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Byron Union SD Governance Handbook

The Board of Education is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public interest in schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student.

Board of Trustees

Jamie Kane, President

Joe Le Bel, Vice President

Gina Capelli, Clerk

Melissa Ortiz-Gray, Trustee

Claudia Rodriguez- Cantwell, Trustee

Superintendent

Crystal Castaneda

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

This handbook reflects the governance team's work on creation of a framework for effective governance.

Board Approved on February 4, 2026



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On February 3, 2025, and January 10, 2026, Byron Union School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent participated in workshops on Effective Governance with the California School Boards Association. This document reflects the governance team's discussions about developing and sustaining a framework for effective governance and includes highlights of their conversation about roles, norms and protocols that enable the governance team to continue to perform its responsibilities in a way that best serves all students.

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UNITY OF PURPOSE

Unity of purpose is the common focus, overarching goals, and the core values, beliefs and principles governing body members share in common about children, the district and public education.

Our Mission

Providing all students with an exemplary education, striving for excellence.

Statement of Purpose

The Byron Union Board of Education shall act in a unified manner to best serve the students and staff of the Byron Union School District in accordance with District By-Laws, California Education Code, and the Brown Act.

Role of the Governing Board

The Board of Education ("Board") will consist of five Trustees, including a President, Vice President and Clerk; established in accordance with Board Bylaw 9100.

In accordance with Board Bylaw, 9000, Role of the Board, the Board of Trustees, in congress with the Superintendent, sets the strategic direction of Byron Union School District ("District") and shall take action to ensure achievement, success, and accountability in the following areas:

- Student Learning and Achievement
- Finance
- Facilities
- Human Resources
- Policy
- Judicial Review
- Collective Bargaining

The Board shall complete cadenced evaluations of the Superintendent in accordance with the Board-approved Superintendent contract.

Annually, the Board of Trustees will participate in a self-assessment.

Regardless of any individual Board Member's vote on an item, the Board shall always act as one entity. A Board-approved action becomes the official approved action/position of the Board on a given matter.

Within 90 days of election/appointment of a new Board Member or hiring of a new Superintendent, a study session shall be held to review/update this Governance Handbook. Review/update of this Governance Handbook may be conducted at a Special Session at any time upon the request of the majority of the Board.



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Board Bylaw 9000:

We set the direction for the community's schools by:

- Focusing on student learning.
- Assessing needs/obtaining baseline data.
- Generating, reviewing, or revising direction setting documents (beliefs, vision, priorities, strategic goals, success indicators).
- Ensuring an appropriate inclusive process is used to develop these documents.
- Ensuring that these documents are the driving force for all district efforts.

We establish an effective and efficient structure for the school district by:

- Employing the Superintendent.
- Setting policies for hiring of other personnel.
- Overseeing the development of and adopting policies.
- Setting direction for and adopting the curriculum.
- Establishing budget priorities and adopting the budget.
- Overseeing facilities issues.
- Providing direction for and voting to accept collective bargaining agreements.

We provide support through our behavior and actions by:

- Acting with a professional demeanor that models the district's beliefs and vision.
- Making decisions and providing resources that support mutually agreed-upon priorities and goals.
- Upholding Board-approved district policies.
- Ensuring a positive personnel climate exists.
- Being knowledgeable about district efforts and able to explain them to the public.

We ensure accountability to the public by:

- Evaluating the Superintendent and ourselves.
- Monitoring, reviewing, and revising policies.
- Serving as a judicial and appeals body.
- Monitoring student achievement and program effectiveness and requiring program changes as indicated.
- Monitoring and adjusting district finances.
- Monitoring the collective bargaining process.

We act as community leaders by:

- Speaking with a common voice about district priorities, goals, and issues.
- Engaging and involving the community in district schools and activities.
- Attending as many school, district and community events as our schedules allow.
- Communicating clear information about policies, programs, and fiscal conditions of the district.
- Educating the community and the media about issues facing the district and public education.
- Advocating for students, district programs, and public education to the general public, community, local, state, and national leaders.



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Role of the Governing Board Member

Each governing Board Member (Trustee) shall conduct themselves at all times in accordance with District By-Laws, California Education Code, and the Brown Act. This conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Maintaining confidentiality
- Communication (verbal, written, or digital)
- Dissemination and/or transmission of District information.

As a voting member, no single Trustee has more authority/influence than another. The Board President, Vice President, and Clerk have additional responsibilities related to Governing Board business and execution of Board Meetings.

Trustees shall request all information in writing solely from the Superintendent. If granted, this information shall be distributed by the Superintendent to the entire Board.

Trustees shall conduct themselves in a prepared, professional manner and act in good faith in the best interests of the District while discharging their duties.

Individual Trustees may not speak on behalf of or individually represent the entire Board, unless authorized to do so in writing by the Board and Superintendent. Trustees shall not speak against actions of the Board in public, private, or online.

Trustees are expected to participate in District events, and in doing so shall follow District and school-site protocols at all times.

The Superintendent is the primary conduit of information between the Board and the District, District / Site Staff, Bargaining Units, and the Community.



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Role of the Superintendent

In accordance with the Board-approved Superintendent contract, District By-Laws, California Education Code, and the Brown Act, the Superintendent shall develop and execute operational and fiscal plan(s) to achieve the directives set forth by the Governing Board. This actionable scope includes, but is not limited to:

- Student Learning and Achievement
- Finance
- Facilities
- Human Resources
- Policy
- Judicial Review
- Collective Bargaining

The Superintendent shall administer the Oath of Office to newly elected/appointed Trustees at a Regular Board Meeting.

The Superintendent serves as the 'voice' of the Board in external communications, the spokesperson for the Board in negotiations, and the primary conduit of information between the District, Bargaining Units, and the Board.

The Superintendent shall share appropriate information requested by any individual Trustee to the entire Board unless otherwise directed by the Board.

The Superintendent shall communicate issues of safety, discipline, injury/illness/death, legality, liability, or other items of note to the entire Board as soon as possible.

The Superintendent shall conduct comprehensive administrative orientation(s) with new Board Members as near to their swearing-in as possible, and before their first regular Board Meeting if at all possible.

The Superintendent is responsible for creating the draft of each Board Agenda. This draft will include requested items, within the jurisdiction of the Board, from Staff, Bargaining Units, the Board, or public. This draft shall be reviewed with and approved by the Board President and/or Vice President (optional) in advance of the posting of the Board Agenda. This review may, in certain circumstances (i.e., confidential matters, disciplinary action(s), etc.), include procedural direction to address unique situations, which will be communicated to the board in accordance with District By-Laws, California Education Code, and the Brown Act.



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Byron Union School District Governance Team

AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

Governance Team Norms and Protocols:

The Board of Education for the Byron Union School District is entrusted by the community to uphold the Constitutions of California and the United States, to protect the public's interest in the schools, and to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to each student. To effectively meet district challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Agreed upon behaviors or norms, and operating procedures or protocols, support consistent behavior and actions among team members. The purpose of the Byron Union SD governance team agreements is to ensure that a positive and productive working relationship exists among Board Members, the Superintendent, district staff, students, and the community. Norms and protocols are developed for and by the members of the governance team and may be modified over time as needed.

District Board Meetings Guidelines

District Board Meetings shall be scheduled, posted, and conducted in accordance with District By-Laws, California Education Code, and the Brown Act. Regular Meetings shall be held at the District Office Board Room as scheduled at the annual organizational meeting noted by the approved Board Meeting Calendar.

Of particular note:

- We will keep our focus on the best interest of our students.
- We will all work to make sure there are no hidden agendas and that all issues and concerns can be dealt with openly by all members.
- We will respect differences. Everyone's opinions count; we will be open to the ideas of others.
- We will commit to focusing on our stated goals and honor the boundaries of our jurisdiction.
- We will each be responsible and prepared to actively participate in the meeting.
- We will keep all confidential information confidential.
- ***Rosenberg's Rules of Order*** is the Board-approved rules of Order of Board Meetings.
- A quorum of 3 Board members is required to hold a Board Meeting.
- The Board shall act by majority vote of all of the membership constituting the Board. (Education Code 35164)
- The Board believes that when no conflict of interest requires abstention, its members have a duty to vote on issues before them. (As stated in BB 9323)
- Perception of bias or conflict, or an actual conflict of interest shall be declared prior to an action of abstention.
- Board Members shall limit commentary at Board Meetings to District Business on the agenda or their activities within the District; discussion of topics or events outside the jurisdiction of the District (i.e. political statements) or not on the agenda are prohibited by the Brown Act in both open and closed session.



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PROTOCOLS STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

Effective governance teams discuss and agree upon the formal structures and processes, or protocols, used by the board and superintendent in their functioning as a team. These structures and processes guide the operations of the governance team and determine how they do business. Protocols are the agreements that ensure that all members of the team are operating within their agreed upon roles.

The following protocols were developed at our Governance Workshop:

TOPIC	PROTOCOL
Protocol: Dealing with Staff and Community Complaints and Concerns	<u>Rationale:</u> It is important to have a protocol on this issue, because... ▪ We care about our constituents, want to validate their concerns, and let them know that we are concerned about their issues. ▪ We want to respond consistently to community concerns with one voice/one process. ▪ We want to ensure that there is a process to resolve and handle various situations and that there is clarity about what that process is. ▪ We do not want to get into the weeds—the operational aspect of the district (Per BB 9200, <i>Limits of Board Authority</i>). ▪ Having clear protocols builds a healthy organization. <u>Action:</u> 1. When a Board Member is approached by a community or staff member with an issue or concern, he/she will: ▪ Receive – Listen without interruption and without preparing a response to the person's issues or concerns. ▪ Repeat – Paraphrase or ask a clarifying question to ensure understanding of what has been said. ▪ Request – Ask what the person sees as the solution to the problem or concern. Ask what they would have us do with the information they have given us. ▪ Review – Review the conversation (and next steps, if any). ▪ Redirect – Put the person back into the system at the appropriate place. Examples: Persons having a concern with: • <i>Homework in a particular classroom should be encouraged to speak with that teacher.</i> • <i>A person concerned about a discipline policy at a school site should be encouraged to speak with the principal.</i> • <i>A person concerned about a districtwide issue should be encouraged to speak with the Superintendent.</i> ▪ Recuse – Regarding issues that may come before the Board in our role as a judicial appeals body (such as personnel and expulsion hearings): Board Members will explain to the constituent that they are unable to hear any



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information on that topic. Listening further would require a Board Member to recuse him/herself when the item comes before the Board, much the same way that a juror would be dismissed from a court proceeding if he/she heard evidence about a case in advance and outside the courtroom. Remind the constituent of the importance of your presence at the hearing.

- **Report** – Notify the Superintendent of the conversation so that she has the full picture and can follow through as appropriate and/or necessary.
- **Board Members' responsibility** in this matter is now complete, and no further action is needed.

2. Responding to complaints received via email:

Board Members receiving a complaint via email can respond using the sample template below:

"Thank you for your email and for raising this issue. I want you to know that I am forwarding your message to the Superintendent so that she/he may address the issue appropriately."

- Board Members will never hit, "Reply all."
- If the Superintendent is on the email, it is not necessary to forward it to her/him.
- Emails cannot include opinion or stance on the matter.

TOPIC	PROTOCOL
Requests for Information and/or placing items on the agenda	<u>Rationale:</u> Critical to effective discussion and deliberation is clarification of the agenda placement process, appropriate placement of items on the Board agenda and sufficient time for gathering information on an issue, as per BB 9322, Agenda/Meeting Materials. <u>Action:</u> • Any Board Member may request that a matter within the jurisdiction of the Board be placed on the agenda of a regular meeting. • The request must be in writing and be submitted to the Superintendent or designee with supporting documents and information, if any. • The Board President and Superintendent shall decide whether a request is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board. • Items not within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board shall not be placed on the agenda. • The Board President and Superintendent shall also determine if the item is merely a request for information or whether the issue is covered by an existing policy before placing the item on the agenda. • If the Board President and Superintendent deny a request from a Board Member to place an item on the agenda or respond to requests for information...



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- The requesting Board Member may request the Board take action during a Board meeting to determine whether the item shall be placed on the agenda or the information be provided to all.
- The Superintendent and Board President will determine the item's appropriate placement on the agenda.

TOPIC	PROTOCOL
Maintaining Confidentiality	<u>Rationale:</u> It is important to have a protocol on this topic because... • A breach in confidentiality undermines trust between Board Members and with staff, students, and the community. • Board Members are privy to confidential information regarding staff and students. Releasing that information to others may harm the staff member or student and result in legal action. • Releasing information may result in extra costs in negotiations and legal matters. • Board Members may be hesitant to speak openly and honestly in closed sessions if they fear that their words will be repeated. • Breaching confidentiality is illegal and any Board Member found guilty of repeating said information may be charged with a misdemeanor. <u>Action:</u> • Board Members will keep all confidential matters confidential and will not share that information with anyone. • Board Members who learn of a breach of confidentiality will immediately bring it to the attention of the Board President and/or Superintendent so that it may be dealt with by the entire Board. • Board Members will leave their personal devices outside of closed session meetings for security purposes. • During closed session, Board Members will keep personal devices on silent or vibrate and will not use devices for calls, texts, email, or recording. Devices should remain out of view and may be checked only for urgent family or medical emergencies. Any suspected breach of confidentiality will be addressed through existing legal and Board processes.



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We have reviewed and agreed to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Byron Union School District Board of Trustees, Superintendent, staff, students, and the community. We shall review and renew this agreement annually.

Affirmed on this _____ day of _____ 2026.

 _____, President

 _____, Vice President

 _____, Clerk

 _____, Trustee

 _____, Trustee

 _____, Superintendent