Gower School District 62
Board of Education Charter and Social Contract

1. Unity of Purpose

The Board of Education plays a unique role in public education, whereby each community collectively pools its resources for the common good through the education of its students. Therefore, we seek to uphold and improve public education for our community through a joint commitment to each of the following:

- Building and maintaining trust and moving the district forward.
- Understanding our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.
- Functioning as a "Board of Seven and a Team of Eight," with the superintendent, to ensure a common, focused direction.
- Creating a district culture that supports positive change.
- Perpetuating a positive district culture that endures through board member and staff transitions.

➢ *Policy 2:20 - Powers and Duties of the School Board*
➢ *Policy 2:80-E - Board Member Code of Conduct*

2. Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

The board, collectively and individually, takes full responsibility for board activity and behavior - the work it chooses to do and how it chooses to do the work. Individual board members are obligated to express their opinions and respect others' opinions; however, board members understand the importance of abiding by the majority of decisions of the board.

➢ *Policy 2:120 - Board Member Development*

The Board

The board, as a whole, will seek always to:

- Govern with a focus on the future, on results, and on continuous improvement;
- Recognize the board as a group of seven and the board president is the first in the line of equals.
- Encourage collective decision making and diversity in viewpoints;
- Respect the distinction between board and superintendent/staff roles; and
- Offer avenues for engagement with the community to understand community values and the community's vision of the future; and
- Leverage the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan to guide our work.

Individual Board Members

Individual members of the board will seek always to:

- Recognize the importance of and commit to the phrase, *Impact over Intent*.
- Maintain a respectful and professional environment for the productive exchange of ideas.
- Sincerely listen and seek to understand the viewpoints of others.
- Utilize a collaborative process to discuss and debate issues where all board members and staff ultimately support board decisions and implementation.

Adopted 9/21/21. Affirmed 5/23/23, 4/16/24, 4/30/25. Revised 9/24/25. Affirmed 4/22/2026. Revised 10/21/26.

- Recognize that the board president assumes some responsibility for facilitating the relationship between the superintendent and the board, as well as preside over board meetings.
- Regularly check their district email and prepare for board meetings.
- **No Surprises!**

  No one (superintendent, board member) gets surprised at any time; in the board meeting or between board meetings. The truth of 'no surprises' is respect. Each board member and the superintendent must respect all of the other participants and the processes the team of eight shares. Otherwise the work will suffer. *Example: Board members who would like to visit a school in their role as a board member will notify the superintendent at least one week prior to their visit.*

3. Engaging the Community

Because the board sits in trust for the whole community, the board will make continuing efforts to hear and engage the whole community. We may seek venues beyond the board meeting where we can effectively engage community members and listen to their concerns. We will attempt to communicate with all stakeholders and all segments of the community, not just those who seek us out. We will monitor our efforts in this area, asking the question, "Which community voices are not part of board considerations and how can we allow these voices to be heard?"

➢ *Policy 2:230 - Public Participation at School Board Meetings and Petitions to the Board*
➢ *Policy 8:10 - Connection with the Community*

Social Media

- Board members will not post rebuttals, responses or corrections to district-related social media posts.
- Board members will share concerning social media posts with the Superintendent to evaluate whether a response from the district is necessary.
- Board members may post general district-related, factual posts on their personal social media sites.

4. Concerns from the Community

When someone complains to us, we will strive to listen carefully, remembering we are only hearing one side of the story. We will then direct that person to the person in the district most appropriate and able to help them resolve their concern. Additionally, individual members of the board will seek always to:

- Make sure that members of the community understand the appropriate order of whom to contact; Chain of Command (teacher, then principal, then district staff) and are aware of any formal forms or policies that might assist them (e.g. written complaint form).
- Ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the district are upheld.
- Clarify that one board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.
- Contact the superintendent if they believe the issue or complaint warrants district-level involvement.

➢ *Policy 2:140 - Communications To and From the Board*
➢ *Policy 2:260 - Uniform Grievance Procedure*
➢ *Policy 8:110 - Public Suggestions & Complaints*

Adopted 9/21/21. Affirmed 5/23/23, 4/16/24, 4/30/25. Revised 9/24/25. Affirmed 4/22/2026. Revised 10/21/26.

5. Meetings of the Board

We understand that board meetings are meetings of the board held in public, not open-forum town-hall meetings. We will keep this in mind as we conduct our meetings, allowing the public to provide input at the time allotted on the agenda to ensure multiple voices of the community inform board deliberations. However, when the board deliberates, it will be a time for the board to listen and learn from each other, considering public input and not a time to re-engage with the public.

We will consistently abide by our formal processes relating to this issue so that all persons are treated fairly and equally. We will review our policies relating to board meeting management (e.g., time limits on input from members of the public), revising or reaffirming them as appropriate.

➢ *Policy 2:200 - Types of School Board Meetings*

Preparation for Meetings

The board will:

- Come prepared for board meetings having read their packet and related materials
- Contact the superintendent via email, with the Board president CC'd, prior to the meeting with any questions in order to give the superintendent time to prepare the answers to the questions - ideally offering the superintendent 24 hours in advance of a board meeting to offer/prepare responses. Of course, board members are free to ask those/other questions again at the board meeting, as well as other clarifying questions as appropriate.
- Notify the Board President and Superintendent if they are not able to attend a meeting, and/or will be late to a meeting.
- Regularly check their district email.

Board Meeting Agenda

The board's agenda is an expression of what the board understands its work to be and how it intends to pursue that work. Typically, the agenda is a cooperative effort of the board president and superintendent. All board members are invited to submit suggestions for agenda items. Requests for a future agenda item are to be made during the Future Agenda Items section of a board meeting. The board president will determine that there is a majority of board members who agree to have the suggested item placed on a future board meeting agenda. Periodically, the entire board will consider important topics or agenda items for consideration in the following months.

➢ *Policy 2:220 - School Board Meeting Procedure*

Closed Session Meetings

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

During closed sessions, Board members will:

- Treat one another with courtesy, providing space for each board member to provide input.
- Assume shared motives and positive intent, voicing disagreement respectfully.
- Remember that each board member has unique operating styles and perspectives.
- Use time blocking to create space for focused work and input from all.

6. Board Member Request for Information

When an individual board member requests information from the superintendent, the board president shall be copied/included in the request directly and/or in reply from the superintendent. The board president and superintendent each have the discretion to share with the whole board as needed. An individual board member will - insofar as possible - work to let the superintendent know ahead of time when a request for information will be made in public so the staff can be prepared to provide a thorough answer.

Individual board members will self-monitor to ensure one person's request for information does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals. Remember that while we are individuals, we are a board of seven/team of eight and directives to the district come from the board as a whole and not one individual member. Should the superintendent determine that a request for information may require more than 30 minutes to fulfill, at their discretion they may bring that request to the board for a consensus to proceed.

➢ *Policy 2:130 - Board/Superintendent Relationship*

Board Member Requests for Action

The only authority to direct action rests with the full board sitting at the board table during a duly called open meeting. A majority vote sets such direction. The board president is responsible for focusing board agendas on appropriate content (board work). Board members and district residents may suggest items for inclusion on the agenda. Such items may be added to the agenda upon approval of the board. Since action items must be posted in the meeting notice, such items will typically be scheduled for a subsequent meeting. When a majority of the board, sitting in a formal meeting, requests action, it should be made relative to the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.

➢ *Policy 2:220 - School Board Meeting Procedure*

7. Board & Superintendent Communication Expectations and Relationship

The board employs and evaluates one person - the superintendent. The board holds that person accountable for district performance and compliance with written board policy. An effective school board develops and maintains a productive relationship with the superintendent. The employment relationship consists of mutual respect and a clear understanding of respective roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Ultimately, this relationship is grounded in a thoughtfully crafted employment contract and guided by the agreed upon standards and procedures for communication and behaviors related to the interactions between the parties. At the core of such relationships that form a Board of Seven and, with the superintendent, a team of Eight, lies a *Social Contract*.

Adopted 9/21/21. Affirmed 5/23/23, 4/16/24, 4/30/25. Revised 9/24/25. Affirmed 4/22/2026. Revised 10/21/26.

8. Social Contract

Both the Board and Superintendent respect the unique role they play. The role of the Board is to govern the district (focusing on the ends), and the role of the Superintendent is to manage the district (focusing on the means). We will use the question, "Is this board work or superintendent work?" when needed. Additionally, "How do you want the superintendent to spend their time?" is a question that may prove to be useful.

In short, a *Social Contract* is an agreement of behavior. When working together as a Board of Seven and, with the Superintendent, a Team of Eight, individual members of the group recognize and agree to certain behaviors for the benefit of the group. This may require 'giving up' or 'letting go' of some individual behaviors, preferences, habits, and actions for the greater good and to function effectively as a whole. The advantages of an organized group (the 'Board') adhering to an agreed upon set of expectations for behavior outweigh the disorganization that may ensue when individuals in the group decide to act completely on their own.

To build a *Social Contract*, as is the expectation in every learning space in Gower School District 62, the following questions must be asked and answered, with consensus building used to determine the unique elements. Furthermore, *Social Contracts* are meant to be regularly reviewed for effectiveness with a shared commitment by members of the group to reflect on their actions and interactions with and among others.

The Questions:

1. How do you, as a member of the Board, expect the Superintendent of the District to interact with you?
2. How do you, as a member of the Board, expect other members of the Board to interact with you?
3. How do you, as the Superintendent of the District, expect members of the board to interact with you?
4. How do you, as a member of the Board, expect members of the Team of Eight to interact with each other when there is debate, disagreement, adversity, and/or conflict?

How do you, as a member of the Board, expect the Superintendent of the District to interact with you?

1. To be treated with respect, a spirit of collaboration and open communication, and a starting assumption of positive intent.
2. To be notified as soon as possible for school, student, or staff emergencies when emergency responders are on scene or involved. Examples may include:
    a. School Lockdown
    b. Serious Accident
    c. Threat of Violence
3. To recognize that all board members will receive the same information.
    a. 'Board Packet Friday' communication is sent as pre-decisional email to the Board President, Board Recording Secretary and "BCC" to all other Board Members
4. To recognize that reasonable requests for additional information will be satisfied in a timely manner.

5. To recognize that the relationship between the superintendent and any individual board members is collegial, not hierarchical, based on mutual respect for their complimentary roles.

How do you, as a member of the Board, expect other members of the Board to interact with you?

1. To be treated with respect, a spirit of collaboration and open communication, and a starting assumption of positive intent.
2. To be treated as an equal; a duly elected and/or appointed member of the board that has taken the Oath of Office to serve the Gower school community.
3. To recognize that no board member, or subset of the board of education, has the authority to act or speak on behalf of the board without the consent of the board majority.
4. To recognize that board members have an obligation to express their opinions and respect others' opinions.

How do you, as the Superintendent of the District, expect members of the board to interact with you?

1. To be treated with respect, a spirit of collaboration and open communication, and a starting assumption of positive intent.
2. To recognize that the superintendent is the spokesperson for the district.
3. To be notified as soon as possible for serious issues in the community that have come to their attention.
4. To recognize that directives to the superintendent are only given at board meetings when a majority of the board agrees to give direction, led by the board president.
5. To recognize that the relationship between the superintendent and any individual board members is collegial, not hierarchical, based on mutual respect for their complimentary roles.

How do you, as a member of the Board, expect members of the Team of Eight to interact with each other when there is debate, disagreement, adversity, and/or conflict?

1. To be treated with respect, a spirit of collaboration and open communication, and a starting assumption of positive intent.
2. To recognize that board members have the right to disagree with the decision of the board, but understand the importance of abiding by the majority decisions of the board once a vote has been taken.
3. To recognize that the board and the superintendent have the right to expect performance, candor and honesty from one another.
4. To recognize that board members have an obligation to express their opinions and respect others' opinions.
5. To recognize that board members understand the importance of <u>speaking with one clear voice</u>.
6. To remember: We are in this together! "*Children at their Best!*" requires us to be at our best!!!

Adopted 9/21/21. Affirmed 5/23/23, 4/16/24, 4/30/25. Revised 9/24/25. Affirmed 4/22/2026. Revised 10/21/26.

Gower School District 62

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025–2030

Mission

Empowering children to be their best today to lead a better tomorrow.

Vision

Ensure an environment that cultivates confident, compassionate, and innovative learners to actively shape and enrich the world.

Belief Statements

In Gower School District 62, we:

- Commit to personal, social, and academic growth resulting in continuous improvement and high achievement.
- Build strong relationships across our community to foster a culture where everyone thrives.
- Ensure an emotionally and physically safe, supportive environment for all.
- Model respect and demonstrate empathy and kindness in all interactions.
- Provide all students with equitable access to resources, opportunities and experiences through collaboration.

Motto

Children at their Best!

Strategic Goals

Ambitious Instruction

Enhance learning through innovative and immersive opportunities to ensure all students reach their highest potential in growth and achievement.

Supportive Environment

Ensure the highest standard of protecting physical safety and emotional well-being.

Involved Families

Expand opportunities for collaboration, connection, and service with parents and community.

Collaborative Teachers

Empower teachers and support staff through a collaborative environment that fosters professional growth focused on student success.

Effective Leaders

Embrace leadership that incorporates collaboration and communication to guide the district in a cohesive and transparent manner.

Adopted 9/21/21. Affirmed 5/23/23, 4/16/24, 4/30/25. Revised 9/24/25. Affirmed 4/22/2026. Revised 10/21/26.