



Board Agreements and Protocols

Cass School District 63 Board of Education

Approved Tuesday, June 20, 2023

The following Board Agreements and Protocols were developed by the Board of Education and Superintendent as a means to memorialize successful past practices and to continue a culture of effective Board governance in Cass School District 63.

I. Roles and Responsibilities (Board Policy 2:10, 2:20, 2:80, 2:130, 3:40)

- A. Board members will respect and follow the Code of Conduct for Members of School Boards by the Illinois Association of Schools Boards, as well as the Board Member Oath and Conduct per Board Policy.
- B. Board members understand the importance of maintaining a positive Board culture and serve on the Board in support of public education and for the students in the district.
- C. Board members understand the importance of effective school governance, recognize that their collective authority is only present at a legally called meeting of the Board, and that the role of day-to-day management of the school district is the responsibility of the Superintendent and not of the Board.
- D. Board members will review all information communicated by the Superintendent and shared with the Board prior to its meetings.
- E. Board members recognize that each member has a right to speak and be heard at a legally called meeting, as well as a right to vote his or her individual conscience.
- F. Board members recognize that each member has a right to disagree with the decision of the Board but will support the Board by abiding by the will of the majority.

II. Respect for Confidentiality

- A. Board members understand that they will have access to information which requires the strictest standards of confidentiality.
- B. Board members respect the confidentiality of this privileged information and will not divulge conversations, discussions, or deliberations that take place during closed session.

III. Meeting Agenda and Related Questions (Board Policy 2:220)

- A. Prior to any specified deadline, Board members who wish to have an item placed on the agenda will contact either the Board President or the Superintendent.
- B. As needed prior to the Board meeting, the Board President and Superintendent will confer regarding the development of the agenda.
- C. Whenever possible, Board members will contact the Superintendent with any questions on the agenda or other meeting materials prior to the Board meeting.
- D. Board members understand that although they are encouraged to ask questions prior to the meeting, they retain the right to ask the questions at the meeting as well.

IV. Communication Via E-mail, Text and Electronic Communications (Board Policy 2:140)

- A. Board members will be judicious in their use of email, text and other electronic messaging, and understand that communications of this nature are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and as such can be made public.
- B. To ensure compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Board members will not "reply all" to informational communications from the Superintendent or others.
- C. Board members will not use any electronic communications to hold any discussion of any kind that could violate the Open Meetings Act, or the goal of transparency to our taxpayers and local community.
- D. The Superintendent will be the primary conduit of communication to the Board and will provide informational updates as needed between meetings of the Board.
- E. Board businesses should be discussed between members at legally called meetings.



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V. Communication with Employees (Board Policy 2:140, 8:110)

- A. The Board of Education views its "one employee" as the Superintendent and directs all communications with district employees through the Superintendent or designee.
- B. In the event an employee communicates directly with a member of the Board, unless otherwise necessary, the Board member will redirect that employee to the proper staff member or to the Superintendent.
- C. In the event a Board member is also a parent in the district, that Board member should communicate and interact with staff as appropriate for any other parent, keeping in mind that staff will view the individual as a Board member first. The role of the Board member should remain completely separate from the role of the parent.

VI. Communication with Parents and the Community (Board Policy 8:95, 8:110)

- A. When hearing a concern from a parent or community member, Board members will listen carefully, remembering they are only hearing one side of the story.
- B. Board members will direct a parent or community member to the proper staff member or to the Superintendent.
- C. If necessary, Board members hearing concerns of this nature will clarify that one Board member has no individual authority to resolve an issue.
- D. After hearing the concern, Board members will contact the Superintendent so that there is awareness of the issue within the district.

VII. Communication with the News Media (Board Policy 8:10)

- A. The Board President is the spokesperson for the Board to the media.
- B. The Superintendent is the spokesperson for the school district to the media.

Board/ Superintendent Communication Expectations

Updated August 31, 2024

This board expects:

- To receive regular communication from the superintendent **every week via email** and a newsletter quarterly.
- To be notified by **immediate text with a follow-up email/ board-o-gram** as soon as possible for:
 - School emergency (lockdown, fire, etc.)
 - Bus accident
 - Weapons
 - Student emergency (arrest, injury, death)
 - Staff emergency (arrest, injury, death)
 - Police Presence
- To receive board packets and supporting documentation **5 days** before the scheduled board meeting (**Friday at 4:00 PM**).
- To receive regular monthly expenditure reports.
- That all 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. ("One gets, all get.")
- That board members will treat each other and staff with respect.
- That the superintendent and staff will treat all board members with respect.
- That reasonable requests for additional information will be satisfied in a timely manner.
- That there will be no surprises. No one gets surprised at any time – in the meeting or between meetings. The truth of no surprises is respect for all participants and the process.

This superintendent expects:

- Requests for additions to the agenda will go to the board president, and will be received by **the Thursday before the scheduled board meeting (2 weeks)**. The board of the whole will agree to put an item on a future agenda before significant staff time is expended by noon.
- That direction is only given at board meetings when a majority of the board agrees to give direction and/or at the discretion of the Superintendent.
- That board members will be respectful toward staff and be respectful of staff's time.
- That board members will read all board packets and supporting documentation before the board meeting.
- That board members will contact the **Superintendent, copying the Executive Assistant** with questions about agenda items or supporting materials at least 48 hours before the scheduled board meeting.
- That there will be no surprises. No one gets surprised at any time – in the meeting or between meetings. The truth of no surprises is respect for all participants and the process.

Elementary SD 159
Board Agreements
Updated August 31, 2024

Board member expectations

- Board members will assume positive intent.
- Board members will treat each other with respect and be open and honest with each other and with the superintendent.
- Board members will speak professionally and keep discussions at board meetings relevant and focused.

Concerns from the community and staff

- Board members will listen carefully, remembering they are only hearing one side of the story.
- Board members will then direct that person to the person in the district most appropriate (Chain of Command) who is able to help them resolve their concern.
- Board members handling concerns in this manner will clarify that one board member has no individual authority to fix a problem.
- Board members will call the superintendent if they think there is an urgent issue of concern.

Speaking with one voice

- No individual board member has the authority to act or speak on behalf of the board without the consent of the board.
- Board members have an obligation to express their opinions and respect others' opinions at the board table.
- Board members understand the importance of speaking with one clear voice to the superintendent.
- Board members have the right to disagree with the decision of the board, but will support the board in its decision by abiding by the will of the majority.

Communicating with the media

- The board president is the spokesperson for the board to the media. In the absence of the board president, the vice president will be the spokesperson
- The superintendent (or designee) is the spokesperson for the district to the media.

Closed session meetings

- Board members respect the confidentiality of privileged information and will not divulge conversations, discussions, or deliberations that take place during a closed session meeting.
- 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 future district operations.

Use of electronic communication

- Board members will be judicious in their use of electronic communication with respect to district business and understand that most electronic communication is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and as such can be made public.
- In compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Board members will not "reply to all" to any district email.
- Board members will not email or text other board members stating their thoughts or opinions regarding district business.
- All community engagement through email, automatic response will be sent, once board meet and agree, Board President will send answer/response.

Social Media

- 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.
- 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.
- Board members will not post rebuttals/responses/corrections to district-related social media posts. Board members may post general district-related posts on their personal social media sites.

Request for information

- When an individual board member requests information, it will be provided to all board members. (“One gets, all get.”)
- 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.

Board meetings and board committee meetings

Public Comment - We understand that board meetings are meeting 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 that multiple voices of the community are heard.

- The public has a right to participate in the meeting only during the designated public comment time.
- Individuals that would like to can address the board.
- Procedures for public comment are clear and available at the meeting site.
- The board secretary will welcome any guests and review the public comment procedures.
- The superintendent will respond to community member’s question within 5 days of the board meeting.

School Visits

- Board members are encouraged to attend school events (sporting events, fine arts events, community events) *as a spectator* as their time permits.
- Board members wishing to visit a school in **official Board capacity** shall:
 - Discuss with the superintendent purpose (official capacity) and the best time to visit, with notification. The superintendent will inform the building principal of your visit.
 - Check in with the office staff upon arrival
 - Follow campus guidelines for visitors (sign in, guest badge, escort, etc.)
 - Respect staff time and allow staff to perform their duties
 - Not evaluate staff
 - Not give direction to any staff or students
 - Not accept gifts (other than nominal tokens) or favors from any district employee
- When visiting with teachers of their own children, board members will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than board members.
- If a board member observes an issue on a campus, the concern will be communicated to the superintendent.

No Surprises

- No one (superintendent or board members) gets surprised at any time – in the meeting or between meetings.



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BOARD WORKING AGREEMENTS

This document reflects ongoing discussions by the Board of Education (the Board) about the roles and responsibilities; working agreements and communication; expectations and relationships; meeting structure and protocols; duties, and election of officers.

The Board and the Superintendent constitute a leadership team with all working toward effective governance, responsible management, supportive interaction, respectful communication, and establishment of clear direction.

Section I: Board of Education's Role and Responsibilities

1. Identify community values and stakeholder expectations
2. Clarify the district direction and goals through a strategic plan
3. Adopt, approve, and ensure implementation of policies
4. Operate openly within the framework of the Board meetings
5. Encourage collective decision-making and respect diverse viewpoints
6. Determine how goals will be measured and what information is required for understandable reporting
7. Adopt formal procedures to monitor and evaluate district programs
8. Use monitoring parameters and established financial performance principles and guidelines to budget for district spending and revenue
9. Respect the differences between the roles of Board Members and the Superintendent
10. Provide opportunities for our community (parents, staff, students, tax payers) involvement

Section II: Working Agreements & Communication

1. The Board of Education is a group of seven equal members.
2. The Superintendent is accountable to the full Board of Education not to individual board members. Direction to the Superintendent is given only at a legally convened meeting of the Board of Education.



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3. All Board of Education members will respect the differences between the Board members; and between Board and Superintendent/staff roles.
4. The Board has one employee, the Superintendent. The Board does not direct or oversee other district staff.
5. Expectations for the Superintendent should be clear and concise.
6. The Superintendent should exhibit shared and supportive leadership toward the Board of Education and individual board members.
7. When individual Board Members request information she/he will email the Superintendent and copy the Board President. Any information resulting from the request will be provided to all Board members.
8. If a Board member requests information from the Superintendent which is estimated to take longer than 60 minutes of cumulative time to prepare, the Superintendent has the option of placing the request as a discussion item on the next Board meeting agenda.
9. When possible, any requests regarding information contained in a Board packet should be made prior to a meeting to allow staff time to prepare thorough answers. If requests regarding information contained in a Board packet are not made in advance, there should not be an expectation that ALL questions can be answered during open session. In the event that a board member's question is not answered in open session, the superintendent will facilitate a response in the aftermath of the meeting in a timely manner.
10. Board members will include the Superintendent in any pertinent conversations or questions with district staff by copying the Superintendent in the email.
11. If decorum is not maintained during a meeting, the Board President should attempt to reestablish decorum using the gavel to quiet all present, move to the next agenda item, or call for a recess. If Board discussions are not exhibiting respectful behavior, any Board member may make a motion for a recess.
12. Board members who have items to be put on the agenda should email the Superintendent and the Board president.
13. External Correspondence:
 - a. When the Board (not the Superintendent) is contacted (this includes in person, via email, social media, or any communication medium), the Board President will respond to the individual. Individual Board



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- members may reply to the individual to acknowledge the inquiry; however, they should not respond to the content of the inquiry.
- b. When the Board and the Superintendent are contacted, the Superintendent will respond to the individual. Individual Board members may reply to the individual to acknowledge the inquiry; however, they should not respond to the content of the inquiry.
 - c. When the Superintendent receives an external communication regarding a specific Board member, the Superintendent will contact that Board member for clarification of the issue before any further action.
 - d. If a Board member feels any inquiry or comment received (or observed) from any communication medium (email, social media, etc.) requires a response, an email should be sent to the superintendent with a copy to the Board president making them aware of the issue. It will be the responsibility of the superintendent to determine "if " and "how" a response will be provided.
 - e. For additional background regarding the Board's position on social media, [click here](#).
14. When a board member wishes to visit a school, the Superintendent should be notified in advance.
15. A comprehensive email update from the Superintendent to the Board is shared via email on a weekly basis.
16. The Board president is the designated liaison to the Board attorney. In the president's absence the vice-president assumes this responsibility. All questions for the board attorney should be collected by the liaison, who will send a written message to the Board attorney. The Board attorney's written response will be shared with all board members.
17. Board members will use only their District email account when communicating on District business.

Section III: Individual Board Member Expectations & Relationships

All board members are to be respectful of each other and will:

1. Demonstrate professionalism and responsible behavior including appropriate body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice.
2. Attend meetings well prepared for district business.



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3. Share the common belief that each person brings a different expertise and has good intentions.
4. Solve problems through a collaborative process.
5. Abide by majority decisions of the board, while retaining the right to seek changes in such decisions through ethical and constructive channels.
6. Sincerely listen and seek to understand the viewpoints of others.
7. Serve on various district committees and report back to the full Board on discussions held at committee meetings.

Section IV: Working Together the Superintendent and all Members of the Board Will:

1. Employ and evaluate one person, the superintendent, and hold that person accountable for district performance and compliance with written board policy,
2. Act in the best interest of all students and stakeholders, and not any particular group,
3. Respect the confidentiality of the closed session,
4. Build trust through open and honest communication.
5. Board members may email or text the superintendent after regular business hours; however, there is no expectation that the superintendent will respond until business hours resume.
6. Direct the superintendent to speak on behalf of the District for media requests.
7. Redirect a concerned parent or community member to the following chain of command: teacher, principal, Superintendent. Community members may also address the Board of Education during the agenda item "Public Comment" during a Board of Education meeting.
8. The board does not interact with the public during the Public Comments portion of the meeting. The board president will thank the individual making comments and determine whether further clarification is needed. The board president will direct the speaker to the superintendent if necessary.
9. Inform the superintendent via email or phone call if a Board member is aware of any individual(s) planning to address the Board of Education at a meeting.



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3. The Board vice president will preside over the meeting in the absence of the Board president.
4. The Board secretary will call the roll for all votes.
5. In the absence of the Board secretary, an alternate secretary will be Selected by the Board President

Section VII: Elections

1. Newly appointed members will recite the IASB ethics statement (Code of Conduct) at their first board meeting.
2. In accordance with the Illinois School Code and Board policies, the president, vice president, and secretary will be elected bi-annually at the Board of Education organizational meeting.
3. A president pro-tem, selected by consensus of the current Board, will accept nominations for president.
4. Roll call voting will continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.
5. The newly elected president will continue the same procedure for the offices of vice president and secretary.
6. All board members will reaffirm the IASB ethics statement (Code of Conduct) at the bi-annual organizational meeting of the Board.

*Adapted and modified from the work of Community Consolidated School District 59



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Section V: Board of Education Meeting Protocols

1. Board meetings are meetings of the Board of Education held in public and are generally scheduled for the 3rd Monday of the month, with Committee meetings on an as-needed basis. Check the Board Calendar for actual dates.
2. Robert's Rules of order will be observed as a guide to facilitate Board of Education meetings.
3. The Board will encourage community involvement by allowing staff and community members to speak at a designated time during the meeting.
Public Comment.
4. All persons attending the meeting will be treated fairly and equally.
5. When someone speaks to the Board, members will listen carefully and then direct the Superintendent to help or further direct him/her to the appropriate person, if needed.
6. During Board discussions the President directs conversation so all members have equitable opportunity to speak and be heard.
7. Members will wait to speak until others have finished speaking. To help maintain order, the president will call on board members whose hands are raised to determine the order of speakers.
8. Make best efforts to stay on topic and encourage fellow board members to do so.
9. Policies and protocols related to board meetings will be reviewed and revised as needed but at least annually.
10. In any instance where the Board directs the Superintendent to convene a public forum or town hall meeting, the subject of the town hall meeting will be placed on the agenda of at least one subsequent board meeting for discussion and public comment prior to board action.

Section VI: Duties of Officers

1. The Board president will preside over Board meetings.
2. The Board president will confer with the superintendent on the agenda.