

Geneseo CUSD 228 Board of Education

Operating Agreements

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 build trust and move the District forward.
- We want to become an effective team.
- We want to understand our individual jobs and collective responsibilities.
- We want to be a team with a common, focused direction.
- We want to create a District culture that supports positive change.
- We want to represent the needs and desires of our community.
- We want to perpetuate a positive District culture that survives in the face of Board member and staff turnover.

2:20 Powers and Duties of the School Board; Indemnification
2:80-E Board member Code of Conduct

Roles & Responsibilities

The Board will:

- Govern with a focus on the future, on results, and on continuous improvement;
- Create a safe environment for the productive exchange of ideas;
- 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;
- Acknowledge that the Superintendent is accountable only to the full Board of Education;
- Speak 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 the consent of the Board.
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Meetings of the Board

We will consistently abide by our formal meeting processes so that all persons are treated fairly and equally. In order to show respect for each other and the processes, no one gets surprised with potentially controversial information or issues **at any time**.

We understand that Board meetings are **not** open-forum 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. 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 them as appropriate.

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 such direction. 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.

Each Board member respects the right of the 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.

- 2:200 Types of School Board Meetings*
- 2:220 School Board Meeting Procedure*

Board Meeting Agenda

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.

During a duly called open meeting, Board members and District residents may suggest items for inclusion on the agenda. Such items may be added to the 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.

Board Member Request for Information

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

The Board speaks with one voice; this includes making requests for information that involves extensive time and energy. In instances where a Board member seeks information that would require the Superintendent and/or staff to create a new report or to complete extensive research, the full Board should be involved to authorize such additional work. This will help ensure relevance to the District mission, vision, goals or objectives, and helps clarify whether the request is Board work or staff work. All responses, reports, or artifacts would then be shared with the full Board. Questions that merely clarify a previous answer or to seek a report or information that had already been shared is not part of this clause.

- 2:130 Board-Superintendent Relationship*

Engaging the Community

Because the Board sits in trust for the whole community, the Board will make continuing efforts to hear and engage the whole community. 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 community voices are not part of Board considerations, and how can we allow these voices to be heard?” Ask, “Who’s got the other side?”

- 2:230 Public Participation at School Board Meetings and Petitions to the Board*
- 8:10 Connection with the Community*

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 to the responsibilities.

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

2:110 Qualification, Term and Duties of Board Officers

New Board Member Orientation

The Board desires to be a team where all members contribute to effective Board leadership. The Board takes initiative in helping new members learn, understand, and practice effective governance. The Board president shall arrange a special meeting of the whole Board to review Board processes and procedures. The Superintendent shall meet with new Board members to answer questions and acquaint the member with the District. If desired by the new Board member, a veteran member will be identified as a mentor.

2:120 Board Member Development

Concerns from the Community and Staff

When someone complains to us, we will listen carefully, remembering we are only hearing one side of the story. We will avoid jumping to conclusions or placing blame prematurely. We will then direct that person to the employee in the District most appropriate and able to help them resolve their 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). We recognize that sometimes people are uncomfortable going to the teacher, but we must direct them to the Building Administrator or Superintendent. Anonymous complaints become personal agenda issues that are time consuming and nearly impossible to resolve.

This will ensure everyone is treated fairly, equally, and expeditiously, and that the processes and procedures of the District are upheld. It will also clarify that no one Board member has individual authority to fix a problem. As a representative of the public, it is important that the Board member invite the person with the complaint to ultimately get back to him if the issue is not resolved.

2:140 Communications To and From the Board

2:260 Uniform Grievance Procedure

8:110 Public Suggestions & Complaints

Board and Superintendent Communication Protocol

Board members with questions or comments regarding a District matter should direct the question or comment to the Superintendent. If it is a simple matter of clarification or interpretation of an issue, the Board member may contact a Building Administrator, but should carbon copy the Superintendent or let the Superintendent know of the phone call or conversation between the member and the Building Administrator.

Board members may contact the Superintendent via e-mail at skuffel@geneseochools.org. The Superintendent will answer, and depending upon the type of question, will **reply to all** Board members with the answer.

Board members may call the Superintendent's cell phone at 815-632-7790, if urgent; or his direct office line at 309-945-0402, if not urgent.

The Superintendent will work to keep the Board abreast of information that he and the Board would deem pertinent and relevant.

The Superintendent will communicate through schoolmessenger, e-mail and other digital means, where possible. He will use regular, U. S. postal mail, when necessary. When phone call or in-person visits result in information to one Board member that is of a nature that should go to all Board members, the Superintendent will follow up with a summary or response appropriate for all Board members.

The Board Takes Responsibility for itself.

The Board will schedule an annual workshop/retreat to complete a Board Self-Evaluation and review governance team agreements and processes.

2:120 Board Member Development

Behavioral Expectations

- a. Start with the common belief that everyone has good intentions.
- b. Create a safe environment for the productive exchange of ideas.
- c. Sincerely listen and seek to understand the viewpoints of others.
- d. Understand that the relationship between the Superintendent and any individual Board members is collegial not hierarchical, based on mutual respect for their complimentary roles.
- e. Solve problems through a collaborative process where all participants support the decision and actively work toward its implementation.
- f. The Board and the Superintendent have the right to expect performance, candor and honesty from one another. We use the term "straight talk" to describe that respectful tone of discussion that leads to appropriate questions and moves us towards resolution.
- g. Matters of personnel shall not be discussed outside of Closed Session when a quorum of the Board of Education is present.
- h. Be mindful that matters discussed in Closed Session meetings must remain closed from all members of the public, unless the full Board of Education votes to release minutes of said Closed Session. Breaches of confidentiality erode trust.

I agree, as a member of the Geneseo CUSD 228 Board of Education, that I will do my best to implement and follow the operating agreement guidelines set forth above.

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Adopted by Board Action 5/5/2015
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