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**OAKLAND UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT***Community Schools, Thriving Students*

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To: Board of Education

From: Governance Handbook Ad Hoc Committee  
Shanthi Gonzales, Aimee Eng

Date: August 10, 2016

Re: Board of Education Governance Handbook

This Governance Handbook was originally drafted in 2011 by Director London, but was not adopted by the board at that time. In late 2015, Director Gonzales was asked by Director London and President Harris to review it and make recommendations for updates at the December 2015 Board retreat. After reviewing the recommendations by Director Gonzales, a Governance Handbook Committee was formed comprised of three Directors (Shanthi Gonzales, Rosie Torres, Aimee Eng) to take on the task of updating the handbook. A draft was first presented to the Board at the April 2016 Board Retreat and reviewed again in June 2016 when Vice President Senn recommended adding a section on conflict resolution.

The Governance Handbook Team has met and made following the updates to the Handbook:

1. Added new sections such as: Governance Team Norms, Vision, Mission, Core Beliefs, Strategic Priorities Goals for Student Achievement and a link to the LCAP;
2. Added additional detail and robust section on the *Powers and Responsibilities of the Board* to include: Role of the Superintendent, Shared Responsibilities of the Board and Superintendent, Orientation and Onboarding of new Board members, How Board Agendas are Prepared, How complaints from the public should be handled, Handling Conflicts that Arise among Governing Team Members, and How Media Requests Should be Handled;
3. Made minor edits to the Theory of Change framework;
4. Updated grammar and language to improve overall flow of handbook.

The goal is to complete the draft of the Governance Handbook for adoption by August 30, 2016.

SG/AE

Cc: Antwan Wilson, Superintendent  
Marion McWilliams, General Counsel

Attachment

# OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK, 2016-2017

### Board of Directors

James Harris, President  
Nina Senn, Vice President  
Jody London  
Aimee Eng  
Jumoke Hinton Hodge  
Roseann Torres  
Shanthi Gonzales

### Superintendent

Antwan Wilson

This handbook reflects the governance team’s work to create a framework for effective governance and realize our Strategic Plan: Pathway to Excellence. The Governance Handbook outlines practices and understandings that build and sustain a positive Board-Superintendent relationship and define a culture of quality, equity, and respect. The Governance Handbook reflects the adopted Board Bylaws and Administrative Regulations, and does not supercede them.

August 2016

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## **Purpose of This Handbook**

This Governance Handbook brings into one place the critical governance documents, overarching goals, and the shared values and beliefs of governance team members, which inform our work on behalf of OUSD students. The Governance Handbook includes the Mission of the Oakland Unified School District, the District's Theory of Action, the District's goals for student achievement, the powers and responsibilities of the governing board, and the norms by which we interact with one another, district staff, and the community.

## **Governance Team Norms**

Our Governance Team Norms are used to govern our time together. Our norms are:

- Honor the Time – No Sidebars, Technology Aligned to Meeting Purpose, Start and End on Time
- Act as a Collective Body – Honor Confidentiality
- Check for Understanding, Surface Assumptions
- Share Divergent Views – Value as a Learning Opportunity
- Celebrate Successes and Each Other's Contributions
- Presume positive intent
- No personal attacks

## **Standard of Professional Practice**

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

The Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance team in order to effectively meet district challenges. Standards of professional practice support consistent behaviors and actions among team members. The purpose of the Oakland Unified School District governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among board members, the Superintendent, district staff, students, families, and the community. The following norms and protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

1. We honor and observe our distinct roles and responsibilities in order to facilitate the efficient and effective running of the school district.
2. We recognize that each Board Director brings unique experiences, values, and beliefs to the table. While I disagree on pressing issues that come before the board, we must work

amicably with each other and the Superintendent to ensure that a high quality education is provided to all students.

3. We see the Superintendent as a key player on the Governance Team, understand his or her role and responsibilities, respect his or her expertise, and seek his or her professional advice on all Board business.
4. We maintain open and honest two-way communication with each other in order to develop a strong Board/Superintendent relationship.
5. We provide direction so that staff presents sufficient, timely, appropriate, specific information that supports the Board's ability to make informed, thoughtful, responsible decisions on behalf of students and the community.
6. We take collective responsibility for the success of our Governance Team and are willing to respectfully discuss personal concerns or issues with other individuals on the team if necessary.
7. We work to understand other team members' concerns, perspectives, and interests.
8. We give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion.
9. We commit ourselves to working hard on behalf of our students and families.
10. We show up on time, prepared and take our responsibilities seriously.
11. We recognize that Oakland is a diverse city, and our Board Representatives bring that diversity of experience and ideas to the board. Differences of opinion are expected and respected among board members.
12. We endeavor to focus our time and energy on important issues, not pettiness.

We have reviewed and agreed to the aforementioned governance team Standards of Professional Practice in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the OUSD Board of Education, Superintendent, district staff, students, families, and the community. We shall review and renew these agreements at our annual governance workshop.

**Our Vision:** All OUSD students will find joy in their academic experience while graduating with the skills to ensure they are caring, competent, fully-informed, critical thinkers who are

**Our Mission:** Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) will build a Full Service Community District focused on high academic achievement while serving the whole child, eliminating inequity, and providing each child with excellent teachers, every day.

## **Board of Education Core Beliefs**

We Believe:

- That every student should learn in a positive and safe learning environment.
- In the ability of every student to thrive in school and reach their full potential - and are committed to ensuring that they achieve college, career and community success in the 21st century.
- In celebrating the diversity of our students with respect to race, culture, heritage, exceptional needs, gender and sexual orientation; committing to giving each child what they need; teaching them with high expectations, and supporting them to find joy and success in their education.
- In full service community schools that - in addition to providing high quality education - act as an integral part of the health and wellness of our neighborhoods, offering lifelong learning opportunities and support for our students and community members.
- That students are most successful when all of us - students, families, educators and community members from all backgrounds and neighborhoods - can meaningfully and equitably participate in making shared decisions and improving conditions at the district level, school site or in the community.
- In the fair and transparent management of our resources in order to ensure the success of all current and future students, and are committed to seeking additional resources

## **Strategic Plan Priorities:**

*Priority 1: Effective Talent Programs:* Our work starts with our people. We need to make OUSD the premier employer for educators in the Bay Area. This means we must recruit the best talent, create a system that cultivates their growth, and develop a culture that facilitates high retention of effective employees.

*Priority 2: Accountable School District:* A school district that supports its people is grounded in values and effective systems. We will ensure that we are one team dedicated to the development of quality schools in every Oakland neighborhood. We will also provide exemplary service to all Oakland schools with an emphasis on increasing achievement and engagement for our students.

*Priority 3: Quality Community Schools:* Every student deserves the right to attend a quality community school in their neighborhood. The Community Schools work in Oakland is some of the most compelling work in the country. By targeting our focus, we will build schools that all Bay Area students are proud to attend.

## **Goals for Student Achievement**

Our LCAP contains our current goals for student achievement. It can be reviewed here: <http://www.ousd.org/domain/3262>

## **Theory of Action**

### CONCEPT

The theory of action is a framework for the district to ensure that our policies, decisions, and work are aligned and drive toward the same outcomes for all students and families. This theory reflects the mission, vision, core beliefs, and values of the organization and is the foundation of our Strategic Plan and LCAP goals.

The Board of Education uses this theory of action as a macro-level guide to develop high-level policies which the organization operationalizes through design, decision making, and implementation. Embedded in the theory of action are key principles of creating a culture of continuous improvement, shared decision-making equity, sustainability, scalability, fiscal and academic solvency, and maximizing the potential of every public school student in Oakland.

This theory of action enhances and builds upon previously adopted Board policies. The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has discussed and adopted policies related to shared,

school-based decision-making in service of high quality teaching and student achievement. For relevant discussion references, please see our Results Based Budgeting (BP 3150), School Governance (BP 3625) and Quality School Development (BP 6005) policies, which can be viewed here: <http://www.ousd.org/domain/68>.

## **THEORY of ACTION**

The Board of Education has endorsed the following framework to guide policy and decision making:

IF we consistently apply quality data in making decisions about high quality and effective academic and social support for students,

AND in service of high and equitable standards and outcomes for students, we maximize school site-based decision-making regarding staffing, finances, calendars, and programs,

AND we ensure that there is high-quality and effective instruction in every classroom that results in high-quality learning for every student,

AND to ensure high quality schools in every neighborhood, we partner with diverse providers in alignment with our policies,

AND we ensure that all facilities are used in service of quality outcomes for students, including constructing and maintaining facilities in accordance with principles of sustainability,

AND we apply data in ways that maximize fiscal and academic opportunities by operating a central office and the number and type of schools that we can sustain over time,

AND we include and partner with the community and families to ensure quality options in each neighborhood throughout Oakland,

AND we prioritize equitable allocation of resources across the district based on need, recognizing that students come to school needing different resources and supports,

THEN Oakland public schools will operate on principles of equity and ensure that all students have the academic, social, and fiscal supports that they need to succeed.

## **Powers and Responsibilities of the Board of Education (Board Policy 9000)**

Subject to the limitations of federal, state, and local law, the Governing Board of the Oakland Unified School District shall:

1. Establish measurable Goals for Student Achievement.
2. Establish a Theory of Action, a coherent strategy for achieving its student achievement goals.
3. Establish policies consistent with the Goals for Student Achievement and the Theory of Action, and systematically monitor the implementation and effectiveness of such policies.
4. Adopt a comprehensive and aligned district curriculum, and systematically monitor disaggregated student academic performance by grade and school.
5. Adopt a fiscally responsible district budget, and systematically monitor the district's fiscal health.
6. Advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local, state, and federal levels.
7. Hire, support, evaluate and direct the work of the Superintendent, General Counsel, and Board Executive Assistant.
8. Evaluate the Board of Education's own performance and effectiveness.
9. Consistently and meaningfully seek input from OUSD families and the community about the decisions and subjects coming before the board.
10. Provide a high level of transparency about how decisions are made and how district resources are used.

### *The Role of the Superintendent*

The Superintendent shares responsibility for all the tasks listed above, and is also responsible for the day-to-day management of the district. It is important to note that the board shares responsibility collectively for supervising and directing the work of the Superintendent. Board members should take care to avoid directing staff other than the Superintendent and General Counsel and should be mindful that their authority is collective, not as individuals.

All OUSD employees are ultimately under the supervision of the Superintendent, and it is important for Board members to steer clear of personnel matters and other matters that fall under the purview of the Superintendent.

In situations where an individual board member disagrees with the actions of the Superintendent, the appropriate thing to do is to consult with other members of the board to determine whether there is a desire to take action collectively to direct the Superintendent toward an alternative course of action.

### *The Role of Board Officers*

OUSD Board Bylaws can be reviewed for more information on the roles of board officers and the functioning of the board, including officer elections and committee appointments. Those can be viewed here: <http://www.ousd.org/domain/68> (BB 9000 - 9130)

### *Onboarding of New Board Members*

It is the intent of the Governing Board to provide new additions to the board with an orientation process that:

1. Introduces the new member to the vision, mission, and core beliefs of the district,
2. Provides an overview of the major bodies of work underway in the district, along with the strategic plan and LCAP goals,
3. Clarifies why that work was identified as the priority,
4. Facilitates building strong relationships among board members and between board members and OUSD staff, and
5. Helps new board members to understand how the board operates and acclimate as a member of the board.

It is the responsibility of the board's officers to plan for new board member onboarding and to seek feedback from the rest of the board on what onboarding will look like. Board members are encouraged to attend CSBA training, especially the new board member training, and to seek additional professional development that will help them to grow in their board member role. There are funds available to allow them to do this. Reference Board Policies 9230 and 9240 for more information.

### *How Board Meeting Agendas are Prepared*

Drafting board meeting agendas is the responsibility of board leadership (President and Vice President) and is done in conjunction with the Superintendent (see Board Policy 9121). The board receives the draft agenda and the documents that are ready 1.5 weeks in advance of the relevant board meeting (except for board retreats, which are treated somewhat differently). Draft agendas should be reviewed by board members right away in order to address any concerns you might have regarding the order, the agenda items, or other factors. Such concerns should be directed to the Board President.

If you would like to add items to the agenda, you can discuss it with the Board President informally, or introduce new legislation during a board meeting. An item introduced in this manner will be agendaized for a subsequent board meeting as long as a majority of the board does not object. See Board Policy 9322 for more information.

#### *Handling Complaints from Parents and the Public*

OUSD has an Ombudsperson who is the main point of contact for handling parent and constituent complaints. Here is where that information can be found:

<http://www.ousd.org/Domain/121>

Board members are encouraged to direct complaints from constituents to this office. Although not all complaints can successfully be handled by the Ombudsman's office, the office can redirect specific concerns if necessary to other departments.

It is important that the Superintendent be aware of constituent concerns so that he can follow up if necessary, so please cc the Superintendent on your communications with staff that are pertinent to addressing constituent concerns.

#### *Handling Conflicts Among Governing Team Members*

It is the responsibility of all board members to follow and enforce our governance team norms and standards of professional practice, which are intended to assist us in effective relations. However, at times conflict will arise between individual board members. On these occasions, the general rule is to privately approach the board member/s with whom the conflict has arisen to raise your concern promptly (prior the next board meeting, if possible) and try to reach resolution.

If the individual meeting does not lead to resolution, the next step is to approach board leadership (President and/or Vice President) about intervening or setting up a mediation. If the conflict is with both members of the leadership team, it may be appropriate to have a conversation with the General Counsel about how to proceed; the Superintendent should also be kept informed about conflicts amongst board members, as it may affect the performance of the Board as a team.

In general, it is important that interpersonal conflicts between board members be handled privately and definitely not in open session board meetings, because they are a distraction from the business of the district. There may be OUSD resources available to help resolve conflicts, and Panasonic Foundation staff might be available to help; check with the Superintendent or General Counsel.

### *Handling Requests from the Media (Board Policy 9010)*

Board members receive regular requests from members of the media. While individual members of the board have the right to speak with the media and express individual viewpoints, the Board President is the official spokesperson for the Board. Board members are encouraged to consult with the Deputy Chief of Communications first, in order to obtain more information regarding the district's position on the interview topic. The Deputy Chief of Communications is the official spokesperson on behalf of the district.

It is helpful for the board to speak with one voice when possible, especially after the board has taken a position/vote on an issue. If a board member decides to publish an opinion piece taking a public stance on an issue that is contrary to the board and district's efforts, it is a shared expectation that s/he will notify other board members in advance, and take into consideration the impact that these actions will have on the work of the district and board. Board members speaking as an individual should be clear that they are speaking as an individual and not as a board member. In addition, board members should be aware of potential Brown Act violations when issues have not been voted on by the board.

Board members are encouraged when speaking with the media or in public to ensure that what you are saying is accurate and that it is helpful in advancing the mission of the district.

### *Initiating Information Requests from Staff*

For Board Meetings:

In order to help staff track incoming requests related to Agenda items, requests for information from staff should be delivered in the form of "Monday Questions," submitted to the Superintendent, along with other designated staff the Monday of the week prior to the board meeting. This process helps staff to identify the agenda items that multiple board members are concerned about, and also ensures that all board members have access to the same information, in terms of the response to questions. Board members can reference the "Board and Staff Communications Protocol" for more details.

In addition to Monday Questions, information can be requested at board meetings (but it is helpful to the staff for you to send a follow up email as a reminder), and during your monthly 1:1 with the Superintendent.

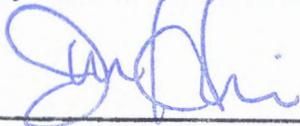
For Non-Board Meeting Questions:

From time to time, questions may arise unrelated to Board Meeting topics. When this occurs, Board members may request additional information from the Superintendent, or discuss this topic during your monthly 1:1 check-in meeting. It is helpful to save and send questions in batches whenever possible, and Monday questions can be one tool for organizing your questions. There are also regular updates provided by the Superintendent, to the board, all staff, and broader Oakland community. The Superintendent regularly sends out a bi-weekly

“Superintendent Memo” to the Board which provides key updates from various departments across the district. An “OUSD Headlines” newsletter is regularly sent out as well. It is important that all documents sent to the Board that are marked as confidential are not shared with others (Board Policy 9011).

*Serious Violations of Legal, Professional and Ethical Standards*

Serious violations of legal, professional and ethical standards may result in investigation and/or censure by the board. Reference Board Policy 9012 for more information.



8/25/16

James Harris  
President, Board of Education



8/25/16

Antwan Wilson  
Secretary, Board of Education

File ID Number: 15-2424  
Introduction Date: 8/24/16  
Enactment Number: 16-1345  
Enactment Date: 8/24/16  
By: oa