of all meetings.</li> <li>• We will keep this in mind as we conduct our meetings, allowing the public to provide input at/and during the time allotted. This will ensure that multiple voices of the community are heard before Board deliberations.</li> <li>• When the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Board to listen and learn from each other, taking the public input into consideration. The Board will not engage with the public at this time.</li> <li>• We will consistently abide by our formal processes relating to all issues so that all persons are treated fairly and equally.</li> </ul>

Issue	Standard
Individual Board member Requests for Action	<p data-bbox="610 228 1263 325">Items for Upcoming Agenda Discussed at a Meeting:</p> <ul data-bbox="662 359 1365 653" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="662 359 1365 583">• Topics for future agendas may be suggested by individuals board members, and upon consensus, added to the upcoming board agenda.</li> <li data-bbox="662 617 1235 653">• A majority vote sets such direction.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="610 743 1377 779">Items for Upcoming Agenda Requested in Writing:</p> <ul data-bbox="662 812 1398 1234" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="662 812 1398 1037">• Individual Board members may request future agenda items in writing to the Board President and/or Superintendent at least 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting.</li> <li data-bbox="662 1071 1289 1234">• The Board President, Board Clerk and Superintendent will review all requests submitted.</li> </ul>

Issue	Standard
Voting No	<ul data-bbox="662 1331 1284 1430" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="662 1331 1284 1430">• Each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote “no” on an item.</li> </ul>

Issue	Standard
Closed Session and the Brown Act	<ul data-bbox="662 1533 1386 1892" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="662 1533 1386 1892">• The Brown Act prohibits Board members from disclosing information discussed during closed session. It is in violation of the law to do so. Any action taken by the board will be reported to the public after the closed session meeting.</li> </ul>



Issue	Standard
Individual Board Member Requests for Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An individual Board member will – insofar as possible – 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 a thorough answer.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

Issue	Standard
Self-monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board will schedule a workshop annually to review governance team agreements and processes by reviewing the Governance Handbook.</li> <li>• The Board will complete a reflective Board evaluation annually to demonstrate efforts to improve and willingness to be lifelong learners.</li> </ul>

## Communication

Issue	Standard
Handling Concerns from the Public and/or Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When an individual brings a concern to a Board member, the Board member will determine if the complainant followed the complaint process (staff, administrator, Superintendent) prior to approaching the Board member.</li><li>• At that point, the Board member will listen, remembering he or she is only hearing one side of the issue.</li><li>• If the concern of an individual will eventually require Board action, the Board member will not be able to hear the details of the complaint so as not to prejudice the Board decision.</li><li>• This ensures everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the District are upheld.</li><li>• This clarifies that one Board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.</li></ul>

**Brown Act**

Issue	Standard
Email and Text Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The Board will use email carefully to avoid violating the Brown Act which prohibits a majority of the Board members from exchanging facts to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Develop collective concurrence</li><li>- Advance or clarify an issue</li><li>- Facilitate agreement or compromise</li><li>- Advance ultimate resolution</li></ul></li><li>● The Board recognizes that using Reply All:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Easily makes email part of the deliberative process</li><li>- Creates a public record</li><li>- Inhibits opportunity for a majority of Board members to have a conversation on a topic</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Board members will be aware of and follow District policy as it pertains to electronic communications.</p>

Issue	Standard
<p>Role and Responsibilities of the Board President</p>	<p>The Board president has a facilitation role relative to Board meetings and acts as spokesperson for the Board. The Board president has no more authority than any other Board member outside of Board meetings.</p> <p>Our Agreement: The role of the Board president is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair meetings,</li> <li>• Work with the Superintendent as necessary to help ensure Board members have the necessary information and materials to make decisions,</li> <li>• Make sure the pending agenda items are addressed appropriately,</li> <li>• Confer with the Superintendent before meetings to prepare, as necessary for the upcoming meeting,</li> <li>• Model the tone and behavior the Board wishes to convey to the community.</li> </ul> <p>As meeting chair, the Board president will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open and preside over meetings,</li> <li>• Introduce agenda items, providing some background information as appropriate, different from background information that is provided by staff (e.g., “This is an item we have had on our agendas four times in the last three months. We have given it a great deal of consideration and appreciate all of the input we have received from the public and the information staff has provided on the issue. Tonight, we will receive additional public input, deliberate further and hope to make a final decision.”),</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call on speakers,</li><li>• Ensure that a motion is one made at an appropriate time during deliberation or make a motion,</li><li>• Make sure all Board members have a chance to share in deliberation,</li><li>• Work to facilitate effective deliberation,</li><li>• Interpret and clarify for understanding to ensure that all Board members have an accurate understanding as the deliberation proceeds,</li><li>• Wait until all other Board members who wish to speak on an issue have done so before adding comments,</li><li>• Call for a vote restating the motion,</li><li>• Clarify and authenticate all action, order and procedures of the Board,</li><li>• Adjourn meetings,</li><li>• Remind the governance team and audience members of any meeting guidelines and Professional Governance Standards the Board has adopted, as necessary,</li><li>• Work with the Superintendent following a Board meeting to make sure there is appropriate follow-up and clarification of possible options for the Board’s future consideration on an issue(s),</li><li>• Serve as the spokesperson for the Board – always bearing in mind the direction and commitment of the Board given during Board meetings.</li></ul>
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Issue	Standard
Role of the Clerk	<p>The duties of the clerk shall be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certify and attest to actions taken by the Board when required</li> <li>• Maintain such other records or reports as required by law</li> <li>• Facilitate record keeping of time for public comments and notify the speaker of remaining time as necessary</li> <li>• Sign the minutes of Board meetings following their approval</li> <li>• Sign documents on behalf of the District as directed by the Board</li> <li>• Serve as presiding officer in the absence of the president</li> <li>• Perform any other duties assigned by the Board</li> </ul>

Issue	Standard
Designated Spokesperson(s)	<p data-bbox="574 226 841 262"><b>Our Agreement:</b></p> <p data-bbox="574 275 1422 359">The designated spokesperson will vary depending on the issue or situation:</p> <ul data-bbox="626 380 1435 1556" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="626 380 1435 512">• <b>Crisis:</b> The Superintendent will be the primary spokesperson and may involve the Board president at the Superintendent’s discretion.</li> <li data-bbox="626 527 1435 709">• <b>Meeting Information</b> (e.g., Board meetings, agenda items, study sessions): The Board President and the Superintendent will serve as primary spokespersons.</li> <li data-bbox="626 724 1435 856">• <b>Core Values/Vision/District Priorities/General District Information:</b> All governance team members may serve as spokespersons.</li> <li data-bbox="626 871 1435 1054">• During the Annual Governance Workshop the governance team will discuss which team members are going to be networking with which community groups and organizations.</li> <li data-bbox="626 1068 1435 1356">• If a Board member is invited to speak to a community group or organization on behalf of the Board, the Board member will make sure other Board members know about the invitation and will request updated District information as appropriate.</li> <li data-bbox="626 1371 1435 1556">• The Board member visiting a community Group will provide a report to the Board at the next Board meeting under Agenda Item: Items from the Board.</li> </ul>

Issue	Standard
<p>Role of the Superintendent</p>	<p>This document is by no means a comprehensive list of the Superintendent’s responsibilities. We update this document as we identify additional areas that we expect our Superintendent to address.*</p> <p>Expectations for our Superintendent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Governance Team: Lead the governance team to establish and implement Professional Governance Standards and an Ethics Statement for the Board members and the Superintendent. Lead the governance team in the development of core values. Work with the governance team to develop a vision and set the direction for the District.</li> <li>• Long Range Plans and Strategic Initiatives: As a member of the District Governance Team lead the District in setting and implementing long-range plans, priorities, strategic initiatives, and action steps.</li> <li>• Instructional Leadership: Develop the best possible attainable program of education. Keep informed of current curricular and educational thoughts, trends, and practices as well as proposed legislation impacting the District. Move the District forward in developing goals and action steps to identify and assess progress toward meeting our instructional goals. Assures continuous study and revision of the curricular program.</li> </ul> <p>Work collaboratively with site leadership (Principals and teacher leaders) to assure that the District’s students are continually progressing toward meeting or exceeding state and District content.</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Budget and Leadership:</b> Maintain budget oversight. Establish systems of control that account for District funds. Keep current on District and state funding and resources. Administer the budget and keep expenditures within those limits. Establish long-range financial needs and budget proposals. Lead the District’s school community in establishing budget priorities.</li></ul> <p>Take measures to enhance revenues through advocacy (such as school foundation, school/community fundraisers) by significant daily and weekly communications and meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Communication, Community and Leadership:</b> Open and maintain lines of communication and cooperative working relationships with our school community. Establish communication channels with our school staff, our community and surrounding communities. Speak on behalf of the District. Prepare reports for public release. Restore and establish consistency and stability with the District’s most important resources: teachers and support personnel.</li><li>• <b>Personnel Management and Leadership:</b> Reorganize and implement effective, well-organized personnel practices. Follow appropriate collective bargaining processes. Communicate and implement bargained agreements. Manage District litigation. Provide support for new teachers as well as supervising and coaching the District principals to promote success.</li><li>• <b>Board Policies and Leadership:</b> Bring and keep the District current with all state and federal laws</li></ul>
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	<p>that have been added or amended over the past years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technology and Leadership: Develop a five-year technology plan.</li><li>• Special Education: Oversight of special education. Maximize resources in serving our students with special education. Be aware of and manage encroachment of the District budget along with pending litigation, shared services, and SELPA.</li></ul> <p>*It is expected that the Superintendent may delegate some of the authority and responsibilities of the position. However, the Superintendent has the final responsibility under such delegation.</p>
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Issue	Standard
Code of Ethics for School Board Members	<p data-bbox="553 224 1406 323">Each trustee shall abide by the Code of Ethics for School Board Members:</p> <ul data-bbox="602 354 1438 1818" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="602 354 1438 646">• I will uphold and enforce all laws and regulations of the State Board of Education, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes shall be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures.</li> <li data-bbox="602 678 1438 970">• I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain our schools to meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing.</li> <li data-bbox="602 1001 1438 1230">• I will confine my Board action to policy making, planning, and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the Board has consulted those who will be affected by them.</li> <li data-bbox="602 1262 1438 1428">• I will carry out my responsibility not to administer the schools, but together with my fellow Board members, to see that they are well run.</li> <li data-bbox="602 1459 1438 1688">• I will recognize that authority rests with the Board of education and make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise the Board.</li> <li data-bbox="602 1719 1438 1818">• I will refuse to surrender my independent judgement to special interest or partisan political groups or to</li> </ul>

	<p>use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools, which if disclosed would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. In all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow Board members, communicate to the Superintendent the perspective of the community for its school.</li><li>• I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the Superintendent.</li><li>• I will support and protect school personnel in proper performance of their duties.</li><li>• I will refer all complaints to the appropriate authority and will adjudicate complaints according to Colusa Unified complaint procedure.</li></ul>
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## CUSD Governance Team Norms and Standards

The Board of Education for the Colusa Unified School District is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitution of California and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student.

To effectively meet District challenges, the Board and the Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Agreed upon behaviors (or norms) and operating procedures (or standards) support consistent behaviors and actions among team members.

The purpose of the CUSD governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among Board members, the Superintendent, District staff, students, and the community. Our beliefs, standards, and Code of Ethics were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

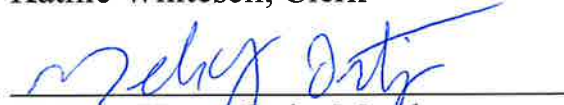
We have reviewed and agree to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and standards in support of a positive and productive working relationship among the Colusa Unified School District Board of Education, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at the Annual Governance Workshop of the CUSD Board of Education.

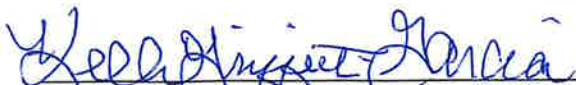
Affirmed on this 21 day of March, 2022.


  
Erin Steidlmayer, Board President

  
Kathie Whitesell, Clerk

  
Chris Mcallister, Member

  
Melissa Yerxa Ortiz, Member

  
Kelli Griffith-Garcia, Member

  
Rebecca Changus, Superintendent