

# Board Conduct and Governance Protocols

## Policies

**Purpose** This document identifies how trustees agree to perform their individual responsibilities and work together as a governing body.

**2.1 Student Centered Service** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Place the needs and interests of students first and consider the effect of decisions on all students across the district.
- B. Support equitable opportunity, high expectations, and continuous improvement for all students.
- C. Represent the district as a whole rather than a particular school, employee group, neighborhood, or personal interest.

**2.2 Collective Authority and Role Clarity** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Recognize that authority rests with the board acting as a body in a legally convened meeting.
- B. Recognize that board members do not direct, supervise, evaluate, or investigate district employees other than the superintendent unless the board as a whole has expressly assigned that responsibility.
- C. Recognize that board members do not promise board action or speak for the board unless authorized by the board as a whole.
- D. Recognize that board members respect the superintendent's authority to administer the district within law and board policy.

**2.3 Preparation, Attendance and Participation** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Attend and prepare for meetings, review the agenda and supporting materials, and seek needed information through the agreed process.
- B. Recognize and support the board's agreed process for seeking additional information or request for change in the agenda is:
  - a. Notify the board chair or superintendent of questions regarding the agenda by 10:00AM on Monday prior to the board meeting. This provides for:
    - i. The superintendent or board chair adequate time to find and relay the information the board member is seeking.
    - ii. Time to determine and plan for whether the board member would like the question or discussion to continue to the board meeting or if the answer given is adequate and no further action is needed.
  - b. When a board member has a request for clarification, more information, would like to pull a consent agenda item or would like to discuss anything on the meeting agenda in depth, that board member should inform the board chair or the superintendent by 10:00AM on Monday prior to the board meeting. This provides for:
    - i. The board chair with the ability to prepare, direct and keep the meeting relevant and productive for all board members.
    - ii. The superintendent to gather needed information and have appropriate staff at the meeting to adequately and appropriately answer questions.

- iii. The board chair to inform and allow adequate time to prepare the remaining board members of any changes or additional information so they are not surprised and fully informed prior to the meeting.
- C. Notify the chair or superintendent when absence or late arrival is unavoidable.
- D. Ask thoughtful, concise questions that clarify the issue being discussed. Identify potential consequences, and support informed decision-making. Avoid repeating questions or revisiting information already addressed and clarified.
- E. Comment on agenda items and express differing viewpoints in a relevant and respectful manner. Comments should contribute to productive discussion of the subject at hand, rather than unnecessarily prolong debate, provoke controversy, create animosity, or disrespect other board members or staff.
- F. Ask thoughtful and substantive questions of staff during presentations and may respectfully examine information, assumptions, or recommendations. Critical inquiry should be balanced with respect for the employee and the setting, with questions contributing to productive discussion, informed decision-making, and a culture of mutual respect. If further concerns need to be addressed, the trustee, the board chair and superintendent will make a plan to do so in the proper setting.
- G. Devote the time necessary to committee assignments, hearings, orientation, conferences, state or regional events and continuing development.

**2.4 Deliberation, Civility and Decision Making** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Listen carefully and consider viewpoints that differ from one's own.
- B. Address issues, facts, and consequences without creating controversy among board members.
- C. Avoid side conversations, interruptions, personal attacks, disruptive technology use, and conduct that prevents other board members from participating.
- D. Remain open to changing an opinion as information develops.
- E. Vote according to the trustee's individual judgment, then respect the lawful decision of the board. A trustee may explain an individual vote without undermining implementation of the board's action. A trustee should be aware of all implications of their vote.

**2.5 Communication and Public Statements** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Communicate accurately, honestly, and respectfully. With awareness that a trustee's words may be understood as representing the district, caution should be used when making statements or promises outside of official board action.
- B. Clearly distinguish personal views from an official board position.
- C. Not act as the spokesperson for the board unless designated by the board chair. The board chair is the normal spokesperson for board positions and actions. The chair may designate another trustee or the superintendent when appropriate.
- D. Speak as individuals, but will not disclose confidential information, attribute confidential comments, or announce decisions not yet made by the board.

**2.6 Community Concerns and Referrals** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Listen respectfully to concerns without promising a particular outcome.

- B. Refer operational complaints to the superintendent for assistance or inform the complainant of the district's chain of command and complaint processes. Encourage them to utilize that process and to come back with any further questions or concerns.
- C. Inform the superintendent and board chair immediately when a concern involves safety, legal exposure, significant public attention, or a recurring district-wide issue.
- D. Not conduct an individual investigation or intervene in an active personnel, student, grievance, or appeal process.

**2.7 Board Staff Relationships** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Maintain open, professional relationships with employees while respecting the superintendent's responsibility for staff direction and accountability.
- B. Requests for reports, research, or significant staff time will be made through the superintendent or the board's agreed information-request process. All information requested by an individual board member will be given to all board members.
- C. Request readily available factual information from appropriate staff through established channels, without giving instructions or using their access to influence employment or operational decisions.
- D. Understand that even though they do not have individual authority over staff, staff may view questions and comments differently than a trustee intends. Being thoughtful and using caution when having conversations with staff helps alleviate making staff nervous and any misunderstandings.

**2.8 Confidentiality, Electronic Communication and Records** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Protect information made confidential by law and information lawfully discussed in executive session. This includes discussion of personnel and students with anyone outside of the board or executive team.
- B. Not use email, text, messaging platforms, or sequential communications to deliberate, build consensus, or conduct board business outside a public meeting.
- C. Assume communications about district business may be public records and use district-provided accounts and retention practices when available.
- D. Immediately report an accidental disclosure or records-retention concern to the superintendent or designated records officer.

**2.9 Conflicts of Interest** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Disclose an actual or potential conflict promptly and before the board discusses or acts on the matter.
- B. Refrain from participation and voting when required by law or board policy, and leave the meeting area when required to protect the process.
- C. Not use the office, confidential information, district resources, or influence for personal benefit or the benefit of family, business associates, or another private interest.
- D. Seek advice from district legal counsel through the chair or superintendent when the application of a conflict rule is uncertain.

**2.10 Professional Development and Self-Evaluation** - To be effective, an individual board member should:

- A. Maintain knowledge of education issues, applicable law, district policy, finance, student outcomes, and effective governance.
- B. Participate in board and individual professional development.
- C. Participate candidly in the annual board self-evaluation and follow through on agreed improvements.

**2.11 Responsibilities of the Chair** - To be effective, the board chair should:

- A. Preside fairly, protect the board's process, encourage participation, maintain order, and apply meeting rules consistently.
- B. Work with the superintendent to develop agendas and support timely information flow to all trustees.
- C. Serve as the normal liaison between the board and superintendent without limiting appropriate communication between individual trustees and the superintendent.
- D. Supervise or direct the superintendent only when expressly authorized by the board.
- E. Address emerging trustee conduct concerns promptly and proportionately.

## **2.12 Addressing Board Conduct Concerns**

Based on the nature, frequency, and seriousness of the conduct, the board will use one or more of the following methods to address and correct the issue:

- A. A private, constructive conversation between the trustee and the chair, vice-chair, or another trustee.
- B. A written clarification of the applicable standard, protocol, policy, or legal requirement.
- C. A facilitated conversation, coaching, training, or voluntary mediation.
- D. Discussion by the full board in an open meeting or in executive session only when permitted by law.
- E. Removal from an officer, committee, liaison, or spokesperson assignment when permitted and approved by the board.
- F. Public censure by board action after notice of the alleged conduct and a reasonable opportunity for the trustee to respond.
- G. Referral to law enforcement, an ethics authority, legal counsel, or another agency when required or appropriate.