



**Brawley Union High School District**  
**Governance Handbook**

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## **Brawley Union High School District Vision**

To prepare students to become productive global citizens.

## **Brawley Union High School District Mission**

To provide a student centered, safe and secure learning environment for all, focused on academic achievement through high quality instruction.

### **Strategic Goals**

- Increase the educational achievement of all of our students
- Increase college and career readiness
- Close achievement gaps
- Provide a positive school climate
- Improve communication efforts among stakeholders
- Ensure a safe and orderly environment

### **Core Values & Beliefs**

We all belong to the Brawley Union High School District family. Our core values and beliefs are rooted in:

- Excellence in learning, in teaching and in service to our students
- Equity in access, resource allocation and educational opportunities
- Engagement with students, families and our community
- Enrichment in curricular and extracurricular offerings and activities

## **Roles and responsibilities of board members and the superintendent**

### **Characteristics of Effective Governance Teams**

- Communicate a common vision.
- Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for ALL students.
- Value, support and advocate for public education.
- Govern within board adopted policies and procedures.
- Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform board deliberations.
- Periodically evaluate the governance team's effectiveness.

### **Characteristics of Effective Trustees**

- Govern in a dignified, professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Operate openly, with trust and integrity.
- Take collective responsibility for the governance team's performance; agree on behavioral norms and operational protocols.
- Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the board and among staff, students, parents, and the community.
- Understand the distinctions between board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the superintendent and staff.
- Understand that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individuals.
- Keep confidential matters confidential.
- Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be informed and effective leaders.

### **Board Roles**

**The role of the board is to provide each student with an education of the highest possible quality within the limits of financial support provided by the State of California.** To accomplish this, board members are responsible for five roles identified by the California School Boards Association ("CSBA"):

- **Setting the direction** for the district by involving parents/guardians, community, students and staff while focusing on student learning and achievement.
- **Establishing an effective and efficient structure** by employing the superintendent, developing and adopting policies, establishing academic expectations and adopting curriculum and instructional materials, establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget, providing safe and adequate facilities to support student learning, and setting parameters for negotiations with employee organizations and ratifying collective bargaining agreements.
- **Providing support to the superintendent and staff** by following standards of responsible governance, making decisions and providing resources that support district priorities and goals, upholding board policies, and being effective spokespersons by being knowledgeable about district programs and goals.

- **Ensuring accountability** through evaluation of the superintendent; monitoring and evaluating policies; serving as a judicial and appeals body; monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness; approving, monitoring and adjusting district budgets; and monitoring the collective bargaining process.
- **Providing community leadership and advocacy on behalf of students, the educational program, and public education.**

### **Superintendent Roles**

CSBA identifies the following standards and roles for superintendents working with the Board of Education:

- Promotes the success of all students and supports the efforts of the board to focus on student learning and achievement.
- Values, advocates and supports public education and all stakeholders.
- Recognizes and respects the different perspectives and styles of board members, staff, students, parents, and community, ensuring the diverse range of views inform board decisions.
- Acts with dignity, treats everyone with civility and respect, and understands the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- Serves as a model for the value of lifelong learning and supports the board’s continuous professional development.
- Works with the board as a “governance team” and assures collective responsibility for building a unity of purpose, common vision, and positive organizational culture.
- Recognizes that the board/superintendent governance relationship is supported by the district’s management team.
- Understands the distinctions between board and staff roles, and respects the roles of the board as the representative of the community.
- Understands that the authority rests with the board as a whole, provides guidance to the board to assist in decision-making, and provides leadership based on the direction of the board as a whole.
- Communicates openly with trust and integrity, including providing all board members with equal access to information, and recognizes the importance of both responsive and anticipatory communications.
- Accepts leadership responsibility and accountability for implementing the vision, goals and policies of the district.

### **Board Norms**

The governance team commits to accomplishing these standards and roles through:

- Focusing on all students
- Adherence to the Brown Act
- Demonstrating respect
- Creating transparency
- Communicating openly
- Listening actively
- Being collaborative
- Taking the time needed to govern effectively
- Encouraging everyone’s ideas and point of view

### **Welcoming new members**

The board president meets with each newly elected member individually to provide a copy of the Governance

Handbook, the schedule of meetings, the format for meetings, and governance team operations.

The superintendent meets with each newly elected member to provide an overview of the district and to introduce cabinet members and other staff who will be communicating with the board.

The superintendent will give newly elected members a copy of the Brown Act and inform them they must conform to its requirements as if they had already assumed office.

The governance team attends the swearing in ceremony and reception for the newly elected members.

### **Annual Organizational Meeting**

The annual organizational meeting will be held within the required 15-day period commencing on the first Friday in December.

At this meeting, the Board shall

- Elect a Clerk, Vice President and President from its members
- Affirm the regular school board meeting dates and starting/ending times for the remainder of the year, and
- Appoint representatives to specific organizations and committees

### **Speaking with a common voice**

All public statements in the name of the board are made by the board president, or if appropriate, by the superintendent.

When speaking to community groups, the media, or to the public, individual board members have a responsibility to identify personal viewpoints as such and not as the viewpoint of the board.

When a board decision has been reached, all board members shall support that decision until it is amended or rescinded by board action. Any board member who may wish to criticize or oppose any specific board action should do so in an open board meeting.

### **Assigning work to staff**

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. Board members are to channel their requests and/or concerns directly to the superintendent (or, if necessary, through the board president).

### **Addressing conflict among board members**

Because the governance team norms are designed to create an open, respectful, collaborative culture, members will engage in dialogue while welcoming an open discussion with different points of view. Members will demonstrate an ability to disagree on issues without taking the disagreements personally. Members will strive to maintain neutral body language and tone during deliberations.

### **School visitations**

School visitations are encouraged to build understanding of the district's instructional programs, curriculum, and staffs. Board members should make appointments with the school principal prior to visiting a campus. "Drive-byes" or "drop-ins" on staff and schools is discouraged and should be coordinated with the superintendent or his/her assistant.

## **Board Meetings**

### **Placing items on board agendas**

Any board member or member of the public may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting. A request from the public or other interested party shall be submitted in writing to the board president or superintendent with supporting documents and information, if any, at least fifteen (15) business days before the scheduled meeting date. A request from a board member shall be submitted in writing to the board president or superintendent with supporting documents and information, if any, at least eight (8) business days before the scheduled meeting date. Items submitted less than the days indicated before the scheduled meeting date may be postponed to a later meeting in order to allow sufficient time for consideration and research of the issue.

### **The role of board members during board meetings**

The authority to direct action rests solely with the full board during public board meetings. A majority vote provides direction to the superintendent. All members share a common responsibility to ensure the Brown Act is followed.

### **Individual board member's request for information, materials or action**

It is important for trustees to be well informed, as oversight of the district is one of the main functions of the board. Board members have an opportunity to meet with the superintendent one on one before the board meeting to discuss comments/questions on the agenda. Within Brown Act guidelines and the extent possible, board members should attempt to have the superintendent answer questions and resolve concerns with items in the proposed agenda at this meeting in order to save time at the subsequent public meeting.

Trustees recognize that they have no power as individuals to direct staff actions, and that compiling information in response to trustee requests can take staff away from their day-to-day operations of schools and the district. 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 in a public meeting so the staff can be prepared to provide a thorough response. Staff will make every effort to ensure that board agenda items include thorough background and information. Requests for information not on the board agenda should be made to the superintendent who will ensure the appropriate staff person responds. All information provided by the administration in response to a request by a trustee shall be provided to all other trustees at the same time. Trustees should self-regulate the amount of requests for information regarding issues not on the board agenda.

### **Board meeting guidelines**

It is important to recognize that a board meeting is the time for the board to do their work in public view. After staff input and public comment, board members are encouraged to ask questions and explain their thinking related to the topic at hand. The board president recognizes members who desire to speak, alternating so that all members have the opportunity to speak. There is not a time limit or limit to the number of questions or comments that a board member may make, but each board member should be respectful of giving other members the opportunity to speak. Nothing in this section will preclude members from speaking multiple times until all discussion is concluded. Unless a point is important to further understanding of the immediate discussion, the board president will allow all other members to speak first and then add his/her comments or questions.

### **Public comments**

Members of the public shall have an opportunity to address the board on any item of interest that is within the

subject matter jurisdiction of the board (Education Code section 35145.4, Government Code section 54954.3). If the public comments on items not appearing on the posted board agenda, the board cannot take action or discuss the comments (Government Code section 54954.2), other than to briefly acknowledge the comments and, if desired, to ask staff for follow up information.

### **Voting**

A majority vote of all members of the board is necessary for the election of officers or for any other action by the board unless otherwise specified by law. Voting shall be by voice and the board Administrative Assistant records the votes by member which is placed into the minutes of the meeting.

Unless otherwise provided by law, affirmative votes by a majority of the board's membership are required to approve any action under consideration, regardless of the number of members present.

The board shall take no action outside of a public meeting except on those matters and under those conditions authorized for closed sessions. (Government Code sections 54957, 54957.7; Board Bylaw 9323.2)

### **Voting no or abstaining**

Each trustee respects the right of other trustees to vote "no" on an issue. Everyone agrees it is a courtesy to the governance team to explain the reasons for the "no" vote either during deliberation or before casting the vote. Abstaining on a vote must be announced at the time the topic is first brought up and shall be based on one of the following: 1) the matter affects a close relative of the board member (Education Code section 35707); 2) the vote is to replace the board member's position on the board (Education Code section 35178); or 3) "remote interests" as listed in Government Code section 1091. If a board member abstains, his/her abstention shall be considered to concur with the action taken by the majority of those who vote, whether affirmatively or negatively. If a member is absent at the previous meeting, he/she will abstain from voting on the approval of that meeting's minutes.

### **Quorum**

A quorum is the minimum number of voting members who must be present at a properly called board meeting in order to conduct business in the name of the board, and is established when a majority of the board members (at least three of the filled positions) are in attendance (Education Code section 35164, Board Bylaw 9323).

## **Additional Board Information**

### **Board-appointed committees**

Board members may appoint community members to serve on any created sub-committee. Newly elected board members will be given the option to appoint their own committee members or continue with the current appointments.

Board members serve as the conduit between a board-appointed committee and the board as a whole. Board members are not voting members of board-appointed committees.

If a board member wants to attend a board-appointed committee meeting of which he/she is not the board liaison, the board member should contact the board Administrative Assistant. This will eliminate the possibility of three or more board members being in attendance at the meeting.

### **Electronic media**

The Board of Trustees will use electronic media (e.g., email and texting) carefully to ensure that there is no violation of the Brown Act (Government Code sections 54950-54962). The Brown Act prohibits board members from exchanging information outside of a board meeting to:

- develop collective concurrence,
- advance or clarify an issue,
- facilitate agreement or compromise, or
- advance an ultimate resolution.

The board recognizes that by using “Reply All” in email responses, the email:

- becomes part of the deliberative process,
- creates a public record, and
- inhibits opportunity for any other two board members to have a conversation on a topic.

Board members will be aware of and follow district policy as it pertains to electronic communication. The district is subject to requests for public documents as provided by in the California Public Records Act (Government Code section 6250 et seq.). Public documents include emails and other correspondence from board members as well as from employees.

### **Complaints from community/staff**

When an issue is brought to a board member, the board member will use active listening to hear what the complaint or issue is. Board members need to remain cognizant of their responsibility for judicial review, staff and student confidentiality, and due process when talking with the complainant.

Restate what the complainant has said to ensure that you have heard the information correctly. Ask the person what he/she would like the board member to do with the information and what the individual would like to see as a possible solution. Explain that you will be sharing the information with the superintendent.

Redirect the complainant to communicate with appropriate personnel and utilize the appropriate complaint procedure. Ask the individual to follow up if the problem isn't resolved.

Notify the superintendent as soon as possible with details of the complaint.

## **Additional Resources**

Brawley Union High School District Board Bylaws link:

<http://www.gamutonline.net/district/brawleyhigh/PolicyCategoryList/2323/9>

Brawley Union High School District Board Meeting Calendar:

<https://www.brawleyhigh.org/cms/lib/CA01902259/Centricity/Domain/8/2018-19%20Board%20Meeting%20Calendar.pdf>

Brawley Union High School District Governance Calendar:

<https://www.brawleyhigh.org/cms/lib/CA01902259/Centricity/Domain/8/BUHSD%201819%20Governance%20Calendar.docx.pdf>

Brawley Union High School District Governance Calendar (Narrative Version):

<https://www.brawleyhigh.org/cms/lib/CA01902259/Centricity/Domain/8/BUHSD%201819%20Governance%20Calendar%20Narrative%20Format.doc.pdf>

Brawley Union High School District Organizational Chart:

<https://www.brawleyhigh.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=1119&dataid=2734&FileName=BUHSD%20District%20Organizational%20Chart%201718.pdf>

Brawley Union High School District MOTF Organizational Chart:

<https://www.brawleyhigh.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=1119&dataid=2736&FileName=BUHSD%20MOTF%20Organizational%20Chart%201718.pdf>

Brawley Union High School Site Organizational Chart:

<https://www.brawleyhigh.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=1119&dataid=2735&FileName=BUHSD%20Site%20Organizational%20Chart%201718.pdf>

California Department of Education list of Acronyms and Initialisms:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/aa/ap/index.asp>