

THSD 113
Board Protocols & Communication Expectations
Last Updated 2/11/2025

These board protocols and communication expectations support District 113 Board Policy, Section 2 (2-130 Board- Relationship and 2-140 Communication To and From the Board and their supporting exhibits).

Section 1: Board Protocols

Community and Staff Engagement

1. Board members will listen carefully, remembering they are only hearing one side of the story.
2. Board members will direct the person to the person in the district most appropriate (Chain of Command) who is able to help them resolve their concern.
3. Board members handling concerns in this manner will clarify that one board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.
4. Board members will inform the Superintendent if they think this is an issue of concern.

Unified Communication “Speaking with One Voice”

1. Board president will thank public comment participants on behalf of the board.
2. Board members have an obligation to express their opinions and respect others’ opinions.
3. Board members understand the importance of speaking with one clear voice to both the Superintendent and the community.
4. The Superintendent is accountable only to the full board of education.
5. Board members have the right to disagree with the decision of the board, but will support the board in its decision by abiding by the will of the majority.
6. No individual board member has the authority to act or speak on behalf of the board without the consent of the board.
7. Board members will represent themselves as a board member at events only when sent to events by the board, otherwise they attend events as community members.

Campus Visits and Parental Interactions

1. If a board member would like to visit or is invited to a school during the school day as a board member, they should arrange the visit with the Superintendent ahead of time.
2. Following is the process that will be followed:
 - a. Follow campus guidelines for visitors (sign in, guest badge, escort, etc.).
 - b. Respect staff time and allow staff to perform their duties.
 - c. Do not evaluate staff.
 - d. Do not give direction to any staff or students.
 - e. Do not accept gifts (other than nominal tokens) or favors from any district employee.
 - f. If an issue is observed during the visit that needs administrative follow-up, direct the concern to the Superintendent.
3. When a board member is communicating with their own children’s teacher, they will utilize personal email.
4. When a board member is meeting with staff regarding their own children, they are to make it known that they are acting as parents rather than as a board member.
5. As a courtesy, the board member may notify the Superintendent when they will be in the school for a meeting for their own children.

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Email and Digital Communication

1. The Superintendent will reply to emails sent from a community or staff member to the entire board.
2. If a board member receives an email from a community member or staff member sent to them individually, it will be forwarded to the Superintendent. The board member may reply with an acknowledgment of receipt and that it has been forwarded to the Superintendent (per our Board policy and protocol).
3. Board members will be judicious in their use of email and understand that most emails are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and as such can be made public.
4. In compliance with the Open Meetings Act, board members will not “reply all” to any district email.
5. Board members will not email other board members stating their thoughts or opinions.

Communicating with the Superintendent and Staff

1. Board members will communicate directly with the Superintendent.
2. Board members will ask questions or bring concerns only to the Superintendent and not communicate them to other staff.

Social Media Usage

1. Board members will not reply to comments posted on social media in regards to district business.
2. Board members will remember the neon “BOARD MEMBER” sign that is always on when posting on social media.
3. Board members will be cautious about posting information expressing their personal opinions which might be misunderstood.

Media Relations

1. The Superintendent is the spokesperson for the district.

Section 2: Communication Expectations

The Board’s Expectations for Collaborative Governance and Communication:

Board Meeting Agenda Setting

1. Board members will send requests for a potential meeting agenda item to the Board President and Superintendent.
2. If full Board direction on whether or not to include the item in a meeting agenda is necessary, the request will be brought to the Board for discussion during the Superintendent's report within a timely fashion.
3. The Superintendent will work with the Board President to create the Board meeting agenda.
4. The Superintendent will ensure all items requiring Board review and response are placed on the appropriate Board agenda.

Superintendent Communications

1. The Superintendent will send regular communications to the board.
2. The Superintendent will address individual board member’s communications within a week or a reasonable amount of time. The Superintendent will share the response with the entire Board when applicable. (“One gets, all get.”)

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3. Board members will be notified by the Superintendent via text as soon as possible in the event of an emergency. Determining an emergency will be at the discretion of the Superintendent with guidance from the Board as needed. Following are examples of potential emergency situations:
 - a. School emergency (lockdown, fire, etc.)
 - b. Student emergency (arrest, injury, death)
 - c. Staff emergency (arrest, injury, death)
 - d. Bus accident
4. Board members will receive a phone alert if they must be notified urgently.
5. Board members will receive community and family standard and emergency communications. Board members will receive staff communications as deemed necessary by the Superintendent.
6. Board members will receive board packets and supporting documentation at least 48 business hours before the scheduled Board meeting.
7. Board members will receive monthly expenditure reports.

Information Requests

1. Board members will self-monitor to ensure their request for information is “need to know,” not “nice to know.”
2. If a board member’s request for information requires significant staff time to provide, as deemed by the superintendent, the request will go to the full board for consensus.
3. All board members will receive the same information.

Mutual Respect and No Surprises Policy

1. Board members, the Superintendent, and the staff will treat each other with respect.
2. Board members, the Superintendent, and the staff will ensure there are no surprises in the meeting or between meetings to show respect for all participants and the process.
3. Individual Board members will not direct the Superintendent or staff. Direction is provided to the Superintendent only and by a majority of the Board.

Confidentiality

1. Board members will respect the confidentiality of privileged information and will not divulge conversations, discussions, or deliberations that take place during a closed session meeting.
2. Board members understand that divulging closed session information not only damages the relationship of the team, but has the potential for far reaching consequences which may impact district operations.

Superintendent’s Expectations for Board Conduct and Communication:

Board Meeting Preparation

1. Board members will contact the Superintendent with questions about the board packet, agenda items or supporting materials as soon as possible and no later than noon on the day before the scheduled Board meeting in order to receive a timely response.
2. Board members will denote which board packet questions require an answer before the meeting and which questions serve as a heads up for the Superintendent’s staff in preparing for discussion during the board meeting.

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Communication with Cabinet and Staff

1. Board member communications, connected to Board business, will go through the Superintendent and may be copied to the Board President. It is the Superintendent's job to source responses to Board member needs from their staff. Board Members will not directly communicate with staff or administrators without prior authorization from the Superintendent.
2. Board member Committee Co-Chairs will copy the Superintendent on communication to Cabinet Committee Co-Chairs regarding committee business.

Document Update History: Board Protocols section was written for the Board's 1/23/25 IASB Workshop. The Communication Expectations section was updated at IASB Board workshop on 8/19/24. Updated to reflect the communication needs of the new Superintendent, Dr. Chala Holland and School Board Members seated as of August 2024. It was discussed and adopted as our protocol at the 10/8/2024 BOE meeting as an action item.