

MESQUITE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

July 2013

MESQUITE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

2013-2014

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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MESQUITE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Members Handbook of Standard Operating Procedures

July 29, 2013

Introduction

As stated in the Preamble in the State Board of Education's Framework for School Board Development, "The Board of Trustees is the educational policy-making body for Texas public school districts. To effectively meet the challenges of public education, school boards and superintendents must function together as a leadership team. Each leadership team must annually assess their development needs as a corporate body and individually to gain an understanding of the vision, structure, accountability, advocacy, and unity needed to provide educational programs and services that ensure the equity and excellence in performance of all students. The Framework for School Board Development has been approved by the State Board of Education to provide the critical areas of development for all public school boards." (See Appendix A)

The School Board's primary responsibility is to oversee the development of policies which will promote the educational achievement of all children of the community. In order to provide the necessary and appropriate leadership for the Mesquite Independent School District (MISD), the Mesquite Board of Trustees, both collectively and individually, is committed to governing as a professional board of directors. This means a commitment to the principles and practice of professional governance, the sharing of a common understanding of Board policies, practice, procedures and principles, a focus on continuous learning and improvement, and a willingness to serve as a model of effective moral leadership to students, staff and the community. This handbook is an attempt to set down in writing the Board's procedures and principles for the benefit of current and future members of the Mesquite Board of Education.

Vision

Quest for Excellence – Success for All Students

Mission Statement

The Mission Of The Mesquite ISD Is To **Educate** All Students And **Empower** Them To **Expand** Their Opportunities To **Enrich** Our Community.

Board Governance

The Mesquite Board of Education will institutionalize a focus on continuous improvement leading to student achievement and student success through its development of policy, ongoing evaluation, and commitment to individual and Board professional growth.

Core Values

The Board will:

1. Deliberate in many voices, but govern in one.
2. Cultivate a sense of group responsibility; understanding that it is the Board, not the staff or administration, which is responsible for excellence in governance.
3. Be an active part of the school district's leadership team, striving to lead the district through a clear mission statement, an articulated vision for the district, shared and commonly understood goals, broad and clearly written policies, and a continual monitoring of the school and student performance.
4. Be willing to hold itself to high standards of excellence in governance and professional responsibility, including a willingness to hold individual Board members and the Board itself accountable for its actions.
5. Continually monitor its own performance, process, and progress.
6. Vigorously and intelligently advocate for the school district and its students on the local, state and national level.
7. Commit both individually and collectively, to being well-informed and educated on local, state and national educational issues, initiatives and practices.
8. Regularly communicate with all stakeholders about school district performance, direction, initiatives, issues and ideas.
9. Formally and informally recognize and celebrate school, staff and student success.
10. Insist on the pursuit of excellence on the part of all with a role in the school district – staff, students and board members.
11. Always strive to act in the interest of what is best for all students, believing that all students can learn and succeed at a high level.
12. Serve as a model of positive professional and ethical conduct.

Board Members Ethics

As a member of the Board, members shall promote the best interest of the District as a whole and, to that end, shall adhere to the ethical standards in accordance with policy BBF (Local) (see Appendix B for detailed standards for areas listed below)

1. Equity in attitude
2. Trustworthiness in stewardship
3. Honor in conduct
4. Integrity of character
5. Commitment to service
6. Student-centered focus

I. Board Meetings

A. Board Officers/Members

1. Process for Selecting Board Officers
 - a. Election of board officers will be held during the first regular board meeting following the official canvassing of the board election results.
 - b. Officers are nominated and elected annually following the reorganization of the Board after the May election.
 - c. All Officer Candidates must be current on their required State Education Credit Hours
2. Role and Authority of Board Members and/or Board Officers [see Appendix C – reference to Policy BBE (Legal) and (Local)]
 - a. No Board member or officer has authority outside the Board meeting. The Board of Education is a collective body and, by statute, can only act when a quorum is assembled in a legally constituted meeting. The statements or actions of individual Board members do not bind the Board of Education, except when that statement or action has been authorized by an official act of the Board.
 - b. No Board member can direct employees in regard to performance of their duties.
 - c. Board members do not get involved with individual student matters. Individual student information is confidential and Board members only have access to this information when that information is necessary for Board members to perform a function in their official capacity or have a

legitimate educational interest in the records in accordance with policies FL (Legal) and (Local).

- d. Board members have a responsibility to comply with confidentiality requirements when provided with or access to confidential records or reports in accordance with policy BBE (Local).
- e. Board member requests for information from the Districts General Counsel should go through the Board President or Superintendent.
- f. President
 - (1) shall preside at all Board meetings
 - (2) shall appoint committees of the Board
 - (3) shall call special meetings
 - (4) shall sign all legal documents as required by law
- g. Vice President
shall serve in capacity of President in absence of the President
- h. Secretary
 - (1) shall ensure that accurate records are kept
 - (2) Acting in absence of the President and Vice President, the Secretary shall serve as President Pro-Tem.
 - (3) shall sign all legal documents as required by law

B. *Board Agenda*

1. Preparation of Board Meeting Agenda
 - a. A draft agenda will be developed by the Superintendent and presented to the Board President for approval one week in advance of the meeting for which the agenda is being prepared.
 - b. The draft agenda will include items from the Board Agenda Calendar as scheduled in advance by the Board as well as actions required by law.
2. Request for item to be placed on Agenda
 - a. Any Board member may request that an item be placed on the agenda for Board consideration by contacting the Board President or the Superintendent five days prior to the meeting.

- b. Items requested later than five days prior to the meeting may be deferred to a later meeting at the discretion of the President and the Superintendent, depending on the time needed to prepare background information to accompany the item for decision making.
- c. No item can be placed on the agenda less than five days in advance of the meeting, unless 1) a delay in acting or discussing an added agenda item could seriously affect the operations of the District or 2) an emergency or urgent public necessity exists.
- d. Any agenda item added to the agenda after the original posting shall be done so in accordance with state laws.

C. Board Member Preparation for Meetings

1. Administration will ensure that all information needed for informed decision making is supplied to each member in agenda packets delivered the Friday prior to the scheduled Board meeting on Monday. Otherwise, materials will be delivered to Board members at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance. Delivery may include the use of electronic media.
2. Each Board member will prepare to address the agenda by reading agenda packet materials in advance of the meeting.
3. Board members should ask agenda-related questions of the Superintendent or Board President prior to the scheduled Board meeting.

D. Conducting Board Meeting

Any time four or more Board members are gathered to discuss school business, it is considered a meeting.

1. Consent Agenda

Placement of items on the consent agenda will be at the discretion of the Board President and the Superintendent. Any individual Board member may ask questions or discuss an item on the consent agenda by asking the President to remove it from the consent agenda for individual consideration. The President will allow discussion on any item requested for removal from the agenda by a Board member. The following types of items may be included on a consent agenda for action together in a single vote without discussion:

- a. Routine items as approved by the Board
 - b. Monthly financial reports
 - c. Minutes of regular and special Board meetings
 - d. Gifts, donations and bequests
 - e. Minutes of joint meeting with city or other government units
2. Consolidated action items
- a. The Superintendent may consolidate items on the agenda summary for possible group action, or any Board member may suggest group action on items to expedite the Board meeting.
 - b. A request by any Board member shall remove any item from the suggested consolidated action list.
3. Executive Session
- a. All personnel issues must be conducted in an executive session unless specifically required by the Texas Open Meeting Law.
 - b. Anything that violates right to privacy, i.e., Texas Open Meeting Act, Texas Open Record Act, cannot be placed on the open agenda.
 - c. The Board can only discuss those items listed on the executive agenda and as limited by law. Government Code Chapter 551 is as follows:
 - 551-071 Private consultation with the Board's attorney.
 - 551-072 Discussing purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property.
 - 551-073 Discussing negotiated contracts for prospective gifts or donations.
 - 551-074 Discussing personnel or to hear complaints against personnel.
 - 551-075 To confer with employees of the School District to receive information or to ask questions.
 - 551-076 Considering the deployment, specific occasions for, or implementation of security personnel or devices.
 - 551-082 Considering discipline of a public school child, or complaints or charge against personnel.
 - 551-083 Considering the standards, guidelines, terms of conditions the Board will follow, or will instruct its representatives to follow, in consultation with representatives of employee groups.
 - 551-084 Excluding witnesses from a hearing.

- d. Board must vote in public session.
 - e. Information discussed during the executive session must remain confidential.
4. Response to Patrons
- a. Any person may address the Board at any regular monthly Board meeting (or an original or rescheduled date) at a time identified by the Board President.
 - b. If the patron's request to address the Board specifically identifies an agenda item, the Board President shall ensure that the patron's comments are heard prior to action on the specific agenda item.
 - c. A patron wishing to address the Board regarding an item on the agenda or an item not on the agenda must complete the form provided for that purpose by 6:30 p.m. on the day of the Board meeting. The topic described on the form shall be complete and in sufficient detail as to determine appropriateness of topic prior to addressing the Board.
 - d. Patron comments may be on items listed on the agenda or other areas of School District operations but should not include complaints/ comments about employees or officials of the District.
 - e. If five or more individuals wish to speak on the same topic, the Board President may request that they designate a spokesperson to address the Board on their behalf.
 - f. Board members may listen to comments but will not respond. The Board President may ask the Superintendent to clarify an item. Items on the agenda will be discussed at the appropriate time as scheduled on the agenda. Items not on the agenda do not permit Board members to respond or discuss, as per the Texas Open Meeting Act.
 - g. The Board President, with Board consensus, may direct the Superintendent to investigate issues brought forward by the public at this time and report to the Board at a later meeting.
 - h. The Board President will be the designated spokesperson for the Board should any response to the speaker be required. The President may
 - (1) Correct misstatements of fact presented by the speaker
 - (2) Refer the speaker to applicable Board policy, and/or

- (3) Place the item on a future Board agenda for discussion if not listed on the current Board agenda.
 - i. The President will limit speakers to a maximum of five (5) minutes each, according to Board policy.
 - j. The President will limit the total time for public comments to thirty (30) minutes during regular Board meetings. Should additional time be needed for all speakers to address the Board, the Board may designate a future meeting as a public hearing to address specific issues.
 - k. The Board will not entertain negative comments on individual students or personnel in public session.
5. Personnel/Student Hearings
- a. The Board will not answer questions or enter into dialogue except with their attorney in the case of an employee hearing.
 - b. At the conclusion of the hearing or at a subsequent meeting, the Board will determine the results of the hearing.
 - c. The following rules for the hearing will be strictly adhered to:
 - (1) The Board will limit response to five minutes per testifier (or as assigned/modified by Board President, as allowed by Board policy).
 - (2) Testimony is to be presented orally or in writing, as detailed in Board policy.
 - (3) The Board will not allow duplicate testimony.
 - (4) The Board will not allow derogatory comments.
 - (5) The Board members will not ask questions since they are acting as a tribunal.
 - d. A hearing held in executive session follows essentially the same procedures, but public audience is prohibited.
6. Parliamentary Rules
- a. The Board shall be guided by parliamentary procedure as detailed in *Robert's Rules of Order* or as spelled out in Board policy.
 - b. All discussion shall relate to the business currently under deliberation.
 - c. The Board President or any other Board Member shall halt inappropriate discussion.
 - d. The Board President shall

- (1) Recognize members prior to them giving their comments, and
- (2) Be responsible for asking clarifying questions during hearings.

7. Motions/Voting

- a. The Board President has the responsibility to keep the discussion to the motion at hand and shall halt discussion that does not apply to the business before the Board.
- b. The President may enter into discussion.
- c. The Board President may vote on all action items.
- d. Except in a conflict of interest as defined by law, Board members should vote.

II. **Communication**

A. *Superintendent*

1. Administrative Report

- a. The Board President may meet with the Superintendent to discuss issues of the District.
- b. Requests for information to the Superintendent from a Board member will be communicated to all Board members.

2. Request for information about agenda item

- a. Members are encouraged to ask for information from the Superintendent or Board President before the Board meeting.
- b. Any questions about agenda items or request for additional information about them will be directed to the Superintendent or Board President.
- c. Board members should make request for information or answers as soon as possible prior to the Board meeting.
- d. The Superintendent will determine if the information request is readily available or requires a report to be developed.
- e. If a written report is provided in response to the request, all members will receive a copy.
- f. Board members may discuss the provided information in the meeting if necessary.
- g. Board members may ask additional questions about agenda items in the meeting.

3. Request for information not related to agenda item
 - a. Board members may make requests for information from the Superintendent.
 - b. The Superintendent will determine if the information requested is readily available or requires a report to be developed.
 - c. If a written report is given in response to the request, all members will receive a copy.
 - d. If the request for information is not granted, the requesting member may ask the President to place the request on a meeting agenda. The requesting member may then ask if a majority of the Board would like the Superintendent to generate a report on the requested information.

B. Notification of Meetings

1. Board members shall be notified of a meeting:
 - a. At least seventy-two (72) hours prior to a regular or special meeting, or
 - b. At least two (2) hours prior to an emergency meeting
2. Board members will be advised through the administrative reports as the agenda summary and complex agenda items are being developed.

C. Communication with Board Members between Board Meetings

1. The Superintendent will communicate with each Board member via weekly Board information packets that will include information such as
 - a. District events,
 - b. Progress reports on Board goals and directives,
 - c. Follow-up reports in answer to Board member questions, and
 - d. Information or reports requested by a Board member.
2. The Superintendent will communicate requested information to all Board members in as timely a manner as possible without interfering with the regular conduct of District business.
3. The Superintendent will meet with Board President as needed, or communicate by telephone, fax, and/or email to inform him/her of District issues that may need to come before the Board for information or action.

4. The Superintendent will distribute any information requested by the Board President to each member of the Board.
5. The Superintendent will email, text or phone all Board members regarding any urgent situations that cannot wait until the weekly administrative update.
6. Board members may communicate with other individual members for purposes of asking questions, clarifying information, or socializing under circumstances that do not conflict with or circumvent the Texas Open Meetings Act.
7. Board members should use caution when communicating with other individual members for purposes of soliciting votes in support of or opposition to items of business that may come before the Board.
8. Board members who wish to share information relevant to District business or issues before the Board should relay the information to the Board President or Superintendent for distribution to all members in the weekly Board information packets.

D. *Contact with Campuses or other District Offices/Buildings*

1. Board members are encouraged to attend as many school events as their time permits and to support activities.
2. Board members may visit any campus after checking with the principal about the best time to visit when not attending a scheduled event. As a courtesy, good practice and communication inform the Superintendent when visiting a campus, etc.
3. Board members will check in with the principal's office following campus guidelines.
4. Board members may interact with any staff member or student during free periods, lunch, or recess.
5. Board members will not go unannounced to any District building or classroom.
6. Board members are not to go into teachers' classrooms or individual building for the purposes of investigation or evaluations.
7. Board members may not give any advice or direction to any staff or students except when safety or liability is an issue.
8. While School Board members have no authority as individuals, it is sometimes difficult for staff members to see them as ordinary parents; therefore,

- a. When visiting with teachers of their own children, Board members will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than as members of the Board, and
- b. Board members will not request nor accept extraordinary consideration for their students.

E. *Community*

1. Communicating with Community

- a. Board members are encouraged to participate in community activities as liaisons between the public and the school district. When doing so, Board members are expected to
 - (1) Relay information about District goals, and/or
 - (2) Refer questions about specific District activities to the appropriate staff person when they do not know the answers.
- b. The School Board encourages community input; however, it will not respond to or act on the basis of anonymous calls or letters.
- c. Signed letters addressed to the Board or a Board member will be forwarded to the President or the Superintendent for inclusion in the weekly Board information packet.
- d. The Board, as a body, will communicate to the community through District communication vehicles authorized by the Board in policy or the District communication plan.

2. Employee/Citizen Complaints

- a. Listen briefly and respectfully; remain impartial.
- b. Ask if the complainant has followed the "Chain of Command" outlined in District policy.
- c. Remind the complainant of the Board's responsibility to remain impartial regarding complaints that may ultimately be brought to the Board on appeal.
- d. If the complainant does not know the District's "Chain of Command," provide the following information:
"Chain of Command"

- (1) The complainant must first discuss the problem with the authority closest to the problem.
 - (2) If the problem is not resolved at that level, the Board member notifies the Superintendent's office for appropriate referral.
- e. Board members should advise the Superintendent of substantial or significant complaints within seventy-two (72) hours.
 - f. The Superintendent will inform the Board of the resolution of complaints referred by Board members if they require Superintendent intervention.

F. *Communication with Media*

1. The Superintendent (or Board President or his/her designee) shall be the official spokesperson for the Board to the media on issues of media attention.
2. A Board member who receives a call from the media requesting information, comments, or an interview regarding District business will direct them to the Superintendent (or Board spokesperson), and he/she will notify the Board President of the call.
3. Board members retain the right to speak to the media as individuals.
4. If speaking to a media representative, a Board member should clarify when speaking as an individual rather than as directed by the School Board. When speaking as an individual, the member will remind the media representative(s) of the position or action of the School Board as a body.

III. **Board Training**

A. *New Member Orientation*

1. Upon election, new members shall participate in a local orientation session within sixty (60) days before or after their election or appointment. The purpose of this orientation is to familiarize new Board members with local Board policies, Board Standard Operating Procedures as well as District goals and priorities.
2. Effective January 1, 1997, all newly elected members shall receive the orientation to the Texas Education Code within the first year of service. The orientation shall be delivered by regional education service centers and shall be three hours in length.

3. The Board President will appoint a mentor for new Board members for one year.

B. Annual team building session/assessment of team continuing education needs

1. Board members, upon completion of the initial training required in paragraph A. 2 above, shall annually participate in an assessment of their training needs.
2. Continuing education for Board members includes orientation sessions, an annual team-building session with the Board and the Superintendent, and specified hours of continuing education based on identified needs.
3. Following each legislative session, each Board member shall participate in a session identifying major changes in the Education Code.
4. At the last board meeting of the calendar year, a report will be made to the entire board, indicating the progress and status of each board member in fulfilling the necessary training hours and sessions.

C. Annual Board/team self-evaluation and establishment of team goals

1. The Board and Superintendent participate in an annual team building activity focused on self-assessment.
2. A Board self-evaluation will be conducted annually.
3. Team goals will be set following the annual self-evaluation.
4. Team building activity concludes with written plans and priorities for continuing education by the Board and by individual trustees.
5. Effectiveness of the team building activity and review of continuing education plans will be reviewed six to ten months following the activity as indicated on the Board Calendar.

D. Training opportunities

1. Board members will be notified by TASB for training opportunities.
2. Board members will be notified by and assisted through the Superintendent's office regarding training opportunities.
3. Twice a year, a report will be sent to the entire board indicating the status of each board members progress in obtaining the necessary training hours

IV. Governance

A. Planning

The following actions are included in the planning process:

1. Establishment of District's vision, mission, annual measurable goals.
2. An Annual Planning Session for development and review of District goals as designated on the Board Calendar and conducted by the Superintendent and Board.
3. Approval of District and campus performance objectives.
4. District and campus improvement plans.
5. A review of District progress toward goals accomplishments as indicated on the Board Calendar.
6. Review of instructional program.
7. Review of programs other than instruction including goals, standards and benchmarks used for assessing effectiveness as designated on the Board Calendar.
8. Development and adoption of budget based on funding priorities consistent with Board adopted goals.

B. Evaluation

1. Superintendent
 - a. The summative evaluation will generally be conducted in December.
 - b. The Board President obtains input from all other members on the approved indicators.
 - c. Evaluation is conducted by consensus in executive session.
 - d. The Board's evaluation of the Superintendent's performance in District operations areas focuses on the Superintendent's success in establishing appropriate measures and standards for performance; putting effective plans, programs, procedures or systems in place; monitoring success; and using data for improvement in addressing Board-adopted goals.
2. Board
 - a. Ongoing assessment of the status of Board/Superintendent team will exist.

- b. Evaluation is conducted in executive session on a schedule determined by the Board. The following areas may be included in the process:
 - (1) Are we following code of conduct?
 - (2) Are we following operating procedures?
 - (3) Is the team of eight functioning?
 - (4) Were goals effective?
3. Review Team Operating Procedure
 - a. District Vision, Mission and Goals will be reviewed annually by all Board members and Site-Based Decision Making Committee members as indicated in Board Calendar. They will determine if the vision statement still represents a shared picture of the basic ideal for the District.
 - b. As designated on the Board Calendar, the Board will annually reaffirm an ethics statement for Board members.
 - c. Standard Board Operating Procedures will be reviewed annually as indicated in the calendar and updated as needed.
 - d. The Board will review reports annually, as indicated in the Board Calendar, and determine which reports will be needed for the next year.

V. **Events**

A. *Annual School Board Calendar*

1. The calendar will cover the Annual Major Events,
2. The calendar will run from September 1 – August 31.

B. *Community Events*

1. The District will purchase tickets on behalf of board members to the various local events such as the annual Chamber of Commerce banquet,
2. Two tickets will be provided per member when requested through the Superintendent's office.

C. *Travel*

1. Registrations. All registrations will be paid by the District for all reasonable conferences, seminars, conventions, and education activities. Pre-registration is required at all events. Board members should use good judgment in

determining the need for travel. Each board member will have a travel budget of \$4000 per budget year. If additional funds are needed, the board member should make a request to the board president, giving justification for the additional funds. Board members who hold additional offices or membership in organizations such as TASB or other entities, can arrange for additional funds by making a request to the board president and superintendent.

2. Travel Advances. MISD will extend a travel advance for most conferences, seminars, and conventions or upon request by Board member. Reconciliation of travel advances must occur within sixty (60) days of payment.
3. Submission. Submission of the "Travel Expense Report" (or an equivalent listing of expenses incurred) should be made to the Secretary of the Superintendent and Board at the Superintendent's office.
4. Filing Deadline. All expense reports along with the various receipts and supporting documents must be submitted within sixty (60) days of the incurred expense. After 60 days, reimbursement of the board members expenses will be reduced by 50%. Travel advance checks will not be given to board members who have not complied with these reporting guidelines.
5. MISD Trustees. Pursuant to District Policy 'BBG Local' MISD will reimburse Board members for all reasonable expenses incurred in meeting their expectations and in carrying out their duties. Board members are expected to show good judgment about travel expenses and have proper regard for economy while representing the School District.
6. Reimbursable Expenses. The following guidelines will be utilized in considering reimbursement of expenses:

TRAVEL ITEM	REIMBURSABLE AMOUNT	RECEIPT REQUIRED	COMMENTS
Airlines	Actual Expenses	Yes	Least expensive fare using most logical and direct route.
Car, Privately-Owned	The maximum standard reimbursement rate permitted by the IRS	No	
Incidental Expenses	Actual Cost	No	Includes expenses such as gratuities, etc.
Lodging in commercial lodging establishments	Actual daily rate including tax	Yes	If traveling with spouse or guest, double room rate will be reimbursed.
Meals	Actual Costs for meals up to \$45 per day	Yes	Meals and refreshments provided to others for MISD business purposes will be reimbursed.
Taxi, Shuttle, or Other Local Transportation	Actual Cost	Yes	

7. Non-Reimbursable Expenses. The following expenses apply as non-reimbursable:

- a. Spouse/guest travel
- b. Additional accommodations charges beyond the single or double occupancy charges
- c. Spouse/guest meals (unless participating in an MISD planned group activity)
- d. Rental car expenses (unless other means of travel cannot be economically used and approved by the Board President and Superintendent)
- e. In-room movie charges
- f. Personal service charges
- g. Laundry or cleaning charges

- h. Health club charges
- i. Amusement, entertainment, diversion and social activities
- j. Unsupported or undocumented charges which require a receipt unless authorized by the Board
- k. Charges incurred for alcoholic beverages. Charges for any alcoholic beverages must not be included on tickets or receipts for other reimbursable items. In cases where food and beverage items are incurred in a bar and/or charged to a hotel room bill, the charges for alcoholic beverages must be clearly separated from other reimbursable charges.

D. Deployment

1. The Board will instruct staff to disseminate Vision, Mission and Goals throughout the District and community following the annual meeting as designated on the Board Calendar.
2. The Board will ensure that Goals have been disseminated on the District web site and through District publications and communications. Goals will also be available in the Board Room for each member.

Framework for School Board Development

The Framework for School Board Development was adopted by the State Board of Education. It outlines the vision, structure, accountability, advocacy, and unity needed to provide local programs and services that will promote excellence in student academic achievement. The state's 20 regional education service centers have an outstanding team of professionals available to assist each school district with their local board training needs.

Framework for School Board Development

Adopted by the State Board of Education, January 1996

Revised by the State Board of Education, July 2012

Preamble: The Board of Trustees is the educational policy-making body for Texas public school districts. To effectively meet the challenges of public education, school boards and superintendents must function together as a leadership team. Each leadership team must annually assess their development needs as a corporate body and individually to gain an understanding of the vision, structure, accountability, advocacy, and unity needed to provide educational programs and services that ensure the equity and excellence in performance of all students. The Framework for School Board Development has been approved by the State Board of Education to provide the critical areas of development for all public school boards.

I. Vision - The board ensures creation of a shared vision that promotes enhanced student achievement.

- The board keeps the district focus on the educational welfare of all children.
- The board adopts a shared vision based on community beliefs to guide local education.
- The board ensures that the vision supports the state's mission, objectives, and goals for education established by law and/or rule.
- The board ensures that the district vision expresses the present and future needs of the children and community.
- The board uses the vision to assess the importance of individual issues that come before the board and demonstrates its commitment to the vision by using the vision to guide all board deliberations, decisions, and actions.
- Individual board members should not have individual agendas separate and apart from the shared vision.

II. Structure - The board provides guidance and direction for accomplishing the vision.

- The board recognizes the respective roles of the legislature, State Board of Education, the Texas Education Agency, and local boards of trustees in the governance of the public schools.
- The board fulfills the statutory duties of the local board of trustees and upholds all laws, rules, ethical procedures, and court orders pertaining to schools and school employees.
- The board focuses its actions on policy making, planning, and evaluation, and restricts its involvement in management to the responsibility of oversight.

- The board adopts a planning and decision making process consistent with state law and/or rule that uses participation, information, research, and evaluation to help achieve the district's vision.
- The board ensures that the district planning and decision making process enables all segments of the community, parents, and professional staff to meaningfully contribute to achieving the district's vision.
- The board develops and adopts policies that provide guidance for accomplishing the district's vision, mission, and goals.
- The board adopts a budget that incorporates sound business and fiscal practices and provides resources to achieve the district's vision, mission, and goals.
- The board adopts goals, approves student performance objectives, and establishes policies that provide a well-balanced curriculum resulting in improved student learning.
- The board approves goals, policies, and programs that ensure a safe and disciplined environment conducive to learning.
- The board oversees the management of the district by employing a superintendent and evaluating the superintendent's performance in providing education leadership, managing daily operations, and performing all duties assigned by law and/or rule and in support of the district's vision.
- The board adopts policies and standards for hiring, assigning, appraising, terminating, and compensating school district personnel in compliance with state laws and rules.

III. Accountability - The board measures and communicates how well the vision is being accomplished.

- The board ensures progress toward achievement of district goals through a systematic, timely, and comprehensive review of reports prepared by or at the direction of the superintendent.
- The board monitors the effectiveness and efficiency of instructional programs by reviewing reports prepared by or at the direction of the superintendent and directs the superintendent to make modifications that promote maximum achievement for all students.
- The board insures that appropriate assessments are used to measure achievement of all students.
- The board reports district progress to parents and community in compliance with state laws and regulations.
- The board reviews district policies for effective support of the district's vision, mission, and goals.
- The board reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of district operations and use of resources in supporting the district's vision, mission, and goals.
- The board evaluates the superintendent's performance annually in compliance with state laws and regulations.
- The board annually evaluates its own performance in fulfilling the board's duties and responsibilities, and the board's ability to work with the superintendent as a team.

IV. Advocacy - The board promotes the vision.

- The board demonstrates its commitment to the shared vision, mission, and goals by clearly communicating them to the superintendent, the staff and community.
- The board ensures an effective two-way communication system between the district and its students, parents, employees, media and the community.
- The board builds partnerships with community, business, and governmental leaders to influence and expand educational opportunities and meet the needs of students.
- The board supports children by establishing partnerships between the district, parents, business leaders, and other community members as an integral part of the district's educational program.
- The board leads in recognizing the achievements of students, staff, and others in education.
- The board promotes school board service as a meaningful way to make long-term contributions to the local community and society.
- The board provides input and feedback to the legislature, State Board of Education, and the Texas Education Agency regarding proposed changes to ensure maximum effectiveness and benefit to the schoolchildren in their district.

V. Unity - The board works with the superintendent to lead the district toward the vision.

- The board ensures that its members understand and respect the need to function as a team in governing and overseeing the management of the district.
- The board develops skills in teamwork, problem solving, and decision making.
- The board establishes and follows local policies, procedures, and ethical standards governing the conduct and operations of the board.
- The board understands and adheres to laws and local policies regarding the board's responsibility to set policy and the superintendent's responsibility to manage the school district and to direct employees in district and campus matters.
- The board recognizes the leadership role of the board president and adheres to law and local policies regarding the duties and responsibilities of the board president and other officers.
- The board adopts and adheres to established policies and procedures for receiving and addressing ideas and concerns from students, parents, employees, and the community.
- The board makes decisions as a whole only at properly called meetings and recognizes that individual members have no authority to take individual action in policy or district and campus administrative matters.
- The board supports decisions of the majority after honoring the right of individual members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions.

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**BOARD MEMBERS
ETHICS**

BBF
(LOCAL)

As a member of the Board, I shall promote the best interests of the District as a whole and, to that end, shall adhere to the following ethical standards:

- STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS
 - I will be continuously guided by what is best for all students of the District.

- EQUITY IN ATTITUDE
 - I will be fair, just, and impartial in all my decisions and actions.
 - I will accord others the respect I wish for myself.
 - I will encourage expressions of different opinions and listen with an open mind to others' ideas.

- TRUSTWORTHINESS IN STEWARDSHIP
 - I will be accountable to the public by representing District policies, programs, priorities, and progress accurately.
 - I will be responsive to the community by seeking its involvement in District affairs and by communicating its priorities and concerns.
 - I will work to ensure prudent and accountable use of District resources.
 - I will make no personal promise or take private action that may compromise my performance or my responsibilities.
 - I will recognize that school business may be legally transacted only at a properly posted meeting.

- HONOR IN CONDUCT
 - I will tell the truth.
 - I will share my views while working for consensus.
 - I will respect the majority decision as the decision of the Board.
 - I will base my decisions on fact rather than supposition, opinion, or public favor.

- INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER
 - I will refuse to surrender judgment to any individual or group at the expense of the District as a whole.
 - I will consistently uphold all applicable laws, rules, policies, and governance procedures.
 - I will not disclose information that is confidential by law or that will needlessly harm the District if disclosed.

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**BOARD MEMBERS
ETHICS**

BBF
(LOCAL)

COMMITMENT TO
SERVICE

- I will focus my attention on fulfilling the Board's responsibilities of goal setting, policymaking, and evaluation.
- I will diligently prepare for and attend Board meetings.
- I will avoid personal involvement in activities the Board has delegated to the Superintendent.
- I will seek continuing education that will enhance my ability to fulfill my duties effectively.

TEAM OF EIGHT

- I understand that my authority as a Board member does not extend beyond my service to the Board as a whole. I have no individual authority as a Board member.
- I will provide adequate safeguards around the Superintendent and other personnel so they may perform the proper functions of education on a professional basis.

BOARD OPERATING
PROCEDURES

The Board shall adhere to, and each Board member shall acknowledge, the operating procedures developed and approved by the Board. The Board shall annually review the operating procedures.

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**BOARD MEMBERS
AUTHORITY**

BBE
(LOCAL)

BOARD AUTHORITY

The Board has final authority to determine and interpret the policies that govern the schools and, subject to the mandates and limits imposed by state and federal authorities, has complete and full control of the District. Board action shall be taken only in meetings that comply with the Open Meetings Act. [See BE(LEGAL)]

TRANSACTIONING
BUSINESS

When a proposal is presented to the Board, a discussion shall be held and a decision reached. Although there may be dissenting votes, which are a matter of public record, each Board decision shall be an action by the whole Board binding upon each member.

INDIVIDUAL
AUTHORITY FOR
COMMITTING THE
BOARD

Board members as individuals shall not exercise authority over the District, its property, or its employees. Except for appropriate duties and functions of the Board President, an individual member may act on behalf of the Board only with the express authorization of the Board. Without such authorization, no individual member may commit the Board on any issue. [See BDAA]

INDIVIDUAL ACCESS
TO INFORMATION

An individual Board member, acting in his or her official capacity, shall have the right to seek information pertaining to District fiscal affairs, business transactions, governance, and personnel matters, including information that properly may be withheld from members of the general public in accordance with the Public Information Chapter of the Government Code. [See GBA]

LIMITATIONS

Individual members shall not have access to confidential student records unless the member is acting in his or her official capacity and has a legitimate educational interest in the records in accordance with policies FL(LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

REQUESTS FOR
RECORDS

Individual members shall seek access to records or request copies of records from the Superintendent or other designated custodian of records. When a custodian of records other than the Superintendent provides access to records or copies of records to individual Trustees, the provider shall inform the Superintendent of the records provided.

REQUESTS FOR
REPORTS

Individual members shall not direct or require District employees to prepare reports derived from an analysis of information in existing District records or to create a new record compiled from information in existing District records. Directives to the Superintendent or custodian of records regarding the preparation of reports shall be by Board action.

CONFIDENTIALITY

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**BOARD MEMBERS
AUTHORITY**

BBE
(LOCAL)

At the time Board members are provided access to confidential records or to reports compiled from such records, the Superintendent or other District employee shall advise them of their responsibility to comply with confidentiality requirements.

**REFERRING
COMPLAINTS**

If employees, parents, students, or other members of the public bring concerns or complaints to an individual Board member, he or she shall refer them to the Superintendent or another appropriate administrator, who shall proceed according to the applicable complaint policy. [See (LOCAL) policies at DGBA, FNG, and GF]

When the concern or complaint directly pertains to the Board's own actions or policy, for which there is no administrative remedy, the Trustee may request that the issue be placed on the agenda.

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**BOARD MEMBERS
AUTHORITY**

BBE
(LEGAL)

BOARD AUTHORITY

The Board members as a body corporate have the exclusive power and duty to govern and oversee the management of the public schools of the District. *Education Code 11.151*

The Board may act only by majority vote of the members present at a meeting held in compliance with Government Code Chapter 551, at which a quorum of the Board is present and voting. Unless authorized by the Board, a member of the Board may not, individually, act on behalf of the Board. *Education Code 11.051(a-1)*

ACCESS TO
INFORMATION

An individual Board member has an inherent right of access to records maintained by the District when the Board member requests the records in his or her official capacity. *Atty. Gen. Op. No. JM-119 (1983)*

When there are competing confidentiality or security concerns, it may be proper for the Board to establish reasonable procedures to preserve confidentiality, but the District may not absolutely prohibit an individual Board member from viewing records involving District business that are otherwise properly available to the Board as a governmental body. *Atty. Gen. Op. No. GA-138 (2004)*

ACCESS TO
STUDENT
RECORDS

Personally identifiable information in education records may be released, without the written consent of the student's parents, only to a school official who has a legitimate educational interest in the education records. *34 CFR 99.31 [See FL]*

RESPONSIBILITY
FOR RECORDS

A person, including a Board member, commits a criminal offense if the person:

1. Knowingly or intentionally destroys, conceals, removes, or otherwise impairs the verity, legibility, or availability of a District record in contravention of Local Government Code Chapter 202. *Local Gov't Code 202.008; Penal Code 37.10*
2. Willfully destroys, mutilates, alters, or removes public information without permission as provided by Government Code Chapter 552 (Public Information Act). *Gov't Code 552.351*
3. Distributes information considered confidential under the Public Information Act. *Gov't Code 552.352*

PROTECTIONS FOR
ACTING ON A
LEGISLATIVE
MEASURE

A Board member may not be subject to disciplinary action or a sanction, penalty, disability, or liability for:

1. An action permitted by law that the officer takes in the officer's official capacity regarding a legislative measure;

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**BOARD MEMBERS
AUTHORITY**

BBE
(LEGAL)

2. Proposing, endorsing, or expressing support for or opposition to a legislative measure or taking any action permitted by law to support or oppose a legislative measure;
3. The effect of a legislative measure or of a change in law proposed by a legislative measure on any person; or
4. A breach of duty, in connection with the Board member's practice of or employment in a licensed or regulated profession or occupation, to disclose to any person information, or to obtain a waiver or consent from any person, regarding the officer's actions relating to a legislative measure; or the substance, effects, or potential effects of a legislative measure.

Gov't Code 572.059

**BOARD MEMBER
IMMUNITIES**

The statutory immunity detailed below is in addition to and does not preempt the common law doctrine of official and governmental immunity. *Education Code 22.051(b)*

**STATE LAW
IMMUNITIES**

A Board member is not personally liable for any act that is incident to or within the scope of the duties of the Board member's position and that involves the exercise of judgment or discretion. *Education Code 22.0511(a)*

**FEDERAL LAW
IMMUNITIES**

Except as provided in 20 U.S.C. Section 6736(b), no Board member shall be liable for harm caused by an act or omission of the Board member on behalf of the District if the conditions of the Paul D. Coverdell Teacher Protection Act of 2001 are met. *20 U.S.C. 6733, 6736(a)* [See also DH]