VERNDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Student School Board Representative

Role • Expectations • Boundaries • Support

Welcome to the Board Table

The Student School Board Representative brings an important student perspective to the Verndale School Board. This is a leadership and civic-learning opportunity designed to help the Board better understand student experiences, needs, successes and ideas. Your voice matters, and you are encouraged to participate thoughtfully, ask questions, share student perspectives and help strengthen communication between students and district leadership.

Your role is advisory. You are not an elected school board director and do not carry the legal authority of an elected board member. Consistent with Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) guidance for student representatives, the student representative participates in public Board work while remaining protected from confidential and sensitive matters.

1. The Purpose of Your Role

- Bring student voice and perspective into Board conversations.
- Help Board members understand what students are experiencing across academics, activities, school climate, facilities, communication and other student-centered topics.
- Share important student accomplishments, concerns, ideas and emerging trends.
- Help students better understand the role and work of the School Board.
- Build leadership, communication, civic engagement and governance skills.
- Serve as a positive connection between Verndale students, district leadership and the School Board.

2. What You Are Expected to Do

- Attend regular School Board meetings and other public Board sessions when requested and reasonably possible.
- Review the public agenda and materials provided to you before meetings.
- Come prepared to give a brief Student Representative Report when it appears on the agenda.
- Listen carefully and participate respectfully in Board discussions when student perspective would be helpful.
- Ask questions when you need clarification. You are not expected to already understand school finance, policy, legal language or Board procedures.
- Seek input from a broad range of students rather than representing only your own grade, friend group, activity or personal experience.
- Share information accurately and distinguish between your personal opinion and feedback you have heard from other students.
- Maintain professional behavior and follow the same meeting expectations for respect, order and appropriate conduct that apply at the Board table.
- Let the Superintendent, Board Chair or your mentor know in advance when school, family, work, athletics or activities prevent you from attending.
- Remember that being a student comes first. Your academic responsibilities and healthy participation in school life remain the priority.

3. What Your Role Includes

Your Role Includes	What That Can Look Like
Student Voice	Sharing what students are seeing, experiencing, celebrating or concerned about.
Student Report	Providing updates about academics, activities, events, student organizations, school culture and accomplishments.
Questions	Asking for explanations of agenda items, terms, processes or decisions.
Discussion	Offering student perspective during public discussion when recognized by the Board Chair.
Listening	Learning how the district makes decisions and hearing perspectives from Board members, administrators and community members.
Student Outreach	Informally gathering ideas or feedback from students and encouraging students to use appropriate district communication channels.
Leadership	Modeling respectful communication, confidentiality, preparation, curiosity and responsible civic participation.
Advocacy	Helping the Board consider how decisions may be experienced by students while keeping the needs of all Verndale students in mind.

4. What Your Role Does NOT Include

- You do not vote on School Board motions or resolutions.
- You do not have the legal authority of an elected School Board member.
- You do not direct teachers, coaches, administrators, paraprofessionals or other employees.
- You do not make promises to students about what the Board or administration will decide.
- You do not investigate complaints involving students, employees, coaches or families.
- You do not participate in closed meetings or receive confidential/sensitive materials involving personnel, negotiations, legal strategy, individual student matters, discipline, private data, land acquisition or other matters the district determines are not appropriate for student-representative access.
- You are not expected to speak for every student or know every student's opinion.
- You are not responsible for solving individual student concerns. Those should be directed to the appropriate teacher, coach, counselor, principal or administrator.
- You are not expected to choose between 'the students' and 'the Board.' Your responsibility is to bring useful student perspective to the Board's decision-making process.

5. Your Student Representative Report

A helpful report is brief, student-centered and informative. Consider including:

- What's going well for students right now?
- What are students excited about?
- What important events, activities or accomplishments should the Board know about?
- Are there themes or concerns you are hearing from multiple students?
- Is there an upcoming decision where student perspective may be helpful?
- What is one thing you would like Board members to better understand about the student experience?

A good goal: 3–5 minutes. You do not need to report on everything happening at school.

6. When a Student Brings You a Concern

Students may see you as someone they can talk to. Listen respectfully, but remember that being the Student Board Representative does not make you an administrator or investigator.

- Listen without promising a specific outcome.
- If there is an immediate safety concern, tell a trusted school adult or administrator right away.
- For ordinary concerns, encourage the student to begin with the staff member closest to the issue and follow the school's chain of command.
- Do not bring names or identifying details about individual students or employees into a public Board meeting.
- If you are unsure what to do, contact the Superintendent, Principal, counselor or your Board mentor.

7. Confidentiality & Good Judgment

Most of what you receive as a student representative should be public information. However, Board service may expose you to situations where discretion is important. Never share private student information, personnel information, rumors, or information that district leadership has identified as confidential or not appropriate for public discussion.

Be thoughtful about social media. A post, screenshot, group chat or text can travel far beyond its intended audience. When in doubt about whether Board-related information should be shared, ask before posting or forwarding it.

8. Meeting Etiquette

- Arrive on time and be ready when the meeting begins.
- Silence and put away your phone unless it is needed for Board materials.
- Follow the agenda and listen when others are speaking.
- Wait to be recognized by the Board Chair before entering formal discussion.
- Disagree respectfully. Different perspectives are a normal and valuable part of governance.
- Ask questions freely. It is okay to say, “Can you explain what that means for students?”
- Remember that public meetings may be recorded, streamed or attended by community members.

9. Important Reminders

Student First: Your academics, health, family responsibilities and appropriate school commitments come first. MSBA specifically recommends recognizing that being a student is the priority.

Your Perspective Is Valuable: You were invited to the table because adults do not experience school in the same way students do.

You Don't Have to Know Everything: School governance has a learning curve. Questions are encouraged.

Represent Broadly: Look beyond your own experiences. Listen to younger students, older students, students in different activities and students whose experiences may differ from yours.

Be Respectful, Not Silent: Respect does not mean agreeing with everyone. Thoughtful disagreement and honest student feedback are welcome.

Avoid Surprises: If you plan to raise a significant concern, especially one involving safety, conflict or a sensitive issue, talk with the Superintendent or your mentor before the meeting.

Public vs. Private: Assume Board meeting discussions and public materials can be seen by the community. Never discuss individual student or employee matters publicly.

10. Support You Can Expect

Verndale Public Schools wants this experience to be meaningful and manageable. You can expect:

- A welcoming seat at the Board table during regular public meetings.
- An orientation to Board meetings, agendas, basic governance, confidentiality and your student-representative role.

- An adult mentor—such as an experienced Board member—to help you understand Board processes and meeting content.
- Support from the Superintendent and Board Chair when you have questions or are unsure how to handle a situation.
- Agenda materials appropriate for your role with enough time to review them whenever possible.
- Clear explanation when a portion of Board business is confidential or outside the student representative's role.
- Flexibility when academics, school activities or other reasonable student commitments conflict with Board responsibilities.
- Opportunities to ask questions and receive explanations without feeling that you should already know the answer.

11. People to Go to for Help

When You Need...	Start With...
Help understanding an agenda item	Superintendent or Board mentor
Help understanding Board procedure	Board Chair, Superintendent or Board mentor
A student safety concern	Principal, Superintendent, counselor or another trusted school adult immediately
Help preparing your Student Representative Report	Superintendent, Principal or Board mentor
A concern involving a specific student or employee	Superintendent or Principal — do not address it publicly
Help balancing the role with school commitments	Superintendent, Board mentor, Principal or counselor

12. Student Representative Commitment

As the Verndale Student School Board Representative, I understand that this position is an opportunity to bring student voice to district governance and to learn about public service. I will do my best to:

☐ Attend and prepare for meetings.
☐ Listen to and represent a broad range of student perspectives.
☐ Participate respectfully and ask questions.
☐ Protect private and sensitive information.
☐ Follow appropriate school and Board processes.
☐ Use good judgment in public, online and in conversations about Board business.
☐ Ask for help when I am unsure.
☐ Remember that I am a student first and that this role should support, not interfere with, my education.

Student Representative: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Board Mentor: _____

Superintendent/Board Chair: _____

Reference & Local Use Note

This Verndale guidance is based in part on Minnesota School Boards Association guidance for adding student school board representatives. MSBA recommends an advisory, nonvoting student role; seating the student at the Board table; attendance at public meetings; adult mentoring; recognizing that the student's education comes first; and excluding student representatives from confidential and sensitive Board materials. Verndale Public Schools may further define the selection process, term, attendance expectations and local procedures.

This document is intended as an orientation and expectations guide. Applicable Minnesota law and adopted Verndale Public Schools policies control if a conflict arises.