

# **OPERATING PROCEDURES**

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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**West Independent School District**

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### **DISTRICT VISION STATEMENT**

The West Independent School District, with children as its first priority, strives to provide a safe, rigorous, stimulating academic environment in which students find both challenge and support to exceed state and federal standards while acquiring skills to make life long choices.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES OPERATING PROCEDURES**

For a school district to achieve unified and progressive leadership, the Board Members and Superintendent must share a mutual understanding and respect for their respective roles and responsibilities. At West ISD, the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees function as a “Team of Eight.” The School Board is the corporate policy making body for the District, and the Superintendent provides leadership and manages the District within the framework of those policies.

A structured approach to developing a vision for the District and setting goals is enhanced by first developing a system of standard operating procedures.

The following guidelines and procedures have been developed by West ISD’s “Team of Eight” as our method to effectively communicate with students, staff, and stakeholders of the District.

### **“TEAM of EIGHT”**



- 1. Board Ethics**
- 2. Safe and Orderly Environment**
- 3. Parent and Community Involvement**
- 4. Student Achievement**



**... with children as our first priority.**

## DUTIES / RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Duties of the Board:**

**Govern the District (with the recommendation of the Superintendent)**

**The purpose of placing governance in the hands of the Board and management in the hands of the Superintendent is to ensure the community retains authority over the basic direction and values embodied in the operation of the District, while allowing a trained professional to manage and implement the policies and goals of the District. It also ensures the Board has the recommendation of someone well-versed in the immense complexity of district operations.**

To govern effectively, the Board should never take action on an item without first hearing the recommendation from the Superintendent (with exception of action affecting his/her own employment). The Board is never obligated to accept the Superintendent's recommendation, but frequent denial of recommendations signals the Board and Superintendent need to review goals and procedures to ensure no misunderstandings or failures in communications have occurred.

Individual Board Members must refrain from confusing their role with the role of the Superintendent and trying to become involved in the day-to-day operations of the schools.

The five most essential tasks or roles of the Board are:

1. Adopt goals for the District and monitor success in achieving them.
2. Adopt policies that govern the District and review these policies for effectiveness.
3. Hire a Superintendent to manage the District; evaluate the Superintendent's effectiveness.
4. Adopt an annual budget for the District and set a tax rate appropriate to fund it.
5. Employ and terminate personnel at the recommendation of the Superintendent.

### **Duties of the Superintendent:**

**Manage the District (within the framework of policies and goals adopted by the Board)**

The Superintendent functions as the educational leader and chief executive officer of the District and is, throughout his/her exercise of responsibilities, accountable to the Board of Trustees. The education and administrative leadership responsibilities of the Superintendent are complementary and interdependent with the public leadership, governance, and policy-making responsibilities of the Board.

To avoid confusion and provide harmonious and progressive direction for the District, both the Superintendent and the Board must strive to keep the distinctions between their respective leadership roles clearly in mind.

The five most essential tasks or roles of the Superintendent are:

1. Accept administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning, operation, supervision, and evaluation of the education programs, services, and facilities of the District.
2. Accept authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of personnel and to make recommendations for employment and termination of employees.
3. Prepare and submit to the Board a proposed budget.
4. Recommend policies to be adopted by the Board and develop administrative regulations to implement those policies.
5. Provide leadership for the attainment of student performance.

## **Board Meetings**

The notice for a Board Meeting shall reflect the date, time, and/or location. Regular meetings of the Board shall normally be held on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM. When determined necessary and for the convenience of Board Members, the Board President may change the date, time, or location of a regular meeting with proper notice.

The Board President shall call special meetings at the Board President's discretion or on request by four members of the Board. The Board President shall call an emergency meeting when it is determined by the Board President or four members of the Board that an emergency or urgent public necessity, as defined by law, warrants the meeting.

## **Developing Board Meeting Agenda**

Placing Items on Agenda: The tentative agenda is created by the Superintendent and discussed with the Board's President the week before the regular Board Meeting.

Items must be presented to the Superintendent and/or the Board President for consideration of placement on the agenda. The agenda normally will be closed at noon on the fifth calendar day preceding regular meetings and at noon of the third day preceding special called meetings.

Board Members must request, through the Superintendent and/or Board President, in advance any item they wish to have placed on the agenda.

In accordance with Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA), no member can place an item on the agenda less than 72 hours in advance of a meeting, except in an emergency per Texas Code. Notice for an emergency meeting shall be at least 2 hours prior to the time of the meeting.

Each agenda item must be identified, in sufficient detail, to ensure the nature of the action can be understood by the public. Only items listed on the agenda may be considered at a Board Meeting.

Some agenda items are reports and do not require a discussion since the Board is not voting on any issue.

Board Packet: A packet is prepared each month to send to Board Members the week prior to the meeting. Along with the agenda, the packet includes a summary that gives a brief explanation of the items placed on the agenda. It is divided by agenda topics and contains supporting data for each area. It is intended as a method to ensure organization and to conduct Board Meetings in an efficient and timely manner. It also includes financial statements, list of bills payable, and other supporting data/explanatory documents, so Board Members may have the opportunity to review agenda information before the meeting. If members have any questions or concerns on any of the agenda items, they are strongly encouraged to contact the Superintendent or appropriate administrator for clarification **prior** to the meeting in order to eliminate lengthy discussions at the meetings.

Posting Notice of Agenda: TOMA requires the notice of a Board Meeting be posted in a place “readily accessible” to the general public at all times. The West ISD notice of Board Meetings is posted on an outside bulletin board or front door at the West ISD Administration Building at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled time of the meeting (at least 2 hours prior to the time of an emergency meeting). Also, a copy of the agenda is sent to each campus principal, and notice of the meeting is sent to the local newspaper, emailed to all employees, and posted on the West ISD website.

### **Member Conduct during Board Meetings**

Audience: Persons wishing to address the Board have the opportunity to do so during the “audience” segment of the meeting. Persons wishing to address the Board must sign and make a request on the visitor’s registration sheet located inside the Board Meeting room. In addition, persons wishing to address the Board must read and sign the audience sign-in sheet indicating he/she has read the guidelines document posted inside the Board Meeting room. Each speaker is limited to five minutes. Delegations of more than five persons shall appoint one person to present their views before the Board.

If a member of the public asks a question about an item not listed on the public agenda, the Board President or any member of the Board may respond by providing specific factual information, or a recitation of existing policy, or by asking clarifying questions, but members may not discuss or deliberate the question. If a member of the public wishes to discuss any district employee or a student issue concerning a specific student or group of students, he/she will be asked to present this information in a private setting.

Hearings and Public Hearings: During public hearings, the Board is assembled only to gather information. The Board will not answer questions, but may ask questions to clarify information.

Rules for the public hearing will be strictly adhered to. The Board will limit response to five minutes per testifier; will accept written (signed) or oral testimony; will not allow duplicate testimony; will not allow any derogatory comments.

The Board shall observe the parliamentary procedures in Robert’s Rules of Order. All discussion shall be directed solely to the business currently under deliberation. The Board President has the responsibility to keep the discussion to the motion at hand and shall halt discussion that does not apply to the business before the Board.

### **Voting**

The Board President will vote on all action items. In the case of a tie vote, the item is tabled. The President shall bring the item back to the Board on a subsequent agenda. Voting shall be by voice or show of hands, as directed by the Board President. Any member may abstain from voting, and a member’s vote or failure to vote shall be recorded upon that member’s request.

### **Items for Executive Session**

All personnel issues must be conducted in an executive session, unless specifically required by Texas Open Meetings Law. Anything that violates the right to privacy, i.e., Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Open Record Act, cannot be placed on the agenda. Specifically, TOMA requires the subject matter of the meeting be set forth with sufficient particularity to notify the public of the matters under consideration. Merely stating “litigation” or “routine business” will be discussed is insufficient. General topics such as “real estate” or “contract” should be avoided. Topics should be expanded/explained to give the interested reader a better idea of the issues to be discussed and decided.

The primary purpose behind a closed session for personnel matters is to protect the employee from possible unjustified harm to his/her reputation. The provision for closed session applies only to deliberations concerning individual employees. If a matter involves a class of employees, such as the salary of a group of employees, it should be deliberated in an open meeting.

As with open meetings, records must be kept of closed sessions. The Board must make a “certified agenda,” unless the closed meeting was for the purpose of consulting with an attorney. Participating in a closed session, knowing a certified agenda has not been made, constitutes a Class C Misdemeanor. Sufficient detail should be included in the certified agenda so a reasonable person reading the agenda would understand the scope and nature of the items discussed during the closed session. The certified agenda must be filed for two years after the meeting. It is confidential and can be inspected only by court order.

### **Role of Board in Executive Session**

The Board can *only* discuss items listed on the Executive Closed Session agenda and as limited by law. It may not discuss other issues. Discussing other District business in closed session is a violation of Texas law. Discussions during Executive Session **must** remain confidential. The point of Executive Session is to protect rights and interests.

No action of any kind may be taken in an Executive Session. If the item before the Board calls for action, the Board must first return to open session before a vote is taken.

All personal telecommunication devices shall remain outside of Executive Session.

### **Evaluation of Superintendent**

The Board President obtains input from all members of the Board on the approved indicators on the Superintendent’s evaluation. The evaluation is conducted in closed executive session. A summative evaluation of the Superintendent will be conducted during the first calendar quarter of the calendar year. Goals will be set for the Superintendent during the first calendar quarter of the calendar year, with formative District reporting discussed quarterly. The evaluation of the Superintendent is an indication of the success the Board is having in meeting established goals.

- A. The Board shall prepare a written, summative evaluation of the Superintendent annually. Board Members may schedule a meeting with the Superintendent to provide a formative evaluation if they deem it necessary.

- B. Each Board Member completes and brings to the Board Meeting (usually in January) the approved appraisal instrument. Evaluation is conducted in closed session by consensus.
- C. The Board shall furnish the Superintendent with a copy of the completed evaluation and shall discuss its conclusions with the Superintendent in closed session.
- D. The annual summative evaluation is concluded with a session that identifies the goals for the Superintendent for the upcoming year (the year leading up to the next summative evaluation).

### **Criteria and Process for Selecting Board Officers**

After the canvass of returns, the Board reorganizes and elects officers. Candidates for the President of the Board, Vice President, and Secretary must have at least one year experience on the Board. Elections are held in November of each year.

### **Role and Authority of Board Members and/or Board Officers (set by state statute)**

No Board Member or officer has authority outside the Board Meeting, and no Board Member can direct employees in regard to performance of duties.

The Board President shall:

- 1. Preside at all Board Meetings unless unable to attend
- 2. Appoint committees
- 3. Call special or emergency meetings
- 4. Sign all legal documents required by law

The Vice President shall:

- 1. Act in capacity of President in the absence of the President
- 2. Automatically become President if a vacancy in the office occurs

The Secretary shall:

- 1. Call meetings and act in the capacity of the President, in the absence of the President and Vice President
- 2. Ensure that an accurate record is kept of the proceedings of each Board Meeting
- 3. Ensure that notices of the Board Meetings are posted and sent as required by law
- 4. Countersign all warrants

### **Board Policies**

- A. The Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Policy service is the current entity which produces both original and updates for our Policy Manual, based on input from the Board.

- B. A periodic review of all policies is necessary to ensure current District practices are in concert with the policies that are in place, as well as to identify local Board policies which are in need of update. The Superintendent and Board President work together to ensure this is completed. Proposed local policies or amendments introduced and recommended to the Board at one meeting shall not be adopted until a subsequent meeting. Emergency adoption, however, may occur in one meeting if special circumstances demand an immediate response.
- C. Our District Policy Manual is on-line at <http://www.tasb.org/Policy/pol/private/161916/>. A paper copy is maintained at the West ISD Administration Building.
- D. Legal policies are based upon State law and litigated cases; the Board does not approve these policies, but are obligated to adhere to them. Local policies, on the other hand, are adopted by the Board prior to incorporation into the District Policy Manual.

### **Board Training**

- A. New Board Members should make contact with the Superintendent, before they are sworn in, and coordinate the completion of the initial 3 hours of Board Member orientation.
- B. Additionally, new Board Members shall complete a District Orientation with the Superintendent and a Board Orientation with the Board President during their first month of their term.

### **Governance**

- A. All Board Members should always work through the Superintendent on any matters pertaining to the execution of Board Policy or other district matters. The Superintendent is the one tasked with the execution of Board Policy and must be given the opportunity to do so.
- B. Each Board Member must understand their role. The Board Member is elected as a “Trustee,” not a Representative, and as such is tasked with making decisions that are in the best interest of the children of the District.
- C. Any complaints received by the Board Members should be referred to the Superintendent for disposition. There is a Board Policy in place which outlines the procedures for filing a grievance and those procedures should be followed. If at all possible, the individual with a complaint should be asked to confer with the appropriate teacher or campus administrator first. Always give the Superintendent a “heads up.” Complaints should be resolved at the lowest level possible. Three policies provide a specific, clear process to handle complaints:
  - i. Employee grievances – DGBA
  - ii. Student and parent complaints – FNG
  - iii. Public complaints – GF

All three policies rely on the “Principal-Superintendent-Board” chain of command and resolution. A formal procedure is used in which written complaints are filed first with the Principal. A presentation before the Board is the final step in the complaint process. Sometimes complaints are inadvertently brought first before the Board during the open forum portion of a regular Board Meeting. The Board is under no obligation to hear such complaints before administrative remedies have been pursued. The Board President should direct the person to the appropriate complaint process.

Level III complaints are heard in Board Meetings as scheduled agenda items, which will allow the Board to take action on the complaint during the same meeting. The lack of a response by the Board upholds the administrative decision at Level II and announcing the decision in the complainant's presence constitutes communication of the decision.

- D. Board Members shall request information and/or reports through the Board President or Superintendent. If the Board President or Superintendent questions the request, the request goes to the full Board for a majority vote. Members may also request information by Board action or by the request of an individual member made in a Board Meeting after discussion by the Board as a whole. The Superintendent, as requested or as directed by the Board President, will gather the information and/or report and disseminate it in a timely manner to the entire Board. When requesting reports from District personnel, consideration should be given to the current workload on the person generating the report.

### **Media Inquiries to the Board**

The Board President shall be the official spokesperson for the Board to the media/press on issues of media attention. All Board Members who receive calls from the media should direct them to the Board President or designee.

### **Board Member Visit to School Campus**

Board Members are encouraged to attend PTO and other special events on campuses to represent the Board in support of activities. Board Members are not to visit teachers' classrooms or campuses for the purpose of evaluation or investigation. Board Members must notify the Principal of visits to campuses when they are not attending a scheduled activity.

### **Communications**

The Superintendent meets with the Board President on a routine basis. The Superintendent communicates with all Board Members via regular transmittals. The Board keeps the Superintendent informed via telephone calls, faxes, e-mail, text messages, and/or personal visits as deemed necessary.

The Board will communicate with the community through Public Hearings, Regular Board Meetings, and regular publications. Individual Board Members cannot speak in an official capacity outside the Boardroom.

Input through emails and letters are encouraged by the Board. Although anonymous communications are discouraged, these communications will be reviewed.

### **Graduation**

In an attempt to maintain decorum and a semblance of order at West High School Commencement, the following procedures shall apply:

1. The conveyance of the West High School Diploma to graduating seniors shall be the sole providence of the Board President. If the President is not present, the descending order of officers shall prevail: 1. Vice President 2. Secretary 3. Most senior Board Member – ad seriatim.
2. Possible exceptions to the above guidelines will be limited to immediate family members of a School Board Member. (e.g., son/daughter, grandson/granddaughter, step-son/step-daughter, nieces/nephews)
3. Extenuating circumstances, not outlined in Article #2, must be submitted in writing by the student to the Superintendent's office at least ten (10) days prior to the graduation exercise. Each request will be reviewed by the Board President and the Superintendent as to the appropriateness of the request. Student must state reason for request.
4. Verbal or written request on the day of graduation will not be honored.
5. Conveyance of diplomas at or during extracurricular activities (i.e., softball or baseball playoffs) shall follow these same guidelines.

### **Reviewing Board Operating Procedures**

Standard Board Operating Procedures will be reviewed and updated in July of each year and will be part of Board training.