

# BOARD OF EDUCATION NORMS AND PROTOCOLS

The governance team agrees to:

## Operate in a manner that reflects:

- Student-focused decision making
- Focus on student achievement
- Approachability
- Knowledge about educational issues
- Trustworthiness
- Consistency
- Responsiveness
- Commitment
- Excellence in everything we do
- Fairness
- Follow through
- Passion
- Wisdom
- Investment
- Ethical behavior
- Professionalism

## A Governance Roles and Responsibilities

The governance team agrees to:

- Always put students first when making decisions and keep student achievement as the main focus of board actions
- Educate students – ethically and with fiscal responsibility
- Follow the Code of Ethics and disclose any conflicts of interest
- Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each in their respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust
- Act as a policymaking body separate from the roles and responsibilities authorized to the superintendent
- Not micromanage the superintendent in the day-to-day operations of the district
- Follow the chain of command and instruct and encourage others to do so when necessary
- Support the team, be open-minded and willing to listen
- Commit to being accountable

The governance team agrees to:

- Be transparent and respectful
- Always follow the chain of command and not micromanage the superintendent
- Designate the superintendent as chief executive officer fully delegating authority to provide educational leadership, manage daily operations and perform all duties assigned by law
- Operate as a governance team with the superintendent as a key member
- Never surprise the superintendent in a board meeting
- Respect the superintendent's professional recommendations and decisions, even when there's disagreement, and never undermine the superintendent's authority
- Take recommendations from the superintendent seriously, and carefully research and review before taking action
- Open and honest communications
- Hold the superintendent accountable for operations and student performance
- Establish the superintendent's annual performance goals jointly with the superintendent in alignment with the strategic plan and provide feedback to the superintendent at least bi-annually via formative and summative evaluation procedures
- Be supportive of board decisions, even when there's disagreement
- Be fair and timely with the Superintendent's Evaluation. The evaluation process includes an annual review in May/June, the setting of new goals in July and a mid-year evaluation in January of each year.

## **C Chain of Command**

The governance team agrees to:

- It will support and follow the chain of command and insist that staff do the same
- The superintendent is responsible and accountable for the day-to-day operations with equity and consistency
- Issues and concerns received by the Board or individual members will be referred to the superintendent
- The board will educate the public about the chain of command and instruct them to follow it when approached with requests about day-to-day and operational issues.

The governance team agrees to:

- Be open-minded and respectful of all opinions
- Provide a safe space for communications for all stakeholders
- Seek input and listen to all sides before making decisions
- Put students first when making decisions
- Study the issues and discuss with stakeholders, superintendent and fellow board members
- Be prepared and knowledgeable about educational issues and topics
- Support decisions made by the Board and/or administrative team once a decision is made
- Support the majority decision

## **E School Visits**

The governance team agrees to:

- Follow the chain of command and board protocols when requesting a personal visit
- Board members wishing to visit schools will make arrangements with the superintendent at least 24 hours in advance and state their purpose for the visit, unless they are invited directly by the school administration or district
- Visits to schools should be conducted for an appropriate purpose
- Protocol does not preclude board members from attending school functions as a parent or as a community member
- They will follow visitor sign in procedures, be respectful of the staff's time, and maintain professional conduct
- Invitations to sporting or extracurricular events where Board members will be recognized in a formal or ceremonial capacity should be sent to the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and the Board

## Capital Projects & Construction Site Visits F

The governance team agrees to:

- Tour construction sites when invited by the administration
- There will be regular updates on capital projects during board work sessions that may include images and drone fly-through footage
- Individual board members will not make unscheduled visits to active construction sites
- Board Members will not have outside, individual contact with the CMR, Architect or their staff regarding capital projects. All questions regarding projects and progress will go through the Superintendent or his/her designee.

## G Communication

The governance team agrees to:

- Be open-minded, respectful and professional with all stakeholders
- Ongoing, transparent communication with community stakeholders while maintaining confidentiality regarding sensitive matters, including items discussed in executive sessions, and refraining from discussing the intentions of fellow board members
- Incorporate good, timely, open and constant communication
- Support and encourage each other in serving the public at the highest level of professionalism and ethical conduct. The board encourages new board members in their first year of service to accept support and education about the role and best practices from the Board Chair, Superintendent, and an assigned “Board Mentor.” The “Board Mentor” shall be a veteran board member who, when possible, has served at least one 4-year term of service. The Board Mentor will agree to be an additional layer of support and a point of contact for a new board member in their first year of service.

The governance team agrees to:

- Respectful and timely communications
- A 24-hour response time from the superintendent
- Not inundate the superintendent with daily phone calls, but definitely call if there's an emergency
- During times of crisis when the school system is making decisions about how to respond to a crisis or to prepare for a potential closing, individual board members will direct concerns or questions to the board chair. The board chair and superintendent will maintain daily contact. The concerns from board members will be relayed by the board chair to the superintendent and information will be gathered. The board chair will then share updates with the entire board.
- Expect the superintendent to communicate with all board members regularly using selected modes
- Direct all stakeholders' questions, input or discussion to the superintendent who will communicate them as needed to the board
- When a board member has information or data to share with other board members and/or staff, board member will provide the information/data to the superintendent who will distribute to pertinent parties
- When all seven board members receive emails from constituents, the board chair will reply all, include the superintendent on the thread. If the superintendent and board are all copied on a constituent's email, then the superintendent will reply all in his/her response.
- Requests for information from individual board members to the superintendent that will likely require considerable time and effort must be approved by a majority of the board
- Be mindful of the Superintendent's time and try to call or send non-urgent emails and texts during business hours. (after 7:30 am and before 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday).
- In conversations among board members and/or the superintendent, confidentiality is assumed unless otherwise noted. Board members are encouraged to engage in phone calls privately and to protect conversations from being overheard.

- When an individual board member receives an email from a constituent, the board member will reply to their constituent, thanking them for emailing. The board member will note in the reply email that the board protocol is for the email to be shared with the entire governance team and that the Chair will reply on behalf of the Board. The board member will then forward the email to all the additional board members and the superintendent. The board chair will gain consensus from the majority of the Board that the response reflects the will of the Board. The board chair will reply on behalf of the board, typically within 24 hours. Each board member and the superintendent will be included in the response. Individual board members will be listed by name and district at the close of the email.

### I Communications with Staff

The governance team agrees to:

- The superintendent is the only employee that reports directly to the Board of Education
- They will go through the superintendent when wanting to communicate with staff
- They will be cohesive as a team and show support for staff
- If there are concerns regarding a staff member or a school issue, the board member will speak privately with the superintendent about the issue, unless the superintendent directs them to share the concern otherwise (i.e. with another staff member)
- They will always be respectful and courteous to staff
- There will be no surprises during staff presentations at board meetings
- When board members are notified of inquiries and/or concerns from stakeholders, they should refer the issue to the superintendent or his designee

The governance team agrees to:

- Complete an annual governance team self-assessment aligned with the required eight domains
- Develop and implement action plans based on the self-assessment results
- Sign annually, certification of individual and collective agreement of the Georgia State Standards for School Boards, the Code of Ethics, and the Conflict of Interest Policy

## **K Strategic Planning**

The governance team agrees to:

- Be engaged and supportive
- Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision
- Make sure these goals remain their district's top priorities and that nothing detracts from them
- Have strong shared beliefs and values that meld the limitless possibilities for student learning with an unshakeable confidence in the district's ability to teach all children at high levels
- Annually commit to support the action plans outlined in the district's strategic plan
- Foster an environment and commitment to continuous improvement

## **Communication with the News Media L**

The governance team agrees to:

- Have the board chair provide his/her statement to the board ahead of time
- Embrace the superintendent or his designee as the official spokesperson for the school district
- A process to ensure that board members are kept informed of incidents, district positions and position statements
- Not to go on camera or radio unless the questions are provided prior to the interview, in an effort to prevent the message from being manipulated in the editing process
- Designate the board chair as the official spokesperson for the board when it pertains to matters of the board. Individual board members are strongly discouraged from speaking to the media regarding personal feelings about the school system or decisions made by the district.



## **M Social Media Communications**

The governance team agrees to:

- Use social media as a tool to promote positive and important news about the school district
- Not engage with the public on controversial topics on social media
- Not respond to negative comments on social media
- Be positive and mindful of how their actions on social media reflect on the whole Board
- Be mindful on posting about politics
- Stay away from responding during a crisis and rely on the district social media sites to relay critical information
- Send any social media information that may further an awareness of community concerns or controversy to the superintendent and board chair
- Board members are reminded that their spouses and direct family members may be inadvertently viewed as representing them on social media as an individual board member. Thus, Board members are strongly encouraged to discuss with their family members how social media responses on behalf of the Board or in defense of the Board would negatively impact the entire board.

## **Board Meetings**

**N**

The governance team agrees to:

- Act and conduct the business of the school district before the public
- Conduct board meetings that reinforce for the public and community stakeholders that the governance team is operating effectively.
- Establish procedures to ensure that meetings are in accordance with local board policy and the open meetings law
- Board members recognize the importance of conducting board business in the public and the sanctity of using Executive Session. Executive Session information should not be discussed outside of executive session meetings or with non-board members.

## **O Fundraising with Vendors/Potential Vendors**

The governance team agrees to:

- Adhere to the Conflict of Interest policy
- Not ask for donations for individual schools or for the district
- Be mindful of the perception



The governance team agrees to:

- Be mindful when supporting local candidates and how this could impact relationships/future relationships
- Be smart about its decisions

**Q****Addressing Concerns Regarding Board Norms and Protocols Among Board Members**

The governance team agrees to:

- Remain focused on the academic success of Bryan County students and in turn, remain committed to following the Board Norms and Protocols as closely as possible.
- Recognize that honest and open communication regarding best governance practices is paramount to successful governance and positive working relationships.
- Attempt to resolve any perceived deviation from Board Norms and Protocols in the following manner:
  - 1) Board member with a concern about another Board member will express the concern to the Board member privately and seek to resolve the concern.
  - 2) If the concern is unresolved, the Board member with the concern about another Board member will discuss the concern with the Board Chair and/or Superintendent privately.
  - 3) The Board Chair will meet with the Board member of concern and remind them of their Code of Ethics, best Board governance practices, the team commitment to following the Norms and Protocols as well as any potential impact a deviation from best practices could have on the school system.
  - 4) If the aforementioned actions, in the view of the Chair, do not bring resolution, then the Board Chair and one other Board member shall meet with the noted Board member, remind them of their Code of Ethics to follow governing policies and protocols, and seek to garner a commitment to display appropriate action.
  - 5) If the Board Chair is the member of noted concern, the Vice Chair and/or Superintendent will hear the concern from any Board member. The Vice Chair will meet with the Chair and include the Superintendent or another Board member.
- If the above steps are unsuccessful, then Policy BH's provision, "Upon a motion supported by a two- thirds vote, the board may choose to conduct a hearing concerning a possible violation of this Code of Ethics by a member of the Board."