



Rockford Area School District #883 -- Policy 209 Addendum

Adopted: 01/06/11

Reviewed: 2024

Revised: _____

209 ADDENDUM - BOARD OF EDUCATION OPERATING NORMS

I. INTRODUCTION

The following expectations have been developed and agreed to in order to provide structure to the operation of the School Board in pursuit of its mission and to strengthen the relationships among School Board members, between the School Board and Superintendent.

The governance focus for the Board is on policy rather than procedures. Board work is directed toward putting in place expectations for goals to be accomplished.

Board members want to ensure that there is "open-minded" discussions and flexibility; that Board norms are consistent with team play and fairness; that tasks and issues in meetings are well-developed and clear; and that the Board members consider the "human element" in problem-solving.

A. How We Relate To One Another...

1. All Board members should feel free to express their opinions and beliefs about issues. Discussions will be open and encourage candor. Honest disagreements are legitimate and have an appropriate place on the Board. However, Board members will respect one another and will not criticize one another "behind-the-back" or in an otherwise inappropriate manner.
2. Board members will relate to one another with honesty, integrity, and respect. Once a clear majority of the Board has agreed to a certain position and discussed it thoroughly, other Board members will not renew discussion of that topic provided that a full discussion and vote has taken place.
3. When a majority of the Board makes a decision, the minority members will respect majority rule and exemplify the standard, "I did not agree with this action, but I will respect and support the position of the Board."
4. The Superintendent will make every effort to be open to all points of view, to listen to and respond to questions and be responsive to the needs of the School Board.
5. Board members will look for opportunities, within the unique characteristics of governing a public school district, to develop relationships and rapport with one another as an asset to performing their duties.
6. Board members agree to devote time on an annual basis for self-evaluation and review of operating norms.

B. How We Communicate...



7. All Board members will receive the same information and data which relates to issues coming before the Board. Much of that information will come from the Office of the Superintendent and s/he will ensure that each member has equal access. However, when Board members are absent or late to a meeting, the remaining members will not take time to fully review all past discussions.
8. Board members are encouraged to fully participate in all discussions. Board members should feel comfortable to speak up freely and ask relevant questions so that issues and recommendations have an appropriate review.
9. Board members will channel requests for information, reports, etc. through the Superintendent rather than directly to staff.
10. All official communication between Board members and other school district staff will be channeled through the Superintendent, particularly if it relates to performance of school district employees.
11. The Superintendent (or designated staff) will provide written updates on a periodic basis, in addition to reports at regular School Board meetings, to keep Board members informed of issues of interest and concern affecting the School District.

C. How We Govern...

12. Board members should take risks in confronting differences of opinion. Board members are encouraged to express their opinion in a respectful way about issues and occasionally to “play the devil’s advocate” in order to ensure full discussion. However, Board members must be careful that adherence to a point of view does not prolong unnecessary discussion or block consensus.
13. Board members will focus on policy and broad parameters and not on administrative/management activities.
14. Board members will contact the Superintendent when they receive complaints rather than contacting the staff directly. The Superintendent will investigate complaints and provide Board members with all the information they need to respond to the individual initiating the call.
15. Board members will recognize and respect that their authority exists where a quorum of the Board meets and not as individuals.
16. Individual Board members will not directly contact legal counsel without approval of the full Board. Legal questions should be forwarded to the Superintendent to investigate as necessary.
17. It is agreed that the Board Chair and Superintendent will meet prior to each meeting so that he or she is fully prepared to run the meeting.
18. Board members will contact the Superintendent prior to the meeting if they have concerns or questions about items recommended for consent adoption or about routine personnel recommendations.



19. Board members receiving complaints will encourage parents to follow channels (teacher/coach/advisor, principal or building/program administrator, district administrator or superintendent, etc.) and avoid communicating the "I'll fix it" message.
20. Board members will appropriately clarify their role i.e. citizen, parent, or school board member in their interactions with teachers and other staff.
21. Board members will set the general parameters for subcommittee and task force committee assignments.
22. Board members will notify building principals when visiting a building in their official capacity as a member of the Board. Each member will attempt to visit each building at least once per year.
23. Board members who are not in attendance at assigned school board committee meetings are responsible for getting information discussed prior to any full school board meeting where the same issue may be discussed.

D. How We Conduct Meetings...

24. Board members agree that discussion will be limited to the agenda and that items will not be added to the agenda at the meeting unless they cannot be delayed until a subsequent meeting. Board members may request that items be added to the agenda by contacting the Superintendent or Board Chair. The Board Chair is the "gatekeeper" of the agenda. If the Board Chair determines that an issue has already been fully discussed or is not appropriate for the agenda, the individual Board member making the request may ask that the item be added to the agenda at any Board meeting. If there is a "second" to the motion and majority support, the item will be added.
25. Board members agree to prepare for discussions in advance and review the materials distributed in the packet before the meeting.
26. Neither the Superintendent nor individual Board members will put one another in a position to discuss items or make recommendations in the absence of appropriate information and preparation.
27. The Superintendent along with the district, program and building administrative team will make every effort to provide the School Board with complete and well-organized materials for the meeting and sound rationale for recommendations.
28. It is the Board Chair's responsibility to remind members, when necessary, to limit discussions to the agenda.
29. Board members who disagree with recommendations in the agenda or need more information before making a decision will contact the Superintendent or School Board Chair prior to the meeting.
30. The Board Chair will welcome visitors and make it clear at the beginning of the meeting how they can participate. Citizens in the audience can be recognized and comment from the podium at the



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beginning of the meeting during the "Public Comment" time period. They may not ask questions of presenters during presentations or Board discussion, but may do so at the end of the presentation period if the Board Chair indicates that open questions will be entertained.

31. "No surprises" is an important ethical and management standard in regard to public board meetings and is a shared responsibility of the Superintendent, the Board Chair, and individual Board members.

Cross Reference: Policy 209 Code of Ethics