

Board Policy BBI: Board-Staff Relations

Status: DRAFT

Original Adopted Date: 03/21/2012 | **Last Revised Date:** 11/03/2014 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 11/03/2014

The DeKalb County Board of Education wishes to maintain open channels of communication with District staff, including District employees and contractors. The primary line of communication, however, will be through the Superintendent, and official business of the District shall not be carried on between staff and Board members except as directed by the Superintendent.

A. Staff Communications to the Board

All communications or open reports to the Board or any of its subcommittees from principals, supervisors, teachers, or other staff members will be submitted through the Superintendent. Staff should not contact Board members regarding school or District business, and staff interests or concerns should be communicated through the chain of command unless otherwise directed by the Superintendent.

This procedure does not deny the right of any employee to appeal to the Board from administrative decisions on important matters, provided that the Superintendent has been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed in accordance with the Board's policy on complaints and grievances. Staff are encouraged to report concerns to the appropriate department handling employee grievances and concerns or through the whistleblower hotline.

Staff members are also reminded that Board meetings are public meetings. As such, they provide an excellent opportunity to observe firsthand the Board's deliberations on problems of staff concern.

B. Board Communications to Staff

All Board member communications, questions, policies or directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members through the Superintendent. Board members should not contact staff to discuss school or District business. The Superintendent will develop appropriate methods to keep staff fully informed of the Board's problems, concerns and actions. Board member requests to meet with or require information from a staff member shall be at the direction of the Superintendent.

If a Board member brings to the Superintendent a request or concern regarding Board governance or otherwise requiring full Board consensus, the request or concern will be referred to the Board Chair. Any responses by the Superintendent should be made through the Chair based on agreed communication channels to ensure that the response is shared with the full Board.

C. Board Member Visits to Schools

The ultimate responsibility for a school's operation lies with the Superintendent. There are advantages for obtaining knowledge about a school's operation by individual Board members visiting the school. However, some problems can be encountered by Board members visiting schools, including the following:

1. It is impossible to separate the identity of a Board member from that of a private citizen.
2. Evaluation of staff members and employees is an administrative responsibility, not a Board member's responsibility.
3. Board members must not make general statements or promises that could be construed to be the position of the Board.
4. Board members should not make statements to teachers and employees which could be construed as a procedural directive.

D. Guidelines for Visiting Schools

Board members are encouraged to visit schools during open houses and other times specially arranged for the general public. In addition, Board members are encouraged to visit the schools to speak with, listen to, and observe the operations and procedures of the school to gain knowledge for policy-making decisions in the areas of finance, personnel, curriculum, facilities and transportation.

The following guidelines apply when Board members visit schools:

1. There should be no interruption of classes or other activities.
2. Class visitation or observation should be done only with the approval of the principal.
3. Review of evaluation information of any teacher or employee should be done only in executive session of a Board meeting.
4. The Board member should not act or speak independently in making decisions or commitments of a course of action of the Board.

Board members must recognize that their presence in the schools could be subject to a variety of interpretations by school employees. Such visits will be regarded as informal expressions of interest in school affairs and not as “inspections” or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes.

E. Enforcement

This policy shall be enforced in the manner set out in the Board Member Code of Ethics Policy, Descriptor Code BH, Paragraph F. Staff members who violate this policy shall be sanctioned as determined by the Superintendent.
