

Board of Education  
of  
Charles County

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# GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

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Charles County  
Maryland



# Board of Education of Charles County Governance Handbook

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Exceptional Boards make governance intentional and invest in the structures and practices that address changing circumstances, allowing Board members and the Superintendent to effectively function as a team.

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## Board of Education

**Yonelle Moore Lee, Esq.,** *Chairperson*

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**Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D.,** *Superintendent of Schools*

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Cover artwork — “Orange Tulips,” by Joella Lorraine Guerrero, sophomore, Maurice J. McDonough High School. (2024)

## School System Mission Statement

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The mission of Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is to provide an opportunity for all school-aged children to receive an academically challenging, quality education that builds character, equips for leadership, and prepares for life in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning.

## Governing Board Role and Responsibilities

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The Charles County Board of Education (the Board) is elected by the community to provide leadership and citizen oversight of Charles County public schools. The Board promotes the interests of schools under its jurisdiction and is the governing body with decision-making authority over educational matters that affect the county. The Board adopts a strategic plan to guide the school system in developing, implementing, and improving educational programs for its students. With the advice of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board collaborates to establish priorities with specific objectives and achieve results.

The Board shall work with the Superintendent to fulfill its major duties and responsibilities. The powers and mandatory duties of the Board of Education are defined in the [Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland](#) and [Title 13A of the Code of Maryland Regulations](#). The Board's primary responsibilities, aligned to support the school system's Strategic Plan, include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Establishing a long-term vision for the school system that aligns with the strategic plan. (Policy 6100 and 6120).
2. Establishing and maintaining oversight of the school system to include selection of the superintendent and adoption of policies, curriculum, the budget and collective bargaining agreements. (Policy 8210, 6400 series, 3120, 4730).
3. Ensuring accountability to the local community, including personnel (to include the approval of certificated personnel), programmatic and fiscal accountability, and service as a judicial and appeals body as needed. (Policy 1150, 4000, 3120, 9350).
4. Providing community leadership and advocacy at the local, state, and national levels on behalf of children, school system programs and public education. (Policy 1410, 1500).
5. The Board will review the Superintendent's performance on an annual basis. This includes a mid-year review conducted in December and a year-end review conducted in June. (Superintendent's contract).



In addition to the mission statements and the mandatory duties that are defined in law, the Board is committed to The Key Work of School Boards, (The Key Work of School Boards Guidebook, by Katheryn Gemberling, Carl W. Smith, and Joseph S. Villani) which is a framework for planning and acting that is based upon systems thinking. Developed in 2000 by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), The Key Work of School Boards encompasses the following essential areas on which Boards need to focus attention:

- **Vision** – Engage in a comprehensive planning process to establish a clear vision of student outcomes with high expectations for quality teaching as the top priority of the school board, staff and community.
- **Standards** – Set clear standards for student’s academic performance.
- **Student Assessment** – Establish an assessment process that measures and communicates success at regular intervals.
- **Accountability** – Establish a strong accountability process that reflects the expectation that high academic standards, transparency, and accountability undergird a world-class education.
- **Alignment** – Align resources to focus on students meeting and exceeding the academic standards.
- **Climate** – Create a positive climate for student and staff success.
- **Collaborative Relationships** – Build collaborative relationships with political, business, and parent leaders, with a focus on developing a consensus for student achievement as a top community priority.
- **Continuous Improvement** – Commit to on-going, impactful staff professional development and continuous improvement of student achievement.

## Governance Standards (Board Bylaw 9000)

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The Board’s primary responsibility is to act in the best interests of every student in the school system. In addition, the Board has a commitment to parents/guardians, community members and employees. The Board must also comply with Maryland laws regarding public education and established school system policies. To maximize Board effectiveness and public confidence in school system governance, Board members are expected to govern responsibly and hold themselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The Board conducts business and operates as one team, partners in this work, with one another and with the administration. The Board adheres to the following principles, which reflect Board members’ shared commitments to collaborate in the best interest of the school system, establish effective Board policies, delegate authority for school administration to the Superintendent of Schools and to promote academic success for all students.

The Board expects its members to work with each other and the Superintendent to promote a high-quality education for each student. The Board shall have a unity of purpose and each individual Board member shall:

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus.
2. Value, support and advocate for public education.
3. Communicate a common vision.
4. Recognize and respect differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community.
5. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.

6. Adhere to the standards established in the Board Handbook, and govern within Board appointed policies and procedures, as well as local, state and federal laws.
7. Respect confidentiality, keeping confidential matters within the Board.
8. Operate openly, with trust and integrity.
9. Take collective responsibility for the Board's final decisions.
10. Periodically evaluate the Board's own effectiveness, including identifying areas for improvement and correction.
11. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to guide and inform Board deliberations.
12. Encourage participation in professional development at least once per year and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader. Professional development is defined as participation in any activity that advances the knowledge of issues pertaining to public education to include (but not limited to) conferences, seminars, presentations that furthers the knowledge and ability of a board member to carry out their duties as part of the Board of Education.
13. Provide high-level summary in writing of the professional development opportunities (i.e., trainings, conferences, committee meetings, etc.) to all Board members within a reasonable time after completion (no more than 30 days). See Policy 8120.
14. Understand the distinctions between Board and staff roles and refrain from performing management functions responsible for the Superintendent and staff.

[The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article §3-104](#), determines that the authority of the Board is collective and not individual, and power belongs not to individual members of a Board of Education but to the Board of Education itself (“Each county Board is a body politic and corporate...”). Board members have authority only when acting as a Board of Education in a legally constituted meeting, a quorum being present. The statements or actions of an individual member, group of members, or any committees of the Board of Education do not legally bind the Board of Education itself, and an individual Board member cannot act on behalf of the Board or represent the authority of the Board, unless so authorized by the full Board.

Each Board member, along with the Superintendent, is personally responsible for the success of the Board. Once the Board adopts a position, Board members are expected to be able to explain the Board's position. Board members have the right to their individual position – even when such position differs from that of the Board. Board members are expected to ensure that in communicating their individual positions, they do not undermine the collective authority of the Board such as acting in opposition to the Board's official position or failing to uphold or enforce the Board's decision.



Board members also shall assume collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture. In addition to strict adherence to the NSBA Ethics Guidelines and personal ethics, Board members shall meet regularly both internally and with CCPS staff and the community to discuss team governance and interactions. Board members have agreed to schedule periodic retreats for strategic planning to promote success and improve team effectiveness.

## **Student Member of the Board**

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The school system, as well as the Board, are similarly well served by the dedication of its many student leaders. In accordance with [The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article 3-701](#), a regularly enrolled CCPS junior or senior is elected annually by votes from students in Grades 6-11 to serve a term of office from July 1 to June 30 of the next school year as the Student Member of the Board of Education (SMOB) of Charles County. Charles County Board Policy 9123, Student Representation, established the nomination and election processes and further defines the roles and responsibilities of the position. Once the SMOB is confirmed to the Board, it receives all Board information, except confidential personnel and closed session items, effective July 1.

The SMOB is expected to participate in all public Board meetings and appropriate functions. The SMOB's parent(s)/guardians are responsible for supporting the SMOB's school and Board service obligations and determining their event attendance. On matters that come before the Board at public meetings, the SMOB is expected to participate as any other Board member. It is understood that the SMOB represents the student voice and is expected that they will bring feedback from their main constituency to Board meeting discussions.

The SMOB is also expected to participate in the parliamentary voting process within the limits imposed by the statute. As provided in [Section 3-501 of the Education Article](#), these limitations exclude voting on personnel, appeal issues in general, and those issues which fall under specific areas of the Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article: attendance areas; site acquisition, condemnation, consolidation and architect selection, etc.; appointment and salary of the Superintendent; teacher and employee discipline; budgetary matters; appointment and promotion of staff; collective bargaining; and student suspensions and expulsions. The SMOB may not attend closed sessions of the Board addressing a matter on which a Student Member is prohibited from voting.

The SMOB also may make motions, or second motions made by others only if the SMOB is legally entitled to vote on the matter. During their term as a Board member, the SMOB is expected to devote sufficient time and prioritize fulfilling their academic responsibilities. The SMOB's academic responsibilities shall be their main duties. The student member is permitted to distribute diplomas and/or certificates at high school commencements but may not confer his or her own diploma.

Board members shall serve as mentors to the SMOB to ease the transition to Board responsibilities. The Board also encourages and financially supports the SMOB's attendance at the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) new Board member orientation session. The Board encourages and financially supports the SMOB attending the NSBA annual conference and MABE annual conference. The SMOB's expenses, including hotel, transportation, per diem and airfare shall be paid. The school system will work with the SMOB parent/guardian on logistics to support the participation of the SMOB at these conferences. A parent/guardian is required to accompany the SMOB to any conferences the Board attends.

# Core Values

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The fundamental principles of an organization are known as its core values. They provide the basis and core principles of an organization, as well as its values and public image.

1. The Board values collaborative, meaningful relationships with all stakeholders to include parents/legal guardians, students, teachers, staff, administrators, Board members, state and local elected officials, and members of the community at large.
2. The Board believes in equity for all students, understanding that some students require additional resources in order to receive a quality education.
3. The Board values equity as a personal and professional responsibility and will strive to create inclusive learning environments in which every student is able to achieve his/her highest potential.
4. The Board will support rigorous standards and high expectations for all students as the key to academic excellence and lifelong learning.
5. The Board believes there is value in diversity and all students and staff members are endowed with unique talents and entitled to mutual respect.
6. The Board values and promotes practices that ensure a safe and orderly learning and work environment.
7. The Board commits itself to be prepared for meetings and productively participate during the meetings in a manner that builds consensus towards decision making. Furthermore, the Board strives to refrain from duplicating statements that result in an inefficient use of Board meeting time.
8. The Board endeavors to enhance its skills and knowledge required to be effective leaders and engage in a governance model that promotes excellent public education, through professional development offerings (i.e., new member orientation, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, National School Boards Association, etc.).
9. The Board will periodically evaluate its own performance using a third party to ensure that the decision taken by the Board benefits student outcomes.

# Governance Protocols

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The agreements below serve as our tools to strengthen the capacity of the Board and Superintendent as we engage in constructive and positive interactions grounded in a mutual understanding of our respective roles and responsibilities.



# Communications

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The Superintendent and Board members are committed to open and respectful dialogue with one another in a continuing effort to strengthen working relationships within the team.

- Board members are asked to inform the Superintendent of the most effective one-on-one method of verbal communication, e.g., cell, home telephone, office phone during business hours, voice message, etc.
- The Superintendent will provide timely and relevant information to Board members. The Board will make concerted efforts to read and understand information provided by the Superintendent and his/her team so that they are fully informed about significant issues of importance to the school system.
- Board members and the Superintendent will strive to use the “keep each other informed” practice so that everyone has necessary, relevant information.
- The Superintendent will strive to keep the Board informed of prominent issues likely to be featured in the newspaper or other reputable media sources.
- Individual Board members will avoid making statements that could be misinterpreted as consensus opinion of the entire Board or the school system when speaking to the media or on social media platforms. When possible, individual Board members will alert the Board Chairperson and the Superintendent about making statements to the media on significant or controversial issues for the school system.
- Once a Board decision is made, that is the official position of the Board and must be communicated to the public when speaking on said adopted position.
- The Superintendent will establish an internal school system emergency communication protocol to communicate with the Board in case of extreme emergencies. During crisis situations, the Superintendent or his/her designee will send an email or text alert to all Board members and continue to update the Board as necessary.
- Board members must utilize their Board issued email accounts for all official Board business communications. Each member is expected to respond promptly to queries from the Chairperson, the Board’s executive assistant, and/or the Superintendent/designee. All email is subject to the Public Information Act and must be disclosed when requested by members of the public. Board members shall not use email in any way that would violate the Maryland Open Meetings Act or conflict with rulings of the Maryland Open Meetings Compliance Board, which generally prohibit any form of simultaneous or concurrent communication among a quorum of the Board on email or by other forms of electronic communication. All email correspondence is expected to be respectful, cordial and civil.



# Duties of Board Officers

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The officers of the Board are the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. The Chairperson presides at all meetings, signs authorized or approved contracts and other documents on behalf of the Board, represents the views of the Board in all communications and correspondence, and performs other duties prescribed by law or by the Board.

The Chairperson may appoint ad hoc committees of the Board and/or staff members to assist the Board with its work, study specific issues, or undertake Board projects. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson performs these duties. The following is a more illustrative list of the duties of the Chairperson:

1. Board meetings.
  - A. Works with the Superintendent of Schools and Vice Chairperson to develop agendas, with input from Board members.
  - B. Presides over meetings using Robert's Rules of Order, revised as a guide.
  - C. Ensures meetings are conducted in an orderly and succinct manner.
2. Communication.
  - A. Serves as the official spokesperson for the Board.
  - B. Works with the Board and individual members during meetings to obtain consensus.
  - C. Focuses on ensuring effective, open, and honest discussion among Board members.
  - D. Allows each Board member to express his/her ideas and opinions within the stated topic.
  - E. Works with the Superintendent of Schools/executive assistant to ensure all Board members are informed in a timely manner.
3. Committee Assignments.
  - A. Appoints ad hoc committees, as necessary.
  - B. Discusses with individual Board members their interests and strengths to try and arrive at consensus over committee assignments.
  - C. Attempts endeavors to ensure a cognizant balanced workload for each Board member.
4. Evaluation/Retreat.
  - A. Plans any Board retreats with input from the Vice Chairperson and the Superintendent of Schools.
  - B. Ensures that the Superintendent of Schools is evaluated annually.
  - C. Reviews the Board's norms annually.
5. School and Public Events.
  - A. Ensures that the Board is represented at school and public events.
  - B. Represents the Board's stated positions on inquiries from the media, elected officials and community groups.
  - C. Speaks at systemwide school/Board-sponsored events or other formal occasions, acknowledging the presence of fellow Board members and other dignitaries.
6. Documents Individual Board Member Requests.
  - A. Signs contracts approved by the Board, official letters, and other written communication on behalf of the Board.



If both the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson are absent from a Board meeting, the Superintendent presides until a president pro term is elected from among the Board members. The Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson are elected at the Board's annual organization meeting.

*Legal Reference: Sections 4-102, 4-107, and 4-204 Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.*

## **Individual Board Member Requests**

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All Board members are equal and authority rests with the Board as a whole. Direction is given to the Superintendent only at Board meetings (including executive session) through actions taken by the Board. The Board may suggest ideas or subjects of interest for future Board meeting agendas.

- At Board meetings, individuals may mention an item for future consideration as an agenda item, explaining their interest in a particular course of action or topic. If five Board members have an interest in the item, the Superintendent shall prepare materials for a deeper Board discussion and/or act on it at a future Board meeting.
- At Board agenda planning meetings, the Board Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and the Superintendent will review each item and determine if it is appropriate for open or closed session; whether the item should be an action item subject to Board vote; or an information/ report item and determine the proper time to place the item on the agenda.
- Board members will not task any other staff with the exception of the Executive Assistant to the Board. Requests by individual Board Members made to the Superintendent outside of Board Meetings may be granted by the Superintendent provided it is minimally impactful in terms of time and resources. Information requested by individual Board members will be shared with the entire Board.

### **Closed Session Items**

Certain items are discussed in closed (executive) session. These include but are not limited to: personnel, negotiating parameters, disciplinary issues and potential school sites. As stipulated in Board Policy 8140.1, the confidentiality of closed session items is an expectation of all Board members.

### **Quorum**

As prescribed in Board Policy 9335, six members of the Board will constitute a quorum. If a quorum is not present, the Board may still meet; however, they may not vote or act on any matter until a quorum is present.

### **Board Retreat**

The Board will hold regular retreats at least once per year annually with the Superintendent to review and modify the CCPS strategic plan. The Board will also engage in team development to increase working relationships to benefit student outcomes.

### **Attendance**

Each Board member will strive to attend every Board meeting. A Board member may face a charge of willful neglect of duty if there is a consistent pattern of non-attendance at Board meetings.

# **Protocols for Absentee Participation**

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1. Members of the Board may participate in a regular or special in-person meeting of the Board, excluding any closed session thereof, by means of an audio or video conference, pursuant to the following protocols:

A. The absent Board member may participate in the public meeting by audio or video conference call only when a family, work, or other bona fide emergency prevents the Board member from attending the meeting in person.

2. The absent Board member who wishes to participate in the public meeting, or a portion of the meeting, by audio or video, must make his or her request known to the Board Chairperson and the Superintendent at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled public meeting.

3. To comply with the Maryland Open Meetings Act, the absent Board member may participate in the open session of a regular or special meeting only if the audio or video can and will be broadcast over a speaker phone or other technology capable of allowing the absent Board member to hear and be heard by the attending Board members and members of the staff, public, and press present at such meeting, or a portion thereof.

4. A Board member's participation in a meeting by audio or video conference call will be counted as the total number of members required to form a quorum.

5. Any Board member who participates in a meeting by audio or video conference call will be permitted to consider, discuss, and vote upon any matter properly before the Board in the same fashion and with the same effect as if such member were physically present at the meeting. The minutes of any meeting at which such Board member participates in this manner will reflect that such member participated by audio or video conference call and was not physically present during such meeting.

6. For the Board meeting, the Board member(s) will call in at an appointed time on the meeting agenda. The virtual Board member(s) should not speak until called upon to do so by the Board Chairperson.

7. To avoid either electronic interference or multi-second time delay, the virtual Board member should undertake all efforts to mitigate any noise in his/her proximity.

8. Due to the complexity of managing a hybrid meeting and ensuring the presence of a quorum, no more than three virtual Board members may participate via telephone conference call concurrently.

*[Legal Reference: Section 3-101et seq., General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.](#)*



## **Handling Concerns/Suggestions**

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It is essential for Board members to be responsive to the community and be good listeners, while not attempting to personally resolve a problem. It is also important to recognize there are staff members responsible to remedy or manage student and staff concerns or problems.

The Superintendent and members of the CCPS leadership team are committed to resolving staff and/or parent concerns at the appropriate school or school system level.

- When someone shares a concern with a Board member, he/she will listen carefully and direct that person to the appropriate staff member (if known) or refer the parent or staff member to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will promptly follow up and supply information to the Board member(s) about the concern's status.
- It is acceptable for a Board member or the Superintendent not to have the answer to a specific operational matter when asked by a constituent. A suggested response is, "I or a staff member will get back to you in a timely manner with an answer to your question." Board members should communicate constituent's information and concern to the Superintendent as soon as possible to allow the Superintendent or designee to respond and copy the Board member and/or the Board at large on an email with their response.
- To maintain objectivity, a Board member will not delve into the specifics of complaint regarding personnel matters.
- A complaint forwarded by a Board member will not be perceived as complainant endorsement.
- Suggestions or ideas related to operational matters given to Board members by staff or constituents will be referred to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will be engaged for suggestions or ideas related to operational matters that members of the Board receive from staff or constituents.
- For individuals or vendors seeking to partner or conduct business with the school system, those entities will be referred to the Superintendent.

## **Maintaining Confidentiality (Board Policy 8140.1)**

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Maintaining confidentiality is essential to protecting the interests of the school system and individuals. The Board values, respects, and honors those matters shared with them and the Superintendent and will maintain that trust.

In alignment with this policy, Board members will take no private action that will compromise the Board or administration. Members will respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law. Moreover, Board members shall maintain the confidentiality appropriate to sensitive issues and information that otherwise would compromise the integrity or legal positions of the Board or the school system, especially those matters discussed in closed session.

1. The Board and the Superintendent agree to maintain the confidentiality of all closed sessions and privileged communication as required by law and Board policy. Such matters include personnel issues, specific student matters, contract discussions, litigation, real property acquisition and related matters, and labor relations.
2. The Board will not discuss concerns of negotiations with members of the employee bargaining unit, but instead will give the school system's negotiation team clear guidelines.
3. A Board member should leave the meeting prior to the start or before a specific topic is discussed if, for any reason, they prefer not to take part in an approved confidential conversation or if they have a conflict of interest with the topic being discussed.

## **Board Member Role in Public**

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As elected officials, Board members play an essential role in the community and serve as liaisons to the public they serve.

- Upon arrival Board members will notify the event administrator of their attendance. During school and system events, Board members will be introduced as appropriate, unless they are attending as a parent. When in doubt, the supervising administrator will inquire as to the Board member's preference for introduction.

## **Board Members Visiting Schools**

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School visits remind Board members that the students and learning are the primary focus of the school system. School visits allow Board members to observe programs in action, the movement of CCPS toward its systemwide goals and shows appreciation for the excellent work being done.

- The purpose of a Board member's visit is to observe and educate, not to investigate or give directions to personnel.
- Board members should notify the school before visiting to ensure that their presence will not disrupt activities for that school day.
- The Superintendent will ensure principals and teachers know that a teacher does not need to interrupt his or her lesson when a Board member visits a classroom.
- When visiting with teachers of their own children, it is understood that the Board member is there as a parent, unless otherwise stated.



# **Prior to Board Meetings and Work Sessions**

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All meetings of the Board are public meetings, except for closed sessions and as otherwise permitted under state law. Under special circumstances (e.g., weather or facility related emergencies), as determined by the Board, any meeting of the Board may be conducted virtually to allow for remote participation of all Board members and participants. The public will be provided with notice and the ability to watch and (when permitted by the Board) participate in these virtual meetings remotely.

## **Agenda Setting for Board Meetings and Work Sessions**

The Superintendent and Board members recommend agenda items for Board meetings and work sessions (hereafter known together as “business meetings”) based on these priorities and by adhering to the following process:

1. The Superintendent (or designee) schedules regular agenda-setting meetings with the Board Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, the Superintendent and designated staff. The following items are discussed at these business meetings:

A. The agenda for future business meetings. The Superintendent or their designee advises the Board Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of time requirements for agenda items, the status of major items to be discussed at Board meetings, agenda setting and the availability of staff to be present for Board discussions. During these meetings, items raised during previous business meetings and/or public meeting(s), are assigned for follow-up and potential discussion/reporting at a future Board meeting.

B. A list of items to be scheduled for future business meetings. The Superintendent or their designee collaborates with the Board Chairperson and Vice Chairperson to identify the status of items to be scheduled and suggests dates for their presentation. The Board maintains a continuous listing of future agenda items.

C. The Superintendent, or designee, and the Board Chairperson and Vice Chairperson review a calendar of future Board meetings (regular and special), closed sessions, public hearings and work sessions.

After the agenda-setting meeting, copies of draft agendas are sent to Board members and executive staff, and are then once final posted to the Board’s website and BoardDocs the Friday prior to the business meetings. Board members are encouraged to share their interests regarding scheduled items to inform staff presentations prior to the meetings by communicating with the Superintendent.

2. Significant preparation by the Superintendent, staff, and the Board goes into an effective Board meeting. To maximize the effectiveness of Board meetings, the Board agrees to the following:

A. Before every business meeting, materials are prepared. Board materials are not released to the public until they are final. Board meeting materials are available online to the Board and the public on the Friday before regular business meetings. Items that require extensive study should be distributed to Board members in advance of the regular distribution of Board materials, to allow sufficient time for review and consideration by Board members.

B. The advance meeting agenda shall indicate if an item is for “information,” “report,” and/or “action.” Notwithstanding the designation, any Board member can make a motion germane to an agenda item before the Board.

C. The Superintendent and staff will be available prior to the Board meeting to answer any questions and/or discuss agenda items needing clarification.

D. Board members will read the agenda and supporting materials before the Board meetings or work sessions and will try to contact the Superintendent with questions/concerns.

# At Business Meetings (Board Meetings & Work Sessions)

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The Board conducts one Board meeting and one work session per month, except for the month of July during which the Board is in recess. Also, there is no work session in the month of December. These business meetings are held at the CCPS central office in La Plata, Maryland.

In addition to acting on scheduled items, the agenda of each business meeting contains an opportunity for Board members and the Superintendent to make comments on activities, request information and ask questions of a general nature. During the meeting, presentations by staff to the Board emphasize key highlights and recommendations, ensuring that the Board has sufficient time to discuss the agenda item.

Meetings are to begin promptly at the starting time on the agenda, provided that a quorum is present. Closed sessions normally are scheduled at the start, lunch hour, and/or end of the meeting.

Every effort is made to schedule items of significant public interest at times convenient to the public, and a special effort is made to group similar and major educational issues together during Board meetings.

At every business meeting, time is set aside for public comments from residents and constituents to encourage public participation. Each speaker who signs up for public comment during the designated sign-up process is granted three minutes each to speak. The Board is interested in hearing a broad range of perspectives from the community. The members of the Board desire to hear the views and have the advice of interested community members.

Although public input on policy, program, and practices is encouraged, public comment is not the proper avenue to address specific student or employee matters. The public is encouraged to utilize existing avenues of redress for complaints. Comments about the actions or statements of individual staff members should be referred to the Superintendent or processed through available channels.

Under special circumstances, as determined by the Board, any meeting of the Board may be conducted virtually to allow for remote participation of all Board members and participants. The public will be provided with notice and the ability to attend these virtual meetings remotely.

To help ensure effective public participation in the decision-making process, it is suggested the Board does the following:

- Endeavors to advertise the agenda and supporting documents on the school system's website no later than the Friday before the business meeting.
- Involves parents, community members and students on advisory committees.
- Convenes town hall meetings on issues of wide public interest, as determined by the Board.
- Permits the public to voice opinions on matters pertaining to education and other items that are before the Board within its business meetings.
- Encourages residents to communicate with Board members by publishing contact information, including email addresses.
- Widely circulates proposed policies for comment.



# Board meetings

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The following associations will have an optional standing testimony slot at each Board Meeting: 1) Education Association of Charles County (EACC) and 2) American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). The Board conducts its regular monthly meeting in the general order outlined in Policy 9336.

- Call to Order.
- Pledge of Allegiance.
- Information Items.
- Report Items.
- Unfinished Business.
- New Business.
- Future Agenda Items.
- Recognition.
- Public Forum.
- Board Member Updates.
- Approval of Minutes.
- Action Items.
- Adjournment.

Effective Board meetings require the Board, staff, and community to understand the structures and processes needed to effectively operate the business requirements of the school system.

- Each Board member will respect the right of other Board members to hold an opposing point of view. Following a vote, all Board members will respect the decision made by the Board.
- All team members will be respectful and attentive during public comments. The Board Chairperson should acknowledge a public speaker's comment and say that the Superintendent will follow up on a concern or issue, if appropriate.
- If an individual Board member cannot support the decision of the Board, the member is expected, at a minimum, to refrain from undermining the decision.
- The commitment to either support or refrain from undermining majority decisions does not prevent the member from asking for consideration at a future time of a more acceptable alternative; however, the decision of the Board should be considered final.
- Personal electronic devices should not be used during Board meetings to communicate or discuss an item on the Board agenda. Board members should keep in mind that communicating with community members during the Board meetings may give the appearance that the Board member is being unduly influenced, fed information, and being manipulated by a member(s) of the community; rather than being fully present and engaged in the Board meeting.



# Work Session Meetings

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Work sessions serve as a unique opportunity for the Board and staff to engage in important conversations on school system programs, future trends, and innovations, or to simply inform the Board and CCPS leadership team members on current or future issues that the school system may face.

- Work sessions will occur throughout the year to ensure coverage of the timely and urgent issues that require extensive discussion before a Board action.
- Work sessions will be organized with a staff presentation followed by Board discussion and questions. Materials should be provided to Board members in advance of the work session.

## Annual Organizational Meeting

[According to state law](#), the Board of Education must conduct an annual meeting on the second Tuesday in January for the election of a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. The annual organizational meeting is traditionally combined with a regular business meeting. The meeting is called to order by the current Chairperson, and at the point where the elections are to be conducted, the Superintendent or their designee presides. All Board members are eligible to be Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Through an individually recorded vote, members elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson in accordance with Board Policy 9120. The election for Chairperson shall precede the election for Vice Chairperson. Immediately upon their election, the elected Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall assume their office's duties. In addition to selecting the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, the Board also must fill vacancies on the Board's standing committees (if any exist), including designating the chair for each of the committees.

*[Legal Reference: Section 3-502 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.](#)*

## Special Meetings

Other than regularly scheduled business meetings, publicized in advance, the Board may meet for retreats, trainings, and policy-development sessions. As part of its master calendar, the Board may schedule annual meetings where the Board is listening and gathering input and feedback with organizations such as the Student Government Association presidents, Charles County Parent-Teacher Organizations and Parent-Teacher-Student Organizations, labor management associations, etc. The Board also may meet with other elected and appointed officials, and education, civic, and community organizations. These meetings may be held at the CCPS central office or in communities throughout the county. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, the Superintendent, or at the written request of the majority of the Board. Whenever possible, at least 24 hours notice of special meetings and their purpose will be given to each Board member and, whenever feasible, meeting dates will be determined in consultation with Board members. To remain transparent to the public, business that does not come within the purposes set forth in the call for the meeting may not be transacted at a special meeting.



## **Closed Session**

Under the Maryland Open Meetings Act, the Board of Education is authorized to meet in closed session to discuss, among other things, personnel matters, acquisition of real estate, pending litigation, collective bargaining issues, matters protected from public disclosure by law, and to obtain legal advice. The Maryland Open Meetings Act also requires that, before meeting in closed session, the Board must give reasonable advance notice of the closed session.

1. Immediately prior to convening a closed session during the Board meeting, the Chairperson shall conduct a recorded vote on closing the session, that includes the reasons for closing the meeting, including citations of legal authority and a listing of the topics to be discussed.

2. Closed sessions may be called by the Chairperson at any time, or by the Superintendent. However, the Board must take a public vote to go into closed session and must give public notice of the meeting by providing notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting, as required by the Maryland Open Meetings Act. If an emergency session is required, the Board must give notice of the session and take a public vote to go into closed session. The presiding officer shall conduct a recorded vote on the closing of the meeting and shall make a written statement setting out the reason for closing the meeting, the specific provision of the Maryland Open Meetings Act that allows the meeting to be closed, and the topics to be discussed during the closed session.

3. It is the responsibility of all Board members to monitor the topics discussed in closed session to ensure that the topics discussed are appropriate for closed session. All Board members will receive training on the requirements of the Maryland Open Meetings Act and shall remain responsible for keeping abreast of the Act.

4. Board members and staff are expected to maintain the confidentiality of closed session.

*[Legal Reference: Section 3-101 et seq., of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.](#)*

## **Town Halls**

The Board will hold regular Town Halls as the Board strives to engage and dialogue directly with county citizens. Questions raised by citizens during the meeting will be compiled and answered, as appropriate, and posted on the CCPS website. The Board, through public input, will determine the opening topic for the Town Halls. However, any subject brought forward by the public during the Town Halls may be discussed.

## **Board Member District Meetings**

To interact with the public, Board members may decide to host meetings in their elected districts (at-large members may convene in any area). The Superintendent and other CCPS employees will not help Board members in running district meetings. If their schedule allows, the Superintendent may attend district meetings.

## **Professional Development**

Board members are advocates and champions within our community. Board members make decisions that have a significant and long-term impact on students, schools and communities. The Board guides the school system to produce students who graduate globally competitive. Professional development is the Board's principal means of improving its own capacity to positively affect student performance and education. Board member training and development allows Board members to make use of the training resources available to them and then implement those practices to best serve the public in an effective way. The Board is devoted to continuous improvement and growth by acquiring knowledge to better equip itself with the skills necessary to effectively govern the school system. The Board is encouraged to engage in regular training and professional development.

Board members are encouraged to take advantage of professional development and training offered through MABE, NSBA, and other low cost/free sources. Professional development may also include: MABE Committee presentations, CCPS Blueprint and Committee presentations.

A Board member will reimburse the school system for the covered costs if they are unable to attend a professional development that was funded by CCPS. A Board member will make an effort to inform the Board Chairperson and executive assistant of any unavoidable extenuating circumstances (such as illness, flood, auto accidents, family emergency or job-related emergency).

If the Board determines that there is a pattern of an individual Board member's nonattendance at professional development paid for by CCPS, the Board member may be required to pay out-of-pocket for future trainings and then seek reimbursement once attendance is confirmed. The Board may mandate that a Board member pay for upcoming trainings out of pocket and then request reimbursement once attendance is verified if it finds a trend of the Board Member missing professional development sessions funded by CCPS.

Prior to December of every year, the Board will review its office budget for the next fiscal year and agree on a budget amount. Board members will review and agree on the number and types of paid professional development activities and community events the Board will engage in for the upcoming school year. The Superintendent will provide a list of such activities from the previous fiscal year to inform decision making. The Board can amend its office budget before the final submission of the CCPS budget in June.

## **Board Vacancy**

The Board will fill vacancies following established guidelines in legislation. In the event of the resignation, death, or removal from office of an elected Board member, the remaining members of the Board (other than the SMOB) will select an individual to fill the vacancy.

This individual will serve for the remainder of the term. State law also requires that the individual must be a registered voter of [Charles County for three years](#) and that an individual subject to the authority of the county Board may not serve as a member of the Board. For example, although an employee of the school system would be eligible for appointment, he/she would have to resign as an employee to serve as a member of the Board.

When filling Board vacancies, the Board typically discusses the establishment of the process as an administrative function of the Board. The Board will generate a public notice that sets out the qualifications established by law. Interested persons are asked to submit a resume or brief record of his/her personal history and relevant civic, professional, employment, and other experience, along with a cover letter indicating his/her home address. The Charles County Board of Elections verifies that applicant(s) reside in the appropriate district. As in other Board meeting notices, the Board vacancy notice is disseminated widely through various methods (i.e., via the CCPS website, social media and relevant media outlets).

Selected candidates are interviewed by the Board in a public session. During the interview, the candidates provide responses to questions that address their experience, priorities and expectations for the job. The Board appoints the individual who garners a majority vote of the remaining Board members.

In the event of a vacancy in the SMOB position, the Board fills the vacancy and may (but is not required to) select the individual receiving the second highest vote in the most recent election.



## **Removal of a Board Member**

A Board member may be removed from office for immorality, misbehavior while in office, incompetence, or deliberate neglect of duty in accordance with the law. A member of the Board may only be removed by the Maryland State Board of Education.

If a member of the Board engages in any of the behaviors mentioned above, the Board Chairperson and the Superintendent will meet with the member to discuss the matter(s). In the event that the Board Chairperson engages in any of the previously mentioned behaviors, the Superintendent and the Vice Chairperson will proceed to deal with the matter. The entire Board of Education will be kept informed regarding such issues should they arise.

The member may request a hearing and be heard publicly before the Maryland State Board of Education. The member also has the right to a de novo review of the removal by the Circuit Court for Charles County.

*[Legal Reference: Section 3-501, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland Board policy 9110.](#)*

## **Association Memberships**

The Board will periodically evaluate the efficacy of its Association memberships. This includes but is not limited to MABE and NSBA. The Board may choose to obtain memberships in other organizations that can offer benefits to CCPS.

## **Board Member Committee/Task Force/ Work Group Assignments**

The Board Chairperson will be called upon to assign Board members to MABE Committees to represent CCPS' interests and relay information to inform the representing Board member's position on the committee. MABE Committees may include Federal Advocacy, Conference Planning, Educational Equity, Policies and Procedures, etc. Board members may also opt to join or be assigned to CCPS' task forces, work groups, etc. These groups may include the Equity Task Force, Blueprint Pillar groups, etc. It is the expectation that representing Board members gather and relay information from their committee and/or other group assignments to the Board and the public, via a report provided during a Board meeting and/or work session.

A Board member with a pattern of nonattendance at these types of meetings, where they serve as a Board representative, may be removed by the Chairperson and another Board member appointed to serve in the position.

## **Board Member Compensation and Expenses**

Board members are provided an annual salary (\$7,000 for Chairperson/\$6,000 for other members) paid quarterly and additional funding (\$1,500 for Chairperson/\$600 for other members) for travel expenses associated with duties inside the county. All these items are taxable. Additional expenses for travel may be submitted by Board members, but these will count against the \$1,000 annual limit prescribed under the [Education Article Section 3-503](#).

Laptops/i-Pads are provided to all Board members. CCPS can also provide cell phones if Board members choose to have one.

In the performance of their duties, Board members may attend events in Charles County that have an affiliation with CCPS. All Board members will have access to these events, and these will be paid for through CCPS. If a Board member is unable to attend an event that was paid for by CCPS, they will reimburse the school system for the covered expenses. In the event of unavoidable extenuating circumstances (e.g., car accident, illness, flood, family emergency, or work-related emergency), the Board member will endeavor to communicate their circumstance to the Board's executive assistant and the Board Chairperson.

In the case that a Board member consistently fails to attend CCPS-funded events and professional development, they will have to pay for these trainings and events out of pocket in the future and request reimbursement when their participation is verified.

## **Superintendent Selection and Contract**

[Per Section 4-201 of the Education Article](#), contracts for school Superintendents are four years and begin on July 1 and end four years later on June 30. By law, a Superintendent must inform the Board by February 1 in the year their contract is ending with their intention of seeking an additional four-year contract. This does not preclude the Superintendent from informing the Board at an earlier date. Similarly, the Board may inform the Superintendent of its desire to consider/not consider an additional four-year term by March 1.

The Board has the following options to select a new Superintendent. The Board can work alone, hire an outside firm, or use MABE's expertise to assist with the selection. The search and selection procedure does not have any set standards. In the past, the Board has used MABE and carried out a national search that resulted in the selection of the top three candidates, who were subsequently subjected to in-person interviews by the Board.

### *Nondiscrimination statement*

*The Charles County public school system does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability in its programs, activities or employment practices. For inquiries, please contact Dr. Mike Blanchard, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (students) or Nikial M. Majors, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (employees/ adults), at Charles County Public Schools, Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, P.O. Box 2770, La Plata, MD 20646; 301-932-6610/301-870-3814. For special accommodations call 301-934-7230 or TDD 1-800-735-2258 two weeks prior to the event. CCPS provides nondiscriminatory equal access to school facilities in accordance with its Use of Facilities rules to designated youth groups (including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts).*

