

# School Board-Superintendent Communications Practices

## Philosophy/Purpose

Clear and timely communication between members of the Board of Education and the Superintendent is essential to a productive working relationship by establishing trust and ensuring all parties are informed and prepared to be effective.

Clearly defining communications procedures, as well as roles and responsibilities, will help reduce confusion and the potential for misinformation or conflicting information to be shared to other parties, including district leadership, staff and community members. Additionally, it will help support Board Members in their role of Governance and support the Superintendent to provide leadership and supervision for the school district.

## Goals of these Communications Protocols

- Clearly define roles and expectations for communication between Board Members and the Superintendent
- Set expectations for communication involving Board Members and district staff
- Ensure clear and consistent two-way communication

## Values

In working together for District 191, Board Members and the Superintendent will model the District 191 Values as outlined in the Strategic Roadmap.

Caring Community - Our culture will actively encourage and embrace each member of the community, creating a sense of support that fosters their individual growth and pursuit of learning.

Cultural Proficiency - Our school community will work to understand our assumptions and biases, making a commitment to value and manage cultural uniquenesses and adapt education to meet the needs of each student.

Future Readiness - Our students will know they are ready to meet every next challenge through the confidence that comes from adventurous exploration and rigorous academics.

Inclusive Partnership - Our collaboration and communication will inspire a culture of trust where students, families and staff are reflected in decisions that shape our district.

Student Agency - Our students will make choices that personalize their learning journey, proactively building a day-to-day experience that leads them toward their passion and purpose.

## Guiding Principles of Board/Superintendent Communication

- We will speak with one voice.
- We will value and respect the unique and distinct roles of the Board and the Superintendent.
- We will communicate positively about each other, staff and District 191 as a whole.
- We will advocate for District 191 and public education.

- We will communicate regularly and clearly with the goal of keeping board members informed about events and/or changes that may have a consequential impact on the district overall. These situations will be communicated to the Board in advance of staff and community.

## **Legal Requirements**

The Board and Superintendent will follow all applicable state laws concerning open meetings.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

As a body of elected officials, the Board as a whole represents the community at large and has the responsibility to oversee the operation of the school district, through the Superintendent.

### Board Members:

- Speak with one voice, communicating the decisions of the Board with support from the Superintendent and advocating for District 191 schools.
- Work together, taking recommendations from the Superintendent, to establish district policy, adopt the district budget, and conduct district business as outlined in policy and state statute.
- Work together to provide direction to and review the work of the Superintendent.
- Represent the voice of the community through constituent relations, including by bringing concerns of community members and staff, as detailed below.
- Supports publicly the work of the district and communicates the value of District 191 schools and programs.

### Board Chair:

- Serves as a liaison between the Board and the Superintendent.
- Is responsible for sharing information pertaining to Board work with all Board members on a timely basis and is the primary conduit of information flow from the Board to the Superintendent.
- Works with the Superintendent to set meeting agendas, as outlined by Policy.
- Works with the Superintendent and Director of Communications to act as primary spokesperson for the Board with the media.

### Superintendent:

- In consultation with the Board Chair, establishes and reviews these communications protocols.
- Schedules meetings with individual board members.
- Provides information requested by board members, as outlined in these protocols.
- Works with the Board Chair to set meeting agendas, as outlined by Policy.

## **Regular Communication**

Weekly email: The Superintendent will provide a weekly update to Board Members via email. The weekly update will include issues selected by the Superintendent as important, updates requested by the Board, and information from members of the Superintendent's leadership team. Board Members are expected to check emails in a timely manner.

The executive assistant to the superintendent will provide a weekly update for calendar invites and events to board members.

One-on-one meetings: The Superintendent will meet regularly with individual Board Members to provide information, hear and answer questions or concerns, and conduct business (e.g. setting agendas or scheduling meetings), as needed. At the Superintendent's discretion, she will send a follow-up email to all Board Members as a response to specific requests/questions.

Board work sessions: The Board Chair and Superintendent may schedule work sessions for the Board where topics of particular importance can be presented and discussed in depth. In general, staff participation at these meetings will be limited to presenting information and answering questions.

Regular Board Meetings: As scheduled by the Board each year, the Board will hold regular meetings for conducting district business and receiving informational reports. Agendas will be set by the Superintendent, Board Chair, and Vice Chair. Documents for Board meetings will be available to Board Members per policy.

Board Members are asked to submit questions about materials in advance, so they can be answered before the meeting. Board Members may still choose to ask their question(s) at the meeting, if they feel there is a benefit to the answer being shared in a public forum.

### **Communication with Staff**

In general, Board Members should make requests for information to the Superintendent, who will determine the appropriate method for responding to those requests.

The Board and its members will not issue directives to staff except through the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designated representative(s). Regarding staff presentations in Boardbook, suggestions for revisions and questions should be sent to the staff member, direct supervisor and Superintendent if the staff member is not a member of the executive leadership team.

Individual Board Members will not request reports or compilation of materials from staff that involves significant work time unless the majority of a Board Committee or the Board as a whole approved the preparation of the report.

### **Emergency/Crisis Communication**

In the event of an emergency/event, the Superintendent will ensure that all Board Members are aware of the situation as soon as possible, providing details that are available. In general, this information will be provided by email, with a text notification sent by the Superintendent to bring Board Members' attention to the email for situations that require District Incident Command Team action.

- Generally, the board will be notified when the following events occur at district schools and/or sites:
- Emergency services are requested with a 911 call
- An unexpected evacuation is activated
- Implementation of standard response protocols for Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, Shelter
- Weapons or lookalike weapons are discovered on school or district sites
- Significant or serious injury to staff, student(s) and/or visitor(s)
- There is a high probability that there will be information about the incident shared widely on social media platforms

After the initial alert is shared with the full BOE, messaging will be sent to staff, followed with communication to students/families. This helps ensure that the BOE is informed and can provide last minute feedback on planned communications. More importantly, it ensures full board support of the superintendent in formal, external communications to our school community.

As needed updates on emergency situations may be provided by the Communications Director or other staff members, as requested by the Superintendent.

When seeking input from board members before making a public statement about a district or public crisis, attempts will be made to allow 24-48 hours for board members to provide input before releasing the message to the staff or public.

## **Community Relations**

Members of the Board will refer all personal appeals, applications, complaints, and other communications concerning the administration of the school district to the Superintendent or his or her designated representative(s) for investigation and report to the Board Member.

Board Members will encourage staff and community members to follow the chain of command, bringing their complaint or concern to their teacher, principal, Supervisor and/or Superintendent, as appropriate.

Responses to community members will be provided by the Board Chair, in consultation with the Superintendent and appropriate staff.

## **Protocol for Special Events**

The superintendent, when speaking at special events, will acknowledge board members by name who are present at special events especially when other elected officials (city, state and federal) are in attendance.

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