

LARKSPUR-CORTE MADERA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Governance Team Handbook

Board of Trustees

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*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful
committed people can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.*

--Margaret Mead

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Unity of Purpose

The Governance Handbook is created by the governing board of the school district to ensure that its members have a set of understandings, beliefs and essential agreements about the manner in which the trustees as a governing body govern the school district. The handbook serves as a guide for trustees and the superintendent in leading the district in fulfilling its Mission and Vision Statement. The handbook contains important protocols for conducting business as a governance team, representing the interests of and communicating with constituent groups, setting policy, supporting the superintendent, and adhering to agreed upon structures for decision-making, problem-solving and conflict management that enable the board to carry out the mission of the district and its aim to attain the highest student achievement. The handbook assists trustees in evaluating the board's effectiveness in managing itself, identifying operational challenges, monitoring policy and procedures, implementing best practices and maintaining public confidence.

Mission and Vision Statement

The Larkspur-Corte Madera School District is a dynamic learning community committed to educational excellence, equity, and inclusion. We inspire members to think critically, act creatively, work collaboratively, and communicate effectively. We strive to be engaged citizens, contributing positively to our local and global communities.

Core Values and Concepts

Core Values and Concepts are shared tenets that guide the district. These remain fairly stable, are the foundation for decision-making, and serve as a framework for evaluating the performance of the governance team.

Promoting Visionary & Collaborative Leadership

Our learning leaders model, set direction, and maintain a focus on students and positive learning climates, clear and visible values, and high expectations for all members of our learning community. Our leaders inspire and motivate teams, involve and communicate with our community, and collaborate and form key relationships.

Student-Centered Education

In order to ensure that our students meet their highest potential, we provide a comprehensive, inquiry- and standards-based differentiated curriculum, and opportunities for every student to be successful, involved, and engaged in collaborative learning with peers and teachers. We believe ongoing assessment of student learning informs our instructional practices.

Organizational and Personal Learning

We promote strategic thinking, innovation, flexibility, and agility in response to changing

requirements. We invest in personal learning for all through focused professional development, peer-to-peer learning, and opportunities for reflection across the learning community.

Valuing Faculty, Staff, and Partners

Our success depends on valuing the diversity of our faculty, staff, parents, and community members. Their varied backgrounds, skills and knowledge, along with their creativity, dedication, and motivation, contribute to a more enriching educational environment.

Citizenship

We model good citizenship, ethical behavior, and sensitivity to others, and promote each individual's success as members of a local community and global society. We value diversity in our students and believe it enriches our inclusive educational program.

Focus on Process, Progress, and Results

We use a variety of measures and data to assess continuous improvement in academic and social/emotional goals, develop short and long term strategic priorities, and manage our resources effectively and efficiently.

Strategic Priorities

- Foster healthy, inclusive, respectful, and safe learning environments. Promote the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of all community members.
- Inspire academic growth and civic responsibility through a rigorous, inquiry-based curriculum that is engaging and personalized.
- Attract, cultivate, and retain innovative, inspirational educators.
- Sustain the fiscal integrity and stability of the district.
- Facilitate collaborative partnerships between students, families, schools, and community.

Effective Governance

California School Boards Association

The following description of Governance is adopted from CSBA Masters in Governance Modules. The CSBA Governance Standards and corresponding Superintendent Standards have been adopted by the Larkspur-Corte Madera School District board of trustees.

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, but 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 and create a climate of excellence in which students thrive by:

- setting a direction for the district reflective of the community's wishes for its children
- creating a supportive framework for action in the district
- holding the system accountable through mutually agreed upon mechanisms (e.g. assessments, budgets, surveys)
- providing support to students and staff through behaviors and actions
- demonstrating community leadership on behalf of children, district schools and public education.

“The role of the school board is not to run the schools, but to see that the schools are well run.”

Governance Standards

To effectively focus all district efforts on student learning and achievement for all students, a governance team needs to have a unity of purpose, a mutual understanding of roles, positive working relationships and supportive structures and processes. One of the chief ways a governance team can strengthen or maintain its effectiveness is to periodically annually assess its own performance in these areas.

Striving to operate as a high-performance team, Larkspur-Corte Madera School District Trustees will:

- Communicate honestly, openly and consistently
- Model behaviors that inspire trust in others
- Listen to understand
- Bring relevant issues back to the board table
- Honor and appreciate differences, respect expertise
- Set high standards and strive toward academic excellence
- Dedicate ourselves to lifelong learning
- Serve through collaboration and teamwork
- Challenge ourselves and others to achieve
- Encourage new visions
- Think without boundaries
- Dare to ask how and why
- Keep confidential matters confidential
- Recognize board authority rests with the team, not individuals

As trustees, we acknowledge that trust takes time and consistent energy to institutionalize. Trust is essential to any group's unity of purpose. Essential agreements help build trust among team members, maintain a positive climate and are necessary for accountability and the consistent implementation of decisions, policies and procedures. Trustees develop agreements about how they will behave with each other, staff and the public. They are often also referred to as norms.

In order to build trust, we agree to:

- Focus on the best interests of students
- Assume good will
- Listen completely, respond and question respectfully
- Give every trustee a chance to speak or pass
- Follow through on commitments and be ready to fully participate with team members
- Debate and deliberate objectively, focus on content and substance, not personalities
- Keep confidences
- Ask permission before discussing a subject that may cause embarrassment or discomfort
- Keep our words and looks congruent
- Make every attempt not to surprise someone and put them on the spot
- Choose words carefully, avoiding adversarial language or tone
- Give and receive feedback

- Encourage risk-taking and acknowledge mistakes are human
- Support new members in learning the culture and norms
- Make decisions based on principle, not self-interests
- Recognize accomplishments and praise efforts made by individual team members and the team as a whole

Governance Roles

Board members have collective, not individual authority. Authority to make decisions is only granted to the board as a whole. The full board gives direction to the superintendent, most commonly at board meetings. Individual board members do not have the authority to direct the superintendent or staff, unless otherwise agreed to by the board and superintendent.

Role of the Board

Bylaws of the Board 9000(a)

The board sets the tone for the entire district. Through its actions and behavior, the board will establish a climate in which learning is valued, professional growth is enhanced, and the most important goals are student success and making a difference for the community.

Set the Direction for the Community's Schools

- Setting the direction involves adopting policies that establish the vision and mission of the district. It requires that trustees are strategic in their thinking and focused on the future learning needs of their community. Trustees must be aware of the broad and diverse community values and needs.

Establish the Structure

- Trustees adopt, evaluate, and update policies consistent with the law and the District's vision, mission, core values, and strategic goals.
- Trustees hire, support, and evaluate the superintendent to ensure that the vision, mission, core values, strategic goals, and policies of the District are implemented.
- Trustees set a positive climate for collective bargaining and dispute resolution and model principled negotiations.
- Trustees make budget allocations in order to achieve the mission, goals, and educational priorities of the district.
- Trustees provide safe, adequate facilities that support the District's instructional program.
- Trustees establish the direction of the curriculum, approve academic standards, and adopt curriculum and instructional materials.

Provide Support

- Trustees are an essential link to the community and will govern on behalf of the public.
- Trustees both represent the community to the district and advocate for the district in the community.
- Trustees model a positive work environment through interactions as a board and as individual trustees.
- Trustees model open, straightforward, and tactful communication in order to build trust.
- Trustees make decisions and provide resources that support district priorities and goals.

Ensure Accountability

- The board evaluates the Superintendent and sets policy for the evaluation of other personnel.
- The board establishes the goals, criteria and indicators used to monitor progress, strategic priorities and student achievement. The superintendent provides periodic progress reports to ensure accountability.
- The board adopts a budget that provides stability and effective use of funds.
- The board guarantees a safe and appropriate educational environment is provided to all students by maintaining the district's assets and facilities.
- The board serves as a judicial (hearing) and appeals body in accordance with law, Board policies, and negotiated agreements.
- The board monitors the collective bargaining process.

Demonstrate Leadership

- Trustees provide positive leadership when they focus on futuristic visions for the district, model integrity and ethical behavior, support risk-taking, and positively challenge the superintendent and staff to strive for excellence.
- Trustees provide clear information about the fiscal condition of the district.
- Trustees provide guidance to the community about the district's policies and procedures such as parental rights, the Uniform Complaint Policy, and specialized programs.
- Trustees advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local, state, and federal levels and build support for the District's students and programs through community leadership on educational issues.

Role of the Board President

Bylaws of the Board 9121

The role of the board president is very important to the effectiveness of the board, the superintendent/board relationship, and the organization. Careful thought must be given to the selection process for and expectations of the position. The board president is the leader of the board and facilitator of board process.

Responsibilities

The board president, as all trustees, has no legal authority as an individual other than that delegated by the trustees. He/she is a member of the board team, but has greater responsibility to create a positive climate, lead the board, and work closely with the superintendent.

Develops the board team

Trustees who work together well contribute to the effectiveness of their board.

The board president:

- Builds a sense of team
- Assists in having trustees work together
- Ensures respectful and ongoing communication among trustees
- Has knowledge of the Brown Act
- Assists in helping trustees understand their roles and responsibilities
- Applies conflict resolutions skills to prevent discord that can hurt the organization
- Works directly with individuals who are being disruptive or do not work as a unit
- Reminds trustees of legal, ethical, and appropriate behavior
- Orients new trustees on procedures and responsibilities
- Encourages all board members to participate in professional development activities
- Ensures the board engages in regular self-evaluation and uses the results of the evaluation to improve effectiveness
- Assigns the vice president to lead or serve in his/her absence; if the vice president is not available, the clerk shall serve in his/her absence

Represents the board and district

The board president often acts as the lead spokesperson for the board. He/she must be knowledgeable about the district, board policy, and external issues and trends.

The board president:

- Communicates board decisions and district actions
- Has a thorough grasp of issues
- Advocates for district issues with locally-elected officials, community, state, and national governments
- Is articulate, informed, and willing to represent the board's actions, not personal views
- Performs ceremonial duties, such as community events, graduations, fund raisers, speaking in the community
- Has excellent public relations skills and is comfortable dealing with the media

Works closely with the superintendent

The board president is a major support and counsel to the superintendent. He/she communicates regularly with the superintendent and shares information on behalf of the board.

The board president:

- Fosters an environment of communication
- Promotes a culture of "no surprises"
- Shares responsibility with the superintendent to make contact with trustees
- Prepares the board agenda with the superintendent and board vice president
- Makes committee assignments
- Ensures the superintendent is regularly evaluated and facilitates the process which ensures trustee input

Presides over board meetings

The board president presides over the board meetings.

The board president:

- Call such meetings of the Board as he/she may deem necessary, giving notice as required by law
- Calls the meeting to order at the appointed time and presides over meeting
- Ensures that discussion and decision-making are orderly, deliberate, and appropriate, and that all trustees have ample opportunity to be heard
- Recognizes persons who desire to speak, and protect the speaker who has the floor from disturbance or interference
- Seeks balance and facilitates exploration of diverse opinions among constituents
- Runs the meeting efficiently
- Seeks to reach closure on issues
- Puts motions to a vote, and state clearly the results of the vote
- Handles disorderly audience conduct
- Has knowledge of parliamentary procedure
- Signs all instruments, acts and orders necessary to carry out state requirements and the will of the Board
- The president shall have the same rights as other members of the Board, including the right to move, second, discuss and vote on all questions before the Board

Other board president responsibilities

- Encourages trustees to stick to policy making, and avoid administrative-type actions
- Supports the district's mission/vision and goals

Role of the Board Vice President

Bylaws of the Board 9121

When the president resigns or is absent, the vice president shall perform the president's duties. When both the present and vice president are absent, the clerk shall perform the president's duties.

Role of the Board Clerk

Bylaws of the Board 9123

The duties of the clerk are to:

- Certify or attest to actions taken by the board when required
- Maintain such other records or reports as required by law
- Serve as presiding officer in the absence of the president and vice president
- Notify board members and members-elect of the date and time of the annual organization meeting
- Perform any other duties assigned by the board

Role of the Superintendent

The overarching role of the superintendent is to lead the district in the direction set by the board. The Superintendent serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the district. The Superintendent shall perform the duties of Superintendent as prescribed the laws of the State of California, Board Policy, and the Superintendent's job description. The Superintendent shall have primary responsibility for execution of board policies and responsibility for the duties prescribed pursuant to Education Code section 35035. There are several areas of focus for the superintendent. These include:

- Strengthening the board and superintendent relationships
- Organizational leadership
- Educational programs and services
- Fiscal management
- Human resources
- Community relationships
- Legislative relations
- Legal management
- Communicates and facilitates professional development, networking

Strengthening Relationships

- Maintains ongoing communication by providing trustees with pertinent information and no surprises
- Provides information to ensure trustees have enough information to come to a decision
- Provides information and counsel to the board
- Communicates with trustees – up-to-date/hot buttons/heads up (no surprises)
- Prepares agendas with the board president (with input from the board); coordinates meeting details
- Provides clarification of agenda action items
- Provides advance notice and public information on meetings
- Attends all regular, special and closed session meetings of the Board (except those closed sessions related to Superintendent's employment)
- Serves as secretary to the board - Bylaws of the Board 9122

Organizational leadership

- Develops the agenda with the board president and vice president
- Leads and administers the district
- Implements board policy
- Creates a positive climate
- Articulates future trends, needs, and opportunities
- Ensures alignment of all district plans
- Informs trustees on progress toward accomplished goals
- Is an active community leader, and participates in county, state, and national conferences

Educational Programs and Services

- Administers the delivery of high quality programs
- Seeks board approval of curriculum
- Ensures student progress and achievement
- Ensures standards-based instruction
- Ensures accountability
- Carries out the vision with ongoing dialogue and accountability
- Annual performance measures are completed in compliance with the federal and state accountability programs.
- Recommends, to the Board, District goals and objective for the ensuing school year
- Endeavors to improve his/her professional competence by all available means

Fiscal Management

- Ensures legal, ethical, and prudent management of resources
- Presents clear and informative budget reports
- Ensures a budget development process
- Seeks board approval for the adopted budget, first interim and second interim and budget revisions
- Develops long-range financial plans
- Monitors financial adherence
- Ensures accurate information is shared with trustees regarding parcel tax and bond measures
- Supports school foundations and fundraising
- Advises Board of all possible sources of funds that might be available to implement present or contemplated District programs

Facilities

- Ensures facilities, property and land use plans are fiscally-sound and viable

Human Resources

- Acts as the primary responsibility for all personnel matters including selection, assignment, discipline, and dismissal of employees, subject to the approval of the Board
- Represents the Board with respect to all employer-employee matters and makes recommendations to the Board concerning those matters
- With prior notice to the Board, may reorganize the District's administrative staff within existing financial parameters
- Reviews and acts on of all personnel complaints and concerns made to individual members of the Board, or the Board as a whole
- Establishes and maintains positive board and staff programs
- Ensures fair and legal hiring practices
- Implements personnel practices
- Ensures grievance procedures are followed
- Provides timely information to trustees
- Engages in positive bargaining practices
- Informs trustees of contract proposals

- Ensures the employee evaluation process is completed

Community Relations

- Establishes and maintains positive community programs
- Ensures district programs align with community needs
- Advocates for the district
- Maintains links with business, government and community leaders
- Ensures responsiveness to the community
- Participates in community events
- Keeps trustees informed of issues that may result in media coverage

Legislative Relations

- Stays up-to-date on policy, issues, and trends
- Keeps trustees informed on the impact of legislation
- Makes key contacts with legislators
- Provides opportunities for trustee advocacy

Legal Management

- Informs trustees about major laws and regulations
- Ensures procedures comply with law
- Monitors compliance
- Recommends appropriate legal counsel
- Informs trustees of legal action and lawsuits
- Ensures appropriate liability insurance

Governance Protocols

Effective governance teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the board and superintendent in their functioning as a team (e.g., agenda structure, visiting schools, handling complaints or concerns from the community, bringing up a new idea); how boards operate, and how they do business. Protocols are the established code of procedures that the governing board develops to ensure effective and consistent communications, relationships, and interactions in the school district and learning community. Protocols are agreements made by the trustees and superintendent that, if broken, hurt the team and the district.

These protocols are structure and process agreements about how the Governance Team operates and conducts business.

Procedure	Agreement/Written Protocol
Representation of self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume positive intent • Handle issues proactively to minimize controversy at the board level • Clarify comments to ensure mutual understanding • Clarify issues with the individual, so that they are resolved in a timely manner • Agree to respect the decision and move on together (respectfully agree to disagree and move on) • Take the time necessary to become knowledgeable about the work of the district by visiting classrooms, attending all meetings, and seeking information from administration and staff as required • Seek to be informed by asking timely and substantive questions • Attend local school events, educational conferences, workshops, and training sessions • Network with community leaders and trustees from other districts
Representation at community meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify board president/superintendent if not attending a meeting • Be clear if attending a meeting that you are not representing the board • Share pertinent information at board meetings

<p>Individual board member requests for information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intention of the protocol is to keep the superintendent informed of requests for information; to encourage efficient and effective flow of information; and to ensure that information requests are relevant to the mission of the district. • Trustees may directly ask questions of district office staff, with the superintendent copied on each given request. A trustee will ask the superintendent for assistance when additional information is needed. • The staff being asked should be prepared to provide available and relevant information. Staff will notify the superintendent if a question or request is overly time-consuming. The superintendent will discuss this with the individual trustee. • All safety issues are immediately directed to the principal and superintendent. • Individual relevant questions and responses will be distributed among all trustees via the weekly board letter. • If a question is from a trustee acting as a parent, the question is between the school and the trustee.
<p>Individual board member requests for discussion or action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an individual trustee requests discussion or action, he/she will present that information to the superintendent/board president to determine the appropriate action. • The trustee may request that this issue or action be placed on the board agenda. • If the request for action results in a change of normal operating procedure, the superintendent/board president will be notified immediately and will determine next steps. • The authority to act rests only with the full board at the board table (quorum). • Trustee will <i>attempt</i> (insofar as possible) to let the superintendent know when requests for information will be made in a public forum so the staff can be prepared to provide a thorough response.

<p>Use of district committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board appointed committees - Superintendent appointed committee (with board attendance) - Staff committee (without board presence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles, expectations, attendance, outcomes, and rules of board-appointed committees will be clarified based on board policy. • Board members do not vote on board-appointed committees. • The board-appointed committees make recommendations to the board and draft resolutions or policies as applicable. • The board president is responsible for making committee appointments. • Staff and/or superintendent-appointed committee (with board attendance). The board president appoints trustees to the committee. The committee advises the superintendent. Committee purpose and role as an advisory body is clarified regularly based on board policy. • Staff committee (without board attendance). The committee advises the superintendent. Committee purpose and role as an advisory body is clarified regularly.
<p>Handling complaints from the community, or concerns from public or staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with policy (BP 1312.1, 1312.2, 1312.3, 1312.4) • Uniform Complaint Policy required by law • Listen carefully and remember it is only one side of the story. Clarify comments to ensure mutual understanding. Direct the person to the person in the district most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern--teacher, then principal, then superintendent). Make them aware of the Uniform Complaint Policy. Clarify that board members do not have individual authority to fix a problem. Invite the person with the complaint to ultimately get back to you if the issue is not resolved.
<p>Board/Superintendent communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent will prepare a weekly board letter to the board summarizing the relevant and important issues that have arisen during the prior week, as well as listing key superintendent meetings. • Superintendent will create monthly discussion opportunities for trustees to meet individually with superintendent, consistent with Brown Act regulations. • The board may question and receive explanation for any administrative decision. • Issues discussed are kept confidential.
<p>Visiting schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits are encouraged. As a professional courtesy, trustees will arrange visits through the superintendent. Trustees will also be cautious about length of visits and protecting the learning environment/classroom. • The superintendent will ensure the principals and teachers know they don't need to stop a lesson for a board member visit.

Board meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever possible, there will be time at the beginning of regularly-scheduled board meetings for staff, student and/or community recognition. • Board packets/materials (to include budget materials) will be delivered via e-mail by the weekend before each board meeting to allow for ample reading and preparation time. This includes seeking answers to questions from the administration that will enhance understanding of the material and make for a more efficient use of time during the Board meeting. • When a significant or high profile item is brought to the Board for action, the Superintendent shall present a summary of the perspectives and issues discussed by the Cabinet in arriving at the recommendation. • Trustees will make every effort to submit their Board Agenda questions to the Superintendent by 8:00 am on Monday morning via email or voicemail. When possible, responses to Trustee’s questions will be emailed to Trustees by 2:00 pm on Tuesday prior to the Board meeting. • All Trustees will see all Trustees’ questions and Cabinet Responses. • Issues discussed at closed session are kept confidential. • Respect decision and move on together. • If a trustee has a concern about another trustee’s comments or behavior during a board meeting, they will seek clarification with that person directly within 24-48 hours (as possible) following the meeting. • Honor time; be succinct in presentation of options.
Voting no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although consensus is preferred, each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote “no” on an issue. As a courtesy to the team, reasons for the “no” will be explained either during discussion or before casting the vote.
Self-monitoring of governance team effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual governance team self-reviews will be conducted either during a regular scheduled board meeting or a special workshop.

<p>Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A timeline and calendar that include board discussion items will be developed and reviewed annually. • Board and staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to ask each other clarifying questions goes in both directions. - Give and receive with positive intent. - Create opportunities to have more informal interaction. • When the Trustee group receives an e-mail with a copy to the Superintendent, the Board President will respond within 24-48 hours as possible (and copy the Superintendent on the reply e-mail). As appropriate, the Board President may ask the Superintendent to respond. • When trustees are copied on an e-mail, the superintendent will respond within 24-48 hours and copy Trustees on the reply • Trustees will not engage in an e-mail dialogue with more than one other trustee. • When an e-mail is received by an individual Trustee on board-related matters, the Trustee will forward the e-mail to the board president and superintendent with their proposed response. The board president and superintendent will provide feedback to the Trustee before s/he responds to the original sender. • When contacted by the media, notify/refer to board president who will respond. • With regards to electronic communications, see Bylaws of the Board 9012.
<p>Process for on-boarding new trustees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent will arrange for a trustee orientation, where district office departments will share their function/role within the district, provide resources, and be available to answer questions. • Trustees will be given <i>Five Habits of High Impact School Boards</i>. • CSBA and MCOE Trustee Workshops will be communicated to new trustees and paid for by the district. • New Trustees will meet individually with the superintendent and the board president.