



FOLSOM CORDOVA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Governance Handbook

Board of Trustees

2023

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This handbook reflects the governance team's commitment to effective governance. Effective governance requires ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, commitment to norms, and agreement on protocols and formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that benefits all children.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</u>	1
<u>FCUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS</u>	2
<u>FCUSD VISION STATEMENT</u>	4
<u>FCUSD MISSION STATEMENT</u>	4
<u>EQUITY QUESTIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING</u>	4
<u>GOVERNANCE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	5
<u>PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	7
Set the direction for the community’s schools	7
Establish an effective and efficient structure for the School District	7
Provide support through our behavior and actions	7
Ensure accountability to the public	7
Act as community leaders	7
<u>POSITIVE GOVERNANCE TEAM CULTURE</u>	8
<u>FCUSD GOVERNANCE NORMS</u>	8
<u>STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE</u>	9
FCUSD Board of Education Protocols	9
Self-monitoring of governance team effectiveness	9
Voting	10
Board meeting management	10
Handling concerns from the public and staff	10
Individual Board member requests for Information	11
Individual Board member requests for action	11
Individual Board member comments during Board business	11
Role and responsibilities of the Board President	11
Designated spokesperson(s)	13
Electronic Communication	14
Visiting schools	14
<u>ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT BOARD REPRESENTATIVE</u>	16
<u>AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP</u>	17

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance – A Definition

School district governance is the act of transforming the needs, wishes, and desires of the community into policies that direct the community's schools.

There are three dimensions to the effective governance of any organization: the actions of the individual, individuals joining as a group to govern, and the performance of governance responsibilities by the group.

In a school district, the governing 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 roles,
- 3) create and sustain a positive governance culture, and
- 4) create a supportive structure for effective governance.

Establishing and agreeing to basic tenets of effective governance enable the governance team members to create a climate for excellence in a school district and to maintain the focus on improved student learning and achievement.

Consensus – A Definition

- “My voice has been heard”
- “I understand the topic/proposal”
- “It is clear to me that the will of the group has emerged around the topic/proposal”

FCUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

1. Keep the District focused on learning and achievement for all students

- Recognize that children come to school with diverse educational needs
- Base decisions on the District's vision; student needs; research; empirical data; and a balance of community expectations, legal constraints, and resources
- Ensure that the District has established academic standards and regularly measures growth in achievement for all students
- Ensure that the District provides opportunities for all students to succeed

2. Communicate a common vision

- Develop and adopt a written statement of the District vision and other direction-setting documents using collaborative processes that involve the staff, parents, students, and community
- Demonstrate commitment to the vision and goals by regularly communicating them to staff and the community
- Exhibit behaviors and make decisions that support achievement of the District vision
- Stay current on trends and emerging needs in education in order to proactively participate in renewing or reviewing the District's direction and policies
- Uphold Board decisions

3. Operate openly, with trust and integrity

- Conduct District business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner
- Consider the concerns and interests of the staff, parents, students, and community
- Encourage thorough consideration of issues, engage in dialogue for clarification, and withhold judgment until all perspectives are heard
- Ensure that all members of the Board have the same information—no secrets or surprises among members of the governance team
- Clearly communicate decisions to all those who are affected by them
- Keep confidential information confidential

4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect

- Treat the community, parents, students, staff, and the Board with dignity and respect
- Listen openly and respectfully to each other, members of the community, parents, students, and staff
- Welcome open discussion of different points of view
- Demonstrate ability to disagree on issues and still maintain trust, respect, and dignity
- Work together to build consensus for decisions

5. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures

- Maintain a policy development, approval, and update process that is understood and followed
- Understand the distinctions between the role of the Board and that of the Superintendent and staff
- Have agreed-upon norms and protocols for carrying out Board responsibilities

6. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance

- Assume collective responsibility for Board conduct
- Function as a governance team with the Superintendent
- Demonstrate a commitment to continually improving governance efforts
- Take responsibility for the orientation of new members

7. Periodically evaluate our own effectiveness

- Have procedures in place for regular, on-going self-evaluation
- Ensure meeting agendas provide for a sound order of business and facilitate a primary focus on matters related to student achievement
- Ensure that individual Board members understand their roles and the limits of individual responsibility and authority

8. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations

- Ensure Board policy enables parents, staff, and the public to participate in meaningful ways in District discussions, school programs, and activities
- Consider the concerns and interests of all segments of the community in deliberations

FCUSD VISION STATEMENT

Empowering all students to thrive through educational excellence.

FCUSD MISSION STATEMENT

FCUSD is committed to providing excellence in educational programs that carry high expectations for each student's success. In collaboration with our community, the mission of FCUSD is to ensure all students demonstrate high levels of learning through our commitment to continuous cycles of improvement, transformative social emotional learning, and engaging, culturally responsive instruction.

EQUITY QUESTIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING

- Who are the specific student groups impacted by this decision, policy or practice?
- How have we engaged diverse community voice in specifying the problem that needs to be solved, success criteria for the program and barriers that need to be removed in order to positively impact student outcomes?
- How will this action specifically accelerate and/or improve outcomes for Black or African American, Hispanic, English Learner, Special Education, foster and homeless and/or low income students?
- What steps do we need to take to make sure that underserved students benefit from this academic, enrichment and/or wellness resource?

GOVERNANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Demonstrating community leadership as the only locally elected officials chosen solely to represent the interests of students, Board members have a responsibility to speak out on behalf of children. Board members are advocates for students, the district's/COE's educational programs and public education. They build support within their communities and at the state and national levels.

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.

In the Folsom-Cordova Unified School District, Board members are elected by the citizens of five separate "trustee areas." [See <https://www.fcusd.org/domain/5606>]. Trustee area elections increase the opportunity for the Districts' voters to select Board members who reside in or near their local neighborhoods and schools. Nonetheless, each Board member exercises their responsibilities on a District-wide basis and represents the interests of the entire District and all of its schools, students, and families.

Boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities: 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 education.

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 and Superintendent will fulfill these responsibilities by working together as a governance team to make decisions that will best serve all the students in the community.

The Board carries out these responsibilities in each of the following areas:

- Setting the District's Direction**
- Establishing Policies and Procedures**
- Monitoring Student Learning and Achievement**
- Assuring Financial Stability**
- Maintaining Safe and Healthy Facilities**
- Establishing Effective Human Resources Practices**
- Assuring Compliance with Legal Requirements and Guidelines**

Advocating for the Community

The Superintendent assists the Board in carrying out its responsibilities in each of the areas, and leads the staff toward the accomplishment of the agreed-upon District vision and goals. The following page provides more detail on how the Board performs its governance responsibilities.

PERFORMING GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

The members of the Folsom Cordova Unified School District Board of Trustees agree with the responsibilities of school boards as adapted from the California School Boards Association:

Set the direction for the community's schools

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

Establish an effective and efficient structure for the School District

- Employ and work with the Superintendent in support of an effective governance team
- Establish a human resources framework that includes policies for hiring and evaluating other personnel
- Oversee the development, review, and adoption of policies
- Adopt and support a curriculum that meets the District's mission and vision
- Establish budget priorities, adopt a responsible budget, and oversee facilities issues
- Provide direction for and approve collective bargaining agreements

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 for the governance team
- Be knowledgeable enough about District efforts to explain them to the public

Ensure accountability to the public

- Evaluate the Superintendent and the president will ensure proper procedures and timelines are met for the Superintendent's evaluation
- 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 facilities issues
- Monitor the collective bargaining process
- Be responsive to concerns and interests of constituents in each member's trustee area and in the District as a whole

Act as community leaders

- Communicate clear information about District priorities, goals, policies, programs and the fiscal condition of the District
- Engage and involve the community in District schools and activities
- 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

POSITIVE GOVERNANCE TEAM CULTURE

Governance team culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the interaction among the people in an organization. Teams have unwritten (implicit) or written (explicit) agreements about how they will behave. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture.

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 communication.

FCUSD GOVERNANCE NORMS

We agree to

- focus on the best interests of students
- respect each other's opinions
- hear each member's ideas and voice
- value each member's point of view
- be open to new ideas
- exhibit positive body language
- not interrupt, nor monopolize
- encourage everyone to verbalize
- disagree agreeably
- recognize the positive
- be willing to compromise
- focus on process, not personalities
- act by building on the thoughts and ideas of fellow governance team members
- commit the time necessary to govern effectively
- commit to open communication, honesty, and transparency
- maintain confidentiality
- commit to supporting protocols

STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Effective governance teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the trustees and the Superintendent in their functioning as a team (e.g., processes or structures for agenda setting, set-up of board room and table, agenda structure, handling complaints or concerns from the community, bringing up a new idea); how governance teams operate, and how they do business. These agreements about how groups will operate are often called protocols.

The Board shall each year elect its entire slate of officers. The election of Board officers shall be conducted during an open session of the annual organizational meeting.

FCUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION PROTOCOLS

The following protocols were developed to support and promote the effectiveness of our Governance Team.

Topic 1	Protocol
Self-monitoring of Governance Team effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board will annually schedule a date to review Governance Team agreements and processes. • Suggested timeframe is prior to the Organizational meeting.

Board Meeting Preparation Protocols

Topic 2	Protocol
How the Board meeting agenda is developed and reviewed and by whom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board President and Superintendent work together to develop agenda. • Reviewed by Cabinet.
Placing items on the Board meeting agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Board member requesting an agenda item be placed on a future agenda must receive consensus by the governance team, under agenda section, Advanced Planning: Suggested Future Agenda Items.
Obtaining additional information about Board meeting agenda items before the meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer directly with the Superintendent or designee.
Obtaining answers to questions about Board meeting agenda items before the meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer directly with the Superintendent or designee.

During Board Meeting Protocol

Topic 3	Protocol
Board meeting management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open forum or town hall meetings. • The Board will allow the public to provide input at the time allotted to ensure the multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations. • The Board will review its policies, bylaws, and protocols relating to Board meeting management (for example, time limits on input from members of the public), and revise or reaffirm them as appropriate.
Alerting the Board President of the desire to speak on a particular agenda item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr./Ms. President – may I add something.
Introducing new ideas for the Board’s consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Board member requesting an agenda item be placed on a future agenda must receive consensus by the governance team, under agenda section, Advanced Planning: Suggested Future Agenda Items.
Voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to a vote, the Board president will ask Board members if they have questions or comments. • Each Board member respects the right of other Board members to vote “no” on an issue. • Board members agree it is a courtesy to the governance team to explain the reasons for a “no” vote either during deliberation or before casting the vote. • Board members are expected to cast a yes or no vote to indicate their preference and to abstain only when they have a conflict of interest.

Topic 4	Protocol
Handling concerns from the public and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When someone brings a concern to the Board, the Board will listen carefully, remembering it is only hearing one side of the story. The Board member(s) will refer the complaining party to the appropriate “site or district” personnel and keep the Superintendent informed. • The Board will assure that the complaining party is aware of any forms or policies that might assist them (for example, a written complaint form). • As representatives of the public, it is important that the Board member(s) invite the person with the complaint to ultimately get back to them if the concern is not resolved. • Board members will be mindful that they are a judicial and appeals body, so they will be appropriately cautious when hearing concerns

	<p>regarding student and/or employee discipline matters. These should be referred to the Superintendent's office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the public will not be permitted to yield their speaking time to another member of the public.
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Topic 5	Protocol
Individual Board member requests for information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When an individual Board member requests information pertaining to an agenda item, it will be provided to all Board members. 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 public so the staff can be prepared to provide a thoughtful answer. 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.

Topic 6	Protocol
Individual Board member requests for action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only authority to direct action rests with the full Board during public Board meetings. A majority vote provides direction to the Superintendent. Individual Board members may request that an item be placed on a future agenda by explaining their interest in a particular issue or requested action.

Topic 7	Protocol
Individual Board member comments during Board business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board business allows Board members an opportunity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on the Board meeting Highlight staff and student success Recognize or congratulate team or individual achievements Provide relevant information about our schools that the full Board should know Report on commission, committee or other relevant meetings Highlight school and community partnerships In respect of audience and staff time, individual Board member comments should be limited to five minutes.

Topic 8	Protocol
Role and responsibilities of the Board President in managing Board meetings	The Board has an obligation to set an example of good government in action for our community. The Board will model dignified problem solving for our community and our children. The Board president works with the Superintendent so that board meetings proceed professionally, efficiently, and effectively. District staff will have the opportunity to provide necessary background materials and information to the Board in a respectful environment. Each Board

	<p>member will have the opportunity to express their viewpoint during Board deliberations. Everyone in attendance at Board meetings will be treated with dignity and respect.</p> <p>The Board president has the primary facilitation role at Board meetings, and acts as spokesperson for the Board. The Board president has no more authority than any other Board member outside of Board meetings.</p> <p>The role of the Board president is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chair the meetings, • work with the Superintendent to ensure Board members have the necessary information and materials to make wise decisions • assure that pending agenda items are addressed appropriately, • confer with the Superintendent before meetings to prepare, as necessary, for the upcoming meeting, • model the tone and behavior the Board wishes to convey to the community. <p>As meeting chair, the Board president will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open and preside over meetings, • introduce agenda items or ask Superintendent to introduce agenda items, • provide background information as appropriate, • call on speakers, • ask for motions at appropriate times during deliberation, • make sure all Board members have a chance to share in deliberation, • facilitate effective deliberation, • interpret and clarify motions or directives as needed, and articulate the "what" (purpose/desired outcome) and "why" (rationale) behind the Board's direction • call on other Board members to speak on issues before adding their own comments, • call for a vote restating the motion, • clarify and authenticate all action, orders and procedures of the Board, • adjourn meetings, • remind the governance team and audience members of any meeting guidelines the Board has adopted, as necessary, • work with the Superintendent to make sure there is appropriate follow-up and clarification of actions following the Board meeting, • serve as the spokesperson for the Board.
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Topic 9	Protocol
Role and responsibilities of the Board Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform functions delegated to them by the president. • Assume the duties of the president when the president is unable to perform them. • Perform such duties as directed by the law and/or the members of the Board.

Topic 10	Protocol
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<p>Role and responsibilities of the Board Clerk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certify or attest to actions taken by the Board when required. • Maintain such other records or reports as required by law. • Sign documents on behalf of the District as directed by the Board. • Serve as presiding officer in the absence of the president and vice president. • Notify Board members and members-elect of the date and time for the annual organizational meeting. • Preform any other duties assigned by the Board.
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<p>Topic 11</p>	<p>Protocol</p>
<p>Role and responsibilities of the Board Member</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a direction for the District. • Providing a basic organization structure for the district through the establishment of policy. • Ensuring accountability. • Providing community leadership on behalf of the District and public education.

Other Protocols

<p>Topic 12</p>	<p>Protocol</p>
<p>Communication with the Public</p>	<p>It is essential that important information be communicated to the staff and the community in a timely manner. Board members and the Superintendent have an obligation to communicate clearly about District issues. It is important that the Board speak with clarity and consistency regarding Board actions in order to maintain the trust of the community.</p> <p>The Board recognizes that some situations have legal, privacy, or other considerations that may place restrictions on what may be told to the media or public. Confidential issues must remain confidential.</p> <p>In most cases, the press may contact any Board member for comment. However, a sensitive or confidential issue may best be addressed by one chief spokesperson, the Board president. The public information officer and/or the Superintendent will advise Board members on media relations.</p> <p>All public statements authorized to be made on behalf of the Board shall be made by the Board president or, if appropriate, by the Superintendent or other designated representative.</p> <p>When a Board member is invited to speak to a community group or organization, they will make sure other Board members and Superintendent know about the invitation and will seek updated District information as appropriate.</p> <p>When speaking to community groups, members of the public, or the media, individual Board members should recognize that their statements may be perceived as reflecting the views and positions of the Board. Board members have a responsibility to identify personal viewpoints as such and not as the viewpoint of the Board.</p>

Topic 13	Protocol
Communications between the Board and other staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via email or phone to the Superintendent or staff. • Staff will respond with information back to all members.

Topic 14	Protocol
Responding to community or staff complaints or concerns outside of Board meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board president and/or Superintendent is the spokesperson. • Complaint Procedure Guidelines to be followed. Link TBD

Topic 15	Protocol
Electronic Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members will use electronic and social media communications in a manner that insures the Board does not violate the Brown Act. The Brown Act prohibits Board members from exchanging facts to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop collective concurrence - Advance or clarify an issue - Facilitate agreement or compromise - Advance ultimate resolution • Recognize that using Reply to All: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Makes electronic and social media communications part of the deliberative process - Creates a public record • Board members will be aware of and follow District policy as it pertains to electronic communications.

Topic 16	Protocol
Visiting schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board and Student Board members are encouraged to visit schools. • As a professional courtesy, Board members are encouraged to communicate or email the principal ahead of time to arrange the visit. • Board members 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 their lesson when a Board member visits a classroom.

Topic 17	Protocol
Board member participation on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As assigned by full Board.

district committees and in district activities.	
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Topic 18	Protocol
When and how the Board conducts a self-evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board will annually schedule a date to review governance team agreements and processes. • Consult with California School Boards Association (CSBA), on a formal Board self-evaluation survey in preparation for the June Board study session and alternate between years with an informal survey

Topic 19	Protocol
When and how the Board evaluates the Superintendent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-annually in closed session.

Topic 20	Protocol
Participate in CSBA Master's in Governance training or similar professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is strongly encouraged for serving as Board president and vice president.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS

- Student Board members are also the presidents of the Student Advisory Board (SAB). The SAB is comprised of representatives from all of the District's secondary schools. Two Student Board representatives shall serve concurrently, representing two different high schools, one from the city of Folsom and the city of Rancho Cordova.
- Student Board representatives attend meetings of the Governing Board and keep the Board informed about the activities, issues, ideas, and concerns of the District's students.
- The SAB and the Student Board members are encouraged to consider and report on academic, safety, emotional, and social issues affecting students. The Board values and encourages input from the SAB and the Student Board members.
- Student Board members may cast a "preferential vote" on all of the open session actions taken by the Governing Board. Student Board members to be called upon first to vote, to ensure their vote is considered.
- The Student Board members may accompany Board members to the California School Boards Association's annual conference.
- Student Board members are encouraged to visit school sites.

FOLSOM CORDOVA DISTRICT GOVERNANCE TEAM

AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP

A major difference between groups and teams is that teams have clear agreements (norms that identify expectations for behavior, and protocols that describe how the team will operate) set by the team's members. Once developed, these norms and protocols shape how team members behave with each other and how they perform their responsibilities.

Group expectations help a group work together to not only address difficult issues in an objective and consistent way, but also to confirm what each member will do in the normal course of business to help the team succeed.

- CSBA

FCUSD Governance Team Norms and Protocols

The Board of Education for the Folsom Cordova 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.

To effectively meet District challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a governance leadership team. Common agreement about procedures and protocols support the efforts and effectiveness of the governance team.

The purpose of the FCUSD governance team agreements is to ensure a positive and productive working relationship among Board members, the Superintendent, District staff, students, and the community. These protocols were developed for and by the members of the governance team, and may be modified over time as needed.

The FCUSD Board of Education has reviewed and agrees to follow the aforementioned governance team norms and protocols in order to support a positive and productive working relationship among the Folsom Cordova Unified School District Board of Education, staff, students and the community. This agreement shall be reviewed prior to the Annual Organizational Meeting of the FCUSD Board of Education every election year.

Additional revisions were made:

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