

School Committee & Subcommittee Operating Protocols and Norms

Approved 7.1.2020

Governing Principles:

- We recognize the importance of honoring our agreed upon norms and protocols, and we agree to take responsibility for reminding one another when we get off track.
- We are responsible for exercising co-leadership with the Superintendent in the vision, planning, policy making, evaluation, and advocacy for the mission of continuous improvement of student achievement in the district.
- A School Committee meeting is a meeting of the School Committee that is held in public – not a meeting with the public -- and we will make every effort to ensure that Committee meetings are effective and efficient. Opportunity for public input shall be provided to individuals in compliance with the ground rules posted on the agenda.
- We will advocate on behalf of the students and the district. We will work for the passage of new laws designed to improve student achievement and public schooling, and for the repeal or modification of existing laws that impede this progress.
- We shall work to build trust between and among School Committee members, the Superintendent, and the administration by treating everyone with dignity and respect, even in times of disagreement, by maintaining a respectful environment where each member is empowered to freely express opinions, concerns, and ideas..
- The Committee, whenever possible, should seek input from the professional educators and administration, and weigh their opinions and recommendations when exercising our judgment on matters before the Committee.
- School Committee members will not take unilateral action and agree to recognize and respect that their authority exists only when a quorum of the Committee meets. A Committee member's authority is derived only through a majority decision of the Committee acting as a body during an open, public meeting.
- At all times, our operating protocols and norms will conform with State and Federal laws, Open Meeting laws, and published School Committee policies.

Meeting Preparation:

- A meeting agenda will be distributed to committee members 48 business hours prior to each meeting. Items may be added to meeting agendas in advance of public posting of the agenda through discussion with the Chair. Agenda items will be selected and prioritized by the Chair and Superintendent to ensure efficient, and productive meetings.
- The Committee will use a consent agenda for routine items, selected at the discretion of the Chair. All of the items in the consent agenda will be approved with a single vote, and each item will be clearly identified. Any member may ask that one or more items be removed from the consent agenda for a separate vote.
- Informational meeting materials will be posted in a shared meeting folder at least 48 business hours in advance of the meeting. Members are responsible for ensuring they have access to these materials during meetings by either electronic means or using printed paper copies.
- If School Committee members have questions or concerns pertaining to any item on the agenda item or in the informational packet, they should contact the Superintendent in advance of a meeting.

Meeting Protocols:

- School Committee members shall come to meetings fully prepared and ready to begin the meeting in advance of the posted start time. If a member cannot attend or will be late to a meeting, they should contact the Chair and Superintendent as far in advance as possible.
- Attendance at the majority of School Committee meetings is expected. Inability to attend a meeting shall be communicated to the Chair and Superintendent as soon as possible.
- Committee members will make all reasonable effort to attend all Committee meetings, committee assignments, sub-committee meetings, hearings and work sessions.
- Committee members who are absent or late to meetings will take the initiative to learn what was missed after the meeting.
- The Committee will balance discussion and debate of issues with the need to make a timely decision. Members may speak only after being acknowledged by the Chair, and should limit their remarks to three (3) minutes or less on any one topic. All members will be afforded the opportunity to speak, but should avoid repetition of remarks.
- We aim to have meetings with a duration no longer than two to three (2-3) hours. The Chair and Superintendent will work together to plan and prioritize agenda items to keep meetings within this timeframe.
- Committee members agree that discussion will be limited to the agenda and that items will not be added to the agenda at the meeting, unless the urgency or importance of the item cannot be delayed until a subsequent meeting.
- On issues where community input or additional time for consideration is desirable, presentation and discussion of issues will take place in a separate meeting prior to the final vote. Whenever possible, at least one week will separate the initial discussion and the final vote.

Quality video and/or phone conferencing shall be available at meetings should a member not be able to physically attend so they may remotely participate. Members wishing to attend remotely should notify the Chair and Superintendent well in advance to ensure this is available and complies with Open Meeting Law.

Communications & Collaboration:

- The Superintendent and the School Committee recognize the importance of proactive communication and agree that if Committee members have questions or concerns, they will contact the Superintendent well in advance of the meeting.
- School Committee members agree to thoughtfully seek and support solutions that will provide the greatest benefit to all students. Once the School Committee has taken action, Committee members will support the official position of the School Committee.
- We encourage and welcome the public to attend and/or view the meetings. As per policy and the Chair's prerogative, the public may comment during the designated time during regular meetings, and those comments will be taken under advisement by the Committee. We will not typically engage in dialogue with the public in order to maintain effective and efficient meetings. However, topics raised by public participants may be placed on subsequent agendas at the discretion of the Chair and Superintendent.
- It is our responsibility to set the tone for the entire district, and we will make every effort to promote a positive image.. The Superintendent will be visible in the community, and we will operate transparently and respectfully, maintain confidentiality, and respect the Open Meeting Laws.

- The Superintendent and School Committee recognize the importance of working collaboratively with municipal representatives.
- The norm for communication of meeting information and materials as well scheduling of meetings shall be email. District emails shall be issued to each Committee member for use. This email account shall be checked each business day and messages responded to in a timely manner.

Access to Information

- School Committee members agree to refer important questions and concerns they receive from members of the community to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will investigate and provide all Committee members with the information needed to respond to an issue in a timely manner.
- School Committee members will channel all requests for information, reports and data through the School Committee Chair.. The Superintendent will ensure that each Committee member has equal access to this information.
- Legal Counsel serves the GDRSD. There will be instances where administration and/or the School Committee require legal guidance. Should any Committee member require legal guidance they must provide all requests to the School Committee Chair. The School Committee Chair is responsible for obtaining legal guidance from legal counsel and sharing it with all Committee Members.
- Committee and subcommittee information will be stored and archived in Google Drive folders accessible to all members. Additionally, information stored in the Drive from previous years will be made accessible to new members.

Improvement and Accountability:

- Members will endeavor to improve the skills and knowledge required to fulfill their role on the School Committee. This includes participation in an orientation session and other formal training organized by the Superintendent and the School Committee Chairperson, the MASC annual conference, and other relevant learning opportunities.
- School Committee members agree to participate in periodic evaluations of committee performance, with the goal of continuously improving the work we do on behalf of the district and students.

In order to equitably distribute the workload of the committee, members will take on assignments and be accountable based on the tasks or requirements of the assignment. Committee members who cannot fulfill any assignment or responsibility will inform the chairperson and help find someone to serve as a substitute.