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# LOMA PRIETA JOINT UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Governance Handbook, September 23, 2020

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## Board of Trustees

Deana Arnold, President  
Kerrie Mills, Vice President/Clerk  
Ron Bourque, Trustee  
Ben Abeln, Trustee  
Alex Hall, Trustee

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## Superintendent

Lisa Fraser

*This handbook reflects the governance team's work on the creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, norms, and protocols that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>MISSION STATEMENT</u> .....	3
<u>EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</u> .....	3
<u>UNITY OF PURPOSE</u> .....	4
<u>GOVERNANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</u> .....	4
<u>PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES</u> .....	5
Setting the Direction .....	5
Establishing the Structure .....	5
Providing Support .....	5
Ensuring Accountability .....	5
Demonstrating Community Leadership .....	5
<u>AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP</u> .....	6
<u>OUR GOVERNANCE NORMS</u> .....	6
<u>OUR GOVERNANCE PROTOCOLS</u> .....	7
Self-evaluation of governance team effectiveness .....	7
Handling concerns from the public and staff .....	7
Voting no .....	8
Visiting schools .....	8
Individual board member requests for information .....	8
Individual board member requests for action .....	8
Board meeting management .....	9
<u>SIGNATURES</u> .....	9

## MISSION STATEMENT

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Loma Prieta Joint Union School District, a partnership of schools, parents and community, is committed to providing each student with optimal learning opportunities in a safe, stimulating and supportive environment so that each student can reach their full academic and social potential.

The entire district and its supporting community work to produce graduating children who are academically prepared for their futures and who are good citizens. We endeavor to use our resources wisely and provide our students with a high-quality educational experience.

## EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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

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 supportive structure for effective governance through agreed-upon norms and protocols

Effective 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.

## UNITY OF PURPOSE

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

- Our shared purpose is to provide an excellent learning environment for all students.
- We want to be an effective team with a common focus.
- We want to understand our collective responsibilities.
- We want to build trust and move the district forward.
- We want to perpetuate a positive culture within the district.
- We want to promote a transparent and open public process so the public understands the basis of the decisions made by the board.

## GOVERNANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. The role of the trustees on locally elected school boards is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities. Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities: 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.

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 students in the district.

The superintendent assists the board in carrying out its responsibilities and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed upon district goals.

Boards who inadvertently get involved in staff functions undercut their ability to hold the superintendent accountable for the results of those efforts.

## PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

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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 / obtain baseline data

Generate, review, and revise direction-setting documents (mission statement, strategic goals, success indicators)

Ensure that an appropriate, inclusive process is used to develop the above-listed documents

Ensure that these documents drive district efforts

### ***Establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district***

Employ and support the superintendent

Establish a human resources framework that includes policies for hiring and evaluating all personnel

Oversee the development of and adopt policies

Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum and require data-producing assessment systems

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 board-approved district policies and support staff implementation of board direction

Ensure a positive working climate exists

Be knowledgeable enough about district efforts to be able 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 and 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, goals, and issues

Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities

Communicate clear information about policies, programs, and fiscal condition of the district

Ensure the community is informed about the issues facing students, the district, and public education

Advocate for children, district programs, and public education to the general public, key community members and local, state and national leaders

## AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

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The board and Superintendent must function together as a governance team in order to effectively meet district challenges, so it is vital that the board and superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open, honest communications. The purpose of the following Loma Prieta Joint Union 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 agreements were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other. Teams can have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave toward each other and other individuals. These behavioral ground rules or “norms” enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift a negative one.

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 of board room and table, agenda structure, handling complaints or concerns from the community, and bringing up new ideas. These agreements about how groups will operate are often called “protocols.”

## OUR GOVERNANCE NORMS

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*We agree to –*

- Focus on the best interests of our students.
- Show respect for others: listen attentively, never dismiss/devalue others, value different perspectives and each person’s contributions.
- Commit to having effective deliberations; we will listen openly to the opinions of others and will be concise in our own statements to reduce unnecessary repetition.
- Devote the time necessary to govern effectively. This means being there, being knowledgeable, participating, understanding the full scope of being a board member and being willing to take on all the responsibilities involved.
- Be collaborative and professional, even when we do not agree. Having different views and votes is healthy and essential to good decision making.
- Maintain confidentiality.

- Avoid Brown Act violations by not discussing district matters among a quorum of trustees, whether in person, by telephone, or electronically, unless present in a board meeting with the issue on the agenda.
- Learn from the past while focusing on the present and the future.
- Use meeting time wisely.
- Discuss any personal issues in private.
- Practice open and honest communications on all issues.
- Provide prompt and constructive input on policies and curriculum to the superintendent.
- Recognize that statements made in public by individual board members may be seen as the position of the board. The board will decide on issues where a single spokesperson might be in the best interest of the district.
- Take collective responsibility for the board's performance.

## OUR GOVERNANCE PROTOCOLS

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Issue	Protocol
Annual summer planning meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will review governance team agreements and processes and perform a self-evaluation.</li> <li>• We will set annual goals and with the intent of not adding major activities during the year unless absolutely necessary; if goals do need to change during the year, the board and superintendent will redefine them together.</li> </ul>

Issue	Protocol
Handling concerns from the public and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When someone brings an issue or complaint to us, we will listen carefully, remembering that we are only hearing one side of the story.</li> <li>• We will paraphrase for understanding.</li> <li>• We will review the conversation, and then direct the person back into the system at the appropriate place.</li> <li>• When appropriate, we will report the conversation to the superintendent so that he/she may follow-up.</li> </ul>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Protocol</b>
Voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote “yes” or “no” on an issue.</li> <li>• Board members can request to have their reasons for voting “yes” or “no” in the minutes.</li> </ul>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Protocol</b>
Visiting schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits are encouraged.</li> <li>• As a professional courtesy, trustees will call the principal or superintendent ahead of time to arrange the visit.</li> <li>• Trustees 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.</li> </ul>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Protocol</b>
Individual board member requests for information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual board members shall submit requests for information to the Superintendent (BB 9200). When such information is provided, it will be provided to all board members.</li> <li>• Unless agreed to by the board as a whole, individual board members shall not be allowed access to personnel files or other confidential documentation. Requests for such documentation will be granted only when necessary for the board to make an informed decision on a matter before the board. The board is obligated to maintain the confidentiality of any such documentation. As such, the review of such documentation will only take place in a secure location to be determined by the full board.</li> <li>• An individual board member will 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 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>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Protocol</b>
Individual board member requests for action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The only authority to direct action rests with the board as a whole, when they are seated at a board meeting.</li> <li>• A majority vote sets such direction.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
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Issue	Protocol
Board meeting management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will inform others about questions or concerns prior to a meeting.</li> <li>• We understand that board meetings are meetings of the board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings.</li> <li>• We will allow the public to provide input at the time allotted to ensure the multiple voices of the community inform board deliberations.</li> <li>• However, 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, not a time to re-engage with the public.</li> <li>• We will respect each other, listen, and speak one at a time</li> <li>• We will consistently abide by our formal processes relating to this issue so that all persons are treated fairly and equally.</li> <li>• We will review our policies, bylaws and protocols relating to board meeting management (e.g., time limits on input from members of the public), revising or reaffirming them as appropriate.</li> </ul>

## SIGNATURES

We, the Board of Trustees and Superintendent of the Loma Prieta Joint Union Elementary School District, have reviewed and agreed to the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Loma Prieta Joint Union Elementary School District Board, staff, students, and the community. We shall renew these agreements annually.

Affirmed on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020

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Deana Arnold, President

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Kerrie Mills, Vice President/Clerk

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Ron Bourque, Trustee

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Ben Abeln, Trustee

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