



## *Piner-Olivet Union School District*

### **Piner-Olivet Union School District Mission**

Our purpose is to establish a community of learners that empowers each student to speak in their own voice to create a world that is better than the one they inherited.

# Governance Handbook

### **Board of Trustees**

Mardi Hinton, President

John Way, Vice President

Albert Lau, Clerk

Mindy Mohr, Member

Cindy Pryor, Member



### **Superintendent**

Carmen Diaz-French



*The Piner Olivet Union School District Governance Handbook documents the Governance Team's work on effective governance. This process involves discussions and reaching agreements on shared leadership roles and operating protocols that enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in the community.*

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## ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

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### **Governance Efficacy– A Definition**

*“Governance efficacy is defined as the power of school boards, to change the face of education in their communities through positive and appropriate policymaking, equitable resource allocation and transparent accountability for all stakeholders.”*

— Dr. Abelardo Villarreal – 2007

Public education is vital to the health of communities. School board members are responsible for ensuring that a school district’s public education system is serving the needs of all students by providing equitable access to a high quality education.

### **EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE: High Performing Boards**

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There are three dimensions to effective governance. The POUSD Governance Handbook documents the governance responsibilities within these three dimensions.

1. **Governing as a unified team with a shared vision to lead and serve the community.**
2. **Governing within a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.**
3. **Creating and sustaining a positive governance leadership culture.**



# I. UNIFIED COMMITMENT TO LEAD AND SERVE THE COMMUNITY

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The foundation of effective governance is the common focus governing board members share that transcends individual differences to fulfill a greater purpose. A unity of purpose exists when the commitment to achieving these goals becomes the guiding principle for all trustees.

The focused efforts of Piner-Olivet Union School District are reflected in the District Mission, and Student Outcomes adopted by the POUSD Board of Education.

## **Piner-Olivet Union School District Student Outcomes**

Mastery of the following competencies is the cornerstone of the Piner-Olivet District program. In addition to the knowledge described in the California Content Standards, these competencies are the foundation of our culture and academic goals. We believe that students proficient in these skills and behaviors will be successful on any path they choose.

### **Personal Integrity**

Students handle themselves with confidence and act with honesty and courage. They commit to their developing beliefs and are willing to assume roles as inquiring observers, active participants, and dynamic leaders. They demonstrate positive working relationships across diverse groups, accept personal responsibility for their actions, and remain open to learning from the feedback and guidance of others.

### **Productive Collaboration**

Students develop and use the skills necessary to plan and engage in group projects. They work to resolve social and logistical conflicts and devise solutions to meet diverse needs. They collectively set goals and develop strategies to meet those goals. They evaluate the effectiveness of their approach and constructively adapt to new understandings as they arise.

### **Critical and Creative Thinking**

Students identify problems and pursue opportunities from multiple perspectives. They locate, organize, analyze, and apply key information in inventive and imaginative ways. They design, evaluate, and employ a variety of strategies, tools, and skills to achieve innovative results. Students are independent, creative, and critical thinkers who question and connect to the world

around them from both big picture and focused perspectives.

### **Effective Communication**

Students understand and practice effective communication using verbal and nonverbal language with intent, awareness, and accuracy. They are empathetic, emotionally intelligent, persuasive, and articulate. They are skillful self-advocates who effectively communicate their needs. Students internalize and present their understandings and ideas with confidence and clarity. Employing a variety of media, they use practical, academic, and artistic abilities to convey meaning in a clear and engaging fashion.

### **Reflective Learning**

Students excel at making critical observations about their own learning and potential. They formulate meaningful and relevant questions that inspire and encourage further inquiry. Students consistently take charge of their education by reflecting upon and revising their own practices.

### **Citizenship and Global Responsibility**

Students are engaged and informed citizens. They are empowered to create positive change in themselves, their communities, and the world. They are mindful and principled decision makers who understand the long and short-term effects of their actions on others and the environment. They practice compassionate, ethical, and active citizenship in local, global, and virtual settings. Students strive to achieve balance between their own needs and the needs of others.

### **Resiliency and Drive**

Students are adept at taking intelligent risks and view mistakes as necessary steps toward learning and growth. They consciously identify their intentions and desires. They possess the tenacity and determination to work individually and collaboratively. They are self-motivated and self-regulated. Piner-Olivet students confront challenges and persevere through adversity.

## II. SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Effective teams value and respect their essential roles, reach mutual agreement on the roles of the board and the superintendent and strive to operate within them. The second essential element of effective governance is defining roles and responsibilities and leading with commitment to these agreed upon roles.

### *Effective Governance Teams*

- Communicate a common vision. Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for each and every student.
- 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.

### *Effective Trustees*

- Govern in a dignified, professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Understand that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individuals.
- Understand the only employee who reports to the board is the superintendent.
- 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.
- Keep confidential matters confidential.
- Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be informed and effective leaders.

### III. GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP CULTURE

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Exceptional boards make governance intentional and invest in structures and practices that can be thoughtfully adapted to changing circumstances. Protocols are tools to strengthen the capacity of the board to engage in a constructive relationship with the superintendent and staff– one that is grounded in a mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities. Explicit protocols, agreed to and upheld by the board and superintendent provide transparency and stability in the governance relationship as the board carries out its role.

The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of the governance team and to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among board members, the superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. The protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

#### *Protocols to Facilitate Governance Leadership*

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Using Meetings As Strategic Leadership Tools</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The board meeting is a meeting to conduct district business in public. Well-run efficient meetings model leadership, and promote trust and confidence in the Board to strategically move the district forward.</i></li><li><i>The governance team wants to demonstrate to the school community and to the public alignment among all District planning processes, which include Local Control Accountability Plan goals, school site plans and allocation of resources.</i></li><li><i>Board meetings provide opportunities to share educational philosophy among governance team members and with the community.</i></li><li><i>The board wants to ensure healthy productive conversations about difficult issues without losing focus.</i></li></ul>

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Using Meetings As Strategic Leadership Tools</b>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members will receive comprehensive background information for board action items in advance of the board meeting.</li> <li>• To demonstrate alignment: Board meeting action items include a reference to the District goals. The superintendent reports explicitly link board meeting agenda topics to the district goals.</li> <li>• The board president facilitates the board meeting, balancing input and discussion with accomplishing the business of the meeting. Board members share accountability for board deliberations that spend the ‘right’ amount of time on the ‘right’ things while valuing the input of each member of the governance team.</li> <li>• The process for public input is clearly outlined on the Board meeting agenda.</li> <li>• The Governance Team has established processes for annual planning, evaluation and continuous learning. Annually and as needed, the governance team will schedule study sessions and board conversations/conversation meetings to discuss the district’s strategic priorities.</li> </ul>

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Requesting Information from Staff</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Critical to board member’s ability to make informed and wise decisions is timely and equal access to information.</i></li> <li>• <i>The superintendent wants to be responsive to information requests, while balancing management of staff time, and maintaining the focus on District priorities.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members will always work through the superintendent when asking questions or requesting additional information on board meeting agenda items.</li> <li>• The superintendent will ensure timely responses to requests, and will provide the information or direct board members to the correct source. As appropriate, the Superintendent will distribute answers to all Board Members.</li> <li>• Board members will trust one another to use good judgment and effective communication when making requests. 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.</li> </ul>

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Bringing Up New Ideas</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The governance team encourages fresh and innovative thinking, new ideas and ways to improve.</i></li> <li>• <i>The governance team will establish a process that will support bringing forward new ideas while maintaining the focus on District goals.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<p>When bringing forward a new idea, trustees will proceed according to these guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the concept/idea to the superintendent, board president or during board comments at a board meeting.</li> <li>• If the idea is brought to the superintendent or the board president, the idea will be</li> </ul>

	<p>brought to the item to the Agenda Setting meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The superintendent will include ‘new ideas’ in the Friday Update as appropriate.</li> <li>• New ideas may be held for consideration during the District annual goal setting process.</li> </ul>
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<b>Topic</b>	<b>Confidentiality/Closed Session Practices</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The governing board recognizes the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of information acquired as part of a board member's official duties.</i></li> <li>• <i>The responsibility of the board includes being privy to closed sessions or confidential information about district litigation, personnel, negotiations, or other issues permitted under the Brown Act.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All trustees will strive to maintain the public’s trust by not breaching confidentiality.</li> <li>• A trustee, who inadvertently or accidentally violates a confidential issue, will take immediate responsibility for correcting the action.</li> </ul>

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Allowing the Majority to Set the Direction</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Board members have a responsibility to express themselves in a professional manner, whether in agreement or disagreement with the board majority.</i></li> <li>• <i>Board members agree to respect the board decisions, to remind the public that a trustee is one of five, that the majority has voted and they will move forward together.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board agrees 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.</li> <li>• Prior to a board decision, if a member of the public asks a trustee about a future board decision, the trustee will clarify that he/she is voting as an individual.</li> <li>• Following a board decision trustees agree to never undermine or attempt to discredit a legally adopted policy or action by the board.</li> <li>• If trustees are approached by the media about the decision, they will refer the media to the superintendent for additional information.</li> </ul>

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Board Study Sessions/Conversation Meetings</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Study sessions and conversation meetings provide opportunities to study issues in more depth. The topics are usually those where additional discussion is needed to make important decisions.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study sessions/conversation meetings are public meetings subject to the provisions of the Brown Act and no action is taken.</li> <li>• The board will identify study sessions/conversation meeting topics to consider for</li> </ul>

	<p>the school year during the annual goal setting process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the study sessions/conversation meetings, the governance team will ensure an orderly structure for input with flexibility to allow for effective deliberation among governance team members. The board will determine the public input process, based on the issue.</li> </ul>
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Protocol	Role in Public
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The board understands the importance of being both visible and accessible to the public. Trustees are a resource to the community about the schools, programs, decisions and pending decisions.</i></li> <li>• <i>It is important that the public understands that final authority rests with the entire board and that decisions are made at the Board table.</i></li> <li>• <i>It is important that the board speaks with one voice in order to maintain the trust of our community.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees represent the board in what they say and do and will set an example of professionalism in their communication. When appropriate, trustees will clarify their authority as one of five in all board decisions and actions.</li> <li>• The governance team believes it is essential that important information be communicated to members of the board, the staff and the community in as timely a fashion as possible. To ensure consistent messages, the superintendent will provide talking points to trustees regarding initiatives related to District priorities.</li> <li>• The Board recognizes that some situations have legal or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public.</li> <li>• The superintendent will prepare talking points and key messages for board members on major board actions.</li> <li>• The designated spokesperson will vary depending on the issue or situation:</li> <li>• <b>Crisis/Disaster:</b> The superintendent will be the primary spokesperson and may involve the board president at his/her discretion.</li> <li>• <b>Meeting Information:</b> (e.g. board meetings, agenda items, study sessions): The board president and the superintendent will serve as primary spokespersons.</li> <li>• <b>Student Outcomes /Mission / District Priorities / General District Information:</b> All governance team members may serve as spokespersons utilizing developed and agreed upon key messages.</li> </ul>

Protocol	Responding to Community Concerns
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Board members have roles as ambassadors, representatives, and liaisons in the community.</i></li> <li>• <i>The board wants to be accessible, consistent in responding, informative, and fair in dealing with complaints and concerns from the community.</i></li> <li>• <i>Important to the board is timely response to issues.</i></li> <li>• <i>The board has an obligation to understand stakeholder interests, and to see all of the issues are aired and considered in an open, honest, and respectful environment.</i></li> <li>• <i>The board assumes positive intent.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<p>When approached with concerns and complaints, board members will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen and use judgment in responding, being mindful of their role in judicial</li> </ul>

	<p>review. Board members may remind the public that there are some issues that they may not discuss.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realize that a board member is one of five, and that the authority rests with the majority in all board decisions and actions.</li> <li>• Strive to ensure community members are acknowledged and are clear about next steps. Provide information and direction to policies or processes or persons in the District (e.g., teacher, principal, superintendent) who can most directly help them with their concern.</li> <li>• Invite community members to communicate with the board.</li> <li>• Will contact the superintendent, and the superintendent will follow up as needed.</li> </ul>
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<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Establishing Multi - Year and Annual District Goals</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Governance Team is responsible for setting the vision and goals for the District.</i></li> <li>• <i>Establishing district multi-year and annual goals and measurements of success promotes good stewardship, clarity of direction, and focus and alignment of resources.</i></li> <li>• <i>Critical to effective governance work is data driven decision-making that promotes clarity of direction, focus and alignment.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Governance Team will develop governance calendar to align all planning processes and ensure the planning processes will guide and inform budget development.</li> </ul>

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Superintendent Evaluation</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Boards must have agreed upon district priorities in order to effectively evaluate the superintendent.</i></li> <li>• <i>The governance team understands that the manner in which the superintendent is evaluated serves as a model for evaluation throughout the District.</i></li> <li>• <i>The evaluation process must be clear and fair. It should be goals based, data driven, collaborative and on going.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board utilizes the superintendent evaluation as an important leadership tool to focus and align all district efforts. The Superintendent’s evaluation is an ongoing two-way communication process and involves both commendations and recommendations for improvement.</li> <li>• The Superintendent is evaluated based on the District’s progress on the District’s LCAP goals. The Superintendent will be evaluated annually with a mid year check in and the final evaluation before the 30th of May. The evaluation process will follow the timeline listed below:</li> <li>• June – Establish performance expectations for LCAP goals and board/superintendent relations for the next school year.</li> <li>• Jan/Feb – Superintendent presents mid-year progress report; board will discuss the superintendent performance and a summary of the board consensus will be shared with the superintendent.</li> <li>• March/April – the goal setting process for the next year begins.</li> </ul>

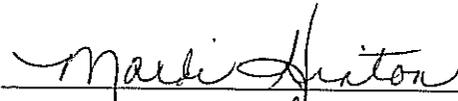
<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Superintendent Evaluation</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April – superintendent evaluation forms will be distributed to trustees.</li> <li>• April/May – superintendent presents a progress report for discussion with the board. Board members will individually complete the evaluation instrument. The board will meet in closed session to discuss individual evaluations and reach consensus. The board president or board designee will combine the individual evaluations to create a consensus document and average ranking of performance.</li> <li>• May – the board will discuss the superintendent performance and reach consensus on the evaluation. A summary of the board consensus will be shared with the superintendent.</li> </ul>

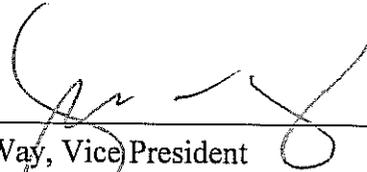
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Board Governance Self Assessment</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Conducting a governance self-evaluation demonstrates accountability of the governance team to strengthen and improve governance practices.</i></li> <li>• <i>The governance self-assessment provides an opportunity to reflect, evaluate, and focus on strengthening the governance team.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board supports continuous improvement through ongoing evaluation of governance effectiveness.</li> <li>• The governance assessment process will align with assessment of progress on LCAP goals and the superintendent evaluation.</li> <li>• The board will participate in at least one workshop bi-annually to review the POUUSD Governance Handbook, governance team agreements and processes and to participate in a self-evaluation process.</li> </ul>

<b>Topic</b>	<b>New Board Member Orientation</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Board members must be knowledgeable about the district they are governing, about current issues in education that are impacting their district, and about roles and responsibilities of all members of the governance team.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Protocol</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board and superintendent will schedule an orientation session for newly elected board members as soon after the election as possible. The board president will share responsibility for orientating new members with the superintendent. District staff will be involved in the orientation as appropriate.</li> <li>• The Governance Team will schedule a board retreat to review and re confirm the governance protocols as outlined in the POUUSD Governance Handbook.</li> </ul>

We have reviewed and agree to follow the governance team protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Piner-Olivet Union School District Board of Education, Superintendent, staff, students and the community. We shall renew this agreement at each Annual Organizational Meeting of the POUUSD Board of Education.

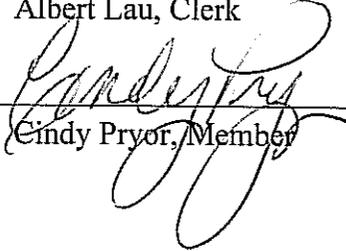
Affirmed on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of February 2018.

  
Mardi Hinton, Board President

  
John Way, Vice President

  
Albert Lau, Clerk

  
Mindy Mohr, Member

  
Cindy Pryor, Member

  
Carmen Diaz-French, Superintendent



## Appendix A

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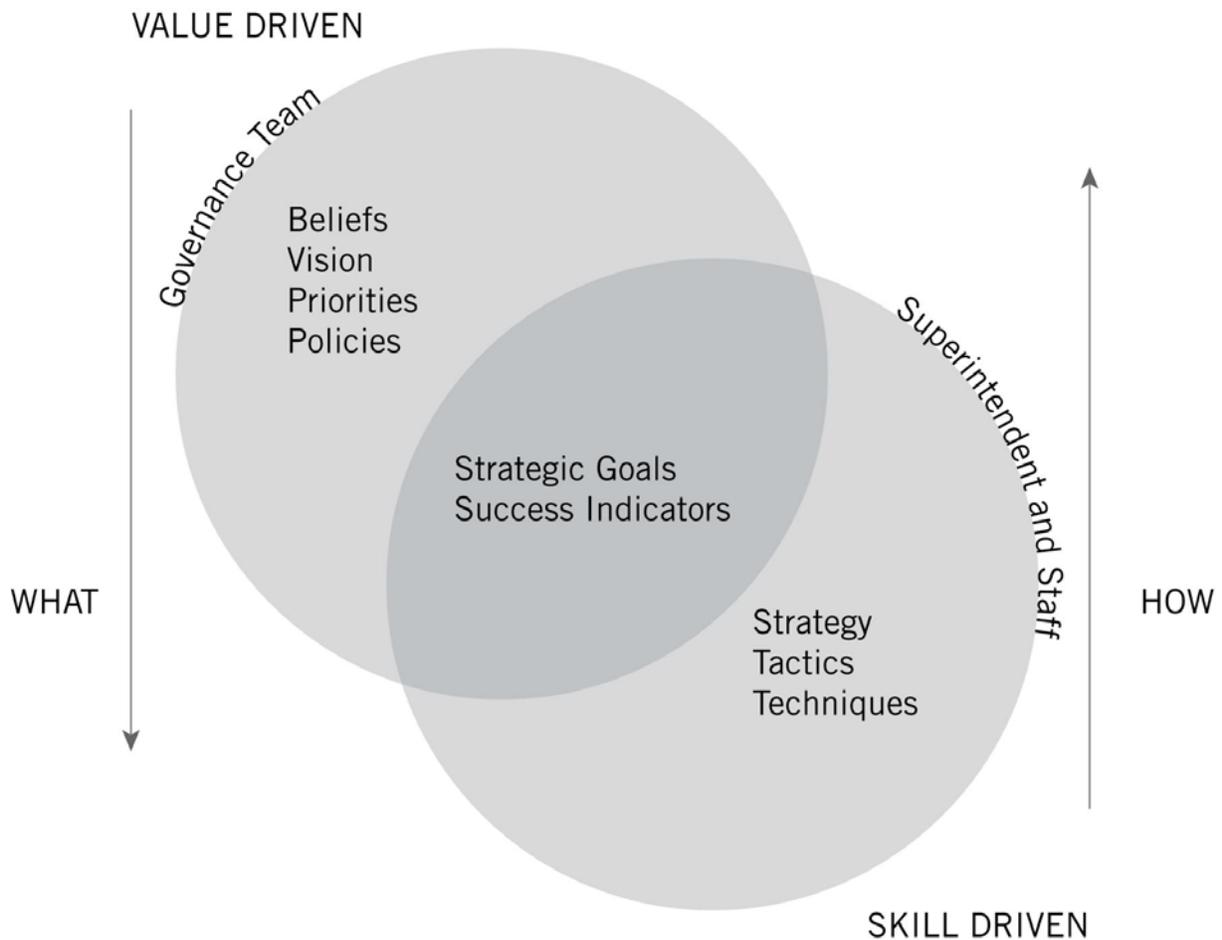
### *Effective Governance Teams<sup>1</sup>*

*Effective teams value and respect their essential roles, reach mutual agreement on the roles of the board and superintendent, and strive to operate within them.*

Boards and superintendents work together to ensure a district has effective leadership.

There are important distinctions to be made between the board's role and that of the superintendent and staff. The role of the School Board is not to run the schools, but to see that the schools are well run.

### *Understanding Governance Roles*



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<sup>1</sup> Source: California School Boards Association