
**PIERCE JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL
DISTRICT**



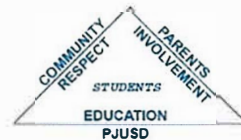
Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees:

John R. Friel
George Green
Melissa Doherty
Xochi Perez Dudley
Abel Gomez

Superintendent:

Carol Geyer





School District Governance

Locally elected school board members provide citizen oversight of the community's schools, and protect the public's interest in preserving a free and equitable public education system in the United States.

When governing effectively...

School boards ensure success for all students by making decisions that fulfill legal mandates and align district systems and resources to ensure long-term fiscal stability of the district.

In order to govern responsibly...

Boards must act collectively and openly, be guided by community interests, and informed by recommendations of the superintendent and professional staff.



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I. Unity of Purpose

Unity of Purpose is a common focus, overarching goals, and the values and beliefs governance team members share about children, the district and public education that help them transcend their individual differences to fulfill a greater purpose.

A. Principles

Stay focused on student achievement and student wellness using the motto “Student First” and the vision, mission, and goals approved by the Board:

- Govern together as a team to develop a common focus and purpose.
- Govern in a transparent, open, and accessible manner.
- Govern in collaboration with the superintendent and staff.
- Maintain a high standard of integrity based on local core values.
- Make high-quality decisions based upon available information.

B. Mission

The Pierce Joint Unified School District exists to create foundations for students to achieve success.

C. District Goals

1. Pierce Joint Unified School District students will graduate high school college and career ready.
2. Pierce Joint Unified School District students will feel a sense of connectedness academically, socially, emotionally, and physically in their schools.
3. Pierce Joint Unified School District will engage families and members of the greater school community as educational partners.

"Students First"





D. Governance Team Unity of Purpose

- Our shared purpose is to have the best learning environment for all students.
- We want to build trust and move the district forward.
- We want to become an effective team.
- We want to understand our collective responsibilities.
- We want to be a team with a common focus so that we are not a distraction to the district or community but a catalyst for the focused efforts of employees.
- We want the community to be able to see evidence of this focused direction.
- We want to be partners with the staff in positive change.
- We want to oversee the putting together of a first rate program and first rate facilities, ensuring that we continue to improve.
- We want to perpetuate a legacy of positive culture as people come and go.

E. Setting Direction for the District

It is the role of the Board of Trustees (the “Board”) to bring the beliefs, values and wishes of the community to the Board table. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Board to periodically ensure all stakeholders (i.e., parents, community members, staff and students), have been given the opportunity to express their desires about the education the Pierce Joint Unified School District (the “District”) should provide for our community’s children. The Board can then make sure the community’s perspective is reflected in the District’s direction-setting documents.

Gathering community input might involve holding focus groups, a town hall forum or a community conference.

If community members are brought together to provide input, it is vital to provide follow-up communications explaining how the information was utilized and what progress is being made on District objectives.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. The role of the trustees who sit on locally elected school boards is to ensure school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities. Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities. These are setting direction; establishing an effective and efficient structure; providing support; ensuring accountability; and providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools.

These five responsibilities represent core functions that are so fundamental to a school system's accountability to the public that they can only be performed by an elected governing body. Authority is granted as a whole, not each member individually. Therefore, board members fulfill these responsibilities by working together as a governance team with the superintendent to make decisions that will best serve all the students in the community.

A. Set the Direction for the Community's Schools

- Focus on student learning
- Assess needs/obtain baseline data
- Generate, review or revise setting direction documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators)
- Ensure an appropriate inclusive process is used
- Ensure these documents are the driving force for all district efforts

B. Establish an Effective and Efficient Structure for the School District

- Employ and support the superintendent
- Establish a human resources framework that includes policies for hiring and evaluating other personnel
- Oversee the development of and adopt policies
- Set a direction for and adopt the curriculum and required data-producing assessment systems
- Establish budget priorities, adopt the budget and oversee facility issues
- Provide direction for and vote to accept collective bargaining agreements



C. Provide Support Through Our Behavior and Actions

- Act with professional demeanor that models the district's beliefs and vision
- Make decisions and provide resources that support mutually agreed upon priorities and goals
- Uphold board-approved district policies and support staff implementation of board direction
- Ensure a positive working climate exists
- Be knowledgeable enough about district efforts to explain them to the public

D. Ensure Accountability to the Public

- Evaluate the superintendent
- Monitor, review and revise policies
- Serve as a judicial and appeals body
- Monitor student achievement and program effectiveness and require program changes as indicated
- Monitor and adjust district finances and periodically review facility issues
- Monitor the collective bargaining process

E. Act as Community Leaders

- Speak with a common voice about district priorities, goals and issues
 - Engage and involve the community in district schools and activities
 - Communicate clear information about policies, programs and fiscal condition of the district
 - Educate the community and the media about the issues facing students, the district and public education
 - Advocate for children, district programs and public education to the general public, key community members and local, state and national leaders
- (continued on next page)*



III. Positive 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.

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

IV. Governance Team Norms and Protocols

The Board of Trustees for the Pierce Joint 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.

The Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team in order to effectively meet district challenges. Agreed upon behaviors, or norms, and operating procedures, or protocols, support consistent behaviors and actions among team members. The purpose of the Pierce Joint Unified School District governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among board members, the superintendent, district staff, students, and the community.

A. Governance Meeting Norms

- Trustees will respect each other's opinion.
- Trustees will conduct themselves in a fair, positive, and professional manner.
- Trustees agree to be able to disagree, but not to be disagreeable.
- Trustees will act in a positive and professional manner.
- Trustees will accept Superintendent's role as a leader and promote it by action.
- Trustees will honor the Brown Act.
- Trustees will follow the chain of command.
- Trustees will maintain confidentiality.



B. Protocols for Effective Governance

1. Handling concerns from the public and staff

Principles: Board members should be responsive to the community and be good listeners. It's important for members of the governance team to be consistent in their responses to staff and the community. Board members need to stay within their function and not attempt to personally "fix" the problem. There are staff members whose job it is to remedy or deal with student and staff situations. Students and staff members have due process and confidentiality rights that cannot be violated. The school board is potentially the "Court of Last Resort" and members who have been too involved early in the situation may not be able to participate in a final hearing.

Protocol:

- When someone complains to us, we will listen carefully, remembering we are only hearing one side of the story, and then we will direct that person to the staff member in the district most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern.
- We will make sure they understand the appropriate order of whom to contact (teacher, then principal, then district staff) and are aware of any formal forms or policies that might assist them (e.g., written complaint form).
- This will ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the district are upheld.
- It will also clarify that one board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.
- As a representative of the public, it is important that the board member invite the person with the complaint to ultimately get back to him if the issue is not resolved.

B. Protocols for Effective Governance (continued)

2. Visiting Schools

Principles: Visiting schools reminds board members that the students and learning are our primary focus. We can observe programs that are moving us toward the achievement of our goals, and can show appreciation and recognize people for the good work that they are doing. Each board member should have the opportunity to get to know each of the school sites and have a range of experiences with each school. The board respects the busy schedule of staff and the anxiety that can be created by well-meaning, but unannounced visits to schools and/or committee meetings. It is important to follow a consistent process that is respectful of both staff and board member time.

Protocol:

- 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 also be cautious about encroaching on the learning environment. To assist in this matter, the superintendent will ensure principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his or her lesson when a board member visits a classroom.

Rigor
Relevance
Relationships

B. Protocols for Effective Governance (continued)

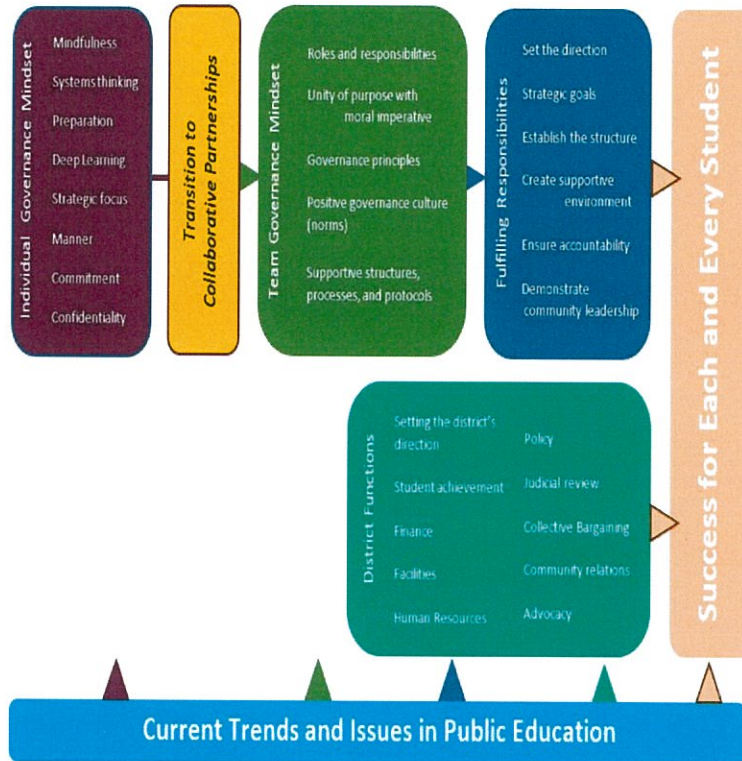
3. Bringing up new ideas or agenda items

Principles: Board members should have the opportunity to bring up new ideas or subjects of interest for future board meeting agendas and must understand the process in order to do so. Creating a clearly defined process develops consistency, maintains trust, and provides a process to think through issues that might have merit. Staff focus, energy and time, as well as other district resources must be focused on achieving the agreed upon district vision, goals and objectives and should not be diluted by new projects or the interests of individual board members. The board as a whole makes the determination of whether or not items of individual interest are added to a future agenda. We must honor the intent of the Brown Act and provide opportunities for members of the staff and the public to inform and hear board deliberations on all agenda items if they choose to do so.

Protocol:

- A board member's first step will always be to discuss the new topic or idea with the superintendent.
- Individual board members may bring up a new idea or request a future agenda item by explanation during "Items to be Agendized for the Next Regular Meeting" at the end of the meeting.
 - The board president will ask the superintendent for any comments on the item
 - A majority of board members need to concur to place a new item on a future agenda
- All new ideas or agenda item topics will be weighted against their effect on staff's ability to accomplish the district vision and goals.
 - Consideration will include:
 - the impact of the new agenda item or topic on agreed upon district priorities and goals;
 - the shift of staff time, and energy away from their primary responsibilities relative to achieving district goals; and
 - the reallocation of district resources away from agreed upon district priorities and goals.

Effective Governance System



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APPENDIX A:
Pierce Joint Unified School District
Applicable Board Bylaws

Pierce JUSD BB 9200 Limits of Board Member Authority

The Governing Board recognizes that the Board is the unit of authority over the district and that a Board member has not individual authority. Board members shall hold the education of students above any partisan principle, group interest, or personal interest.

Unless agreed to by the Board as a whole, individual members of the Board shall not exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools or command the services of any school employee. Individual Board members shall submit requests for information to the Superintendent. Board members shall refer Board-related correspondence to the Superintendent for forwarding to the Board or for placement on the Board's agenda, as appropriate.

Individual Board members do not have the authority to resolve complaints. Any Board member approached directly by a person with a complaint should refer the complainant to the Superintendent or designee so that the problem may receive proper consideration and be handled through the appropriate district process.

A Board member whose child is attending a district school should be aware of his/her role as a Board member when interacting with district employees about his/her child. Because his/her position as a Board member may inhibit the performance of school personnel, the Board member should inform the Superintendent or designee before volunteering in his/her child's classroom.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide a copy of the state's open meeting laws (Brown Act) to each Board member and to anyone who is elected to the Board but has not yet assumed office.

Board members and persons elected to the Board who have not yet assumed office are responsible for complying with the requirements of the Brown Act.

APPENDIX A: Pierce Joint Unified School District Applicable Board Bylaws

Pierce JUSD BB 9121 President

The Governing Board shall elect a president from among its members to provide leadership on behalf of the Board and the educational community it serves.

The president shall preside at all Board meetings. He/she shall:

1. Call the meeting to order at the appointed time
2. Announce the business to come before the Board in its proper order
3. Enforce the Board's policies relating to the conduct of meetings and help ensure compliance with applicable requirements of the Brown Act
4. Recognize persons who desire to speak, and protect the speaker who has the floor from disturbance or interference
5. Explain what the effect of a motion would be if it is not clear to every member
6. Restrict discussion to the question when a motion is before the Board
7. Rule on issues of parliamentary procedure
8. Put motions to a vote, and state clearly the result of the vote
9. Be responsible for the orderly conduct of all Board meetings

The president shall perform other duties in accordance with law and Board policy including, but not limited to:

1. Signing all instruments, acts and orders necessary to carry out state requirements and the will of the Board
2. Consulting with the Superintendent or designee on the preparation of Board agendas
3. Working with the Superintendent to ensure that Board members have necessary materials and information
4. Subject to Board approval, appointing and dissolving all committees
5. Calling such meetings of the Board as he/she may deem necessary, giving notice as prescribed by law
6. Representing the district as governance spokesperson, in conjunction with the Superintendent

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.

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

**APPENDIX A: Pierce Joint Unified School District
Applicable Board Bylaws**

Pierce JUSD BB 9123 Clerk

The Governing Board shall elect a clerk from its own membership at the annual organizational meeting.

The duties of the clerk shall be to:

1. Certify or attest to actions taken by the Board when required
2. Maintain such other records or reports as required by law
3. Sign documents on behalf of the district as directed by the Board
4. Serve as presiding officer in the absence of the president and vice-president
5. Notify Board members and members-elect of the date and time for the annual organizational meeting
6. Perform any other duties assigned by the Board

Pierce JUSD BB 9323 Meeting Conduct

Meeting Procedures

All Governing Board meetings shall begin on time and shall be guided by an agenda prepared in accordance with Board bylaws and posted and distributed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act (open meeting requirements) and other applicable laws.

The Board president shall conduct Board meetings in accordance with Board bylaws and procedures that enable the Board to efficiently consider issues and carry out the will of the majority.

Quorum and Abstentions

The Board shall act by a majority vote of all of the membership constituting the Board.

The Board believes that when no conflict of interest requires abstention, its members have a duty to vote on issues before them. When a member abstains, their abstention shall not be counted for purposes of determining whether a majority of the membership of the Board has taken action.

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**APPENDIX A: Pierce Joint Unified School District
Applicable Board Bylaws**

Pierce JUSD BB 9323 Meeting Conduct (continued)

Public Participation

Members of the public are encouraged to attend Board meetings and to address the Board concerning any item on the agenda or within the Board's jurisdiction. So as not to inhibit public participation, persons attending Board meetings shall not be required to sign in, complete a questionnaire, or otherwise provide their name or other information as a condition of attending the meeting.

In order to conduct district business in an orderly and efficient manner, the Board requires that public presentations to the Board comply with the following procedures:

1. The Board shall give members of the public an opportunity to address the Board on any item of interest to the public that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board, either before or during the Board's consideration of the item.
2. At a time so designated on the agenda at a regular meeting, members of the public may bring before the Board matters that are not listed on the agenda. The Board shall take no action or discussion on any item not appearing on the posted agenda, except as authorized by law.
3. Without taking action, Board members or district staff members may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by the public about items not appearing on the agenda. Additionally, on their own initiative or in response to questions posed by the public, Board members or staff members may ask a question for clarification, make a brief announcement, or make a brief report on their own activities.

Furthermore, the Board or a Board member may provide a reference to staff or other resources for factual information, ask staff to report back to the Board at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter, or take action directing staff to place a matter of business on a future agenda.
4. The Board need not allow the public to speak on any item that has already been considered by a committee composed exclusively of Board members at a public meeting where the public had the opportunity to address the committee on that item. However, if the Board determines that the item has been substantially changed since the committee heard the item, the Board shall provide an opportunity for the public to speak

**APPENDIX A: Pierce Joint Unified School District
Applicable Board Bylaws**

Pierce JUSD BB 9323 Meeting Conduct (continued)

5. A person wishing to be heard by the Board shall first be recognized by the president and shall then proceed to comment as briefly as the subject permits.

In general, individual speakers will be allowed three minutes to address the Board on each agenda or nonagenda item, and the Board will limit the total time for public input on each item to 20 minutes. However, in exceptional circumstances when necessary to ensure full opportunity for public input, the Board president may, with Board consent, adjust the amount of time allowed for public input and/or the time allotted for each speaker. Any such adjustment shall be done equitably so as to allow a diversity of viewpoints. The president may also ask members of the public with the same viewpoint to select a few individuals to address the Board on behalf of that viewpoint.

In order to ensure the non-English speakers receive the same opportunity to directly address the Board, any member of the public who utilizes a translator shall be provided at least twice the allocated time to address the Board, unless simultaneous translation equipment is used to allow the Board to hear the translated public testimony simultaneously.

6. The Board president may rule on the appropriateness of a topic, subject to the following conditions:
- If a topic would be suitable addressed at a later time, the Board president may indicate the time and place when it should be presented.
 - The Board shall not prohibit public criticism of its policies, procedures, programs, services, acts, or omissions.
 - The Board shall not prohibit criticism of district employees, however, whenever a member of the public initiates specific complaints or charges against an individual employee, the Board president shall inform the complainant of the appropriate complaint procedure. *(continued on next page)*

**APPENDIX A: Pierce Joint Unified School District
Applicable Board Bylaws**

Pierce JUSD BB 9323 Meeting Conduct (continued)

7. The Board president shall not permit any disturbances or willful interruption of Board meetings. Persistent disruption by an individual or group shall be grounds for the president to terminate the privilege of addressing the Board.

The Board may remove disruptive individuals and order the room cleared if necessary. In this case, members of the media not participating in the disturbance shall be allowed to remain, and individuals not participating in such disturbances may be allowed to remain at the discretion of the Board. When the room is ordered cleared due to a disturbance, further Board proceedings shall concern only matters appearing on the agenda.

When such disruptive conduct occurs, the Superintendent or designee shall contact local law enforcement as necessary.

Recording by the Public

Members of the public may record an open Board meeting using an audio or video recorder, still or motion picture camera, cell phone, or other device, provided that the noise, illumination, or obstruction of view does not persistently disrupt the meeting. The Superintendent or designee may designate locations from which members of the public may make such recordings without causing a distraction.

If the Board finds that noise, illumination, or obstruction of view related to these activities would persistently disrupt the proceedings, these activities shall be discontinued or restricted as determined by the Board.



In order to support a positive working relationship among the Pierce Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees, the staff, students and community, we have reviewed and agreed to the norms and protocols outlines in the 2023 Governance Handbook annually at the Annual Organizational Meeting



John R. Friel, President



George Green, Vice-President



Melissa Doherty, Clerk



Xochi Perez Dudley



Abel Gomez, Member



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