



Where students are family  
and learning comes to life!

"Where students are family and learning comes to life!"

# Governance Handbook

**The Board of Education 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 education is provided to each student.**

## **Board of Trustees**

Kathi Dunham-Filson, President  
Ray Prock Jr., Clerk  
Robert Hodges, Member  
John Plett, Member  
Sandi Dirkse, Member

## **Superintendent**

Aaron Rosander

## **Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements**

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

On June 1, 2016 and November 1, 2016, Denair Unified School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent participated in workshops on Effective Governance with the California School Boards Association. At that time, we updated/revised the Governance Handbook that was developed in 2014. This document reflects the governance team’s discussions about developing and sustaining a framework for effective governance and contains highlights of their conversations about unity of purpose, roles, norms and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best serves all students.

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# Building a Governance Team

## Unity of Purpose

*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: maintain a unity of purpose, agree on and govern within appropriate roles, create and sustain a positive governance culture and create a supportive structure for effective governance.

### What we are most proud of about our District...

- The authentic pride people have of our community and schools. The schools and community meld together.
- The sense of community over generations – the long history
- The commitment from staff, families and community
- The co-location of our sites creates a small family atmosphere

### What do we want to accomplish as a governance team? What do we stand for?

- We want to oversee the continued improvement and excellence of our programs and facilities – never resting on our laurels.
- Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students.
- We want to build trust and move the District forward.
- We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities; we want to be partners with the staff in positive change.
- We want to be an effective team with a cohesive direction so that we are not a distraction to the District or community but instead a catalyst for the employees and their focused efforts.
- We want to perpetuate our legacy of pride and a positive culture.

## **MISSION**

Offering superior customer service, exemplary instruction, powerful educational programs in exceptional school environments, Denair Unified School District seeks to be the first and best public school choice in Stanislaus County for those seeking a small school setting.

## **PREAMBLE**

### **CODE OF ETHICS OF THE EDUCATION PROFESSION**

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurturing of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

The educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the members of the community provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct. The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession indicates the aspiration of all educators and provides standards by which to judge conduct.

## **GUIDING BELIEFS and PRINCIPLES**

***Belief 1: Educating youth is the centerpiece of our business. The process of education is dynamic, multi-dimensional, organized and transformative for all students.***

Teaching and learning is a living, multifaceted activity that encompasses the WHOLE CHILD. By instructing through the *cognitive, affective* and *psychomotor* domains, students are best able to learn, perform, achieve and motivate. The process of education increasingly reveals and uses knowledge, skill and performance. Education changes lives through the continuous increased discovery and use of human potential.

### **~PRINCIPLES~**

#### ***Teaching and Learning:***

Is Interactive and Dynamic

Invites creativity, curiosity and inquiry

Is a balance of collaborative and individual activities

Imbeds critical thinking, problem solving and performance

Uses proven research-based practices

Is planned and uses a Lesson Mastery approach

Targets the whole child.

*Curriculum:*  
Based on State Standards  
Driven by relevancy and future readiness  
Uses technology and other world class tools  
Employs multiple materials, approaches, activities and performance  
Includes World Languages and the Visual and Performing Arts  
Cultivates leadership, democratic participation, self-actualization

***Belief 2: Education is a service sector industry and a PEOPLE business.***

We believe that high quality relationships set the stage for high quality outcomes, and that excellence in service requires loyalty to educational purpose, superior communication, strong interpersonal relations, and a commitment to continuous improvement and advancement.

~PRINCIPLES~

*Employees are role models for students*  
*Students are viewed and treated as part of the “Denair family”*  
*Staff is highly trained and eminently qualified for job assignment(s)*  
*Human worth and dignity are inherent in all interaction and pursuits*  
*Partnership with parents/guardians and community is integral in our operations*  
*Real-time, full communication occurs within and across the organization, and to all stakeholders*  
*We develop the fullest potential of all students in the context of democratic principles and ideals.*

***Belief 3: Optimal environment(s) are secured for teaching, learning and performance.***

Attractive, safe facilities and the timely, efficient use of ready resources lend to the highest levels of pride and performance.

~PRINCIPLES~

Safety and security first  
Clean, well-maintained facilities  
Inventory of necessary materials and tools  
Positive classroom and work environments  
Exemplary expectations within and across the District  
Excellent classroom management and work schedule management  
Manage resources (time, money, materials and people) according to beliefs, principles and priorities

## **Board of Trustees – Shared Values**

Shared Values are those beliefs that are central to the mission of our District. They are stable and all members of our District rely on them for guidance and decision-making. They are used to help our District achieve its vision and mission.

### **Responsibility**

- Establish a sense of shared responsibility
- Balance the needs of students, employees and operational requirements.
- Define and pursue common vision with common sense.
- Ensure shared accountability for and ownership of agreements made.

### **Respect**

- Promote positive professional relationships.
- Honor bargaining units and employees consistent with our strategic plan to serve our students.
- Listen to and consider ideas based on their merit in a fair and honest process.

### **Commitment**

- Establish priorities and follow through strategies aligned with our mission and vision.
- Demonstrate positive, supportive commitment to our District's shared vision and values.
- Work collaboratively at all times to solve problems.
- Hold to a commitment that will inform, educate and support the shared values of our District.

### **Honesty and Trustworthiness**

- Share accurate, timely verbal and written communications.
- Establish mutual trust with all stakeholders based on openness, consistency and reliability.
- Build trust in an honest and straightforward manner founded on our shared values.
- Emphasize actions that are fair and equitable as we work together.

### **Caring and Compassion**

- Display mutual respect and support of others.
- Respond unselfishly to the needs of others and treat others with kindness, concern and generosity.
- Value similarities and differences of others.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## *Mutual agreement on the roles of the Board and Superintendent*

The role of Trustees is to stay focused on the big picture while fulfilling five responsibilities in a series of job areas. These five responsibilities are:

1. We set the direction.
2. We establish the structure.
3. We provide support.
4. We ensure accountability.
5. We act as community leaders.

We carry out these responsibilities in each of the following job areas:

- Setting the District's Direction
- Student Learning and Achievement
- Finance
- Facilities
- Human Resources
- Policy
- Judicial Review
- Collective Bargaining
- Community Relations and Advocacy

The Superintendent assists the Board in carrying out its responsibilities in each of the job areas, and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed upon District vision and goals.

## GAINING CLARITY ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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### The Role of the Board and Superintendent - CSBA:

School board “trustees” are the representatives of the people, elected to ensure the district schools educate the children in consideration of the interests of the local community. The role of the School Board is to govern the school district.

The superintendent is hired by the school board to provide the professional expertise in the day-to-day operations of the district. The role of the Superintendent is:

1. To work with the school board to develop an effective governance leadership team.
2. To serve as the chief administrative officer for the school district.

### Performing Board Responsibilities - CSBA:

#### **We Set the Direction for the Community’s Schools by:**

- Focusing on student learning.
- Assessing district needs.
- Generating, reviewing and revising setting direction documents: (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)
- Ensuring an appropriate inclusive process is used to develop these documents.
- Ensuring that these documents are the driving force for all district efforts.

#### **We establish an effective and efficient Structure for the school district by:**

- Employing the superintendent.
- Setting policy for hiring of other personnel.
- Setting policies.
- Setting direction for and adopting the curriculum.
- Establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget.
- Overseeing facilities issues.
- Providing direction for and voting to accept collective bargaining agreements.

#### **We Provide Support through our behavior and actions by:**

- Acting with a professional demeanor that models the district’s beliefs and vision.
- Making decisions and providing resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals.
- Upholding board approved district policies.
- Ensuring a positive personnel climate exists.
- Being knowledgeable about district efforts and able to explain them to the public.



**We Ensure Accountability to the Public by:**

- Evaluating the superintendent
- Monitoring, reviewing and revising policies
- Serving as a judicial and appeals body
- Monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness and requiring program changes as indicated
- Monitoring and adjusting district finances
- Reviewing facilities issues
- Monitoring the collective bargaining process

**We Act as Community Leaders by:**

- Speaking with a common voice about district priorities, goals and issues.
- Engaging and involving the community in district schools and activities.
- Communicating clear information about policies, programs and fiscal conditions of the district.
- Educating the community and the media about issues facing the district and public education.
- Advocating for children, district programs and public education to the general public, community, and local, state and national leaders.

**What the Board needs from the Superintendent:**

**The superintendent will support trustees in fulfilling their responsibilities by:**

- Having confidence and trust in the Board
- Providing us with information regarding campuses and staff
- Providing information and data on complex issues, such as the budget. Providing that information in ways that are meaningful to each of us, such as a budget dashboard.
- Operating with transparency
- Really listening and adapting the information provided to meet our needs
- Continuing to have individual meetings with each Board Member
- Sharing information and answers to questions with all
- Continuing to provide “real time” information but also providing a brief update at quiet times
- Providing information on a Google calendar
- Providing information earlier when the information is extensive

## What the Superintendent needs from the Board:

### **The trustees will support the superintendent in fulfilling his responsibilities by:**

- Providing him with information and insights about community views
- Remembering that suggestions are different than directions and being clear on our intent
- Remembering that direction can only be given to the Superintendent at Board Meetings
- Allowing him the freedom to achieve our Mission, Vision and Goals and monitoring the district's progress.
- Displaying confidence and trust in him
- Sharing perceptions from site visits
- Being conscious of his time
- Participating in individual meetings with the Superintendent

## What the Board Members need from each other:

### **The trustees can support each other in fulfilling their responsibilities by:**

- Listening and really hearing what others have to say – their ideas
- Having patience
- Displaying transparency – admitting when we have an agenda and sharing it openly
- Having confidence and trust in each other
- Respecting each other's opinions
- Being prepared
- Leaning on each other's expertise

# Creating and Sustaining a Positive Governance Team Culture

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

## Governance Norms

*In addition to meeting the norms below in order to create a positive culture and atmosphere, we agree to act in ways that will help us meet the CSBA Professional Governance Standards.*

### **WE BELIVE THAT A STRONG GOVERNANCE TEAM IS ONE THAT...**

- Works cooperatively toward consensus decisions
- Congeals to achieve a common vision and accompanying goals
- Shares a common goal and invests the time to achieve that goal
- Brings different ideas and approaches to achieve a common goal
- Understands the art of compromise in debate
- Brings diverse knowledge and backgrounds together to guide an entity
- Keeps the best interest of the kids at all times – **The kids win!**

### **THEREFORE, WE AGREE TO –**

- Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, respected).
- To show respect (never dismiss/devalue others).
- Make a commitment to effective deliberation, each listening openly while everyone is allowed to express his or her point of view.
- Make a commitment to open communication, honesty, no surprises.
- Commit 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 (this is the way we operate)!
- Maintain confidentiality (builds trust).

- Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.

**AND – ABOVE ALL –**

- Focus on students' best interest – on what's best for the students! This is what we do! And it is the touchstone that allows us to have our differences.

*To this end, we have adopted the following meeting guidelines:*

### **Meeting Guidelines**

- We will keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- We will stay focused on our goals and avoid getting sidetracked.
- We will listen actively to all ideas, **not** listen to reply.
- When we have a difference of opinion, we will debate the facts of the situation.
- Each member will take responsibility for the work of the team. We will each be responsible for the success of the meeting, participate equally and address concerns.
- We will be supportive rather than judgmental.
- We will work toward the future – learning from the past.

# Board Governance Protocols

## Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

The only authority to direct actions rests with the quorum of the Board sitting at the Board table. A majority vote sets such direction. Individuals can 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. When a majority of the Board, sitting in a formal meeting, requests action, that request should be made in the context of the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.

As a Board, we recognize that no individual member of the Board, by virtue of holding office, shall exercise any administrative or investigatory responsibility with respect to the schools; nor as an individual, command the services of any employee. Board Members are to channel their requests and/or concerns directly to the Superintendent (and, if necessary, through the Board President).

Board Policies (BB 9000 and 9200) of the District relate to the role and responsibilities of the Board collectively and Board Members individually.

## Responding to Concerns

In responding to concerns regarding the work of the District, Board Members will:

- ❖ *Receive* the information (listen), unless the issue is one that might come before the Board in its Judiciary role.
- ❖ *Repeat* the information – paraphrase to ensure understanding, when it is appropriate to listen to the concern.
- ❖ *Remind* the individual that a Board Member has no authority as an individual and share the appropriate line of command and process to follow in addressing their concern.
- ❖ *Re-Direct* – Thank them for sharing their thoughts and direct them to the appropriate staff member.
- ❖ *Report* – At the earliest possible time, inform the Superintendent.

When interacting with the public, Board Members will hold to the highest level of professional conduct, including emphasizing the positive aspects of the District.

## **The Board's Role and Relationship with the Staff and Community**

When individually visiting schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, Board Members are encouraged to notify the Superintendent that they will be visiting a school or department, and may provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.

Board Members will direct all requests for information to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will distribute the information to all Board Members.

This protocol does not imply a censoring of any private and informal conversations.

## **Board Meetings and the Agenda**

A Board meeting is held in public, but is not the public's meeting (e.g., open-forum town hall meeting).

Meetings will be conducted in such a way as to allow the public to provide input in the time allotted to ensure that multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations; however, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Board to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public.

Regular Board meetings will be on the second Thursday of each month. Normally, each Board meeting will begin with Closed Session at 5:30 pm. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 7:00 pm. Study Sessions are scheduled for the fourth Thursday of each month and shall be held at the discretion of the Board.

The design of the Board agenda will follow the historical structure utilized by the Board. The design of the agenda may only be altered with the approval of the Board.

The Superintendent, with the support of staff, will create each Board Agenda. In preparation of the agenda, Board Members may request items to be placed on the agenda.

The Board President, Clerk and the Superintendent will, on the prior Wednesday, review the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting and make appropriate revisions.

## **Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)**

The Governing Board recognizes the importance of developing a system of internal control procedures in order to help fulfill its obligation to monitor and safeguard district resources and to ensure that invoices are paid expeditiously. The warrant process protocol is as follows:

Step 1 – Once a week, the Board shall receive, via email, each warrant register.

Step 2 - Each Board Member shall review the warrant register, within 72 hours of receipt.

Step 3 - Each Board Member shall communicate, via email, to the Superintendent the warrants that are of concern.

Board Members will make every effort to submit, prior to the meeting, questions they intend to ask so that the Superintendent and district staff have the opportunity to prepare to answer Board Members' questions at Board meetings. When an individual Board Member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board Members. If unforeseen questions arise during the meeting, Trustees will acknowledge their question or comment as spontaneous and that they understand that staff may not have the information on hand to answer the question.

Individual Board Members are expected to self-monitor compliance to the Brown Act, including limiting Closed Session to the agenda item(s). Board Members need equal access to information, and to operate within the Brown Act. The use of email communication is subject to the Brown Act. The Superintendent shall forward questions and answers to all Board Members. Board Members, when responding, shall not "reply to all."

Board Members will read the information provided to them and commit to ongoing professional development and training.

Each trustee has the obligation, in serving the community, to vote on each item presented to the Board.

## **Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)**

The governance team will strive for brevity in deliberations, keeping remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed and meetings can be efficient. Addressing each agenda item the Board shall, normally, adhere to the following process:

- ❖ Staff Presentation/addressing questions from the Board
- ❖ Input from the Community
- ❖ Board Discussion and Deliberation

Each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote in the minority position. If requested by a fellow team member, each trustee agrees, as a courtesy to the team, to explain the reason for their vote, either during deliberation or before casting the vote.

To model the behavior of being polite and professional at Board meetings, the governance team should address one another by their last name and appropriate prefix/title.

Recognizing that the Community elects leaders to serve as Board Members, it is assumed that each Board Member has the ability to serve as Board President. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the protocol to be used to elect the officers of the Board will follow a seniority rotation into the leadership roles of the Board. Seniority is determined by the year in which an individual is elected or appointed. If multiple new members are elected in the same year, then lots shall be drawn to establish seniority. Due to personal circumstance (e.g., medical reasons), a Board Member who is next in line to serve as Clerk or President, may elect not to rotate into the Clerk/President position at an organizational meeting. If this occurs, (due to medical reasons) the member would remain in the order of succession with future first right of refusal.

The protocol for recording the votes of the individual Board Members shall follow the rotation order established in the election of officers, with the first vote recorded being that of the Past President and the last vote would be that of the President of the Board.

The Board wishes to maintain a culture of professionalism, stay focused, and respect the need of trustees to be available to their families:

- Cell phones will be set for 'silent' or vibrate.
- Trustees will be discreet in checking cell phones if necessary.



## **The Board's Role in Collective Bargaining**

Board Members will be actively involved in the collective bargaining process to ensure that the District is represented well by those selected to negotiate on behalf of the Board and the Community. The involvement of the Board will be to:

- ❖ Ensure that the ethical, fiscal and educational goals of the Community are represented in the actions taken throughout the collective bargaining process;
- ❖ Participate by providing direction and guidance to those selected to represent the Board (District Negotiation Team). Board Members do not attend at-the-table negotiations.
- ❖ Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiation team;
- ❖ Set the District's collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team;
- ❖ Expect, as the representative of the Board, that the Superintendent will ensure that the Board, collectively and individually, is informed on the issues and strategies implemented within the collective bargaining process.
- ❖ The Superintendent is the Collective Bargaining Spokesperson for the Board.

## **The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent**

The Board will commit to work through and with the Superintendent on issues regarding the running of the District. The Superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible of:

- ✓ serious safety concerns
- ✓ serious disciplinary action
- ✓ serious / unexpected personnel changes or disciplinary issues
- ✓ serious illness or death of a student, a staff member or members of the staff member's immediate family
- ✓ legal or liability concerns
- ✓ notable achievements

In all matters, the Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information.

It is the Superintendent's responsibility to organize the staff in the manner that best serves the needs of the District. As a professional courtesy, the Superintendent shall provide appropriate notice to the Board in advance of action being taken.

As the norm, the Superintendent speaks on behalf of the Board. The Board President is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

The Superintendent will inform the Board when media contacts the Superintendent.

### **The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent (continued)**

All conflicts between the Superintendent and the Board will be handled in Closed Session, with the Superintendent being in attendance, when appropriate and necessary.

Conflicts between individual governance team members (including the Superintendent) will be addressed privately between those who hold the conflict and will not involve other members of the team.

The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the Superintendent. The Board will set aside at least one special meeting in January for the purpose of completing the annual evaluation of the Superintendent. Normally, in consultation with the Superintendent, the evaluation process and associated documents will be developed and approved by the Board, not later than the first Board meeting in March. The evaluation process and instrument is designed to bring about the collective view of the Board. Thus, the evaluation will reflect the majority view of the Board, as a whole.

### **The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols**

Within 90 days of the election/appointment of a new Board Member or appointment of a new Superintendent, a Study Session of the whole Board will be held for the purpose of reviewing/updating the governance protocols of the Board.

Upon the request of two or more Board Members, a special study session will be called for the purpose of reviewing/updating of the governance protocols of the Board.

We have reviewed and agree to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Denair Unified School District Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement annually.

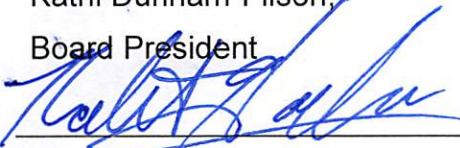
Affirmed on this 9<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2017



Kathi Dunham-Filson,  
Board President



Ray Prock Jr., Clerk



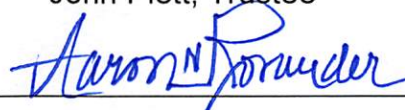
Robert Hodges, Trustee



John Plett, Trustee



Sandi Dirkse, Trustee



Aaron Rosander, Superintendent