

## Building Strong School Board/ Leadership Team Relationships

*(Updated February 2023/MJL/adapted from materials prepared and used for Minnesota New School Board Member training, by Superintendent Michael Lovett and School Board Member George Kimball for the Minnesota School Boards Association, 2015-2017.)*

### 1. Cohesiveness

*Our school community sees school board members and school leaders as a team. School board members and school leaders together represent our students, staff and school community as one cohesive unit.*

*Work to be your unified best everyday and in every correspondence, whether your communication is intended to be public or private.*

### 2. Communication

*Communication must be regular, continuous and fit the needs of your board and leadership team. Your superintendent or executive director will work with the school board to find a strategy that regularly updates you on operational urgencies, important upcoming events, and progress on strategic priorities.*

*As a board member, listen to, talk with, and meet with your superintendent or executive director.*

*When board members have varying expectations on how much communication you want from your executive leader, it may be helpful to discuss the topic as a full board at a study session.*

### 3. Community

*As a school board member, you are a steward of your school or district, and have a responsibility to your school community, including students, parents, and staff. Working closely with your school leaders, find ways of being visible and supportive, understanding and honoring the board role and that of the school's leadership team.*

### 4. Conduct

*Conduct every conversation and ask every question-- in public or private- with respect and civility.*

*Develop school board protocols about who should respond to questions or advocacy from parents, students, or staff.*

*For example, the school board chair and the superintendent or executive director could make a decision on which of them should respond given the nature of the communication.*

## 5. Compliance

*Understand, honor and comply with the letter and spirit of federal and state laws and your own board policies. As a school board member you operate within the context of five levels of authority, including:*

- Federal laws and regulations
- State laws and rules
- School board policy
- Administrative procedures
- Contracts and other legal agreements

*As a new board member, appreciate the complexity of these levels of authority. Especially important from the beginning is a keen understanding of and respect for federal and state data privacy laws and the Minnesota Open Meeting Law.*

## 6. Compassion

*Recognize your responsibility for oversight of the school or district, and a respectful standards-based evaluation of your executive leader. Support your superintendent or executive director by following the norm of praising in public and offer suggestions for improvement or concern in private unless the matter is an ethical or legal matter that requires public transparency. School board members are in a key role to provide support for the professional and personal challenges school leaders face.*