



Kyrene Elementary School District
Governing Board and Superintendent
Communication Handbook
2017-18

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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).

A highly effective Governing Board and Superintendent strives to improve student achievement levels and build a strong base among the stakeholders and citizenry for ownership of their public schools. The Governing Board engages in targeted professional development to master skills, understands the regulatory environment in which the Board works, uses meetings to promote academic accountability and fiscal integrity, and personifies the highest standards of honorable, focused public service even in highly stressful times. The Governing Board and Superintendent communicates with District stakeholders (students, parents, personnel, community members, etc.) in a manner that complies with State and Federal law and Board Policies.

2. Vision

All students achieve at their maximum potential to become problem-solvers, creators and visionaries of tomorrow.

3. Mission Statement

The Kyrene School District will commit to student success for all by providing engaging and challenging educational environments which promote and inspire a passion for learning, leading, and achieving transformative life outcomes.

4. Governing Board and Superintendent Norms

The Board and Superintendent will operate with a shared commitment to serving the best interests of Kyrene's students.

- A. The Board and Superintendent will communicate and work together based on a shared respect for the roles each play in the leadership of District. The Superintendent and District staff will be respectful of the role the Board plays as elected representatives of the Kyrene community and their role as defined in state statute. The Board will be respectful of the role of the Superintendent to manage the District and its staff and hold him/her accountable for its operation.
- B. Respect extends to actively listening to others, refraining from interrupting when others are speaking, refraining from negative or derogatory statements about others' work, allowing everyone to express their voice and encourage input, refraining from use of cell phones during meetings and being respectful of others' time.
- C. The Board and Superintendent will work together to avoid "surprises". Every effort will be made to share information with each other with as much lead time as possible. Board members will strive to communicate questions and concerns to the Superintendent as appropriate, and the Superintendent will strive to keep Board members informed of information they need to be aware as appropriate. If there is an item that needs to be discussed collectively, it will be placed as an agenda item at a future meeting rather than bringing up the issue, without notice, at the meeting.
- D. The Board will respect established protocols for communication with the Superintendent and District staff. There shall be an agreed "chain of command", starting with the Superintendent. The Superintendent will ensure that responses to Board requests will be handled in a timely manner and share responses with the entire Board.

- E. Once a decision has been made, the Board will collectively respect the decision made and avoid disagreement in public. Decisions made by the Board will be supported by the Superintendent, District leadership and staff once a decision is made. We will support the majority decision(s).
- F. Board acts as a collective body. Individual Board members do not have individual authority. Only the Board, as a whole, has authority. We agree that an individual Board member will not take unilateral action. The Board President will communicate the position(s) of the Board on controversial issues. When Board members serve on various school committees their role shall be defined by the Board as silent observer or active participant.
- G. The Board will address its behavior by yearly self-evaluation and by addressing itself to any individual problems, such as poor meeting attendance or leaks of confidential information.
- H. The Board will conduct Executive/closed sessions only for appropriate subjects. Executive sessions will be held only when specific needs arise. Board members will be extremely sensitive to the legal ramifications of conducting executive/closed meetings and comments.

5. Role of the Superintendent

The Superintendent functions as the administrative manager of the District and is, throughout his/her or their (awkward sentence) exercise of responsibilities, is accountable to the Board. Often, there is some confusion as to the overlap of responsibilities between the Board and the Superintendent. This confusion, in turn, can result in tension that interferes with the effective performance of both the Board and the Superintendent in carrying out their duties and responsibilities and can compromise District leadership.

6. Role of the Board (per BBA-Board Powers and Responsibilities)

- A. The Board is authorized [by AZ law] to adopt all needed policies and regulations for the organization, evaluation, and governance in the District.
- B. The Board has three functions:
 - a. The legislative function: It is the policy of the Board to retain and exercise full legislative authority and control over the schools by adopting general policies or by acting directly in matters not covered by its policies.
 - b. The executive function: Placing in operation existing Board policy. Most of this function is delegated by the Board to its executive and administrative officer, the Superintendent.
 - c. The appraisal function: [The he determination of the efficiency of the school operation and an evaluation of the educational program of the District based on the policies as outlined in the policy manual.

7. Understanding the Board's Role (per BCA-Board Member Ethics)

Board members will strive to improve public education, and to that end will:

- A. Attend all Board meetings insofar as possible, and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.
- B. Recognize that decisions should be made only after discussion at publicly held Board meetings;
- C. Render all decisions based on the available facts and independent judgment, and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special-interest groups.
- D. Encourage the free expression of opinion by all Board members, and seek systematic communications between the Board and students, staff, and all elements of the community.

- E. Work with other Board members to establish effective Board policies and to delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the Superintendent.
- F. Communicate to other Board members and the Superintendent expressions of public reaction to Board policies and school programs.
- G. Be informed about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by state and national school boards associations.
- H. Support the employment of persons best qualified to serve as school staff members, and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation of all personnel.
- I. Avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest, and refrain from using their Board position for personal or partisan gain.
- J. Take no private action that will compromise the Board or administration, and respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law.
- K. Remember always that a Board member's first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the public schools.

8. Role of the Superintendent (and District Administration; per BDD-Board/Superintendent Relationship)

- A. The establishment/adoption of policies is the responsibility of the Board, and the execution of those policies is a function of the Superintendent.
- B. The Superintendent is the chief executive officer of the School District and is responsible for the professional leadership and skill necessary to translate the policies of the Board into administrative action.
- C. The Superintendent is responsible for the administration of the District. The Superintendent may delegate the necessary authority to other employees and develop such procedures and regulations as the Superintendent considers necessary to ensure efficient operation of the District.

9. Understanding the Role of the Superintendent (and Administration; per CB-Superintendent)

- A. The Board shall employ a Superintendent, who shall enforce State and Federal laws and the policies of the Governing Board.
- B. The administration of the school system, in all aspects, is the responsibility of the Superintendent, whose functions shall be carried out in accordance with the policies of the Board.
- C. The Superintendent may establish regulations for the administration of the District that are in compliance with State or Federal law and the policies of the Governing Board.

The following chart defines some of the significant differences in the roles of these officials:

Administration

Governing Board	Superintendent
The board hires a Superintendent and delegates responsibility for administrative functions.	The Superintendent is responsible for providing administrative leadership and managing the District's day-to-day operations.

Policymaking

Governing Board	Superintendent
The Board establishes policy for the governance of the District after considering the Superintendent's recommendations.	The Superintendent is responsible for designing and implementing procedures to effect the requirements of policy set by the Board.

Hiring & Evaluating Personnel

Governing Board	Superintendent
The Board employs professional personnel in accordance with policy upon recommendation of the Superintendent and reviews and acts on other personnel recommendations from the Superintendent.	The Superintendent recommends personnel to be hired; is responsible for performance evaluations; and makes recommendations for renewal, non-renewal and dismissal of personnel, as provided by policy.

Program Evaluation

Governing Board	Superintendent
The Board approves courses to be offered and requires periodic reports on the status of the educational program offered by the District, making revisions in policy as they are needed. The Board publishes an annual education performance report on the District and each campus and holds a hearing for its public discussion.	The Superintendent serves as the education leader for attainment of student performance objectives and submits to the Board reports on the curriculum, keeping the Board informed about the evaluation of school programs.

Planning Goals

Governing Board	Superintendent
The Board establishes education goals for the District, based on the input of District staff and community members, through various planning activities.	The Superintendent provides administrative leadership and makes recommendations to the Board concerning the development and implementation of and progress toward the education goals approved by the Board.

Budget

Governing Board	Superintendent
The Board communicates the District's priorities to the Superintendent through identified goals, reviews the budget submitted by the Superintendent, makes necessary revisions and adopts the budget.	The Superintendent prepares a budget, recommends budget expenditures to the Board, makes revisions as requested by the Board and administers the budget adopted by the Board.

Facilities Planning

Governing Board	Superintendent
The Board adopts plans for facilities after considering the recommendations of the Superintendent and delegates supervision of the building program to the Superintendent.	The Superintendent leads the administrative effort to plan for, operate, and evaluate facilities and to supervise improvements.

Community Relations

Governing Board	Superintendent
The Board adopts a program of school-community relations and remains responsive to the community.	The Superintendent recommends and implements a program of school-community relations and keeps the community informed about District performance, policies, programs, and procedures.

10. Meeting Preparation

- A. Board members may request that the Board President or Superintendent place items on the agenda. Whether these items are requested during or between scheduled Board meetings they will be added to “Items for Future Consideration”.
- B. The Board President and (possibly) Vice-President will meet with the Superintendent to review and approve the draft agenda usually within a day or two of a Board meeting.
 - a. Requests for additions to the agenda will be received at least by noon the Wednesday before the Tuesday Board meeting.
- C. The final agenda, and supporting presentations/documents will be made live on BoardDocs no later than 4:30 pm on the Friday before a Board meeting.
- D. The Superintendent’s Cabinet and Board will schedule Issue Review Sessions prior to each Board meeting to address issues that have been requested by Board or staff members, discuss the work of the school district and preview the agenda for the upcoming meeting.
- E. The Superintendent will include in each week’s Board memos, the working agenda of Board meetings as well as any supplemental background information related to Board agenda items.
- F. Staff will check with a Board member who placed an item on the Items for Future Consideration list to be sure the item is appropriately listed.
- G. The Items for Future Consideration list will be kept current so the Board will know how and when the item will be addressed. Items listed as “Items for Future Consideration” are not considered to be agendaized, and therefore, cannot be discussed during Board meetings where they are introduced until they have been placed on an agenda.
- H. A consent agenda will be used for items not requiring discussion.
- I. Any Board Member may ask to have an item pulled from the consent agenda to allow for discussion or individual consideration. The Board Member will notify the Superintendent of the intent to pull an item off the consent agenda and what additional information may be required in order to enable the agenda to be modified to place the item on the agenda as a separate action item. If the request to pull an item from the consent agenda is made less than 24 hours prior to the meeting, the Board Member making the request will notify the Superintendent as soon as possible that an item will be pulled during the Board meeting.
- J. Pulled consent items will be discussed after the consent agenda vote or when scheduled as an action item, as the case may be.
- K. The Board will receive Executive Session supporting documents via confidential email two calendar days before the scheduled Executive Session.
- L. Board members will receive email alerts when changes have been made to the agenda or new information is added to BoardDocs.

- M. Board members will notify the Superintendent about positive and negative comments received from the community about the district or specific agenda items.
- N. Board members will give the Superintendent time to research clarifying questions about agenda items and not delay asking for clarification until the Board meeting.
- O. Board members will let the Superintendent know if they are considering not adopting the Administration's recommendation or requesting an item be removed from the consent agenda.

11. Conducting Board Meetings

- A. All Board members will be on time for all meetings.
- B. Board members will come to the meeting prepared to discuss items on the agenda.
- C. Procedures for public comment are clear and available at the meeting.
- D. Only the Board President will respond to public comments during the meeting.
- E. Public comments will be limited to 3 minutes.
- F. The Board President may recognize the Superintendent for factual information.
- G. The Board President may recognize a Board member to respond to a personal attack.
- H. The Board President will ensure that only one person speaks at a time and that each member has an equal opportunity to participate.
- I. Board members will model the behaviors expected of students, staff and community members.
- J. The public has a right to participate in the meeting during the designated public comment time, unless otherwise designated on the official agenda.
- K. Issues, not people, will be attacked during meetings.
- L. Members will listen respectfully to each other and staff (no side conversations).
- M. Meetings will be mindful of compliance with applicable law and policy guidelines.
- N. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and all Board members have the responsibility to monitor compliance.
- O. Use "point of order" to interrupt and get meeting back on track.
- P. Refrain from taking a position on an issue until all relevant information is presented.

- Q. The focus of Board meetings will be Board work and not administrative/staff work.
 - a. Is the item to celebrate a success?
 - b. Is the item a policy decision?
 - c. Is the item something that requires Board action?
 - d. Is the item needed to ensure accountability?

- R. Members will not make long, unnecessary speeches.

12. Post-Board meetings

- A. Board members and staff will support (or stay silent and careful to not undermine) the decision of the Board.

- B. Board members and staff will abide by confidentiality laws governing executive session discussions and will respect the privacy interests of students and staff.

- C. Board members and staff will ensure that all documents, records, reports, etc., are processed and maintained in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, etc.

13. Communications Process Between Superintendent and Governing Board

- A. The Kyrene District Governing Board expects:
 - a. To be notified as soon as possible (by the most appropriate means depending on the type of emergency) for:
 - i. School emergency (lock down, fire, etc.)
 - ii. Student emergency (arrest, injury, death)
 - iii. Staff emergency (arrest, injury, death).
 - b. That all Board members will receive the same information.
 - c. One member's request for additional information results in all members receiving or having the same access to the information.
 - d. Special communications are done for all Board members.

- B. The Superintendent expects:
 - a. That direction is only given to the Superintendent at Board meetings when a majority of the Board votes to give direction.
 - b. That Board members will work through the Superintendent to visit schools and classrooms.
 - c. That Board members refer emails, letters, and telephone calls to the Superintendent to resolve issues and/or concerns from parents, staff, and/or community.

14. Communication between Governing Board members

In order to stay in compliance with Open Meeting Law:

- A. Communication outside of regularly scheduled Board meetings
 - a. Avoid action or belief words in all communications.
 - b. Consult with District legal counsel on word use in written communications.
 - c. Route written communications through the Superintendent, and allow the Superintendent to communicate with all members of the Governing Board as appropriate.

- d. 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
- a. Board members will use the electronic communication system so the President will know when they want to address the group.
 - b. Board members and the Superintendent will not use personal electronic devices to communicate during meetings except under unusual circumstances.
 - c. The President will actively facilitate the meeting by encouraging Board members to participate in the conversations.
 - d. Board members will avoid interruptions by allowing each other to finish making statements.
 - e. The President will help each Board member stick to the agenda when appropriate
 - f. The President will ask Board members to finish their thought to move the meeting along.
 - g. The President will remind Board members not to repeat themselves if this occurs.
 - h. The President can suggest that additional time at a future meeting be scheduled if a topic/issue is taking longer than expected.
 - i. 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.
 - j. 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.

15. Communication with the Public During Regularly Scheduled Board Meetings

- A. Call to the public (Blue Cards)
- a. Speakers have three minutes to ask their questions and/or make their points.
 - b. They receive a 15-30 second notification when their time is nearing an end. Then they are advised their time to speak is over.
 - c. A speaker may only speak once per agenda item and may not assign time to another person.
- B. Call to the public guidelines
- a. Blue Cards not related to agenda items—Board and staff members should not respond unless to correct misinformation.
 - b. Blue Cards that are related to agenda items—Board and staff members can respond.
 - c. Allow the person his/her 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.
 - d. Once the person has completed his/ or his statement or questions and has left

- the podium, an appropriate response, if any, can be made.
- e. 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.
- f. Individuals will not be allowed to yield their 3 minutes to another individual to increase the amount of time available to address the Board.

16. Communication Between Governing Board Members and the Superintendent

- A. 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.
- B. The Superintendent or assistant will contact each Governing Board member whenever needed or appropriate.
- C. Board members will contact the Superintendent whenever needed or appropriate.
- D. The Superintendent will send Governing Board members a Board Memo each week.
 - a. Board Memos will be sent no later than Friday at noon each week.
 - b. Information shared with Board members via the Board memo are not intended for distribution.
- E. 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.
- F. The Superintendent will let the Governing Board know who will be responsible for leading the school district in his/her absence.

17. Communication Between Governing Board Members and the Media

- A. The Board recognizes its responsibility to provide information to the community and actively seeks to establish a good working relationship with local news media.
- B. To promote a positive relationship between the District and the media, the Board shall respond as appropriate to requests from the media concerning the programs and activities of the District as well as matters pending before the Board.
- C. All communication with the news media for the purposes of seeking or arranging news coverage, providing official statements from the District, or responding to requests from the news media shall be channeled through the office of the Superintendent.
- D. The Governing Board President will speak on behalf of the Governing Board when appropriate and/or refer members of the media to the designated district spokesperson.
- E. All Governing Board members and the Superintendent will be notified when the President will speak (when appropriate and possible) on behalf of the Governing Board.

- F. The Assistant Director for Communications will share written communications for the media or community with the Governing Board prior to their release.
- G. When pressed for comment, Governing Board members will adhere to:
 - a. This is what the Board decided. (After a vote has been taken, support the will of the Board.)
 - b. This is the process that was used. (Describe the process if needed.)
 - c. State only the facts.
- H. Speaking to the media as an individual
 - a. Consider Open Meeting Law requirements.
 - b. Avoid discussing the voting process to assure the community that you have not already decided prior to a discussion with the entire Governing Board.
 - c. Stress that you are speaking as an individual and not for the Governing Board.
 - i. Keep your remarks positive and respectful.

18. Communication Between Governing Board Members, District Personnel and Schools (per BHC-Board Communications with Staff Members)

- A. Official communication between the Board and employees will occur as follows:
 - a. Communicate with the Superintendent about requests for information or answers to questions. This will ensure that district leaders are aware of Governing Board interests and concerns.
 - b. 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 should not forward such information to all of the other Board members themselves to comply with Open Meeting Law. If the information being requested is of significance, approval by the Board will first need to be obtained to indicate this is a Board request.
 - c. An employee will first communicate on school or employment related matters at the administrative level. Any employee who exhausts the opportunity of discussing a matter at the various administrative levels may then communicate in writing with the Board on the matter. No anonymous communication will be considered by the Board.
 - d. Any employee who wishes to address the Board in the employee's capacity as a parent, District resident, or individual, rather than as an employee, may do so by following the procedures in Policies BEDH and BHD.
 - e. Official communications, policies, directives, Board concerns, and Board action(s), as appropriate, will be communicated to employees by the Superintendent.
 - f. Schedule meetings at schools through the Superintendent's assistant.
 - g. Governing Board members can directly accept invitations to attend school events.
 - h. Communicate specific questions about schools through the Superintendent or designee.

19. Communication Between Governing Board Members and the Community

- A. Governing Board members are ambassadors to the community and should represent the District in a positive manner in all interactions with the community.
- B. Governing Board members should understand processes being utilized with various district initiatives and projects in order to educate the community.
- C. Governing Board members should refer people to existing processes and groups for how they can participate, advocate or share information.
- D. 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.
- E. Governing Board members should maintain independence as a single member when speaking with individuals or groups.
- F. Governing Board members should work with the Superintendent to find appropriate methods to provide information to the Board and/or Superintendent they have received from various groups.
- G. Governing Board members should refer staff and community members to appropriate administrators to address administrative issues.
- H. When speaking as an individual, 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.
 - a. When contacted by the public on an issue, Board members can respond by saying, "I will refer this issue to the Superintendent."

20. Governing Board Visits to Sites

Board members are encouraged to attend as many school events (sporting events, fine arts events, community events) as a spectator as their time permits.

Board members wishing to visit a school shall:

- A. Notify the Superintendent of their visitation plans. The Superintendent will check with the principal about the best time to visit, make the necessary arrangements and confirm with the board member(s).
- B. Check in with the principal upon arrival.
- C. Follow campus guidelines for visitors (sign in, guest badge, escort, etc.).
- D. Respect staff time and allow staff to perform their duties.
- E. Not evaluate staff.
- F. Not give direction to any staff or students.

- G. Not accept gifts (other than nominal tokens) or favors from any District employee.
- H. When visiting with teachers of their own children/family members, Board members will make it clear that they are acting as parents/family members rather than Board members.