

Orange County School Board

Governance Norms & Protocols

We, the members of the Orange County School Board, agree to employ the following Norms and Protocols in all of our interactions, based on the following general roles and responsibilities of the board:

1. Involve the community, parents, students and staff in developing a common vision that is focused on learning and achievement, responsive to the needs of all students.
2. Adopt, evaluate and update policies consistent with the law and the vision and goals of Orange County Public Schools.
3. Maintain accountability for student learning by adopting the district curriculum and monitoring student progress.
4. Hire and delegate administrative authority to the Superintendent to implement the vision, goals, and policies.
5. Evaluate the Superintendent annually.
6. Adopt a fiscally responsible budget and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the school division.
7. Ensure that a safe and appropriate educational environment is provided to all students.
8. Provide community leadership on educational issues.

Orange County School Board

Norms

1. In all of our board duties and interactions, we will prioritize our primary objectives: student achievement and student safety.
2. We will hear each opinion, but ultimately act as one Board. We will speak candidly and courteously to each other and listen to different opinions with an open mind. We will depersonalize disagreements, exercise due diligence in researching law, data, and facts, and recognize that good governance is best achieved by considering all viewpoints in the decision-making process.
3. We will recognize our proper role of oversight and governance, and not confuse it with day-to-day management of the school system, which is delegated to the Superintendent.
4. We will remain aware of the different roles that we play as individuals (board member, citizen, parent, etc.)
5. We will maintain open communication with each other, the administration, faculty, staff, and the community-at-large.
6. We will prepare in advance for each meeting and come well-informed concerning the issues under consideration.

Orange County School Board

Protocols

1. Developing the board agenda.

The Chair, Vice Chair (when available), and the Superintendent develop the agenda.

2. Placing items on the agenda.

Board members will utilize the spreadsheet provided to inform the Chair by the Monday prior to the agenda setting meeting if they have items to add. The board clerk will send an email reminder to the board one week in advance requesting submission of agenda items to the Chair by the deadline.

Board members may also request to add items to a future agenda during a meeting.

3. Obtaining information about agenda items before the meeting.

Board members may contact the Superintendent prior to the meeting with any question on agenda items that require additional information.

While it is preferred that questions are provided to staff in advance of the meeting to allow preparation of a thorough answer, board members are also free to ask additional questions during the meeting.

4. Responding to staff or community at board meetings.

Board members will not engage in dialog during the public comment section of the board meeting.

Following public comment, the Chair may ask staff to follow up with a member of the public and/or, when appropriate, may ask the speaker to contact the appropriate site or district staff member who can best address the concerns expressed in the comment. Staff can then advise the board as needed.

5. Handling complaints or concerns.

Individual board members have no authority to fix problems.

When problems arise, the appropriate order of whom to contact is first the teacher, then principal, then central office staff.

Board members should listen carefully to complaints, then direct the person to the most appropriate staff member who can help resolve the issue. Board members will also advise the superintendent of the concern.

As representatives of the public, it is important that board members invite the person with the complaint to ultimately inform them if the issue is not resolved.

6. Board member districts.

Board members are elected from specific geographic districts within the county boundaries, however, it is important to understand that board members represent and serve all students, regardless of district. Board members have a responsibility to all schools in the county.

7. Communications between board members and the superintendent.

Board members are encouraged to communicate with the superintendent in person or via phone, text, or email.

8. Communications between board members and staff (including requests for information).

Board members should make every effort to request information from the appropriate staff member, copied to the superintendent.

Information shared with one board member will be shared with all board members.

If considerable work, more than two hours, is required to generate data, board members will understand that extra time may be required to fulfill the request.

9. Consensus	The board may utilize a straw poll method for situations when a formal motion is not required.
10. Assignment of committee members.	Committee assignments are voluntary and based on each member's area of interest and expertise. A minimum two year term is preferable for committee service.
11. Committee reporting expectations.	Committee members will report back to the full board following committee meetings.
12. Responding to media inquiries.	The Chair (or designee) is the official spokesperson of the board. The superintendent will respond to day-to-day inquiries.
13. Use of social media.	Board members are discouraged from posting comments, liking comments, or replying to comments on social media regarding school board matters.
14. Visiting schools.	Visits to school sites are an expectation of board members according to Virginia Code § 22.1-79. As a professional courtesy, school board members may inform the principal and the superintendent in advance when planning to visit a school.
15. Attending school events.	Board members are encouraged to attend school events. Ideally, each board member will try to attend at least one event monthly.
16. Professional Development.	High quality annual professional development for board members is required.
17. Meetings and conferences.	Attendance at regularly scheduled board meetings is expected. If an absence is necessitated, the member assumes responsibility for reviewing the meeting video and/or minutes or communicating with another member for updates. Board members will notify the school board clerk if they wish to attend a meeting or conference.

18. Superintendent	The superintendent is evaluated annually by July 1, using the document <i>Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents</i> provided by the Virginia Department of Education.
19. Board retreats.	A school board retreat will be scheduled annually, preferably during the summer, for review of the previous school year and planning for the coming school year.
20. Self evaluation.	The school board may conduct a self-evaluation annually, preferably during a summer retreat.
21. Monitoring the Strategic Plan.	Review of the Strategic Plan should be regularly scheduled during board meetings throughout the year, and evaluated in depth annually, preferably during the summer retreat.