

Sample School Board Protocols

Does your board have agreement on some common board process questions? How might you come to agreement and develop board protocols?

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| √ Asking questions about the agenda (2:220)* | √ Communicating with the public (2:140, 8:10, 2:230)* |
| √ Communicating with members (2:140, 2:140-E)* | √ Visiting campuses (8:30)* |
| √ Communicating with staff (3:30)* | √ Responding to suggestions and concerns (8:110)* |
| √ Communicating with the media (8:10)* | √ Orienting new members (2:120)* |
| | √ Conducting closed sessions (2:200)* |
| | √ More...? |

** Please refer to the PRESS Policy Reference Manual*

Unity of Purpose

We affirm the unique role of 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.

- We want to build trust and move the district forward.
- We want to become an effective team.
- We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.
- We want to be a team with a common, focused direction.
- We want to create a district culture that supports positive change.
- We want to perpetuate a positive district culture that survives in the face of board member and staff turnover.

Please refer to the PRESS Policy Reference Manual:

2:20 Powers and Duties of the School Board; Indemnification

2:80-E Board Member Code of Conduct

Roles & Responsibilities

The board will seek always to:

- govern with a focus on the future, on results, and on continuous improvement;
- encourage collective decision making and diversity in viewpoints;
- respect the distinction between board and superintendent/staff roles, and
- pursue rigorous and continual improvement in its ability to define community values and its vision of the future.

Please review your written board policy to ensure alignment with your Board Protocols.

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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 the 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, taking the public input into consideration; 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 re-affirming them as appropriate.

2:200 *Types of School Board Meetings*

2:220 *School Board Meeting Procedure*

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. Periodically, the entire board will consider important topics or agenda items for consideration in the following months.

2:220 *School Board Meeting Procedure*

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 will seek venues beyond the board meeting where we can effectively engage community members and listen to their concerns. We will attempt to be in touch 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?"

2:230 *Public Participation at School Board Meetings and Petitions to the Board*

8:10 *Connection with the Community*

No Surprises!

Meaning, no one (superintendent, board member) gets surprised at any time – in the meeting, or between meetings. The truth of no surprises is respect. Each board member and superintendent must respect all the other participants, and the processes the board team shares. Jump outside of respect for either people or processes, and someone will get surprised – and end up looking or feeling bad. And the work will suffer.

2:130 *Board-Superintendent Relationship*

New Board Member Orientation

The board desires to be a team where all members contribute to effective board leadership. The board takes initiative in helping new members learn, understand and practice effective governance. The board president shall arrange a meeting of the whole board to review board processes and procedures. The superintendent shall meet with new board members to

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answer questions and acquaint the member with the district. If desired by the new board member, a veteran member will be identified as a mentor.

2:120 *Board Member Development*

Concerns from the Community and Staff

When someone complains to us, we will 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. We will make sure they understand the appropriate order of whom to contact (teacher, then principal, then district staff) and are aware of any formal forms or policies that might assist them (e.g., written complaint form). This will ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the district are upheld. It will also clarify that one board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.

2:140 *Communications To and From the Board*

2:260 *Uniform Grievance Procedure*

2:230 *Public Participation at School Board Meetings and Petitions to the Board*

8:110 *Public Suggestions and Concerns*

Voting Method

When a vote is taken upon any measure before the board with a quorum being present, a majority of the votes cast determines the outcome. Each board member respects the right of the other members to vote “no” on an issue. On important matters, board members are encouraged to explain the reasons for a “no” vote either during deliberation or before casting the vote.

2:220 *School Board Meeting Procedure*

Board Member Request for Information

When an individual board member requests information, it will be provided to all board members. An individual board member will - insofar as possible - work to let the superintendent and staff 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.

2:130 *Board-Superintendent Relationship*

2:140 *Communications To and From the Board*

2:140-E *Guidance for Board Member Communications, Including Email Use*

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.

2:220 School Board Meeting Procedure

The Board Takes Responsibility for Itself

The board will schedule an annual workshop to complete a board self-evaluation and review governance team agreements and processes.

2:120 Board Member Development

The Board President

The board is a group of seven equals and the board president is the first in the line of equals. Each board member takes full responsibility for board activity and behavior. The task of the board president is the facilitation of the work of the board and its ability to comply with its working agreements and mutual expectations. The board president will also assume some responsibility for facilitating the relationship between the superintendent and the board. The board will elect a member for this important position who is well suited to the responsibilities.

In accord with the School Code, the board president will be elected every two years at the board organizational meeting following the April school board election. The president pro-tempore will accept nominations for the position, including self-nominations. A second is not necessary for the nomination. Roll call voting will continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast. A run-off of the top vote-getters may be necessary to achieve the required majority.

2:110 Qualification, Terms and Duties of Board Officers

Speaking with One Voice

- a. 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.
- b. The relationship between the superintendent and any individual board members is collegial not hierarchical, based on mutual respect for their complementary roles.
- c. The superintendent is accountable only to the full board of education.
- d. The board and the superintendent have the right to expect performance, candor and honesty from one another.
- e. Board members have an obligation to express their opinions and respect others' opinions.
- f. Board members understand the importance of speaking with one clear voice to the superintendent.
- g. 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.

Behavioral Expectations

- a. Start with the common belief that everyone has good intentions.
- b. Create a safe environment for the productive exchange of ideas.
- c. Sincerely listen and seek to understand the viewpoints of others.
- d. Solve problems through a collaborative process where all participants support the decision and actively work toward its implementation.

What else?

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