



**STILLWATER  
AREA PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**

## **Operating Norms for the Stillwater Area Public Schools Board of Education**

Board members recognize that the primary function of the Board of Education is to establish policies by which the schools are to be administered, and that the administration of the educational program and the conduct of school business shall be left to the Superintendent.

The Board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The Board will work in partnership with the Superintendent, staff, students, parents and the community. The Board, not the Superintendent or staff, will be responsible for excellence in governing. The Board will use the expertise of individual Board members to enhance the ability of the Board as a body, but will not substitute individual judgments for the Board's collective judgment.

Board member accountability to the entire school district supercedes:

- a. any conflicting loyalty a Board member may have to other advocacy or interest groups
- b. any loyalty based upon membership on other boards or staffs
- c. any conflicts based upon the personal interests of any Board member

### **How We Relate to One Another**

1. All Board members should feel free to express their opinions and beliefs about issues. Discussions will be open and encourage candor. Honest disagreements are legitimate and have an appropriate place on the Board. However, Board members will respect one another's opinions and will not criticize one another behind-the-back or in an otherwise inappropriate manner.
2. Board members agree to apprise themselves of the required School Board training available through MSBA.
3. Board members agree to devote time on an annual basis for self-evaluation and review of operating norms.
4. Board members agree to focus on issues rather than personalities.

### **How We Communicate**

5. All Board members will receive the same information and data which are necessary for decision making. Much of that information will come from the Office of the Superintendent and s/he will ensure that each member has equal access to this information.
6. Board members who are absent or late to meetings will take the initiative to find out what they may have missed. If you know you are going to be absent, notify the Board Chair or the Superintendent.
7. Board members are encouraged to fully participate in all discussion. Board members should feel comfortable to speak up freely so that questions are answered and full review takes place.
8. Board members will channel requests for information, reports, etc., through the Superintendent and Board Chair rather than directly to staff.
9. Board members will remain informed concerning state and federal laws and regulations affecting education.

10. Board members agree to exercise honesty in all written and interpersonal interactions.
11. Board members will make every reasonable effort to protect the integrity and promote the positive image of the district and one another.

## **How We Govern**

12. Board members agree to seek and support solutions that they believe will provide the greatest benefit to the largest number of students. Once the Board has taken action, Board members should support the official position of the Board.
13. Board members should take risks in confronting differences of opinion. Board members are encouraged to disagree about issues to ensure full discussion. However, Board members must be careful that adherence to a point of view does not prolong unnecessary discussion or block consensus.
14. Board members will refer to the Superintendent the questions and concerns they receive from members of the school community. The Superintendent will investigate and provide all Board members with the information needed to respond to an issue.
15. Board members will recognize and respect that their authority exists when a quorum of the Board meets and not as individual Board members.
16. Individual Board members will not contact board legal counsel without approval of the full Board. Legal questions should be forwarded to the Superintendent to investigate as necessary.
17. Board members will contact the Superintendent prior to a meeting if they have concerns or questions about items on the agenda.
18. Board members will maintain appropriate confidentiality.
19. Board members agree to maintain focus on common goals.

## **How We Conduct Meetings**

20. Board members agree that discussion will be limited to the agenda and that items will not be added to the agenda at the meeting unless they cannot be delayed until a subsequent meeting. Board members may request that items be added to the agenda by contacting the Superintendent or Board Chair prior to a Board meeting. The Board Chair is the gatekeeper of the agenda and will determine whether an issue has already been fully discussed or is not appropriate for the agenda. During a Board meeting, a Board member may make a motion to add an item to the agenda. If there is a second to the motion and majority support, the item will be added.
21. Board members agree to prepare for discussions in advance and review the materials distributed prior to a meeting.
22. Board members will make all reasonable effort to attend all Board meetings and work sessions.
23. Neither the Superintendent nor individual Board members will put one another in a position to discuss items or make recommendations in the absence of appropriate information and preparation.
24. During the Open Forum section of Board meetings, Board members will listen respectfully to issues brought to them by the community. Board members may ask questions for clarification from the administration and/or the speaker. The Board will not deliberate or take action during the open forum regarding an issue presented. If public follow-up is required, it will be presented at a subsequent meeting.
25. The Superintendent will make every effort to provide the School Board complete and well-organized materials for meetings and sound rationale for recommendations.