



Downey Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees

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Dr. Roger Brossmer

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Unity of Purpose, Roles, Responsibilities, Norms and Protocols

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

On March 7, 2026, Downey Unified School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent participated in a workshop on Effective Governance with the California School Boards Association. This document reflects the governance team's discussion about developing and sustaining a framework for effective governance and includes highlights of their conversation 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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SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

Locally elected School Board members provide citizen oversight of the community's schools and protect the public's interest in preserving an accessible and equitable public education system in the United States.

School boards ensure success for all students by making decisions that fulfill legal mandates and align district systems and resources to ensure the long-term fiscal stability of the district.

Boards must act collectively and openly, be guided by community interests, and informed by recommendations of the superintendent and professional staff.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of purpose is the common focus, overarching goals, and the core values, beliefs and principles governing body members share in common about children, the district and public education.

Our Vision

All students graduate with a 21st Century education that ensures they are college and career ready, globally competitive and citizens of strong character.

Our Mission

Downey Unified School District is committed to developing all students to be self-motivated learners and productive, responsible, and compassionate members of an ever-changing global society. Our highly qualified staff foster meaningful relationships with students, parents, and the community while providing a relevant and rigorous curriculum in facilities that advance teaching and learning.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

What We Hope to Accomplish:

- Continuous growth in programs, test scores, and achievement.
- Under our stewardship our students will be able to achieve this continuous Growth in all areas and reach their full potential.
Create policies to support our Superintendent to maintain enrollment stability, increase student performance and become actively engaged

- citizens.
- Work as a respectful team moving the district forward to meet our increased graduation requirements and lifting all students up.
- Continue to attract students to this district.
- Do everything possible in the educational program to prevent our becoming a declining enrollment district.
- Stay financially solvent and meet student and staff needs.
- For Downey Unified to become the “Go-To” district in Southern California for students, staff, and the community.

GAINING CLARITY ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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 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 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.

Downey Unified School District Governance Team

AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

Governance Team Norms and Protocols:

The Board of Education for the Downey Unified School District is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public's interest in the schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. To effectively meet district challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Agreed upon behaviors or norms, and operating procedures or protocols, support consistent behavior and actions among team members. The purpose of the Downey USD governance team agreements is to ensure that a positive and productive working relationship exists among board members, the superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. Norms and protocols are developed for and by the members of the governance team and may be modified over time as needed.

Our Agreements to Facilitate Governance Leadership:

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 all work to make sure there are no hidden agendas and that all issues and concerns can be dealt with openly by all members.
- We will listen actively to all ideas; listen openly without preparing a response.
- When we have a difference of opinion, we will debate the facts of the situation and avoid addressing personalities. We will address process -- not personalities.
- We will respect differences, show respect, and never dismiss or devalue others.
- All team members will offer their ideas, responses, and resources.
- 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 never be a, “Used to Be” district as to education, salaries, and benefits.
- We are better together as a family.
- We will work toward the future, while respecting what we have learned from the past.

Protocols STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

Effective governance teams discuss and agree upon the formal structures and processes, or protocols, used by the board and superintendent in their functioning as a team. These structures and processes guide the operations of the governance team and determine how they do business. Protocols are the agreements that ensure that all members of the team are operating within their agreed upon roles.

The Board and Superintendent will:

- Be dedicated to making all other members of the team successful.
- Operate in an honorable and honest manner dedicated to the success of the students and staff of the district.
- Be treated with dignity and respect.
- Will establish annual priorities and goals to guide district work and align with Superintendent evaluation.

Board Members will:

- Work with members of the Board and the Superintendent to become a governing board devoted to students.
- Focus on policymaking, planning, and evaluation for student success.
- Recognize that the Board makes decisions as a whole only at properly scheduled meetings and that individual members have no authority to take individual action in policy or District and campus administrative matters.
- Respect and honor the right of individual members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions.
- Attend regularly scheduled Board meetings unless a situation occurs that makes attendance impossible.
- Cooperate in scheduling Special meetings and/or work sessions for planning and training purposes.
- Acknowledge that two Board Members must agree before an item is placed on a meeting agenda. The Board President also has the ability to add items to the agenda. Individual requests for reports, projects, etc., will be directed only to the Superintendent.
- Receive items for study session prior to action. Advance notice (approximately one week when possible) will be provided. Agendas will be shared in advance to support preparation.
- Study sessions will be used for in-depth discussion prior to Board action and will include staff presentations and Board discussion, with materials provided in advance.
- Uphold the legal requirement for confidentiality on all matters arising from Board Meeting closed sessions; we will keep all conversations taking place in closed session absolutely confidential.
- Confidential materials will be clearly identified. Closed session discussions remain confidential, and non-confidential materials may still require appropriate public records processes prior to broader distribution.
- Recognize and respect the Superintendent's responsibility to manage the District and to direct employees in District and campus matters.
- Understand the Superintendent's role to make personnel recommendations and changes in consultation with the Board.
- Participate in establishing annual expectations and goals for the Superintendent.
- Objectively evaluate the Superintendent's performance and provide appropriate feedback.
- Participate in self-assessment of the Board's performance.
- Communicate directly with the Superintendent when staff, students, parents, or community members raise a question or concern.
- Communicate directly with the Superintendent prior to Board Meetings to address questions and/or concerns about agenda items; honor the "no surprises" rule.
- Communicate one-on-one with the Superintendent when an individual concern arises and will not allow a matter to fester.
- Cast a vote on all matters except when a conflict of interest arises.
- Recognize the individual role of constituents and special interest groups while understanding the importance of using one's best judgment to represent members of the community.

- As time permits, visit school sites and attend school functions, but avoid interrupting instruction or interrupting employees at work.
- Represent the District, when possible, by attending community functions.

TOPIC:

PROTOCOL:

**Responding to
Staff or
Community
Concerns or
Complaints**

Rationale:

-We care about our constituents' concerns and want to hear them, but we recognize that individual Board Members do not have the authority to resolve issues and complaints, as stated in BB 9200, *Limits of Board Member Authority*.

-We all want to speak with one voice and set consistent expectations.

-We want to steer people in the right direction so that their issues can be addressed in the most efficient manner possible.

- We want to avoid legal issues.

Therefore, when a Board Member is approached by a community or staff member with an issue or concern, he/she will:

- **Receive** – Listen empathetically without interruption and without preparing a response to the person's issues or concerns, unless it is an issue that may come before us in our judicial role - that information will be shared with the entire Board at the appropriate place and time - during the hearing.
- **Repeat** – If it is appropriate for us to listen to the concern, we will paraphrase or ask a clarifying question to ensure understanding of what has been said.
- **Redirect** – Direct the person back into the system at the appropriate place, to the Superintendent or his designee.
- **Report** - Notify the Superintendent of the conversation so that he has the full picture and can follow through as appropriate.

Concerns and complaints should be addressed at the lowest appropriate level. Board Members will encourage individuals to work through appropriate site or department channels. Forwarding a concern does not indicate endorsement, and the Superintendent or designee will follow up to close the loop.

Site Visits and District/School Events

Rationale:

- Site Visits help Board members stay informed about district programs and the condition of school facilities.
- It is important to create boundaries for Board Members and the sites so as not to disrupt instruction or undermine principals.
- Site visits have a positive effect on staff and community morale.
- Consistency of behavior and expectations is important.

Therefore, when a Board Member wishes to visit a school, he/she will:

- Schedule the visit with the site principal.
- Notify the Superintendent's office about the scheduled visit.
- Limit the number of Board Members attending any visit to no more than three to avoid Brown Act issues.
- Wear their badges during school hours.
- Check in with and be escorted by the site principal.
- Limit the length of the visit to 90 minutes to two hours.

Attending Events: Board Members are encouraged to attend as many school/district events as their schedules allow and inform the principal if they intend to attend an Open House.

Attendance at events should be coordinated, when appropriate, through the Superintendent's Office. Board Members will notify site administrators, follow site protocols, and may be acknowledged when appropriate.

Superintendent Protocols

Superintendent will:

- Work toward creating a team with the Board dedicated to students.
- Respect and acknowledge the Board's role in setting policy and overseeing the performance of the Superintendent.
- Work with the Board to establish a clear vision for the District.
- Prepare preliminary goals annually for the Board's consideration.
- Provide data to the Board Members so data-driven decisions can be made.
- Have a working knowledge of all legal and local policies.
- Make personnel recommendations and changes in consultation with the Board.
- Inform the Board prior to critical information becoming public.
- Distribute information fully and equally to all Board Members.
- Communicate with Board Members promptly and effectively.

- Distribute the Board Agenda in a timely fashion and with enough time for the Board to study and clarify information prior to scheduled meetings.
- Respect the confidentiality requirement of Board Meeting closed sessions; keep all conversations taking place in closed session strictly confidential.
- Treat all Board Members professionally.
- Communicate with individual Board Members to determine if concerns exist prior to a possible problem developing.
- Provide regular updates, including district developments and relevant educational issues.
- Conduct a self-assessment prior to the Board's evaluation of the Superintendent's job performance.
- Bring to the attention of the Board matters that affect relationships.
- Visit school campuses regularly.
- Represent the District by being visible in the community.

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

Affirmed on this _____ day of _____, 2026.

Jose J. Rodriguez, Board President

D. Mark Morris, Vice President

Tyrone Conde, Clerk

Joseph E. Manacmul, Trustee

Giovanna Perez-Saab, Trustee

Linda Salomon Saldaña, Trustee

Nancy A. Swenson, Trustee

Dr. Roger Brossmer, Superintendent