

Portland Public Schools Board Member Expectations and Operating Protocols

As elected Board members of Portland Public Schools, our responsibilities are to:

1. Strive to provide the highest quality education for each PPS student.
2. Set explicit goals and priorities for the District, and provide financial oversight for the District. Working with the Superintendent, ensure that staff carry out and that students and the community are aware of the goals and priorities.
3. Focus on policy making, monitoring, and evaluation to further these goals and priorities.
4. Hire, set goals for, and evaluate the Superintendent.
5. Respect the role of the Superintendent to manage the District and to direct employees in District and school matters.
6. Make decisions as a whole Board only at public meetings. Recognize that individual members have no authority to take individual action in policy or in district and school administrative matters.
7. Encourage and model constructive public discourse in Board decision making. Respect the right of individual Board members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions. Once a decision is made, support the full Board and Superintendent in carrying out decisions.
8. Honor the student voice. Ensure strong, effective staff support to encourage student voice.
9. Respect those who express their views on issues related to the District. Solicit input and listen to all perspectives.
10. Actively participate in community events, acting as ambassadors on behalf of the District, as well as in state and/or national events when possible.
11. Strive to cultivate and maintain productive relationships, and work as a team with one another and the Superintendent.

I. Priority Setting and Evaluation

A. Priority Setting

1. The Board will establish, at a public meeting, annual and long-term priorities in alignment with the District's strategic plan and Superintendent's goals. The Board will align their work with District goals and the budget process, and will convene regular retreats to discuss and evaluate the District progress in meeting these priorities.
2. Every six months, the Board will elect two Co-Chairs during one of their public meetings.
3. Board Co-Chairs will meet regularly with the Superintendent and key staff to evaluate past Board meetings and determine the agenda for upcoming Board meetings. The Board Co-Chairs will solicit input from Board members and will use the following criteria to consider items for placement on the Board meeting agendas:
 - a. Strategic relevance and consistency with the priorities of the Board and the District;
 - b. Comparative importance;
 - c. Immediacy;
 - d. Community interest; and
 - e. Readiness for Board consideration (staff research, preparation, analysis, etc.)

Issues directly related to the Board's priorities will receive priority placement on Board agendas.

4. The Board Co-Chairs will regularly check in with the full Board regarding the Board meeting structure, and progress on the Board priorities and work plan.

B. Board Professional Development and Evaluation

1. The Board will self-assess its performance at least annually. The Board Co-Chairs will regularly evaluate Board meetings and work sessions. All Board members are encouraged to provide feedback to the Co-Chairs at any time to improve the Board's performance. The Board will also set explicit priorities as a Board for Board professional development. The Board Co-Chairs will annually review the Board Office budget to ensure there are sufficient funds to support the Board's professional development.

C. Superintendent's Evaluation

The Board will establish regular goals for the Superintendent's performance and engage in a process that provides for thoughtful and deliberative assessment of the Superintendent's work.

II. Meetings

- A. Board members agree to attend regularly scheduled Board meetings unless a situation occurs that makes attendance impossible. Board members will cooperate in scheduling special meetings and/or work sessions for planning and training purposes, and will advise staff if a Board member is unable to attend or arriving late.
- B. Board members agree to start and end meetings on time. Board Co-Chairs will solicit input from other Board members if a Board meeting likely to substantially exceed to the scheduled time as to whether the meeting should continue or certain agenda items be deferred to a later meeting.
- C. Board members will be prepared for each meeting by reviewing materials in advance.
- D. Board members agree to uphold the legal requirement for confidentiality on all matters arising from Board executive sessions and any other confidential communications.
- E. Board members agree to communicate with a focus on problem solving. Members will seek to clarify issues by soliciting each other's points of view.
- F. Board members agree to listen carefully and with courtesy when other people are speaking during Board meetings. Discussions between Board members will serve as a model for acceptable public dialogue.
- G. Board members should cast a vote on all matters except when a conflict of interest arises.
- H. Board members agree that when it is necessary to miss a meeting, that they will review the video of that meeting.
- I. Board members agree that if they must be absent from a meeting, that they will only request to phone into the meeting to cast a vote. Boardroom equipment limits the quality of the transmission for participation in a discussion.

III. Communication

- A. Board members agree to communicate directly with the Superintendent and/or members of the Executive Committee when a question arises, or when a concern is voiced by a staff member, student, parent, or other community member with the understanding that the matter will be addressed in a timely manner. To ensure optimal communication, Board members should copy the Superintendent and her Advisor, along with the General Counsel and Board Office Manager on their emails to the Executive Committee, and staff will do the same in its replies. By adhering to this communication loop, it verifies that Board members are receiving timely responses to their communication and that there are not multiple staff members working on the same issue. (These steps do not pertain to inevitable confidential situations that arise).
- B. Board members are requested to NOT directly contact staff who report to Executive Committee members without clearing it through the appropriate Executive Committee member first, as other staff may not be as familiar with Board communication and protocols. There may be case-by-case exceptions to this (such as key Communications Department staff).
- C. Board members are requested to communicate directly with the Board Co-Chairs or the Superintendent, as appropriate, when concerns arise about other Board members or District staff. When disagreeing with other Board members, Board members should maintain a respectful dialogue. Board members should refrain from personally criticizing another Board member or District staff in public.
- D. Board members retain the right to express individual opinions, and when doing so, will clearly state that the opinion is his/hers and not that of the Board.
- E. On occasion, it is beneficial to the Board and the public to have a designated Board spokesperson on a particular issue. In such cases, the Board Co-Chairs may speak for the Board on specific issues, or may designate other Board members to act as a spokesperson. Having a designated spokesperson does not mean that other Board members cannot express their opinions or perspectives about the issue.
- F. Individual personnel issues will be processed consistent with District policy and will not be discussed publicly, rather only with the Superintendent or designee. Specific personnel complaints submitted to the Board or individual Board members should be referred to the Superintendent or designee.
- G. From time to time, the Board may be required to make findings of fact that can be appealed to another government agency (i.e., personnel matters or charter school application hearings). In these situations, no Board member will discuss the substance of the matter with any person(s) directly involved in the issue, other than PPS staff, outside the formal hearing and deliberation process.

IV. Requests for Information

A. Information Requests of Staff

1. When Board members have information requests of staff (but do not require any particular decision to be made), the Board member should feel free to communicate their request to any member of the Executive Committee or through the Board Office Manager. The Superintendent or her Advisor should be copied on any written requests to keep her apprised of issues of concern to the Board.
2. If the request for information is of such a nature that it will take significant time to compile a response (i.e., more than two hours), the Board member should communicate his/her request to the Superintendent or designee for further direction. The Superintendent can then work with the Board member to determine the most efficient way to provide the information requested.

B. Requests Requiring Decision-Making or Resource Allocation

When a Board member has a request that will require a decision to be made or resources to be allocated, the Board member should send that request to the Superintendent or designee for a response in a timely manner. The full Board should be copied on these requests.

C. Responding to Concerns from the Public about District Staff

When Board members are approached by members of the public expressing concerns about District staff and the person requests specific follow-up, the Board member should direct that person to address their concerns to the Superintendent. If a citizen voices a complaint about a particular employee at a public meeting, the Board Chair should direct that person to cease their comments and refer them to the Superintendent.

D. Providing Documents to Board for Review in Advance of Meetings

The Board Co-Chairs and Superintendent will establish the agenda for full Board meetings at least 10 days prior to the Board meeting. Staff and the Superintendent will have the Board book, and any supporting documentation, available at least four days prior to the Board meeting except under extenuating circumstances.