

**DRAFT: 08/13/12****Board Governance Agreement**

As a board of education, we understand the value and necessity of working together as a governance team. In order to best serve students of the District and the community at large, we will strive to undertake our duties and perform our statutory charges in a professional, civil, responsible and informed manner. Toward that end, we have established the following expectations for the board and its members:

***Prior to a meeting:***

- Members are encouraged to maintain an open mind as the consideration and deliberation of district business occurs. Members should not establish or publically state a final position on a board issue until hearing recommendations listening to deliberations, and considering all facts and opinions on the topic. Simply put, members shall strive to keep an open mind when presented with administrative and public proposals impacting district operations.
- District administrators frequently assist the board by providing members with detailed background information and evaluations relating to matters coming to the board for consideration. Members are expected to read and consider the research provided in these board packets prior to the formal deliberation and consideration of the issue in question. Members shall also solicit additional administrative assistance as may be appropriate in a particular situation.
- Mindful that it is the public policy of the State of Illinois that public bodies exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business and that the people have a right to be informed as to the conduct of their business, the board of education remains committed to ensuring that its actions be taken openly and that its deliberations be conducted openly in accordance with the parameters of the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Questions from board members to the administration or other board members are encouraged in advance of the meeting, but members must conduct such communications in a manner that complies with the Open Meetings Act. Members must be aware of the Open Meetings Act's requirements in order to avoid inadvertent violations of the act.
- In order to ensure that the board's deliberative process is conducted with integrity and open-mindedness, Board members should use caution when speaking to constituents about preliminary stances on issues that will be presented to the board for consideration. Board members should advise constituents about the deliberative process and the manner in which formal board action is taken. For example, members might state, "I have not taken a position yet as I wish to hear from my fellow board members and gather information on the topic."
- Board members will request that the administration provide appropriate information to the public prior to the meeting and that the public be afforded the opportunity for public comment at board meetings in accordance with the Illinois School Code and board policy. These public relations functions are to be performed on behalf of the full board of

education and are intended to more effectively inform all stakeholders in the community of pending board initiatives.

•

***During the meeting:***

- Board members are expected to show mutual respect for each other as equal, elected/appointed officials.
- Dialogue and non-verbal behavior is expected to be thoughtful and diplomatic.
- Listening to one another is as valued as speaking – side bar conversations are discouraged.
- The board will support the president’s role as the facilitator of the group.
- Board members will stay on-topic.
- The board expects all members to express their opinions at the board table in order to benefit the entire governing team. In other words, we should all know where members stand on an issue at the meeting.
- The board vote is the only and final means to direct and authorize the superintendent or staff to conduct the work of the district.

***After the meeting:***

- All board members are expected to support the board decision. Once the decision has been made, it is time to move on to the next critical issue. Efforts by board members to revisit previous decisions or secure belated public support will only distract from the future work of the district.
- Member may wish to state, “I didn’t vote for the proposal but the decision was made and I support the work of the full board.” The board of education requests that its members explain their position without appearing to undermine the decision of the full board.
- In order to ensure that accurate and comprehensive information about board action is disseminated throughout the entire community in an efficient, accurate, and fair manner, the board of education will work with its administration to develop and implement distribution procedures that fulfill the board’s goals. In order to avoid the circulation of information that is inadvertently inaccurate or incomplete, the board of education encourages individual board members to work with the administration to prepare public updates to be sent on behalf of the full board by its staff.
- Media related interviews will be handled by the board president or the superintendent at their discretion. Individual members may conduct interviews after a meeting in order to assist the media in performing their work and/or individual members may elect to refer the matter to the board president or superintendent.
- Throughout these interactions, members will adhere to this Governance Agreement of the board.

***General communication and in-between meetings:***

- When contacted by community members, board members will listen to the concerns of the individuals and explain the work of the full board (or advise them of the chain of command in the school district). Members will treat such instances as opportunities to

educate citizens regarding the authority of the full board at a meeting. Board members may wish, for example, to advise community members: “As I have no individual authority, you may wish to speak to the full board at a convened meeting so that all our members have an opportunity to hear your concerns.”

- Throughout these discussions, members will remember they always represent the district and the board of education. Board members should recognize that, in the eyes of the public, they always wear the “board hat”. Members should refrain from “selective encouragement” – or simply promoting their own individual opinion -- as such actions undermine the important relationship members have with one another and the effectiveness of the board at large.
- Board members are always encouraged to contact the superintendent regarding communications with citizens, parents or staff. This courtesy helps to keep all parties informed of pending issues, public concerns, and administrative activities regarding the particular issue in question.

Resource: From Illinois Association of School Boards meeting with District 116 Board of Education, April 18, 2012.

ADOPTED:

2:82

Page 2 of 2

DRAFT