

Special Board Meeting
January 9, 2010
Notes
Submitted by Cathy Mabry

FORESTVILLE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

Reviewed FUSD Governance Handbook first. It was explained this was an example only and open to revisions and changes.

Chris made the following comments:

Page 9, second paragraph having to do with Unity of Purpose. It might be helpful to develop a handbook with this focus.

Page 10, under Gov. Team's Purpose, bullet 5. We want to be a team with a common focus.....he thought it important this be done positively and not done as a distraction as discussed in this statement.

Page 11, He brought up accountability regarding the nine job areas listed (district direction, learning and achievement, finance, facilities, HR, policy, judicial review, collective bargaining, and community relations). Can we agree as a board on these areas as being our responsibility? Why are they not coordinated with list on page 12?

Page 12, Set direction for schools; assess needs/obtain baseline data. He asked if this is part of the Board's responsibilities. Especially assessing needs and obtaining data.

Page 12, Ensure documents are driving force for all district efforts. What do we do here other than reading mission statement?

Next heading; establish effective and efficient structure; Setting direction requires an outcome. This could be data produced or other means of assessment.

Governance norms; didn't like some of the wording in this topic. Focus should be on students what is best for kids.

Under Governance Norms, didn't understand what Being collaborative (this is the way we operate) meant. Unclear to him.

Page 16, Protocol having to do with individual board member requests: Discussed Board's past practice of using a straw vote to give an indication of each board member's opinion on a specific issue, Chris agrees with this practice.

Guy

Page 11, important that Board not overstep bounds with administration. Having also to do with last sentence where boards inadvertently get involved in staff functions where it undercuts ability to hold administration accountable.

Page 13, He thought it was good protocol to have an annual governance meeting.

Ron

Likes idea of synchronizing Governance Responsibilities information listed on page 12 with nine responsibilities listed on page 11.

Agreements on page 13, It is left to the board to determine the norms and protocols. We should be explicit rather than implicit when listing these. Discussed that the norm is the expectation and the protocol is the means by which the norm is carried out. The board could give a straw vote as a process by which norm is developed.

Chris responded that being familiar with the backup is part of the Board Member's job. Guy liked on page 14 where one shouldn't take things personally.

Jean made the following comments:

Jean liked CSBA's structure and thought this was a great start. We could add more the norms, look at other's schools for examples. She thought it would be helpful for the protocols to be more specific when addressing how/to whom new board members should go for information or guidance. Protocols not spelled out well enough. She had to ask questions for direction when she started because protocols were not written out.

She talked about individual request for information from staff and the importance not to ask staff for random requests.

Concern on page 17, putting time limits on input from public, take their information once and then move on to someone else, each person gets their one time to give their input.

She discussed the CSBA Unity of Purpose. What values do the board believe in? Stand for? What does the board want to accomplish individually and as a unit.

A discussion ensued.

Talin discussed how we put together all of our information for the board meeting. There are similar norms for all the separate voices at the school. It would be helpful to spell out norms for each group, i.e. DAC for example, but have all norms be consistent with one another. Protocols are the action norms the expectations. Everyone should have the same basic rules, however does everyone follow them? Are they spelled out specifically enough so all can follow?

Ron agreed with this said all norms and protocols should be written down.

Chris discussed unity of purpose again and talked about creating the best learning environment for all students.

Guy also said norms and protocols should be explicit. Board should write down their expectations, would there be trust among staff to follow these.

Michael W. agreed that covering the basics requires explicit information rather than implicit, and ask which direction do these norms and protocols move us. Again looking to helping new board members with goals and direction to make their entry easier.

Talin indicated she continues to work on trust issues, which is a challenge among teachers with administration.

Chris suggested taking the explicit norms to everyone at the school saying this is what the board and administration value and want for the school. These can be taken to all groups, evaluate how the trust issue plays into this. Teachers fear that the norms might single them out in negative ways.

Talin said that how the Board directs her goes along with the explicit values that are spelled out. She needs these in order to be able to more specifically direct teachers.

Guy thought these norms protocols were a template a first step. Further identifying unity of purpose is good. Look at the elements of unity of purpose, have a discussion around this.

Ron said it would not work for the Board to give norms for DAC for example. This was discussed earlier. Board can give Talin what they have and she can then develop norms with various groups. These should fit each group. Everyone is pretty ethical; norms can be different for different groups. Just so each group has its norms and protocols.

Bob said the next step was to have Cristy edit the handbook with the various changes suggested, come back with the various pieces that may need to be modified or changed.

Ron suggested two board members work with Cristy to do this, Chris and Jean will do so.

CURRENT BOARD BACKUP FORMAT

Next item discussed was format of our current backup.

Chris said the agenda was primarily a legal tool and we have latitude to retool ours if so desired. It would take a lot of time to reformat, in Chris' opinion, unproductive time. The purpose is to comply with noticing, not provide a narrative of events. One suggestion is that if an item does not require action, get rid of the back up material.

Ron felt we needed all the info currently included in the agenda. Chris felt if there was nothing requiring action we shouldn't need to put back up in. Chris felt our agenda was fine he thought the other samples (SCOE and SRCS) were more complicated.

Bob wanted to know if we could streamline our agenda. He said numbering and lettering was cumbersome and took a lot of time. The current format is difficult.

Guy thought that maybe someone could give Cristy instruction with the basic word document to make her job easier.

Jean likes the other formats (from other schools) better. Thinks they are more readable. Chris suggested maybe Jean and Cristy look at putting together a new format. Guy wanted a cleaner looking format than what we have easier to read, more simplistic and visually more appealing. Jean said simpler would be nicer.

Chris thought the SCOE format was more editorial and he thought that would take more time to put together than what we currently has. He would prefer not to move away from our format. Possibly changing to a different font on our agenda might make it easier to read. Use Calibra.

Ron had resistance to putting editorial focus into packet. SCOE lists the item but not a narrative to go with it. He likes that they list upcoming activities. Jean also liked listing upcoming activities.

Bob can get the templates for the other agendas. He likes the SRCS format.

Ron likes the SRCS format. It makes the Board think about the categories of information. What is behind this information? Think about it in this fashion. Everyone seemed to like the SRCS format.

Chris felt Cristy would need help putting this format together. She would need a history of actions taken to put it together. Chris and Jean discussed format for first reading. For example first reading on next agenda would go down under previous board activity. Chris said put the date and first reading down under discussion, if this was the agreed direction.

Ron suggested talking about the policy putting down the background of it. Be specific, list activity taken and make note of that. Keep track of conversation around it. On first reading when did we last adopt what we have? Board should agree there is a lot if discipline required in how to put it together. The format requires discipline, it must be consistent. Look at previous packets for history and keep it simple.

Bob agreed with this develop a standard to follow. Bob thought a new format might cut down on paper used. Chris thought there was potential in a new format, it could be less demanding for staff to put together. Everyone discussed printing on both sides of the paper and the logistics involved in that. Chris thought the way our agenda was currently

formatted there were three different word documents which makes it hard to print back to back. They discussed how machine copies.

Bob said Cristy is working on putting backup onto website complicated to do and time consuming. The public likes having access to this.

Guy wanted to know how we scan this info; Bob said they are having software problems with the scanner. None of the copiers have any scanning ability. Chris suggested using a company called Draftech could put all the scanning and putting it on a disc.

Guy and Chris discussed putting info on a PDF file but it may be too big to download easily. Cristy has Word 2007 has PDF capability. Jean wanted to know how many people are downloading documents, would that affect Cristy's work?

FORESTVILLE UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT MAP

We looked at a map of the district we have seven contiguous borders with other districts, Windsor, Healdsburg, Guerneville Monte Rio, Harmony, Oak Grove, part of Piner Olivet (I believe, correct me if I'm wrong).

Michael said you could use GPS to list out where all our students live, Cristy is currently identifying by hand where all students are on district map. Guy works with a company who identifies demographics he will see if what they offer might be useful.

Bob said Cristy is listing where preschoolers live on map, Bob said also that cums past first grade are not necessarily very accurate. There are companies who do this for larger districts but the service is expensive.

Chris said Google Earth lets you put markers in. Mike and Ron said there is a lady who works in the county office who might be able to help us. She may not be free, but Chris said Efen Carrillo might be able to help us get what we need. Ron suggested talking to the people at the county first to see if they could help.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION BACKUP

Next the Board looked at the statistical information presented after the Handbook and discussed the district reports information. Discussion looked at number of teachers, administration, classified staff, where Bob fit into that (certificated). Chris felt lunch program and attendance clerk should be under office and clerical not under paraprofessionals. Bob felt the figures under classified staff were not accurate. He said the state looks at school and district activities separately.

Ron suggested using ED Data off of a CD; he thought the information might be pretty accurate. We talked about the past parcel taxes. Cathy asked when the two parcel taxes that failed were held. Bob said in 2004 and 2005.

PRIORITIZING 12/10/09 MEETING TOPICS

Jean indicated there were eight topics that had been discussed at the last meeting and the Board was supposed to prioritize them. They are: Student achievement, technology infrastructure, student demographics, district social role, community demographics, teacher demographics/relationship, and facilities infrastructure, planning for Boards/parcel tax. We put all of these up on the board and everyone marked the top three of their choice. They were as follows:

- (3) Student achievement
- (3) Technology infrastructure
- (3) Facilities infrastructure
- (2) student demographics
- (1) district social role
- (1) community demographics

Chris asked Talin where she thought the focus was of these six categories. She felt student achievement was at the top. She said she shares with the Board the topics she feels the Board thinks are most important. There are obstacles to focusing on student achievement and that she and the teachers are at the beginning of the process in this achievement. The PLC is a way of reaching this goal. Trust is another issue that must be developed more fully if student achievement is to be accomplished. They are “not there yet”. Teachers are committed to helping their students and they have evidence they are doing this.

As for technology infrastructure Talin still doesn't have all the software necessary to pull all our data together. To do this would be immensely helpful in assessing where students are in their learning and how best to direct teaching to help them achieve. She is working with a data tracking system that is somewhat helpful and there is a need for ongoing data analysis. She cited the example of turning down the Distinguished School application because she could not provide the data necessary to turning in the form.

There are several software programs for tracking kids for Star scores. This is helpful also Jill Thompson working with intervention. The software helps to determine which kids require intervention. If she has a rubric teachers can use they can better see if they are meeting kids needs what the specifics are and how best to help them. They can track student progress and can quantify results. Chris said that the board could provide a vision for student achievement that could be given to the teachers to assist them. He also suggested asking teachers what they are doing to assess their students for achievement, what methods they are using, and feedback from them as to how they think students are achieving (or not).

Talin said that senior teachers had a fear that this data analysis might be used against them and criticize their teaching methods and success. Younger teachers were much more comfortable with this new way of approaching data analysis and open to utilizing it to better their practice. Chris asked if teachers are teaching to the standards that this

practice would be part of quantifying teacher/student progress. She said instructional practice is the heart of the results and results/difficulties should be shared among grade level colleagues.

Maybe being more explicit of what is expected would be helpful to teachers. Talin said the age of teachers and their training makes a difference in how they approach student achievement, again younger teachers are more familiar with this format. She said a strong instructional program takes trust, building relationships from teachers, teachers building relationships with administrators and vice versa. Authentic collaboration must take place.

Talin said student achievement is more effective when focused on teacher training. Explicit board goals would be helpful in this area. Board members sitting in a collaborative process is a global effort. She mentioned unity of purpose as being essential. She felt students were improving academically.

Ron felt the board could be more proactive in moving forward and felt that improving student achievement would be more effective if the board got involved in putting out explicit goals. He also said technology infrastructure was critical to the overall success of the school and yet no money had been set-aside for it in the budget. Maybe in future budgets this amount was critical and should not be deleted. We needed to focus on what was important in improving student achievement and this was part of it. He said what the boards wants for the district drives everything else.

Talin stated she puts best practice in action and would welcome more discussions with the board. Chris asked if there is a generational divide among teachers who are either intimidated by or resistant to change. Are there enough teachers comfortable with the process that might assist those with greater discomfort? Would this make things better or worse?

Talin said yes and no. Level of trust helps the process, there is quite a bit of disparity among the teachers some would welcome help, some would not.

Bob said resources are limited the newer staff are more savvy technologically, they ask for updated equipment and hi tech equipment and there is little money to provide all of this. For example tv's in some rooms have broken and there is no money to replace. Them. Chris suggested purchasing several and having rooms share them, similar to how AV departments used to work. Jean stated each teacher has a DVD player but some have no TV to go with it. Bob said some teachers already share to solve this problem.

Guy suggested that Talin prioritize the topics discussed and then board members would meet with her for her suggestions and explicit direction as to how to address the related issues. Bob said student demographics are changing there are more students who may need intervention. He felt all subject areas listed below student achievement also work toward the goal of successful achievement. We are losing kids who receive a lot of support at home to other schools. Talin said they don't have full evidence of this and

there is no way of measuring this. Guy asked what could the board do to help her gather this evidence.

Jean said that technology also means training students so they are competitive in the greater world. Talin agreed this was a huge concern. Jean said there are kids at school who don't even have a computer at home. Ron wished we could give every 7-8th grader a computer. Ron stated he liked this discussion that was taking place and board members could work with administration to hopefully address and resolve some of these problems. Feedback from administrators could then go back to the board for further discussion and implementation. Guy felt the meeting was productive and went well and the board could go forward with the ideas presented. Jean thanked Cristy for the time she spent putting together the handbook.

Chris said that it would be helpful to ask teachers to give information of student's abilities, support network and needs are educationally to better understand student needs and levels. Bring teachers into this discussion we have been having about evaluating student achievement, solicit their ideas. Talin said she could use past surveys to know how to best approach teachers with this idea and get them involved. She talked again about factions among teachers unity of purpose and bringing FEF to assist. Bob thought the meeting was most helpful and will focus on maybe changing the format of our agenda to make it most readable and use as little paper as possible. Michael felt it was a good meeting, insightful and everyone took time to look at their values as they relate to the betterment of the school. Although there were differences among the group consensus was reached on many topics. He talked about technology, what has not been funded and how to align things so we are working toward these goals discussed. Ron thought it would be helpful to solicit more of the public to attend these Saturday meetings.