



## Mount Vernon School Board Operating Protocols

For enhancing teamwork among members of the board and between the board and administration, we, the Board of Directors, hereby publicly commit ourselves collectively and individually to the following operating protocols.

### Roles and responsibilities

We are members of a leadership team of six (five directors and the superintendent) dedicated to working collaboratively for the best interest of our students, parents, staff, and community.

We are committed to model the leadership expected at every level of the district. We will follow best collaborative practice in our deliberations, believing better decisions will result from our individual commitment to learn and understand varying perspectives as we work to build consensus.

Successful organizations are the result of the strong and effective leadership. In order for members of our team to be active players, they must know their roles.

### Roles of the Board and Superintendent

<b>School Board - Governs (Guides/Directs)</b>	<b>Superintendent - Manages (Administers/Operates)</b>
Decides What	Decides How
Requests Information	Seeks and Provides Information
Considers Issues	Provides Recommendations
Creates, Reviews, Adopts Policy	Recommends, Implements Policy, Approves & Reviews Plans
Implements Plans, Monitors Progress	Reports Progress
Supervises & Evaluates Superintendent	Contracts with Personnel
Approves & Reviews Budget	Formulates Budget
Represents Public Interests	Acts in Public Interest

### What our Roles Do NOT Encompass

<b>The role of the School Board is not to:</b>	<b>The role of the Superintendent is not to:</b>
Carry out policies or micro-manage or develop budgets	Make policies
Direct any staff other than the superintendent	Direct the Board
Create Surprises	Create Surprises
Abdicate board responsibility	Assume board responsibilities
Press narrow personal agenda	Press narrow personal agenda
As individuals, make promises that would appear binding upon the board and/or district	Discourage open discussion and feedback

## **Board Operating Protocols**

We, the members of the Board, are committed to serving the students and residents of Mount Vernon. We strive to provide the highest quality public education, recognizing that systemic change and a focus on equity will be necessary to meet the needs of all the students in our district.

To achieve that goal, we have established this operating protocol, which will serve as a code of conduct and ethics to help govern our actions at meetings and in our role as directors.

We believe that the success of the Mount Vernon School District depends on shared vision among the school board, students, staff, parents, and community, and we will try, to the best of our ability, to uphold these aspirations.

We vow always to show respect for each other, for all members of the Mount Vernon School District, and for all school district residents. This respect is based on our fundamental belief in the goodwill of all of these district participants. We especially value the hard work of the Mount Vernon School District staff and we will show appreciation in our actions as a board and as individuals.

We exemplify the behavior codified in the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) School Board Standards and in the Individual School Director Standards. \*This includes standards for equity and inclusion. The board holds the conviction that all students can learn and achieve regardless of circumstances and this requires inclusive instructional environments, and culturally relevant and differentiated instruction that creates a culture of belonging.

We assiduously follow the provisions of the Washington State Open Meetings Act and will not engage in discussion, either in person or through electronic media, of school district issues in groups of three or more directors except in publicly announced meetings.

We formulate annual and long-term district goals, key strategies, and priorities for progress, in collaboration with school district staff and, when appropriate, with parents, and community members. We will support conscientiously and whole-heartedly the superintendent's efforts to achieve those goals, but will not otherwise involve ourselves in the management of district affairs.

We commit ourselves to keeping the superintendent informed (usually in advance) of all substantive conversations with district staff, except those conversations that pertain directly to the board's evaluation of the superintendent's job performance.

We communicate with each other and with the superintendent and staff in such a way that there are no surprises in meetings. We will present clearly and succinctly our individual point of view in meetings, but will support board decisions in all our comments after a group decision has been made. To facilitate this process, we will review all board meeting agenda materials provided and seek clarification or additional information from the superintendent as needed prior to meetings.

We will make it our responsibility to communicate the interests and opinions of all our constituents to the school district and to communicate the district's goals, progress, and needs to our community and to its legislators. This will require extra efforts to ensure the voices of our historically marginalized populations are heard and considered in deliberation and decision making.

## Board Meetings

<p><b>Board Meetings</b></p> <p><b>Board meetings provide the forum for where decisions are made.</b></p>	<p>Regarding Board Meetings, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invest time to discuss and study systemic issues that impact equitable student achievement.</li><li>• Strive to hold efficient, succinct, equitable meetings, while also allowing adequate time and consideration of underrepresented voices and issues impacting equity.</li><li>• Review agenda items prior to board meetings.</li><li>• Request any additional information from the board president or superintendent.</li><li>• Ask the board president or superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting.</li><li>• Ensure that surprises to the board or superintendent are the exception and not the rule.</li><li>• Expect the board president to be cautious of time and observe the board's protocol.</li><li>• Refer additional facts and information needed by the board to the superintendent for follow-up</li></ul>
<p><b>Board Meetings: Executive Sessions</b></p> <p><b>Executive Sessions will be held when specific needs arise as allowed by law. These needs include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acquiring or selling real estate</li><li>• Qualifications of an applicant for employment by the board</li><li>• Qualifications of a candidate for appointment to elective office such as a school director</li><li>• Discussion with legal counsel of enforcement actions, litigation or potential litigation</li></ul>	<p><b>Regarding Executive Sessions, we will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be extremely sensitive to the legal ramifications of executive session meetings and comments.</li><li>• Respect the confidentiality of all privileged information, including that discussed in executive session.</li><li>• Discuss a permissible topic in executive session, but take final actions in public, as is required by the Open Public Meeting Act.</li></ul>

## Communications

### Communications Between the Board and Staff

The following communications procedures are established:

#### A. Staff Communications to the Board

- All reports to the board or individual board members from principals, supervisors, teachers, or other staff members shall be submitted through the superintendent.
- Personal complaints and criticism received by board members will be referred to the appropriate supervisor or superintendent.
- This will not deny any staff member's right to appeal to the board regarding administrative decisions, provided that the superintendent will have been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed according to the applicable procedures on complaints and grievances.

#### B. Board Communications to Staff

- All official communications, policies, and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members through the superintendent.
- The superintendent will employ all such media as are appropriate to keep staff fully informed of the board's priorities, concerns, and actions.
- Requests for information from staff by board members will be taken to the superintendent. The superintendent will provide information in a timely manner.

#### C. Visits to the School

- The typical process is for individual board members to inform the principal of their visit to the school or classroom.
- Such visits will be regarded as expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. Official visits by board members will be carried on only under board authorization and with the full
- knowledge of staff, including the superintendent and principal.

<p><b>Communications Between the Board and Staff (continued)</b></p>	<p><b>D. Social Interaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Staff and board members share a keen interest in the schools and in education. When they meet at the social affairs and other functions, informal discussion on such matters as educational trends, issues, and innovations can be anticipated.</li> <li>• Discussions of personalities or staff grievances are not appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working with district staff about our own children</b></p>	<p>In order to work effectively with district staff about our own children we agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember that we are parents (grandparents) first.</li> <li>• Follow the same process that we expect all parents to follow: meet with the teacher first, then follow the chain of command.</li> <li>• Be clear that we are speaking to the teacher as a parent. (i.e., "My child is having this problem. How can I help them?")</li> <li>• Understand that sometimes our spouse or significant other may be the right person to handle the situation.</li> <li>• Inform the superintendent of the situation regardless of the resolution.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communications between the board and community - complaints or concerns</b></p>	<p><b>The board encourages public input through a variety of print and electronic media.</b></p> <p>In order to respond effectively to community members who share a concern or complaint with us, we agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember that receiving information from an individual or a group is not the same as having total knowledge of the topic or issue. There are usually two sides to every concern.</li> </ul>

**Communications between the board and community - complaints or concerns (continued)**

- Utilize the 6 R's to ensure the person speaking feels valued and heard:
  - Receive by listening openly to what the other person is saying.
  - Repeat by paraphrasing back or asking questions for clarification.
  - Request what the person sees as a solution to the problem; and/or what they want you to do with the information.
  - Review the real options the person has available to them within the district policies or processes.
  - Redirect the person to the appropriate place in the system.
    - Encourage patrons to present their own issue to the person who can address their issues properly and expeditiously.
    - If appropriate, explain the district complaint policy and how it can be accessed.
- Report to the superintendent
  - Call the superintendent to give him a heads-up about the constituent issue so that the superintendent is able to understand the total picture.
  - Describe our response to the constituent so that the superintendent hears directly from us, and is not caught in the middle.

The superintendent will deal with the issue as necessary and, when appropriate, determine how best to inform the total board.

## Board Conduct

### Board conduct

#### We will:

- Lead by example. We use words and actions that create a positive impression on an individual, the board, or the district.
- Base our decisions on the available facts and not independent judgement.
- Not yield to individuals or special interest groups.
- Represent the needs and interest of all the children in the district as outlined in the district's mission statement.
- Not abuse our official position.
- Not use district facilities, resources, or position for the purpose of advancing the interest of ourselves or any other individual or individuals.
- Make every attempt to attend all board functions, including committee meetings.
- Serve on committees as a silent observer or active participant, as defined by the board.
- Accept responsibility for all board decisions, regardless of how we voted, and not offer a different opinion outside the boardroom.
- Take no private actions that will compromise the board or administration.
- Endeavor to hear all members' opinions and listen objectively.
- Encourage debate and differing points of view.
- Conduct discussions with care and respect.

## Board Authority

<b>The Board's Authority</b>	<p>We recognize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That only the board as a whole has authority.</li><li>• That individual board members do not have authority.</li><li>• That the board president is the spokesperson for the board.</li><li>• That the board emphasizes planning, policy-making and public relations rather than being involved in the management of school operation.</li><li>• That an individual board member will not take unilateral action.</li><li>• The individual directors do not give direction. The board as a whole gives direction.</li><li>• Exercise oversight responsibilities through policy, planning, advocacy, public relations.</li><li>• Avoid attempts to micro-manage the schools.</li><li>• Delegate the management of the schools to the superintendent.</li><li>• Set clear goals for the superintendent.</li></ul>
<b>The Board and Superintendent Relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Surprises to the board or the superintendent will be the exception, not the rule.</li><li>• The board recognizes the superintendent as the chief executive officer and expects recommendations, proposals, and suggestions on most matters before the board.</li><li>• The board president meets with the superintendent and keeps all board members informed of board matters/information.</li><li>• At the weekly Director's meetings, board directors meet individually or in pairs with the superintendent to share concerns, ask questions, or to bring forth future agenda items for the board consideration.</li></ul>



## Board Professional Development

<b>The Board's Professional Development</b>	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a self-evaluation every two years.</li> <li>Address any individual problems, such as poor meeting attendance or leaks of confidential information.</li> <li>Model life-long learning.</li> <li>Participate in opportunities that provide professional growth.</li> <li>Encourage members to take advantage of opportunities to inform themselves about current educational issues through individual study and participation in programs providing needed information.</li> <li>Encourage members to disseminate information to other members.</li> </ul>
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## Board and Superintendent Roles in Negotiations

<b>The Board and Superintendent Roles in Negotiations</b>	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define the philosophical and financial parameters for negotiations.</li> <li>Trust our negotiating team to do the best job that they can.</li> <li>Remind staff that there is a process in place, that the staff and district each have an identified negotiating team, and that any questions or issues need to go through the defined negotiation process.</li> <li>Adopt and stand behind the final contracts.</li> </ul>
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As a demonstration of our ongoing commitment to these principles, we will sign this document annually at the December organizational meeting and whenever a new member takes the oath of office.

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Board President

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Date

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Board Vice President

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Date

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Board Member

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