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**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Community Schools, Thriving Students

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GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK, 2020-2021**Board of Directors**

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Superintendent

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This handbook reflects the governance team's work to create a framework for effective governance. The Governance Handbook outlines practices and agreements that build and sustain a positive Board-Superintendent relationship and define a culture of quality, equity, and respect. The Governance Handbook is intended to reflect the adopted Board Bylaws and Administrative Regulations, and is not intended to conflict with or supersede them.

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Purpose of This Handbook

This Governance Handbook is a compendium of 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.

As Board members, we have taken the following Oath of Office. "We solemnly affirm that we will support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of California, and the Charter of the City of Oakland, and will perform the duties of a School Board Director to the best of our ability." The Governance Handbook is intended to help equip Board members with the tools and resources to fulfill the responsibilities of our role.

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. In addition to our governance standards in [Board Bylaw 9005](#), 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. Just like Oakland itself, we recognize that each Board Director brings unique experiences, values, and beliefs to the table. While at times we will disagree on pressing issues that come before the Board, we must work amicably with each other and the Superintendent to create a high-functioning district that can meet student and community needs.
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 value 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 commit to devoting the necessary time to developing trust and relationships with other members of the governance team, and to working 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 endeavor to focus our time and energy on important issues, not pettiness.
12. As a member of the Board, I commit to working to minimize surprises at public meetings while adhering to public meeting laws by requesting information in advance, and collaborating and communicating regularly with the Superintendent and Board colleagues before, during, and after meetings.

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 prepared for college, career, and community success.

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.

Our Core Values:

- **Students First:** We support students by providing multiple learning opportunities to ensure students feel respected and heard.
- **Equity:** We provide everyone access to what they need to be successful.
- **Excellence:** We hold ourselves to uncompromising standards to achieve extraordinary outcomes.
- **Integrity:** We are honest, trustworthy and accountable.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** We resist assumptions and biases and see the gift of every student and adult.
- **Joy:** We seek and celebrate moments of laughter and wonder.

Board of Education Core Beliefs

We Believe:¹

- 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:²

Priority Area #1: Quality Community Schools

Ensure every school is a thriving community of learning and every student is on track to graduate college, career, and community ready.

We are committed to learning, growth, and success for every Oakland student, regardless of their background, zip code, or “circumstance.” All students deserve access to a high quality education

¹ Board Policy 0100, Philosophy.

² Note that as of June 2020, the Superintendent is in the process of developing a new Strategic Plan. This Governance Handbook should be updated to reflect the goals of the new Strategic Plan when it is adopted.

that builds on the resilient, collaborative learner, community leader, critical thinker, and nurtures the problem-solver they already are. We know every student will learn at high levels when instruction meets their needs and that is why we are committed to ensuring all students build the relationships to feel connected and engaged by delivering culturally responsive, standards-based instruction that engages all students in learning and leverages the unique strengths and gifts they bring to our schools.

Priority Area #2: - Fiscal Vitality

Ensure the prioritization of resources to maximize the impact on students with the greatest needs.

OUSD must be a financially healthy district that invests resources equitably and strategically - providing the necessary programs and services to students with the greatest need. This will require central office departments working collaboratively to revamp the budgeting process, and leveraging the recommendations of the Government Finance Officers Association. When we are able to operate at optimal levels, we will be able to spend more of our time, resources and money on our core business of teaching and learning, thus improving the District's academic return on investment.

Priority Area #3: Organizational Wellness

Ensure a culture of divergent perspectives, creative problem-solving and mutual accountability between central office, schools, and community.

The bedrock of an effective organization is people so we must care for and support each other. Schools and their communities are the unit of change and the work of central office is to focus on customer service and quality support. As part of our ongoing efforts to create a more collaborative and mutually respectful organization, we must continue to improve upon transparent communication and quality engagement. With these conditions in place, OUSD will be able to recruit talent, cultivate their growth, and retain effective employees.

Our Commitments

- Provide every student with access to a high-quality school
- Ensure each student is prepared for college, career, and community success
- Staff every school with talented individuals committed to working in service of children
- Create a school district that holds itself and its partners accountable for superior outcomes
- Guarantee rigorous instruction in every classroom, every day

Goals for Student Achievement

Our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) contains our current goals and strategies for student achievement and has been developed with feedback from our District's Parent Student Advisory Committee (PSAC) and other stakeholders. A new LCAP guiding the next three years will be

adopted in December 2020 (delayed from June). The current LCAP 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 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. Each of these policies speaks to the role of the District as building the capacity within school sites and maximizing resources and decision-making within school sites.

For additional relevant 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>.

Our 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 and General Counsel.
8. Evaluate the Board of Education's own performance and effectiveness.

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 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, each Board member agrees 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> (BP 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, Theory of Action 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 may be funds available to allow them to do this. Reference [Board Bylaws 9230](#) and [9240](#) for more information.

How Board Meeting Agendas are Prepared

Drafting Board meeting agendas is the responsibility of Board President, in consultation with the Vice President, and in conjunction with the Superintendent and the General Counsel (see [Board](#)

[Bylaw 9121](#)). The Board typically receives the draft agenda and the documents that are ready in advance of the relevant Board meeting (except for Board retreats). 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 a Board member would like to add an item to the agenda, the process is to introduce new legislation in writing during the New Legislative Matter item at the Board meeting. An item introduced in this manner without objection of the majority, shall be assigned by the President to the appropriate standing or special committee of jurisdiction for consideration of its programmatic, financial and/or other impact. See [Board Bylaw 9322](#) for more information.

Handling Complaints from Families and the Public

OUSD has an Ombudsperson who is the main point of contact for handling complaints from families and constituents. 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 or she can follow up if necessary, so please cc the Superintendent and her designee (i.e., Senior Director of Strategic Projects) 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. At times, however, 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; check with the Superintendent or General Counsel.

Handling Requests from the Media ([Board Bylaw 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. (This means that, when speaking with the media, individual Board members should make it clear that they are not speaking for the Board unless otherwise authorized by the Board President.) Board members are encouraged to consult with the Chief of Staff first, in order to obtain more information regarding the District's position on the interview topic. The Director 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 the Superintendent, the General Counsel, and other Board members in advance, and take into consideration the impact that these actions will have on the work of the District and Board. In addition, Board members should be mindful of the Brown Act's purpose when issues have not been voted on by the Board.

At a minimum, 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

In advance of 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 before the Board meeting at the latest. This process enables 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.

In addition to Monday Questions, information can be requested during a Board meeting. However, Board members should direct information requests to the Superintendent, who will determine how best to provide the requested information. Additionally, Board members should follow up with an email request so that it is clear what information is sought. Information requests may also be made during regular meetings with the Superintendent and/or General Counsel.

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 the General Counsel. It is helpful to save and send questions in batches whenever possible. Board leadership should always be copied on email requests in order to monitor communication and workflow. For the large bodies of work coming up for Board consideration (usually the topics identified as Board priorities via the Superintendent work plan), there are regular “2x2s” with key staff so that Board members can ask more detailed questions and provide feedback to staff on possible proposals to be considered at upcoming Board meetings. (Staff does not and cannot shared this feedback with other Board members.)

There are also regular updates provided by the Superintendent and General Counsel, to the Board, all staff, and broader Oakland community. The Superintendent regularly sends out a bi-weekly “Superintendent Message to the Board” 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 Bylaw 9011](#)).

Board Meeting Conduct

The Board of Education has created Governance Team Meeting Norms and Meeting Rules of Engagement to guide how we strive to interact and treat one another during Board meetings. These norms and rules are also how we model productive engagement and interaction for the Oakland community. They are intended to help Board members uphold professional conduct and run efficient and effective Board meetings.

Our Governance Team Meeting 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

Our Meeting Rules of Engagement are:

- Five (5) minute speaking limit for Board Members
- No mingling with the audience
- Address comments to other Board Members
- Focus on agenda items
- Don't repeat what's been said
- Always be respectful

- No interruptions
- Enforce norms
- Model desired behavior

Our Governance Team Meetings Norms and Meeting Rules of Engagement should be revisited regularly, and updated and revised periodically, particularly when new Board members join the Board. This is important to ensure collective buy-in and commitment on our agreements. The Governance Team Meeting Norms and Meeting Rules of Engagement are included in our Regular Board Meeting Agendas as a reminder to the commitments we have made to each other and the constituents we serve.

Online Meetings

When meetings of the full Board or committees occur online, we will observe the following norms:

- Log in at least 15 minutes ahead of the start time.
- Keep video on while the meeting is occurring.
- Do not interact with anyone in the room with you.
- If you need a break, please turn off your screen and attempt to return within 10 minutes. Please let the President or Committee Chair and Parliamentarian know you are stepping away, using text or the private chat function.
- In general, conduct oneself (e.g., behavior, dress, mannerisms, speech) as one would during an in-person meeting to the extent feasible.

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 Bylaw 9012 for more information.