

**Governing Board Communication Strategies and Procedural
Guidelines**

Kyrene Elementary School District #28

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Kyrene Elementary School District #28

1. Introduction

We believe in order to build and/or maintain effective team relationships that Governing Board members should have some common operating principles about communication between ourselves and with members of the school community. A set of agreed upon communication strategies will provide the desired parameters and methodologies to ensure that communication will reflect positively on the Governing Board and the school district. Areas of communication that regularly occur are listed below with strategies that the team believes will serve the district well. These strategies also ensure that the Governing Board and the school district comply with the provisions of A.R.S. 38-431.01 (Open Meeting Law).

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2. Mission

A highly effective Governing Board has examined carefully how, as a working team, we can contribute to improving levels of student achievement and build a strong base among the stakeholders and citizenry for ownership of their public schools. Our Governing Board engages in targeted professional development to master skills, understands the regulatory environment in which we work, uses meetings to promote academic accountability and fiscal integrity, and personifies the highest standards of honorable, focused public service in highly stressful times.

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3. Communication Between Governing Board Members

A. Communication outside of regularly scheduled Board meetings

In order to stay in compliance with Open Meeting Law:

- Avoid action or belief words in all communications.

- Consult with district legal counsel on word use in written communications.
- Route written communications through the superintendent, and allow the superintendent to communicate with all members of the Governing Board as appropriate.
- Use caution when discussing a conversation with one Governing Board member to another Governing Board member (serial conversation).

B. Communication during regularly scheduled Board meetings

- Board members will use the electronic communication system so the president will know when they want to address the group.
- Board members will not use personal electronic devices to communicate during meetings except under unusual circumstances.
- The president will actively facilitate the meeting by encouraging Board members to participate in the conversations.
- Board members will avoid interruptions by allowing each other to finish making statements.
- The president will help each Board member stick to the agenda when appropriate.
- The president will ask Board members to finish their thought to move the meeting along.
- The president will remind Board members not to repeat themselves if this occurs.
- The president can suggest that additional time at a future meeting be scheduled if a topic/issue is taking longer than expected.
- Board members should be on the lookout for closure. A member of the Governing Board or superintendent may offer a summary that is a perfect place to segue from discussion to action.
- Be cognizant that it might be time to *call the question*. It is not always an easy call, but there comes a time where the discussion should wind up and action taken.

C. Communication with the public during regularly scheduled Board meetings

Call to the public (Blue Cards)

- Speakers have three minutes to ask their questions and/or make their points.
- They receive a 15-30 second notification when their time is nearing an end. Then they are advised their time to speak is over.
- A speaker may only speak once per agenda item and may not assign time to another person.

Call to the public guidelines

- Blue Cards not related to agenda items—Board and staff members should not respond unless to correct misinformation.
- Blue Cards that are related to agenda items—Board and staff members can respond.
- Allow the person her or his entire three minutes to ask questions or make a statement before responding. During this time listen and do not interact with the speaker. This will avoid confusion regarding the amount of time a person has to address the Governing Board and will ensure that others have equitable time. It also avoids the Governing Board or administration from engaging in a debate.
- Once the person has completed her or his statement or questions and has left the podium, an appropriate response, if any, can be made.
- People have a right to their opinions and perspectives. Debating with a person may discourage community members from sharing their thoughts with us. Remember to address the issue at hand and provide your perspective or opinion in a respectful tone.
- Individuals will not be allowed to yield their 3 minutes to another individual to increase the amount of time available to address the Board.

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4. Communication Between Governing Board Members and the Superintendent

- State items desired for future consideration during the designated time at the Board meeting and follow up will be indicated via written communication or other means.
- Items requested by individual Board members will be kept track of by assistants assigned to this task and periodic updates will be provided through the Board Memo.
- The Superintendent or assistant will contact each Governing Board member whenever needed or appropriate.
- Board members will contact the Superintendent whenever needed or appropriate.
- The Superintendent will send Governing Board members a Board Memo each week.
- The Superintendent's Cabinet and Board will schedule Issue Review Sessions prior to each Board meeting to discuss the work of the school district.

- The Superintendent will report absences of more than 3 days due to professional obligations, vacation time, illness or other circumstances to the Governing Board prior to the absence (preferably) or when the absence occurs.
- The Superintendent will let the Governing Board know who will be responsible for leading the school district in his absence.

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5. Communication Between Governing Board Members and the Media

A. Speaking for the Board

- The Governing Board President will speak for the Governing Board whenever possible and/or refer members of the media to the designated district spokesperson.
- All Governing Board members and the Superintendent will be notified when the President has spoken on behalf of the Governing Board.
- When pressed for comment, Governing Board members will adhere to:
 - This is what the board decided. (After a vote has been taken, support the will of the Board.)
 - This is the process that was used. (Describe the process if needed.)
 - State the facts.

B. Speaking as an individual

- Consider Open Meeting Law requirements.
- Avoid discussing the voting process to assure the community that you have not already decided prior to a discussion with the entire Governing Board.
- Stress that you are speaking as an individual and not for the Governing Board.
- Keep your remarks positive and respectful.

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6. Communication Between Governing Board Members and Schools

- Schedule meetings at schools through the Governing Board secretary.
- Governing Board members can directly accept invitations to meet or attend school events.
- Communicate specific questions about schools through the Superintendent or designee.

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7. Communication Between Governing Board Members and District Office Staff

- Communicate with the Superintendent or appropriate Cabinet member about requests for information or answers to questions. This will ensure that district leaders are aware of Governing Board interests and concerns.
- When one Board member requests data, information, a document, etc., in most instances it should be forwarded by the Superintendent or designee to all Board members. To further clarify, Board members shouldn't forward such information to all of the other Board members themselves to comply with Open Meeting Law.

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8. Communication Between Governing Board Members and the Community

- Governing Board members should understand processes being utilized with various district initiatives and projects in order to educate the community.
- Seek to have Governing Board conversations as a whole with the community in an appropriate setting and in compliance with the Open Meeting Law so each Governing Board member will receive the same information regarding the opinions and concerns of parents and community members.
- Refer people to existing processes and groups for how they can participate, advocate or share information.
- Governing Board members should consistently refrain from making assurances to groups or individuals about resolving their issues and concerns and refer them to the Superintendent.
- Governing Board members should maintain independence as a single Governing Board member when speaking with individuals or groups.

- Governing Board members should work with the Superintendent to find appropriate methods to provide information to the Board and/or Cabinet they have received from various groups.
- Governing Board members should encourage members of the community to communicate with all Governing Board members instead of contacting individuals.
- Governing Board members should refer staff and community members to appropriate administrators to address administrative issues.
- When speaking as an individual, Governing Board members can share opinions but should clearly state they are not speaking for the Governing Board and should not provide any assurances about impending items that may be considered by the entire Governing Board.
- When contacted by the public on an issue, Board members can respond by saying, “Please note we will investigate this issue and information will be provided to you.”

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