



# **Fairfield–Suisun Unified School District Governance Handbook**

The Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District Governing Board 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.

## **Governing Board Members**

Jack Flynn  
Judi Honeychurch  
Ana Petero  
Perry Polk  
Bethany Smith  
Helen Tilley  
Craig Wilson

## **Superintendent**

Kris Corey

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

This handbook reflects the work of previous Governing Boards (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”) on the creation of a framework for effective governance, and applies to new and returning Board Members until modified. This work involves ongoing discussions about unity of purpose, roles, norms, and coming to agreement on protocols for formal structures that enable the Board to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits all children.

## **Table of Contents**

I.....	Role of the Board.....	Page 3
II.....	Board Meeting Dates and Times .....	Page 3
III.....	Types of Meetings .....	Page 3
IV.....	Role of Board Officers.....	Page 3
V.....	Order of Items on the Board Meeting Agenda .....	Page 4
VI.....	Public Comment During Board Meetings .....	Page 5
VII.....	Board Deliberations During Board Meetings .....	Page 5
VIII.....	Abstentions.....	Page 5
IX.....	Governance Norms.....	Page 5
X.....	Governance Protocols - How Business is Conducted .....	Page 6
XI.....	Communication Between and Among the Board, Board Members, and the Superintendent .....	Page 8
XII.....	Communication Between the Board and Other Staff.....	Page 8
XIII.....	Response to the Media: Speaking for the District (Procedures).....	Page 9
XIV.....	Responding to Complaints or Concerns From the Community .....	Page 10
XV.....	Visiting School Sites.....	Page 11
XVI....	Participating in District Activities/Role in Public/Community Visibility .....	Page 12
XVII...	Board Member Participation on District Committees .....	Page 12
XVIII...	Board Self-Evaluation .....	Page 12
XIX.....	Evaluating the Superintendent .....	Page 12
	Governance Calendar .....	Page 13
	List of and Links to Board Bylaws.....	Page 13
	Signature Page .....	Page 15

**I. Role of the Board (BB 9000):**

The Board:

- a. Sets the direction of the District and ensures a focus on student learning and achievement.
- b. Establishes an effective and efficient organizational structure.
- c. Provides support to the Superintendent and staff as the Superintendent carries out the Board's direction.
- d. Ensures accountability to the public for the performance of the District's schools.
- e. Provides community leadership and advocacy on behalf of students.

**II. Board Meeting Dates and Times (BB 9320):**

- a. Meetings of the Board are held in public but are NOT public meetings.
- b. The purpose of a Governing Board Meeting is for our Board Members to discuss agenda items with each other and speak in favor or against the item to assist in decision making.
- c. Board Meetings are opportunities for the Board to discuss the business of the District.
- d. The Board shall adopt a schedule of regular meetings at the Annual Organizational Meeting.
  - i. FSUSD Meetings are generally the 3rd Thursday of each month.
  - ii. Closed session generally begins at 5 pm followed by open session at 6 pm.
  - iii. Study Sessions may be scheduled and shall be held at the discretion of the Board.

**III. Types of Meetings**

- a. Regular Meetings
- b. Special Meetings--May be scheduled when the majority of the Board request additional time for an in depth conversation or discussion on topics or issues.
  - i. Study Session:
    - Study Sessions give the board an opportunity to learn about issues of interest. They often include reporting from staff to receive more in-depth information on important issues. Study Sessions give Board Members an opportunity to learn without the pressure of making a decision, but the study session may inform later decisions.
  - ii. Discussion Meetings:
    - Discussion meetings may involve staff, but typically involve the governance team and the superintendent. The team members learn from each other without the pressure of making a decision. They may think out loud and share ideas with one another.
- c. Emergency Meetings
- d. Closed Session Meetings

**IV. Role of Board Officers:**

- a. Election of Officers (BB 9100):
  - i. Board Members will submit written interest for Board offices and Subcommittee assignments in early November.
  - ii. The list of interested members will be provided to the entire Board at the regularly scheduled meeting in November. Additional



\*The aforementioned items listed in e-g are on the agenda in order by Department: Educational Services; Business Services; Human Resources; and Superintendent/ Board.

**VI. Public Comment During Board Meetings: (BB 9323)**

- a. Public comment is limited to topics within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board.
- b. Public comment is limited to 30 minutes maximum on each item.
- c. Speakers are limited to three minutes on each item.
- d. Association Reports are on the Board agenda and separate from public comment.
  - i. Association Reports shall not exceed 5 minutes in length.
- e. The Superintendent may provide brief comment or clarity and may follow up with public speakers as appropriate.

**VII. Board Deliberations During Board Meetings: (BB9005) (BB9121)**

- a. The public has a right to expect the Board to give appropriate attention and deliberation on items of importance to the District.
- b. The Board shall have respect for each other's opinions as this is vital to ensuring successful deliberations.
- c. The Board shall strive to keep remarks succinct (to the point) so that all opinions may be expressed to ensure that meetings are efficient.
- d. Each agenda item will adhere to the following process in this order:
  - i. Input from the community
  - ii. Staff presentations
  - iii. Follow-up questions for the Superintendent
  - iv. Motion and second if item requires action
  - v. Board discussion and deliberation

**VIII. Abstentions (BB9323) (BB9270):**

- a. Unless there is a legal or perceived conflict of interest, Board Members should exercise their duty to the public by voting on issues brought for action.
- b. Abstentions are most appropriate in cases where:
  - i. there is a personal relationship between a litigant and a Board Member or where there may be a perception of bias between the two.
  - ii. there is a decision that financially impacts the Board Member or a member of the Board Member's immediate family which creates a legal conflict.
  - iii. in the cases of confidential student discipline matters, there is a personal connection between a student, the student's family and the Board Member.
- c. Where there is an actual legal conflict of interest, the Board Member must publicly declare the conflict and recuse themselves from deliberations and voting.
- d. Abstentions shall not be counted for purposes of determining whether a majority of the Board has taken action.

**IX. Governance Norms (BP0100) (BB9005) (BB9011) (BB9200) (BB9320) (BB9321):**

The Board shall:

- a. Focus on student learning and student achievement.

- b. Assume positive intentions which helps to build trust.
- c. Maintain confidentiality (keep confidential information confidential).
- d. Understand that authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individual Board Members.
- e. Recognize that decisions are made only at properly noticed and scheduled meetings.
- f. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures.
- g. Understand that Board decisions are binding on all Board Members.
- h. Understand that individual members shall support, and shall not undermine, all decisions reached by the Board.
- i. Refrain from speaking derogatorily of decisions.
- j. Be prepared for public Board Meetings including:
  - i. Thoroughly reviewing all agenda and meeting materials in advance of the Board Meeting.
  - ii. Submitting any questions on said materials prior to the meeting.
- k. Refrain from performing any management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.
- l. Work in a collegial, professional, and productive manner with all members of the Board and treat everyone with civility and respect.
- m. Serve as a representative of the District's families and community.
- n. Communicate directly with the Superintendent whenever a question or concern is raised by a staff member, student, parent, or stakeholder and inform the complainant of the necessary process to follow in resolving concerns.
- o. Communicate directly with the Superintendent prior to Board Meetings to address questions and/or concerns about agenda items.
- p. Honor the “no surprises” rule with the Superintendent including:
  - i. Individual Board Members shall communicate (prior to the Board Meeting) if they are planning to pull an item from the Consent Calendar.
  - ii. Individual Board Members shall communicate (prior to the Board Meeting) if they have individual concerns or questions on agenda items.
- q. Participate in professional development by committing the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective Board Member.
- r. Refrain from directing the work of District employees by action or implication.
- s. Refrain from soliciting and/or organizing public comment.

**X. Governance Protocols – How Business is Conducted:**

- a. **Agenda Setting and Review (BB9322):**
  - i. Agendas are arranged so that the public may observe the Board’s business.
  - ii. The Board President, Vice-President, and Superintendent meet to discuss the contents of the agenda and the process that will be followed at the meeting.
  - iii. At the discretion of the Board President and Superintendent, an additional Board Member may attend the agenda setting and/or agenda review meetings to discuss the contents of the agendas and the process that will be followed at the meeting.
    - The additional Board Member must request to attend in writing to the Board President.

- The additional Board Member, President, and Vice President agree to refrain from discussing items with other Board Members as to not violate the Brown Act.
  - iv. The Board agenda for regularly scheduled meetings is submitted to the entire Board and public no less than 72 hours before a regular meeting. The practice in FSUSD is that the agenda is posted on the Friday prior to the following Thursday night meeting.
- b. **Placing Items on the Board Meeting Agenda (BP2110) (BB9122) (BB9322):**
  - i. Requests for agenda items must be submitted in writing ten (10) days in advance for consideration by the Board President and Vice President.
    - The Superintendent, as a member of the Governance Team, has the responsibility to inform the Board if requests have the potential to divert resources from approved goals and/or projects.
    - The Board President and Vice President will consider the request at the next Agenda Setting Meeting.
- c. **Obtaining Additional Information/Answers to Agenda Items Prior to a Board Meeting (BB 9322):**
  - i. Board Members may submit questions in writing to the Superintendent or request a meeting with the Superintendent to discuss items on the Board agenda.
  - ii. In order for staff to answer questions appropriately, Board Members should email questions to the Superintendent prior to 12:00 noon on the Tuesday preceding the regularly scheduled meeting.
  - iii. All non-confidential questions and answers will be compiled and submitted to all Members of the Board (and the public) as additional information prior to the Board Meeting.
- d. **Alerting the Board President of the Desire to Speak on a Particular Agenda Item (BB9121):**
  - i. Raise hand, or if virtual, use application tool to indicate desire to speak.
  - ii. Wait to be acknowledged by the Board President before speaking.
  - iii. Make a commitment to open, honest communication, with no deliberate surprises.
- e. **Responding to Complaints/Concerns During Board Meetings (BB9323) (Superintendent Contract, Article 3):**
  - i. As appropriate, the Superintendent may provide a brief clarification or direct staff to connect with public speakers.
- f. **Board Decisions (BB9005) (BB9323.2):**
  - i. Once the Board has made a decision, the decision becomes the decision of “the Board”.
- g. **Board Decision to Censure (BP1312.1)**
  - i. A Declaration of Censure is a fundamental expression of the majority opinion of the Board. A censure is a remedy to protect the district from a liability of unauthorized actions of a board member.
  - ii. The Board has the right to expressively state a disavowal of one Board Member’s opinion. The public expects the highest

- standards of ethics from those involved in public service.
- iii. When any Board Member violates laws, policies, or bylaws that undermine the effectiveness of the Board, a formal resolution of censure may be requested and placed on the agenda.
- iv. A request for censure hearing should be submitted in writing to the Superintendent by no less than two, and no more than three Members of the Board. The request must contain specific charge(s) on which the proposed censure is based, and the written material(s) on which the charge(s) are based.
- v. The request and charge(s) shall be agendized in accordance with the Brown Act for the meeting of the Board.

**XI. Communications Between and Among the Board, Board Members and the Superintendent (BP0100) (BB9005) (BB9010) (BB9200):**

Board Members shall:

- a. Assume collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive Organizational culture.
- b. Act in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- c. Submit requests for information to the Superintendent. These requests can be for information to be shared in an upcoming Friday Letter, memo, or Board presentation.
- d. Confer directly with the Superintendent to ask questions and/or request additional information on agenda items.
- e. Model professional behavior by being polite and respectful.
- f. Recognize that as a norm, the Superintendent speaks on behalf of the Board. The Board President is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board, when necessary.

**XII. Communications Between the Board and Other Staff:**

**a. Individual Board Member Requests for Information From Staff (BP2110) (BP2111) (BB9322):**

- i. The Superintendent is committed to providing the Board with adequate information concerning the effective running of the District, to make informed decisions, and to govern effectively.
- ii. Requests for information must be balanced against staff's ability to respond, taking into account staff's other work on behalf of students and the district and time commitment required by the request.
- iii. The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring the efficient use of all human and material resources.
- iv. Individual requests will be prioritized by the Superintendent as to urgency and its interest to the entire board.
- v. Any information requests which will take more than 30 minutes to fulfill must be made by at least three Board Members. This supports the idea of individual members reaching out to a Board colleague first to discuss or raise questions.

**b. Responding to the Community Outside of Board Meetings Including Meetings with Union Officials/Bargaining Team Members:**

- i. Board Members shall refrain from attending or participating in negotiations.
- ii. Board Members shall trust that the administration speaks on behalf of the Board.

- iii. Board trust is paramount to successful negotiations and employment relations.
- iv. Communication regarding issues related to negotiations and contracts are made on behalf of the Board by the Superintendent or designee.
- v. Members should never have undisclosed, private meetings with association members over matters concerning negotiations, working conditions, or contractual issues. Individual Board Members should notify the Superintendent of any invitation to meet individually with leaders in the Associations and the topics of discussion.
- vi. Any Board Member conducting undisclosed, private meetings with association members over negotiated matters may be subject to public censure.
- vii. Since engaging in a private conversation with association personnel may lead to a misunderstanding of promises made or implied, if and when members attend such meetings, they are encouraged to do so in pairs.
- viii. When speaking via telephone to bargaining team members, Board Members are encouraged to listen without comment as any comment may be misconstrued.
- ix. Any conversation regarding negotiations should be shared with the Superintendent and district lead negotiator.

**XIII. Response to the Media: Speaking for the District (Procedures) ([BB9010](#))**

a. Communication with Media

- i. For most routine communication with the media, the Superintendent, or designee, acts as spokesperson for the Board and shall represent the Board's view/direction.
- ii. The Board recognizes their responsibility to ensure a consistent message and provide fact-based information to the public.
- iii. The Board President as the Board's spokesperson shall:
  - Make statements that have been authorized by the Board whenever possible.
  - Represent the Board in describing actions taken, decisions made, and business that will be heard before the Board.
  - Inform the Board when media contact has been made on their behalf, stating the contact and the content of the communication.
- iv. Individual Board Members who exercise their right to free speech shall:
  - Clearly state that the opinion and/or information offered belongs only to the individual and in no way reflects the Board's position.
  - Encourage the member of the media to contact the official spokesperson as well for the Board's position, if one has been taken.
  - Refrain to the extent possible, from indicating how they will vote on an item coming before the Board, realizing

that voting is most appropriately done at a meeting of the Board.

**XIV. Responding to Complaints or Concerns From the Community (BB9200) (Superintendent Contract, Article 3):**

- a. Individual Board Members shall not exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools or command the services of any school employee.
- b. Individual Board Members do not have the authority to resolve complaints. Board Members who attempt to resolve complaints may unintentionally:
  - i. violate existing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with bargaining units;
  - ii. violate other contracts;
  - iii. violate California Education Code;
  - iv. violate California Labor Law;
  - v. disclose confidential student information;
  - vi. disclose confidential staff information;
  - vii. disclose confidential Closed Session information.
- c. The Board recognizes their responsibility to hear complaints and concerns from the community and to direct the complainant to resolve the issue at the point closest to its origination.

Board Members shall:

  - i. Listen and paraphrase enough to satisfy the complainant that the concern has been heard and understood.
  - ii. Refer the complainant to the person/position closest to the problem:
    - classroom problem.....teacher, then principal
    - policy issues.....Superintendent
    - senior staff.....Superintendent
  - iii. Refer the complainant to the Superintendent's office.
  - iv. Refrain from promising to "look into it" or fix anything.
  - v. Remind the individual that a Board Member has no authority as an individual Board Member.
  - vi. Provide the Superintendent with a "heads up" regarding any concern or complaint.
  - vii. Share anonymous complaints with the Superintendent, although they may not be investigated, unless required by law.
  - viii. Refrain from discussing formal complaints. Restraint is necessary in order to preserve the fair hearing of the complaint at a later time should the complainant choose to appeal a finding or decision of the Superintendent.
- d. **Suggested responses a Board Member may use when the Board Member Receives a Concern/Complaint. As a reminder, please copy the Superintendent in your responses if responding via email:**
  - i. "Thank you for bringing this to my attention. Members of the Governing Board do not deal directly with the day-to-day operations of the school district. I have forwarded your communication to the Superintendent."

- ii. "Thank you for sharing your concern. I am forwarding your request to our Superintendent to make sure this issue is handled appropriately."
- iii. "Thank you for the email. Have you communicated this with your site administration? As Board Members, we work through the Superintendent. I have forwarded your concern to our Superintendent of Schools."
- iv. "The Superintendent is the Chief Executive Officer for the district. I have forwarded your concerns and input to the Superintendent."
- v. "Thank you for your email. I always appreciate hearing from members of our community. Please note that while I share in your concern, I have no individual authority. Individual Board Members must refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff. I have forwarded your email to our Superintendent."
- vi. "The Governing Board accepts responsibility for providing a means by which the public can hold employees accountable for their actions. We desire complaints to be resolved expeditiously, without disrupting the educational process. To promote prompt and fair resolution of the complaint, every effort is made to resolve a complaint at the earliest possible stage.  
In accordance with Board Policy/Administrative Regulation 1312.1 (Complaints Concerning District Employees), I am forwarding your complaint/concern to the Superintendent who will forward it to the appropriate administrative staff member. Your complaint/concern should be addressed promptly and fairly. If you haven't been contacted within the next 48 hours, please contact the Superintendent's office at 707-399-5008.  
In the meantime, I am providing you with the link to the FSUSD webpage that outlines the complaint processes and procedures: <https://www.fsusd.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=15295>

**XV. Visiting School Sites:**

- a. Board Members should notify the Superintendent and site principal no later than 24 hours in advance when visiting a school or department.
- b. Following a visit, Board Members shall provide input to the Superintendent on issues or concerns that may arise from such a visit.
- c. Each member is assigned, on a rotating basis, a group of schools they shall serve as the Board representative at special events.
- d. Board Members shall refrain from inviting other board members or community members to an assigned school site visit.
- e. At no time, while visiting schools or school events, shall a Board Member:
  - i. Make promises, either overt or implied.
  - ii. Interfere with administration.
  - iii. Involve themselves in personnel issues, student records, union activities, or solicit complaints or concerns.
- f. Board Members shall not request any information from staff beyond that which would be provided to any regular community member.

**XVI. Participating in District Activities/Role in Public/Community Visibility (BB9140) (BB9200):**

- a. The public expects its leaders to be visible at all times.
- b. Board Members are seen as the official representatives of the District.
- c. Behavior and speech of individual Members of the Board reflect on the entire Board and District.
- d. Board Members shall behave at all times in a manner that reflects positively on the District.
- e. Board Members shall refrain from obligating the Board and/or administration by actual speech or implication, unless authorized to do so by the Board.
- f. Board Members shall, when interacting with the public and their constituents, hold to the highest level of professional and ethical conduct, including emphasizing the positive aspects of the District.

**XVII. Board Member Participation on District Committees (BB9130):**

- a. Governance Subcommittee and advisory committee work allows for efficient and effective use of time and resources to inform Board decisions.
- b. Advisory committees are an effective way to receive public input that is based on accurate information and in-depth discussion.

**XVIII. Board Self-Evaluation (BB9400):**

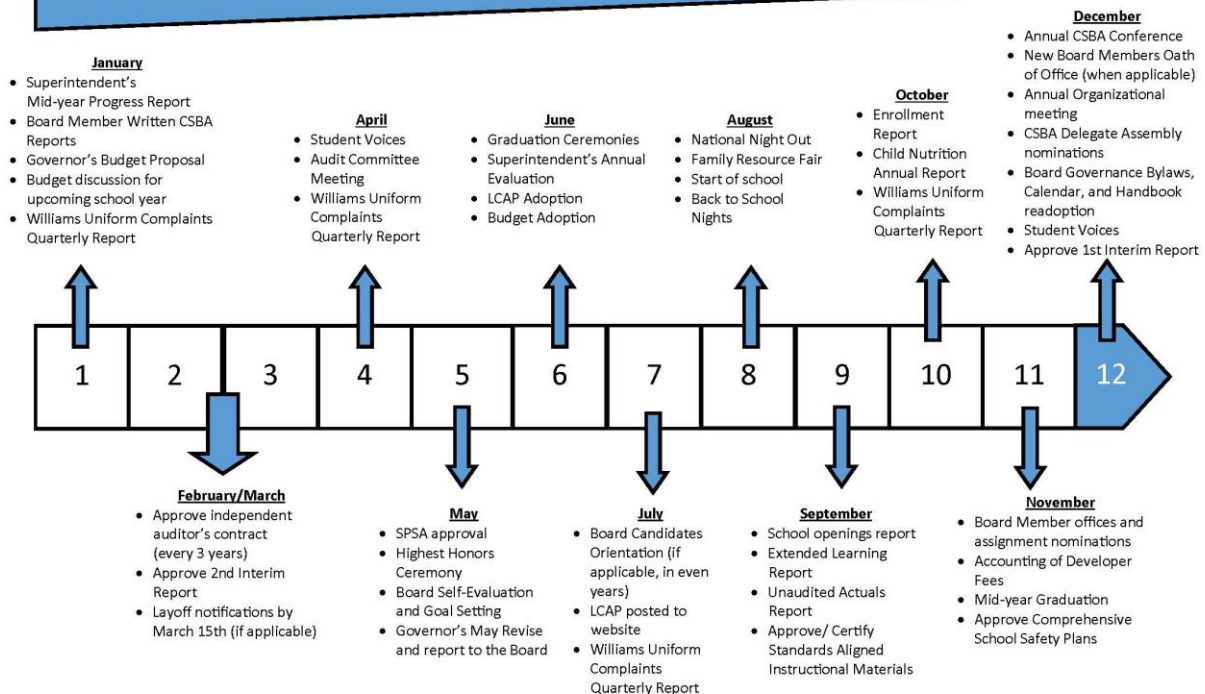
The Board shall:

- a. Evaluate their own effectiveness on an annual basis.
- b. Review and reapprove the Governance Handbook each year.
- c. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance.
- d. Annually evaluate its own performance in working together as a team. Each member should contribute by assessing their view of the Board's performance.
- e. Utilize the self-evaluation meeting to develop goals for strengthening Board performance and determine success indicators for the next year's self-evaluation.

**XIX. Evaluating the Superintendent (BP2121) (BP2140):**

- a. The purpose of the evaluation is to objectively evaluate the Superintendent's performance and provide appropriate feedback.
- b. The Board shall follow the process outlined in the Superintendent's contract.
- c. The Superintendent's evaluations are confidential.
- d. The Board will agendaize the annual evaluation of the Superintendent at one meeting in June. The discussion of the annual evaluation may occur over several meetings as needed.
- e. The evaluation process and instrument are designed to bring about the collective view of the Board. Thus, the evaluation will reflect the majority view of the Board.
- f. There will be ongoing communications between the Superintendent and the Board throughout the year along with regular progress reports via Friday letters, Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) updates, and budget updates from the Superintendent/designee to the Board. The more formal evaluation process will add to that ongoing process, not replace it.
- g. The Board will conduct an informal mid-year check-in and end-of-year formal evaluation of the Superintendent.

# Fairfield-Suisun USD Governance Calendar



Board approved: 12/14/2023

The following is a list of the FSUSD adopted Board Bylaws. Each bylaw is linked to its most current version maintained by CSBA at the following link: <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/index.aspx?S=36030826>


- ★ BB9000: Role of the Board
- ★ BB9005: Governance Standards
- ★ BB9010: Public Statements
- ★ BB9011: Disclosure of Confidential/Privileged Information
- ★ BB9012: Board Member Electronic Communications
- ★ BB9100: Organization
- ★ BB9110: Terms of Office
- ★ BB9121: President
- ★ BB9122: Secretary
- ★ BB9123: Clerk
- ★ BB9124: Attorney

- ★ BB9130: Board Committees
- ★ BB9140: Board Representatives
- ★ BB9150: Student Board Members
- ★ BB9200: Limits of Board Member Authority
- ★ BB9220: Governing Board Elections
- ★ BB9222: Resignation
- ★ BB9223: Filing Vacancies
- ★ BB9224: Oath or Affirmation
- ★ BB9230: Orientation
- ★ BB9240: Board Training
- ★ BB9250: Remuneration, Reimbursement and Other Benefits
- ★ BB9260: Legal Protection
- ★ E9270: Conflict of Interest
- ★ BB9270: Conflict of Interest
- ★ BB9310: Board Policies
- ★ BB9320: Meetings and Notices
- ★ E9321 (1): Closed Session
- ★ E9321 (2): Closed Session
- ★ BB9321: Closed Session
- ★ BB9322: Agenda/Meeting Materials
- ★ BB9323: Meeting Conduct
- ★ E9323.2 (1): Actions by the Board
- ★ E9323.2 (2): Actions by the Board
- ★ BB9323.2 Actions by the Board
- ★ BB9324: Minutes and Recordings
- ★ BB9400: Board Self-Evaluation

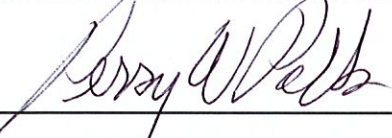
Re-Adopted this 14th day of December, 2023, by the Governing Board of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District:

Signed:


  
\_\_\_\_\_, Board President, Bethany Smith

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Board Vice-President, Judi Honeychurch

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Board Clerk, Helen Tilley

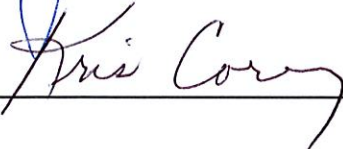
  
\_\_\_\_\_, Board Member, Perry Polk

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Board Member, Craig Wilson

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Board Member, Jack Flynn

**Not present at meeting** \_\_\_\_\_, Board Member, Ana Petero

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Student Board Member, Lavani Madadi

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Board Secretary, Superintendent Kris Corey