



**SOMERVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**#YEGUASTRONG!**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**OPERATING PROTOCOL**

**BOARD ADOPTED: DECEMBER 2022**

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## **OVERVIEW/INTRODUCTION**

Somerville Independent School District's seven school board members serve, without monetary compensation, to guide district improvement and policy development. This School Board together with the Superintendent, functioning as a "Team of Eight", strives to exemplify the finest in school district leadership and vision. To enhance teamwork among members of the school board, and between the board and the administration, we the members of the Somerville Independent School District Board do hereby publicly commit ourselves collectively and individually to follow the board operating protocol.

## **SISD VISION**

***DEDICATED. DETERMINED. DYNAMIC. DEVOTED.***

***Dedicated*** to empowering learning for every student, every day, by providing engaging, viable, and relevant curriculum.

***Determined*** to build strategic partnerships that foster a culture of learning for all.

***Dynamic*** leadership focused on attaining and retaining excellent teachers to pave the way for student success.

***Devoted*** to equity; closing the learning gaps by knowing every student by name, strength, and need.

## **SISD MISSION**

Somerville Independent School District will provide a safe educational environment that fosters academic achievement, post-secondary success, and ensures each student graduates from high school both college and career ready with the ability to become responsible, productive, and contributing citizens in a diverse world.

## **SISD BELIEF STATEMENTS**

### ***IN SISD WE BELIEVE...***

1. Every child can learn.
2. Students always come first.
3. Our diversity is our greatest asset.
4. Our schools should be a safe and secure place for our students, staff, and parents.
5. Feedback loops and self-reflection are imperative for growth.
6. Teachers direct student outcomes.

## **GOALS**

### **Student Performance**

1. Provide high-quality instruction for all through academic and post-secondary success through proficiency in reading and math, and implement programs aimed to support college and career readiness in a safe and secure environment.

### **Human Resources**

2. Recruit, retain, and develop high-quality teaching staff, who engage in continuous professional development focused on providing viable and relevant student instruction, and who share the responsibility for providing a positive and successful learning environment.

### **Partnerships**

3. Maximize partnerships by engaging students, parents, staff, and the community to maximize every child's potential.

### **Equity**

4. Effectively personalize learning, and close all learning gaps for each child, by adopting a plan to know every single student from Pre-K to 12th grade; their strengths and needs while focusing on educational success for each.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

5. Maintain a transparent and balanced budget while supporting academic excellence and expanding resources for students and staff.

### **BOARD BASICS: COMPOSITION/LENGTH OF TERMS**

- The SISD Board of Trustees is comprised of 7 member; all positions are at large. Each board position is a 3-year term.
- Board Elections are held every year in May with the board seats split (i.e.-2 seats elected, then 2 seats elected, 3 seats elected).
- Eligibility to run for office is in board policy BBA (LEGAL).
- After each election, The Board shall elect a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer who shall be members of the Board. The Board may assign a District employee to provide clerical assistance to the Board. Officers shall be elected by majority vote of the members present and voting. A minimum of 1 year board experience is preferred before serving as an officer.

*\*Related Policies: BBB (LOCAL), BBA (LEGAL), BDAA (LEGAL), BDAA (LOCAL)*

### **COLLECTIVE BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Set the direction of the district including vision, mission and district goals for student educational success and well-being
- Set and approve district policies that reflect the educational needs and well-being of all students
- Hire and annually evaluate the performance of the superintendent
- Approve the district's budget
- Levy taxes and oversee collection thereof
- Order elections, canvass returns, declare results

Board members **do not** have any authority outside of the board meeting. The board operates as a collective body with a quorum present.

*\*This is a brief overview of board duties. BAA (LEGAL) provides a more detailed list of duties. Other related policies: BBD (exhibit), BBE (LEGAL & LOCAL)*

### **INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Diligently prepare for and attend all meetings.
- Apply the rules of good governance and understand how governance fits into the overall structure of the district. (See Addendum A).
- Familiarize oneself with regulatory statutes such as the Texas Open Meetings Act and the Public Records Act (covered in this Handbook) and ensure compliance.
- Act responsibly and efficiently when using District assets, including personnel, time, property, equipment, and funds.
- Maintain the highest ethical standards (see code of conduct, next section).
- Respect the voice of your appointed or elected peers and the community you serve.
- Advocate for ALL students and staff at the local and state level.
- Attend school functions and be visible/accessible to the community.

## **BOARD MEMBERS' STANDARDS OF CONDUCT/CODE OF ETHICS**

### ***ETHICS=***

**Equity in Attitude**

**Trustworthiness in Stewardship**

**Honor in Conduct**

**Integrity in Character**

**Commitment to Service**

**Student-centered Focus**

Board members shall promote the best interests of the district and shall adhere to the following ethical standards:

- Be fair and impartial when coming to decisions and consider all who maybe impacted.
- Be aware of personal conduct both in the board room and out in the community as they are representatives of the school district.
- Refuse to surrender judgement to any individual or group at the expense of the district.
- Seek continuing education that will enhance and improve his/her service as a trustee.
- Diligently prepare for and attend all board meetings.
- Support the collective decision of the board, even when personally disagreeing or voting against.
- Communicate all questions and concerns pertaining to your role as a Board Trustee to the Superintendent.

Board members shall NOT:

- Disclose information that is confidential by law (i.e., all matters discussed in closed session) or that will needlessly harm the District if disclosed.
- Give direction to any employee other than the Superintendent.
- Make any personal promise or take private action that could compromise his/her responsibilities to the district.

*\*Related Policy: BBF(LOCAL)*

### **COMPLIANCE WITH OPERATING PROCEDURES**

- Board members are strongly encouraged to follow all board operating procedures to the best of their ability and help hold each other responsible to the collective mission of the board.
- Ideally, individual concerns should be addressed one on one with the board member or taken to the Board President for further guidance.
- While the Superintendent is encouraged by these procedures to report to the Board President, Board Members will not take concerns about fellow Board Members to the Superintendent. All concerns involving Board Members are to be discussed with the President (or Vice President in the event the President is the person of concern).

*\*Related Policies: BAA (Legal); BBC (Legal); BBE (Legal and Local); BBF (Local); BD*

### **PREPARING THE BOARD MEETING AGENDA**

In consultation with the Board President and/or Vice President, the Superintendent shall prepare the agenda for all Board meetings. Any Board Member may request that a subject be included on the agenda for a meeting, and the Superintendent shall include on the preliminary agenda of the meeting all topics that have been submitted in a timely manner by a Board member.

### **PREPARING FOR BOARD MEETINGS**

- Board members prepare to address agenda items by doing the following:
  - Reading agenda packet materials before each board meeting.
  - Contacting the superintendent with questions about agenda items or background information at least one business day before the scheduled board meeting.
- Receiving answers to questions in advance does not preclude board members from asking relevant questions about agenda items during board meetings.



## **PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS/MEETING STRUCTURE**

The Board President (or designee) shall be the leader of the meeting, observe parliamentary procedures, and call the meeting to order.

### **Guidelines for Board Member Protocol shall be as follows:**

- Board members shall act and dress professionally.
- Board members shall handle all interactions with each other, the Superintendent, staff and the public with respect.
- Board members shall refrain from responding to speaker comments or addressing the audience.
- Discussions shall be addressed to the Board President and then the entire membership.
- Discussions shall be directed solely to the business currently under deliberation and the Board President shall reserve the right to close discussions that do not apply to the business before the Board.
- The Board President shall preside with fairness and provide Board members with equal time. No Board member shall be permitted to procure substantial time extraordinary of other trustee's participation.
- Board members shall strive to make Board meetings effective, efficient, and professional.

### **Executive/closed session guidelines:**

- Only certain topics are permitted for discussion in executive/closed session as defined by law in the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Items discussed in closed session are to remain confidential and not discussed with members of the public or staff.
- By law, voting of any kind cannot take place on closed session. All votes are to be taken in open session. If a matter requiring a vote for resolution is discussed in closed session, the vote shall be taken once the board is back in open session or tabled for future consideration.

***\*Related Policies: BE (LEGAL & LOCAL), BED (LEGAL)***

### **BOARD WORKSHOPS/SPECIAL MEETINGS**

Workshops conducted by the School Board shall begin at times designated by the Board, the Board President, and Superintendent.

- Workshop/Special meeting topics are determined by the board and aligned with priorities that are established annually in accordance with district goals and will be scheduled monthly or more frequently, as needed.
- The workshop/special meeting location and time will be listed in the meeting notice.
- All open meetings rules, including public comment rules, apply to workshops and special meetings.

### **COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES/COMMUNICATION MATRIX**

#### **BOARD MEMBER'S REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:**

- Members should request information not related to a meeting agenda item directly from the superintendent and/or board president (who will direct request to superintendent) in writing.
- All team members will receive a copy of any report generated by a board member's request in accordance with this procedure via the communication matrix.

## **BOARD MEMBERS COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MEETINGS:**

- Board Members may use mail, email, voice mail, text messaging, fax, phone, special committee meetings or personal contact to communicate with each other; however, Board Members shall never meet, talk, text or e-mail in a group large enough to constitute an official meeting, typically four (4) or more, unless notice has been posted. In email or text messaging, "Reply to All" should be avoided.
- Board members shall avoid physical quorums as stated above to remain in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.
- In keeping with the Open Meetings Act, Board members shall also avoid walking quorums by avoiding speaking of school district business in secession via phone, in person, text or email. No "pre-polling" of votes allowed as this violates open meetings act.
- Board Members who participate in social media such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn or Twitter, should be careful to avoid online conversations that could be construed as speaking for the Board or constituting an online Board meeting, continuing board business from a past or future meeting, or portraying the Board/District in a negative connotation.
- Board Members will keep the Superintendent informed of concerns in a timely manner. It is the Superintendent's job to act and resolve situations. Board Members should not violate the chain of command, causing disrespect and unclear expectations between Staff, Superintendent, and Board.
- Questions submitted to the Superintendent via email or other electronic means should NOT be sent simultaneously to the entire Board. Doing so may constitute an online meeting.
- Information shared by Superintendent to Board in executive session will be kept confidential until Superintendent notifies the Board that information is public.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA:**

- The Board President (or designee) will serve as the board spokesperson to the media on issues regarding board actions or governance issues.
- A board member receiving a call from the media requesting information, comments, or an interview will inform the media representative that the superintendent is the board's designated contact for official information about district business and that the board president is the board's designated contact for official positions on the board's actions or decisions as a body.

- Upon agreement, board president and superintendent may designate board members to speak on unique issues separate from district governance.
- Board members who do speak with media representatives will clarify at the beginning of the interview that they are speaking as individuals rather than as authorized representatives of the board of trustees.
- When speaking as an individual, the board member may remind media representatives of the official position or action already taken on the issue by the board of trustees and refer them to the board's designated spokesperson for further information about those actions.
- When speaking to media representatives, board members will generally avoid stating opinions or speculating about possible board action on issues that are scheduled for discussion at a future board meeting and explain that decisions will be made after deliberation with members of the board in a meeting.

#### **COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY:**

- As elected officials and Trustees acting on behalf of the public, Board Members have a responsibility to be accessible to the public and assist citizens with suggestions, questions, or complaints regarding the schools in the District. Encourage all citizens to follow the chain of command and resolve issues at the lowest level possible.
- Board members must provide service to constituents and should not involve themselves in problem management.
- The Board and individual Board Members shall follow all state laws and regulations regarding the prohibitions of Board involvement in management.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS:**

##### **Board/Superintendent Communication**

1. With respect to providing information and counsel to the Board, the Superintendent shall not fail to give the Board as much information as necessary to allow Board members to be adequately informed. The Superintendent will communicate information in a timely fashion to all Board members through:
  - a. Board meetings and executive sessions.
  - b. Voicemail, text messages or email.
  - c. Telephone calls.

2. Board members will keep the Superintendent informed via telephone calls, voice mails, text, e-mails, personal visits, dialogue meetings and requests for executive session or open meeting discussions.

3. The Board's official communication to the operational organization is the Superintendent. However, to facilitate communication, the Superintendent may designate other senior staff members as Board contacts.

#### **Board Response to Contacts/Correspondence**

1. Individual Trustees may communicate with members of the community as they deem appropriate. While the Board strives to be responsive to stakeholders, it is not possible for them to respond to every inquiry.
2. Letters and faxes addressed to individual Trustees and received in the Superintendent's office are distributed to the Trustees in their Board meeting packet. If an item is urgent or time sensitive, the Trustee is contacted by email or telephone before the Board meeting.
3. Citizens may contact the Board members by email at their Somerville ISD designated email addresses. The Trustees should acknowledge receipt of the email and inform the sender that the message has been forwarded to the Superintendent's office. The Superintendent shall ensure that an appropriate response is provided on behalf of the Board. The Board will also receive a copy of the response.
4. If the Board President responds to an inquiry in writing, all Board members receive a copy of the response.
5. The Board of Trustees encourages input, and the confidentiality of individuals will be maintained to the fullest extent possible. Anonymous calls or letters will not receive a response and will not result in directives to the administration.

#### **Administration Response to Contacts/Correspondence**

1. All correspondence addressed to the Superintendent or administration is routed to the appropriate staff members.
2. The appropriate staff members investigate the issues raised in the correspondence and will respond in a reasonable and appropriate manner. It is the goal of the administration to respond to correspondence within 10 working days.
3. The Somerville ISD administration encourages input. Anonymous calls or letters, however, will not receive a reply from the administration.

4. Confidentiality of the person writing the correspondence is appropriately maintained.

*\*Related Policies: \*BBE (LEGAL & LOCAL)*

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES:**

- Social Media can be a very positive and useful tool for sharing information with the public. Board Members are encouraged to share district updates and posts for informational purposes.
- Avoid discussing specific school district business on social media, especially if other board members are on the same page, post or comment thread. This could constitute a “walking quorum” and violate the Open Meetings Act.

#### **BOARD MEMBER VISITS TO CAMPUSES AND DISTRICT FACILITIES**

- Board members are encouraged to attend as many campus events as their time permits.
- As a courtesy to the Administration, Board members will make every effort to notify the Superintendent’s Office in advance of visiting a campus. (This does not pertain to visits as a parent, as a spectator to school events, or other events open to the public or by invitation.)
- Board members are required to check in with the principal’s office and follow campus/facility guidelines/rules for visitors.
- Board members may interact with any staff member or student during conference periods, lunch, recess, and before or after school without interrupting scheduled learning periods or interfering with the learning process.
- Board members are not to go unannounced into teachers’ classrooms or individual buildings for the purpose of evaluation.
- When visiting with teachers of their own children, board members will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than as board members.
- Board members will not request or accept any consideration or favors from any district employee.
- Board Members shall comply with all rules and procedures at each facility throughout the District.

*\*Related policy: BBE (LEGAL)*

## **NEW BOARD MEMBER ORIENTATION**

- New Board Members should attend as much training as possible during their first year of service.
- **REQUIRED TRAINING:** Elected or appointed governmental officials must have a minimum of 1 hour of training for Open Meetings Act and 1 hour of training for the Public Information Act. Only training programs that have been prepared or approved by the Office of Attorney General (OAG) are acceptable. Officials have 90 days after their election or appointment to complete these required trainings.
- The Superintendent, administration, and Board President (or designee) will meet with each new member as soon as practical after joining the Board.
- The Superintendent will arrange for new Board Members to visit with key staff members to familiarize themselves with such issues as finance, budgets, curriculum and instruction, safety and discipline issues, school management issues, and other issues of interest.

*\*Related Policy: BBD (LOCAL & EXHIBIT)*

## **ONGOING BOARD TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

School board members must complete continuing education training required by the State Board of Education (SBOE). Tex. Educ. Code §11.159(b); 19 Tex. Admin. Code §61.1. To the extent possible, entire boards are encouraged to participate in continuing education programs together. 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 61.1(i). *\*Related Policy BBD (LOCAL & EXHIBIT)*

- Link: [TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS](#)

### **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS**

Length of Service	Initial Board Orientation	Orientation to TCE	Open Meetings Act	Public Information Act	First Year Board Training	Open Meetings Act	Public Information Act	Financial Literacy Training	Board Governance	Board Governance
1st Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
2nd Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
3rd Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
4th Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
5th Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
6th Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
7th Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
8th Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
9th Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
10th Year	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required

#### **Training Requirements Summary**

Summary of training requirements for school board members. Training requirements are listed for each year of service. Training requirements are listed for each year of service.

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#### **Additional Training**

Additional training is required for school board members.

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Additional training is required for school board members.



### **ROLE OF THE SECRETARY TO THE BOARD**

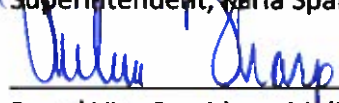
The Superintendent's Secretary shall take the official minutes of each Board meeting, work session, and public hearing and will provide minutes for Board review and approval in a timely manner. The Superintendent's Secretary provides clerical and organizational support to Board members by:


- Forwarding all Board written correspondence and e-mail to Board members when a response is appropriate;
- Maintaining the Board Calendar of Events;
- Contacting Board Members concerning possible meeting dates and time;
- Assisting the Board with constituent contacts;
- Making travel arrangements and reservations for Board trainings or travel to conferences;
- Maintaining Board files;
- Tracking completion of Board member training credits, and
- Providing assistance in assembling online Board packets for Board members

Somerville Independent School District

Date Approved: December 8, 2021

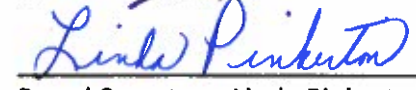
  
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Superintendent, Karla Sparks

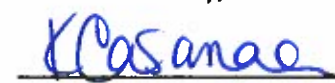
  
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Board Vice President, Melissa Tharp

  
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Board Treasurer, Joe Gonzales

  
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Board Member, Keith Howe

  
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Board President, Jason Urbanosky

  
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Board Secretary, Linda Pinkerton

  
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Board Member, Kim Casanova

  
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Board Member, David Idlebird