



Ashland School Board Operating Agreements and Understandings

Adopted 11-21-2022

The School Board Job Description

1. Members of the Board and the Superintendent shall work together as a team.
2. Focus on policy-making, planning and evaluation, rather than day-to-day operations.
3. Make decisions as a whole board only at properly called meetings. Board members recognize that individual members have no authority to take individual action in policy or district and school administrative matters.
4. Support decisions of the majority after honoring the right of individual members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions.
5. Recognize and respect the Superintendent's responsibility to manage the school district and to direct employees in district and school matters.
6. Give careful consideration to all issues brought to you by individuals and special interests. Actively solicit input and listen to all perspectives. We will operate as representatives and make decisions in the best interest of the whole district.
7. Value the role we play in the community and represent the district, when possible, by attending school and community functions.
8. Be an advocate for public education in the district, region and state level by speaking up for, and on behalf of public education whenever required.
9. Be cognizant of district resources when requesting information and/or action from the superintendent.

Meetings

1. No surprise items at Board meetings.
2. Allow all members time to express themselves without feeling rushed.
3. Employ parliamentary procedure to facilitate a smooth meeting.
4. Uphold the legal requirement for confidentiality on all matters arising from the board meeting in Executive Session.
5. Start and end meetings on time.
6. Attend regularly scheduled board meetings and work sessions unless a situation occurs that makes attendance impossible.
7. Cooperate in scheduling special meetings and/or work sessions for planning and training purposes.
8. Cast a vote on all matters except when a conflict of interest arises



Communication Agreements

1. Communicate directly with the Superintendent when a question arises, or a concern is voiced by a staff member, student, parent or community member.
2. Communicate directly with the Superintendent or Board Chair prior to meetings of the board to address questions and/or concerns about agenda items.
3. Communicate one-on-one, when an individual concern arises, with the Superintendent or other board members as appropriate.
4. Schedule formal visits to schools through the superintendent's office.
5. No individual board member, regardless of his or her position, has the authority to speak for the board.

Dealing with Citizen or Staff Complaints Board and Administration

The following process is recommended to board members who are contacted by a community or staff member who has a complaint.

1. Listen to the individual's concern. Maintain a professional demeanor.
2. Determine if the individual has discussed the issue with the person immediately responsible. If this has not been done, tell them how to contact the appropriate person.
3. Explain the District process for resolving concerns and conflicts. Describe the appropriate channels that should be followed if the complaint is not resolved.
4. Explain that as a final resource a complaint can be submitted to the school or district, and refer the person to the complaint process in Board policy. Explain that complaints raised against individuals cannot be addressed in a public meeting.
5. Be cautious of giving the appearance of agreeing with the person; sometimes just listening makes people think that you are on "their side." Remember that anything you say might be understood as the position of the Board or the administration.
6. If the complaint merits investigation it should be referred to the superintendent or may be raised in executive session or work session as appropriate.

Handling controversy

Board: Use a variety of strategies in dealing with controversy or sensitive issues. Examples are as follows: (1) the chair may call a short recess if it appears that people need to regroup or regain their composure; (2) a special meeting could be called to deal



with a topic that appears likely to need extended airtime; (3) the chair may ask the superintendent to investigate a concern or complaint.

Generally, the Board does not take final action on a complaint during the meeting at which it is presented. While we need to respond in timely fashion, we need to allow time to give the issue the review and study it warrants.

The Board does not hear specific complaints related to individuals in open session. To protect the rights of individuals such complaints are dealt with in executive session.

Always maintain a courteous demeanor and demonstrate respect for people who address the Board.

BOARD COMMUNICATION WITH LABOR LEADERSHIP (ADDENDUM TO OPERATING AGREEMENTS 11.21.22)

In general, individual Board Members should not meet with union leadership in the absence of the Superintendent or the full Board except as outlined in Board policy. This does not prohibit a Director from interacting with any staff in the course of visiting a building, soliciting feedback from building staff or when acting as a parent discussing topics immediately relevant to their child.

If Board members wish to meet in the absence of the Superintendent with union leadership outside of the above, up to two interested Directors should bring a proposal to the whole Board and the Superintendent to discuss the interest in advance.

A clear purpose and desired outcome should be communicated. The Board and Superintendent should discuss 1) whether the intended purpose furthers the interest of the District and students, 2) whether there is an inclusive and transparent way to achieve the interest that includes other Board members and the Superintendent, and 3) the desired outcomes.

If it is determined that the interest and desired outcomes serve the District and students, the Board and Superintendent will collaborate to find the most inclusive strategy to reach the desired outcomes.

If there is agreement that the best way to achieve the desired outcomes is for up to two Board members to meet with union leadership without the Superintendent or other Board members present, the Board and Superintendent will:

- 1) Set clear parameters for the conversation;
- 2) Review guidelines for communications to avoid potential unfair labor practices;
- 3) Use the time to listen and understand union leadership perspectives;



- 4) Communicate the parameters to union leadership;
- 5) Refrain from problem solving or agreement;
- 6) Review the content and outcomes of the conversation in a timely manner with the Board Chair and Superintendent.

So as to avoid unintended unfair labor practices, Board members shall refrain from meeting with members of union leadership during active periods of collective bargaining with the specific group to which that union leader may belong.