

**Mt. Abraham Unified School District Board
Policy Governance Monitoring Report**

Policy Area: Board Operations A4

Policy Subject: Governance Process

Monitoring Report for Policy A4.1 – Governing Style

Reporting Period: January 23, 2018 – September 25, 2018

Reporting Responsibility: School Board Directors for the Public Record

Report Submitted By: Andrew Morton, MAUSD School Director, New Haven

Policy Language:

•The Board will govern lawfully, observing the principles of the Policy Governance model, with an emphasis on (a) an outward vision rather than an internal preoccupation, (b) encouragement of diversity in viewpoints, (c) strategic leadership more than administrative detail, (d) clear distinction of board and superintendent roles, (e) collective rather than individual decisions, (f) future rather than past or present, and g) proactive rather than reactivity.

Board Adopted Interpretation: We interpret “govern lawfully” to mean the Board will govern without breaking the law (state or federal), contract language and will follow ANESU policies.

We interpret “outward vision” to mean the Board’s focus will be on student outcomes.

We interpret “encouragement of diversity in viewpoints” to mean that the Board will encourage a wide variety of viewpoints from members.

We interpret “strategic leadership more than administrative detail” to mean the Board will demonstrate a strategic focus on improvement on student and organizational outcomes rather than managing the administration.

We interpret “clear distinction of board and superintendent roles” to mean the Board will recognize their roles and those of the Superintendent and work diligently to focus their time on their roles as outlined in policy.

We interpret “collective rather than individual decisions” to mean the Board will arrive at decision based on input from all members .

We interpret “future rather than past or present” to mean the Board will focus on the future outcomes.

We interpret “proactive rather than reactivity” to mean the Board will create the vision for the outcomes rather than taking action based on a situation or circumstance.

Evidence: Meeting minutes, experience/observations at board meetings.

Conclusion: We report compliance. “Diversity of viewpoints” and “collective rather than individual decisions” is evident by meeting minutes where difficult decisions regarding budgeting or personnel decisions in executive session have not resulted in unanimous decisions (for example, see [Consent Agenda Item B, 3/27/2018 Board Meeting](#)). The Board Chair has asked for the perspectives and opinions of those who have not voiced them during discussion. “Proactive rather than reactive” and “future rather than past or present” is evidenced in the [board work plan](#) and is adjusted as new information and demands arise. Generally, board members have a forward-looking approach to governance except where past issues inform future processes. “Strategic leadership” and “distinction between roles” of superintendent and board have been evidenced by routine discussion about the boundaries between the two, in large part to new board members learning and therefore asking for guidance about roles. Use of language in meetings also delineates the distinction between board and superintendent - for example, the board’s ownership of developing and putting forth a budget, the thoughtful questioning of the superintendent’s plan for the board proposed budget, and respect of the superintendent’s role to implement the budget as proposed.

Policy Language:

▪ **Accordingly:**

1. The Board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The Board, not the staff, will be responsible for excellence in governing. The Board will be the initiator of policy, not merely a reactor to staff initiatives. The Board will not use the expertise of individual members to substitute for the judgment of the Board, although the expertise of individual members may be used to enhance the understanding of the Board as a body.

Board Adopted Interpretation: We interpret “cultivate a sense of group responsibility” to mean the Board will work together to demonstrate its duty to the group.

We interpret “excellence in governing” to mean the Board will be tasked with assuring they govern well and in accordance to its policies.

We interpret “initiator of policy” to mean the Board will responsible for developing and/or changing policy.

We interpret “judgment of the Board” to mean the Board’s collective decisions.

Evidence: Meeting minutes, experience/observations at board meetings, email communications.

Conclusion: We report compliance. All board members have had perspectives and opinions, encouraged by other board members and the Board Chair, but individual opinion does not appear to have taken on an outsized or dominating role in board work or direction. “Excellence in governing” is aspirational and is being addressed as a new unified board with some members who, new to board work, are learning and

understanding policies, and continually working to clarify board/superintendent interactions based upon policy. Finally, where a lack of a quorum became a problem at some meetings, a clarification of board member responsibilities, methods of contacting the Board Chair when unavailable and responsibility to the group was addressed.

Policy Language:

2. The Board will direct, control, and inspire the organization through the careful establishment of broad written policies reflecting the Board's values and perspectives. The Board's major policy focus will be on the intended long-term impacts outside the staff organization, not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those effects.

Board Adopted Interpretation: We interpret "careful establishment of broad written policies" to mean the Board's values will be reflected in their policies. We interpret "long-term impacts outside the staff organization" to mean the Board's policies will be used to direct, focus and inspire the organization(schools) rather than focus on staff, administration or programs need to achieve the outcomes.

Evidence: Meeting minutes.

Conclusion: We report compliance. Existing policies are in place while the new unified board has focused on the details of unification to become operational July 1st, 2018. Board work plans have included the systematic review of policy through monitoring reports which are now beginning. Additional consideration of policies, such as whether or not to institute Community Advisory Councils (as indicated in the Act 46 Articles of Agreement) have been tasked to the Community Engagement Committee for further discussion and recommendations (see [CE Committee Minutes for 9/4/2018](#), [6/12/2018](#), et al.).

Policy Language:

3. The Board will enforce upon itself whatever discipline is needed to govern with excellence. Discipline will apply to matters such as attendance, preparation for meetings, policy-making principles, respect of roles, and ensuring the continuance of governance capability. Although the Board can change its Governance Process policies at any time, it will scrupulously observe those currently in force.

Board Adopted Interpretation: We interpret "govern with excellence" to mean the Board will continuously take the necessary action to govern at the standards set by the policies.

We interpret “continuance of governance capability” to mean the Board will commit to attending meetings-prepared, following policies in place, showing respectful behavior to all members and their role.

Evidence: Experience/observations.

Conclusion: We report compliance. Whenever issues prevent governing, they are addressed, as the aforementioned problem with quorums. Board members attend meetings with meaningful and informed questions about the agenda packet and there are careful and explicit questions not only about content, but process under Policy Governance with a focus on the superintendent/board interface. More experienced members as well as the Board Chair are able to respectfully interject and re-orient the discussions to issues of governance. When there is some collision between superintendent and board domains (personnel issues legally vs. Policy Governance), discussion has been respectful.

Policy Language:

4. Continual Board development will include orientation of new Board members in the Board’s Governance Process and periodic Board discussion of process improvement.

Board Adopted Interpretation: We interpret “continual Board development” to mean the Board will provide orientation/training for new members, regarding the Governance model and members will be encouraged to attend meetings, workshops and conferences to increase their knowledge and competencies..

We interpret “periodic Board discussion” to mean the Board will regularly discuss and develop a plan to continually improve their process.

Evidence: Experience/observations, meeting minutes, email communication.

Conclusion: We report compliance. Annual retreats with Policy Governance presentations ([see Annual Retreat 8/14/2018 agenda](#)) as well as VSBA new board member orientations have been available to new and seasoned board members alike. Additionally, policy governance questions are dealt with as they arise in board meetings. There is an inherent structural challenge, however, balancing board work and the training of board members in Policy Governance as people rotate in and out of elected positions.

Policy Language:

5. The Board will allow no officer, individual, or committee of the Board to hinder or serve as an excuse for not fulfilling group obligations.

Board Adopted Interpretation: We interpret “hinder or serve as an excuse for not fulfilling group obligations” to mean nothing should stop the Board from doing its work.

Evidence: Experience/observation, meeting agenda against board work plan.

Conclusion: We report compliance. A board work plan is in progress and objectives are being met.

Policy Language:

6. The Board will monitor and discuss the Board’s process and performance at each meeting. Self-monitoring will include comparison of Board activity and discipline to policies in the Governance Process and Board-Management Delegation categories.

Board Adopted Interpretation: We interpret “self monitoring” to mean the Board will examine and discuss their process and meeting performances at all meetings. We interpret “discipline to policies” to mean the Board will consider work it has done and the discipline needed to follow the Governance policy regarding Board work.

Evidence: Board self-assessments conducted at the end of each meeting.

Conclusion: We report compliance. Each meeting has ended with a self-monitoring feedback tool. Engagement is consistently high with a high degree of adherence to the agenda. Commonly the Board Chair or other members will, mid-meeting, have in mind the totality of the work to be accomplished for that meeting and respond appropriately when agenda items take up considerable time. If agenda items need to be moved to future meetings, it’s typically out of respect for the time needed to adequately address that item.

END OF MONITORING REPORT

MAUSD Board Monitoring Report

Policy Number: (A4.1)

Policy Title: Governing Style

Month and year: September 2018

OFFICIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION RESPONSE

Comments/Questions:

Based upon the information provided, does the Board find that:

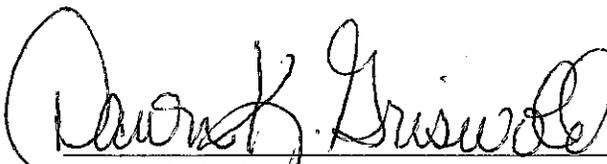
...the Board's interpretation is reasonable?

Yes No

... data demonstrates accomplishment of this interpretation?

Yes No

If not, what other evidence does the Board request?

 9/25/18
Board Chair Signature Date


Board