

Mary M. Knight School Board Operating Protocol

The complexities of operating a school district cannot be fully addressed in policies, procedures, or operating principles. Working with people and handling difficult and controversial issues on a daily basis requires good judgement, common sense, and a strong trust relationship between board and superintendent. Not every complaint will be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties involved; not every issue or concern will be foreseen. For these reasons, trust in each other, allowance for error, and team efforts to address problems are a key part of an effective school district operation. We will approach all situations with the belief the other person is working in good faith with good expectations.

The members of the Mary M. Knight School Board hereby commit to collectively and individually to the following operating protocol:

1. **Children's interests come first.** The Board will represent the needs and interests of all the children in our District. We will give them the best possible with what we have.
2. **The Board acts only as a body.** Individual Board members do not have authority. Only the Board as a whole has authority. We agree that an individual member will not take unilateral action. The Board president will communicate the position(s) of the Board on all issues.
3. **Clearly stated goals.** The Board will set clear goals for themselves and the Superintendent.
4. **Follow the chain of command.** The last stop, not the first will be the Board. We agree to follow the chain of command and insist that others do so too. While the Board is eager to listen to its constituents and staff, each inquiry is to be referred to the person who can properly and expeditiously address all the issues.
5. **Executive/closed sessions will be held only for appropriate subjects.** Executive sessions are held only when specific needs arise. Board members will be extremely sensitive to the legal ramifications of their meeting and comments.
6. **Communication between staff and the Board is encouraged.** Staff and Board members share a keen interest in the schools and in education. Engaging in informal discussion on matters such as educational trends, issues, and innovations can be anticipated. Discussion of personalities or staff grievances are inappropriate. All personnel complaints and criticisms received by the Board or individual members will be directed to the Superintendent. Board members will be cautious of giving the appearance of agreeing or aligning with individuals, remembering that anything said might be understood as the position of the Board.
7. **Practice the governance role.** The Board will emphasize planning, policy making, and communication rather than becoming involved in the management of schools.
8. **Practice efficient decision-making.** Board meetings are for decision-making action and votes. When discussion becomes repetitive, we agree to follow Robert's Rules.
9. **Utilize superintendent input.** The Superintendent should make recommendations, proposals, or suggestions on most matters that come before the Board.
10. **Speak to agenda issues.** We agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and listen to our fellow Board members. Facts and information needed from administration will be referred to the Superintendent.

- 11. Debate the issues.** Conduct at board meetings is very important. We agree to avoid words and actions that create a negative impression on an individual, the Board or the District. We encourage debate and differing points of view. We will use care and respect in open and honest debate of issues.
- 12. Own your own issues.** The Board will not be a 'ball carrier' for others, but rather will encourage others to present their own issues, problems, or proposals when discussing issues.
- 13. Conduct efficient and effective board meetings.** Long meetings should be avoided. Points are to be made in as few words as possible; speeches at board meetings will be minimal. If a board member believes he/she doesn't have enough information or has questions, either the superintendent or Board President is to be called before the meeting.
- 14. Do not spring surprises on other board members or the superintendent.** There should be no surprises at a board meeting. Surprises to the Board or the Superintendent will be exception, not the rule. We agree to ask the Board President or Superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting.
- 15. Annually conduct a Board evaluation.** The Board will address its behaviors by yearly self-evaluation and by addressing itself to any individual problems such as port meeting attendance or leaks of confidential information.