

Board Meeting Norms & Protocol Agreements
Board Mini-Retreat, April 15, 2015
Revised at Board Retreat, June 22, 2015

I. Agenda Setting

(From 4/15/15 Meeting—no revisions):

Possible protocol:

- i. Create standing agenda item
- ii. Is it a significant request?
 - Does it exist already?
 - How is it to be presented?
- iii. Board President asks others if they agree that information is needed.
- iv. Board President or Superintendent states need and rationale for it and whether/how it is a priority and/or is aligned with Strategic Plan, etc.
- v. In a reasonable time frame, Superintendent states estimated time needed and other priorities that are competing, give board moment to process
- vi. Board discusses if needed
- vii. Board President confirms it is needed or tabled, not needed, etc.

II. Protocol for Requesting More Information from Staff

(Discussed/Revised at 6/22/15 Meeting)

1. At the end of all discussion, discussion/action, and action items, the Board President or Superintendent will ask whether and what further information is required in order for the Board to make a decision.
2. If more information is requested, then staff will estimate the amount of work required to produce this information:
 - 2.1. If determined to be relatively simple to produce, then the information will be brought back to Board at next possible date.
 - 2.2. If deemed a significant amount of time and effort are required, the Board will determine if the information warrants staff effort.
 - 2.3. If time commitment is unknown, staff will investigate and get back to the Board President so that they can determine whether to do follow up work.
3. Board President will ask whether at least 3 board members require the information requested.
 - 3.1. If three board members require it, at the next cabinet meeting staff will address timeline and deliverables.

III. Ensure All Board Members Are Equally Informed Prior to a meeting (No Surprise Rule)

- Allow for some items to come up last minute because of nature of the work
- For last-minute items, before sharing item, state reason it is coming up last minute
- If decision needs to be made, more information and time may be needed
- If last minute materials are developed and available ahead of time, email it to the board prior to the meeting

(From 6/22/15 Meeting)

Acknowledge that last minute items do arise because of the nature of the work. For such items, before sharing at the Board meeting, staff will state the reason why it is coming up last minute. To extent possible, staff will share available information ahead of time with the Board. The “default” is an email or call by the superintendent to all Board members (at the discretion of the superintendent and dependent upon what feedback the superintendent needs.)

It is critical that Board Members are prepared to participate fully in discussions and to take action on items in a timely manner. As such, staff has responsibility to provide a complete packet of information, and Board Members must take the time to read the packet and ask clarifying questions of staff prior to the meeting, as much as reasonable and possible.

- Staff will prepare and post materials by Friday afternoon the week before a meeting, with rare exceptions for critical material that were not made available to staff on time.
- Board Members will thoroughly review materials and make every possible effort to ask clarifying questions or make requests for more complete information by the end of the day on the Tuesday prior to the meeting.
- For material that could not be posted until Monday, Board Members will make every possible effort to send questions and concerns to the Superintendent by mid-day Wednesday of that same week.

If a Board member has a material issue with an agenda item that she/he believes will be of a surprise to the Superintendent and/or the other Trustees, that Board member will make every possible effort to discuss this with the Superintendent well in advance of the Board meeting.

IV. **“Circling the Drain”**

(Definition: When a particular issue is going around and around at a meeting or across multiple meetings with seemingly no end in sight.)

The Board agreed that in order to avoid “circling the drain”, when introducing items, or once an item has come back to the Board more than once, the Board President or the Superintendent will give an estimate of how many meetings are expected on this topic and when a decision is needed or desired, along with a timeline of possible meetings leading to a decision.

(from 4/15/15 Meeting) examples of circling the drain: Preschool Location, Edison Montessori, Hot Lunch Vendor

Possible Protocols:

- forcing functions -
 - it can only be on the agenda for so many times
 - times are assigned to it
 - justification needs to be provided if it is coming up for discussion multiple times
- Use Strategic/Tactical/Operational framework to support
- Way to ask, “can we vote on this?” and respect the asker
- Fist to Five type tool
- Employ discipline to agenda-setting
- Add paragraph to agenda for “strategic implications” and “process implications”
- Keep a running list of items that need consideration for agenda setting
- Affirm norm of - It’s okay to not have unanimity
- Board chair as tactician - am I trying to drive to a vote or ...?
- Restate the executive summary
- Any board member can “call for the question” and ask whether we’ve had enough discussion

V. **Other Agreements to Support Smooth Operation of a Board Meeting (from 6/22/15)**

- a. When introducing an agenda item, the Board President will clarify the process to be used, to include whether we will go around and take turns addressing an item or whether it will be a more open-ended, free flowing conversation.
- b. Generally speaking, regardless of format of a discussion, it is a good practice to look to the Board President to allow him/her to facilitate the conversation.
- c. For action items, the Board President will follow the protocol of first calling for a motion and a second, and then open up for discussion. If staff have information to present, they can use the discussion time to make a presentation.