

Stephenville Independent School District



Board of Trustees Code of Conduct and Operating Procedures

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Code of Conduct and Operating
Procedures, Revised 2006*

revised 9-18-06

Preamble: As members of the Stephenville Independent School District Board of Trustees, we realize that to be the most effective advocates for children, we, as a Board, must function as a team and at all times treat each other and the people we serve with the utmost courtesy, dignity, respect and professionalism. Should we, for whatever reason, fail to follow these guidelines, we ask that our fellow Board Members call it to our attention. Should that occur, we pledge to accept the feedback without anger or retribution, and to renew our efforts to follow this Code of Conduct and Board Operating Procedures. We shall promote the best interests of the school district as a whole, and, to that end, we shall adhere to the following educational and ethical standards.

BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

I. Governance

- A. I will bring about desired changes through legal and ethical procedures, upholding and enforcing all laws, administrative rules and regulations, court orders pertaining to schools and district policies and procedures.
- B. I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of all children in the District, regardless of ability, race, creed, sex, national origin, disability or social standing. All decisions will place the needs of children first.
- C. I will recognize that the Board must make decisions as a whole, as a body corporate, and make no personal promise or take private action that may compromise the role and integrity of the Board. All Board action must take place in an official Board meeting.
- D. I will focus Board action on policy making, goal setting, planning and evaluation as outlined in Board policy and state law.
- E. I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after due consideration of the recommendation by the Superintendent. I will insist on regular and impartial evaluations of all staff by the Superintendent or his designees.
- F. I recognize that the role of the Board is to govern and oversee the management of the District. I will delegate authority to the Superintendent for the day to day operations of the District.
- G. As a Board Member, I will not step outside my role to govern and oversee the management of the District by seeking to participate in the administration of the day to day operations of the District.

II. Conduct

- A. I will hold confidential all matters that, if disclosed, may have a negative impact on the District. I will respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law, including closed session discussions.

- B. To the extent possible, I will attend all regularly scheduled and specially set Board meetings, arrive on time, and I will be informed of the issues to be considered at the meetings.
- C. I will assist in making policy decisions only after full discussion at publicly held Board meetings, and I will render all decisions based on available facts, and I refuse to surrender judgment to individuals or special groups.
- D. I will refrain from using my Board position for personal or partisan gain.
- E. I will disagree in an agreeable manner. I will not hold grudges or question other Board Member's ethics or motives as to their vote or views on issues.
- F. I will be firm, fair, just and impartial in all decisions and actions.
 - I will respect the majority decision as the decision of the Board.

III. Communication

- A. I will encourage the free expression of opinion by all Board Members. I will make a good faith effort to understand and accommodate the views of others.
- B. I recognize the appropriate channels to refer complaints to the Superintendent and will do so.
- C. I will seek communication between the Board, students, staff, and the community at Board meetings as required to conduct Board business.
- D. I will communicate to fellow Board Members and the Superintendent at appropriate times expression of public concerns.
- E. If I am Board President, I will make sure that persons addressing the Board follow established policy guidelines.
- F. If I am Board President, I will make sure that persons addressing the Board do so in a professional manner and not allow inappropriate communication to be directed to the Board or the Superintendent during Board meetings.
- G. As a Board Member I will not withhold school district information from other Board Members.
 - If I am Board President, I will ensure that all Board Members are given opportunity to reflect their views. I will work toward building consensus among all Board Members.

IV. Board Preparation

- A. I will become informed about current educational issues and seek continuing education opportunities such as those sponsored by state and national school board associations.

- B. I will disseminate pertinent information gathered at training workshops and conventions with the Superintendent and fellow Board Members.

STEPHENVILLE ISD BOARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Preamble: It is essential to the smooth and efficient functioning of the District that Board Members thoroughly understand and adhere to their proper role, which is to govern and oversee the management of the District. Board Members may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the District, and members' interactions with the Superintendent or staff must recognize the lack of authority vested in individuals except when explicitly Board authorized. Board Members are prohibited from participating in the day to day operations of the school district. The governance framework for Stephenville ISD is set forth in Policies BA, BAA, BBB, BBE, BE, BEC, BED, in the Stephenville ISD Board Policy Manual

In addition to, and in conjunction with, the Board Code of Conduct, the following procedures will govern the Stephenville ISD Board of Trustees.

I. Developing the Board Meeting Agenda

A. Who can place items on agenda?

1. Agendas are created by the Superintendent and Board President and presented to the Board on Wednesday prior to the Monday meeting.
2. Board Members must request in writing or verbally to the Superintendent or Board President at least **seven (7)** days prior to the Board meeting any item they desire to have placed on the agenda.
3. In accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, no item can be placed on the agenda less than 72 hours in advance of the meeting, except in an emergency as defined by law.
 - a. The Superintendent and Board President shall include on the agenda all trustee requested agenda items that have been timely submitted according to Board operating procedures.

B. Items that will not be heard in open session:

1. All personnel issues unless excepted under the Texas Open Meetings Act applies.
2. Anything that could violate an individual's right to privacy.
3. All exceptions as covered in the Texas Open Meetings Act.

C. Use of Consent Agenda

1. Board Members shall call the Superintendent, or designee, with questions regarding consent agenda items prior to the meeting. If more discussion is warranted, that item may be pulled at the request of any

Board Member and considered as an action item. Consent items may include:

- a. all routine items
- b. annual renewals of Region XI contracts, shared service agreements and TEA matters
- c. gifts, donations and bequests
- d. review bills and financial information
- e. minutes of regularly and called Board meetings
- f. updates of Board policy
- g. routine bid considerations
- h. items recommended by the Superintendent

II. Member Conduct During Board Meetings

In addition to the following procedures, at all times Board Members shall adhere to the Board Code of Conduct.

A. Patrons addressing the Board:

- 1. Audience participation at Board meetings is limited to the portion of the meeting designated as Open Forum. At all other times during a Board meeting, the audience shall not enter into discussion or debate on matters being considered by the Board, unless recognized by the presiding officer. No presentation shall exceed five minutes. Delegations of 5 or more persons shall appoint one person to present their views before the Board.
- 2. At regular meetings the Board shall allot a total of 30 minutes to hear persons who desire to make comments to the Board. Persons who wish to participate in the Open Forum shall sign up with the presiding officer or designee before the meeting begins and shall indicate the topic about which they wish to speak.
- 3. Persons addressing the Board in Open Forum shall be given 5 minutes.

B. Board response to patrons addressing the Board:

- 1. Board Members can hear comments.
- 2. Board President may direct administration to investigate item(s) and report back to the Board.
- 3. Board Members cannot respond or enter into discussion with the audience during the meeting as:
 - a. Items on the agenda will be discussed as appropriate and scheduled on the agenda.
 - b. Items not on the agenda do not permit Board Members to respond or discuss except to make factual statements or refer to board policy.

4. Board President may exercise discretion in allowing patron comments to exceed 5 minutes or to extend the 30 minute time allotted for Open Forum.
 5. Board Members may request that the Board President extend the Open Forum times set out in this policy.
- C. Discussion of Employee/Student Issues
1. The Board will not allow complaints regarding individual personnel in open session unless required by law.
 2. The Board will not allow complaints on individual students in public session unless required by law.
- D. Hearing and Presentments
1. The Board will conduct all hearings or presentments in accordance with the applicable board policies (e.g. DGBA, FNG, GF).
 2. During hearings or presentment, Board Members will seek legal counsel as deemed necessary.
- E. The Board shall observe the parliamentary guidelines in Robert's Rules of Order or Established Policy or Practice. A summary of Robert's Rules of Order will be provided to each Board Member.
- F. Discussion of Motions
1. All discussions shall be directed solely to the business currently under deliberation.
 2. The Board President has the responsibility to keep the discussion to the motion at hand and shall halt discussions that do not apply to the business currently before the Board.
- G. The Board President shall recognize a Board Member prior to giving their comments.

III. Voting

- A. The Board President will vote on all action items.
- B. The Board President may make motions, second motions and enter into debate on all agenda items.
- C. In case of tie, the motion is defeated.
- D. In case of a less than unanimous vote, the Board will support the majority decision and go forward in harmony.

IV. Individual Board Member Request for Information or Report

- A. When acting in his or her official capacity, an individual Board Member has the right of access to all documents and records of the district and the responsibility to comply with confidentiality requirements. This right does not extend to confidential student records.
- B. Board Members will request information, or seek access to records, or request copies of records through the Superintendent, or designee.
- C. Individual members shall not direct or require District employees to prepare reports derived from an analysis of information in existing District records or to create a new record compiled from information in existing District records. Directives to the Superintendent regarding the preparation of reports shall only be made after discussion and vote in a board meeting held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.
- D. Written information/reports will be disseminated through the Superintendent's office and shared with all Board Members.

V. Citizen Request/Complaint to Individual Board Members

- A. The Board Member who is presented with a request or complaint outside the board meeting, shall receive enough information in order to be able to understand the nature of the request or complaint.
- B. The Board Member shall then refer the citizen to the appropriate person/chain of command as appropriate.
- C. The Board Member shall not become individually and personally involved in the request or complaint.
- D. The Board Member must remind the citizen of their role and that as a Board Member they must remain impartial in the event the situation comes before the Board.
- E. The Board Member shall notify the Superintendent as soon as possible of the request or complaint. (e.g. Even if Board Member refers the patron to the principal to resolve the complaint, the Board Member should advise the Superintendent of the referral).
- F. The Superintendent will ensure that the citizen is contacted in a timely manner. Board Members will be notified of the disposition of the complaint if appropriate as deemed by the Superintendent.

VI. Employee Request/Complaint to Individual Board Member

- A. The Board Member should hear the employee request or complaint to be sure they understand the nature of the complaint.

- B. The Board Member shall then refer the employee to the appropriate person/chain of command as appropriate.
- C. The Board Member shall not become individually and personally involved in the request or complaint.
- D. The Board Member must remind the employee of their role and that as a Board Member they must remain impartial in the event the situation comes before the Board.
- E. The Board Member shall notify the Superintendent as soon as possible of the request or complaint.
- F. The Superintendent will ensure that the employee's request/concern is addressed in a timely manner. Board Member will be notified if Superintendent deems appropriate.

VII. Board Member Visit to Campus

- A. All Board Members are encouraged to visit all schools and school events.
- B. All Board Members must sign in with the principal's office upon arrival at the building.
- C. Board Members will not individually undertake to observe the performance of employees, including classroom teachers, for the purposes of "evaluating" a teacher's performance.

VIII. Communications

- A. The Superintendent will communicate regularly with all Board Members via board packets and updates.
- B. If a Board Member has a concern about any aspect of the Superintendent's duties or performance, he/she should go to the Superintendent and discuss the problem.
- C. Board Members will not reprimand or provide direction to staff. Directives to the Superintendent shall be in the confines of a duly called Board Meeting.
- D. Board Members will not attempt to exert pressure or influence on the staff in order to coerce them into making particular recommendations or decisions.
- E. Board members will not individually conduct interviews with prospective employees.
- F. Individual Board Members cannot speak in an official capacity for the Board outside the Board room unless otherwise authorized by the Board.
- G. Board Members will not give unsolicited recommendations about candidates for jobs throughout the district.

- H. Board Members will not direct personnel to consider vendors other than those recommended through the competitive bidding or proposal process.
- I. Board Members will not communicate through email or in any other medium with each other in a manner that is not in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

IX. Communication with Legal Counsel

- A. The Board authorizes the Superintendent and/or Board President to contact legal counsel on behalf of the district.

X. Evaluation of the Superintendent

- A. The Superintendent and Board shall function as a "Team of Eight".
- B. Board Members will receive training on a locally developed process for Superintendent performance evaluation.
- C. A summative evaluation will be conducted in Dec./Jan.
- D. Each Board Member will complete and deliver to the Board President, the approved appraisal instrument at least two (2) weeks prior to the summative conference.
- E. Evaluation of the Superintendent will be conducted in executive session unless the Superintendent requests the evaluation be done in open session. Ratings and comments on the Superintendent's evaluation will be determined by Board consensus.

XI. Evaluation of the Board

- A. The Superintendent and Board function as a "Team of Eight".
- B. A formal self-evaluation of the Board shall be conducted annually using an instrument approved by the Board.
- C. The formal self-evaluation will be conducted each spring addressing:
 - 1. Is the Board following the Board Code of Conduct?
 - 2. Is the Board following Board Operating Procedures?
 - 3. Is the Team of Eight functioning appropriately and effectively?
 - 4. Were the goals set effectively and were they accomplished?
- D. The evaluation will be used to determine team-building training needs and such training will be conducted annually.

- E. As deemed necessary, the Board shall utilize closed session under Texas Government Code 551.074 to evaluate and discuss the roles and responsibilities of Board Members as allowed by law.
- F. As deemed necessary, the Board shall utilize closed session under Texas Government Code 551.074 to hear complaints about public officials as allowed by law.
- G. Board Members may request that a discussion of the performance of the Board as a body corporate or the performance of individual Board Members be placed on a properly posted agenda for discussion and possible action.
- H. The Board may develop as it deems appropriate discussion items that address governance issues, board policy issues and the Board Code of Conduct and Operating Procedures.

XII. Criteria and Process for Selecting Board Officers

- A. No Board Member can hold office without one year's experience as a Board Member.
- B. Officer elections will be held in May of each year at the first regular meeting following the May trustee election.
- C. Election of Officers will be conducted according to the attached plan (see Procedure for Officer Election).

XIII. Role and Authority of Board Members and/or Board Officers

- A. No Board Member or officer has authority outside of the Board meeting unless otherwise delegated by the Board.
- B. No Board Member shall direct employees in regard to their performance of their duties.
- C. The Board supervises and evaluates the Superintendent.
- D. PRESIDENT
 - 1. Presides at all Board meetings
 - 2. Appoints committees
 - 3. Shall call special meetings
 - 4. Signs all legal documents required by law
 - 5. Along with the Superintendent, sets the Board's agendas

E. VICE PRESIDENT

1. Shall act in the capacity of the President in the absence of the President.

F. SECRETARY

1. Is responsible for accurate records of Board meetings
2. Acting in absence of President and Vice President, the Secretary shall act in the capacity of the President.

G. OFFICE VACANCY

1. The Vice President shall fill a vacancy in the Presidency and a new Vice President shall be elected.
2. A vacancy among officers of the Board other than the President shall be filled by a majority action by the Board.

XIV. Role of Board in Executive/Closed Session

- A. The Board can only discuss those items listed on the executive/closed session agenda and allowed by law.
- B. The Board must vote in open session.
- C. Information discussed during executive/closed session shall remain confidential.

XV. Media Inquiries to the Board

Board Members should direct media calls to the Board President and notify the Board President and Superintendent of the call.

XVI. Media Inquiries to Individual Board Members

Individual statements and responses by Board Members are only individual statements and not representative of the entire Board and any individual Board Member making statements to the press will emphasize they are not speaking for the Board.

XVII. Phone Calls/Letters

The Stephenville ISD Board of Trustees encourages input and the Board should refer appropriate calls and letters to the administration pursuant to the proper channels and board policies. If a Board Member receives an anonymous complaint, the Board Member should encourage the person to identify themselves and the nature of their complaint so the person can be referred to the appropriate administrator to handle the complaint/concern.

XVIII. Response to Signed Letter Requests or Complaints

The Stephenville ISD Board of Trustees encourages input. A signed letter will be forwarded to the Superintendent who will send acknowledgment to the originator of the letter. The Superintendent will respond and address the request/concern.

XIX. Required Board Member Training

See training chart

XX. Board Members as Parents

- A. Make it clear that they are acting as parents
- B. Board Members should not request nor accept extraordinary consideration for their children.

XXI. Reimbursable Expenses

- A. Board Members shall be reimbursed for reasonable expenses for:
 - 1. Carrying out the business of the Board at Board request.
 - 2. Attending meetings and conventions as official representative of the Board.
 - 3. Mileage, commercial transportation, parking, lodging, meals and other incidental expenses are reimbursable.
- B. Board Members shall not be reimbursed for:
 - 1. Expenses of family members who travel with Board Members.
 - 2. Alcoholic beverages
- C. The Stephenville ISD Code of Conduct and Board Operating Procedures will be reviewed regularly, adopted and updated at a regular Board meeting.

XXII. Campaigning for Election or Re-election

- A. Board incumbents running for re-election shall not request or accept support from District employees during work time.
- B. Board Members shall not utilize District equipment or materials for campaign.

XXIII. Goal Setting

- A. A goal setting workshop will be conducted annually to develop long and short term plans for the District.
- B. Superintendent priorities will be based on goals each year.

XXIV. Procedure for Election of Board Officers

- A. The Board will properly post on the agenda for the nomination and election of Board Officers. Board Officers are President, Vice President and Secretary.
- B. The Board President will facilitate the nomination and election of Board Officers at a Board meeting.
- C. No Board Member may hold office without a one year minimum Board experience.

XXV. Violation and Sanctions

- A. Upon inclusion on the agenda and public posting in accordance with the law, the Board may convene in executive session to discuss a violation of the Code of Conduct and Board Operating Procedures, or other Board policies, so long as the deliberation is confined to the duties, discipline, or complaint against a Board Member.
- B. The Board Member may request that the deliberation be conducted in open session.
- C. As a consequence of these deliberations, the Board may elect to do nothing, may reconvene in open session and vote to: (1) Publicly reprimand the Board Member; (2) Recommend additional training for the Board Member; (3) Authorize the Board President to remove the Board Member from leadership positions in the district. Leadership positions include Board officer positions and membership on any district or campus level committee. The Board may utilize any or all of these sanctions as allowed by this section.
- D. Nothing provided herein shall be construed to alter, modify, or limit in any way the rights of school district personnel and members of the public to file complaints against the Board or Board Members under applicable Board policies.

XXVI. Board Review of Code of Ethics and Board Operating Procedures

- A. The Board will annually review the Board Code of Ethics and Operating Procedures.
- B. Each new Board Member will be given a copy of the Board Code of Ethics and Operating Procedures prior to or at the new Board Member's first Board meeting.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR BOARD MEMBERS

As a member of the Board, I shall promote the best interests of the District as a whole and, to the end, shall adhere to the following ethical standards:

Equity in attitude

- I will be fair, just, and impartial in all my decisions and actions.
- I will accord others the respect I wish for myself.
- I will encourage expressions of different opinions and listen with an open mind to others' ideas.

Trustworthiness in stewardship

- I will be accountable to the public by representing District policies, programs, priorities, and progress accurately.
- I will be responsive to the community by seeking its involvement in District affairs and by communicating its priorities and concerns.
- I will work to ensure prudent and accountable use of District resources.
- I will make no personal promise or take private action that may compromise my performance or my responsibilities.

Honor in conduct

- I will tell the truth.
- I will share my views while working for consensus.
- I will respect the majority decision as the decision of the Board.
- I will base my decisions on fact rather than supposition, opinion, or public favor.

Integrity of character

- I will refuse to surrender judgment to any individual or group at the expense of the District as a whole.
- I will consistently uphold all applicable laws, rules, policies, and governance procedures.
- I will not disclose information that is confidential by law or that will needlessly harm the District if disclosed.

Commitment to service

- I will focus my attention on fulfilling the Board's responsibilities of goal setting, policymaking, and evaluation.
- I will diligently prepare for and attend Board meetings.
- I will avoid personal involvement in activities the Board has delegated to the Superintendent.
- I will seek continuing education that will enhance my ability to fulfill my duties effectively.

Student-centered focus

- I will be continuously guided by what is best for all students of the District