

Umatilla School District Board and Staff Operating Principles

Operating principles define the beliefs, values and methods of working together. Successful organizations are the result of effective and dynamic leadership. In order to promote such leadership, we must agree on a basic ways of working together- as a Board and as a District. The Board serves as a model for the entire District. The topics that follow outline the manner in which we agree to conduct our Board business and foster positive District relations.

Communication

Through appropriate channels, frequent, shared with Board/Superintendent team:

Superintendent to Board: The superintendent will inform the Board of pertinent activities and any potentially “newspaper worthy” news. The superintendent will use email to communicate routine matters to the Board weekly. During crisis situations, the superintendent will send an email alert and text/phone members beginning with the Board chair. The superintendent will communicate individual board questions/concerns/responses to the entire Board in the weekly notes.

Board to Superintendent: Board members are encouraged to inform the superintendent of any communications they receive from district patrons (positive or negative). The Superintendent takes directions from the Board as a whole- individual Board members should refrain from making requests of the superintendent (except for minor clarifications, explanations, etc.) and from giving direction to the superintendent regarding District business. Individual Board members will give a courtesy call or email to the superintendent prior to visiting a school.

Board to Other District Administrators/Employees: Board members are encouraged to channel formal communications to district administrators or other employees through the superintendent. Any substantial requests for information or action should come through the Board chair to the superintendent, and should reflect the Board as whole. Individual Board members shall not give directives to any school administrator or employee, publicly or privately.

Follow the chain of command:

All: The last stop, not the first, will be the Board. We follow the chain of command and insist that others do too. Try to resolve all issues at the lowest level possible and honor the role and responsibilities of those closest to the situation.

Effective Meetings

No surprises:

Board: Board members should share ideas about new programs and new directions with the superintendent (who may involve key staff) or other members of the Board before presenting them publicly.

Administration: Bring matters to the Board in a timely fashion. Present programs and projects far enough in advance so Board members suggestions can be addressed without upsetting activities already in progress.

Be prepared:

Board: Read materials and seek clarification and information as needed from the superintendent or Board chair prior to the Board meeting. When possible, explain all major concerns about a proposal to the superintendent in advance.

Administration: Develop recommendations that combine the best interests of students and the needs of the District with the focus and direction the Board desires. Board input during work sessions and during the discussion component of a meeting may provide direction.

When a situation is controversial, exemplify the governance role, own the decision making process and support one another:

Board: Use a variety of strategies in dealing with controversy or sensitive issues. Examples: 1) the chair may call a short recess to allow for regrouping or regaining of composure, 2) a special meeting could be organized to address the topic that may need more time, 3) the chair may ask the superintendent to investigate the complaint or concern.

Generally, the Board does not take final action on a complaint during the meeting at which it is presented. The Board does not hear complaints related to individuals in open session. To protect the rights of individuals, such complaints are dealt with in executive session with the appropriate parties present.

Administration: Resolve complaints at appropriate administrative levels. Prepare and forewarn the Board of any concern likely to come its way. Write follow-up notes to patrons with concerns and inform them of any follow-up action the Board or administration may take.

Decision Making

Practice efficient decision making:

Board: In order to formulate and execute sound decisions, we agree to:

- Resolve problems at the lowest level possible following the chain of command.
- Clearly communicate decisions.
- Build a point of reevaluation into decisions.
- Provide input from all concerned.
- Make decisions consistent with our expressed goals.
- Move to the question when the discussion is repetitive.
- Executive session will be held only for appropriate subjects.

The Board acts only as a body:

Board: No Board member has the authority to speak for the Board without Board action and direction. Board members will act only as member of the Board and do not assume individual authority when the

Board is not in session unless authorized and directed by Board vote. Board members should review essential facts, consider others' ideas, and present personal opinions during Board deliberations; but, once the Board vote has been taken, all Board members should support Board decisions regardless of how individuals voted.

Superintendent: It is the Board's job to see that the schools are well run, but not to run the schools. Day to day work and decisions are the responsibility of the superintendent. The superintendent will follow Board policy when making daily decisions and will keep the Board apprised of key initiatives, decisions and personnel changes.

We all work collectively for the benefit of students in the district and agree to keep children at the focus of our work and decisions.