

## **The Board-Superintendent Relationship**

The successful operation of schools requires a close, effective working relationship between the board and the superintendent. The relationship must be one of trust, goodwill and candor. As the legally designated governing body, the board retains final authority within the district. The board exercises powers expressly required and implied by law. The superintendent is the board's professional advisor, to whom the board delegates executive responsibility, including such powers required to manage the district in a manner consistent with board policy and state and federal law.

The superintendent, as an executive officer of the board (secretary), is responsible for the administration of the schools under applicable laws and policies of the district. The board delineates the duties of the superintendent and uses them as the basis for evaluating the superintendent's performance. Unless specifically limited, the superintendent may delegate to other staff the exercise of any powers and the discharge of any duties imposed by district policy or a vote of the board. The delegation of power or duty does not relieve the superintendent of responsibility for the actions taken under such a delegation.

In order to perform their responsibilities, board members must be familiar with the operations within the schools. The superintendent will establish communication procedures which can enhance the board member's understanding of student programs and school operations.

The following operating principles will govern the roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent.

### **Superintendent/Board Operating Principles**

#### **Introduction**

As the citizen and executive leaders of the Woodland School District, it is important for the School Board and Superintendent to work together as a team. Though the roles of each are necessarily different, the primary mission of developing the full potential of all learners must be the paramount purpose for each.

The way the Board and Superintendent conduct business becomes a model throughout the District for students, teachers, parents and staff for leadership and problem-solving.

Operating principles define roles, responsibilities, and methods of working together. To assure quality operations, leaders must agree on basic ways of working. Therefore, the Board and Superintendent agree to abide by these principles.

#### **Commitment**

- We will expect each other to be committed to the work of leading the Woodland School District.

- We will maintain regular attendance at meetings. If we are unable to attend, the Board President or Superintendent should be notified.
- We will work as a team.
- We will lead by example.
- We will commit to ongoing improvement of ourselves, the Board, and the Board & Superintendent team.

### **Judgment and Trust**

- We will trust that the intentions of others are positive.
- We will be truthful, and trust that others are truthful.
- We will have allowance for error.
- We will recognize that each of us may approach problems and challenges in a different manner. This does not make another's approach wrong; just different.

### **Decision-Making**

- The cornerstone of our decision-making will be "What's best for kids".
- We will approach Board discussions with an open mind; seeking to understand each other's ideas, perspectives, values and beliefs.
- We will disagree without being disagreeable.
- We will make decisions that are well informed.
- We will attack problems and issues NOT people or personalities.
- Once a decision is made by the Board on any issue we will support that decision, in word and action, though we may not agree with the decision.
- The Board will make decisions on policy, budget, direction, etc.
- The Superintendent will make decisions on implementation of policy, operations of the School District, management and direction of staff, etc.
- We will recognize that we all process at different rates. We will therefore make allowance for requests to delay decisions.

### **Communication "No Surprises!!"**

#### **The Board and Superintendent**

- Recognize that open communication requires trust, respect and a fundamental belief in goodwill among Board Members and Staff.
- Support each other constructively and courteously.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Focus discussion on issues, not personalities.
- Uphold the integrity of every individual.
- Involve those parties who will be affected by the decision whenever possible and appropriate.
- Enter into problems with an open mind for all individuals involved.
- The Superintendent and School Board will, whenever appropriate and possible, promptly notify one another of events, rumors and issues that are likely to be issues of potential concern within the District and or community.

- The Superintendent and School Board recognize that the line between policy and management is not always clear. It is appropriate for the board and superintendent to negotiate that line on an ongoing, case-by-case basis. “Pushback” from both parties is expected and should be viewed as a healthy part of the working relationship.

### **Superintendent**

- The Superintendent will limit surprises to the Board, such as last-minute decisions and additions to the agendas.
- The Superintendent will seek to make communication clear, complete, concise and timely.
- The Superintendent will meet or speak with Board President on at least a weekly basis. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss operations of the District and establish agenda for meetings of the Board.
- The Superintendent will provide a written briefing to the Board of operational highlights on a weekly basis.
- The Superintendent will follow-through on Board questions and requests.
- The Superintendent will, when appropriate, provide full-disclosure to the Board of Directors on sensitive issues, and issues that come before them for decision.
- The Superintendent will share concerns with the Board and/or individual Directors openly.

### **Board**

- The Board will limit surprises to the Superintendent, such as last-minute requests for detailed information or additions to the agenda for which he may not be prepared.
- The Board will communicate Board interests and expectations to the Board President and/or Superintendent clearly and on a regular basis.
- The Board will recognize the impact of large projects on the Superintendent and his staff (opportunity cost) and will reasonably limit such projects.
- Board direction to the Superintendent will come by way of an approved motion, consensus, or through the Board President.
- Concerns of the Board and/or the individual Directors will be addressed with the Superintendent openly, directly and in a timely manner.
- Board members will offer candid feedback to one another, seeking to help one another and the whole team to improve their effectiveness and performance.
- Individual Board members bring differing skills and expertise with them. To the extent that these skills and expertise can enlarge the thinking of the board, inform decision-making, guide policy decisions, enhance operations, and improve the skills of staff, Directors are encouraged to utilize these assets.
- The Board recognizes the value of student voice and input into the work of the board. They will be intentional about seeking out and receiving input and perspectives of the student board representative.

**Superintendent and School Board Roles and Responsibilities**

<b>The Role of the School Board is to:</b>	<b>The Role of the Superintendent is to:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set policies;</li> <li>• Prioritize and keep District resources focused on student learning;</li> <li>• Approve the budget;</li> <li>• Hire and evaluate the Superintendent;</li> <li>• Listen to and represent the community;</li> <li>• Be an advocate for public education;</li> <li>• Be supportive of students, staff and administration;</li> <li>• Support participation and involvement in decision-making within the board;</li> <li>• Involving community and staff within the district to support participation in decision-making;</li> <li>• Direct concerns or criticisms to the Superintendent in a timely manner;</li> <li>• Actively engage with the student board representative to ensure student voice in decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support actions taken by the Board and clearly differentiate personal opinion from Board decisions when speaking in the minority.</li> <li>• Provide recommendations and implement Board policy;</li> <li>• Build a positive environment throughout the District;</li> <li>• Serve as a resource to the Board;</li> <li>• Recommend for hire and supervise All District Staff;</li> <li>• Act as the primary District communicator;</li> <li>• Provide support, leadership, and vision for the District;</li> <li>• Bring options and recommendations to the Board;</li> <li>• Ensure District and staff accountability;</li> <li>• Be the "day-to-day" decision-maker;</li> <li>• Manage and delegate the work of the District.</li> </ul>

<b>The Role of the School Board is to NOT:</b>	<b>The Role of the Superintendent is to NOT:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out policies or micro-manage;</li> <li>• Direct any staff other than the Superintendent;</li> <li>• Create surprises;</li> <li>• Abdicate Board responsibility;</li> <li>• Press narrow personal agendas;</li> <li>• As individuals, make promises that would appear to be binding upon the Board and/or District.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make policies;</li> <li>• Create surprises;</li> <li>• Assume Board responsibilities;</li> <li>• Press narrow personal agendas;</li> <li>• Be the sole spokesperson for the Board;</li> <li>• Discourage open discussion and feedback.</li> </ul>

**Dealing with Citizens and Parents**

- Concerns and complaints will be promptly referred to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will follow-up with Board members on the outcome of referrals.
- When we hear concerns and complaints we will listen and refer the individual with concerns to the lowest level possible for resolution e.g. the school principal, etc.

- When we hear concerns and complaints we will suspend final judgment, recognizing that we may not have a complete picture.
- Individual Directors will represent themselves as individual Board members in dealing with citizens rather than as representing the School Board. The exception to this is when addressing others on issues where there is agreement by the Board (such as direction, policy, elections, etc.).

### **Board Members as Parents**

- Board members do not, by virtue of being a Director, abdicate their role as parent in their interactions with their child(ren)'s school(s). It is important that they clearly communicate with teachers, principals, and staff when they are in their parent role vs. their Director role.
- Directors shall follow the same protocols as other parents in dealing with issues and concerns regarding their own child(ren). e.g. addressing concerns at the "lowest level"

### **Effective Meetings**

- The Board agrees to share ideas about new programs and new directions with the Superintendent and other members of the Board before presenting major proposals publicly.
- Out of respect for the time of others, Board meetings will begin as scheduled.
- The Board agrees to read all materials, call and ask questions in advance (to allow Superintendent to prepare complete and accurate response), seek clarification and information as needed and when possible, explains to the Superintendent in advance about major concerns about proposals.
- The Board will refrain from holding de facto Board meetings via telephone and/or email.

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Legal References:	RCW 28A.320.010	Corporate powers
	RCW 28A.330.050	Duties of superintendent as secretary of the board
	RCW 28A.330.100	Additional powers of the board (First Class Districts Only)
	RCW 28A.400.010	Employment of superintendent — Superintendent's qualifications, general powers, term, contract renewal
	RCW 28A.400.030	Superintendent's duties

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