



EAST MAINE SCHOOL DISTRICT 63

East Maine School District 63 Board Of Education Operating Principles

The Board of Education is responsible for the hiring and evaluation of the Superintendent. Upon his/her recommendation, the Board authorizes the appointment of all staff members, the setting of salaries, the levying of tax monies and budgeting for educational programs and overall operating expenses. Also upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board supports the implementation of research based, results proven curriculum along with appropriate staff professional development.

The Board sets District policy and delegates the execution of policy to the district administration. The role of the Board of Education is not to run the schools, but to see that they are well run.

Unity of Purpose

We affirm the unique role of public education, whereby each community collectively pools its resources for the common good through the education of its students. Therefore, we seek to uphold and improve public education for our community. We want to:

- strive to put the needs of children over the wants of adults;
- become an effective team with a common, focused direction;
- understand our individual jobs and our collective responsibilities;
- create a district culture that supports positive change;
- perpetuate a positive district culture that survives in the face of Board Member and staff turnover.

Roles and Responsibilities

We will seek always to:

- govern with a focus on the future, on results, and on continuous improvement;
- encourage collective decision making and diversity in viewpoints;
- respect the distinction between Board and Superintendent/staff roles;
- pursue rigorous and continual improvement in its ability to define community values and its vision of the future;
- create an educational environment that meets the needs of all students.

The Board President

The Board is a group of seven equals; each member takes full responsibility for Board activity and behavior. The task of the Board President is the facilitation of the work of the Board and its ability to comply with its working agreements and mutual expectations. The Board President will also assume some responsibility for facilitating the relationship between the Superintendent and the Board. The Board will elect a member for this important position who is well suited for the responsibilities.

In accord with the Illinois School Code, the Board President will be elected every two years at the Board organizational meeting following the April School Board Election. The President pro-tempore will accept nominations for the position, including self-nominations. A second is not necessary for the nomination. Roll call voting will continue until one candidate receives a

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majority of votes cast. A run-off of the top vote getters may be necessary to achieve the required majority.

New Board Member Orientation

We desire to be a team where all members contribute to effective Board leadership. We take initiative in helping new members learn, understand, and practice effective governance. Whether appointed to the Board, or as soon as possible after the post-election reorganization meeting, opportunities for Board member orientation will be provided. The Superintendent shall meet with new Board members to answer questions and acquaint the members with the District. If desired by the new Board members, a veteran member will be identified as a mentor.

Speaking with One Voice

- No Board member or subset of the Board of Education has the authority to act or speak on behalf of the Board without consent of the Board.
- The relationship between the Superintendent and any individual Board member is collegial not hierarchical, based on mutual respect for their complimentary roles.
- The Superintendent is accountable only to the full Board of Education.
- The Board and the Superintendent have the right to expect performance, candor, and honesty from one another.

Behavior Expectations

- Acknowledge that an effective Board must be composed of members who respect its processes and recognize dissenting viewpoints.
- Start with the common belief that everyone has good intentions.
- Create an environment of mutual trust for the productive exchange of ideas.
- Sincerely listen and seek to understand the viewpoints of others.
- Solve problems through a collaborative process where all participants support the decision actively and work toward its implementation.
- Respect the professional expertise of district staff as necessary for the operation of effective schools.
- Model life-long learning by participating in Board member professional development opportunities.

The Board Takes Responsibility for Itself

We will schedule an annual workshop/retreat to complete a Board Self-Evaluation to review governance team agreements and processes as time permits and/or need arises, or by the end of the school year.

Board Member Request for Information

When an individual Board member requests information relevant to performing the duties of a Board Member, it will be provided to all Board members. An individual Board member will - insofar as possible – work to let the Superintendent and staff know in advance when a request for information will be made in public so the staff can be prepared to provide a thorough answer.

Individual Board members will self-monitor to ensure one person's request for information does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve district goals.

Board Member Requests for Action

The only authority to direct action rests with the full Board sitting at the Board table during a duly called open meeting. A majority vote sets direction. The Board President is responsible for

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focusing Board agendas on appropriate content (**board work**). Board members and district residents may suggest items for inclusion on the agenda. Such items may be added to an agenda upon approval of the Board. Since action items must be posted in the meeting notice, such items will typically be scheduled for a subsequent meeting.

When a majority of the Board, sitting in a formal meeting, requests action, it should be made relative to the intended results, not the methods used to achieve those results.

No Surprises

Meaning, no one (Superintendent, Board members) gets surprised at any time in meetings or between meetings. The truth of no surprises is respect. Each member of the team must understand that when disrespect is shown toward people or processes through public surprises, people feel attacked, and the work of the Board suffers.

Board Meeting Agenda

The primary focus of all Board decisions must be student achievement. The Board's agenda is an expression of what the Board understands its work to be and how it intends to pursue that work. Typically, the agenda is a cooperative effort of the Board President and Superintendent. All Board members are invited to submit suggestions for agenda items. Periodically, the entire Board will consider important topics or agenda items for consideration in the following months.

Meetings of the Board

We understand that Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not open-forum, town-hall meetings. We will keep this in mind as we conduct our meetings, allowing the public to provide input at the time allotted on the agenda to ensure the multiple voices of the community inform Board deliberations. However, when the Board deliberates, it will be a time for the Board to listen and learn from each other, taking the public input into consideration, not a time to re-engage with the public.

We will consistently abide by our formal process relating to this issue so that all persons are treated fairly and equally. We will review our policies relating to Board meeting management (e.g., time limits on input from members of the public), revising, or re-affirming as appropriate.

Voting Method

When a vote is taken upon any measure before the Board with a quorum being present, a majority of the votes cast determines the outcome unless otherwise required by law. Each Board member respects the right of other members to vote "no" on an issue. On important matters, Board members are encouraged to explain the reasons for a "no" vote either during deliberation or before casting the vote. **All members understand the importance of support and respect for the decision of the majority.**

Engaging the Community

Recognizing that successful schools are the responsibility of the entire community, and because the Board sits in trust for the community, the Board will make continuing efforts to hear and engage the whole community. With assistance from the Superintendent, we will seek venues beyond the Board meeting where we can effectively engage community members and listen to their concerns.

We will attempt to be in touch with all stakeholders and all segments of the community, not just those who seek us out. We will monitor our efforts in this area, asking the question "which

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community voices are not a part of Board considerations, and how can we allow these voices to be heard?”

Concerns from the Community and Staff

When someone voices a concern, we will listen carefully, remembering we are only hearing one side of the story. We will then direct that person to the person in the district most appropriate and able to help them resolve the concern. We will make sure they understand the appropriate order of whom to contact (teacher, then principal, then district staff) and are aware of any formal forms or policies that might assist them (e.g., written complaint form). This will insure everyone is treated fairly, equally, and expeditiously and that the processes and procedures of the district are upheld. It will also clarify that one Board member has no individual authority to fix a problem. As a representative of the public, it is important that the Board member invite the person with the concern to ultimately get back to her/him if the issue is not resolved.

Nothing in this statement is intended to replace or supersede established District policy.

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