

The seal of the Calistoga Joint Unified School District is partially visible on the left side of the page. It features a green circular border with the word "DISTRICT" in white capital letters. Inside the circle, there is a stylized sunburst or fan-like pattern in shades of green and yellow.

# CJUSD Board Governance Handbook

Calistoga Joint Unified School District  
1520 Lake Street  
Calistoga, CA 94515

## **Board Members Names/Positions**

Stephanie Rothberg-Allan	President
Matthew Reid	Clerk
Indira Lopez-Jones	Trustee
Laurel Rios	Trustee
Rudy Gonzalez	Trustee

## **Strategic Goals**

1. Ensure academic excellence for all students
2. Provide a safe, healthy, and positive school environment
3. Increase parent engagement and enhance communication

## **Mission Statement**

We are a collaborative, culturally rich educational community, where a rigorous and innovative curriculum prepares our students to be successful contributors to our global society.

# Professional Governance Standards

This Board Governance Handbook is designed to unify the Board of Trustees, reinforce their roles, and enhance their commitment to norms and agreement on protocols. This formal structure will enable the governance team to perform their responsibilities in a way that best benefits all students of CJUSD. The intent of these standards is also to enhance the public's understanding of the critical responsibilities of the CJUSD Board of Trustees, and to act as a guide for the trustees in their capacity as a unified governance team.

## **Elements of Effective Governance**

Governing as a unified team with a shared vision to lead and serve the community; governing within a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities; creating and sustaining a positive governance leadership culture.

## **The Individual Board Member**

*In California's public education system, a board member is a person elected or appointed to serve on a school district or county board of education. Each board member brings unique skills, values and beliefs to their board. In order to govern effectively, individual members must work with each other and the Superintendent to ensure that a high quality of education is provided to each student.*

To be effective, an individual board member:

- Keeps learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus.
- Values, supports and advocates for public education.
- Recognizes and respects differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community.
- Acts with dignity, and understands the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- Keeps confidential matters confidential.
- Participates in professional development and commits the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.
- Understands the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrains from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.
- Understands that authority rests with the Board as a whole and not the individual.
- Respects the views of others.
- Asks questions.
- Remains open-minded until final action is taken by the Board.

## **The Board**

*School districts and county offices of education are governed by boards, not by individual board members. While understanding their separate roles, the board and superintendent work together as a "governance team." This team assumes collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture in order to govern effectively.*

To operate effectively, the board must have a unified purpose and:

- Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students.
- Communicate a common vision.
- Operate openly with trust and integrity (adhere to the Brown Act).

- Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Govern with board-adopted policies and procedures.
- Take collective responsibility for the board's performance.
- Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness.
- Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations.
- Recognize the value of, and be fair to the administrative staff.
- Work in a spirit of cooperation.

### **The Board's Roles and Responsibilities**

*The primary responsibilities of the board are to set a direction for the district, provide a structure by establishing policies, ensure accountability, and provide community leadership on behalf of the district and public education.*

To fulfill these responsibilities, the board shall:

- Involve the community, parents, students and staff in developing a common vision for the district, which is focused on learning and achievement, and is responsive to the needs of all students.
- Adopt, evaluate, and update policies consistent with the law and the district's vision and goals.
- Maintain accountability for student learning by adopting the district curriculum and monitor student progress.
- Hire and support the superintendent so that the vision, goals, and policies of the district can be implemented.
- Conduct regular and timely evaluations of the superintendent based on the vision, goals and performance of the district, and ensure that the superintendent holds district personnel accountable.
- Adopt a fiscally responsible budget based on the district's vision and goals, and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the district.
- Ensure that a safe and appropriate education environment is provided to all students.
- Establish a framework for the district's collective bargaining process and adopt responsible agreements.
- Provide community leadership on education issues and advocate on behalf of the students and public education at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Do not publically criticize staff, district administration, or the governance leadership team.
- Communicate with each other (among board members and superintendent).

### **Unity of Purpose/Norms**

*This requires a common focus, through which the values, beliefs, and deeply held goals that the governance team members share about students, the district, and public education help them transcend their individual perspectives to fulfill a greater purpose.*

- Model the type of behavior that the board wishes to be seen throughout the district.
- Be on time, focused, and prepared for meetings.
- Be respectful and courteous; learn from differences of opinions and philosophies.
- Be a good citizen.

- Take personal responsibility.
- Be informed.
- Be trustworthy (competence and character).
- Manage and resolve board conflicts internally.
- Assume collective responsibility for conduct and behavior of the governance team.
- Recognize and appreciate the professional judgment of CJUSD staff and their commitment to our schools and students.
- Maintain focus on the goals.
- Base decisions on thorough evaluation of available facts.
- Put aside personal and political preferences and opinions in deliberations; student needs always drive the decisions.
- Speak with one voice once decisions are made; support them and move to implementation.
- Communicate clearly.
- Use Robert's Rules of Order as a guideline, abide by board policies and agreed upon protocols.

*\*adapted from CSBA'S Professional Governance Standards*

## Protocols to Facilitate Governance Leadership

Effective teams discuss and agree upon the formal structures and processes used by the trustees and the superintendent in their operations. The protocols listed below were agreed upon to support and promote the effectiveness of our governance team.

### **Board Member Visits to School Sites**

School site visits are encouraged. As a professional courtesy, trustees will notify the school site administrator in advance in order to request a visit to a classroom or programs. Trustees will be cautious about encroaching on the administrator's time and be mindful of your presence to ensure you are not disruptive to school activities and learning. Trustees will also notify the superintendent of their intended visit. Trustees will maintain a positive attitude and share positive observations. If you observe concerns or have critical questions, do not raise them during your visit; instead, present them to the superintendent for resolution and follow-through. Always check in to the main office to announce your visit and wear your site-designated trustee badge. Trustees will maintain positive interactions, even when on campus as a parent of an attending student.

### **Board Member Participation in District Events and Functions**

Our governance team wishes to maintain high visibility and to show support for the school and district programs. Trustees will attend functions whenever possible, and remain positive in all situations. Trustees must recognize that they are showing support of the school by their attendance, and not expect nor require special attention.

### **Role in Public**

The board understands the importance of being visible and accessible to the public. Trustees will demonstrate their dedication and commitment to the governance team by

clarifying their authority as one of five in all board decisions and actions. Trustees represent the board in what they say and do, and will set an example of professionalism.

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

The board represents the community; therefore, it needs to respect the input from the community. The board should be in touch with the community and know what is important to its members. Community members should feel they are listened to and understood.

Listen carefully, understanding that a community member's input is only one side of the story. Direct the person to the staff member most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern. Trustees will make sure that they understand the order of whom to contact. Trustees understand that as individuals, they have no authority to fix a problem. As representatives of the public, it is important that trustees invite the person with a concern to reach back out to them if the issue is not resolved. Trustees will bring the issue to the attention to the site administrator and the superintendent. When the board receives an email addressed to all board members, the board president will thank them and inform them that the message will be forwarded to the superintendent. Board members may respond with acknowledgment that the email was received. As a board, it is agreed upon that the response should be unified and come from the board president or superintendent.

### **Access and Request for Information**

When a trustee has a request for information, the agreed upon process will be to request this of the superintendent. The superintendent will then work cooperatively with staff to provide the information. All other members of the governance team will also receive the information for review. Trustees will be mindful of the workload of the staff and will self-monitor requests, respecting the concept of "nice to know" vs. "need to know."

### **Communication**

Communication is an open exchange of ideas and are important to our governance team. The board accepts responsibility both as a team and as individuals, to share news and information with all segments of our community and school groups. The board will strive to present honest and full disclosure of all financial and educational data. It is also the board's responsibility to be positive public relations agents for our district and all of its accomplishments.

### **Confidentiality**

The responsibility of the governance team includes being privy to closed session or confidential information about district litigation, personnel, negotiations, superintendent evaluations, or other topics permitted under the Brown Act. The board will work to maintain the public's trust by not breaching this confidentiality. The board understands that to violate this confidentiality would be to commit a misdemeanor. If trustee(s) inadvertently or accidentally violate a confidential issue, the board and the superintendent will respond accordingly.

### **Electronic Mail and Social Media**

The governance team recognizes that electronic communication is an efficient and convenient way to communicate and expedite the exchange information. Trustees shall exercise caution to ensure that electronic communications are not used as a means for the board to deliberate outside of an agenda board meeting. If a trustee would like to share information with the rest of the board that is informative and learning in nature, this

information will be forwarded to the superintendent to determine appropriation of distribution to all five board members.

When using social media to share district related matters, trustees should be mindful that the Brown act applies. Trustees should not comment on or engage in other board members' district related social media sites. Trustees may never share nonpublic information on social media; by discussing issues related to their position with CJUSD Board of Trustees, their communications are likely subject to the public records act disclosure. It is recommended that they separate their personal social media sites from the district related sites and be clear that their comments do not represent those of the district.

### **Closed Session**

All closed session discussion items will be agendaized. The trustees will not discuss any matter that is not clearly stated on the agenda. If an action is taken in closed session, it will be reported out by the board president in open session immediately following.

### **Board Member Compensation**

The trustees are not compensated for their service in any form. The trustees are offered a cellular phone stipend and/or a district computer in order to perform their district duties.

### **Orientation of New Members**

Immediately following the certification of public election or appointment to the board, new members will be seated following an oath of office. As soon as possible, the board president will schedule an orientation session for the new member.

### **Personal or Preferential Treatment**

The board does not seek or accept any special or favored treatment for our children, family, friends, or themselves. Equal and respectful treatment of all people is expected. This behavior will be modeled all times.

### **Self-Monitoring of Governance Team Effectiveness**

Trustees will schedule and participate in at least one workshop every year to review governance team agreements and processes, and participate in a self-evaluation process. The Board will select a regular time to do this and put it on the board calendar.

### **Superintendent Evaluation**

The board recognizes the value and importance of a comprehensive and formal evaluation process for the superintendent. Abiding by all contract terms, the board will conduct an annual formal evaluation. If decided upon, a bi-annual review may also be conducted.

### **Board Self-Evaluation**

The governance team understands the value of self-reflection and feedback regarding the team. Following the same schedule as the superintendent, all members of the Board of Trustees shall participate in an individual and governance team evaluation.

### **Board Study Sessions**

To assist the governance team in making informed decisions and to stay current on district issues, the board will periodically schedule board study sessions to provide in-depth information on topics critical to the district.

### **Personal Problem Solving**

If a member of the governance team hears disturbing information that has supposedly come from another member of the board, trustees and the superintendent will act immediately to identify the issue and address the concern with the person or persons involved.

#### **Conference Attendance/Travel Procedures**

All trustees may attend conferences for the purpose of board development. The superintendent or designee may approve trustee requests to attend conferences in accordance with the adopted budget. Trustees shall report to the Board, orally or in writing, as soon as possible on the content of the conferences that they attend. The board recognizes that a trustee may incur travel-related expenses in the course of performing their duties. These expenses are governed by the same policy that governs district employee travel.

#### **Election of Board Officers**

The Board normally follows a rotation method (clerk to president) for selecting officers. These positions can be retained annually with unanimous board approval.

#### **Spokesperson for the Board**

Once decisions have been made, the board president or designee will be the spokesperson for the board and describe the board's processes and positions. During disasters and emergencies, the superintendent will take the lead in communicating information to the public, staff and press. The president will be responsible for this in their absence. Meeting information will be the responsibility of the superintendent and board president. All media inquiries will be responded to in a unified voice by the president of the board or the superintendent.

#### **Core Values/Vision/District Priorities/General District Information**

All board members may be spokespersons. The board president will always speak first as a matter of deference for the position.

#### **Employee Relations**

When employees contact trustees, trustees will seek to determine inquiry is regarding a policy matter, which is a legitimate topic to discuss with a trustee or an employment matter. When it is a policy matter, board members will listen, and when possible, encourage the employee to share their thoughts with the proper committee or work group. If the topic is an employment matter, the board member will encourage the employee to respect the protocol and address the matter with the proper administrator.

#### **Agenda Review/Trustee Questions**

The superintendent will schedule a meeting with each trustee prior to the official public meeting to review the agenda and ensure that everyone understands what will be presented and discussed at the meeting. If a trustee has additional questions, it is their responsibility to email, call, or make an appointment to meet with the superintendent.

#### **Setting Board Agenda**

The superintendent will distribute a tentative board calendar of agenda items annually. Following the established template, the superintendent and board president will order the agendas for each meeting for maximum effectiveness. There may be occasions in which the superintendent or board president needs to reorder the agenda at the beginning of the meeting in order to accommodate efficiency or a particular presenter's schedule. Trustees may request that an item be placed on an upcoming agenda.

### **Requesting an Item be Placed on the Agenda**

Any trustee may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting. The request should first be presented to the superintendent or president of the board. If a majority of the board supports the request for this item to be placed on the agenda, the superintendent will consider the appropriate timing. A trustee may express interest in an idea after discussing it with the superintendent, during the "Future Agenda Items" section of the public meeting.

### **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 district. In the event of an emergency involving the health or welfare of students or staff, disciplinary actions toward an employee, or other emergencies, the superintendent will work to keep the board informed in a timely manner. Conversely, it is the duty of the governance team to, whenever possible, communicate issues and concerns openly with the superintendent prior to a public meeting.

### **Communications During Meetings**

The governance team is committed to continuing the culture of positive collegiality that currently exists. The tone/demeanor set by the board president and governance team will be professional, respectful, and firm in control. Trustees will refrain from engaging in private conversations during board meetings as well as sending and receiving electronic communication during board matters.

### **Board Deliberations**

Each trustee brings unique skills, values, and beliefs to the board table. The best possible decisions are likely when all members of the team have been part of the discussion and everyone is operating within the same parameters this protocol promotes. Making the best decision is achieved by welcoming all viewpoints, exploring all options, being efficient and avoiding repetition. The board president introduces the item, explains how they and the public may comment, and how the board will deliberate. The agenda describes when and how the public may speak to any given item. After any given presentation, the board may then ask clarifying questions, the public may comment, and further clarification may occur after public comment. After deliberation, the board votes.

### **Board Meeting Management and Norms**

The following should be considered board meeting norms: everyone participates, seek first to understand then be understood, stay on topic, listen before responding, keep discussion moving forward, remain objective, adhere to time, and protect confidence. The board will focus on students' best interests at all times. Trustees understand and agree that the board meetings are meetings of the board held in public, not open forum town hall meetings. The board will keep this in mind as meetings are conducted, allowing the public to provide input at the time allotted to ensure multiple voices of the community are heard. It is the role of the board president to facilitate the board meeting efficiently while following protocol.

### **Follow up on Items Brought to the Board by the Community**

The board recognizes that there are times when a community member makes a presentation to the board in open public comment, which is not on the agenda. After the presentation, the superintendent will assign the appropriate person to do a follow-up, and



then report back to the board. When appropriate, the superintendent will ensure that the follow-up information is presented to the public.

### **Allowing the Majority to Set the Direction**

The board agrees that there are multiple right answers in addressing issues. Dissenting opinions are listened to respectfully. The final authority for board decisions rests with the board as a whole. Following a board decision, the trustees agree to support the majority decision fully. Following the decision, if trustees are approached by the community, staff, or the media about the decision, protocol will be to refer all questions to the board president.

### **Voting No**

Each trustee recognizes and respects the right of other trustees to vote “no” on an issue or to abstain from voting. The board agrees that as a courtesy, trustees will explain their reasoning for the “no” vote or the abstention either during deliberations or before casting the vote.

### **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, and the board committee will act in an advisory capacity. When the committee’s duties have been completed, the committee shall be dissolved. Board committees shall provide public notice of their meetings and conduct them in accordance with the Brown act. When the majority of the members of the board attend open and noticed meeting of the standing committee, the board members who are not members of the standing committee shall attend only as observers.

### **Citizen Advisory Committees**

When the majority of 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 committee 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.

### **Keeping the Board Informed**

All trustees must have access to sufficient and equal information. The superintendent will inform the board as soon as possible regarding serious issues. The superintendent exercises discretion and independent judgment on what to report to the board. The superintendent will provide the board with Friday updates and will follow up with any open-ended issues.

The Board of Trustees for the Calistoga Joint Unified School District have reviewed and agreed to follow the governance team protocols described in this handbook in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the CJUSD Board of Trustees, the superintendent, staff, students, and the community. This agreement shall be renewed at each Annual Organizational Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

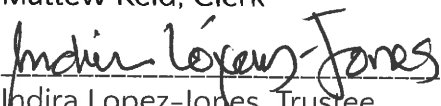
Affirmed on this 16th day of January, 2024.

  
Stephanie Rothberg-Allan, President

1/16/24  
Date

  
Matthew Reid, Clerk

1/16/24  
Date

  
Indira Lopez-Jones, Trustee

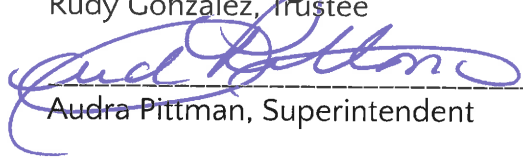
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Laurel Rios, Trustee

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Date

  
Rudy Gonzalez, Trustee

1/16/24  
Date

  
Audra Pittman, Superintendent

1/16/2024  
Date