

Sample Unified School District Board Operating Protocol

For the purpose of enhancing teamwork among members of the board and between the board and administration, we, the members of the Sample Unified School District Board, do hereby publicly commit ourselves collectively and individually to the following operating protocol:

- Surprises to the board or the superintendent will be the exception, not the rule. There should be no surprises at a board meeting. We agree to ask the board president or the superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting;
- Communications between staff and the board are encouraged. However, board requests that will likely require considerable time or have political implications are to be directed to the board president and/or superintendent. All personnel complaints and criticisms received by the board or its individual members will be directed to the superintendent;
- Board members will inform the superintendent of all positive or negative comments received from members of the community about the District, its programs and staff;
- Board members may visit any campus after checking with the principal about the best time to visit;
- The Board and the superintendent will set goals annually using the strategic plan format as a framework;
- The last stop, not the first, will be the School Board. We agree to follow the chain of command and insist that others do so. While the board is eager to listen to its constituents and staff, each inquiry is to be referred to the person who can properly and expeditiously address the issue;
- A board member will not “solicit an issue”, become a “ball carrier” for others or work around administrative employees and will encourage others to present their own issues, problems or proposals in a constructive manner.
- The board will emphasize planning, policy-making and public relations rather than becoming involved in the management of the schools;

- The board will address its behavior by yearly self -evaluation and by addressing itself to any individual problems, such as poor meeting attendance or leaks of confidential information;
- The board will set clear goals for themselves and the superintendent. The board and superintendent will set clear goals for the Sample Unified School District;
- The superintendent is the chief executive officer and should recommend/propose/suggest on most matters before the board;
- Individual board members do not have authority. Only the board as a whole has authority. We agree that an individual board member will not take unilateral action. The board president will communicate the position(s) of the board on controversial issues.
- Conduct at a board meeting is very important. We agree to avoid words and actions that create a negative impression on an individual, the board, or the district. While we encourage debate and differing points of view, we will do it with care and respect to avoid an escalation of negative impressions or incidents. Individual members may disagree with a board action, but will support the decision of the board as a whole;
- To be efficient and effective, long board meetings must be avoided. Points are to be made in as few words as possible; speeches at board meetings will be minimal. If a board member believes he/she doesn't have enough information or has questions, either the superintendent or the board president is to be called before the meeting;
- Board meetings are for decision-making, action and votes, not endless discussion. We agree to "move the question" when discussion is repetitive;
- The superintendent will ensure that supporting information required for informed decision-making is provided to the board three days prior to the meeting.
- Conflicts between board members will be addressed by the board president.

- The board will not play to the audience. We agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and attend to our fellow board members. Facts and information needed from the administration will be referred to the superintendent;
- The board will represent the needs and interests of all the children in the Sample Unified School District.

Board President

Board Member

Board Member

Board Member

Board Member

Date

Who Has Authority for What – The Board and Superintendent as a Team

A question often asked by board members and superintendents is “What is the role of the board and what is the role of the superintendent in the operation of the school district?”

The age-old statement that the board sets policy and the superintendent administers that policy would seem to indicate a very distinct and clear dividing line between the respective roles of each. That division, however, is not always so clear nor is it one upon which everyone involved agrees.

Board members are usually “doers”; they operate businesses, they run homes, they dig ditches, they buy supplies. “Doers” often find it hard to look at the big overall picture and make decisions that cause other people to “do” the job. Many times they are tempted to get in and “do” the job themselves. Conflict situations arise when the board and the superintendent have not defined their specific roles within the district.

Because the needs of a district vary; because leadership and management styles vary, there are not encompassing answers to “who has the authority for what.” The real need in each district is for the board and superintendent to decide what each is to do and establish proper procedures that will lead to the performance of those duties.

Board members, as they make decisions and find themselves involved in the business of the district, should ask themselves: Are we providing leadership to the superintendent and staff and establishing policy for the district or have we stepped into the role of the administration? Superintendents should ask themselves: Am I providing leadership to the board in pointing out areas where policy is needed, or am I usurping the board’s responsibility by establishing policy? Worse yet, am I forcing the board to make administrative decisions because I don’t want to take the responsibility.

Keeping roles clear and communications open is the key to good board/superintendent relationships.

The following division of roles and responsibilities between the board and superintendent are provided as examples.

| | <u>School Board</u> | <u>Superintendent</u> |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Policy | Adopts | Implements and suggests |
| 2. Meetings | In charge of | Serves as a resource person |
| 3. Budgets/Finance/ Audits | Adopts and monitors | Prepares, administers, monitors details |
| 4. Instruction | Establish criteria, approves and monitors | Recommends, oversees staff’s efforts |
| 5. Personnel | Establishes criteria, approves or rejects | Interviews, recommends, hires, evaluates, promotes staff development |
| 6. Facilities/Transportation/ Food Services | Develops policy on use of facilities, transportation, food services | Implements policy, writes rules and regulations, makes recommendations |
| 7. Community Relations | Creates a positive image for district | Creates a positive image for district, directs communications |
| 6. The Board and Superintendent | Hires the superintendent, establishes expectations, evaluates | Works at the pleasure of the board, is chief executive officer of the district |