Meridian World School
Board Communication Policy

Background:
You will recall that a parent, spoke during the public comment portion of the board meeting, citing two sections of law, Texas Government Code, Section 551 regarding Open Meetings and the Texas Administrative Code, Section 100 regarding Open Enrollment Charter Schools.

Request:
She asked that a policy be developed that aligns with these two sections of the government code. indicating through her comments that she believes via TGC 551 that simple questions that align with 551.042a should be answered during the public comment time and secondly that TAC 100 requires the board to address parent inquiries directly rather than delegating responses to the staff.

The two sections she referenced are below.

Texas Government Code, Section 551

Sec. 551.042. INQUIRY MADE AT MEETING.
(a) If, at a meeting of a governmental body, a member of the public or of the governmental body inquires about a subject for which notice has not been given as required by this subchapter, the notice provisions of this subchapter do not apply to:
   (1) a statement of specific factual information given in response to the inquiry; or
   (2) a recitation of existing policy in response to the inquiry.
(b) Any deliberation of or decision about the subject of the inquiry shall be limited to a proposal to place the subject on the agenda for a subsequent meeting.

Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 100

(a) Primary responsibility. The governing body of a charter holder has the primary responsibility for implementing the public school program authorized by the open-enrollment charter and ensuring the performance of the students enrolled in its charter schools in accordance with the Texas Education Code (TEC).
(b) Alienation of open-enrollment charter. An open-enrollment charter grants to the governing body of a charter holder the authority to operate a charter school.

   (1) The governing body of the charter holder shall, acting as a body corporate in meetings posted in compliance with Government Code, Chapter 551, oversee the management of the charter school.

   (2) Except as provided by this section, the governing body's powers and duties to operate the charter school shall not be delegated, transferred, assigned, encumbered, pledged, subcontracted, or in any way alienated by the governing body of the charter holder. Any attempt to do so shall be null and void and of no force or effect and shall constitute abandonment of the contract for charter.
(3) A charter holder shall notify the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in writing prior to initiating any type of bankruptcy proceeding respecting the charter holder. Filing for any form of bankruptcy relief prior to such notice shall constitute abandonment of the contract for charter.

(c) Exclusive method for delegating charter powers and duties. An open-enrollment charter must specify the powers or duties of the governing body of the charter holder that the governing body may delegate to an officer, employee, contractor, management company, creditor, or any other person. The exclusive method for making such a delegation shall be to file a request for a delegation amendment with the TEA division responsible for charter schools under §100.1033 of this title (relating to Charter Amendment), specifying the power or duty delegated and the particular person or entity to which it is delegated.

(d) Accountability for delegated powers and duties retained. The governing body of a charter holder remains responsible for the management, operation, and accountability of the charter school operated by the charter holder, regardless of whether the governing body delegates any of its powers or duties.

Staff Discussion:

We considered what is doable within a board meeting without bogging down the proceedings unnecessarily, i.e.; is a statement of specific factual information easily put together (example: the shoe presentation), and is policy readily available to respond, at least with thoughtfulness and assured correctness? If it is straightforward (are sequins on shoes allowed? / answer: No), then a simple response is doable.

Much of what comes before the board from parents requires more than a cut-and-dried response (i.e., further refinement of the definition of neutral color for shoes) though it requires no board deliberation. For example, due, in large part, to the on-going questions about the uniform policy from primary parents, the ViPs, working with the administrative staff completed and posted online a well-developed, illustrated uniform guide with dos and don’ts clearly defined. This answers the questions about the shoes, but the answer did not require board deliberation or direction, though it did require time and effort of both staff and parents.

As regards the TAC, Chapter 100, pertaining to the board delegation of authority. The Board has delegated authority to the Head of School and through him to the staff to manage the day-to-day operations of the school. Chapter 100 has two main purposes – the first is to prevent a charter company from usurping the non-delegable duties (i.e. hiring the HoS) of the Board of Directors; the second is to indicate that the ultimate responsibility for the Charter School lies with the Board of Directors of that School.

This section does NOT mean that the Board must respond to parent questions brought before it during a board meeting. There is, however, a policy described in the Parent Student Handbook that describes the process that a parent should go through should they have questions regarding their student, the classroom, the program, administrative policy, etc. If they are not satisfied with the response at each level, having reached the highest level – the HoS and still being dissatisfied, they may petition the board in writing to place an item on the agenda. Please see below.

Parent Student Handbook

Section: Communication and Involvement
Page 9,

FOR CONFLICT AND CONCERNS

Informal Conflict Resolution
Students and parents are encouraged to discuss concerns and complaints through informal conferences with the appropriate teacher, principal, or other campus administrator at an appropriate time. We encourage early resolution of concerns at the administrative level closest to the student. Concerns should be expressed informally if possible - and as soon as possible.

Formal Resolution
Policies for a more formal conflict resolution are located in the Code of Conduct under Disciplinary Appeals / Complaints / Conflict Resolution.

Section: Code of Conduct
Page 30

DISCIPLINARY APPEALS / COMPLAINTS / CONFLICT RESOLUTION

(The following applies to disciplinary consequences except for expulsion. The appeals process for expulsion is detailed in the section below entitled Expulsion.)

A parent may appeal the decisions of Meridian School teachers or administration by following the following steps:

Complaints or concerns which are not resolved at the classroom/Teacher level may be brought to the attention of the respective Assistant Principal/ Principal within five (5) school days of the day the parent was advised of a disciplinary issue.

Complaints or concerns which are not resolved at the Assistant Principal or Principal level may be brought to the attention of the Head of School within five (5) school days of the day the parent was informed of the disciplinary decision of the Assistant Principal or Principal.

The complaint or concern addressed to the Head of School must be in writing, must be specific, and where possible, suggest a resolution. The Head of School shall attempt to respond to all written complaints or concerns within five (5) school days of the receipt of the written complaint.

Parents who are dissatisfied with the response of the Head of School may make their complaint known in writing to the Governing Board. The complaint shall be directed to the President of the Governing Board, shall include a copy of the written complaint to the Head of School, and the Head of School’s response. A copy of the complaint shall also be delivered to the Head of School. The President of the Governing Board shall, at the next meeting of the Governing Board, provide a copy of the complaint record to all members of the Board. Any action of the Governing Board regarding the complaint shall be taken in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

The Governing Board shall respond to all written complaints or concerns within ten (10) days after the Governing Board has met regarding the complaint. All decisions are final.

Policy Proposal

1. During the public comment portion of a board meeting, questions that can be responded to with a statement of fact or a reference to existing policy shall be answered at that time. After the speaker has finished, the Board President, shall ask the Head of School to respond to such a question. The speaker, nor the audience should engage in a discussion about an item, but allow the Head of School or his staff to respond. If the speaker has a follow-up for clarification, they may do so.

2. If, in the opinion of the Head of School, an answer requires research or a more nuanced response, he may request that he and his staff be permitted to get back with the parent in order to respond adequately.
If the matter requires board deliberation or participation, the staff will request that the matter be placed on an upcoming agenda of the School Board.

3. If the public comment / question regards policy that regards the day-to-day running of the school (i.e. parents inside the classrooms), the Board President shall ask the HoS to respond. He will respond by referring to the sections in the Student Parent Handbook cited above: Have you spoken with your child’s teacher about this matter? Did you speak with the appropriate Principal?, etc. If the parent has not, they will be directed to the written procedure for such questions or complaints. If the parent has visited with all parties as described, they will be instructed to place their item in writing to the President of the Board for consideration.

This information will be posted on the website under the tab ‘Board of Director’ along with information about the general purpose of the Public Comment section of the meetings; specifically that it is a time when members of the community have the opportunity to speak to items currently on the agenda or anticipated on a future board agenda.