



Monroe County Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees' Protocol

1. INTRODUCTION

Operating protocol defines the beliefs, values, and methods of working together. Successful organizations are the result of effective and dynamic leadership. To assure quality operations, leaders must agree on basic ways of working together. Recognizing that individuals are unique and important will enhance our operating principles and develop a high level of organizational self-esteem and confidence. The collaborative culture in which the Board and administration conduct their business becomes a model throughout the Corporation for students, teachers, parents, and staff on how issues are addressed.

2. GOVERNANCE

As the corporate entity charged by law with governing the school district, the Board of School Trustees sits in trust for the entire community. In this essential governance capacity, the Board holds the School Corporation accountable for achieving results for all learners at an appropriate cost, and for avoiding unacceptable choices, conditions and activities.

The Board will seek always to:

- A. Govern with a focus on the future, on results, and on continuous improvement;
- B. Encourage collective decision making and diversity in viewpoints;
- C. Respect the distinction between Board and Superintendent roles, and
- D. Pursue rigorous and continual improvement of its capability to define values and vision.

3. JUDGMENT AND TRUST

The complexities of operating a Corporation cannot be fully addressed in policy, procedures, or operating principles. Working with people and handling difficult and controversial issues on a daily basis requires good judgment, common sense, and a strong trust relationship between Board and staff. Every issue or concern will not be foreseen, thus every complaint may not be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. For these reasons, trust in each other, allowance for error, and team efforts to address problems are a key part of an effective Corporation operation.



4. COOPERATION AND SUPPORT

Board and Administration: Recognize that open communication requires trust, respect, and a fundamental belief in goodwill among Board members and staff. Work to minimize misunderstandings and reduce conflict. Address disagreement privately and do not make disparaging remarks about one another or an official Board action in public.

Agree to:

- A. support each other constructively and courteously
- B. maintain confidentiality
- C. allow ourselves and others the freedom to admit mistakes
- D. focus our discussions on issues, not personalities - free of defensiveness
- E. balance our honesty with sensitivity toward others
- F. uphold the integrity of every individual Operating Principles for the Board
- G. avoid compromising the Board as an institution or individual members with internal or external organizations or groups
- H. pursue thorough understanding at all times
- I. involve those parties who will be affected by the decision and the solution as early in the process as possible
- J. commit to getting to know one another and the ideas that are important to individuals

5. COMMUNICATION

- A. Requests to Superintendent from any Board Member will be distributed to all Board Members.
- B. Board Members will communicate with Superintendent in a timely manner.
- C. Board as a whole will communicate with its community through public hearings, regular board meetings, and regular publications.
- D. Board Members who attend functions of interest to the Board as a whole will communicate items of interest to all Board Members and Superintendent.
- E. Individual Board Members cannot represent the Board or commit the Board outside the Boardroom without consent from the Board on any issue that has not been acted on.
- F. The Board as a whole is committed to and encourages community input through surveys, public forums, and on-going communications activities.



6. EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

- A. Share ideas about new programs/directions with the Superintendent and all other Board members before presenting major proposals publicly. If additional information or questions arise concerning an administrative recommendation the Board member will contact the Superintendent and the Superintendent will share the requested information with all other Board members. No official vote will be taken until the Board and administration has been given ample time to digest the proposal under consideration.
- B. Annual Calendar with tentative agenda items will be printed.
- C. Board members must request to the Board President, in writing, any item(s) they wish to have considered for placement on the agenda.
- D. Items may be placed on the agenda by the Superintendent, the Board President, any Board Member with approval of the President, or through a request by any two Board Members.
- E. The Board President shall recognize Board Members prior to any Member asking clarifying questions or making statements to the Board. There can be no deliberation among the board unless the item appears on the agenda.
- F. Begin all executive sessions and retreats with a review of norms.
 - a) **Begin and end on time.**
 - b) **Maintain a positive tone and assume positive intentions.**
 - c) **If a problem is brought to the group a solution must also be offered.**
 - d) **Stay focused on the agenda items.**
 - e) **We will all support our colleagues.**
 - f) **Each of us is responsible for airing our disagreements during the meeting rather than carrying those disagreements outside the meeting.**
 - g) **Ask permission before sharing what others are doing.**
 - h) **We will all hold each other accountable to the norms,**
 - i) **Be fully present and make contributions.**

7. BE PREPARED

Board: Read all materials - call and ask questions in advance. Seek clarification and information as needed. Explain to the Superintendent or Board president in advance about major concerns regarding a proposal.

Superintendent: Will develop recommendations that combine the best interests of students and the needs of the Corporation with the focus and direction the Board generally wishes to take. Board input to the goal setting process can provide direction to the Superintendent. Disagree Without Becoming Disagreeable

Board: Use executive sessions to address complaints related to staff. Try to resolve major disagreements with one another or staff in private.

Superintendent: State your position but accept the will of the majority of the Board and make every effort - in action and in spirit - to follow through.



All: Disagree with each other in a positive and constructive fashion. Watch "tone of voice", "choice of words", and other actions that spell the difference between discussion, debate, and argument. Handle personal/personnel concerns in private. Give as much attention to the manner in which you disagree with people as you do to the particular issue.

8. DECISION MAKING

The identification and evaluation of alternatives, an awareness of short and long-term consequences, an appreciation for the needs of the group as well as individuals, and sensitivity toward collective action are essential to the decision-making process.

Board and Administration: In order to formulate and execute sound decisions, we agree to:

- A. resolve problems with those most responsible
- B. clearly communicate decisions
- C. build into decisions a point of reevaluation
- D. provide for input from all concerned as early in the process as possible
- E. use a decision-making style appropriate to the situation
- F. establish a rationale for decisions
- G. make decisions consistent with our expressed goals
- H. communicate the rationale for making a decision that has been superseded by a higher level of authority to those involved before releasing the information

9. ISSUES WHICH COME BEFORE THE BOARD - INFORMATION ITEMS

Board: Inform Superintendent of significant concerns raised by Corporation patrons.

Superintendent: Make staff aware of issues/programs on which the Board wishes to be particularly well informed. Keep the Board informed of all new developments and the progress of activities related to Board goals and major programs. Be sure to inform the Board in advance of any complaint, concern, or issue likely to come before the Board.

10. HANDLING CONTROVERSY AT MEETINGS

Board: The Board will not take final action on a complaint during the meeting at which it is presented. The Board will respond in a timely fashion after ample time is allowed for the issue to be given the thorough review and study it warrants.

The Board does not hear specific complaints related to individual staff members. To protect the rights of individuals the Board will work with the Superintendent for resolution and schedule these concerns for executive session.

Request that large groups identify a spokesperson as per Policy 0167.3 e & f: Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three (3) minutes duration. No participant may speak more than once on the same topic.

Superintendent: Resolve complaints at administrative levels outside the Board arena (example: the textbook complaint process), but prepare and forewarn the Board if a concern is likely to come its way. Assist the Board in upholding Board guidelines for dealing with controversial situations at meetings.

11. DEVELOPMENT, ADMINISTRATION, AND REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY

Board: Exercise final approval over all policies. Study administrative reports on the implementation of policies and the effectiveness of policies. Once policies are approved by the majority of the members of the Board, support them even though you may have spoken against them initially.

Superintendent: Advise and assist the Board in developing policy. Share concerns about ideas that may not work. Once in place, support the policies of the Board whether or not you are in full agreement. Inform the Board of the manner in which policies are being administered, and when and if they may need to be revised.

12. EVALUATION AND BOARD STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Board: Establish strong and fair policies related to the evaluation of all Corporation staff. Serve as a role model to staff by evaluating the effectiveness of Board operations.

Superintendent: Support Board policies regarding evaluation and approach your own evaluation as well as the evaluations of those you supervise with the serious intent to work toward improvement. Serve as a role model to those you supervise through your own willingness to be evaluated.

All: Commit to being supportive of each other's need to be recognized and rewarded for achievements as well as to be counseled and assisted when concerns about performance arise. Commit to being proactive in your own education, growth, and development and be supportive of the growth and development of others.

13. IMPLEMENTATION OF PRINCIPLES

Board: If a Board member or the Superintendent is reported to have knowingly or inadvertently violated a principle agreed to in this procedural agreement the Board president will take the initiative to select another Board member and conduct a meeting to discuss the violation with the member or Superintendent. The purpose of the discussion will be to determine the reason for the reported deviation from the Statement of Principles. The president will report the results of the discussion to the rest of the Board for their information.

Superintendent: If a staff member is reported to have knowingly or inadvertently violated the intent of the principles the Superintendent will initiate a discussion with the staff member. The Superintendent will take the appropriate steps to deter continued deviations from the intent of the agreed upon principles.



14. ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF BOARD MEMBER AND/OR BOARD OFFICERS

The Board president assumes a more involved and active role in conducting the business of the School Corporation. Several areas of identifiable responsibility include:

PRESIDENT

- A. shall preside at all Board meetings;
- B. shall appoint committees, if a vacancy occurs, the Board will follow the policy in place;
- C. shall call special meetings; and
- D. shall sign all legal documents required by law.

VICE PRESIDENT

- A. shall act in capacity of President in absence of President.

SECRETARY

- A. Secretary or designee shall keep accurate record of Board meetings.
- B. Acting in absence of President and Vice President, the Secretary shall call meeting and election for President Pro Tem.

- 15. BOARD MEMBER REQUEST FOR INFORMATION OR REPORT** A Board Member may request existing information and/or reports from the Superintendent's Office. If the information is not available or a new report must be generated, it should be requested through the Board President. If the Board President does not agree to the request, it must be resubmitted to the Board President by two or more Members. In case of an emergency, the Board President may request information or reports.

16. CITIZEN INQUIRIES TO THE BOARD

The Board Member will hear citizen's problem(s) for full understanding of the persons involved, date, and place.

- A. Repeat problem to the citizen and refer to appropriate person.
- B. Explain problem resolution process to citizen.
- C. If applicable, remind the citizen of due process and that the Board Member must remain impartial in case the situation goes before the Board.
- D. The Board Member will contact the Superintendent.

17. EMPLOYEE REQUESTS/INQUIRIES TO THE BOARD

The Board Member will respond to employee complaints as follows:

- A. Remind the employee of due process procedure and that the Board Member must remain impartial in case the situation goes before the Board.
- B. Refer employee to appropriate person in the chain-of-command.
- C. The Board Member will contact the Superintendent.



18. BOARD MEMBER VISIT TO SCHOOL CAMPUS

- A. Board Members are encouraged to visit school and volunteer through the parent teacher organization or attend school events as their time permits. Such visits and attendance should be for the purpose of supporting the campus administration, faculty, staff, students, and parents.
- B. Board Members will not visit any school facilities including individual classrooms or work stations for the purpose of evaluation.
- C. Board Members who wish to visit a school in their capacity as a board member will schedule a planned visit with the Superintendent's Office who will notify the building principal.

19. MEDIA INQUIRIES TO THE BOARD

- A. On issues before the Board, the Board President or designee shall be the official spokesperson for the Board to the media.
- B. All Board Members who receive calls from the media may refer them to the Superintendent or the Board President, as appropriate.
- C. Board members may respond to the media on matters of general interest to express their personal perspectives.

20. BOARD RETREATS

A retreat for training; as soon as is possible following Election Day will be held. The entire board, including all board members, shall annually participate with the superintendent in a team building session facilitated by the ISBA or another provider.