

District 97 Board of Education

Responsibilities, Procedures and Protocols

The following are the responsibilities, procedures and protocols that guide the work of the District 97 Board of Education, which is a seven-member team of Oak Park residents who have been selected in a state-authorized election to serve four-year terms without pay.

Responsibilities

Per the policies of the district, the board's main responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Formulating, adopting, and modifying board policies, at its sole discretion, subject only to mandatory collective bargaining agreements and state and federal law.
- Employing a superintendent and other personnel, making employment decisions, dismissing personnel, and establishing an equal employment opportunity policy that prohibits unlawful discrimination.
- Directing, through policy, the superintendent, in his or her charge of the district's administration.
- Approving the annual budget, tax levies, major expenditures, payment of obligations, annual audit, and other aspects of the district's financial operation; and making available a statement of financial affairs as provided in state law.
- Entering contracts using the public bidding procedure when required.
- Indemnifying, protecting, and insuring against any loss or liability of the school district, board members, employees, and agents as provided or authorized by state law.
- Providing, constructing, controlling, and maintaining adequate physical facilities; making school buildings available for use as civil defense shelters; and establishing a resource conservation policy.
- Establishing an equal educational opportunities policy that prohibits unlawful discrimination.
- Approving the curriculum, textbooks, and educational services.
- Evaluating the educational program and approving school improvement and district improvement plans.
- Presenting the district report card and school report card(s) to parents/guardians and the community; these documents report district, school and student performance.
- Establishing and supporting student discipline policies designed to maintain an environment conducive to learning, including deciding individual student suspension or expulsion cases brought before it.
- Establishing attendance units within the district and assigning students to the schools.
- Establishing the school year.

- Requiring a moment of silence to recognize veterans during any type of school event held at a district school on November 11.
- Providing student transportation services.
- Entering into joint agreements with other boards to establish cooperative educational programs or provide educational facilities.
- Complying with requirements in the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. Specifically, each individual board member must, if an allegation is raised to the member during an open or closed board meeting that a student is an abused child as defined in the act, direct or cause the board to direct the superintendent or other equivalent school administrator to comply with the act's requirements concerning the reporting of child abuse.
- Communicating the schools' activities and operations to the community and representing the needs and desires of the community in educational matters.

Communication Expectations

During a retreat held in June 2013, the Board of Education and superintendent agreed upon the use of the following communication guidelines and expectations. These guidelines and expectations are featured in the Illinois Association of School Boards' publication "Starting Right Teambuilding Workshop."

The board expects:

1. A regular communication from the superintendent every week that is sent via email.
2. To be notified about the following situations via phone or email as soon as possible for:
 - a. School emergency (lockdown, fire, closing, etc.)
 - b. Student emergency (arrest, injury, death)
 - c. Staff emergency (arrest, injury, death)
3. To receive board packets and supporting documentation five days before the scheduled board meeting.
4. That all board members will receive the same information.
 - a. One member's request for additional information results in all members receiving or having the same access to the information.
 - b. Special communications are done for all board members.
5. That board members will treat each other and staff with respect.
6. That the superintendent and staff will treat all board members with respect.
7. That reasonable requests for additional information will be satisfied in a timely manner.
8. That regular follow up concerning personnel and discipline issues will occur.

The superintendent expects:

1. That requests for additions to an upcoming agenda be communicated at the previous board meeting.

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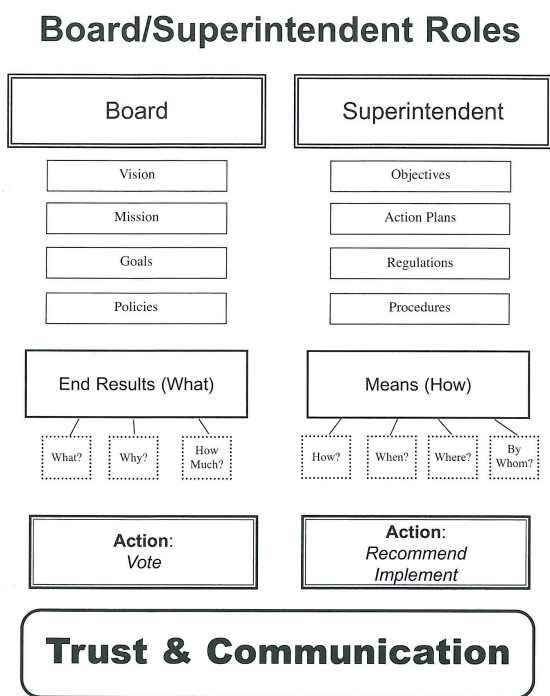
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2. That direction (e.g., request for information, completion of a task, etc.) is only given at board meetings when a majority of the board agrees to give direction.
3. That board members will be respectful toward staff and be respectful of staff's time.
4. That board members will read all supporting documentation before the board meeting.
5. That board members will email the superintendent questions about agenda items or supporting materials at least one full day before the scheduled board meeting.
6. That the board will agree to put an item on a future agenda before significant staff time is expended.
7. That board members will confirm receipt of an emergency email or phone call from the superintendent or his designee.

During a retreat held in December 2014, the board and superintendent agreed to delineate their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the "Trust and Communication" graphic featured below.



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Board Meeting Protocols

Board meetings are generally held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the board room of the administration building, which is located at 970 Madison. The board meeting schedule is set at the beginning of each year, and can be accessed on the district website (<http://www.op97.org>) or obtained from the board secretary by calling (708) 524-3009. Special meetings, workshops, study sessions and community forums may also be scheduled throughout the year. These events, as well as time and/or location changes for regularly scheduled meetings, are announced at least 24 hours in advance through a variety of means, including sending notices to the local newspapers, and posting information on the district's website and in the front lobby of the administration building. The agenda and packet of materials for each board meeting can also be accessed on the district's website.

Historically, the district's board meetings lasted three or more hours on a regular basis. In recent years, the board has made a conscious effort to shorten the length of its meetings to better accommodate the general public, increase people's willingness to serve in an official capacity, and provide its members with the opportunity to engage in more meaningful two-way communication with the community.

Goals

The following are the primary goals for all board meetings:

- Promote transparency and accountability.
- Hold sessions that are efficient and effective.
- Identify additional opportunities for the board and administration to participate in non-board meeting activities that will help strengthen relationships with stakeholders.
- Recognize student and staff accomplishments, as well as partnerships with other local organizations.
- Provide an opportunity for members of the public to present issues and concerns to the board in person.

Meeting Essentials

The board seeks to achieve the following four broad purposes through its meetings.

1. Approve legal obligations, which include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Bill list (approval of payroll, payment of bills, reimbursements, etc.)
 - b. Hiring
 - c. Meeting minutes
 - d. Budgets
 - e. Levy
 - f. Policies
 - g. Contracts
 - h. Student expulsions
 - i. Acceptance of audit

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2. Acquire information via reports and activities that aids board decision-making. These reports and activities include, but are not limited to:

- a. Public comment
- b. Organizational reports
- c. Administrative reports
- d. Committee reports
- e. FYI reports (included in the packet of materials for the meetings, but may or may not be discussed at the table during a subsequent meeting)
- f. Discussion aimed at proactively understanding the public's perspective

3. Set direction and priorities for the district in areas that include, but are not limited to:

- a. Personnel (budget/staffing targets, collective bargaining, etc.)
- b. Operations (facilities, technology, etc.)
- c. Curriculum (student/teacher ratios, priorities, etc.)
- d. Policies (identify the need to create new policies, review existing policies to determine if changes need to be made, etc.)

4. Recognition of students and staff

Agenda for Regularly Scheduled Board Meetings

Below are the items that appear on the agendas for regularly scheduled board meetings. These meetings typically start with an executive session at 6:30 p.m., which is followed by an open session that takes place from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. The time allotted for each item on the agenda will vary depending on the topics/issues being reviewed, discussed and/or approved. The board may choose to change the order of agenda items. For example, the board may consider moving public comment if special reports are expected to take a long time to complete.

1. Executive Session (30 minutes)

- a. Quorum of four board members must be present.
- b. Identify discussion items (negotiations, evaluations, etc.) at the start of the year that fall under the exceptions of the Open Meetings Act and require dedicated executive sessions. Other issues (legal action, student or employee discipline, etc.) may need to be discussed in executive session during the year.
- c. The board may need to return to executive session following an open session if discussion of a topic cannot be held until the next meeting due to legal or contractual urgency or obligation.

2. Special Reports (30-60 minutes)

- a. Public hearings (levy, audit, budget, etc.)
- b. Student presentations
- c. Reports from the administration, board or district committees, community organizations, etc.
 - i. Presentations are delivered in advance and posted in the packet of materials for the meeting whenever possible.
 - ii. All board members must come prepared for discussion.

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- iii. While most of the reports and presentations given to the board during open session are posted in the packet of materials for each meeting, copies (print and electronic) will be made available to members of the general public upon request.
- iv. The final version of any public report or presentation that was not included in the packet of materials for a meeting is attached to the minutes for that meeting, which are posted on the district website.

3. Public Comment

- a. Citizens must state their name and street address for the public record.
- b. Citizens must address the board only at the appropriate time as indicated on the agenda and when recognized by the board president.
- c. Comments from citizens shall be limited to three minutes. In unusual circumstances, and when an individual has made a request in advance to speak for a longer period of time, the individual may be allowed to speak for more than three minutes if approval to do so has been granted by the board.
- d. Citizens must observe the board president's decision to shorten public comment to conserve time and give the maximum number of individuals an opportunity to speak.
- e. Citizens must observe the board president's decision to determine procedural matters regarding public participation not otherwise covered in board policy.
- f. Citizens must conduct themselves with respect and civility toward others and otherwise abide by board policy 8:30 (Visitors to and Conduct on School Property).
- g. Citizens may request that the board provide a response to their comment. If the board receives such a request, it will either respond at the end of the meeting or ask the administration to respond on its behalf either orally or in writing . If the administration is asked to respond on the board's behalf, it will do so by a date that is determined with input from the board and is based on the amount of work that must be completed in conjunction with issuing the response.

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4. Action Items (15 minutes)**

- a. Approve minutes.
- b. Consent items, including the bill list, policy adoption, and personnel action (new hires, retirements, resignations, etc.)
- c. Finance items that were presented/discussed at a previous meeting.
- d. General items that were presented/discussed at a previous meeting.

5. Topic Reports (45 minutes)

- a. Review of final recommendation before approval.
 - i. Action expected at next meeting.
- b. Review of preliminary recommendation.
 - i. Move to final recommendation.
 - ii. Create or send back to committee.
 - iii. Table for the foreseeable future.

- c. Presentation of a topic report.
 1. Create or send back to committee.
 2. Set priority for the administration.
 3. Request additional information.
 4. Table for the foreseeable future.
 5. Just an FYI report – no action to be taken.

6. Update on Board Yearly Priorities

7. Standing Board Committee Reports (30-45 minutes)

- a. Facilities update (FAC)
- b. Financial update (FORC)
- c. Legislative update (CLAIM)
- d. Other committees that have requested or require time on the agenda

8. Administrative Items (as needed)

- a. Policy review
- b. Presentation of financial information
- c. Discussion of administrative proposals or reports

9. Concluding Items (15 minutes)

- a. Superintendent's report
- b. Board concerns and announcements
- c. Board response to public comment
- d. Preview agenda for the next board meeting
- e. Review the board timeline

10. Adjournment

** Action Items

1. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the board will not take action on an item the same night it is being presented, recommended and/or reviewed. Instead, the board will vote on the item at a meeting following the one where it was discussed.
2. When an item is brought to the table for approval, the board will take action quickly and expediently since the item was reviewed/discussed in detail at a previous meeting.
3. The board will make sure the general public understands the process/practice described in the points above.

Board and Community Requests of the Administration

The board often serves as a liaison between the district and the community. Below is the process by which board members will bring issues or concerns to the attention of the administration and the board as a whole.

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1. In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the Oath of Office taken by board members and policy 2:140 (Communications To and From the Board), individual board members will not (a) reply to an email on behalf of the entire board, or (b) engage in the discussion of district business without a majority of board-quorum. If contacted individually from someone in the community, board members will reply [copying all board members on the email] and refer that person to the appropriate level of authority. The standard board response to a print or electronic message regarding such matters shall be limited to acknowledging receipt of the message and providing the name of the district employee who will reply to the sender in a timely fashion.

2. Questions or communications from board members for district staff will be funneled through the superintendent's office. Board members will not take individual action that might compromise the board or district.

3. If a board member becomes aware of an issue or concern, he/she will contact the board president* to determine the best option for addressing it. These options may include, but are not limited to:

- Placing the issue or concern on a future board meeting agenda for review/discussion and action if necessary.
- Raising the issue or concern during the “Board Concerns/Announcements” portion of a board meeting, or during an executive session if the topic falls under the exceptions of the Open Meetings Act.
- Contacting the superintendent via phone, email or in-person meeting to make him/her aware of the issue or concern.
- Ending consideration of the issue or concern if it is not pertinent to or will have an impact on the operation of the district, the work being done by staff or the education of the students.

*If the issue or concern requires immediate attention, and the board president is not available for consultation, the board member will work directly with the superintendent/designee to address it. He/she will then make the board president aware of the situation, and update the other members of the board if necessary/appropriate.

4. If the issue or concern is placed on the agenda of a future board meeting, the board member who raised it will work with the appropriate individual(s) to collect the information that will aid in the discussion of the item at the table. This information, which will likely be shared with the board in the form of a special or topic report or presentation, may include, but not be limited to:

- An explanation of how the issue or concern fits within the board and/or district goals and priorities.
- Estimates of how much time and/or money will be required to resolve the issue or concern.

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- A plan or strategy for addressing the issue or concern, including a timeline, scope of work, assignment of responsibilities and steps for keeping the board updated on the status of the situation.
 - A determination of whether of the board will need to take action on the issue or concern at a subsequent meeting.
5. If the issue or concern is raised during an executive session or the “Board Concerns/Announcements” portion of a board meeting, the entire board will discuss what steps, if any, need to be taken to address it. These steps may include putting the topic on the agenda of a future board meeting, or charging the superintendent with handling it. If the superintendent is assigned the responsibility of dealing with the issue or concern, he/she will provide the board with status reports until the situation has been resolved.
 6. If the superintendent is made aware of the issue or concern via phone, email or in-person meeting, he/she will take the necessary steps to address it. He/she will also keep the board updated on the status of the issue or concern until it has been resolved.

Issues of Note

1. When the board agrees to consider items that fall within its governance role, but outside of its priorities for the year, it will seek information from the superintendent about the amount of the work the item may require so it can determine if other priorities need to be reassessed or reconsidered in light of its interest in pursuing the new matter.
2. At no time will a board member or members direct the superintendent to undertake any course of action without first seeking agreement from the majority of the board.
3. Except when related to tasks assigned to committees, all communication intended for staff, including questions about reports or agenda items in the packet for a board meeting, will be funneled through the superintendent with a copy to all board members.

Committee and Liaison Roles

The Board of Education has established a number of standing committees that work on a variety of issues that are critical to the success of the district, including:

- Finances – Finance Oversight and Review Committee (FORC)
- Facilities – Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC)
- State and federal legislation – Committee for Legislative Action, Intervention, and Monitoring (CLAIM)

In addition to the committees mentioned above, board members serve on the following

administrative standing committees:

- Policy Review
- Benefits Committee
- Calendar Committee

They also serve as liaisons to a variety of community organizations, including:

- Oak Park Education Foundation
- Collaboration for Early Childhood
- PTO Council
- OPRF High School Citizen's Council

At their discretion, the board and administration may form ad hoc committees to work on a particular issue for a defined period of time. Ad hoc committees created by the board receive their charge (purpose, responsibilities, composition, etc.) from the board. They also operate in the same manner as a standing board committee, including reporting directly to the board.

Administrative ad hoc committees are created by the superintendent or designee. They operate in the same manner as standing administrative committees, including reporting to the board through the superintendent or designee.

Below is additional information about committee and liaison assignments.

Overarching Standards

- The board president assigns board members to committees and liaison positions.
- As a general rule, no more than two board members will be assigned to a committee or liaison position. The board will discuss any exception to this rule.
- Board members have the opportunity to offer input in their role as committee members or liaisons. They may also participate in brainstorming sessions or discussions about the creation of new ideas. However, in these situations, the board member is not speaking on behalf of the entire board.
- To avoid the appearance of having undue control of a board or administrative committee, board members will not serve as the chair or voting member of any committee or group.
- Board members are expected to fulfill all of the duties and responsibilities of their assignments, including attending all necessary meetings.

Committees – Roles and Operating Principles

The role of a board committee is to:

- Assist the board with its work on a specific issue or subject.
- Develop insights, create reports and provide recommendations.

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There are several operating principles that guide the work of a board committee (standing or ad hoc), including:

- Board committees are initiated and can be ended by the vote of the board.
- A board committee's charge, purpose, role, scope, membership, and anticipated duration of existence (including whether it is an ad hoc or standing committee) require board approval. Board committee charges should be reviewed and amended, if necessary, on an annual basis.
- Board committees report directly to the board.
- Board committees are subject to the rules and guidelines set forth in the Open Meetings Act.
- Board members who serve on board committees must follow the overarching standards listed above.
- Membership on board committees that feature positions for citizens must be open to the entire community. These opportunities will be promoted using a variety of resources that include, but are not limited to, the district's family of websites, the district and PTO listservs, the local media, and print and electronic materials produced and distributed by other community organizations (Village of Oak Park, District 200, the Oak Park Public Library, the Park District of Oak Park, etc.).
- Board committees do not possess any official decision-making authority.

Administrative Committees

There are several operating principles that guide the work of an administrative committee (standing or ad hoc), including:

- Administrative committees are created at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.
- Board members who serve on administrative committees must follow the overarching standards listed above.
- The individual responsible for creating the administrative committee (i.e., the superintendent or designee) will be responsible for providing the board with any updates regarding the work being performed. However, a board member can participate in or provide the update or report if he/she is asked to by the superintendent or designee.

Liaisons

There are several operating principles that guide the work of a board member who is serving as a liaison to a community organization, including:

- The board will select the organizations that are given liaisons.
- As a liaison, a board member's primary role and responsibility is to serve as a conduit for the flow of information between the board and organization.
- Liaison assignments will be reviewed on an annual basis.

- Board members are expected to have regular interaction with their liaison organization(s). At a minimum, this interaction should occur at least once per quarter. Ideally, however, it will occur once per month during the academic year.
- Board liaison interactions should occur primarily through attendance at the organization's meetings, or through interaction with the organization's leadership.
- Board liaisons will provide regular updates (written or oral) to the board during the "Board Concerns and Announcements" portion of its meetings.
- The liaison or a representative from the organization may present the board with an annual report.
- Any request from a community organization for a formal (standing) liaison should be made to the board president.

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