



SIERRA SANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK 2023

Board of Trustees

Mr. Bill Farris, President

Mr. Mike Scott, Vice President

Ms. Mary Campbell

Mr. Robert Campbell

Mr. Kurt Rockwell

Superintendent

Dr. Dave Ostash



SIERRA SANDS Unified School District

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, commitment to norms and coming to agreement on protocols/formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all students.

Board of Trustees

Mr. Bill Farris—Board President



Mr. Farris has lived in Ridgecrest since 1969 and served on the Board of Education from 1984 through 2006 and 2008 to the present. His children and grandchildren have been continuously enrolled in Sierra Sands schools since the early 1980s. For the last couple of decades, he has extended that service by representing Kern and Tulare counties on the board for the California School Boards Association as the Region 12 Director. He is also a director on the Kern County School Boards Association, and serves on the School District Organization Committee for Kern County.

Mr. Mike Scott—Board Vice President



Mr. Scott was elected to the Board of Education in 1996. He previously served as the DARE officer for our schools during his 34 year career in law enforcement. He achieved the position of Sergeant with the Ridgecrest Police Department, a Lieutenant with the Kern County Sheriff's Office and the Chief of Police with the China Lake Police Department. Upon his retirement from law enforcement he worked as a Security Specialist for NAWS China Lake for five years.

Ms. Mary Campbell—Trustee



Mrs. Campbell was elected to the Board of Education in 2022. She started her teaching career working for SSUSD in 1997. She has taught at Inyokern, Richmond, Faller, and Gateway Elementary Schools. Before retiring, she taught 7th grade Life Science for 4 years at Murray Middle School. She graduated from Cal State Fullerton in 1988 with a degree in Child Development and has completed over 90 units of supplementary teacher credentialing units. Mrs. Campbell and her husband both graduated from Burroughs High School along with all three of their children.

Mr. Robert Campbell—Trustee



Mr. Campbell was elected to the Board of Education in 2022. He is a long time resident of Ridgecrest and a Burroughs High School alum. After graduating from Point Loma College, he returned to Ridgecrest and began a 40 year teaching career with the District. His two children, a son-in-law and daughter-in-law are all graduates of Burroughs High School and he currently has two grandchildren attending school within Sierra Sands.

Mr. Kurt Rockwell—Trustee



Mr. Rockwell was elected to the Board of Education in 2006. He attended elementary, junior high and high school in Sierra Sands and is a proud graduate of Sherman E. Burroughs High School. Mr. Rockwell is the Program Manager for Earthquake Recovery Information Technology Projects at the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division at China Lake and Pt. Mugu, CA. His children have attended elementary, middle, and high school at Sierra Sands and are graduates of Burroughs High School. Mr. Rockwell is a graduate of the California School Boards Association Masters in Governance Program and is an elected member of the CSBA Delegate Assembly.

GOVERNING EFFECTIVELY

GOVERNANCE—A Definition: *School district governance is the process of reaching agreements that balance and reflect community values, beliefs and priorities in policies that focus and align all district efforts to enhance student achievement.* -CSBA

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of a school district:

- The actions and behaviors of individuals
- The board and superintendent coming together to govern, and
- The performance of governance roles and responsibilities by the governance team

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 **(1) maintain a unity of purpose; (2) agree on and govern within appropriate rules; (3) create and sustain a positive governance culture; and (4) create supportive structures and processes for effective governance.**

Why adopt and utilize CSBA's Professional Governance Standards?

The Overall Purposes of CSBA's Professional Governance Standards:

- Help increase the effectiveness of governing boards, and
- Raise parent, public and media awareness about the critical role of governing boards.

Why Adopt and Utilize?

Because local governance teams are critical to positive, sustained public school reform, and the Professional Governance Standards:

- Help keep governance teams focused on learning and achievement for all students.
- Promote dialogue about governance, which leads to a greater understanding among members of the governance team about roles and expectations.
- Help establish a common vocabulary about governance and serve as a framework for building or maintaining a district culture focused on effective governance.
- Publicly affirm the board's commitment to effective governance.
- Demonstrate the willingness of board members to be accountable to each other and to the public.
- Provide a tool for governance teams to evaluate their effectiveness.
- Help governance teams identify areas where continuing education would be useful.
- Help formalize a positive governance culture for when new board members or superintendents join the governance team.
- Promote a greater awareness and understanding among parents, the media and the public about what boards do and how they can operate most effectively.
- Help build trust and foster greater participation by parents and the public in the schools.
- Provide parents, the media and the public with a meaningful basis for assessing the effectiveness of their local governance teams.
- Help promote the value of local governance in our democracy.
- Provide a way for effective governance teams to receive recognition.
- Help educate future candidates and voters about the critical jobs of boards.

Role and Responsibilities

Citizen Oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. School board members are locally elected public officials entrusted with governing a community's public schools. The role of the school board is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities. Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities:

- Setting direction
- Establishing an effective and efficient structure
- Providing support
- Ensuring accountability
- 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 to the board 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.

In California, there are approximately 1,000 school districts and county offices of education that are governed by more than 5,000 school board members. California's is the largest public school system in the nation, serving more than 6 million students - a collective student body larger than the total population of many other states.

The Individual Trustee

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

TO BE EFFECTIVE, AN INDIVIDUAL TRUSTEE:

- 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 with individuals.

The Board

School districts and county offices of education are governed by boards, not by individual trustees. 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 UNITY OF PURPOSE AND:

- Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students.
- Communicate a common vision.
- Operate openly, with trust and integrity.
- Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Govern within 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.

The Board's Jobs

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, there are a number of specific jobs that effective boards must carry out.

EFFECTIVE BOARDS:

- Involve the community, parents, students and staff in developing a common vision for the district focused on learning and achievement and 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 monitoring 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 educational environment is provided to all students.
- Establish a framework for the district's collective bargaining process and adopt responsible agreements.
- Provide community leadership on educational issues and advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local, state and federal levels.

Superintendent Governance Standards

As a corollary to the CSBA Professional Governance Standards, a team of California superintendents including the ACSA Superintendents Committee and the CSBA Superintendents Advisory Council has developed a set of Superintendent Governance Standards. We highly recommend that these be included as part of the Professional Governance Standards adoption.

The Superintendent:

- Promotes the success of all students and supports the efforts of the Board of Trustees to keep the district focused on learning and achievement.
- Values, advocates and supports public education and all stake holders.
- Recognizes and respects the differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community — and ensures that 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, communicating a common vision and creating a positive organizational culture.
- Recognizes that the board/superintendent governance relationship is supported by the management team in each district.
- Understands the distinctions between board and staff roles, and respects the role of the Board as the representative of the community.
- Understands that 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 members of the Board with equal access to information, and recognizing the importance of both responsive and anticipatory communications.
- Accepts leadership responsibility and accountability for implementing the vision, goals and policies of the district.

IDENTIFYING OUR UNITY OF PURPOSE

SSUSD Vision, Goals, Guiding Principles

VISION: Growing a Community of Engaged Learners Connecting to Future Opportunities through Innovative Education

GOALS:

SIERRA SANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 2020-2023 Goals

- 1 • Provide a rigorous academic program which promises college and career readiness.
- 2 • Maximize student engagement and achievement.
- 3 • Grow family and community partnerships that benefit students.
- 4 • Guarantee safe and well-maintained facilities.
- 5 • Develop, value, and retain a high-quality diverse educational team.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES DURING PANDEMIC

- Health and safety of students and staff
- Follow the law and take all reasonable steps to follow appropriate guidance
- Socialization and connection with students
- Provide nutritional services to our students
- Optimize our means of educating our students

AGREEMENTS TO SUPPORT GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

The Board of Trustees for the SSUSD 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 SSUSD District governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among board members, the superintendent, district staff, students, and the community.

We have reviewed and agreed to the aforementioned governance team roles and responsibilities in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the SSUSD Board of Trustees, staff, students, and the community. We shall review, revise, or renew these agreements at our annual governance workshop.

Updated on this 20th day of April, 2023

Mr. Bill Farris, President

Dr. Dave Ostash, Superintendent

What Every Board Member Needs To Know

– About The District –

Need to Know:

1. Name of school district: Sierra Sands Unified School District
 2. School district address: 113 Felspar Ave., Ridgecrest, CA 93555
 3. Main district phone number: (760) 499-1600
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4. Superintendent:	Phone:	Cell Phone:	Email:
Dave Ostash	760-499-1602	760-371-5645	dostash@ssusd.org
5. Superintendent's Secretary / Assistant:	Phone:	FAX:	Email:
Diane Naslund	760-499-1600	760-375-3338	dnaslund@ssusd.org

6. Elected Board Members:	Mobile Phone:	Work phone:	Email:
Mary Campbell	760-499-9680		mary.campbell@ssusd.org
Robert Campbell	760-382-1677		robert.campbell@ssusd.org
Bill Farris	760-677-9102		bfarris@ssusd.org
Kurt Rockwell	760-382-9287		krockwell@ssusd.org
Mike Scott	760-608-9072		miscott@ssusd.org

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7. Communities served by the district: Ridgecrest, Inyokern, Randsburg, Johannesburg, Pearsonville
 8. Number of employees in district:

Certificated	<u>304 (286 DATA, 18 DAGA)</u>
Classified	<u>339 (143 full time, 188 part time)</u>
Management	<u>31</u>
Confidential	<u>8</u>
Substitutes	<u>Certificated 71, Classified 24</u>
 9. What unions are in place?

<u>Desert Area Teachers Assoc.</u>	<u>President Eileen Poole</u>
<u>CA School Employees Assoc.</u>	<u>President Sylvia Payanes</u>
<u>Desert Area Guidance Assoc.</u>	<u>President Brianna Rivera</u>

10. Grade levels served by the district: Transitional Kindergarten (TK)-12. Plus adult school

11. Number of students enrolled: Total: 4,990

Pre-school _____ Elementary school 2314 Middle school 1193
High school 1396 Continuation school 87 Adult Ed. 138

12. Student Population:

Ethnic Groups by Percentage: 56.6% white (non-Hispanic), 28.3% Hispanic, 5.2% African American

Percentage of English language learners: 6.3%

Primary languages spoken at home other than English: Spanish

Percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch: 60%

13. Number of square miles the district covers: 970

14. Home to school transportation: District operated? Yes Contracted to? Occasionally we will contract out a field trip, or high school athletic trip, with Kern County Superintendent of Schools if we are short a driver.

15. Number of schools: Total: 10

State Pre-schools 3 (Faller, Inyokern, Pierce) Elementary schools 6 Middle schools 2

High schools 1 Continuation schools 1 Charter schools 0 Adult Ed. 1

16. District Office Departments:	Title & Name of Department Head:	Phone Number:
Human Resources	Assistant Superintendent, HR Bryan Auld	760-499-1620
Curriculum and Instruction	Assistant Superintendent, C&I Michelle Savko	760-499-1640
Business Services	Assistant Superintendent, Bus. Services Pam Smith	760-499-1604
Special Education Local Plan Area, SELPA	Executive Director, SELPA Paul Delbick	760-499-1702
Technology	Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Donnie Morrison	760-499-1633
Pupil Support Services	Coordinator of PSS Kevin Wythe	760-499-1700
Special Projects	Coordinator of State & Federal Programs Lisa Decker	760-499-1640

Construction	Director of Construction Randy Coit	760-499-1870
Finance & Budget	Chief Financial Officer Lori McGuire	760-499-1604
Maintenance/Operations	Director of Maintenance Shane Herbert	760-499-1870
Nutritional Services and Warehouse	Supervisor of Nutritional Services/Warehouse Sue LeBlanc	760-499-1880

17. Standing Advisory Committees,

Panels or Commissions:	Staff Member Responsible:	Board Representation:
Community Advisory Committee	Paul Delbick, Executive Director, SELPA	N/A
CTE Stakeholder Advisory Committee	Lisa Decker, Coordinator Chris Ostermann, BHS Assistant Principal	N/A
District English Learner Advisory Committee	Lisa Decker, Coordinator Michelle Savko, Assistant Supt. Jennifer Williams, EL TOSA	N/A
District Instructional Materials Review Committee	Michelle Savko, Assistant Supt.	N/A
English Learner Advisory Committee (per site)	Jennifer Williams, EL TOSA Site administration	N/A
GATE Advisory Committee	Lisa Decker, Coordinator	N/A
Parent Advisory Committee	Michelle Savko, Assistant Supt. Lisa Decker, Coordinator	N/A
Superintendent's Council	Dr. Dave Ostash, Superintendent	N/A

18. District Schools:

Name of School:	Grade Levels:	Principal:	Phone Number:
Burroughs High School	9-12	Carrie Cope	760-499-1800
Faller Elementary School	TK-5	Jennifer Brown	760-499-1690
Gateway Elementary School	TK-5	Margaret Bergens	760-499-1850
Inyokern Elementary School	TK-5	Beverly Ewbank	760-499-1683
James Monroe Middle School	6-8	Amy Self	760-499-1830
Las Flores Elementary School	TK-5	Sarah Tate	760-499-1860
Mesquite High School	9-12	Jo Anne McClelland	760-499-1810
Murray Middle School	6-8	John Cosner	760-499-1820
Pierce Elementary School	TK-5	Sandra Castro	760-499-1670
Richmond Elementary School	TK-5	Michael Yancey	760-499-1840
Sierra Sands Adult School	9-12	Jo Anne McClelland	760-499-1811

What Every New Board Member Needs To Know

– About Governance Team Operations –

Need to Know:

1. Board meeting dates and times: Third Thursday every month at 7:00 pm (unless otherwise approved)

Board Officers:	Role:
President:	Bill Farris
Vice President/Clerk:	Mike Scott
Secretary:	Dave Ostash
Other:	

3. Order of items on the board meeting agenda:

1. Adoption of Agenda	6. Educational Administration	11. Business Administration
2. Approval of Minutes	7. Policy Development/Review	12. IKSFA Directors Meeting
3. Programs & Presentations	8. Personnel Administration	13. Consent Calendar
4. Public Hearing	9. General Administration	14. Future Agenda Items
5. Reports & Communications	10. Construction Administration	15. Adjournment

4. The purpose of the Public Comment section of the board meeting: Hear input from community members for items not on the agenda.
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5. The purpose of the Board Comment section of the board meeting: Hear any comments or updates from members of the Board.
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6. Governance Norms – How we behave toward members of the governance team and others:

1. Respectful
2. Receptive
3. Honest
4. Thoughtful
5. Patient

Need to Know:

7. Governance Protocols – How we do business:

How the board meeting agenda is developed and reviewed and by whom:	Superintendent develops the meeting agenda. Board president reviews the meeting agenda.
Placing items on the board meeting agenda:	Superintendent places items on the board agenda. He/she will consider requests by the board and the public.
Obtaining additional information about board meeting agenda items before the meeting:	It is best practice that board members will contact the superintendent before the board meeting with requests for additional information.
Obtaining answers to questions about board meeting agenda items before the meeting:	Contact the superintendent.
Alerting the board president of the desire to speak on a particular agenda item:	Contact the superintendent and the board president.
Introducing new ideas for the board's consideration:	Use "Future Agenda" time on board agenda and board president will ask for board consensus.
Responding to staff or community complaints or concerns at board meetings:	Items that are not on the agenda cannot be discussed toward a conclusion. Information will be referred to the superintendent for appropriate future response.
Communications between and among the board, board members and the superintendent:	In general, communication shall occur in public meetings. Informal communication may occur so long as the content of the conversation does not contribute toward a conclusion.
Communications between the board and other staff:	Communication will start with the superintendent.
Responding to community or staff complaints or concerns outside of board meetings:	Board member may acknowledge complaint/concern; when appropriate, board member will redirect to appropriate staff member. Board member will be sure the superintendent is made aware.
How, when and whom to notify about visiting school sites or participating in district activities:	Contact the superintendent's office for protocol.

Need to Know:

Governance Protocols – continued:

Individual board member requests for information from staff:	Contact superintendent first.
Board member participation on district committees and in district activities:	Contact the superintendent's office for protocol.
When and how the board conducts a self-evaluation:	Annually in May or June with agreed-upon process.
When and how the board evaluates the superintendent:	Annually in May or June with agreed-upon process.

9. Governance Documents:

┌ District Policies	┌ Board Bylaws – (9000 Series of Policy Book)
┌ The Brown Act	┌ CSBA Professional Governance Standards
┌ District Setting Direction Documents	┌ District Budget Development Calendar
┌ Annual Governance Calendar	┌ Governance Handbook

Need to Know:

10. Board Member Benefits:

Stipend:	\$240/monthly
Health Benefits:	Self-Insured Schools of California (SISC) PPO Anthem Blue Cross; Delta Dental; Life insurance available.
Attending conferences / educational meetings / community events:	The board approves these activities at a public meeting within the assigned district budget for board member travel.
Making reservations for conferences / workshops / district business trips:	Contact the superintendent's office.
Travel Expenses and Reimbursements:	According to district policy.

