

SCOTTSBLUFF PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

An Effective School Board:

- Has a mission
- Focuses more on academics than business
- Advocates for children as the #1 priority
- Focuses on the development of policy
- Communicates openly – members exchange ideas freely Understands its role – board members have no individual authority outside of the boardroom
- Seeks consensus; brings an open mind
- Supports board decisions publicly
- Involves all members in dialogue
- Encourages all members to become educated on their job as a board member and on education issues
- Supports the superintendent and understands his/her authority
- Seeks information and relies on data
- Respects diverse points of view from internal and external stakeholders
- Sets board goals
- Is representative of the community
- Encourages all members to share personal ideas
- Focuses dialogue inside meetings, not outside
- Does not disparage board and staff
- Holds the superintendent accountable – board clearly communicates its expectations

**OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

Educational Advocate:

All board members should –

- Put children's education as the #1 priority. Educational opportunity should be equal.
- Trust our educational experts: support in public, criticize in private.
- Support continuing education for board and staff.
- Be informed about education issues through reading, listening, and asking questions.
- Talk about our school in a positive manner.

### Team Focus:

All board members should –

- Maintain the district mission and goals as the team focus.

### Human Resource Development:

All board members should –

- Encourage fellow members to participate in training opportunities.
- Participate in at least an annual self-evaluation that assesses both the function of the board and its goals.
- Help to recruit and retain good board members.

### Positive Relationships:

All board members should –

- Demonstrate respect for each other.
- Agree to disagree agreeably.
- Work to build esprit de corps within the board.
- Communicate openly.
- Leave debates and disagreements in the boardroom.

### Open Communication:

All board members should –

- Share opinions openly, honestly, and respectfully.
- Be open-minded and listen to others.
- No surprises!
- Share a common agreement on definitions; ask for clarification when there are questions.

### Handling Concerns:

All board members should –

- Get both sides of the issues.
- Follow the chain of command – start problem resolution at the lowest level.
- Have the courtesy to let the superintendent know when you are going to visit with staff members.
- Let the board president know about personnel concerns.
- Address concerns in a timely manner – don't let issues fester.
- Be careful about soliciting public opinions.
- Follow this process for handling concerns about individual board members:

- Notify the board president of your concern so that he or she may address the issue with the individual.
- If there is a concern with the board president, notify the vice president regarding the situation.

#### Interactiveness:

All board members should –

- Enable all members to participate in the board discussion.
- Respect other points of view.
- Ensure that all members share their opinions on the issues.
- Respect each individual's right to vote his or her conscience in a responsible manner.
- Build trust through consistent adherence to the board's operating principles.

#### Team Decision-Making:

All board members should –

- Filter decisions through the district's mission statement
- Work to maintain an open dialogue in which all members contribute.
- Seek broad-based input on critical decisions that could be divisive.
- Research issues and trust the district experts.
  - Make data-driven decisions.
  - Consider the alternatives and opportunities.
  - Weigh consequences, both positive and negative.
- Be proactive, not reactionary.
- Support the final outcomes.

#### Meeting Format:

All board members should –

- No surprises!
- Follow the agenda.
- Refrain from interrupting each other and call on every board member in rotation for input or questions.
- Come to meetings prepared.
- Periodically review the agenda format to be sure that it's working for the board.
- Submit their requests to add an item to the agenda by the close of business on the Wednesday before the board meeting.
- Call the administration in advance with any questions about packet information.

Planning, Goal-Setting and Accountability:

All board members should –

- Participate in an annual self-evaluation of the board.
- Participate in an annual goal setting and review progress quarterly.
- Maintain an annual board calendar.
- Conduct a thorough annual evaluation of the superintendent, and review of progress on his or her goals quarterly.

Cross Reference: 201.01 Board Member Code of Ethics

Approved: 08/08/05

Reviewed:

Revised: