

Point Arena Schools
Lighting the Way...

Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees

Sigrid Hillscan, President
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Superintendent

Warren Galletti

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MISSION

The mission of the Point Arena School District is dedicated to work as partners with staff, students, parents, and community to ensure that all students master grade level standards to become:

- Effective communicators and collaborators
- Respectful of self and others
- Independent lifelong learners
- Creative critical thinkers and problem solvers
- Responsible, contributing members of society who graduate prepared for college and/or career.

Beliefs

- Every child has the ability to succeed in school and life.
- We are responsible for our actions, words, and inaction.
- Learning is a lifelong journey.
- While learning is the responsibility of the individual, education is the obligation of the community.
- Appreciating diversity strengthens community.
- Enjoyment enhances life.
- Family and friends are fundamental to personal well-being.
- Open mindedness and responsiveness to change is essential to growth.

District Goals Driving the Three Year Strategic Plan

1. Implement an educational system that prepares students for success in college and/or career.
2. Create a safe, orderly, productive, healthy learning environment that cherishes diversity and collaboration.
3. Engage our parents, guardians, and community in a healthy/collaborative working partnership that supports growth and success of our students.

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance – A Definition

School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.

The Governance Team includes Board members and the Superintendent. There are four dimensions to the effective governance of a school district. Effective governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school district and maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement.

They are:

1. Governing as a unified team with a common vision and unity of purpose
2. Governing with a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
3. Creating and sustaining a positive governance culture
4. Developing protocols and procedures to facilitate governance leadership

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS

- Share common goals - want to achieve the same end
- Effective leadership – set the tone, set the direction and follow through
- Value diverse perspectives
- Honest, authentic, collegial environment
- Reflective – continually looking at what we have done and how we can do better

IV. CREATING AND SUSTAINING A POSITIVE GOVERNANCE CULTURE

A. What trustees need from the Superintendent to fulfill their responsibilities...

- Data to make informed decisions and to monitor progress in achieving agreed upon goals.
- To keep the board up to date on significant developments in the district and the state level.
- ‘No surprises’ regarding brewing issues; hear it from the superintendent first

B. What the Superintendent needs to fulfill his/her responsibilities...

- The board provides direction so that staff presents sufficient, specific information that supports the boards’ ability to make rational, thoughtful, responsible decisions on behalf of the students and the community.
- Clarity about information needed/requested and its purpose
- Respectful, timely feedback from the board
- Informed and knowledgeable trustees
- Respect and trust
- ‘No surprises’ about brewing issues - the Superintendent should be the first to know.

V. GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP - STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

To effectively meet district priorities, goals and challenges, the board and superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of the governance team and to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among board members, the superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. The protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

Topic	Board Superintendent Communication
Rationale	Good communication between the trustees and the superintendent is very important.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Out of respect for staff time, board members will make an effort to schedule meetings with the superintendent as needed. ● The board and the superintendent will strive to inform each other of any important situations to ensure timely and effective responses. ● The superintendent will strive to ensure that all Board members have access to the same information. ● The Superintendent requires time off, so requests from board members should be sent on work days unless it is an emergency.

Protocols to Facilitate Governance Leadership

Requesting Information from Staff	
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All board members are equal under the law, and authority rests with the board as a whole, not with individual members of the board. Direction is given to the superintendent only at board meetings through actions taken by the board. Individual board members are not ‘consultants’ to either the superintendent or other members of district staff. (CSBA tools for focused leadership) ● Critical to the ability of trustees to make informed decisions is timely access to information. ● The superintendent wants to be responsive to requests for information, maintain the focus on district priorities and balance the management of staff time.

Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees will always work through the Superintendent and President when asking questions or requesting additional information on board meeting agenda items or from District Staff. • The Superintendent will ensure timely responses to requests, during work days, and will provide the information or direct trustees to the correct source. As appropriate, the superintendent will distribute answers to all trustees. • Board members will self-monitor to ensure one person’s request for information does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. Requests requiring inordinate amounts of time will be brought to the board to decide whether to support the request.
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Topic	Agenda questions answered before a meeting
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members agree that it is important to have staff time and effort dedicated to moving the district in the direction set by the full board, therefore an individual board member wishing to request information from staff will be mindful of the impact that request has on staff workload.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When there is a question about an agenda item or a general question, Trustees will first contact the Superintendent or Board President at least one to two days before the board meeting. • The Superintendent will communicate concerns about staff workload, should these concerns arise. • Agenda setting meeting will include the Superintendent, Board President, and one or two other board members.

Topic	Board Meeting Management
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board meeting is a meeting to conduct board business in public. Well-run, efficient meetings model leadership, promote trust and confidence and provide opportunities to demonstrate strategically how the Governance Team is working to move the district forward and planning for the future. • The board wants the public to understand that they grapple with issues with professionalism and respect, and work hard to maintain the focus on our priorities. • Trustees want to ensure that multiple voices of the community are heard, that the process for community input is clearly defined. The board has established a clearly defined structure to manage the discussion and to support equal participation by all trustees.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board president will remind the public, as needed, that the purpose of the meeting is to conduct the District business in public. • As needed, the president will outline the guidelines for public input and highlight that these guidelines are listed on the board meeting agenda. • The board president acts as facilitator to focus the dialogue and manage the input. • Members of the public will address the board from a podium. Each topic has a 20-minute time limit. Three minutes are allotted per person or one person may represent a group for up to 20 minutes. The board president may ask for a timekeeper to assist in managing the public input.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board president has discretion to add time to the discussion, if the majority of the board agrees to additional time. • The board president may ask that the public limit their comments to new information to ensure that all speakers who wish to speak have an opportunity to do so. • The board president will sit in the center of the board table. The table is set up to ensure all board members can see one another during the board deliberation. • Members of the public who wish to address the board will complete a speaker’s card. <p>Managing Action items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1 – Background Information/recommendation • Step 2 – Public Comment (unless it was given prior to the discussion item). • Step 3 – Board Discussion and Vote
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Topic	Support for Majority Decisions
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board values and protects variation in Board opinions. However, the Board will seek whenever possible to achieve consensus.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each board member brings unique skills, values and beliefs to the board table. Each member is given equal opportunity to provide input, to provide support and to voice concerns, proposals or recommendations made by staff or other board members. • Dissenting opinions are listened to respectfully. • The final authority for board decisions rests with the board as a whole. • Board members agree that even if they disagree with a decision made by the majority of the board, they will allow that decision to set the direction for the district and will not undermine the majority decision that was made.

Topic	Confidentiality/Closed Session Practices
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the Board includes having access to confidential or sensitive information, some of which are shared in closed sessions, such as litigation, personnel, salary negotiations, superintendent evaluations, or other issues permitted under the Brown Act. • Notes are highly discouraged during closed session. Notes may stay in a sealed envelope with HR if a board member insists that they need to reflect back on the meeting. All papers handed out during closed session are to be shredded at the office following the meeting or left with the superintendent.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board will work to maintain the public’s trust by not breaching confidentiality. • If a Board member breaches adherence to a confidentiality issue, he or she should bring the admittance to the Superintendent and/or President immediately.

Topic	Responding to Community Concerns & the Media
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board seeks to be accessible, consistent, and fair in dealing with complaints and concerns from the community. • Timely response to issues is a priority for the board.
Protocol	When approached with concerns and complaints, trustees will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen, being careful not to imply agreement, since only one perspective is being expressed. • Clarify that a board member is one of seven and that the authority rests with the majority in all board decisions and actions. • Strive to ensure a community member feels heard and empowered with next steps. Provide information and direction to policies or processes or persons in the district (e.g. teacher, principal, superintendent) who can most directly help them with their concern. Refer to the District organizational chart and process to handle complaints or other inquiries. • Board members will use judgment in responding, being mindful of their role in judicial review. • Trustees will give the Superintendent a timely “heads” up if they direct a community member to speak to the Superintendent. • The Superintendent is first to speak to media. If the Superintendent is not available, the Board President may answer media inquiries involving the school district.
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Topic	Establishing Multi - Year I District goals
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a district Strategic Plan with multi-year goals, actions and metrics that promote clarity of direction, focus and alignment of resources is critical to effective Board leadership.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual goal setting process will be directly linked to the evaluation of the superintendent’s performance.

Topic	Board Governance Self Assessment
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting a governance self-evaluation demonstrates accountability to the community and the intention of the governance team to strengthen and improve governance practices.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board supports continuous improvement through an evaluation of governance practices and effectiveness. • Annually (in January) the board will schedule a conversation/study session meeting to reflect on governance practices and participate in a self-evaluation process. During the evaluation, the governance team will discuss what is working well (commendations) and what can be improved (recommendations).

Newly Elected Board Member Resources	
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly elected members to the Board of Trustees will likely be unfamiliar with state open meeting laws, meeting procedural policies, board bylaws, the district budget, goals, and other district related issues. • The governance team will provide all the tools necessary to help new board members reach their potential to be an informed, productive and effective member of the team.

Protocol	<p>Newly elected board members will receive the following resources upon election and prior to their first board meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brown Act Handbook, Point Arena Schools Governance Handbook and Annual Board Meeting Calendar, Board Bylaws/Policies, and CSBA Professional Governance Standards ● Collective Bargaining Agreements: PAHSTA, AUTO, CSEA Arena, CSEA Point Arena ● Local Control and Accountability Plans, District Budget, District Information Resource, the Strategic Plan with metrics. <p>The Superintendent and Board President will provide a board orientation to new board members within one month of their start date.</p>
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Visiting Schools and Attending School Events	
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The board should be informed about teaching and learning in the schools, including school climate, behavior, strengths and weaknesses of each school. ● Board members are encouraged to visit schools and attend school events.
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a professional courtesy, trustees will schedule school visits through the site administration with notification to the superintendent or designee ● The superintendent will ensure that staff is aware of the process and protocols for trustees visiting the classrooms. ● Board members with children at the schools are able to visit the classroom to speak with the teacher regarding their child. If said board member would like to volunteer or observe in the classroom, please schedule with the teacher and principal and let the superintendent know of your intentions. ● All board members are to sign in with the office when visiting schools.

We have read and agreed to the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship amongst the Point Arena Joint Union School District Board of Education, staff, students, parents, and the greater community.

We agree to:

1. Review and renew these protocols and norms annually.
2. Create and support effective and efficient governance leadership, communicate openly, freely and accurately.

Board President

Board Clerk

Trustee

Trustee

Trustee

Trustee

Trustee

Appendix A

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE ¹

School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.

As the governance team fulfills responsibilities in the areas of setting direction, human resources, policies, student learning and achievement, finance, judicial appeals, collective bargaining, and community relations and advocacy, the way in which governance team members perform the governance role is critical.

Whether in the boardroom, out in the community or at home, board members are always trustees for the district. The integrity of the school district's educational program is dependent upon the responsible and professional manner in which each board member, and the board collectively, fulfills governance roles and responsibilities with the superintendent. The demeanor of governance team members sends an important message to the public.

Utilizing effective governance techniques, private citizens, once elected to school boards, work with the superintendent to keep all district efforts focused on student learning. Effective governance tenets encompass the basic characteristics and behaviors that enable governance team members to effectively create a climate for excellence in a school district.

The community elects school board members to set and monitor the direction of the school district, and the district superintendent will translate all efforts into action. It is therefore vital that the board and superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open communications.

Working as a group, board members and the superintendent leverage the efforts of the professional staff by setting a direction for the district reflective of the community's wishes for its children, by creating a supportive framework for action in the district, by holding the system accountable through mutually agreed upon mechanisms, by providing support to students and staff through behaviors and actions, and by demonstrating community leadership on behalf of children, district schools and public education. When this is done effectively, the chances of a climate for excellence being created in which students thrive increases dramatically.

¹ Source: California School Boards Association

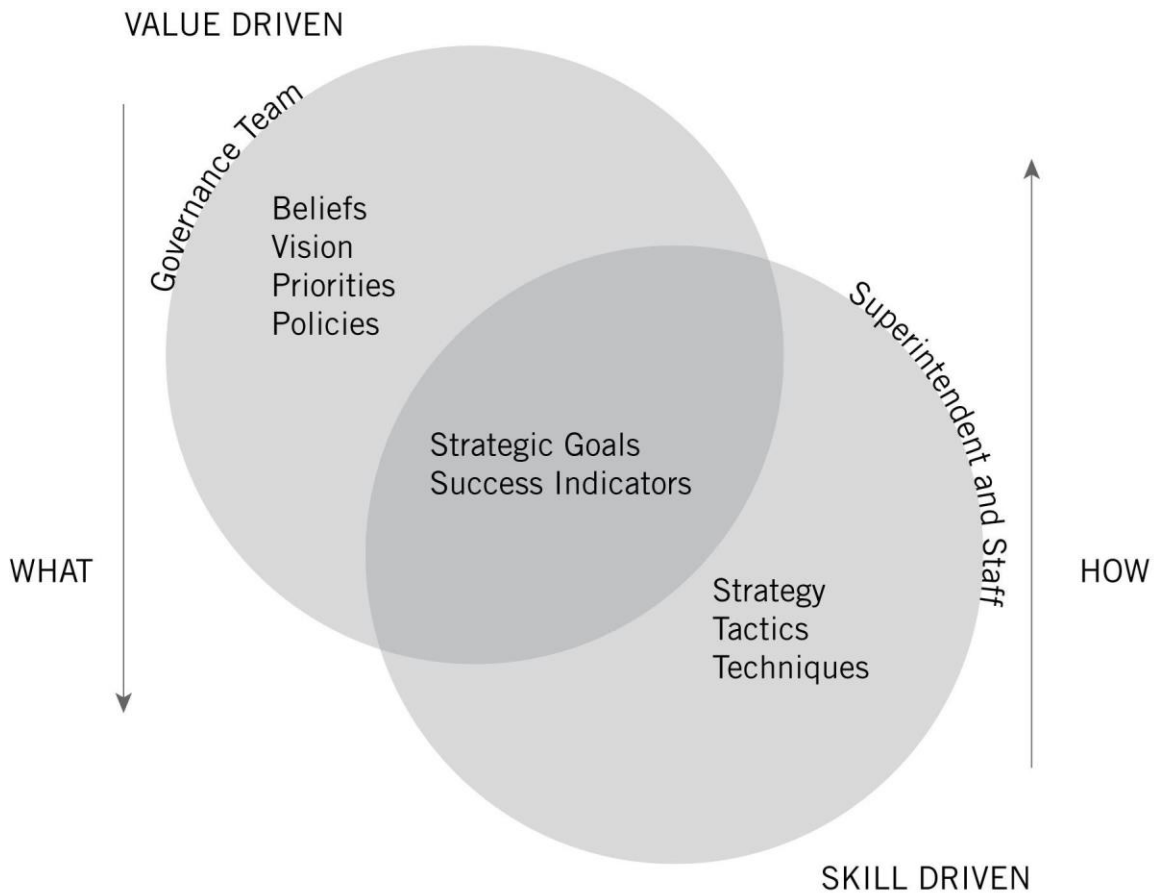
Appendix B

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE TEAMS²

Effective teams value and respect their essential roles, reach mutual agreement on the roles of the board and superintendent, and strive to operate within them.

Boards and superintendents work together to ensure a district has effective leadership. There are important distinctions to be made between the board's role and that of the superintendent and staff. The role of the school board is not to run the schools, but to see that the schools are well run.

UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE ROLES³



² Source: California School Boards Association

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