

## THE BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIP

The successful operation of schools requires a close, effective working relationship between the board and the superintendent. The relationship must be one of trust, goodwill and candor. As the legally designated governing body, the board retains final authority within the district. The board exercises powers expressly required and implied by law. The superintendent is the board's professional advisor, to whom the board delegates executive responsibility, including such powers required to manage the district in a manner consistent with board policy and state and federal law.

The superintendent, as an executive officer of the board (secretary), is responsible for the administration of the schools under applicable laws and policies of the district. The board delineates the duties of the superintendent and uses them as the basis for evaluating the superintendent's performance. Unless specifically limited, the superintendent may delegate to other staff the exercise of any powers and the discharge of any duties imposed by district policy or a vote of the board. The delegation of power or duty does not relieve the superintendent of responsibility for the actions taken under such a delegation.

In order to perform their responsibilities, board members must be familiar with the operations within the schools. The superintendent will establish communication procedures which can enhance the board member's understanding of student programs and school operations.

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Legal References:	RCW 28A.320.010 Corporate powers
	RCW 28A.330.050 Duties of superintendent as secretary of the board
	RCW 28A.330.100 Additional powers of the board (First Class Districts Only)
	RCW 28A.400.010 Employment of superintendent — Superintendent's qualifications, general powers, term, contract renewal
	RCW 28A.400.030 Superintendent's duties

Adoption Date: 5/18/99  
Revised: 6/20/00, 3/16/04, 4/17/18  
Reviewed: 08/04/2020

## Board-Superintendent Relationship

Citizen oversight of government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. To assure a quality operation, the Aberdeen School District Board of Directors and superintendent agree to the governance principles and protocols outlined in these procedures because we believe that the manner in which the board and superintendent conduct the district's business becomes a model for students, teachers, parents and staff.

The Aberdeen School District Board of Directors is mindful that this governing body's authority is granted to the board as a whole and we understand that individual board members possess no authority. The Board of Directors fulfills its responsibilities by working as a governance team with the superintendent. The Board will emphasize planning, policy making, holding the district accountable and communication. The superintendent is responsible for carrying out the direction set by the Board of Directors and for the day-to-day management of the schools.

## Our Governing Norms

The Aberdeen School District Board of Directors agrees to:

- Focus *first* on the best interests of students;
- Be informed and prepared;
- Follow the chain of command;
- Maintain open communication;
- Do our homework;
- Stay on task;
- Be on time;
- Honor our commitments;
- Speak with one voice;
- Maintain confidentiality;
- Be respectful to others;
- Focus *always* on the best interests of students.

## Our Operating Protocols

The principles and protocols outlined here support a philosophy of cooperative behavior that is agreed upon by the board and superintendent. Our purpose is to enhance teamwork among members of the board and between the board and the superintendent.

Board Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We agree to respect each other's opinions during discussion and debate. We also agree the superintendent needs the support of the full board once a majority vote or decision has been taken.</li> <li>• The Board seeks to respect minority opinions and to allow the minority opinion to influence the majority opinion in a positive</li> </ul>
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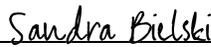
	<p>manner. To this end, we agree to share our reasons for a “no” vote either during deliberations or before voting.</p>
<p>Communications/ Cooperation and Support</p>	<p>We agree open communication requires trust, respect and a fundamental belief in goodwill among board members and the superintendent. We agree that the board president and superintendent are responsible for communicating official district positions to the media. When dealing with the media, individual directors agree to make it clear they are not speaking for the Board or the District.</p> <p>The board president is the official spokesperson for the Board of Directors and the superintendent is the official spokesperson for areas of district operation.</p> <p>We recognize the need to be a team once decisions are made and to support Board decisions in the community and in the media. We will work to minimize misunderstandings and reduce conflict by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting each other constructively and courteously.</li> <li>• Maintaining confidentiality.</li> <li>• Focusing our discussions on issues, not personalities.</li> <li>• Encouraging constructive disagreement.</li> <li>• Expressing our opinions and positions on issues honestly and openly while being receptive to others’ opinions.</li> </ul>
<p>Visiting Schools</p>	<p>Directors are welcome in the schools and are encouraged to observe the practical application of their policy decisions. When planning to visit a school in the role of a director, we agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact the principal ahead of time, 24 hours when possible.</li> <li>• If we want to observe a specific classroom or program, we let the principal know in advance.</li> <li>• We check in at the office when arriving and check out when leaving.</li> </ul>
<p>Handling Concerns from the Public and Staff</p>	<p>We understand the importance of our relationships with staff and members of the community. These relationships allow us to perform the important role of being eyes and ears both for our community and for the district. We agree empowering the superintendent to manage the district is paramount and that it is important to promptly share information and concerns with the superintendent regarding issues related to district administration, programs or personnel.</p> <p>We also agree that a consistent pattern of handling concerns from the public and staff will ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally and expeditiously, and that the process and procedures of the district are upheld. We understand that a consistent pattern of assistance will also clarify for stakeholders that individual board members do not have authority to direct staff. When someone comes to us with a complaint or a concern:</p>

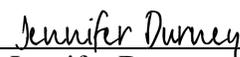
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We listen carefully and then direct the individual(s) to the person in the district most appropriate and able to resolve the concern.</li> <li>• We make sure they understand who to contact (teacher, then principals, then district staff) and are aware of any forms or policies that might assist them. As directors, we are aware that what we are hearing is just one side and are cautious about giving the appearance of agreeing with the individual, knowing that <del>that</del> anything we say might be misunderstood as the “position of the Board.”</li> <li>• We then contact the superintendent to share the concern and the action we took.</li> </ul>
Individual Board member Requests for Information	<p>The superintendent agrees to keep the full Board informed to the best of her ability. When an individual board member requests information, it will be provided to all board members.</p> <p>As directors, we agree to let the superintendent know ahead of time, as much as possible, when a request for information will be made in public, so staff can be prepared to provide a thorough answer.</p> <p>As directors, we will self-monitor to ensure requests are reasonable and do not divert an inordinate amount of staff time.</p>
Board Member Requests for Action	<p>We agree there should be no surprises during meetings. We agree to avoid bringing topics up unexpectedly at the meeting that require/request Board action.</p> <p>We understand that the only authority to direct action rests with the full board through a majority vote. Once a final decision has been made on a proposal, the superintendent and board of directors agree to individually and collectively support successful implementation.</p>
Setting the Agenda	<p>Board agendas are developed by the board president and the superintendent. Individual board members requesting items for the agenda will contact the board president.</p> <p>The superintendent agrees that all materials for the meeting will be provided to the board at least two (2) days before the meeting. On those rare occasions when immediate action is required, the superintendent agrees to consult with the board president prior to the meeting. As directors, we will do our best to review all material provided and seek clarification or additional information as needed from the superintendent prior to the board meeting.</p> <p>We agree to be prepared to share opinions and engage in discussion at the board meeting.</p>

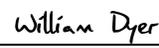
Board Meeting Management	<p>We agree to follow Robert’s Rules of Order for parliamentary procedure.</p> <p>We understand that Board meetings are meetings of the Board that are conducted in public, not open forum, town hall meetings.</p> <p>We agree to allocate time during the meeting for members of the public to provide input to ensure that the multiple voices of our community help inform Board deliberations.</p> <p>We agree that attending all meetings and taking responsibility to obtain information when absences are unavoidable is critical to remaining actively informed of school district issues and trends. We each agree to inform the superintendent when an absence is unavoidable. Remote attendance as allowed under Policy 1450 is encouraged.</p> <p>We agree that meetings will begin on time.</p> <p>We agree to be listeners during public comment and understand that it is ill advised to debate or argue with members of the public during board meetings. Directors may ask clarifying questions and the president may choose to factually respond to simple questions or request the superintendent to take note of the issue and respond to the person later.</p> <p>The president will thank the public for their comments.</p> <p>We agree that requests for changes to the minutes should be communicated to the superintendent prior to the meeting.</p> <p>As directors, we agree to give our full attention to the business at hand and to forego texting, emailing or sidebar conversations during the meeting.</p> <p>The superintendent and Board agree that all discussion during executive session is privileged and shall not be shared unless it is the express decision of the Board to do so.</p>
Internal Board Relationships and Communication	<p>The superintendent and president will meet with new directors and provide an orientation.</p>
Evaluation	<p>The superintendent, the Board president and the Human Resources director will insure timely and periodic evaluation of the superintendent according to Board Policy 1630, the superintendent’s contract, job description, and any agreed-upon frameworks.</p>

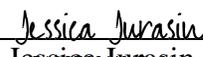
	The board of directors agrees to conduct a self-evaluation and review operating procedures annually in July or August revising or reaffirming them as appropriate.
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The Aberdeen School District Board of Directors and Superintendent Alicia Henderson accept the challenge of good governance and pursuing a common intent through a review of opinions and fact, to an end that is understood and defensible by all. We agree to the governing norms and operating protocols presented above.

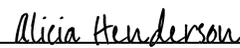
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Alicia Henderson, Superintendent

Reaffirmed: 08/04/2020