



Board Policy BBI: Board-Staff Relations

Status: DRAFT - 2nd
Reading

Original Adopted Date: 03/21/2012 | Last Revised Date: 11/03/2014 | Last Reviewed Date: 02/17/2025

Red Lined Version

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines governing relations and communications between staff members and the Board of Education. Staff members include district employees, contractors, and vendors. Effective communication between staff and the Board is essential to maintaining a productive and professional educational environment while ensuring compliance with the chain of command. For most matters, the primary line of communication between staff and the Board will be through the Superintendent. The DeKalb County Board of Education wishes to maintain open channels of communication with dDistrict staff, including dDistrict employees and contractors. , vendors. The primary line of communication, however, will be through the sSuperintendent, and official business of the dDistrict willshall not be carried on between staff and bBoard members except as directed by the sSuperintendent.

A. **Staff Communications to the Board**

Unless otherwise specified, staff communications to the Board must be coordinated through the Superintendent. This ensures the chain of command is followed and that the Superintendent is informed of matters requiring the Board's attention. Official district business will not be conducted between staff and Board members except as directed by the Superintendent or as outlined below. District staff have the right to appeal administrative decisions to the Board of Education. Instructions for filing a complaint or grievance are outlined in policies GAE (2): Complaints and Grievances, Certified Employees, and GAE (3): Complaints and Grievances, Non-Certified Employees. District staff are encouraged to report suspected fraud, waste, theft, abuse, noncompliance or unethical behavior to the Board of Education. The whistleblower process is outlined in policy GAGC: Employee Ethics and its associated regulation. As members of the public, district staff are also eligible to participate in Community Input Sessions of the Board. Instructions for speaking at a board meeting are outlined in policy BCBI: Public Participation in Board Meetings. 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.

B. **Board Communications to Staff**

Unless otherwise specified, Board members must direct questions, concerns, or requests for information to the Superintendent rather than communicating directly with staff members. Board members are prohibited from giving directions or tasks directly to staff members without the Superintendent's prior approval. This ensures that all requests are addressed through proper channels and do not interfere with daily operations. As a practical matter, board members are expected to have direct interaction and communication with staff working in the Board Office. However, these staff members are supervised by and report to the Superintendent Chief of Staff, not the Board or Board Chair. In emergency situations, Board members may communicate directly with staff as necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of students, staff, or property. The Superintendent must be notified of such communication as soon as possible. This procedure does not deny the right of any employee to appeal to the bBoard from administrative decisions on important matters, provided that the sSuperintendent has been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed in accordance with the bBoard's policy on complaints and grievances. Staff are encouraged to report concerns to employee relations department the appropriate department handling employee grievances and concerns or through the whistleblower hotline 1-88-475-0482 at the Audit & Compliance department. If the complaint or concern is with Audit & Compliance department, then staff is encouraged to report to the Chief Legal Officer. If ther are complaints or concerns about the superintendent, those should be reported directly to the Board Chair who will consult with General Counsel.

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

C. **Guidelines for Board Member Visits to Schools Board Communications to Staff**

The Superintendent is responsible for monitoring daily school operations. However, Board members may benefit from knowledge and understanding gained during a school visit. Without prior notice, Board members may visit schools during open houses and other times specially arranged for by the general public. If a Board member desires to visit a school outside of these times, these visits must be coordinated through the Superintendent. Board members must recognize that their presence at a school could be subject to a variety of interpretations by school employees and the public. Therefore, the following guidelines have been developed to govern school visits: 1. The Board member will not interrupt classes or other activities. 2. The Board member will not visit or observe classes without the principal's approval. 3. The Board member will not evaluate teachers or other district staff. 4. The Board member will not make commitments on behalf of the Board or the District. 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.

D. Enforcement

This policy will be enforced in accordance with policy BH: Board Code of Ethics. 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.

E. Guidelines for 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. 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. 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.

F. Guidelines for Visiting Schools

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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 and the public. 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 will 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.
