



Mother Lode Union Elementary School District

Draft Governance Handbook

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Board of Trustees

Gene Bist Sr., Trustee
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Superintendent

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EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Unity of Purpose, Roles, Responsibilities, Norms and Protocols

The Mother Lode Union Elementary School District Governance Handbook is a summary of the ongoing governance team's work on effective governance. This process involves discussions and reaching agreements on shared leadership, roles, and operating protocols that enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities to the community.

Annually the team reviews and updates this Governance Handbook.

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UNITY OF PURPOSE

Mission

The Mission of the Mother Lode Union School District is the successful education of every student.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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 management 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.

The Board of Trustees:

Sets 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.

Establishes 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.

Provides 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.

Ensures 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

Acts 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.

The Board of Trustees believes that its primary responsibility is to act in the best interests of every student in the district. The Board also has major commitments to parents/guardians, all members of the community, employees, the state of California, laws pertaining to public education, and established policies of the district. To maximize Board effectiveness and public confidence in district governance, Board members are expected to govern responsibly and hold themselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The Board expects its members to work with each other and the Superintendent to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. Each individual Board member shall:

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus
2. Value, support and advocate for public education
3. Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community
4. Act with dignity, and understand the implications of demeanor and behavior
5. Keep confidential matters confidential
6. Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader
7. Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff
8. Understand that authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individuals

Board members also shall assume collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture. To operate effectively, the Board shall have a unity of purpose and:

1. Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students
2. Communicate a common vision
3. Operate openly, with trust and integrity
4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect
5. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures
6. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance
7. Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness
8. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations

Meeting Norms

We will:

- ☐ Be on time for meetings
- ☐ Come to meetings prepared to participate
- ☐ Model expected behaviors
- ☐ Ensure that all members have the same information
- ☐ Acknowledge all opinions in a positive manner
- ☐ Practice open and honest communication
- ☐ Accept differences in experience, culture, and value priorities
- ☐ Give and receive constructive feedback civilly
- ☐ Allow others to speak without interruption
- ☐ Listen attentively
- ☐ Have no side conversations (including text messages)
- ☐ Stay focused on our goals and student achievement
- ☐ Go the extra mile to support each other in our work
- ☐ Maintain flexibility in difficult situations
- ☐ Project unity in public
- ☐ Respect others' time (to the extent possible ask questions beforehand)

PROTOCOLS & PROCESSES

Our Governance Team's Agreement on How We Will Handle Various Issues Mother Lode Union School District

Board Members will act at all times in full compliance of the Brown Act. The Brown Act protects the rights of the community and stakeholders to be informed about Board decisions and the reasoning behind those decisions. The Board is encouraged to speak openly, offer opinions, ask questions and recommend new ideas on specific agenda items during designated discussion times at Board Meetings.

1. Visiting Schools

School visits are encouraged. Board Members, when functioning in the capacity as a Board Member will notify the Superintendent and principal when planning a visit to a school site. While on campuses, Board Members will also be cautious about encroaching on the learning environment.

The board understands that periodic visitations to the school site is a valuable tool in understanding the culture of the school and increasing board member visibility. Such visits are for the purpose of becoming acquainted with school programs, personnel, operation, and facilities. Board members shall not go into teachers' classrooms or campuses for the purpose of evaluation or investigation. Board members will not give directions, or make suggestions to personnel during their visit.

Trustees wishing to visit a school site will inform the superintendent in order to arrange a date and time for the visit. The superintendent will accompany the trustee when visiting classrooms and departments.

When visiting with teachers of their own children, board members will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than board members.

2. Attendance at District Events and Functions

Our Governance Team wishes to maintain high visibility and to show our support for schools and District programs. We will attend District functions whenever possible. We understand that time constraints may prohibit members from attending all events. Those attending the event will represent the Governance Team. We recognize that we are showing our support of the schools by our attendance and do not expect nor require special attention.

3. Handling Concerns and Complaints From the Public and Staff

When someone complains to us, we will listen carefully, remembering that we are hearing only one side of an issue. We will direct the person to the staff member most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern. We will make sure that they understand the appropriate order of whom to contact (Teacher, then Principal, then District Staff) and are aware of any formal policies that might assist them, including Williams Uniform Complaint Procedures and Complaint Form. This will ensure that everyone is treated fairly, equally, and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the District are upheld. We understand that as individuals we have no authority to fix a problem. As representatives of

the public, it is important that we invite the person with the concern to ultimately get back to us if the issue is not resolved. Individual Board Members will not speak on behalf of the Board, but clarify that the views are those of the individual Board Member.

While Board members may listen to complaints from staff or community members regarding policies or procedures; members must be careful not to usurp the chain of command. Staff complainants are encouraged to discuss the matter with the superintendent, their supervisor, or union representative. Community complainants are encouraged to discuss the matter with the superintendent.

However, with regard to the Board's Court of Appeals role, board members will **not listen** or respond to complaints against personnel.

4. Board Meeting Management

We understand and agree that the Board Meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings. We will keep this in mind as we conduct our meetings, allowing the public to provide input at the time allotted to ensure multiple voices of the community to be heard. We will consistently abide by our formal agreements and protocols in relation to this issue so that persons are treated fairly and equally.

Board meetings are held in public, not with the public. Debate should only occur between board members. The Board will not respond to questions or statements made by members of the audience. Only the chair will respond to public comment during the meeting and only if warranted.

The public may participate in regular board meetings only during the public input agenda items required by The Brown Act. The board may hold special meetings on occasion to allow a more free-flowing discussion.

The President may read the following statement prior to community input:

"The Board values constructive community comments and suggestions and welcomes your participation in the democratic process. Board action may not legally be taken on any item not specifically listed on our agenda. Testimony is not protected from damage claims for libel. Public charges or allegations may result in legal action being brought by those individuals."

The president may call a short recess at any time to calm a potentially contentious issue during a board meeting. Additionally, any board member may offer a recess motion.

5. Access and Requests for Information

When a Board Member has a request for information, our agreed upon process will be to go first to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will then work cooperatively with our staff to provide all Board Members with the information.

6. Individual Board Member Requests For Information

When an individual Board Member requests information, it will be provided to all Board Members. An individual Board Member will – insofar as possible – work to let the

Superintendent and staff know ahead of time when a request will be made in public. This will allow the staff member to be prepared to answer any questions or to prepare materials. We will self-monitor our own requests to ensure that one member's requests will not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. We recognize the concept of "Nice to Know" vs. "Need to Know" in information and will seek information only needed for effective decision making.

Any individual Board member who desires a copy of an existing written report or survey prepared by the administrative staff will make such a request to the superintendent. A copy of the material may be made available to each member of the Board.

Requests for the generation of reports or information which require additional expense to the district must be submitted to the Board for consideration.

7. Individual Board Member Request for Action

A majority vote of the Board of Trustees sets the direction. The only authority to direct action rests with the Board when seated at a regular or special meeting of the Governance Team. Individual Board Members can request action by bringing up a new idea, explaining their interest and working at a meeting to gain the majority support to approve the action. It is the intent of the requisition for action; to be done in the context of intended results, not dictating the methods used to achieve those results.

8. Verbal Communication

Communication and an open exchange of ideas are important to our Governance Team. We accept responsibility as a team and as individuals, to share news and information with all segments of our community and school groups. We will strive to present honest and full disclosure of all financial and educational data.

9. Written Correspondence

The Governance Team recognizes that electronic and other written correspondence is an effective and convenient way to communicate among Board Members and between Board Members, District Administration, and Members of the Public. Members of the Governance Team shall exercise caution so as to ensure that electronic communications are not used as a means to deliberate outside of an agendaized Board Meeting. Typically, individual Board Members will refrain from responding to e-mail communication. If an individual Board Member chooses to respond to written correspondence received from a member of the community, their communication shall clearly state that their response does not necessarily reflect the views of the Board as a whole. Any complaint or request for information received by the Governance Team will be addressed by the Superintendent through the appropriate District process. Like other writings concerning District business, a Board Member's electronic communication may be subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

10. No Surprises

It is the responsibility of the Superintendent to inform the Board immediately of any information crucial to the well-being of the students, school or school District. In the event of an emergency situation involving the health or welfare of our students or staff,

disciplinary actions toward an employee, or other emergency situations, the Superintendent will work to keep the Board informed in a timely manner. It is also the responsibility of the Board to share with the Superintendent the same crucial information. In working as a Governance Team, it is important that whenever possible, Board Members communicate issues and concerns openly with the Superintendent prior to a public meeting. The Governance Team should work toward a professional manner and a standard of “No Surprises” or “Got Ya’s” during the Board Meetings.

11. Voting Protocol

Each Trustee recognizes and respects the right of the other Trustees to vote “no” on an issue or to abstain from voting. We agree that as a courtesy, we will explain our reason for the “no” vote or abstention either during deliberations or before casting the vote.

12. Confidentiality

The responsibility of our Governance Team includes being privy to closed sessions or confidential information about District litigation, personnel, negotiations, Superintendent Evaluation, or other issues permitted under the Brown Act. We will work to maintain the public’s trust by not breaching this confidentiality. We understand that to violate this confidentiality would be to commit a misdemeanor. If we inadvertently or accidentally violate a confidential issue, we will take immediate responsibility for our action.

13. Superintendent Evaluation

We recognize the value and importance of a comprehensive and formal evaluation processes for the Superintendent. Established goals, objectives and overall performance will be evaluated annually. The Board will ask questions and request feedback regarding the Superintendent’s progress throughout the year. Work well done will be acknowledged appropriately. We agree to abide by all contract terms.

14. Orientation of New Members

Immediately following the certification of public election or appointment of the Board, new members will be seated following the oath of office. As soon as possible, the Board President or Board Designee will schedule an orientation session for the new members.

The orientation session will include but not be limited to:

- Review of Governance Handbook protocols and agreements
- Review regular Board Meeting dates for the school year and the Board agreement to try to keep the Fourth Wednesday evening of each month available for possible Study Sessions and/or Special Session Meetings
- Review of Board agenda process and procedures
- Review of 9000 series of Board Bylaws
- Review of the Brown Act and discussion of confidentiality
- Review of ACSA/CSBA Professional Standards and job description for the Superintendent as they relate to accountability of Superintendent to Board
- Review contract provisions and evaluations and evaluation procedures
- Discuss critical issues and any pending litigation
- Discuss responsibility of Board to monitor fiscal matters

- Review of Board calendar

15. Self-Monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness

We may schedule and participate in at least one workshop every year to review Governance Team agreements and processes and to participate in a self-evaluation process. Board will select a regular time to do this and put it on their calendar.

16. Personal Problem Solving

If a member of the Governance Team hears disturbing information that has supposedly come from another member of the Governance Team, we will act immediately to identify the issue and address the concern with the person or persons involved. We take it to the source of the issue for resolution. We recognize that insinuation and rumors can be false and may damage relationships.

17. Personal or Preferential Treatment

We do not seek or accept any special or favored treatment for our children, family or friends. We expect equal and respectful treatment of all people. We will model this behavior at all times.

18. Board Appointed Committees

The Governing Board may establish Board Committees as necessary. The Board shall determine the duties of the committee at the time of its appointment. Unless specifically authorized by the Board to act on its behalf, Board Committees shall act in an advisory capacity. When its duties have been completed, the committee shall be dissolved. Board Committees shall provide notice of their meetings and conduct their meetings in accordance with the Brown Act. When a majority of the members of the Board attend an open and noticed meeting of a standing committee, the Board Members who are not members of the standing committee shall attend only as observers.

19. Citizen Advisory Committees

When the majority of the Board deems it necessary, A Citizens Advisory Committee may be formed. The purpose of any such committees shall be defined and aligned to the District's vision and goals. The committee shall serve in a strictly advisory capacity; they may make recommendations but their actions shall not be binding on the Board. The membership of Citizen Advisory Committees should represent the diversity of the community and a diversity of viewpoints. Training and information shall be provided as necessary to enable Committee Members to understand the basic administrative structure, program processes, and goals of the Committee.

20. Board Study Sessions

To assist the Governance Team in making informed decisions and staying knowledgeable of current District issues, our Governance Team will periodically schedule Board Study Sessions. When possible, Board Study Sessions will be scheduled on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Study Sessions should provide in-depth information on one or two matters. Unless otherwise agreed to by all Governance Team members, a Study Session should follow the same timeline for concluding as a regular Board Meeting.

21. Conference Attendance Procedures

All Board Members may attend conferences for the purpose of Board Development. The Superintendent or designee may approve Board Member/Employee requests to attend conferences in accordance with the adopted budget. Board Members and Employees shall report to the Board, orally or in writing as soon as possible on the conferences they attend.

22. Follow-up on Items Brought Up by Community Members During Board Meetings

There are times when a Community Member makes a presentation to the Board about an item which is not on the agenda. After the presentation, the Superintendent will assign the appropriate person to do a follow-up. The Superintendent will then report back to the Board.

23. Requesting Items to be Placed on Board Agenda

Any Board Member may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting. The request must be in writing and be submitted to the Superintendent or designee with supporting documents and information, if any, at least one week before the scheduled meeting date. If a written request is denied, the Superintendent will notify the Board Member in writing and give a brief explanation. A Board Member may also request that an item be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting by making a verbal request at a regular Board Meeting during the "Board Report" agenda item and polling the Board for support by asking for a "thumbs up" from his/her fellow Members. If a majority of the Board Members support the request, the item will be placed on the agenda of a subsequent regular Board Meeting.

24. Unified Board

The board recognizes that it represents all students and all facets of the community and, as such, it has an obligation to pursue different points of view with honesty and vigor. Each board member commits to hearing one another out. By doing so board members model for students the honest and respectful expression of different points of view. If a member of the Governance Team cannot support the decision of the Board because it offends a moral or personal code, the member is expected, at a minimum, to refrain from undermining the decision or directive.

Recognizing that we do not have different values; instead, we have different value priorities. Given that there are rarely single-value problems, we seek the **best** rather than the right solution.

25. Social Media

Board members shall exercise caution so as to ensure that electronic communications are not used as a means for the Board to deliberate outside of an agendaized Board meeting.

We have reviewed and agree to abide by and institutionalize the aforementioned governance team standards and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Mother Lode Union Elementary School District Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at each Annual Organizational Meeting of the Board of Education.

Affirmed on this _____ day of _____, 2017

Gene Bist Sr., Trustee

Janet VanderLinden, Trustee

Cathy Wilson, Trustee

Chuck Wolfe, Trustee

John Parker, Trustee

Marcy Guthrie, Superintendent