

FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board of Education Handbook



This handbook summarizes various policies, protocols, and practices of the Board of Education to aid its members and the general public in understanding the operating principles of the Board.

I. Introduction

II. Fairfield Public Schools Mission, Vision, and Goals

- A. Mission
- B. Vision of the Graduate
- C. Educational Goals
- D. Achievement of Educational Goals

III. Board of Education Meetings

- A. Master Calendar
- B. Meetings
- C. Non-Meetings
- D. Agenda
- E. Minutes
- F. Decision-Making Process
- G. Public Comment on Agenda Items
- H. Superintendent's Report
- I. Robert's Rules of Order
- J. Open Board Comment During Meetings
- K. Executive Session

IV. Board of Education Committee and Liaison Responsibilities

- A. Board Authority and Responsibility
- B. Election of Board of Education Members
- C. Appointments
- D. Reports
- E. Finance & Budget Committees
- F. Policy Standing Committee
- G. Transportation Safety Advisors
- H. Liaison Responsibilities
 - 1. Town of Fairfield Charter Positions
 - a. Fairfield Board of Health
 - b. Fairfield Parks and Recreation Commission
 - 2. Board of Education By-laws
 - a. Cooperative Educational Services
 - b. Building Committees
 - c. Representative Town Meeting
 - d. Board of Finance
 - e. PTA Council
 - 3. Other Committees
 - a. Special Projects Standing Building Committee
 - b. SEPTA
 - c. Cable Advisory Council of Area 2 (CAC2)
- I. Meeting Schedule of Other Town Bodies

V. Standards of Conduct

- A. Prohibition on Discussion Involving Group Emails
- B. Comment by Board of Education Members to the Press
- C. Town of Fairfield Charter – Standards of Conduct
- D. Fairfield Board of Education – Standards of Conduct

VI. Annual Budget Process

- A. Board of Education Staff and Board Roles and Responsibilities
- B. Timetable
- C. Advocacy of and Support for Board of Education Initiatives
- D. Attendance and Support at Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and RTM Town Meetings

VII. Evaluation, Public Complaints, Staff Grievances, and Discipline Responsibilities

- A. Procedures for Public Suggestions and Complaints
- B. Group Board of Education Email Address
- C. Employee Grievance and Discipline Hearings
- D. Employee Contract Negotiations
- E. Student Expulsion Hearings
- F. Student Residency Hearings
- G. Superintendent's Evaluation/Contract

VIII. Administrative Matters

- A. By-laws
- B. Board of Education Annual Self-Evaluation
- C. Attendance at School Events
- D. Conference Attendance
- E. Information Requests From Board of Education Members
- F. Fairfield Public Schools Website
- G. Friday Packets
- H. Board of Education Meeting Agenda Packets
- I. Use of ID Badge While Visiting School Facilities
- J. Individual Board of Education Email Addresses
- K. Parking and Other Services at Board of Education Headquarters

IX. Definitions and Acronyms

Adopted 6/26/12

Revised 5/7/15

Revised and Adopted 2/11/20

I. Introduction

The Board of Education is committed to governing the Fairfield Public Schools in a professional and responsible manner. This means providing leadership to students, staff, and the larger community; effectively communicating to the public; and having a common understanding of Board By-laws, policies, practices, and procedures. The Board's hope is to foster democratic debate in which issues are raised and discussed in a passionate but collegial atmosphere and decided in a responsible manner.

This handbook contains general information drawn from a variety of public source documents, including: the Town of Fairfield Charter, Board of Education By-laws, Board of Education Policies, Administrative Regulations, and Fairfield Public Schools' Business Practices. It also contains information from *Twenty Guidelines for Board Members* written by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) and *A Practical Guide to Connecticut School Law* by Thomas B. Mooney, 9th edition.

This handbook is only intended to summarize and bring together in a single location certain information, policies, and practices helpful to members of the Board of Education and the general public in understanding the organizing principles, authority, and operation of the Board of Education and the Fairfield Public Schools.

The information in this handbook should not be relied upon as an alternative to reviewing the full and complete source documents on the topic.

This handbook is not intended to modify or supersede any existing Board of Education Policy, Administrative Regulation, or practice. This handbook does not create any new or additional obligation or requirement on the Board of Education, administration, or Fairfield Public School District and is to be used solely for information purposes.

The Board encourage parents, students, and the general public to become involved in the Fairfield Public Schools. As a community, we can achieve great success for all students in our district.

II. **Fairfield Public Schools Mission, Vision and Goals**

The Board of Education had adopted a series of policies outlining the Mission and Goals of the Fairfield Public Schools. Fairfield Public Schools will ensure that every student is engaged in a rigorous learning experience that recognizes and values the individual and challenges each student to achieve academic progress including expressive, personal, physical, civic, and social development. Students will be respectful, ethical, and responsible citizens with an appreciation and understanding of global issues. Student achievement and performance shall rank among the best in the state and the nation (Policy O110, Revised and Approved 3/11/14).

A. Mission – The mission of the Fairfield Public Schools, in partnership with families and community, is to ensure that every student acquires the knowledge and skills needed to be a lifelong learner, responsible citizen, and successful participant in an ever changing global society through a comprehensive educational program (Policy O100, Revised and Approved 3/11/14).

B. Vision of the Graduate – The FPS Vision of the Graduate is that all students will be Collaborators, Communicators, Critical Thinkers, Responsible Citizens, Innovators, and Goal-Directed Resilient Learners. This Vision forms the FPS Academic Expectations which are a part of the district’s graduation requirements.

C. Educational Goals – Fairfield Public School students will

- achieve and exemplify mastery of the district FPS Academic Expectations;
- perform at high levels regarding school-specific Social and Civic Expectations;
- develop into responsible citizens who exhibit ethical behavior;
- acknowledge, explore, and value the importance of diversity;
- develop a healthy personal identity and self-reliance;
- demonstrate strong motivational persistence to learn;
- exhibit an inquisitive attitude, open-mind, and curiosity;
- acquire an understanding and appreciation of other cultures;
- understand international issues and demonstrate the skills needed to participate in a global society; and
- acquire knowledge of the following areas of study: science; technology; mathematics; language arts; social studies; literary, visual, and performing arts; world language; unified arts; and health and physical education.

(Policy O200, Revised and Approved 10/9/18)

D. Achievement of Educational Goals

In order to achieve the above Educational Goals, Fairfield Public School students shall acquire knowledge and mastery of skills by:

- engaging in critical thinking through

- collaboration
- problem solving
- analyzing data and complex systems
- acquiring, evaluating, and applying information to build greater understanding
- transforming existing ideas, knowledge, and solutions into new ideas, products, and processes
- innovative, creative, and artistic expression;
- communicating effectively by
 - asking questions, listening, and thinking adaptively while making connections and creating innovative solutions
 - conducting research and demonstrating the skills necessary to locate and use information effectively
 - expressing ideas clearly and effectively;
- achieving an understanding of themselves and others by
 - utilizing effective study skills and articulating their own learning style
 - self-advocacy
 - taking advantage of opportunities to explore, develop, and express their own uniqueness and creativity
 - recognizing the importance of healthy social, emotional, and physical growth
 - exhibiting ethical conduct
 - demonstrating empathy for others;
- mastering literacy and numeracy;
- gaining understanding of the interactions among various areas of study;
- recognizing one's individual civic responsibility by
 - developing an understanding of local, state, national, and international governments
 - exhibiting civic mindedness through participation in local, state, national, and international communities.

(Policy 0200, Revised and Approved 10/9/18)

III. Board of Education Meetings

A. Master Calendar – The Board of Education shall hold at least ten scheduled regular meetings a year and shall give annual notice of such meetings (Town of Fairfield Charter, Article VIII, Section 8.1, B.1). The Board of Education has recently opted to hold sixteen regular meetings a year, and the agenda for each meeting, as described in the Board of Education By-laws Article V, Section 4A, is established between the Superintendent and the Board Chair in consultation with the Vice Chair and Secretary. Individual action items on a variety of topics can be scheduled for any meeting. Currently the work of the Board of Education follows the pattern described below (subject to change):

1. January – Two regular meetings and two budget review meetings are scheduled. A proposed budget is adopted at the last regular meeting in January to meet the Town of Fairfield Charter requirement of submitting a budget request by January 31st.
2. February – One regular meeting is scheduled, which allows for attendance by Board of Education members at various budget review sessions conducted by the Board of Selectmen (BOS), Board of Finance (BOF), and Representative Town Meeting (RTM).
3. March – One regular meeting is scheduled, which allows for attendance by Board of Education members at various budget review sessions conducted by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and RTM.
4. April – One regular meeting is scheduled. The Board, pursuant to State statute, sets the graduation dates for both high schools in April. In addition, the Board meets to conduct its annual self-evaluation in this month at a special meeting.
5. May – Two regular meetings are scheduled, including one at which budget adjustments are reviewed and approved, if required, based on changes in total funding granted and approved by the RTM. Student awards are also presented in May.
6. June – Two regular meetings are scheduled. Budget transfers, if necessary for the current fiscal year, are approved. The school lunch program, lunch prices, and participation in the Healthy Food Certification program are reviewed and approved. An evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools is conducted.
7. July – A special meeting may be scheduled during July or August for the purpose of discussing negotiation strategy if the Board is entering into negotiations with a certified bargaining unit (Teachers and/or Administrators) during the upcoming school year.
8. August – One regular meeting is scheduled on the last Tuesday of the month. The Board holds a discussion on the initiatives of the Fairfield Public Schools for the coming year. It also holds a general discussion regarding the next year's capital and operating budgets. The Board of Education discusses its own goals, including how best to present the needs of students and the district to other Town bodies.

9. September – Two regular meetings are scheduled. The Board receives a presentation on the capital improvements budget. The Board of Education approves its own goals.
10. October – Two regular meetings are scheduled. The Board approves the proposed capital improvements budget. The school calendar for the following year is proposed.
11. November – One regular meeting is scheduled which includes the annual organizational meeting at which officers are elected and the By-laws are reviewed.
12. December – One regular meeting is scheduled. The Board of Education meeting calendar for the following year is issued at this meeting. Possible By-law changes proposed in November are voted upon; others may be discussed. The proposed budget calendar for the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and the RTM is reviewed.
13. Town Halls – Held bi-annually, for citizen commentary on facilities, finances, and programs of FPS.

B. Meetings – The Board of Education conducts its meetings under the laws and provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) based on a schedule published in December for the following year. The Board of Education can cancel regular meetings when there is no business that cannot wait until the next regular meeting. The Board of Education can also schedule special meetings if matters arise requiring action that cannot wait until the next regular meeting. There are three types of meetings under the FOIA (as outlined in *A Practical Guide to Connecticut School Law*, by Thomas B. Mooney, 9th edition, pages 45-64):

1. **Regular Meeting** – a meeting which has been included in the listing of regular meetings filed by January 31st of each year. By Fairfield Board of Education practice, the list of scheduled regular meetings for the subsequent year is published at the December regular meeting and submitted to the Town Clerk.
2. **Special Meeting** – a meeting which must be noticed twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting including the time, place, and business to be transacted. The most significant difference from a regular meeting is that items cannot be added to the agenda, and only such business as is included on the notice of the meeting can be addressed.
3. **Emergency Meeting** – a meeting similar to a special meeting but which is exempt from the twenty-four hour notice provisions. The minutes shall include a statement of the nature of the emergency and any decisions made, and those minutes must be filed with the Town Clerk within seventy-two hours.

C. Non-Meetings – Certain meetings are excluded from the definition of “meeting” under the FOIA. Any meetings of a personal search committee; a chance meeting or social gathering, even if a quorum of the Board shows up at the event,

provided the Board does not discuss business; a caucus of members of a single political party; and strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining may be justifications for a non-meeting.

- D. Agenda** – The agenda is established in discussions between the Superintendent of Schools and the Chair of the Board of Education, and in consultation with the Vice-Chair and Secretary. Individual Board of Education members may ask for items to be placed on the agenda. Reasonable requests will be accepted and placed on the agenda as time allows (Board Practice). The Board shall have the agenda with its materials and enclosures at least five days prior to the meeting (By-laws Article V, Section 3A). The agenda is designed for the guidance and information of the Board and to inform the public of items of business to come before the Board. Additional items, not included the filed agenda, may be considered and acted upon at regular meetings upon the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Board present and voting (By-laws Article V, Section 3D).

- E. Minutes** – Minutes are maintained in accordance with State law and the Town of Fairfield Charter. All public meetings of the full Board are recorded, and the audio/videotape and all records are retained in accordance with the state statutes on records retention. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent reviews his/her notes from the meeting and listens to the audio/videotape of the meeting and constructs a draft set of minutes. The draft minutes are reviewed by the elected Secretary of the Board of Education. After a draft set of minutes is finalized, it is included in the Board agenda for review and approval by the full Board (Board Practice).

- F. Decision-Making Process** – Except in emergencies, the Board shall not attempt to decide upon any question submitted for consideration by any person or persons until the Board has examined and evaluated all information (By-laws Article V, Section 7). Board of Education members shall read and study the agenda and all backup information in advance of the upcoming meeting (CABE Boardmanship – *Twenty Guidelines for Board Members #16*).

- G. Public Comment on Agenda Items** – The Board of Education welcomes members of the public to attend Board of Education meetings and to become informed on issues concerning which the Board must act. Public comment is not generally taken on the minutes, election of officers, Board of Education By-laws, and personnel matters. Public Comment is described by the BoE By-laws as follows:

As a means of encouraging public participation during Board meetings, the Chairman shall solicit comments from the public with regard to agenda items, as proposed or amended, that the Board will be discussing and/or will be acting upon by vote. Up to three (3) minutes may be allotted to each speaker. The Chair may modify this limitation at the beginning of a meeting if the number of persons wishing to speak makes it advisable to do so. A member of the public can only speak to a topic once at a meeting. Public Comment on agenda items will take

place at the beginning and end of the meeting. Public Comment on Old Business will also take place following Board discussion of those items and prior to when any vote is taken. Where a number of speakers wish to present on a single topic, the Chair may allow one person to represent the group, in which case additional time, at the discretion of the Chair, can be allowed. The Chair may limit public comment in any manner appropriate to the orderly and efficient conduct of Board meetings (By-laws Article V, Section 6, paragraph A, number 2 shown in italics. Balance is past practice).

- H. Superintendent's Report** – At the conclusion of the Superintendent's Report, questions from Board members shall be related only to the topics addressed by the Superintendent (Board Practice).
- I. Robert's Rules of Order** – The Board of Education shall conduct its business in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Perseus Publishing, to encourage full, fair, and orderly discussion; to maintain order; to respect each member's right to speak; and to allow for action by the majority within a practical period of time while protecting the rights of the members of the minority to express their viewpoints (By-laws Article V, Section 9 and Robert's Rules of Order defined).
- J. Open Board Comment During Meetings** – The Open Board comment period should not be used to surprise the Board or the Superintendent. Members should not use this agenda item as a time to commence a discussion which has not been noticed to the public (CABE Boardsmanship – *Twenty Guidelines for Board Members #1*).
- K. Executive Session** – The public has a right to be at Board of Education meetings and to know when, where, and why the Board is meeting. Thus, all Board of Education meetings will begin in public, and the reason for a proposed Executive Session (in as much detail as possible) shall be included on the agenda. A two-thirds (2/3) vote is required to go into Executive Session. The Board of Education shall state, on the record, for which of the approved reasons it is going into Executive Session:
1. Discussion of personnel appointments, evaluation, and dismissal (employee must be notified, can be present, and/or can require meeting to be in public session)
 2. To discuss strategy and/or negotiations on pending claims and litigation
 3. Security matters
 4. Real estate acquisitions, if openness might affect price
 5. Discussions which might disclose records which are exempt from disclosure under State law

No votes shall be taken in Executive Session.

(The above statements are summarized from Town Clerk Betsy Browne's memo of November 18, 2011. A more complete discussion of the FOIA can be found in *A Practical Guide to Connecticut School Law* by Thomas B. Mooney, 9th edition, pages 53-64.)

IV. Board of Education Committee and Liaison Responsibilities

- A. Board Authority and Responsibility** – The Fairfield Board of Education is the governing body of the Fairfield Public Schools and derives its power from and exists under, the Constitution and General Statutes of the State of Connecticut (By-laws Article I). Individual Board members have no authority except when they are meeting as a Board of Education. The Board of Education is a collective body and, by Statute, can only act when a quorum is assembled in a legally constituted meeting. The statements and actions of individual Board members do not bind the Board of Education or the Superintendent, except when that statement or action has been authorized by an official act of the Board.
- B. Election of Board of Education Members** – The Fairfield Board of Education is a nine member, bi-partisan Board. Board members serve four-year terms, with four members up for election in one election cycle and five members up for election two years later.
- C. Appointments** – The Chair shall appoint or re-appoint Board of Education members to the various Standing, Advisory, and Ad Hoc Committees, as well as maintain Liaison responsibilities to other Town Boards and Commissions, following the annual Organizational Meeting each November (By-laws Article II, Section 3A, sub-sections 3-10).
- D. Reports** – If there is a Committee and Liaison written report, it should be sent in advance for distribution in the Friday Packet. Where additional oral reports are needed, points should be succinct (CABE Boardsmanship – *Twenty Guidelines for Board Members* #1).
- E. Finance & Budget Committees** – The purpose of this committee is to provide a forum for the Superintendent and the Superintendent’s staff to offer and exchange information about, and discuss the finances of, the school district and the annual budget. This committee also provides a forum to explore new finance and budget-related ideas (By-laws Article II, Section 4A, sub-sections 1-2).
- F. Policy Standing Committee** – The purpose of this committee is to formulate and recommend written policies by which the Board shall exercise its leadership in the operation of the school district and to study and evaluate administrative regulations and reports concerning the execution of the Board’s written policies in accordance with Article IV, Section 2 (By-laws Article II, Section 4A, sub-sections 1-2).
- G. Transportation Safety Advisors** – The Transportation Safety Advisors comprise a working group that makes recommendations relative to school transportation safety. The Transportation Safety Advisors are generally composed of the Transportation Supervisor, a Board of Education member, a representative from the police department, and the bus contractor. The primary function of the Transportation Safety Advisors is to review, upon written referral, a transportation decision made by the Transportation Supervisor on a request made by a parent or citizen for a bus route or bus stop change. The decision is reviewed for compliance with Board of

Education Transportation Policy and related Administrative Regulations (Policies 3600 et seq.).

H. Liaison Responsibilities

1. Town of Fairfield Charter Positions

- a.** Fairfield Board of Health – In accordance with the Town of Fairfield Charter Article X, Section 10.9, a Board of Education member is designated annually to and serves as a voting member of the Board of Health.
- b.** Fairfield Parks and Recreation Commission – In accordance with the Town of Fairfield Charter Article X, Section 10.10, a Board of Education member is designated annually to and serves as a voting member of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

2. Board of Education By-laws

- a.** Cooperative Educational Services – In accordance with the Charter and By-laws of CES, Fairfield has two seats on the CES Board as voting members of this not-for-profit fiduciary Board.
- b.** Building Committees – State law requires the establishment of Building Committees to oversee the development of major school construction projects if a district wishes to apply for and receive reimbursement of a portion of the cost of such construction. In accordance with Board of Education By-laws and subject to any approvals required by the Town, the Board of Education Chair appoints a Board member to serve as a liaison to any school building committee (By-laws Article II, Section 3A, sub-section 5d). The Board of Education creates Educational Specifications for individual projects and requests the First Selectman to appoint such a committee, subject to the approval of the Representative Town Meeting.
- c.** Representative Town Meeting – In accordance with Board of Education By-laws, the Board of Education has maintained a liaison relationship with the RTM, and the Board of Education Chair annually appoints a Board member to attend meetings for the purpose of developing a closer working relationship and to enhance communications.
- d.** Board of Finance – In accordance with Board of Education By-laws, the Board of Education has maintained a liaison relationship with the Board of Finance, and the Board of Education Chair annually appoints a Board member to attend meetings for the purpose of developing a closer working relationship and to enhance communications.
- e.** PTA Council – In accordance with the Board of Education By-laws, the Board of Education has maintained a liaison relationship with the PTA Council, and the Board of Education Chair annually appoints a Board

member to attend meetings for the purpose of developing a closer working relationship and to enhance communications.

3. Other Committees

- a. Special Projects Standing Building Committee – This town committee was established to oversee selected projects, as may be assigned to them by the First Selectman. The Board of Education Chair appoints a Board member to serve as a voting member on this committee.
- b. SEPTA – By past practice, the Board of Education has maintained a liaison relationship with the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) and the Board of Education Chair annually appoints a Board member to attend meetings for the purpose of developing a closer working relationship and to enhance communications.
- c. Cable Advisory Council of Area 2 (CAC2) – State mandated representative of the Fairfield Board of Education to the Advisory Council for Cable Television Area 2 attends the meetings of the CAC2 and provides feedback and input regarding the Education Access Channel (ch. 78) and its service for the Fairfield Public Schools. Votes on annual funding allocations from the CAC2 to its member communities.

I. Meeting Schedule of Other Town Bodies

- 1. **Board of Selectmen** – 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at Sullivan Independence Hall, 1st floor conference room at 4:30 p.m.
- 2. **The Board of Finance** – 1st Tuesday of the month at the Board of Education, 2nd floor conference room at 7:30 p.m.
- 3. **The Representative Town Meeting (“RTM”)** – 4th Monday of the month at 8:00 p.m. RTM subcommittees meet the 3rd Monday of the month.
- 4. Citizens interested in attending meetings of any Town body should check the Town website at www.fairfieldct.org to confirm the meeting schedule and location and to find agendas, minutes, and other related documents.
- 5. All regular meetings and some special meetings of the Board of Education are videotaped and broadcast by FairTV, on a real time basis. They can also be viewed on line, on demand, and are broadcast at other times.

V. Standards of Conduct

- A. Prohibition on Discussion Involving Group Emails** – As members of a public Board, Board of Education members must abide by the FOIA, which mandates that discussions regarding the business and policy of the school district should take place in public view. It is the policy of this Board that email shall not be used in such a manner as to deprive the public of these open-meeting rights. Therefore, group emails involving multiple Board members regarding issues before the Board, or which may reasonably be expected to come before the Board, are not permitted. Individual Board members may consult with one another on issues; however, they should be cognizant of the restrictions imposed by the FOIA and abide by the spirit of open-meeting principles.
- B. Comment by Board of Education Members to the Press** – Board of Education members can speak to the media, but only the Chair can speak on behalf of the Board. Board of Education members should feel comfortable deferring comment to the Chair or the Superintendent (By-laws Article II, Section 3A, sub-section 3 and Policy 1100 Approved 8/27/04).
- C. Town of Fairfield Charter – Standards of Conduct** – Board of Education members shall demonstrate by their example the highest standards of ethical conduct, to the end that the public may justifiably have trust and confidence in the integrity of government. As agents of public purpose, they shall hold their offices or positions for the benefit of the public, shall recognize that the public interest is their primary concern, and shall faithfully discharge the duties of their office regardless of personal considerations (Town of Fairfield Charter Article XI, Section 11.1). The above statement of policy is further defined in the Town of Fairfield Charter through:
1. Conflicts of Interest – Article XI, Section 11.2
 2. Disclosure of Interest – Article XI, Section 11.3
 3. Fair and Equal Treatment – Article XI, Section 11.4
 4. Penalties and Disciplinary Action for Violations – Article XI, Section 11.5
- D. Fairfield Board of Education – Standards of Conduct** – The Board of Education has adopted additional standards of conduct through its By-laws. Board of Education members must:
1. Adhere to the most recent edition of CABE's Code of Ethics for Boards of Education (By-laws, Article III, Section 2)
 2. Comply with the Conflicts of Interest Statements (By-laws Article III, Section 6)

3. Follow a Code of Ethics (By-laws Article VII, as further defined in Policy 0050, Approved 8/27/04).

VI. Annual Budget Process

- A. Board of Education Staff and Board Roles and Responsibilities** – The annual budget preparation process shall include broad-based participation and careful scrutiny of programs and expenditures to help the Board fulfill its responsibilities to the students, staff, and town. The Board shall review projected costs, finalize requirements, establish a desirable budget amount, and specify parameters for the Superintendent to use in the development of a proposed budget (Policy 3100, Approved 8/27/04).
- B. Timetable** – To facilitate accomplishing this role, an annual operating and capital budget calendar is established to ensure the Board of Education can discuss Fairfield Public School initiatives, reflect on the budget presentation process, and have adequate time to review and approve the budget.
- C. Advocacy of and Support for Board of Education Initiatives** – Board members and the Superintendents are staunch advocates of high quality, free public education for all Connecticut children (Policy 0050, Approved 8/27/04).
- D. Attendance and Support at Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and RTM Town Meetings** – Board of Education members will strive to attend the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, RTM subcommittee, and RTM meetings pertaining to its education budget request and at other times throughout the year as initiatives are presented for Town approval (Board Practice).

VII. Evaluation, Public Complaints, Staff Grievances, and Discipline Responsibilities

- A. Procedures for Public Suggestions and Complaints** – Board members will refer all complaints through the proper “chain of command” within the system and will act on such complaints at public meetings only when administrative solutions fail (By-laws Article VII, Number 17, Amended and Approved 2/13/18). This By-law is further defined by Board of Education policy: “...If a complaint is made to individual Board members, the person making the complaint shall be referred to the proper administrator and informed that the matter may be referred to the Superintendent if the complainant does not agree with the initial decision” (Policy 1312, Approved 8/27/04). Parents and other citizens should present their own issues, problems, or proposals through the chain of command (CABE Boardmanship – *Twenty Guidelines for Board Members #6*).
- B. Group Board of Education Email Address,** boemembers@fairfieldschools.org – This is the group email distribution for all Board members as well as a member of the administrative staff. Anyone wishing to email the group as a whole, rather than typing individual email addresses, may use the “boemembers” address shown above. Please note that a member of the administrative staff reviews all of the emails that come into this address and will respond accordingly when district requests are made e.g., someone from the public inquiring about a job position. Board of Education members will use their best judgment on whether they respond as an individual member to such emails or allow the Central Office staff to address the issue that was raised (Board Practice).
- C. Employee Grievance and Discipline Hearings** – The Board will act in accordance with the grievance procedures outlined in the appropriate Collective Bargaining Agreement (Policy 4135.4-4235.4, Approved 8/27/04).
- D. Employee Contract Negotiations** – By past practice, a Negotiating Committee is appointed, comprising a member from the Board of Education, the Board of Education Executive Director of Personnel and Legal Services, and the Board of Education Attorney. The Negotiating Committees for the Teacher and Administrator contracts also include a member of the Board of Finance. Negotiations are conducted in accordance with State law governing school district negotiations.
- E. Student Expulsion Hearings** – Except in an emergency situation, the District shall, prior to expelling any student, conduct a hearing to be governed by the procedures outlined in the Board of Education Policy Manual, which authorizes the Superintendent to retain a Hearing Officer to conduct the hearing (Policy 5114, Revised and Approved 5/15/12).
- F. Student Residency Hearings** – Any child, parent, or guardian may request a hearing before a Hearing Officer, as appointed by the District, if they believe

they have been denied accommodations by the Fairfield Public Schools (Policy 5118, Approved as Amended 9/14/10).

G. Superintendent's Evaluation/Contract – The Board of Education conducts an annual evaluation in June for the purpose of accountability and for the mutual benefit of the Fairfield Public Schools and the Superintendent. The evaluation should consider performance against job description responsibilities and a review and analysis of approved goals and objectives. Goals and objectives are generally established in September. The Board of Education reviews the Superintendent's three-year contract and may offer a new three-year contract (CT General Statute 10-157).

VIII. Administrative Matters

- A. By-laws** – The Board of Education has adopted its By-laws. At its annual organizational meeting in November of each year, it shall review and revise these By-laws as the Board of Education deems appropriate and approve changes in December. The By-laws may also be revised at any regular and special meeting of the Board of Education as may be properly noticed (By-laws Article VI).
- B. Board of Education Annual Self-Evaluation** – The Board of Education shall conduct an annual self-evaluation of its policies, practices, and internal operating procedures at a special meeting prior to May of each year (By-laws Article IV, Section 4). By practice this is generally done each April.
- C. Attendance at School Events** – Board of Education members are encouraged to attend school events as their schedules permit. Every effort should be made to notify the Superintendent's office or a building principal in advance of a visit, and Board members should wear their official ID. If Board members are attending a school event not in a Board capacity (e.g. as a parent), they do not need to notify Central Office or a building principal. Board members should be careful not to act or speak in a manner that suggests they are speaking or acting on behalf of the Board of Education or the school district when they have not been so authorized by the Board.
- D. Conference Attendance** – There are limited funds available for attending CABE sponsored conferences. Board of Education members interested in attending a conference or class should make that interest known through the Chair to the Superintendent's office (Board Practice).
- E. Information Requests From Board of Education Members** – The Superintendent provides study materials and information required to assist the Board of Education in researching and evaluating proposals before the Board of Education. Members are welcome to seek additional information to aid in their discussion and final action. The Board of Education, by collective action or the Chair, may request additional information from the Superintendent as may be required. Committee Chairs can request information from the Superintendent or Central Office staff with a copy to the Superintendent, for committee business only. Individual members may seek additional information that helps the Board members make better-informed decisions only from the Superintendent with a copy of all such requests given to the Board of Education Chair. If the information sought by either the Board of Education, the Chair, Committee Chairs, or individual members is readily available, every effort will be made to include it in the Friday Packet for Board of Education members, provide it is requested in a timely manner. If the information requested is not readily available and will redirect staff time, the request for the information or data must be made as a Board. The essence of these Board practices is three-fold: a) to recognize that individual Board members may not give direction to the Superintendent (only the full Board can), b) to ensure information requested does not put an undue burden on

staff and c) to encourage Board of Education members to prepare their questions or requests for additional information in advance to allow adequate time for staff to gather their requested information (By-law Article I, Section 2, paragraph B, number 1).

- F. Fairfield Public Schools Website** – The Fairfield Public Schools maintains a website to aid in communicating to parents and citizens, www.fairfieldschools.org. A wealth of information is available and specifically includes, within the Board of Education pages, a list of all scheduled Board of Education meetings, agendas, and minutes; a list of members, committee work and adopted policies; a citizen’s guide; the annual budget and various financial reports; and plans and reports on current topics.
- G. Friday Packets** – By practice, Friday Packets containing materials of interest to and for use of Board of Education members are distributed to a variety of individuals and institutional readers as may be requested.
- H. Board of Education Meeting Agenda Packets** – Board meetings are more effective when members read the materials and information within the packet prior to the meeting so it will not need to be presented orally at a Board of Education meeting. Board of Education meeting agenda packets will be distributed electronically five days before a meeting (By-laws Article V, Section 3A).
- I. Use of ID Badge While Visiting School Facilities** – During school hours and office hours, please wear your Board of Education ID badge when visiting school buildings and Central Office. When visiting these locations, you must also sign in at the front office of a school building or at the front desk of Central Office even though you have a badge (Policy 3564, Approved 8/27/04).
- J. Individual Board of Education Email Addresses** – All members of the Board of Education will be assigned a district email address and may make use of that or their personal email address (Board Practice). Regardless of which email address that is used, all correspondence, including via email, is subject to the FOIA.
- K. Parking and Other Services at Board of Education Headquarters** – There is covered parking available under the building at the Board of Education offices. There is a vending machine in the Board of Education staff break room outside of the Board room. Both may be used by Board of Education members (Board Practice).

IX. Definitions and Acronyms (Most definitions were taken from: *"Becoming a Better Board Member, A Guide to Effective School Board Service"* 3rd edition by National School Boards Association of Berlin, CT *BoE Member Handbook, October, 2011*)

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act: A Federal law that prohibits discrimination against disabled individuals in all terms and conditions of employment and requires employers to make “reasonable accommodations” for disabled applicants and employees, unless the employer can demonstrate that doing so would create “undue hardship” for the organization.

AYP – Adequate Yearly Progress: An individual state’s measure of annual progress toward achieving state academic standards. School districts and schools were required to meet this minimum standard under the No Child Left Behind Act. According to the law, state standards were met when all students meet the target for proficiency.

AP – Advanced Placement Programs: A series of courses administered by the College Board that high school students can take to earn college credit. Students must master a generally high level of course work and pass an accompanying test.

CLC – Complex Learning Cohort: Students who attend a CLC program have significant needs that impact participation in general education settings. These needs may include cognitive disabilities, communication disorders, delays in adaptive skills, motor deficits and social and or emotional needs that requires more intensive and individualized instruction.

CABE – The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education: Serves local and regional Boards of Education. It is a membership organization made up of Connecticut Boards of Education, including 151 school districts representing 90% of the state’s public school population.

CAPSS – The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents: A statewide, non-for-profit, educational administration organization whose membership includes Connecticut public school superintendents, assistant superintendents, central office administrative personnel, State Department of Education officials and college and university professors.

CAPT – The Connecticut Achievement Performance Test: The former standardized assessment administered to students in grade 10 in March. Students were assessed in the content areas of reading, mathematics, writing and science.

CAS – Connecticut Association of Schools: A not-for-profit organization working to strengthen elementary and secondary education in Connecticut. Its mission is to offer exemplary programs and services that promote excellence in education of all children.

CEA – Connecticut Education Association: A state teachers union headquartered in Hartford, CT with a membership of more than 41,000. CEA lobbies for pro-education legislation at the state and federal level, advances and protects the rights of teachers at the bargaining table, and works with state policymakers to continue to elevate the teaching profession and promote public education.

CES – Cooperative Educational Services: The local RESC serving the Fairfield Public School District. See RESC for a further definition.

CIAC – Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference: See CAS for definition.

CMT – The Connecticut Mastery Test: The former standardized assessment administered to students in grades 3 through 8. Students were assessed in the content areas of reading, mathematics, writing, and science (grades 5 and 8).

CO – Central Office: This is located at 501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, CT and is the location of the Superintendent’s office and the offices of the Central Office Leadership Team, along with support staff who give guidance, direction, and support to the Fairfield Public Schools on a day to day basis. It is also the location (generally) for all regular and special meetings of the Board of Education.

COLT – Central Office Leadership Team: This abbreviation and/or phrase reflects the Superintendent’s senior leadership team and is currently composed of the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Executive Director, Innovation, Curriculum, and Programs, Executive Director of Special Education and Student Services, Executive Director of Personnel and Legal Services, Executive Director of Operations, Executive Director of Digital Learning, and Executive Director of Finance and Business Services.

DBT - Dialectical Behavior Therapy: A type of psychotherapy focused on a cognitive behavioral approach; helps students with self-regulating emotional responses.

DIP - District Improvement Plan: Defines the indicators that would represent the attainment of the Mission and Goals, at the District level, as well as the actions necessary to achieve them over the next several years.

DLT – District Leadership Team: This abbreviation and/or phrase reflects an expanded key leadership team and currently comprises the COLT Team plus elementary and middle school principals, high school headmasters and housemasters, middle school assistant principals, curriculum leaders, and special education coordinators.

DRG – District Reference Groups: To assist in reporting and analyzing school district data, the State Department of Education developed District Reference Groups, which are designed to compare groups of districts that have similar characteristics. The State’s 166 school districts and 3 academies have been divided into 9 groups, based on socioeconomic status, indicators of need and enrollment. The Fairfield School District is in DRG B.

ECS – Education Cost Sharing: The Educational Cost Sharing grant is the largest state funding program for K-12 in Connecticut. The ECS formula – the tool used to allocate ESC funds across school districts – equalizes spending by targeting more money to poorer districts and seeks to improve educational equity by adjusting for differences among school districts in terms of student need and district wealth.

ESL – English as a Second Language: This is also referred to as ELL – English Language Learners or ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages.

ETS – Educational Testing Service: Nationwide organization that administers various kinds of educational and psychological tests, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

FERPA – Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act: A Federal law that gives parents certain rights with respect to their children’s educational records.

FMLA – Family Medical Leave Act: A Federal law requiring employers covered by the act to grant eligible employees up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave a year for an employee’s own serious health conditions or following the birth or adoption of a child; employees returning from such leave are entitled to be restored to their same position or a similar one.

FOI – Freedom of Information: The Freedom of Information (FOI) Commission publishes rules and regulations to facilitate the informed and efficient exchange of information between governmental bodies and the general public.

FPS – Fairfield Public Schools: This abbreviation and/or phrase will be used whenever communicating about topics that refer to the school district in its entirety.

HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act: A Federal health insurance-related act that has privacy rule implications for school districts.

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: A Federal funding statute requiring schools that receive monies under this law to provide a free and appropriate public education in the least-restrictive environment to all eligible children with disabilities.

IEP – Individualized Education Plan: When a student is determined eligible for special education the PPT targets areas of need identified through the comprehensive evaluation process to develop an IEP with measurable annual goals and objectives. The IEP is a plan that is developed to address each student’s individual needs. Some components of the IEP includes the student’s present levels of academic and functional performance, goals and objectives, modifications and accommodations required for the student to participate in general education, and the special education and related services the child receives.

NAEP – National Assessment of Educational Progress: A national testing program administered by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education that tests representative samples of 4th, 8th and 12th grade students in reading, math, science, writing and other subjects. Known as the nation’s report card, NAEP provides data on achievement over time (since 1969) and allows for regional, state-by-state and some district comparisons of student performance.

NEASC – New England Association of Schools and Colleges: NEASC provides accreditation services for more than 2,000 public and private institutions in the six state regions – Pre-K through University.

NGSS – Next Generation Science Assessment: The state standardized assessment administrated to students in grades 5, 8, and 11. Students are assessed in the content area of Science.

PPT – Planning and Placement Team: This is a multi-disciplinary team of parents and educators who meet to review student progress and recommends a comprehensive evaluation in all areas of suspected disability to assist in determining whether or not the student qualifies for special education and related services. Services may include academic support; speech and language services; social-emotional support; and occupational or physical therapy support. When students qualify for special education members of the PPT collaborate on the development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to address the students’ areas of need.

SIP – School Improvement Plan: Defines the indicators that would represent the attainment of the Mission and Goals, at the District level, as well as the actions necessary to achieve them, annually.

SRO - School Resource Officer: A career law enforcement officer with sworn authority who is deployed by the FPD in a community-oriented policing assignment to work in collaboration with the District.

SAT – Scholastic Aptitude Test: The state standardized assessment administered to students in grade 11. Students are assessed in the content areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

SRBI - Scientific Research Based Interventions: These focus on a number of areas central to children’s school success and well-being, such as reading, language development, mathematics, and social-emotional learning, using practices backed by scientific research.

SBA – Smarter Balanced Assessment: The state standardized assessment administered to students in grades 3 through 8. Students are assessed in the content areas of reading and mathematics.

RESC – Regional Educational Service Center: RESCs were created more than 30 years ago by legislative action to help school districts communicate and collaborate. Their main purpose is to furnish programs and services.