



**Littlefield Unified School District**  
**Governing Board and Superintendent**  
**Communication Protocol**

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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 strive 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 communicate with District stakeholders (students, parents, personnel, community members, etc.) in a manner that complies with State and Federal law and Board Policies.

## **2. Vision**

(TBD)

## **3. Mission Statement**

The Littlefield Unified School District is committed to excellence. Therefore, we are committed to providing opportunities for all students to learn and develop socially, emotionally, and academically. We are committed to providing resources to our students, parents and teachers in an ongoing effort to help students transition from childhood to adulthood.

## **4. Governing Board and Superintendent Norms**

The Board and Superintendent will operate with a shared commitment to serving the best interests of Littlefield'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 the District. The Superintendent and District staff will be respectful of the role the Board plays as elected representatives of the Littlefield 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, 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 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.
- I. Board Members will notify the Board President, Superintendent, or District Office prior to being absent from meetings.

## **5. Role of the Superintendent**

The Superintendent functions as the administrative manager of the District and is, throughout his/her exercise of responsibilities, is accountable to the Board.

## **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:
  - 1. The legislative function is the policy-making aspect of the school system. 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.

2. The executive function of the Board is concerned with placing in operation existing Board policy. Most of this function is delegated by the Board to its executive and administrative officer, the Superintendent.
3. The appraisal function involves the 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; and
- 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 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 the statutes and rules of the state of Arizona and the federal government, and the policies of the Governing Board of the District.
- 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 applicable statutes or regulations of the Arizona Administrative Code and the policies of the Governing Board. These regulations are binding on the employees of this District and students in the schools.

**10. Board & Superintendent Communication**

- A. The Superintendent will respond to emergent questions ASAP but no later than close of business and routine questions will be answered or acknowledged within 24 hours if an answer is not readily available. Questions regarding the agenda can be emailed.

**11. Agenda and Meeting Preparation**

- A. Any Board member may request that an agenda item be added either at the “call for future agenda items” during a meeting or via an email to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - a. It was recommended that the Board Secretary track requests for agenda items, including who requested the items and when. The Board President and Superintendent will work to get the agenda items as soon as possible but board acknowledges it may not be the very next meeting. It will be communicated to the Board what future agenda items are pending.
  - b. It was acknowledged the board has one employee (the Superintendent) and she has one boss (the Board as a whole). Therefore, requests for additional information, reports or other agenda items that the Superintendent determines will take significant time or resources may be brought back before the Board for a vote prior to fulfilling the request.
- B. The Governing Board will receive the agenda packet via Drop box the Friday before Board Meetings. They will also have a scheduled 1 on 1 meeting with the Superintendent to review the packet and

ask questions.

- a. The Superintendent will send an email to the Governing Board, after the 1 on 1 meetings, outlining any questions/answers. This will ensure that all Board Members receive the same information at the same time.

## **12. Site Visits**

A. Board members recognize that, while they have no individual authority, their status as Board Members carries perceived authority amongst community, staff, and families. This can result in disruption or stress at the school level when a board member arrives unexpectedly or when a staff person is put in the position of telling the Board Member “no” if it is not a good time. Board Members acknowledge that they have no special access or privileges when visiting the schools and will comply with regular visitor policy.

- a. Board members who wish to visit schools should contact the Superintendent at least 2 days in advance of their requested date. The Superintendent will work with the school to determine if a visit can be accommodated and work with the Board Member to schedule a visit.

- i. While on campus, Board Members agree to abide by the following guidelines and will report any concerns to the Superintendent rather than addressing it directly with staff.

- Check in with the Principal upon arrival.
- Follow campus guidelines for visitors (sign in, guest badge, escort, etc.)
- Respect staff time and allow staff to perform their duties.
- Not evaluate staff.
- Not give direction to any staff or students.
- Not accept gifts (other than nominal tokens) or favors from any district employee.
- While visiting with teachers of their own children, Board Members will make it clear that they are acting as parents rather than Board Members.

## **13. Board and Community / Staff Communication**

A. While the Board wants to be available to the community, staff, and families, they also want to be sure they are behaving ethically and equitably. When Board Members let community/staff/families go around the chain of command or attempt to resolve issues directly, they run the risk of violating policy and/or giving increased access to individuals that go to them directly instead of following the chain of command. Because the board is the last stop for grievance, Board Members should avoid getting involved in issues at the lower levels in case the matter comes before the Board in the future. This will help them avoid potential conflicts of interest or the perception of one which could put the Board Member or the District at risk for possible ethical and/or legal issues.

- a. Board Members should find a way to thank and acknowledge concerns brought forth by

community/teachers and families while also adhering to policy and deferring to the chain of command.

- i. Emailed complaints sent to the whole board should be responded to by the Superintendent. The Superintendent should let the board know that a response was given (though details are not necessary).
- ii. Concerns/complaints can be responded to using the following TARR formula (Thank, Acknowledge, Refer and Remind):
  - Thank the person for sharing with you.
  - Acknowledge what they are feeling (concerned, anger, etc.)
  - Refer to the chain of command that can help them and , if needed,
  - Remind them of complaint policy/procedure.