



Board of Education Communication Protocols

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Introduction

In conjunction with Board policies, this document seeks to clarify, for the Summit School District Board of Education (“Board”), various communication protocols and act as a guide in handling communications between Board members, the Board/Board members and the Superintendent, and the Board and constituents. This document is not all-inclusive and will not address every communication issue. This document is also subject to change and does not constitute policy. This protocol shall be reviewed on an annual basis.

Protocols are intended to support coordination, consistency, and clarity regarding communications. They are *not* intended to limit Board members from sharing their individual perspectives nor engaging with constituents such as students, staff, and community members.

Further, Board members are encouraged to utilize the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) Leadership workbook, along with the CASB website, and professional development opportunities as tools to increase their skills and effectiveness as Board members. As a team, the Board recognizes that there is an opportunity for growth in effective communications and this has been documented in several ways including GP and BSR Monitoring Reports, [Monitoring Report Evaluations](#), [End of Meeting Debriefs](#), 2023-24 and 2024-25 Board goals ([09/19/24 goals check-in](#)), and a written [Board Comment](#) from the 10/03/24 Board meeting that includes Policy Consultant communication guidance.

Additional feedback and associated action items from October 19, 2023 and November 21, 2024 are included [here](#).

Protocols for Standard Communications

1. Communication protocols are not only necessary but must be clearly established to maintain effective communication between the Superintendent and Board and respect their defined roles and responsibilities.
2. The Superintendent must keep the Board informed to effectively fulfill its purpose, as set forth in its adopted Board policies.
3. The Board must keep the Superintendent informed to effectively support the Superintendent's job performance, as it relates to the organizational accomplishment of the Board's *Ends* policies and organizational operation within the boundaries established by the Board's *Executive Limitation* (EL) policies.
4. Section K of the District's administrative policies include topics related to parent and community involvement in school, public information and complaints, and public information and communications. The Board should keep itself informed of these administrative policies, adhere to the roles and relationships outlined in these policies, and direct community members through the proper communication channels.
5. As provided in statute, written correspondence is subject to requests under the Colorado Open Records Act and is property of the district in perpetuity.
6. The Board will receive communications through the Superintendent via the following methods:
 - a. Scheduled regular Board meetings, retreats, and special meetings, including but not limited to the following standing agenda categories:
 - i. Superintendent Comments (one-way report out)
 - ii. Superintendent Reports (multi-directional discussions)
 - iii. Superintendent Spotlights and Recognitions
 - b. Monitoring reports (written reports, and related meeting presentation and discussion), Superintendent performance evaluations, and other informal learning tools in adherence with Board Policy BSR-5, [Monitoring the *Ends* and *Executive Limitations* Policies and Superintendent Performance Evaluation Processes](#)
 - c. Media advisories, press releases, and other District communications
 - d. Weekly written updates and other timely updates via email. The Superintendent appreciates acknowledgement of receipt and/or engagement from Board members to ensure that these updates are relevant.
 - e. Agenda planning meetings with the Board president and vice-president
 - f. Quarterly 2:1 or 1:1 meetings for Superintendent and Board directors (for more information, see the annual Board Committees and Liaison Assignments document)

- g. Quarterly 1:1 meetings for Superintendent and Board president
- h. Committee and advisory group meetings (ex. Finance Committee, Facilities Committee, DAC, Consejos de Familias Hispanas, LMC)
- i. Urgent phone calls, texts, or email (based on *Protocol for Special Communications - Superintendent to Board of Education*, see below)

7. The Superintendent will receive communications through the Board via the following methods:

- a. Refer constituent concerns or complaints to the point of the concern, and through the appropriate chain of command as outlined in [Administrative Policy KE, Public Concerns and Complaints](#).
 - i. If the concern lies in classroom practice, the constituent should be referred to the teacher or principal.
 - ii. If the constituent has already contacted the most appropriate staff and is not satisfied with the outcome, the constituent can be referred to the Superintendent's office.
 - iii. Inform the Superintendent of all operational concerns or complaints.
- b. Refer staff concerns to the point of the concern and/or to their union representative if a contract violation is alleged. Inform the Superintendent of all operational concerns or complaints. See *Protocol for Special Communications - Parameters for Staff / Board Dialogue* below for further guidance.
- c. If a concern raised by any constituent is of a potentially serious nature, inform the Superintendent immediately. If the concerns are about suspected child abuse or neglect, then a board member must directly report those concerns within 24 hours of suspected incident(s) to law enforcement or Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 844-264-5437. Reporting to a school employee, including the Superintendent, does not relieve a mandatory reporter of their legal obligation to report to the hotline or law enforcement.
- d. If information is needed on any aspect of the District, contact the Board president, who may already have the information or will be able to direct you most appropriately on the inquiry.
- e. If you have a concern with an action taken or not taken by the Superintendent, address it directly with them at the next private opportunity or 2:1 or 1:)1 meeting.
- f. Maintain a commitment to showing respect for fellow board members and to accuracy and consistency in line with Board policies and governance team standards when communicating with constituents and the media.

Protocol for Special Communications - Superintendent to Board of Education

- 1. Role of Board president as conduit: Because the Board and Superintendent have distinct but interdependent roles, some communication may fall outside standard channels. In these cases, the Superintendent will support the Board's need to stay informed while remaining focused on operations. To facilitate efficient communication, the Board president will serve as the sole conduit for periodic operational updates between the Superintendent and the Board and will share information with the full Board as appropriate. Emergency Situations: From time to time,

situations arise that require immediate communication and fast decisions. Please see [Communication Guidelines for Board Role in School Safety Incidents \(Updated Nov 2024\)](#) for additional detail.

Protocol for Special Communications - Parameters for Staff / Board Dialogue

Board and administrative policy, and agreements with the Summit County Education Association (SCEA) and Summit School District Leadership Association (SSDLA), provide the outline for the special relationship between District staff, the Superintendent, and the Board. It is the desire that the following protocols, in addition to the Protocols for Standard Communications, will help to promote a healthy relationship and dialogue among these groups in a way that supports and respects the roles and responsibilities of the Superintendent and Board.

1. All concerns, complaints, and grievances must be addressed in alignment with applicable employee/union contracts/agreements, policies, and statute.
2. Proactively keep the Superintendent and Board president informed/aware of scheduled meetings with staff members.
3. Inform the staff member that you will be sharing operational feedback with the Superintendent, as the Board's sole employee.
4. For operational concerns, refer staff members to their principal or supervisor, SCEA building representative/other union leadership or SSDLA representative/leadership (as applicable); then to the Superintendent.
5. Debrief the Superintendent on operational feedback.
6. Current opportunities for proactive and intentional communications between staff groups and the Board include:
 - a. School visits to include instructional rounds, special events, staff outreach events, and scheduled visits as schedules allow
 - b. Scheduled Board meeting agenda items, including:
 - i. LMC visits to Board meetings twice per year and as needed
 - ii. School spotlights - one visit per school per year
 - c. Board representative attendance at LMC meetings as requested by the SCEA
7. In alignment with its role within the Master Contract, the LMC should act as a space where collaborative problem-solving and relationship-building among staff, Superintendent, and a representative of the Board (as appropriate) take place.
8. During Teacher and Staff Negotiations and during times when Union business, such as bargaining unit policy or recognition is on the Board agenda: In order to respect the annual SCEA negotiations process, the roles and responsibilities of the negotiations team representatives, and maintain strong, positive relationships within SSD, Board members are encouraged to diplomatically decline invitations for 1:1 meetings with staff members during this timeframe but are encouraged to take 1:1 meetings outside of negotiations. Board members are not required to attend negotiations but are encouraged to observe negotiations when possible; Board members do not participate in negotiations beyond observation.

Protocol for Special Communications - Media Requests, Email Correspondence, and Social Media Use

On occasion, Board members may be approached by media outlets (newspaper, radio, podcast, etc.). To honor Board policy:

1. It is best practice that all media requests received by Board members should be directed to the District's Director of Communications and the Superintendent so they may assist in answering requests. They can advise Board members on what is allowable under the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA), as well as providing reliable resources and data to support the Board member. There may also be a determination made during this consultation that there is a subject expert, other than the board member, who may be better suited to answer a media request.
2. The Superintendent or designee (e.g., the Director of Communications) may contact a Board member to fulfill a media request.
3. A Board member should always first consult with the Board president and Superintendent when fulfilling a media request regarding personnel issues, issues involving a specific student(s), or an ongoing criminal or civil investigation.

A Board member may receive direct emails or group emails from constituents and/or staff. To honor Board policy:

1. If an email is addressed to all Board members, it is the expectation that the Board president will provide the response from, and the perspective of, the Board as a whole. Individual Board members may, and are even encouraged to, respond, but they should state clearly that the response is their own and not the opinion or statement of the Board as a whole.
2. If the email indicates that it is to be included as public comment, the Board president shall respond and forward to the Board secretary and assistant secretary. Individual Board members are encouraged to acknowledge the receipt of emails to the whole Board but are not responsible for responding on behalf of the Board as a whole or forwarding the initial email to the Board secretary and assistant secretary.
3. If Board members are copied on an email directed to the Superintendent, the Board members shall proceed as though the Superintendent or appropriate member of his team will respond.
4. Board members are encouraged to contact the Board president if they receive information that is particularly concerning.
5. Board members should not expect to be copied on a written response to a constituent, however they may request a debrief from the Board president or Superintendent as applicable.

Board members may be active on social media. Board members should consider that they have no control over the distribution of any social media post, even if it has been subsequently deleted. CASB provides additional [social media tips](#) to consider. To honor Board policy:

1. Board members should use heightened judgment and caution when deciding to participate in online discussions regarding the school district.
2. Board members should be careful not to create the perception that their individual opinions represent that of the Board or District.
3. Board members shall act in alignment with all expectations set forth in Board policy.

Protocol for Board Meetings - Public Comments

Public comment shall be offered in Board meetings as provided for in Board policy *GP-7, Board Business Guiding Principles, Norms, and Operations*, and as such, in adherence with Administrative policy [BEDH. Public Participation at Board Meetings](#), and the associated regulation, [BEDH-R. Public Participation at Board Meetings](#).

The Board has agreed upon the following interpretations made by the Board president effective with the 2023-24 school year (per *GP-4, President's Roles and Responsibilities*, section 2):

1. Individuals choosing to participate in public comment can provide written comments to be part of public record or make live comments (in-person or via electronic attendance), but the Board will not read written comments aloud during a Board meeting.
2. Pre-recorded videos will be accepted as public comment and will be included in public record, however, the Board will not play the video during a Board meeting.
3. All records of written "chats" within electronic meetings are considered part of public record.

After the Public Comment section of the meeting, the Board is encouraged to provide clarity to the speaker(s) and practice empathy by communicating that:

1. The Board hears what the speakers are saying, appreciates their participation, and values their feedback, however, Board members are advised to not engage in discussion or respond to public comments at that moment as their role in public comment is to listen to community voice; and
2. There is a process in place to ensure that their voice is considered in decision making.

Following public comment, the Board president and/or Superintendent will ensure any necessary follow-up action has been taken, and that the Board is informed of official Superintendent and/or Board responses as follows:

1. The Superintendent will determine which public comments require follow-up, the type of follow-up required, and may request direction from the Board. This information will likely be shared during the Superintendent comments agenda item. Board members may recommend follow-up action by the Superintendent and/or Board president. Not all public comments will require follow-up.
2. When considering a written response on behalf of the Board, the Board president shall exercise caution if the public comment topic is not one that the Board has previously discussed.
3. The Board president and Superintendent will share actions taken and/or reason(s) for non-action related to public comments at the following board meeting. This ensures that the feedback loop has been closed, the public is made aware of operational action taken since the comment was made, and the Board is informed of any official communication made on behalf of the Board.

Protocol for Regular Meetings - Board Comments

Time is dedicated in each regular Board meeting for Board comments. During this time, Board members share information that they deem important for the Board, Superintendent, and/or the general public to know. Board comments are intended for one-way communication, whereas the Board development portion of the agenda is intended for multi-directional communication and engagement among team members.

1. The focus of Board member comments should be connected to the Board's *Global Ends Statement* and the Board's *Ends* policies.
2. Examples include updates related to committee and liaison work, school visits, community and/or district celebrations and recognitions, attendance at school and/or community events, professional learning, networking, etc.
3. At this time, there is not a defined structure related to the updates included in #2 above.
4. Board members shall try to limit their comments to three (3) minutes each, to respect the time of the Board, staff, and public.
5. Board members shall make only one (1) comment to ensure that comments do not inadvertently become a dialogue that is not included in the approved agenda.
6. Board members should not directly respond to public comments.
7. Board members can make verbal comments and provide written comments as part of the Board comments agenda item.
8. The content of all Board comments shall adhere to Board policy.

Protocol for Regular Board Meetings - Providing Direction on District Communication

The Board shall adhere to Board policy with respect to roles and responsibilities. As such, implementation and communication of the District's operational activities fall under the purview of the superintendent.

During the discussion portion of an agenda item in a Board meeting, the Board may make recommendations to the Superintendent regarding communications to the Summit School District community. Any recommendation should include the purpose of the communication and expectation of the Board. The Superintendent is not obligated to act upon communication recommendations provided by the Board.

Board Policy Regarding Communications

The Policy Governance® structure and philosophy ("PG"), along with the accompanying Board policies, were adopted by the Summit School District Board of Education ("Board") effective July 1, 2023. Three of the four sets of Board policies, Governance Process (GP), Board-Superintendent Relationship (BSR), and Executive Limitation (EL) policies, each address Board and Board-Superintendent communication protocols in various ways.

Following is summarized information from Board policies that are relevant to communication protocols and provide examples of the type of information contained in each, as they relate to communication. Please note that these are included here for your convenience only. Consult the adopted Board policies for specific information and notable exceptions, as well as Board-approved Monitoring Reports for

interpretations and other important information. Additionally, the following policies are not intended to be read in isolation from the other Board policies, and these summaries are not inclusive of all Board policy that relates to communication.

Board-Superintendent Relationship (BSR) Policies

The purpose of the BSR policies is to define how the Board relates governance to management, i.e., the Board's relationship to the Superintendent and definition of roles, authority, accountability and how proper use is monitored. Following is summarized information from the BSR policies that are relevant to communication protocols. Please refer to the policies themselves for additional detail.

BSR-1 - Governance-Superintendent Connection states that the Board's "sole, official connection to the operational organization is through the Superintendent" and requires that the Board "direct the operational organization through only the Superintendent". Additionally, at the "Superintendent's discretion, other staff members may be designated as points of contact".

BSR-2 - Unity of Control states that only "official decisions of the Board, acting as an entity, are binding on the Superintendent" except in rare cases where the Board has specifically delegated this authority. Additionally, this policy provides that the Superintendent may refuse requests of information of assistance from individual Board members/committees in certain cases.

BSR-3 - Accountability of the Superintendent outlines that "all authority over staff members" rests with the Superintendent and that the "Board recognizes that all staff members are accountable to the Superintendent, except as otherwise provided by law." As such, "the Board shall not give directions or instructions to persons who report directly or indirectly to the Superintendent" nor take responsibility "for formally or informally evaluating any staff member other than the Superintendent".

Governance Process (GP) Policies

The GP policies define how the Board goes about the job of governing, i.e., how the Board will develop, implement and monitor its own work. Following is summarized information from the GP policies that are relevant to communication protocols. Please refer to the policies themselves for additional detail.

GP-1 - Purpose of the Board outlines core beliefs that the Board will use as guidance to fulfill its purpose, some of which affect how the Board and its members are expected to interact and communicate with members of the Summit School District community. They highlight the importance of educated citizens and community members; relationships; the innate worth of individuals and the need to treat others with dignity, respect, and fairness; the understanding of, and respect for, diversity; the importance of trusting, respecting, and valuing the contributions of others within a team; and the expectation that individuals take accountability and responsibility for their own actions and hold themselves to high moral, ethical, and civic standards."

GP-2 Board Job Description outlines establishing and maintaining effective communications with students, staff, families, and community members as a unique job of the Board, as distinguished from the Superintendent and SSD staff, through access to public Board meetings and related documents,

Board-directed committees, community and staff outreach meetings, adopted school visits, strategic liaison roles, advocacy, and recognition and celebration of student, staff, and District accomplishments.

GP-3 Governing Style outlines the Board's emphasis on leadership that "focus[es] on organizational vision rather than adult personal agendas or interpersonal issues . . . strategic leadership rather than administrative detail . . . observ[ing a] clear distinction between Board and Superintendent roles . . . [encouraging] diversity in viewpoints and discussion . . . [and making] collective, clear, and transparent decisions rather than individual and vague decisions".

Further, this policy notes that the "Board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility and shared participation . . . work in partnership with the Superintendent, staff, students, families, and the community . . . [and] will use the expertise of individual Board members to enhance the capacity of the Board as a body . . . not substitute individual judgments and opinions for the Board's collective values" and highlights that "Board members will not assume responsibility for resolving operational issues or give personal direction to any part of the operational organization."

Finally, as GP-3 relates to communication protocols, the Board will exercise self-discipline with respect to "respect of roles, and long-term continuity of the Board's governance philosophy" and "will not allow any Board member or Board committee to hinder or excuse the fulfillment of the Board's policy commitments."

GP-4 - Board Officer Roles, Transitions, and Framework outlines the specific duties of Board officers, including communication responsibilities of the Board President which include: making interpretive decisions that fall within topics covered within GP and BSR policies and keeping the Board informed of these interpretations; not supervising or directing the Superintendent isolation of the full Board; representing the Board to outside parties in announcing Board-stated positions and Board decisions, and providing interpretations within the areas delegated to the President; and serving "as the liaison between the Board and the Superintendent on Board operational issues, including conferring with the Superintendent on crucial matters which may occur between Board meetings."

GP-7 - Board Business Guiding Principles, Norms, and Operations outlines norms and operational guidelines that "build and maintain productive and respectful relationships, interactions, and communications."

Items #1 through #10 in subsection 2(a)(i) of the policy address actions that encourage "effective and efficient multi-directional listening and communication, and promot[ing] better relationships resulting in successful outcomes". Examples include assuming positive intent and practicing trust, honesty, and authenticity in all interactions; sharing information, knowledge, concerns, and reflections; exercising active listening, seeking to understand, and developing mutual solutions; and asking clarifying questions while being mindful of Board role.

Subsection (2)(a)(ii) of the policy addresses actions "to instill trust and confidence throughout the District and community, and support and strengthen the Board's integrity and professionalism". Examples include adherence to Open Meetings Law (Sunshine Law), promoting the positive image of the District, being cognizant of the potential impact of any public statements about Board business or

decisions, knowing and following the chain of command in Board communications and actions, directing operational concerns through the proper channels, and respecting the final decisions of the Board.

Subsection (2)(a)(iii) of the policy addresses actions to “create a productive, respectful, and welcoming space for all”, especially as they pertain to Board meetings. Examples include demonstration of respect and dignity, offering constructive criticism, timely and appropriate communications, and creating space to engage in healthy dialogue and debate.

Subsection (2)(b)(i) of the policy addresses actions to “support the President’s efforts to facilitate an orderly meeting and prioritize your duties as an elected official”. Examples include communications in relation to meeting preparation, including the timeline for agenda item requests and clarifications, and setting and communicating clear expectations and goals when leading discussion or presentation on an agenda topic”.

Additional items in subsection 2(b) of the policy address such items as promptly notifying the Board President and Assistant Secretary if you will be attending a meeting in-person, responding to communications received in a timely fashion, recognition of public comment within each meeting, and providing direction for District communication related to meeting discussion and actions.

[GP-8 - Board Member Code of Conduct, Violations, and Vacancy Process](#) outlines the Board Member Code of Conduct. Examples include specific actions on how a Board member shall share concerns of Board policy violations, adherence to the Open Meeting Law (Sunshine Law), agenda item clarification, Board responsibility to the citizens of the district and accountability to the entire District, the inability for Board members to speak on behalf of the Board and recognition of the lack of authority vested in individual Board members, public expression of individual negative judgments of Superintendent and/or staff performance, actions that will compromise the Board or District, and actions that will be taken in the “event of a member’s alleged, willful, continuing, and/or substantial violation of policy”.

[GP-11 - Board Committees](#) outlines specific committee member expectations as they relate to communications, which align with the purpose and charge of Board committees and their commitment to being team-oriented, accountable for their own actions, and holding themselves to high moral, ethical, and civic standards.

Executive Limitation (EL) Policies

The purpose of the EL policies is to represent Board values about methods and conduct employed as staff pursues organizational ends, i.e., these policies place constraints on the Superintendent’s authority that establish the boundaries within which all operational activity and decision-making will take place. Following is summarized information from *EL-9 Communication and Support to the Board* that is relevant to communication protocols. Please refer to the policy itself for additional detail.

[EL-9 - Communication and Support to the Board](#) requires that “the Superintendent shall not cause or allow the Board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work” which addresses such items as

reinforcement of authority of the Board as a whole and representation of the Board's processes, roles, and legal obligation; advising the Board if the Board is not in compliance with law, agreements, or Board policy particularly as it relates to the Board and Superintendent relationship; and advising the Board of adverse media coverage or negative reactions within stakeholder groups regarding District matters.