



Newport-Mesa School District Board of Education Protocols

Updated 2/15/2023

Overview

Outstanding Boards are intentional about governance and invest in the practices that address changing situations. Protocols are tools that build and strengthen the capacity of the Governance Team to have constructive and positive relationships. The mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Superintendent will provide transparency and stability for the District.

Principles of Governance

The Governance Team will operate on the following principles of good governance:

1. Keeping learning and student achievement for every student as the primary focus.
2. Recognizing that we represent the entire district, the board shall ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views from across the communities the district serves to inform deliberations and decisions.
3. Operating openly with trust and integrity.
4. Governing in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility, dignity, and respect, while honoring the right to disagree with each other.
5. Valuing, supporting, and advocating for public education.

Governance Relationships and Productivity: Ongoing and Onboarding

1. The Board President and Vice President, or designees, shall meet with new trustees to familiarize them with the rhythm of the Board's work, including and not exclusively covering the policy and legislative review process, meeting protocols, processes for asking questions in advance of meetings to ensure board meetings are efficient and productive.
2. The Superintendent will share information regarding the Brown Act, Public Records Requests, social media laws and best practices and other information to ensure new trustees and the full Board are aware of, and adhering to, legal requirements.
3. Respecting the need to be honest if concerns arise between members of the board, Trustees will speak directly with one another about concerns so that they may be addressed in a collegial manner and with a commitment to keep the governance team optimally productive and focused on student achievement. If concerns persist, the Board President, or designee, will meet with the trustees one-on-one.
4. The Board Members commit to engage in professional development, both individually and as a Board.
 - a. This may include attending the annual California School Boards Association Conference, participating in workshops, sharing resources that invest in strong leadership skills, and setting priorities for the Board of Education in support of the organization's goals.

5. The Board commits to conduct an annual self evaluation.

Communications

1. The Superintendent and Board Members commit to open dialogue with one another in order to avoid surprises to the governance team and staff.
2. The Superintendent will provide relevant, timely, and thorough information to Board Members through a weekly update, and may utilize the following communication channels to address concerns or questions in a timely manner:
 - a) Bi-weekly check-ins, texts, and phone calls
3. In order to ensure that all Board Members receive the same information prior to a meeting, and to keep the Superintendent informed of Board Members' questions and concerns, requests for information should come to the Superintendent's Office.
 - a) The Board Member will receive the information and it will also be provided to the other Members through a weekly update or other communication.
4. The Board understands the distinction between board and staff roles and will refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.
5. The Superintendent's Office will provide the Board with a governance calendar.
6. The Superintendent will make an effort to meet at least every 2 weeks with individual Board Members to discuss items of mutual interest and concern.

Maintaining Confidentiality

1. The Board, Superintendent, and cabinet members agree to maintain the confidentiality of all closed session and privileged communication as required by Education Code.
 - a) Such matters relate to personnel issues, litigation, real property negotiations, and labor negotiations.
2. Board members should address concerns that may arise to the Superintendent and not to individual staff members.
3. Board members will not personally advocate for an individual's hiring, promotion, demotion, or termination.
4. The Board will provide clear parameters to the district's negotiation team members, including the tone preferred for productive discussions at the table, and will not address issues of negotiations with employee bargaining unit members.

Board Member Role in Public and Social Media

1. Board Members visiting a school will inform the Superintendent and principal in advance.
 - a) Board Members should avoid making evaluative comments about an employee's performance.
2. As a courtesy, Board Members will inform their fellow trustee if they visit a school site/s in that trustee's area.
3. Board Members agree to follow all safety protocols when visiting school sites.
4. Board Members will be introduced at all school and district events unless they are attending as a parent or spectator.
5. Board Members will contact the Superintendent should the media contact them.
6. Individual Board Members represent the district in an official capacity only when appointed by the Board in that capacity.
 - a) Board members will inform the Board and Superintendent when asked to represent the District in their capacity as a Board Member.

7. In high profile situations, the Superintendent or Board President will be the spokespersons for the District to communicate a unified message.
8. In using social media to communicate school business, Board Members should:
 - a) Clarify that any statement made reflects their personal views and not necessarily in their official position as a Member of the Board
 - b) Refrain from the deliberation of school district business
 - c) Direct all concerns from community members to the appropriate district administrator.
 - d) Avoid posting content on which you have already formed an opinion before you vote.
 - e) Freely consider posting or reposting content that the District has already approved.

Board Committees

The Governing Board may establish Board committees as necessary. Unless specifically authorized by the Board to act on its behalf, Board committees shall act in an advisory capacity. Any committee not required by law may be dissolved when its duties or term has been completed or whenever the Board deems necessary.

1. Purpose: Upon establishing a committee, the Board shall clearly define the committee's purpose, a timeline for completion of the assigned responsibilities, and stakeholder groups or individuals to be represents on the committee, length of time that the committee members are expected to serve, and expectations for reporting to the Board and/or the Superintendent of designee.
2. Unless exempted by law, Board-created committees shall provide public notice of their meetings and conduct meeting in accordance with the Brown Act.

Staff Relationships

1. Board Members may request information:
 - a) Directly from the Superintendent
 - b) From members of Executive Cabinet, with a copy to the Superintendent as a courtesy to keep them informed.
2. If a trustee contacts a member of Executive Cabinet by phone, the staff member shall keep the Superintendent informed.
3. Board Members will share any concerns about staff to the Superintendent and will refrain from disparaging staff members in public.
4. Official visits to school sites are encouraged and should be arranged through the Superintendent's office.
 - a) This does not include attendance at campus events such as athletic contests, performances, etc.
5. Board Members recognize that they are not to do staff work.
6. Board Members will treat all staff with respect.

Handling Concerns

The Board and Superintendent are committed to having parent and/or staff concerns handled at the level closest to the point of interest/concern e.g., the school site, the department, etc. where those involved in the issue can resolve the matter.

1. Board Members should not solicit information from staff regarding other staff members.

2. Board Members will listen to and relay any concern to the Superintendent and will not remain directly involved in the complaint process.
3. Board Members will refer parent or staff concerns to the Superintendent.
 - a) The Superintendent will investigate the concern in a timely manner, respond, and communicate back to the complainant and the Board Member.
4. A Board Member forwarding a complaint will not be perceived as endorsing the complaint.
5. If a Board Member is a parent in the district and has concerns regarding their child/ren, they may consult with the Superintendent on the best course of action to ensure the matter/s are properly and promptly attended to without causing concerns due to the Board Member's official role.
6. When communicating with staff as a parent, Board Members will use their personal email accounts.
 - a) If staff reach out or respond to the Board Member's district email account, the Board Member shall politely remind them to use their personal email when communicating about personal matters.

Prior to Board Meetings

1. Board Members will thoroughly read materials before the board meeting and contact the Superintendent with any questions they have on the agenda no later than 10 a.m. on the Monday before the meeting.
 - a) The purpose of asking questions in advance of the meeting is to ensure that staff is prepared to make the Board's meetings as efficient and effective as possible.
2. Board Member's questions will be answered and provided to all Board Members prior to the meeting.
3. To avoid Brown Act violations, Board members will not communicate with more than two other board members regarding items that the Board will be acting on.
4. Board Members will notify the Superintendent, in advance, of their intent to remove an item from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration.
5. Board Members may request that an issue be agendaized by making a request to the Superintendent.
 - a) The item will be placed on the agenda according to the bylaws and after giving staff time to prepare for the item.
6. When a high-profile item is being considered by the Board, any disagreements or concerns should be discussed with the Superintendent before the meeting.

Board Meetings

1. Individual Board Members will be acknowledged by the Board President prior to making a comment.
2. Each Board Member will respect the right of other Board Members to hold an opposing point of view and, following a Board vote, will support the decision made by the Board.
3. Board Members will not engage with audience members unless they are speaking from the podium with an agendaized address to the Board.
4. Board Members agree that it is a courtesy to each other and to the full Board to share the reason for a dissenting vote during deliberation.
5. All team members will be respectful of each other and recognize the impact of comments made in public toward one another.
6. The Superintendent or a Board Member should not bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise to the team.

7. Study sessions will be developed throughout the year on issues that require extensive discussion.
8. Board and management team members will be fully engaged at all meetings and avoid electronic or other distractions not related to the meeting.
9. Board Members will attend all regularly scheduled board meetings and study sessions unless there are extenuating circumstances.
10. The Superintendent and Board will review protocols related to recessing board meetings, clearing the board room, and continuance of meetings.

Board Adoption: 3/7/23