

Middletown Unified School District

Governance Handbook

The Board of Education 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.

Board of Trustees

Zoi Bracisco, President

Annette Lee, Clerk

Allison Berlogar, Member

Chris Ochs, Member

Patricia Pachie, Member

Superintendent

Jeff Crane

Unity of Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities, Norms, and Agreements

This handbook reflects the governance team's work on creation of a framework for effective governance. This involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, norms, and coming to agreement on protocols for formal structures that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.

This Governance Handbook was developed in a Board workshop conducted on September 18, 2025.

MIDDLETOWN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

MISSION

The Middletown Unified School District is committed to creating a community of knowledgeable and responsible lifelong learners through challenging learning experiences and mastery of a standards-based curriculum.



CORE VALUES

Focus on Students

We value the unique potential of **every** child and will work to ensure they are prepared for a productive life after high school

Integrity

We value truth and honesty in **every** personal interaction throughout the District.

Engagement

We value learning and teaching that engages and enriches **all** students.

We value the highest quality staff that can instill that engagement and love of learning in **all** students.

Partnership

We value strong parent, school, and community partnerships including respectful and timely two-way communication between home and school.

Respect

We value providing a safe and supportive environment for **all** students.

Building a Governance Team

Unity of Purpose

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

In a school district, the Board and Superintendent work together as a governance team. For a governance team to work together effectively, members need to: maintain a unity of purpose; agree on and govern within appropriate roles; create and sustain a positive governance culture; and create a supportive structure for effective governance.

What do we, as a governance team, want to accomplish?

What do we stand for?

Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students, including programs, facilities, and continuous improvement in all areas.

We want to build trust and move the District forward in a transparent manner.

We want to be an effective team.

We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.

We want to be a team with a common focused direction so that we are a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees, and the community can see evidence of this focused direction.

We want to be partners with the staff in positive change.

We want to perpetuate a legacy of positive culture.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mutual agreement on the roles of the Board and the Superintendent

The role of Trustee is to stay focused on the big picture while fulfilling five responsibilities in a series of job areas. These five responsibilities are:

- We set the direction.
- We establish the structure.
- We provide support.
- We ensure accountability.
- We act as community leaders.

We carry out these responsibilities in each of the following areas:

- ✓ Setting the District's Direction
- ✓ Student Learning and Achievement
- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Facilities
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Judicial Review
- ✓ Collective Bargaining
- ✓ Community Relations and Advocacy

The Superintendent assists and makes recommendations to the Board in carrying out its responsibilities in each of the job areas, and leads the staff toward accomplishment of the agreed upon District vision and goals.

Governance Team Culture

Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other. Teams have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave with each other and others. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift a negative one.

Governance Norms

In addition to meeting the norms below in order to create a positive culture and atmosphere, we agree to act in ways that will help us meet the CSBA Professional Governance Standards.

WE AGREE TO –

- **Focus on all our students’ best interests as the touchstone for our decisions.**
- **Keep from taking disagreements personally (individuality is embraced, respected).**
- **To show respect (never dismiss/devalue others).**
- **Make a commitment to effective deliberation, each listening openly while everyone is allowed to express his or her point of view.**
- **Make a commitment to transparency through open communication, honesty, and no surprise.**
- **Commit the time necessary to govern effectively. This means being there, being knowledgeable, participating, understanding the full scope of being a Board Member and being willing to take on all the responsibilities involved.**
- **Be collaborative (this is the way we operate).**
- **Maintain confidentiality.**
- **Look upon history as lessons learned; focus on the present and the future.**

Board Governance Protocols

Leadership Responsibility and Roles of the Board

The only authority to direct action rests with the majority of the Board during a Board meeting.

Individuals can request action by bringing up a new idea, explaining their interest in a particular course of action and working to get a Board majority to support moving in that direction. When a majority of the Board, sitting in a formal meeting, requests action, *that request should be made in the context of the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.*

Board Policies (BP 9000, 9200, and 9300) of the District relate to the role and responsibility of the Board collectively and Board members individually.

“No individual member of the Board, by virtue of holding office, shall exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools; nor as an individual, command the services of any employee” (CSBA). Board members are to channel their requests and/or concerns directly to the Superintendent (or if necessary through the Board President).

In responding to concerns, board members will:

- ***Receive*** the information and listen carefully, remembering that only one side of the story is being presented and thank them for sharing their thoughts;
- ***Direct*** the complainant to the staff most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern;
- ***Share*** with the individual that a board member has no authority as an individual and share the appropriate line of command to follow in addressing their concern (teacher/employee, principal/manager, Superintendent/district staff).
- ***Inform*** the Superintendent as soon as possible.

The Board's Role and Relationship with Staff and Community

- Board member visits to school sites are encouraged. As a professional courtesy, Trustees will call the Principal ahead of time to arrange the visit. Trustees will be mindful of encroaching on the learning environment. When individually visiting schools or departments, as a professional courtesy, Board members are also encouraged to notify the Superintendent that they will be visiting a school or department, and later provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.
- It is imperative that a staff member is not placed in a position by a Board member to provide any information beyond the information that the Board member would be provided by any regular community member; or complete any duty as requested. Management staff members are directed to relay requests from Board members to the Superintendent to ensure that appropriate information is provided to all Board members. This protocol does not imply, to either staff or to individual Board members, a censoring of private and informal conversations.
- In the interest of avoiding potential conflicts of interest and increasing transparency, members of the Board will resign from positions of leadership in school site based groups such as School Site Councils, English Learner Advisory Councils, Parent Teacher Organizations and similar groups. This does not preclude Board members from continuing to attend these meetings.

Board Meetings and the Agenda

- Meetings of the Board are held in public, but are not open-forum town hall meetings. Meetings will be conducted in such a way as to allow the public to provide input in the time allotted to ensure that multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations; however, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for Trustees to listen and learn from each other, taking public input into consideration without re-engaging the public.
- Board meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of the month. Most meetings will begin with Closed Session, beginning at 5:00pm. The Regular Public Meeting will begin at 6:00pm. Study Sessions and Special Board meetings shall be scheduled at the discretion of the Board.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

- The design of the Board agenda will follow the historical structure utilized by the Board. The design of the agenda may only be altered with the approval of the Board.
- The Superintendent, with the support of staff, will create each Board agenda. Board members may request items to be placed on the agenda. The Board President and Superintendent will discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting, in advance of the Board Meeting.
- When an individual Board member requests information, that information will be provided to all Board members. An individual Board member will, insofar as possible, work to let the Superintendent and staff know ahead of time when a request for information will be made public so the staff can be prepared to provide an answer. Individual 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 as expressed in the Local Control and Accountability Plan.
- Individual Board members are expected to self-monitor compliance to the Brown Act, including limiting Closed Session to the agenda item(s). Board members need equal access to information, and to operate within the Brown Act. All communication, including electronic or social media communication is subject to the Brown Act. Any communication received by a majority of the Board shall be deemed a public record and provided to the Superintendent to include in the Correspondence portion of the agenda. The Superintendent shall forward questions and answers to all Board members. Board members when responding shall not "reply to all."
- Board members will read the information provided to them and commit to ongoing professional development and training.
- Each Trustee has the obligation, in serving the community, to vote on each item presented to the Board. Abstention from voting must only take place when required by law, due to a potential conflict of interest.

Board Meetings and the Agenda (continued)

- The governance team will strive for brevity in deliberations, keeping remarks brief and to the point so that all opinions can be expressed and meetings can be efficient. Addressing each agenda item the Board shall normally adhere to the following process: staff presentation, Board discussion, questions for staff, input from community, and deliberation.
- Each Trustee respects the right of other Trustees to vote in the minority opinion. If so doing, each Trustee may, as a courtesy to the team, explain the reason for their minority vote, either during deliberation or before casting the vote.

The Board's Role in Collective Bargaining

Board members will be actively informed of the collective bargaining process to ensure the District is represented well by those selected to negotiate on behalf of the Board and Community. The involvement of the Board may include:

- Ensure that the ethical, fiscal, and educational goals of the Community are represented in the actions taken throughout the collective bargaining process;
- Participate by providing direction and guidance to those selected to represent the Board (District Negotiating Team), Board members may attend at-the-table negotiations in an observer role;
- Establish the bargaining approach to be utilized by its negotiations team;
- Set the District's collective bargaining parameters for its negotiation team;
- Expect, as the representative of the Board, that the Superintendent will ensure that the Board, collectively and individually, is informed on the issues and strategies implemented within the collective bargaining process; and,
- The Superintendent is the Collective Bargaining Spokesperson for the Board.

The Board's Relationship with the Superintendent

The Board will commit to work through and with the Superintendent on issues regarding the running of the District. The Board and Superintendent are expected to protect confidential information.

- The Superintendent will inform the Board as soon as possible of serious disciplinary action, serious safety concerns, serious/unexpected personnel changes, legal or liability concerns, notable achievements
- Board members will inform the Superintendent whenever they are made aware of any important situations.
- Board members will contact the Superintendent with any questions, requests for information, or concerns. The Superintendent will then be aware of all requests and ensures that the entire Board receives the same information.
- It is the Superintendent's responsibility to organize the staff in the manner that best serves the needs of the District. The Superintendent shall provide appropriate notice to the Board in advance of action being taken.
- The Board designates the Superintendent as the official spokesperson for the District. The Board President is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.
- The Superintendent will inform the Board when the media contacts the Superintendent.
- The Board commits to complete an annual evaluation of the Superintendent. The Board will set aside at least one special meeting for the purpose of developing and/or completing the mid-year and/or annual evaluation of the Superintendent. In consultation with the Superintendent, the evaluation process and associated documents will be developed and approved by the Board, not later than the first meeting in September. The evaluation process and instrument is designed to bring about the collective view of the Board. Thus the evaluation will reflect the majority view of the Board, as a whole.

Board Self-Evaluation

The Board commits to annually conduct a Board Self-Evaluation in order to continuously improve Board operations and to increase transparency of our processes.

The Ongoing Implementation of Board Approved Protocols

- Within 90 days of the election/appointment of a new member, a study session of the whole Board will be held for the purpose of reviewing/updating these governance protocols of the Board.
- Upon request of the Board, a special study session will be called at any time for the purpose of reviewing/updating these governance protocols of the Board. It is particularly valuable to call a special study session whenever there is a new Superintendent.