



*P* C S B A  
PROFESSIONAL  
GOVERNANCE  
STANDARDS

**for County Boards  
of Education**

[www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org)

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# PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

Public oversight of local government is the foundation of American democracy. Nowhere is this more evident than in our public schools, where boards of education are entrusted by their diverse communities to uphold the constitution, protect the public interest in schools and ensure that a high quality education is provided to each student. To maximize the public's confidence in local government, boards must govern responsibly and effectively.

The California School Boards Association (CSBA) representing 1,000 local school districts and county boards of education recognizes there are certain fundamental principles involved in governing responsibly and effectively. These principles — or Professional Governance Standards — reflect consensus among hundreds of board members, superintendents, and other educational leaders throughout the state.

These Professional Governance Standards describe three components vital to effective governance: 1) the attributes of an effective individual trustee, 2) the attributes of an effective governing board, and 3) the specific jobs the board performs in its governance role.

The intent of these standards is to enhance the public's understanding about the critical responsibilities of school boards and to support them in their efforts to govern effectively.

## The Individual Trustee

*In California's public education system, a trustee is a person elected or appointed to serve on a board of education. Individual trustees bring unique skills, values and beliefs to their board. In order to govern effectively, individual trustees must work with each other and the superintendent to ensure that a high quality education is provided to each student*

### To be effective, an individual trustee:

- Keeps learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus.
- Values, supports and advocates for public education.
- Recognizes and respects differences of perspective and style on the board and among staff, students, parents and the community.
- Acts with dignity, and understands the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- Keeps confidential matters confidential.
- Participates in professional development and commits the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.
- Understands the distinctions between board, superintendent and staff roles, and refrains from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the superintendent and staff.
- Understands that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individual board members.

## The Board

*County offices of education are governed by a superintendent and board, not by individual board members. While understanding their separate governance roles, the board and superintendent work together as a team. This team assumes collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture in order to govern effectively.*

### To operate effectively, the board must have a unity of purpose and:

- Keep focused on student learning and achievement, as well as the role of the county office of education in providing services to school districts and the community.
- Work collaboratively with the county superintendent.
- Communicate a common vision.
- Operate openly, with trust and integrity.
- Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Govern within board-adopted policies and procedures.
- Take collective responsibility for the board's performance.
- Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness.
- Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform board deliberations.

## The County Board's Jobs

*The primary responsibilities of the county board are to work with the superintendent to establish the direction and priorities for the county office of education through its budgetary responsibilities, and to provide leadership to support the success of public education. To fulfill these responsibilities, there are a number of specific jobs that effective boards must carry out.*

### Effective county boards:

- Maintain a cooperative and supportive working relationship with local school districts, their school boards and the community.
- Collaborate with the superintendent so that the shared vision, goals and policies of the county office of education can be implemented.
- Adopt, evaluate and update policies consistent with law and the county board's vision and goals.
- Maintain accountability for student learning in schools and programs operated by the county office of education.
- Adopt the annual budget and review interim reports of the county superintendent of schools.
- Approve the salary of the county superintendent.
- Review the real property audit and acquire or dispose of real property as necessary for county office of education schools and programs.
- Adopt policies to ensure that a safe and appropriate educational environment is provided for all its students.
- Conduct appeals on student expulsions and inter-district transfers.
- Conduct public hearings when appropriate.
- Fulfill statutory responsibilities in connection with charter schools.
- Provide community leadership on educational issues and advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local, state and federal levels.