POLICY NO. 1010
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The Lake Stevens School District's mission statement is "Our students will be contributing members of society and lifelong learners, pursuing their passions and interests in an every-changing world."

The most effective way to achieve our mission is through close cooperation between the School Board, the Superintendent, administrative teams, and the staff. The example by which the Board and Superintendent lead the district becomes the model for the administrative team, staff, parents, and community on how issues and problems are solved.

Our approach is to work in an open, positive problem-solving atmosphere to achieve the goals of the organization. Cooperation, support, and loyalty do not mean we will agree on every issue; dialogue, divergent thinking, and debate will encourage the best decisions.

The following components are critical to the effectiveness of the Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors.

Communications

The centerpiece of this agreement is focused on communications. The Board and Superintendent agree to conduct the business of the district in a courteous, positive manner with open communications and an attitude of sharing and respect. We will make deliberate attempts to share information and data.

Loyalty and Commitment to the District

Each individual has a responsibility to be loyal to the district and has a commitment to our common cause –-A quality education for every child and a quality of life for the community.

To maintain a close and positive working relationship between the Board and the Superintendent, each member of the board recognizes:

Problems - Problems or perceived problems are those areas of concern which involve a breach of any district policy. The board members agree to direct questions or concerns about perceived or actual problems to the Superintendent or designee rather than solicit information from employees.

Information - Board members should feel free to seek information to increase their understanding of procedures and practices. Each board member may engage in open communication within the district in an effort to gather information. To ensure the effectiveness of board-superintendent relationships, information concerning policy or general information that requires research and/or data will be directed to the Superintendent.

An individual board member may request that the Superintendent prepare information and reports to assist in making informed decisions. If the request requires an excessive and unusual amount of staff time in the opinion of the Superintendent, he/she may direct the member to the Board President. It is the President's responsibility to discuss the request with the rest of the Board to ensure the request is a need and is of interest to at least the majority of the Board.

Concerns regarding additions to the agenda will be directed to the Board President.

Employees

The Board is encouraged to offer praise for employees, but criticism must be channeled through the Superintendent's Office.

Public and Employee Complaints and Concerns

When an individual board member is contacted by a staff or community member, either by phone or correspondence, each member has agreed to the principles of the following model:

1) Listen to the concern or complaint and find out if the individual is "venting" or wishes to know the steps to resolve the issue.
2) Inform the individual of the appropriate policies and channels regarding the complaint or concern. Assist by informing the individual of the correct procedures to resolve the issue. Example: Teacher complaint by parent.
3) a. Refer parent to teacher and principal
   b. Continue to channel the individual to the next immediate level, if the issue is unresolved.
   c. Ensure contractual agreements are considered.

d. The issue is only placed on the board agenda when all the appropriate levels and channels of responsibility have been pursued, including the Superintendent's Office.

4) The Superintendent will be informed by the board member of the complaint or concern and, except in unusual or extenuating circumstances, that information will be shared by the Superintendent or the board member with the remaining members of the Board.

Confidentiality

Without exception, all information received and/or discussed in Executive Sessions will remain completely confidential. Information given in confidence, particularly when planning and exploring alternatives within the confines and laws that determine executive privileged information, must also remain confidential.

Public debate and information, while being open and honest, must not disclose information held to be confidential in regards to negotiations, the purchase of real estate, personnel, or other topics covered by the confidentiality of the executive session laws.

Agenda Preparation

Individual member's agendas must be open and on the table for meaningful dialogue to occur. Surprises at meetings are counterproductive. If a board member wishes to have an item(s) placed on the board meeting agenda for discussion or action, the item(s) must be in writing, explaining the content of the item and the reason fur submitting the item(s), or during a regular board meeting (board member comments), a board member may request an item(s) be placed on a future board meeting agenda. In either case, the Superintendent and Board President should be advised in a timely fashion to allow the Administration the appropriate time to gather data and prepare the board packet according to established deadlines.

District Negotiators, Attorneys, and Consultants

Only the Superintendent or his/her designee is to contact the District's attorneys, consultants, or negotiators. If a majority of the Board feels a need to consult with the district counsel, consultant, or negotiator, the Board President will request that the Superintendent arrange such a meeting.

The Board President, on behalf of the Board, may contact the District's legal counsel in reference to the Superintendent's contract and share that information with the remainder of the Board.

The Media

The Superintendent and/or Community Services Director is responsible for communicating official district positions to the media. There will also be occasions when the Board President communicates the Board's or District's position.

We understand that the best practice of the Board, especially relative to controversial issues and negotiations is to speak as one voice as the Board and Administration. However, it is not the intent of the Superintendent or Board to negate a member's right to speak to the media or community. Board members may state personal positions as long as they make it known they are not speaking on behalf of the Board or the District.

It must also be understood that divisiveness through the media is inappropriate. It must be clear that we agree not to use the media to strike out at the District, Superintendent, board members, or other administrators and staff members, or to use it for one's personal political gain.

School Visitations

Board members are welcome in all schools and facilities at any time. However, out of courtesy, a board member should advise the principal of his/her intent to visit a school. It would be helpful if the board member could let the principal know what he/she wishes to see or do at the school.

Meetings

School board meetings are the community's window to district operations. Meetings will be conducted using Robert's Rules of Order.

Meetings will begin promptly at 6:30 pm or as otherwise announced and end at a reasonable time.

Whenever possible, Executive Sessions will take place prior to the regular meeting. Board members will be advised of the intent of the Executive Session in advance of the meeting.

Except in cases of emergency, issues not set on the agenda or addendum will not be presented by either the Board or Administration (with the exception of announcements that require no action by the Board).

Prior to each meeting the board members agree to study their board packets thoroughly and arrive fully prepared. Board members are encouraged to contact the Superintendent prior to the meeting for clarification or more information.

Each agenda item requiring action by the Board and all reports to the Board will be accompanied by appropriate information provided by the Superintendent in the Board's meeting packet. The board packet will be sent in a timely manner to allow the Board to study the agenda items.

It is understood that on occasion it may be necessary for the Administration to provide additional information at the board meeting.

Decision Making

Each board member recognizes that he/she has no power or right to make individual promises that would be binding upon the Board and District.

Each member has the obligation to state his/her point of view prior to a Board action, including the President of the Board. When taking a position that is contrary to that of the majority of the Board and/or Administration, the board member will be prepared to clearly articulate his/her reasons. Board members owe their constituents and their colleagues the opportunity to know what they stand for.

Because the Board functions as a team, each member has the responsibility to support final decisions and aid in their implementation even though the member may not agree with or favor the decision. Concurrently, board members respect the right of individual members to oppose a proposal and vote against the majority of the Board.

Board members may make suggestions to the Superintendent at any time, but he/she is not bound to follow such suggestions. If a member wishes to pursue his/her idea, he/she will request that it be considered as a regular item of business through the Board President and Superintendent.

Board members each have different experiences, beliefs, needs, and community support. It is the art of persuasion and politics to provide convincing testimony to persuade at least a majority of the Board, in open meeting, to agree to an issue. If that is not possible, the individual agrees that the majority rules. After stating his/her arguments through orderly debate and consideration, he/she recognizes the need to move on to other issues. It is not in the best interest of the District to hold tightly to past disappointments, disagreements, and debates.

The Board is accountable to the local community for the decisions it makes; policies it adopts and maintains; and ongoing personal communication with school staff, parents, students, legislators, and other members of the community.

We subscribe to the Washington State School Directors' Association *Code of Ethics and Governance*.

Cross References:

Policy No. 1100: Meeting Conduct, Order of Business, and Quorum
Policy No. 1105: Executive Sessions
Policy No. 1360: Complaints Regarding Staff Members