

# BOARD OF EDUCATION HANDBOOK



PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
OF THE TARRYTOWNS

## **Board of Education: Overview**

The Board of Education (BOE) is a public corporate body that exists separate from its members. Regardless of changes to its membership, the BOE can act only by a majority vote of the BOE or a legally constituted quorum of the BOE (four Board members for a seven-member Board). The Board shall oversee District personnel, affairs, and properties in accordance with its limited power and duties assigned by the New York State (“NYS”) constitution laws, regulations, and judicial decisions. The Board primarily acts as a policy-setting body and delegates the administration of schools to the Superintendent and staff.

## **The Role of the Board of Education**

The governance role of the BOE is to focus on end results, ensure that the District’s established mission and vision are being upheld, approve and monitor the District’s short and long-term goals, update and monitor policy, and vote on recommendations made by the Superintendent. In carrying out its responsibilities, the BOE, as an entity, shall:

1. primarily act as a policy-setting body with a focus on the District’s vision, goals and policy (What? Why? How Well? How Much?). BOE policies provide general, ongoing guidance and direction to the District;
2. adopt long-term District goals based on the District’s Strategic Plan. The BOE shall monitor and review the progress of the District goals and strategies based upon an adopted timetable and reevaluate and adjust, as necessary;
3. Review the Board of Education packet in advance of each meeting, and submit any questions to the full Board and Superintendent at least 3 days prior to the meeting;
4. approve annual District goals that are aligned with the District’s Strategic Plan as developed by the Administration and adopted by the BOE. The BOE shall receive progress updates of the annual District goals from the Administration based upon an adopted timetable. Goal discussions must occur at public meetings;
5. delegate the administration and management of the schools to the Superintendent, not directly run the District’s day-to-day management of the schools;
6. delegate to the Superintendent the responsibility for achieving the District’s short-term and long-term goals, as demonstrated by evidence-based outcomes.
7. represent the school community and work to build public trust and support for the Schools and public education;
8. be accountable for the fiscal management of the District, including its allocation and alignment of financial resources, review and adoption of the budget, and authorization, investment and borrowing of funds, as necessary and required under the law. The BOE

- shall be transparent and welcome input from the community in the review and understanding of the District's budget and financial resources;
9. require the District's administrative rules and regulations to be consistent with its policies and Open Meetings Law;
  10. as "public officers" under the law, take an oath of office to uphold the law and to faithfully discharge their duties;
  11. understand that BOE decisions are binding on all Board members regardless of how an individual Board member votes;
  12. ensure that individual BOE members are members of a collective body and cannot act on behalf of the BOE or District without support of the majority of the BOE or quorum of the BOE. All BOE members have equal power and authority when it comes to decision making;
  13. annually evaluate itself, its practices and protocols to safeguard compliance with BOE policies;
  14. aim to reach decisions through consensus;
  15. recognize that authority to act rests with the entire Board or a quorum of the Board and that business can only be transacted at official meetings;
  16. recruit and hire the Superintendent;
  17. evaluate the performance of the Superintendent annually during the District's fiscal year, including meeting as a BOE to discuss it prior to providing written comments and then providing a written evaluation to the Superintendent;
  18. work with Superintendent to develop goals, monitor or participate in negotiations, and ratify all Collective Bargaining Agreements;
  19. work with Superintendent to develop priorities when hiring for District administrative positions, including interviewing finalists;
  20. conduct regular, scheduled meetings in public often enough to fulfill the obligations it has for oversight, guidance and acting on the district's business; and
  21. follow Open Meetings Law, the BOE-adopted governance protocols and processes, and District policies.

## **The Role of the Individual Board Member**

Each individual BOE member shall:

1. serve as a member of a corporate body and have no authority as an individual BOE member unless supported by a quorum of the BOE or the full BOE;
2. attend all BOE meetings. The BOE functions as one body composed of individual members and, as such, is only able to be truly successful if all members are participating, debating,

- deliberating and voting in public. If a BOE member must be absent, he or she shall properly notify the BOE President of unavailability or an absence as soon as possible;
3. serve as a member of the district governance team along with all BOE members and the Superintendent;
  4. focus on policy, vision and goals, and rely on the administrative team for problem solving;
  5. participate in new board member orientation and other in-house education and training offered by the Superintendent, commit to ongoing professional development, and strive to be well informed about governance, policies, practices and protocols in the District;
  6. endeavor to make the best decisions on behalf of all students with a commitment to the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obligation, and being mindful to avoid advocating for positions that are self-serving;
  7. serve as the 'eyes and ears' to the community and promptly share all relevant information learned as a BOE member with the BOE President and Vice President who will circulate to the full BOE and the Superintendent;
  8. only direct the Superintendent to work on a project, via the BOE president and Vice President, with the support of a majority of the BOE or the full BOE;
  9. follow Open Meetings Law, the BOE-adopted governance protocols and processes, and District policies;
  10. BOE members will strive to include the full BOE and Superintendent (where appropriate) in BOE communications for the purposes of transparency and mutuality and exclusively use the BOE-assigned District email address for all BOE-related information, requests, or questions shared with the full BOE and Superintendent, avoiding use of personal email and text messages;
  11. participate in at least one BOE-standing committee and attend all such committee meetings;
  12. may serve as a liaison, when appointed, to one or more District partner organizations (Village, PTA, Foundation, District-wide Committee, WPSBA, BOCES, etc.)
  13. send BOE meeting information requests to the BOE President and Vice President (the "Executive Board") and Superintendent ahead of the board meeting and respect the "no surprise" rule;
  14. be well informed about District policy, procedures, facilities, financials, and all other relevant information;
  15. strive to attend student, District and community events, when available, and BOE sponsored programs. Board members will keep Board leadership informed prior to events attended, and will also share observations of attended events with the full Board;
  16. participate in outside educational programs (NYSSBA, WPSBA, BOCES, etc.) and legislative meetings;
  17. participate in fundraising activities when possible;
  18. consistently model mutual respect and civility;

19. guide community members to follow the chain of command (i.e., teacher, principal or assistant principal, Superintendent, BOE);
20. clarify when speaking as a parent or private citizen and not as a BOE member;
21. always inform staff when they are acting as a parent advocating for their children attending District schools;
22. never disclose, allude to, or reference confidential information when speaking with any member of the school community (family members, neighbors, etc), the public, staff, etc. (unless in Executive Session); and
23. as “public officers” under the law, take an oath of office to uphold the law and to faithfully discharge their duties.

## **BOE Officer Roles: President and Vice-President (the Executive Board)**

The BOE President shall provide leadership for the BOE and seek to exercise good judgment in carrying out the District’s vision and planning its short term and long term goals. The BOE President must not only be a good leader but also a navigator, planner, organizer, communicator, interpreter, confidant, liaison, conscience, caretaker and troubleshooter. The BOE President serves as a liaison between the BOE and the Superintendent. The Vice President shall act in the President’s capacity in the event of the President’s absence. Together, the President and Vice President comprise the Executive Board of the BOE. The Vice President should, as a matter of course and habit, be present in all phone calls and meetings with the Superintendent to ensure that the Executive Board is receiving information as a single body.

1. Election of BOE Officers
  - a. Officers of the BOE shall be nominated and elected by the simple majority of the Board at its Annual Organizational Meeting for a term of one (1) year. They will take their oath as officers at this meeting along with newly elected members.
  - b. The elected officers of the BOE are: i) President ii) Vice President
2. The President shall:
  - a. conduct meetings of the BOE in an orderly fashion and in accordance with parliamentary procedure to ensure that meeting discussion stays focused on agenda topics;
  - b. welcome the participation of community members at BOE meetings. Set the tone of cooperation and mutual respect while at the same time ensure that order is maintained, business before the BOE is handled efficiently, and in a fair and dignified manner;
  - c. speak on behalf of the BOE to reflect the Board’s intent and District’s position when answering questions at public meetings or when replying to emails from

- community members; written responses on behalf of the BOE to community members should be shared with the BOE in advance when the content of the reply is substantive;
- d. call special meetings as necessary or on request. Any BOE member may call a special meeting of the Board according to Education Law, 1606;
  - e. appoint committees of the BOE which is generally determined at the annual Organizational Meeting, and subsequently appoint members to the committees, taking into account each BOE members' strengths, interests, talents and desire to contribute;
  - f. serve as ex-officio member of all committees; and
  - g. execute documents approved by a vote of the BOE.
  - h. Vice-President, in the absence of the President, shall act in the President's capacity and fulfill all of the usual and ordinary duties and responsibilities of the office identified above; be present, to the extent possible, when the President meets with the Superintendent of Schools pertaining District business, such as the development of Board of Education meeting agendas.

## **The Role of the Superintendent**

The governance role of the Superintendent is to focus on the means, determine the strategies to achieve short- and long-term goals, develop regulations for policy implementation, document and report progress, and recommend courses of action to address the stated goals. As a member of the Governance Team, the Superintendent is responsible for addressing the following questions: How are we doing the work to achieve the determined goals and mandates? When and where are we doing such work? Who is doing such work?"

In carrying out his/her responsibilities, the Superintendent shall:

1. provide visionary, inspirational and ethical leadership to enable the District to continually improve the educational experiences of all students;
2. serve as the Chief Executive Officer and be responsible for the administration of the District, specifically, Academics & Curriculum, Finance, Operations, Human Resources, Student Achievement, and District Vision;
3. enforce all provisions of the law and all regulations and rules relating to the management of the Schools;
4. recommend and carry out all policies adopted by the BOE and ensure that the rules, regulations and directives of the BOE are enforced;
5. lead instruction and provide information to the BOE on such matters as standards, curricula, assessment, and other matters related to student learning progress;

6. prepare, and assist with the preparation of, periodic reports by administrators for the BOE to keep track of the progress of each BOE short-term and long-term goal-related activity or project, and as requested by the BOE;
7. hold a standing meeting, along with the President and Vice President of the BOE to answer questions from the BOE, review topics, and to help plan agendas for upcoming BOE meetings;
8. attend BOE meetings;
9. provide regular weekly updates to the BOE;
10. hold administrative and teaching staff accountable for attaining the short-term and long-term goals and objectives of the BOE as set forth in the Strategic Plan;
11. assess the needs of the Schools, including capital improvements and repairs of facilities and fields, bond acquisitions, security and emergency requirements, transportation services, etc., and develop plans with BOE to address them;
12. recommend and manage annual and long-term fiscal plans, including preparing and presenting to the Board a preliminary annual budget and ensuring that the budget, as adopted by the Board and approved at the annual meeting, is properly administered;
13. supervise and direct the management and operations of all schools in the District, as well as all educational, social and recreational activities;
14. supervise, manage and assign all personnel with the assistance of administrative staff; (recruit, hire, evaluate, promote, discipline and terminate staff in accordance with state law and District policies);
15. negotiate, approve, and represent the District, with counsel and other administrative staff, with regard to the Collective Bargaining Agreement process, and staff complaints and grievances;
16. establish and approve professional development programs for teachers and staff; delegate authority to other staff members and at all times have the final responsibility for carrying out the mandates of the District;
17. oversee an effective community relations program, including building collaborative relationships with business, civic and governmental groups, parents and other residents;
18. communicate with counsel and share such discussions with the BOE as appropriate;
19. facilitate orientation for new BOE members and organize an annual BOE retreat, and follow-up retreats, as necessary and requested by BOE.

## **Board-Superintendent Relationship**

The School Board - Superintendent relationship is marked by mutual respect and a commitment to mutual support for professional development, deep learning of the material matters in both

roles, and a willingness to reach a constructive and meaningful relationship, even in moments of disagreement.

A School Board member should maintain correct relations with the Superintendent of Schools and the staff:

1. By giving the Superintendent full administrative authority for the operation(s) of the District and expecting accountability for the results.
2. By having the Superintendent present at all meetings of the Board except when the Superintendent's performance, contract, and salary are being reviewed, or, at the option of the Board, when the Board is discussing its interpersonal relationship.
3. By referring all complaints concerning staff or students to the Superintendent, and discussing them at Board meetings only after efforts at an administrative solution have been exhausted.

The Superintendent should maintain correct relations with the Board collectively, and Board Members individually:

1. By giving the individual Board Member due consideration of questions and shared concerns the weight and consideration needed to address them in the appropriate manner, while also advising on whether matters are relevant at the board level.

## **Regular Meetings**

All meetings shall be conducted as set forth in the Open Meetings Law. Except for executive sessions, all meetings shall be open to the public. If videoconferencing or online technology is used to conduct a meeting, the public notice for the meeting shall inform the public that videoconferencing will be used.

The Board of Education may use video conferencing without allowing for in-person attendance at the location of the member participating by video conference under the following conditions: (1) There must be at least one physical location where members of the public can attend in-person; (2) A quorum of the Board must be physically present at the physical location(s); (3) The Board member participating by video conference must be physically unable to be present due to an extraordinary circumstance, which may include but is not limited to: disability, illness, caregiving responsibilities, and/or any other significant or unexpected factor or event which precludes physical attendance, as defined in the Hybrid Meeting Procedures located on the District's website; (4) Any Board member participating through video conference must be able to be heard, seen, and identified at all times (except during Executive Sessions); and (5) members



of the public must be given the opportunity to participate in the meeting virtually in the same capacity as they would had they attended in person.

In the alternative, through July 1, 2026, a Board member may participate by videoconference under any circumstance deemed appropriate by the Board, where his/her location is identified in the public notice and the public has the right to attend the meeting at said location.

Voting may be done through videoconferencing, provided that members can be both seen and heard voting and participating from remote locations. The minutes of the meeting must reflect which members participated by video conference. Any technology used by the District for video conferencing must be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Any in-person requirements under Section 103-a of the Public Officers Law shall not apply during any national, State, or locally declared state of emergency, if the Board determines that the circumstances necessitating the emergency declaration would affect or impair the ability of the public body to hold an in-person meeting.

## **Special Meetings - Call, Notice, And Agenda**

The President, the Superintendent, or any Board member may call a special meeting, by written notice, including via email, to each Board member's residence at least 24 hours prior to the special meeting. The notice shall specifically state the purpose of the meeting, and/or the issues for discussion.

If an emergency special meeting is necessary, it may be called without written notice. But, all members must be present and must unanimously agree to waive the 24-hour notice. No other subject shall be discussed at the special meeting, absent unanimous consent of all Board members.

If videoconferencing or online technology is used to conduct a meeting, the public notice for the meeting shall inform the public that videoconferencing will be used, identify all the locations for the meeting, and state that the public has the right to attend the meeting at any of the locations. Voting may be done through videoconferencing, provided that members can be both seen and heard voting and participating from remote locations. The minutes of the meeting must reflect which members participated by video conference. Any technology used by the District for video conferencing must be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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Any in-person requirements under Section 103-a of the Public Officers Law shall not apply during any national, State, or locally declared state of emergency, if the Board determines that the circumstances necessitating the emergency declaration would affect or impair the ability of the public body to hold an in-person meeting.

## **Meetings On Instructional Programs**

During the first sixty days of the new fiscal year, the Board of Education and the Superintendent will agree upon and prioritize a list of curriculum presentations for the school year.

The purpose of these presentations is to inform the public and to afford the Board the opportunity to review curricular areas in depth and to conduct any necessary follow-up activities.

Personnel, who are involved with implementing the program, should be invited to the presentation to answer questions about the program. Presentations may be made as part of an agenda at regular meetings or at a special meeting designated for such purpose, on dates agreed to by the Board and the Superintendent.

## **Agenda Preparation And Dissemination**

The Superintendent along with the Board President, Vice President, and non-Executive Board members, on a rotating basis, will prepare the agenda for each Board meeting according to the order of business, to facilitate orderly and efficient meetings, and to allow Board members sufficient preparation time to review materials prior to each Board meeting.

Items of business may be suggested by any Board member, district employee, parent, student, or other member of the public, and must relate directly to district business. The inclusion of items suggested by district employees, parents, students, or other members of the public is at the

discretion of the Superintendent, subject to the approval of the Board President and Vice President.

Persons suggesting items of business must submit the item to the Superintendent at least 10 days prior to a regular meeting and items will not be added to the agenda later than these time periods, unless the item is of an emergency nature and authorized by the Superintendent in consultation with the Board President and or Vice President. If a trustee wishes to add an item to the agenda, this request should be communicated to the Board leadership and shared with the entire Board.

## **Community Relations**

In order to maintain schools that reflect the public's standards of quality, the Board of Education strives to conduct District affairs by way of a continuous, open dialogue between the community and the District. Oftentimes, the Board becomes aware of community members' desires for, and concerns about, our school system. The Board recognizes, as one of its main functions, the need to channel feedback to the appropriate professional staff and will serve to facilitate those communications.

The Superintendent and staff will, within budget limitations, use available communication channels, such as newsletters and other publications, radio, television and digital, to inform the public of the policies, objectives, accomplishments, programs, proposed budgets, and needs of our schools. Except at Board meetings, the Superintendent will be the spokesperson for the Board of Education unless there are individual items which the Board decides to handle differently.

The media are invited to attend public meetings of the Board. Announcements of meetings and agendas will be furnished to the designated local newspaper as required under the Open Meetings Law. To the extent possible, school district personnel will be frank and open when dealing with any media representatives recognizing the privilege of the press to establish newsworthy material.

The Board of Education will attend to the following in order to foster strong community relations:

1. partner with District parents in order to have them engaged in the social, emotional and academic progress of their children;
2. keep the community informed about its schools;
3. understand community attitudes and aspirations for the schools;

4. direct all complaints from the public to the appropriate administrative officer. However, such complaints may be carried to the Superintendent of Schools and/or the Board if the problem cannot be solved at that level;
5. promote a spirit of cooperation among the Board, the schools, and the community;
6. facilitate dissemination of information to the community concerning issues and activities in the school using not only traditional modes of communication, such as district mailings, but also current modes of communication such as the District's website and social networking sites;
7. build relationships with local businesses, local government, health care, social service, civic and community organizations to share resources in order to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of all of our students.

## **Evaluation Of Superintendent**

The Board of Education recognizes that student growth, district progress, and community satisfaction are all affected by the performance of the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent cannot function effectively without periodic feedback about his/her performance. Therefore, the Board recognizes its responsibilities to evaluate the Superintendent.

During each year of the Superintendent's appointment, the Board and the Superintendent will meet to discuss a plan of performance review and accountability for that school year. Such evaluation shall occur at least once annually, consistent with the terms and conditions of the Superintendent's contract, pursuant to the regulations of the Commissioner of Education, and will be discussed only during executive session. The evaluation process is intended to provide the highest quality leadership for the school system.

## **Key Statutes Governing BOE**

The Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) governs rights of access to government records, while the Open Meetings Law concerns the conduct of meetings of public bodies and the right to attend those meetings.

The Open Meetings Law, often known as the "Sunshine Law", gives the public the right to attend meetings of public bodies, listen to the debates and watch the decision making process in action. It requires public bodies to provide notice of the times and places of meetings, and keep minutes of all action taken. Because the school boards are public bodies, the Open Meetings Law requires

school boards meetings where school district business will be discussed to be open to the public. Public business includes not only binding votes of the board, but also any activity that is preliminary to such a vote or involves consideration of a matter that could be the subject of board action.

School district's records are subject to the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) and the law defines "record" as "any information kept, held, filed, produced or reproduced by, with or for an agency...in any physical form whatsoever..." except records or portions of records

1. Board of Education as body corporate (Education Law § 1701)
2. Open Meetings Law (Public Officers Law § 100-111)
3. Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) (Public Officers Law § 84-90)
4. Concept of Quorum (General Construction Law § 41)
5. As a public officer, a school board member takes an oath of office to uphold the law and to faithfully discharge his/her duties (Public Officers Law § 10). As stated above, a school board is a corporate public body and as such can act only by a majority of the BOE. Individual BOE members have no inherent powers to act by reason of holding office.
6. Generally, the BOE deals with numerous issues, some of which may not be disclosed publicly. This duty to maintain confidentiality provides, "no municipal officer may disclose confidential information acquired by him in the course of his official duties or use such information to further his personal interests" (General Municipal Law § 805-a). An Executive Session is a portion of the school board meeting that is not open to the public. It can take place only upon a majority vote of the BOE taken at an open meeting. Executive sessions are permitted for only a limited number of specific purposes and with certain limited exceptions, no official action can be taken on issues discussed in executive session without first returning to open session. (Educ. Law § 1708 and Public Officers Law § 102-105.) As stated in Section II D, permissible executive session topics include:
  - a. matters that will imperil the public safety if disclosed;
  - b. matters that may disclose the identity of law enforcement agency or informer;
  - c. information pertaining to a current or pending criminal investigation or prosecution;
  - d. discussion regarding proposed, pending, or current litigation; that fall within one of several categories of deniable records.
  - e. collective bargaining under the provision of the Taylor Law;
  - f. the medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation or matters leading to the appointment or employment or promotion or demotion or discipline or suspension or removal of a particular person or corporation;
  - g. the preparation, grading, or administration of exams;

- h. proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof.

## **Board Meeting Dynamics**

1. Public meetings should start promptly at their advertised starting time. Even if BOE members are late, the meeting should start on time. The Governance Team should strive to complete the public business at meetings within 2 hours.
2. In both public meetings and Executive Sessions, BOE members will respectfully listen to their colleagues, as well as administrative and district staff, without interruption to ensure that each BOE member and staff members can express their point of view.
3. The BOE president shall focus, facilitate, organize discussions and determine next steps to ensure all BOE members may speak and be heard before follow-up(s) by BOE members who have already spoken on that topic.
4. The BOE and administrative team will always model mutual respect and civility.
5. Follow Robert's Rules of Order, including process for addressing comments or questions during the meeting, as well as revised governance meeting procedures.

## **Public Participation in BOE Meetings**

1. Public participation is welcomed during Community Comment items on the agenda, however, there is no statutory requirement that school boards must allow people attending the right to speak;
2. The agenda will include a specified time for public comment;
3. A sign-in sheet may be provided for members of the community that will include their name and topic;
4. School boards have authority to adopt rules and regulations governing the opportunity for members of the public to speak at BOE meetings. At each meeting, the BOE President will read the District's statement on public commentary with an emphasis on civility and mutual respect;
5. Interruption of BOE discussion is not permitted;
6. Members of the public will be asked to state their name and address and be advised that each person is entitled to a maximum of 3 minutes of speaking time in order to allow other community members time to speak. If a community member desires to speak more than once, they will do so at the discretion of the BOE President. The BOE President may invite the speaker to share their additional thoughts via email in order to expedite the rest of the meeting;

7. Community Comment shall last no longer than 20 minutes unless permitted by the Board President. No individual speaker will be permitted to speak for longer than three minutes;
8. Members of the BOE will NOT engage with the public nor respond to questions asked during a public forum. The BOE President shall acknowledge the speaker and direct next steps. (The Superintendent may respond should it be deemed appropriate and judicious, given the nature of the matter at hand.)

## **Executive Sessions**

1. As indicated above, an Executive Session is a portion of a school board meeting that is not open to the public. It is permitted only for a limited number of specific purposes, as set forth below.
2. Legal Requirements for Executive Session
  - a. Permissible Executive Session topics:
    - i. matters that will imperil the public safety if disclosed;
    - ii. matters that may disclose the identity of law enforcement agency or informer;
    - iii. information pertaining to a current or pending criminal investigation or prosecution;
    - iv. discussion regarding proposed, pending, or current litigation;
    - v. collective bargaining under the provision of the Taylor Law;
    - vi. the medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation or matters leading to the appointment or employment or promotion or demotion or discipline or suspension or removal of a particular person or corporation;
    - vii. the preparation, grading, or administration of exams;
    - viii. proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof;
  - b. In accordance with Open Meetings Law, all Executive Sessions shall be conducted during the course of an Open Meeting. Therefore the BOE must give appropriate notice of an Open Meeting and recess to Executive Session from the Open Meeting. Once the Executive Session concludes, the BOE must reconvene to the Open Meeting before closing the business of the BOE.
  - c. Once the Superintendent and BOE president have agreed that a discussion topic meets the legitimate legal standard for an Executive Session discussion, the BOE will call for a motion to recess into Executive Session: BE IT RESOLVED, that the BOE hereby recesses into Executive Session for the following purpose:
  - d. A Board may not take action in executive session except to vote on disciplinary charges against a tenured teacher, as required under state law.

## **Communication And Information Sharing**

In order for the Governance team to function, established communication protocols need to be respected. The following address both internal and external communications:

### **Internal BOE Communication Protocols**

1. All communications should be consistent with the Open Meetings Law and contain 'only the facts' and not personal commentary, opinion, confidential material, or inflammatory statements;
2. BOE members should never use their BOE email (nor their personal email or text messages) for any discussion of confidential matters, debate issues, to seek consensus, or to conduct a de facto BOE meeting;
3. BOE members will strive to include the full BOE and, usually, the Superintendent in BOE communications for the purposes of transparency and mutuality and exclusively use the BOE-assigned District email address for all BOE-related information, requests, or questions shared with the full BOE and Superintendent, avoiding use of personal email and text messages;
4. BOE members may only engage in decision making at public board meetings and must be sure they do not meet informally as a quorum to converse about District topics;
5. The President should promptly share all substantive information, presenting only the facts to all BOE members to ensure all have equal and timely access to the same information;
6. The BOE President and Vice President will aim to meet regularly, generally weekly, with the Superintendent; the President will promptly send an update to the BOE after these meetings to ensure that all BOE members know the information simultaneously.

### **BOE Communications with Staff**

1. When a BOE member has information requests for the administration, the BOE member shall first go to the BOE President who will aim to maintain a reasonable balance of volume, content and tone while ensuring the full BOE is aware of the requests.
2. When a BOE member requires technical assistance with a BOE agenda topic that is beyond the scope of the Superintendent's expertise, the Superintendent will ask the appropriate leadership team member to handle the request and will keep the full BOE apprised as the assistance is addressed.



3. When a BOE information request appears to require a burdensome amount of time to answer, the full BOE will be kept informed that the following options may be used to meet the request:
  - a. the Superintendent may set an optional informational meeting (with the BOE member making the request) prior to the upcoming BOE meeting so the Superintendent can share the information;
  - b. the Superintendent will discuss with the BOE President and the BOE member making the request possible alternatives to address the request;
  - c. the BOE President may place the request on a future BOE agenda for discussion to determine if there is quorum or full BOE support for the request.
4. BOE directed questions and subsequent answers will be shared with the full BOE in the Superintendent's weekly update unless deemed "Urgent" and requiring full BOE distribution ASAP.
5. As a general practice, BOE members should only communicate with the administration on matters related to BOE business through the Superintendent, who will then relay them to the appropriate administrator, and provide a response.

## **External Communications**

1. **Public – Parental and Staff Concerns:** BOE members will direct parents who call with complaints to work up through the hierarchy by talking to the teacher, the principal, appropriate central office staff, and the Superintendent before further involving BOE members;
  - a. BOE members will relay other more substantive criticisms, complaints, or suggestions to the BOE President, who in turn will assure circulation to the full BOE and refer them to the Superintendent;
  - b. The Superintendent will facilitate the problem solving, with staff assistance as necessary and will include status reports on any parental and staff concerns initially sent to the BOE in the Superintendent's weekly update;
  - c. BOE members shall not attempt to solve the problem, including any fact finding;
  - d. The BOE will strive to discourage anonymous complaints and not respond to anonymous complaints.
2. **E-mails:** The BOE will only use the District assigned email for all board-related communications;
  - a. All communications sent in care of the BOE should be distributed promptly to all BOE members and the District Clerk;
  - b. All emails and letters sent to the District Clerk that have been addressed to the BOE will be distributed simultaneously by the District Clerk to the full BOE and the email writer or letter writer should receive a prompt receipt acknowledgement by the District Clerk or BOE President.

- c. The BOE President will determine how best to reply to inquiries sent to the BOE after consultation with the Superintendent. The BOE may be consulted as appropriate with the goal of promptly sending the reply;
- d. BOE members should promptly share substantive information pertaining to the BOE and/or the District with their fellow BOE members and the Superintendent.

### **3. Media**

- a. The Superintendent, BOE President, or designee will serve as a spokesperson in response to media inquiries; the Superintendent handles statements on behalf of the District; the BOE President handles statements on behalf of the BOE;
- b. All official statements of BOE positions, as well as related responses to media inquiries, come from the BOE President and/or Superintendent (or their designees);
- c. All media inquiries received by BOE members should be forwarded or referred to the BOE President and/or the Superintendent and the BOE should be alerted about this inquiry;
- d. When an occasion arises in which the Superintendent or a BOE member should not be the spokesperson, the District will assign a public relations representative or legal counsel to speak on the District's behalf.