Newport-Mesa School District Board of Education Protocols

Overview

Outstanding Boards are intentional about governance and invest in the practices that address changing situations. Protocols are tools that build and strengthen the capacity of the Governance Team to have constructive and positive relationships. The mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Superintendent will provide transparency and stability for the District.

Principles of Governance

The Governance Team will operate on the following principles of good governance:

- Keeping learning and student achievement for every student as the primary focus.
- Recognizing that we represent the entire district, the board shall ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views from across the communities the district serves to inform deliberations and decisions.
- Operating openly with trust and integrity.
- Governing in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility, dignity and respect, while honoring the right to disagree with each other.
- Valuing, supporting and advocating for public education.

Communications

1. The Superintendent and Board members commit to open dialogue with one another in order to avoid surprises to the governance team and staff.
2. The Superintendent will provide relevant, timely and thorough information to Board members through a weekly update.
3. In order to ensure that all Board members receive the same information and to keep the Superintendent informed of Board members’ questions and concerns, requests for information should come to the Superintendent’s Office. The Board member will receive the information and it will also be provided to the other members through a weekly update or other communication.
4. The Superintendent can be reached by email, cell phone or a message via text if a Board member needs to reach the Superintendent.
5. The Board understands the distinction between board and staff roles and will refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.
6. The Superintendent will share communications related to onboarding—including on the topic of social media—with new board members.
7. The Superintendent’s Office will provide the Board with a governance calendar.
8. The Superintendent will make an effort to meet at least every 2 weeks with individual Board members to discuss items of mutual interest and concern.

Maintaining Confidentiality

1. The Board, Superintendent and Cabinet members agree to maintain the confidentiality of all closed session and privileged communication as required by Education Code. Such matters relate to personnel issues, litigation, real property negotiations, and labor negotiations.
2. Board members should address concerns that may arise to the Superintendent and not to individual staff members.
3. Board members will not personally advocate for an individual’s hiring, promotion, or termination.
4. The Board will provide clear parameters to the district’s negotiation team members and will not address issues of negotiations with employee bargaining unit members.

Board Member Role in Public and Social Media

1. Board members visiting a school will inform the Superintendent and principal in advance, as well as the Board member representing that area.
2. Board members will be introduced at all school and district events, unless they are attending as a parent or spectator.
3. Board members will contact the Superintendent should the media contact them.
4. Individual Board members represent the district in an official capacity only when appointed by the Board in that capacity. Board members will inform the Board and Superintendent when asked to represent the District in the capacity of a Board Member.
5. Board members will not serve on district committees unless appointed by the Board President, which makes the committee subject to the Brown Act.
6. In high profile situations, the Superintendent or Board President will be the spokespersons for the District to communicate a unified message.
7. In using social media to communicate school business, Board members should:
   a) Clarify that any statement made reflects their personal views and not necessarily in their official position as a member of the Board;
   b) Refrain from the deliberation of school district business;
   c) Direct all concerns by community members to the appropriate district administrator;
   d) Avoid posting content on which you have already formed an opinion, before you vote;
   e) Freely consider posting or reposting content that the District has already approved.

Staff Relationships

1. Board members should request information through the superintendent who will direct to the appropriate staff member.
2. Board members will share any concerns about staff to the superintendent and will refrain from disparaging staff members in public.
3. Official visits to school sites are encouraged and should be arranged through the Superintendent’s office. This does not include attendance at campus events such as athletic contests, performances, etc.
4. Board members recognize that they are not to do staff work.
5. Board members will treat all staff with respect.

Handling Concerns

1. The Board and Superintendent are committed to having parent and/or staff concerns handled at the lowest possible level, where those involved in the issue can resolve the matter.
2. Board members should not solicit information from staff regarding other staff members.
3. Board members will listen to and relay any concern to the Superintendent and will not remain directly involved in the complaint process.
4. Board members will refer parent or staff concerns to the Superintendent, and the Superintendent will investigate the concern in a timely manner, respond and communicate back to the complainant and the board member.
5. A Board member forwarding a complaint will not be perceived as endorsing the complaint.

Prior to Board Meetings

1. Board members will thoroughly read materials before the board meeting and contact the Superintendent with any questions they have on the agenda no later than Monday at 10 am before the meeting.
2. Answers to Board member’s questions will be answered in advance of the board meeting and provided to all Board members prior to the meeting.
3. Board members will not communicate regarding items that the Board will be acting on with more than two other board members.
4. Board members will notify the Superintendent in advance of their intent to remove an item from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration.
5. Board members may request that an issue be agendized by making a request to the Superintendent. The item will be placed on the agenda according to the bylaws and after giving staff time to prepare for the item.
6. When a high-profile item is being considered by the Board, any disagreements or concerns should be discussed with the Superintendent before the meeting.

Board Meetings

1. Individual Board members will be acknowledged by the Board President prior to making a comment.
2. Each Board member will respect the right of other Board members to hold an opposing point of view and, following a board vote, will support the decision made by the Board.
3. Board members will not engage with audience members unless they are speaking from the podium with an agendized address to the Board.
4. Board members agree that it is a courtesy to each other and to the full Board to share the reason for a dissenting vote during deliberation.
5. All team members will be respectful of each other and recognize the impact of comments made in public toward one another.
6. The Superintendent or a Board member should not bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise to the team.
7. Study sessions will be developed throughout the year on issues that require extensive discussion.
8. Board and management team members will be fully engaged at all meetings and avoid electronic or other distractions not related to the meeting.
9. Board members will attend all regularly scheduled board meetings and study sessions unless there are extenuating circumstances.
10. The Superintendent and Board will review protocols related to recessing board meetings, clearing the board room and continuance of meetings.

Board Adoption: January 11, 2022