



Maplewood Richmond Heights School District

BOARD OF EDUCATION NORMS & PROTOCOLS

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MRH Board of Education Norms

Demonstrate Professional and Ethical Behavior

Whether interacting with each other, staff, students, or community, we adhere to the district's core values: belonging, integrity, inspiration, courage, and success. We commit to being accountable and we demonstrate professional and ethical behavior.

Lead with Unity and Purpose

We base our decisions on the strategic plan, the district's mission, reliable data, and what's best for students. We serve as advocates for K-12 public education and the district. As a Board, we lead as a united team with the Superintendent, each in their respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust. We always put students first when making decisions and keep student achievement as the main focus of board actions.

Value and Respect Each Other

We conduct the Board's work with care and respect. We come to meetings prepared and on time. We are willing to support consensus, remain open to questions, and stay engaged during times of conflict or disagreement. We share information, distribute responsibilities, value each other's contributions, and care for one another personally.

Listen and Communicate Effectively

We engage in ongoing, transparent communication with community stakeholders while maintaining confidentiality regarding sensitive matters and refraining from discussing the intentions of fellow board members. As concerns, questions, and issues arise, we are available and willing to listen to understand the situation. We value and respect the opinions and lived experiences of each other, the Superintendent, staff, students, and community members. We allow all perspectives to be voiced and heard, but ultimately we act as one.

MRH Board of Education Protocols

The MRH Board of Education is composed of leaders elected by the communities of Maplewood and Richmond Heights to act at all times in the best interest of students while providing sound stewardship of committed resources. Board members serve on a volunteer basis in accordance with [Board Policy BBFA](#). While we are each elected as an individual, we must govern as a part of a team. We do not have authority as individual Board members to fix problems as we see them – only the Board has the authority to take action. Therefore, the success of each Board member is dependent on the success of our Board. We conduct ourselves as role models through collaborative working relationships, actively displaying respect at all times, and exemplifying our District mission, vision and core values.

Mission

MRH is an inclusive school District where students, staff, families, and community members are seen, heard, and valued for their unique backgrounds, culture, talents, and beliefs. We support, educate, encourage, and nurture one another to reach our full potential in order to create a better community.

Vision

Inspiring and preparing students to be leaders, scholars, stewards, and citizens who will thrive in a diverse and changing world.

Core Values

As a District, we model and promote:

- **Belonging:** We intentionally develop relationships to create a culture of safety, trust, and openness so that every student, family, and staff member feels valued and connected.
- **Inspiration:** We create an inclusive environment and engaging learning experience that excites and empowers our community to discover, problem solve, innovate, and grow to become well-rounded lifelong learners and leaders.
- **Integrity:** We are honest and accountable. We follow through on what we say and act with transparency to sustain trust with the community.
- **Courage:** We have a personal and collective responsibility to take bold and confident action in various forms in the face of adversity and uncertainty. We uncover, recognize, and dismantle systems of oppression in order to build an inclusive and supportive community
- **Success:** We challenge our community to set ambitious goals to maximize personal and collective potential in order to learn, grow and thrive now and in the future.

Board Member Roles & Responsibilities

- We understand that our primary role is to ensure and implement sound governance for the success of the District.
- We hire our Superintendent, who is solely responsible and accountable to the Board for day-to-day District operations, achievement of District goals, and the success of the District. We evaluate the Superintendent annually as a collective.
- We review, create, and enforce policy, which is implemented by District staff.
- We annually approve and monthly review the District budget.
- We speak with "one voice" to the Superintendent. We reach majority consensus when directing the Superintendent or clarifying required information/research.
- We encourage and respect collective discussion and diverse viewpoints when making decisions.
- We maintain awareness of the Board's comprehensive list of responsibilities, and how those differ from those of the Superintendent, as outlined in [Board Roles and Responsibilities](#).
- We adhere to the [Board's ethics policy](#).

Board Members Listening to Concerns from the Community

- We are leaders in the community and must always be aware that the community views us as Board members in any setting.
- We ask that stakeholders respect that individual Board members may set personal boundaries about when we are able to receive input.
- We listen carefully to all concerns from District stakeholders.
- We manage expectations by explaining our limited authority as individual Board members and share stakeholder concerns with appropriate District officials.
- We advise those with concerns to speak with the most appropriate staff member in the District to help meet their needs:
 - Classroom or learning situation (start with the teacher)
 - District policy or procedure (start with a District administrator)
 - Curriculum related (start with a principal)
 - Athletics or activities (start with a coach or adviser)
 - Programs and services such as Discover Club, Y-Care, SSD supports, or food service (start with the program's director)
- We inform the Superintendent and copy the Board President when we hear a concern that could be of importance to the community. The Superintendent addresses the concern and follows up with the entire Board as appropriate.

Board Interactions and Behavioral Expectations

- As visible role models for the students and community, we conduct and hold ourselves accountable in a respectful manner in meetings, community events, and private situations.
- We have, along with the Superintendent, the right to expect respect, high performance, candor, and honesty from one another.
- We do not push personal agendas.
- We do not disparage other Board members or discuss personal disputes in public.
- Our discussions must always be respectful and should focus on solving problems through a collaborative process culminating with all members supporting the majority decision of the Board and actively working toward its implementation.
- We approach discussion with an open mind and the belief that everyone has good intentions.
- We sincerely and actively seek to understand the viewpoints of others by listening and allowing others to be heard.
- We strive to ensure no Board member is marginalized due to differences in opinion, style, lived experience, or any other factor.

No Surprises at Meetings

- The members of the Board and the Superintendent agree to timely communication of any significant developments, problems, or issues so that neither side is surprised during or between meetings.
- Avoiding surprises is paramount in displaying respect for the Board, District administration, staff, and the community.

Preparing for Board Meetings

- Regular monthly meeting and work session agendas are posted in advance of meetings in accordance with [Policy BDA](#). We strive to exceed that mandated level of accountability by posting agendas with supporting documentation seven calendar days in advance of meetings to allow ample time for review and development of questions.
- It is the responsibility of individual Board members to prepare for meetings and the Superintendent's commitment to provide all information necessary for review for upcoming meetings to Board members in a timely manner.
- Board members should communicate questions regarding upcoming meetings and materials provided for review in an effective and timely manner either to the Superintendent and/or Board President prior to any meeting.
- We will contact the Superintendent, with a copy to the Board President, with any questions concerning the agenda before the Board meeting.

- The process and intention of asking questions prior to the meeting is to help the Superintendent provide the best possible answer for the Board and community.
- The Board President serves as a conduit for any concerns that Board members may express in regard to District business.

Board Requests for Information/Questions

- Board members will direct requests or questions directly to the Superintendent via email and copy the Board President.
- The Superintendent will delegate the retrieval of information and set the time frame for response as balanced against current needs of the District.
- Board members will self-monitor and ensure that one person's request for information or questions does not divert an inappropriate amount of time from staff efforts to achieve District goals.
- The Superintendent may seek to confirm requests for information with a majority of the Board if significant resources are required to provide a response.
- The Superintendent will email a response, and blind carbon copy (bcc) the full Board or the Board President as outlined below, to prevent two-way electronic communications by a quorum of the Board.
 - General questions: The Superintendent will respond and copy (cc) the Board President.
 - Agenda specific questions: The appropriate administrator will respond and copy (cc) the Superintendent and the Board President.
 - All additional responses to questions: The Superintendent or designee will respond and copy (cc) the Superintendent and blind copy (bcc) the full Board.

Protocol for Placing Items on the Agenda

- The monthly meeting agendas and work session agendas are informed by the annual calendar (housed in BoardDocs) and discussions among the Board President, Vice President, and Superintendent.
- Other Board members may request the addition of agenda items by making a request of the Board President, who will discuss with the Superintendent the appropriateness and the timing of adding that item. If the agenda item is denied by the Board President, the Board member who submitted the request may request a vote to add it in a future public meeting.
- Community members may place items on the agenda in accordance with [Board Policy BDDH-1](#).

Executive Sessions

- Executive (or closed) sessions may include identifiable student matters, personnel matters, real estate matters, or legal matters. The specific reasons will be made public in the motion to enter executive session.
- Executive session is open to elected Board members and the Superintendent only. Other relevant guests may be invited to participate at the discretion of the Superintendent and Board President.
- We will, at all times, respect the confidentiality of privileged information and will not divulge conversations, discussions, or deliberations that take place during an executive session meeting. If outcomes of votes taken in executive session are to be communicated to staff, this will be the responsibility of the Superintendent or a central office administrator (as delegated).
- We understand that to divulge executive session discussions or information damages the relationship of the team and has the potential for far-reaching consequences that may impact future District operations, including putting the District and fellow Board members in liability.
- We will make every effort to attend executive sessions, which are usually scheduled to follow previously scheduled public sessions. However, emergency meetings are called at the discretion of the Board President and Superintendent.
- Board members must be present from the “call to order” to be able to vote on matters discussed in the executive session.
- Some items in the executive session, such as sale of property, require more than a majority vote for approval. Board members will be apprised of these unique situations.
- Discussion in executive discussion must be kept to the items on the agenda.

Board Discussion During Meetings

- We actively engage and participate during meetings while sharing time with other members.
- We respect the positions of other members during discussion and encourage focused discussion on the agenda topic.
- We respect the time of Board members, staff, and administration and keep to the agenda and timelines for discussion.
- We look to the Board President for leadership in facilitating our discussions, study items, actions, and other agenda items.
- We hold each other accountable by acknowledging when a Board member has gone off topic or discusses something unrelated to the agenda.
- We conduct ourselves professionally and use our time efficiently and constructively.
- We remember to put students at the center of every decision.
- We actively bring the voice of the community into our discussions.
- We do not use names of specific students or teachers as examples in discussions.

- We prioritize the information provided to us by professional staff and consider the recommendations from these highly qualified professionals.
- We use facts and data, not anecdotal information, to inform our discussions.
- We strive to only add meaningfully to a discussion. We will not reiterate what has already been said or to speak just to speak.

Board Member Voting or Action on Agenda

- Unless otherwise dictated by policy or statute, when a vote is taken upon any measure before the Board with a quorum being present, a majority of votes cast determines the outcome.
- We respect the right of individual Board members to vote as they determine to be in the best interest of the District. However, we expect each Board member to support the decision of the majority vote.

Speaking with One Voice

- We recognize that no Board member or subset of the Board has the authority to act or speak on behalf of the Board without the consent of the Board.
- We recognize that the Superintendent is accountable to the school Board as a whole; individual Board member relationships are based on a mutual respect for our complementary roles.
- When responding to emailed concerns or public comments from regular monthly meetings, we will allow 24 hours for individual Board members to weigh in before the Board President sends an email reply.
- The Board President will respond to emails from the community within 72 hours, and to inquiries from staff and students within 48 hours. The Superintendent will be copied on all email replies from the Board.
- We will copy (cc) relevant administrators on Board email replies to make them aware of the Board's position. The Board President may reach out to individual administrators in advance of sending the email to confirm the reply contains accurate information.
- If the outcome of an executive session vote warrants communication to stakeholders, the Board President will invite brief discussion after the vote to determine how any non-confidential matters related to the outcome will be discussed with stakeholders.
- If an individual Board member receives an email or inquiry related to a governance matter, when appropriate, the membership should consult with the Superintendent and Board President before responding. Any email response should copy the full Board.

Engaging the Community

- We recognize the Board sits in trust for the whole community, and we make continuing efforts to hear and engage the whole community. We seek venues beyond meetings to effectively engage community members and listen to concerns.
- We attempt to be in touch with all stakeholders and all segments of the community, not just those who seek us. We monitor efforts in this area, asking the question, “Which community voices are not part of Board considerations, and how will those voices be heard?”
- We commit to attending and participating in each District and community liaison/Board representative position to which we are assigned so that we remain informed and accessible to the community.
- We engage with the community according to the [Board engagement plan](#)
- On the occasions when we participate in District or community events as private citizens (i.e., parent-teacher conferences, municipal celebrations), we will be mindful that we carry our Board positions with us always.
- We will be mindful of our Board roles when posting on social media, and we will clarify whenever necessary that we speak as individuals in those forums.

Engaging District Staff

- We recognize the Board’s only District employee is the Superintendent.
- The Board may receive recommendations from staff and administrators regarding personnel matters, but only the Board has authority to take action on personnel matters. Input from staff will be one of many factors that inform the Board’s personnel decisions.
- Staff should engage the Board in operational issues only after following the appropriate chain of command (principal or assistant principal, human resources, Superintendent)
- The Board does not respond to anonymous staff emails.
- Board members engage with staff and administrators on Board committees and on district committees that include Board liaisons.
- Staff may invite Board members to participate in classroom or building activities by sending requests through the Secretary to the Board.
- The Board may seek broad input from staff through a range of feedback collection instruments, including district-wide staff surveys, building-level principal surveys, post-check meetings, Superintendent 360-degree surveys, staff exit and stay surveys, building improvement plans, and staff association meetings.

Communication with the Superintendent

The following guidelines shall govern communication (as defined below) initiated by Board members and directed toward the Superintendent. For purposes of this protocol, "communication" includes, but is not limited to, email, text messages, phone calls, in-person meetings, impromptu communication before and after Board Meetings, or other Board events.

- Board members shall use their best discretion when communicating with the Superintendent and respect the Superintendent's time when initiating communication. Any communication is expected to be related to information necessary to make informed Board decisions, rather than to satisfy curiosity.
- Responses to Communication will be provided within 48 hours, unless it is determined by the Superintendent or Board President that communication is time-intensive or outside the scope of strategic-level questions, in which case no response will be provided. Also, the Superintendent will determine if the response is necessary for all Board members to be informed.

Continuing Education for Board Members

- We recognize the importance of professional development for Board members. Thus, we are committed to overall self-improvement and growth through continuing education and training.
- We will participate in two Board learning and development retreats each year.
- We are invited to participate in MSBA-related activities, such as regional events, online classes, and annual conferences. Participation in these events is at the discretion of individual Board members. The Board secretary will provide access and make arrangements.
- Work session agendas may include activities or readings related to professional learning.
- Superintendent and Board members are encouraged to share with each other relevant information (articles, books, videos, etc.) by email.
- We will consult other members to inquire about effective or beneficial learning events and resources.

Committee Expectations

- The Board President and Superintendent will assign Board members to various committees. These assignments are available in BoardDocs.
- At committee meetings, Board members are expected to represent the Board as a whole, rather than their individual viewpoint(s).
- Board members are expected to provide an update on committee meetings to the entire Board during Board Communications at monthly meetings.

Advocating For Your Child

- We recognize that Board members may also have children, grandchildren, or extended family members as students in our school District.
- We acknowledge that as parents/guardians, Board members may need to or want to advocate for their children's needs at school.
- We encourage Board members to follow the proper chain of command when advocating for their child(ren) in the same manner as any District parent/guardian.
- It is unethical and inappropriate for Board members to use their Board position to pressure, manipulate, or intimidate any District staff member when advocating for their child(ren).

Appendix:

[MRH Board Policy Manual](#)

[Board Roles & Responsibilities](#)

[MRH Strategic Plan, 2023 - 2028](#)

[Elements of a Governance Mindset \(Davis Campbell\)](#)