**BOARD MEMO – INFORMATION ITEM**

**PUTNAM COUNTY COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #535**

*Providing Foundations Together, Cultivating Individual Growth*

To: Board of Education

From: Cody Martzluf, Superintendent

Date: Tuesday, October 20, 2026

RE: Board Training Review

**Background:**

- On September 23, 2026, the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) provided the Board of Education with a complimentary, customized in-district Board Self-Evaluation Workshop.

- The purpose of the workshop was to provide additional support to the Board during the ongoing superintendent transition and to strengthen governance practices, communication, and goal-setting.

- As a result of the workshop, the Board identified several areas for continued work and discussion, including:
  - Revisiting the district's strategic plan and establishing updated district goals during the summer of 2027.
  - Utilizing interim district goals in the meantime and incorporating those priorities into the superintendent goal-setting process.
  - Reviewing and utilizing the superintendent evaluation tool.
  - Strengthening communication processes, including updates to the district website and regular superintendent communications.
  - Establishing clear Board protocols and communication expectations.

- I felt the workshop was very beneficial and provided a strong foundation for continued Board and superintendent collaboration. I have included the completed Board Protocols and Communication Expectations document for your review.

IASB Illinois Association of School Boards

Lighting the Way to Excellence in School Governance

# Board Protocols and Communication Expectations

September 23, 2026

## The Role of the Board

1. **The board will seek always to:**
    a. govern with a focus on the future, on results, and on continuous improvement;
    b. encourage collective decision making and diversity in viewpoints;
    c. respect the distinction between board and superintendent/staff roles, and
    d. pursue rigorous and continual improvement in its ability to define community values
    e. and its vision of the future.

## Agenda and Preparation

2. **Preparing the Agenda**
    a. The superintendent prepares the board agenda and will review the agenda with the Board President in advance of the meeting.

3. **Placing items on the agenda**

    a. Requests for additions to the agenda will go to **Cody Martzluf/Reed Wilson** and will be received at least **7** days before the meeting.

    b. If a board member's request to place an item on the agenda is estimated to take more than **60** minutes of staff time to prepare the information, the request will go to the full board for consensus.

4. **Asking questions about the agenda**
    a. Board members will contact **Cody Martzluf AND if applicable the appropriate staff member** with questions about agenda items or supporting materials at least **2 days** before (preferred) the scheduled board meeting.

> *Point to Consider*
> Board members understand that even if they ask questions **prior** to the meeting, they have a right to ask those questions **at** the meeting as well

5. **Requests for additional information**
    a. Board members will receive the same information. One member's request for additional information results in all members receiving or having the same access to the information.

b. If a board member's request for information is estimated to take more than 60 minutes of staff time to prepare the information, the request will go to the full board for consensus.

6. **Preparation**
    a. Board members will receive board packets and supporting documentation at least **4 calendar days** before the scheduled board meeting.
    b. Board members will read all board packets and supporting documentation before the board meeting.

## During the Meeting

7. **Consent Agenda**
    a. The consent agenda will be used for items not requiring discussion.
    b. Board members may request that an agenda item be removed from the consent agenda for independent consideration The preferred practice is to let the superintendent or board president know before the meeting so staff can come prepared to answer questions. The request can also be made after the introduction of the consent agenda and before the motion to approve it is voted on.

8. **Conducting closed sessions**
    a. Board members respect the confidentiality of privileged information and will not divulge conversations, discussions, or deliberations that take place during a closed session meeting.
    b. 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 district operations.
    c. Board members will always go into closed session for personnel items.

9. **Public Participation at Board Meetings**
    a. We understand that board meetings are meeting of the board held in public, not open-forum town-hall meetings.
    b. Each speaker will be limited to **5** minutes.
    c. The limit is 5 minutes total per topic if there is more than speaker for a topic.
    d. Procedures for public comment will be clear and available at the meeting site.
    e. The board president will welcome any guests and review the public comment procedures.

10. **Board Member Participation**
    a. Board members have an obligation to express their opinions and respect others' opinions.
    b. Board members will model the behaviors expected of students, staff, and community members.
    c. Members will listen respectfully to each other and staff (no side conversations).
    d. Board members will speak professionally and keep discussions at board meetings relevant and focused.

## After the Meeting

**11. Decisions of the Board**

a. Majority of board decisions will be supported by all board members, prevailing or not, while allowing for individual perspectives.

**12. Direction to the Superintendent**

a. Board members understand the importance of speaking with one clear voice to the superintendent.
b. Direction will only be given to the Superintendent at board meetings when the majority of the board agrees to give that direction.

## Board/ Community Relations

**13. Communicating with the media**

a. The **Board President** serves as the spokesperson for the Board with the media.
b. The **Superintendent** serves as the spokesperson for the district with the media.

**14. Visiting the campus(es)**

a. In their capacity as a board member, a board member desiring to visit a campus(es) should contact the Superintendent in advance.
b. Board members wishing to visit a school in official Board capacity shall follow all district and campus guidelines for visit. During these visits, board members will not evaluate staff or give any direction to staff or students.
c. Board members are encouraged to attend school events (sporting events, fine arts events, community events) *as a spectator* as their time permits.

**15. Responding to suggestions and concerns**

*GENERAL*

a. When hearing a concern or complaint from a community member or staff member, board members will listen carefully, remembering they are only hearing one side of the story.
b. Board members will direct a community member or staff member with a concern to the most appropriate person in the district to help them resolve their concern. (chain of command)
c. Board members will clarify that one board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.
d. If necessary, board members will communicate the issue to the Superintendent.

EMAIL

a. If the whole board receives an email, the Superintendent and/or the board president will respond and the superintendent will share the response with the entire board.
b. If an email is received by an individual board member, it will be forwarded to the superintendent.

## Board/ Superintendent Relations and Communication Expectations

**16. Board members will:**

a. Receive regular communication from the Superintendent every **week** via **email** [meeting, email, phone call, delivered letter].

1. Board members will be notified via **text** as soon as possible for:
   (a.) School emergency (lockdown, fire, etc.)
   (b.) Bus accident
   (c.) Student emergency (arrest, serious injury, death)
   (d.) Staff emergency (arrest, serious injury, death)

b. Receive regular monthly expenditure reports.

c. Adhere to the Open Meetings Act.

17. Regarding board business, board members will filter questions through the superintendent. He or she may then instruct board members to communicate with other staff.

18. The superintendent, staff, and board members will treat each other with mutual professional respect.

**19. No Surprises**

a. There will be no surprises. No one gets surprised at any time – in the meeting or between meetings.

**20. Board members communication**

a. Board members will be judicious in their use of email and understand that emails and texts related to board business are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and as such can be made public.

b. In compliance with the Open Meetings Act, board members will not "reply all" to any district emails.

c. Board members will not email other board members stating their thoughts or opinions.

## Social Media

**21. Social Media**

a. Board members recognize that while we may be giving our individual opinion or stating a fact on social media, it has the potential to impact the entire board.

b. When promoting official district business and activities, personal use of social media should be limited to directly sharing links from the district media platforms, without personal editorial or opinion.

c. Board members will not post rebuttals/responses/corrections to district-related social media posts.