

SAMPLE Op/Ed I

COUNTY BOARD LEADERS HAVE A CRUCIAL JOB

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 voters to ensure that each student is provided a high quality education. Since so much is at stake, the way boards do their job is critical. Their performance as a board impacts the attitudes and actions of staff, students, parents — and indeed our entire community.

The _____ Board recognizes that to maximize the public's confidence in local government, we must govern responsibly and effectively.

In order to do that, all of us, including the public, must share an understanding about the responsibilities of county boards of education, and their relationship with local districts.

Individuals representing diverse viewpoints and experiences are elected to serve on county boards. Once elected, however, these individuals must work together with the superintendent to govern the district. That's what boards do — they govern.

But governing is a difficult task. Recently the _____ Board of Education took a significant step toward enhancing our effectiveness by adopting new Professional Governance Standards for County Boards, developed by the California School Boards Association and the California County Boards of Education. The Professional Governance Standards represent consensus among hundreds of board members, superintendents and policy experts throughout the state as to the commonly agreed upon principles of effective school governance. These standards provide an important framework for governance that will help us to serve more effectively on behalf of all students and districts in the county. Further, these governance standards provide a useful tool for parents and the community to assess how well we're doing.

California now has rigorous standards for what we expect our students to know and be able to do; we feel it is important to model these high expectations by adopting standards of our own.

As the public asks more of students than ever before, the function of district and county boards has never been more crucial. No one can protect the diverse interests of the children in their communities better than local leaders — and nothing keeps the “public” in public schools better than publicly elected local leadership.

President
County Board of Education