

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR ADOPTING AND UTILIZING THE STANDARDS AND ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AND MEDIA**

CSBA's Professional Governance Standards are intended to help support school boards in their efforts to govern responsibly and effectively on behalf of all students, and to enhance the public's understanding about the critical responsibilities of school boards.

By adopting the governance standards, boards are taking an important step toward:

- Demonstrating their commitment to governing effectively on behalf of students;
- Promoting greater self-accountability; and
- Raising awareness among the public, media and local community members about the critical jobs boards are charged with carrying out.

The following pages provide advice for boards about how to locally adopt the Professional Governance Standards. Once adopted, boards may utilize the governance standards in a number of ways to help strengthen their ongoing commitment to effective governance. Also included in this packet are several suggestions for utilizing the governance standards to help engage the local media and communities.



## **LOCAL ADOPTION**

Local boards are encouraged to review, discuss and adopt the Professional Governance Standards. To formally adopt the standards, the item should be placed on a meeting agenda and the board should pass a resolution. Boards may also wish to adopt related board policies (Sample Board Bylaws 9000 and 9005(a)) to formally incorporate the standards into the Board bylaws. Adopting the standards is an important step for the board and sufficient time and attention should be given to the item on the agenda.

As a corollary to the CSBA Professional Governance Standards, a team of California superintendents including the ACSA Superintendents Committee and the CSBA Superintendents Advisory Council has developed a set of Superintendent Governance Standards. We highly recommend that these be included as part of the Professional Governance Standards adoption for district boards.



## UTILIZING THE STANDARDS

Adopting the standards is a significant first step toward demonstrating the board’s commitment to effective governance. Once adopted, there are many ways – both large and small – that boards can take action to further their commitment on behalf of the students they serve. These include:

- **Displaying the Professional Governance Standards**

The governance standards can help to establish a common vocabulary in the district and county office of education about governance. To achieve this, the standards should be readily accessible to the governing board and periodically communicated to staff and the public. Displaying the standards also helps to reinforce the board’s commitment. Suggestions for ways to display the standards include:

- Posting them at the central office and in the boardroom.  
(Districts that adopt the standards and notify CSBA will receive a poster of the standards for this purpose.)
- Including a copy of the standards as a regular page in the board meeting agenda packet
- Posting the standards on the district or county Web site

- **Making the standards part of the local organizational culture**

The Professional Governance Standards are based on the extensive work of hundreds of locally elected board members, superintendents and policy experts, as well as the CSBA Effective Governance System and Masters in Governance curriculum. School leaders throughout the state have helped to develop the standards – but each board that adopts them should utilize them in a manner that works best locally. For the standards to have maximum value, governance teams must take local “ownership” of them. We recommend a number of ways that boards can begin to do this, including:

- *Regular discussion of the standards.* Governance teams should devote time, ideally as part of board working sessions, to discussing the standards. In particular, governance teams should consider reaching agreements about what would indicate success for the board in meeting each of the standards. This might also take the form of adopting local “performance indicators,” “protocols” or “norms” to back up each standard. An outside facilitator might be useful for these discussions so that all members of the governance team can participate. This work will serve to further reaffirm the board’s commitment to creating and maintaining a positive organizational culture. The board may wish to begin by discussing a specific section of the standards or a specific standard. As more districts and county boards undertake this process, CSBA will act as a clearinghouse in sharing locally agreed upon norms and indicators.



## **UTILIZING THE STANDARDS (CONTINUED)**

— *Periodically evaluating the board's own effectiveness.* Effective boards employ a number of strategies to periodically evaluate their effectiveness. These range from formal workshops to brief “progress checks” at the conclusion of regular meetings to utilizing professional facilitators and soliciting outside feedback. Individual boards should determine which strategies work best for them. In any case, the Professional Governance Standards provide a framework for conducting this periodic evaluation as well as to enhance the board’s “self-accountability.” Boards that adopt the standards and develop their own norms or indicators will be a long way toward having established their own evaluation mechanism.

- **Participating in continuing education**

As the standards demonstrate, serving on a school governing board is a complex job. Both new and experienced board members can benefit from continuing education and professional development opportunities. CSBA offers a range of professional development programs such as the Masters in Governance, New and First Term Board Member Institute, Policy Institutes and the Annual Education Conference, all of which fully integrate the concepts contained in the Professional Governance Standards. CSBA Governance Consulting Services offers workshops to help individual governance teams agree on a governance framework that incorporates the standards.

- **Reviewing and re-affirming the standards**

Following the initial adoption of the standards, boards should review and re-affirm the standards and any related bylaws, policies and agreements at least annually as part of the board’s organizational meeting. Every time a new member joins the governance team, it’s also a good idea to review the standards and the governance team agreements related to them.



## **ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AND MEDIA**

### **UPON ADOPTION**

Local adoption of the Professional Governance Standards provides a great opportunity for the community and the media to learn about the essential jobs of school boards and the board's commitment to effective governance. The board should be sure to communicate its adoption of the standards to the local media and local community.

The following actions may be taken upon local adoption of the standards or soon afterward:

- **Press release**  
Send a press release announcing the board's adoption of the Professional Governance Standards. If other districts within the area have also recently adopted the standards, a joint press release and/or press conference may increase media awareness and attention.
- **Follow-up with reporters, editors and columnists**  
The district or county spokesperson should contact local reporters, editors or columnists to make certain the press release has been received. This is also a good opportunity to answer any specific questions reporters may have about the standards.
- **Op/Ed**  
Submit an op/ed to local newspapers about the purpose and importance of school board governance. Op/Eds provide an opportunity to discuss the job of a school board in much more detail than a press conference or a letter to the editor. Op/Eds are usually no longer than 500 words.
- **Television interviews**  
The adoption of the standards may provide an opportunity to speak with television reporters regarding the responsibilities of school boards and the board's commitment to effective governance.
- **Information in district or county office newsletter**  
News of the board's adoption and a copy of the standards should be published in the district or county newsletter to help inform parents and staff.
- **Post information on the district or county Web site**  
Similar to the newsletter, information about the standards and a copy of them should be posted on the Web site. (A hyperlink to a PDF version of the standards can be made through [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org).)
- **Information in parent newsletters**  
Local parent newsletters such as the PTA newsletter can further inform parents about the importance and function of the school board.



## **ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AND MEDIA**

### **FOLLOWING ADOPTION – SUGGESTIONS FOR ONGOING USE**

Once adopted, the board should take advantage of ongoing opportunities to increase awareness about local school governance. We recommend one or more of the following actions in the months following the board’s adoption of the standards:

- **Meetings with staff and parents**  
Board members should seize opportunities to make a presentation about the standards to staff, as well as to parents. Schedule a special time to talk about the standards and provide refreshments. Even if the audience is small, this type of direct communication helps reaffirm the board’s commitment to effective governance.
- **Editorial board visits**  
A visit with the editorial board of the local newspaper provides a forum where substantive issues can be discussed in less of a “newsy” environment. The inclusion of other individuals, including business leaders, parent representatives and other civic leaders can heighten the significance to the newspaper.
- **Periodic op/eds or columns in local newspapers**  
Submissions do not have to cease with an article or column announcing the adoption of the standards. In fact, the board should look for opportunities to submit follow-up columns describing in more detail particular jobs of the board. CSBA will provide periodic sample op/eds for this purpose to boards that have adopted the standards.
- **Public service announcements (PSAs)**  
Television PSAs, once produced, can be aired on cable access stations, where available. Audio PSAs can also be aired on local radio stations.
- **Articles or columns for other organizations’ publications**  
Guest columns written by the board president can be submitted for publication in other local publications, such as the PTA, chambers of commerce and other civic organizations.
- **Community presentations**  
Never underestimate the power of face-to-face communications. Board members and superintendents should create opportunities to speak at local meetings of the PTA, business groups or other civic organizations. Be sure to contact local ethnic organizations as well. This can be an especially powerful follow-up to a column in an organization’s newsletter.
- **Don’t forget to share the accomplishments of students and schools**  
Helping the media and public to better understand the responsibilities of the school board is vital – but you should also utilize every opportunity when communicating with the media and public to highlight accomplishments of local schools and students.



For additional information about the Professional Governance Standards, visit [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org) or contact Governance Consulting Services at (800) 266-3382.