



*Geyserville Unified School District*

# GUSD Governance Handbook

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## **Board of Trustees**

Linda Colliver, Board President  
Michael Johnson, Clerk of the Board  
Sara Lopez, Board Member  
Cherie Marckx, Board Member  
Chelsea Rickard, Board Member

## **Superintendent/Principal**

Debra Bertolucci

The Geyserville Unified School District Governance Handbook is a summary of the ongoing Board of Trustees' work on effective governance. This process involves discussions and agreements regarding shared leadership roles, and operating protocols that enable the Board to perform its responsibilities in the community. Annually Geyserville Unified School District reviews and updates this Governance Handbook.

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# *Table of Contents*

<b>Effective Governance Defined</b>	3
<b>I. Unified Commitment to Lead and Serve the Community</b>	
Geyserville Unified School District Overview	3
GUSD Mission	4
GUSD/LCAP Priorities	4
<b>II. Shared Understanding of Governance Roles and Responsibilities</b>	5
<b>III. Governance Leadership – Structure and Processes</b>	6
<b>Preparation for Meetings</b>	
Board/Superintendent communication	6
<b>Conduct of Meetings</b>	
Board member interaction with the public at board meetings	7
Bringing up new ideas - deciding on whether to move forward on an idea	7
<b>Board Accountability</b>	
Annual goal setting – annual planning calendar	8
Superintendent/Principal Evaluation	8
<b>Boards as Community Leaders</b>	
Responding to concerns from the community	9
<b>Signature Page</b>	10
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix A – Effective Governance	11
Appendix B– Governance Roles	12

# ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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## ***Governance Efficacy—A Definition***

*“Governance efficacy is defined as the power of school boards to change the face of education in their communities through positive and appropriate policymaking, equitable resource allocation and transparent accountability for all stakeholders.” – Dr. Abelardo Villarreal*

Public education is vital to the health of communities. School board members are responsible for ensuring that a school district’s public education system is serving the needs of all students by providing equitable access to a high-quality education.

## **Effective Governance Teams (Board of Trustees + Superintendent/Principal)**

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization. The GUSD Governance Handbook documents the governance responsibilities within these three dimensions.

1. **Governing as a unified team with a shared vision to lead and serve the community.**
2. **Governing within a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.**
3. **Creating and sustaining a positive governance leadership culture and structure.**

## **I. A UNIFIED COMMITMENT TO LEAD & SERVE THE COMMUNITY**

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The foundation of effective governance is the common focus governing board members share that transcends individual differences to fulfill a greater purpose. A unity of purpose exists when the commitment to achieving these goals becomes the guiding principle for all trustees.

The focused efforts of Geyserville Unified School District are reflected in the District Mission, and District/LCAP goals adopted by the GUSD Board of Trustees.

### ***District Overview***

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The Geyserville Unified School District is composed of three schools at two sites and approximately 220 students. The Geyserville Elementary School serves students in grades K-5, the Geyserville New Tech Academy serves students in grades 6-12, and Buena Vista Alternative Education High School. The District also supports a Boys & Girls Club facility with an after-school program located at the elementary site.

## ***Geyserville Unified School District Mission Statement***

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We are dedicated to providing a superior learning environment for students of all ages and providing a springboard to success in higher education and the world at large.

## ***LCAP Priorities 2022-2023***

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### **Goal 1: Provide safe and secure school environments**

1. General maintenance and facility upgrades
2. Supervision
3. School climate
4. Family engagement
5. Community outreach

### **Goal 2: Increase student achievement and engagement**

1. Technology
2. Highly qualified staff
3. Instructional materials
4. Staff development
5. Data analysis
6. Engaging experiences
7. College and career preparedness
8. Buena Vista High School

### **Goal 3: Provide support**

1. English Language Development (ELD)
2. Instructional support
3. Counseling
4. Intervention
5. Students with exceptional needs

## II. SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The second essential element of effective governance is defining roles and responsibilities and working with leadership, commitment and passion within those agreed upon roles.

The Geyserville Unified School Board members are elected by the community and serve four-year terms. The Board has responsibilities as defined in the CA Education Code.

CSBA Defined Responsibilities and Description	CA Education Code
<p><b>Set the Direction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure a long-term vision for the local school system. The vision reflects the consensus of the community, board, and district staff as to what students need in order to achieve their highest potential.</li> <li>● Develop and adopt strategic goals based upon the vision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish the educational philosophy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Establish Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employ the superintendent/principal and set policy for hiring of other personnel.</li> <li>● Oversee the development of and adoption of policies.</li> <li>● Establish a framework for and adopt the curriculum.</li> <li>● Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget, and oversee facilities issues.</li> <li>● Provide parameters for and vote to accept the collective bargaining agreements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make policy to provide overall guidelines</li> <li>● Employ personnel</li> <li>● Adopt budget and approve expenditures</li> <li>● Set rules and regulations for governing administration &amp; operation of district</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Act with a professional demeanor that models the district’s beliefs and vision.</li> <li>● Make decisions and provide resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities.</li> <li>● Uphold district policies the board has approved.</li> <li>● Ensure a positive personnel climate exists.</li> <li>● Understand and commit the time required to be informed and effective.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Ensure Accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluate the superintendent/principal and set policy for the evaluation of other personnel.</li> <li>● Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness.</li> <li>● Monitor district finances.</li> <li>● Monitor the collective bargaining process.</li> <li>● Serve as a judicial and appeals body.</li> <li>● Ensure well run and safe schools.</li> <li>● Evaluate the effectiveness of the governance team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluate the education process</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide Community Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knowledgeable about community needs and trends and emerging issues that impact public education.</li> <li>● Responsive and accessible to the community.</li> <li>● Speak with a common voice about district priorities, goals and issues.</li> <li>● Educate the community about the issues facing the district and public education.</li> <li>● Advocate for students, district programs and public education to the public, and to local, state and national leaders.</li> </ul>	

### III. GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP – STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

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Exceptional boards make governance intentional and invest in organizational structures, practices and policies that can be thoughtfully adapted to changing circumstances.

Protocols are tools to strengthen the capacity of the board to engage in a constructive relationship with the superintendent/principal and staff– one that is grounded in a mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities. Explicit protocols, agreed to and upheld by the board and superintendent/principal provide transparency and stability in the governance relationship as the board carries out its role. The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of the governance team and may be modified over time as needed.

#### *Protocols to Facilitate Governance Leadership*

##### **Preparation for Meetings**

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Board/Superintendent Communication</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical to effective governance, and informed decision making is good communication and an open exchange of ideas. Effective communication ensures a common and shared understanding of priorities, issues, and successes.</li><li>• Every effort will be made to ensure ‘no surprises’ for the superintendent or trustees.</li></ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The superintendent will prepare a weekly board update to include site information, SCOE updates, and other links to educational resources when relevant.</li><li>• The superintendent has an open-door policy and welcomes informal visits with trustees. The superintendent will schedule one on one meetings with trustees as needed.</li><li>• The superintendent will contract trustees regarding any urgent issues.</li><li>• Trustees will email the superintendent on issues of concern that they hear in the community. The superintendent will determine next steps and follow up.</li></ul>

## Conduct of Meetings

Protocol	Board member interaction with the public at board meetings
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen input is important. The Board of Education’s primary responsibility is to make decisions and act in the best interests of every student in the district.</li> <li>• Before taking action, it is helpful for the board to hear from the public and consider the range of views in the community on a particular issue.</li> <li>• The school board recognizes the value of participation by the public in deliberations and decisions on school district matters. At the same time, the school board recognizes the importance of conducting orderly and efficient proceedings, with opportunity for expression of all participants’ respective views.</li> </ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board president acts as facilitator to focus the dialogue and manage the input.</li> <li>• The board president will remind the public of the purpose of the meeting, to conduct the district business in public. The president will outline the guidelines for public input and highlight that these guidelines are listed on the board meeting agenda.</li> <li>• The board president will thank the public for bringing this issue to the board.</li> </ul>
Protocol	Bringing up new ideas - deciding on whether to move forward on an idea
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board demonstrates a commitment to professional development and continual learning.</li> <li>• Board members value opportunities to share creative thinking and innovative strategies for moving the district forward.</li> <li>• Board members agree to a process that will support bringing forward new strategic goals while maintaining the focus on current district goals.</li> <li>• The board is mindful of resources and the impact of decisions on the district and community resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<p>New ideas are brought to the board, using the following process:</p> <p>Step 1: a trustee brings an idea, including background and support for the idea, to the superintendent, board president or during board comments at a board meeting.</p> <p>Step 2: the idea will be considered during agenda planning.</p> <p>Step 3: the new concept/idea may be held for consideration during the district annual goal setting process.</p> <p>New ideas or agenda item topics will be weighed against the impact on staff’s ability to accomplish district goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Consideration will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impact of new idea/agenda item on agreed upon district priorities, and goals.</li> <li>▪ Diversion of staff time, and energy from their primary responsibilities relative to achieving district goals.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Board Accountability

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Annual goal setting – annual planning calendar</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical to demonstrating a strategic and cohesive board is establishing district multi-year and annual goals that promote clarity of direction, focus and alignment of resources.</li><li>• The board is mindful of resources and the impact of decisions on the district and community resources.</li></ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annually in July, the Governance Team will participate in an annual goal setting process based on results from the prior year and needs as identified by the superintendent, staff and community.</li><li>• The priorities identified annually will inform the development of the District’s LCAP and the annual District budget.</li></ul>

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Superintendent/Principal Evaluation</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The superintendent/principal evaluation is an essential leadership tool to focus and align all district efforts and promote open and two-way communication between the board and the superintendent/principal.</li><li>• The evaluation process must be clear and fair. It should be goals based, data driven, and collaborative. The evaluation supports growth of the superintendent/principal and sustained improvement for the district.</li></ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annually the board will conduct a formal evaluation of the superintendent/principal in order to assess her effectiveness in leading the district toward established goals.</li><li>• The superintendent/principal will prepare a summary report on progress for board review. Using an agreed upon evaluation tool, each trustee will independently complete the evaluation form. The board will meet in closed session to discuss and develop one consensus evaluation document.</li></ul> <p>The evaluation timeline is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• August: Agree on priority areas and with the superintendent/principal, set goals for the coming year that the governance team believes will reasonably move the district toward its long-range vision.</li><li>• January: The board will schedule a mid-year review of the superintendent/principal to reflect on preliminary results and make any adjustments to the district direction.</li><li>• By May of each year the board will complete the superintendent/principal evaluation.</li></ul>

## Boards as Community Leaders

Protocol	Responding to Concerns from the Community
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Board members want to be accessible, consistent, and fair in dealings with complaints and concerns from staff and the community.</li><li>• The board values open communication and timely resolution of issues.</li><li>• Hearing concerns provides the opportunity to educate the public about how the board does its business and to confirm that the board does not handle the day-to-day business of the district.</li><li>• Board members will strive to ensure a community member or staff member feels heard and empowered with next steps.</li></ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<p>When approached with an issue or concern that is outside of the formal complaint process, trustees agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen openly, being careful to remain neutral.</li><li>• Remind staff and the community that no individual trustee has the authority to resolve the issue.</li><li>• Encourage addressing the concern with the person who can most directly help them, e.g., teacher, principal, superintendent. Board members will strive to eliminate fear of retribution.</li><li>• As appropriate, a trustee will explain the district complaint or grievance process.</li><li>• Trustees will share the issue or concern with the superintendent/principal, as appropriate.</li><li>• The superintendent/principal may provide board members with key talking points regarding topics that may concern community members.</li></ul>

## GOVERNANCE TEAM PROTOCOLS

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The Board of Education for the Geyserville Unified School District is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student.

To provide a high-quality educational program for all students, to effectively plan for the future and to meet district challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Agreed upon operating procedures, or protocols, support consistent behaviors and actions among team members. The purpose of the Geyserville Unified Governance Handbook and protocols is 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.

We have reviewed and agree to follow the governance team protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Geyserville Unified School District Board of Education, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at each Annual Organizational Meeting of the Board of Education.

Affirmed on this 14th Day of September 2022.

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Linda Colliver, Board President

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Michael Johnson, Clerk of the Board

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Sara Lopez, Trustee

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Cherie Marckx, Trustee

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Chelsea Rickard, Trustee

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Deborah Bertolucci, Superintendent/Principal

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## *Appendix A*

### **EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE** <sup>1</sup>

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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.

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.

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.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: California School Boards Association

## Appendix B

### EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE TEAMS <sup>2</sup>

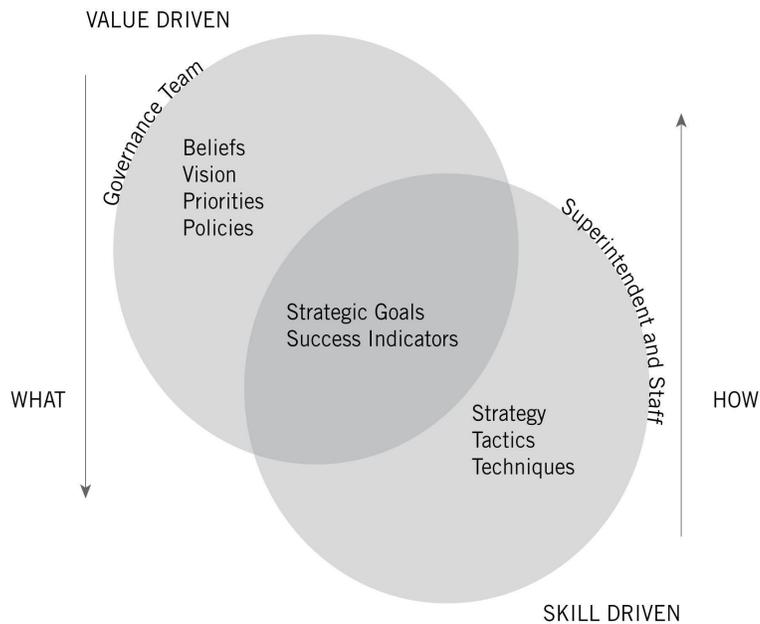
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*Effective teams value and respect their essential roles, reach mutual agreement on the roles of the board and superintendent, and strive to operate within them.*

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. 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. It is therefore vital that the board and superintendent have a respectful and productive working relationship based on trust and open communications.

### UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE ROLES

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<sup>2</sup> Source: California School Boards Association