

GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

LOCAL LEVEL

Local schools are governed by an elected board of education. Size may vary by district, but it is usually a five- or seven-member board, elected either by district or at large. They are the governing body; they hire the superintendent, approve other hiring, and set the policy for the district. California has approximately 1000 local school boards, according to the Governance Working Group of the Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education. They see the local school board as “the crucial link between public values and professional expertise.” They do not “cross into the implementation of education content or pedagogy, but rather provide leadership to school systems as they establish and strive for higher levels of student performance.”

CSBA has also adopted Professional Governance Standards for school boards. Under “The Board’s Jobs” they state:

“The primary responsibilities of the board are to set a direction for the district, provide a structure by establishing policies, ensure accountability and provide community leadership on behalf of the district and public education.”

They list a number of things effective boards do to fulfill these responsibilities. These include:

- involve the community, parents, students and staff in developing common values
- adopt, evaluate and update policies consistent with the law and the district’s values and goals
- maintain accountability for student learning
- hire and evaluate the superintendent and ensure that the superintendent holds district personnel accountable
- adopt a fiscally responsible budget
- ensure a safe and appropriate educational environment and provide community leadership on educational issues.

School governance at all levels functions in two ways. It not only provides the administrative structure to distribute funding, set budgets, provide accountability and deliver educational services, but it also reflects the values and goals of the community and the electorate.

