



## DeKalb County Board of Education Norms and Protocols

The Governance Team (Board of Education) agrees to:

### **Operate in a manner that reflects:**

- Student-focused decision making
- Focus on student achievement
- Knowledge about educational issues
- Trustworthiness
- Consistency
- Responsiveness
- Access & Opportunity for All Students
- Commitment
- Ethical behavior
- Professionalism
- No surprises

### **A Governance Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Always put students first when making decisions and keep student achievement as the main focus of board actions.
- Educate students – ethically and with fiscal responsibility.
- Follow the Code of Ethics and disclose any conflicts of interest.
- Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each in their respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
- Function as a policy making body separate from the roles and responsibilities authorized to the superintendent.
- Not micromanage the superintendent in the day-to-day operations of the district
- Follow the chain of command.
- Support the team, be open-minded and willing to listen.
- Never surprise the superintendent in a board meeting.
- Be responsible for the Strategic Plan.

## **B Superintendent**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Be transparent and respectful.
- Always follow the chain of command and not micromanage the superintendent.
- Designate the superintendent as chief executive officer fully delegating authority to provide educational leadership, manage daily operations, and perform all duties assigned by law.
- Operate as a governance team with the superintendent as a key member.
- Respect the superintendent's professional recommendations and decisions, even when there's disagreement, and never undermine the superintendent authority.
- Take recommendations from the superintendent seriously, and carefully research and review before acting.
- Open and honest communication.
- Hold the superintendent accountable for operations and student performance.
- Establish the superintendent's annual performance goals jointly with the superintendent in alignment with the strategic plan and provide feedback to the superintendent at least bi-annually via formative and summative evaluation procedures.
- Be supportive of board decisions, even when there's disagreement.
- Be fair and timely with superintendent's evaluation. The evaluation process includes an annual review in May/June, the setting of new goals in July, and a mid-year evaluation in December/January each year (December for election years; month for non-election years).

## **C Parent and Community Process Flow Chart/Chain of Command**

The Governance Team agrees:

- To support and follow the Parent and Community Process Flow Chart/Chain of Command and inform staff to do same if approached.
- The superintendent is responsible and accountable for the day-to-day operations with equity and consistency.
- Issues and concerns received by the board or individual members will be referred to the superintendent.
- The board will educate the public about the Parent and Community Process Flow Chart/Chain of Command and instruct them to follow it when approached with requests about day-to-day and operational issues.

Adopted: 2013

Revised: 11/13/25

## **D Decision Making Process**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Be open-minded and respectful of all opinions.
- Provide a safe space for communications for all stakeholders.
- Seek input and listen to all sides before making decisions.
- Put students first when making decisions.
- Study the issues and discuss with stakeholders, superintendent, and fellow board members.
- Be prepared and knowledgeable about educational issues and topics.
- Support decisions made by the board and/or administrative team once a decision is made.
- Support the majority decision.

## **E School Visits**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Adhere to Board Policy: BBI: Board Staff Relations  
[Board-Staff Relations](#)

## **F Capital Projects & Construction Site Visits**

The Governance Team agrees:

- Individual board members will not make unscheduled visits to construction sites.
- Construction site visit will be coordinated with superintendent.
- The superintendent will provide regular updates on capital projects during board meetings that may include images and other essential information.
- Superintendent will convene steering committee meetings or steering committees.
- Up to three board members may attend a steering committee meeting simultaneously, provided prior notice is given.

## **G Communication**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Be open-minded, respectful, and professional with all stakeholders.
- Ongoing, transparent communication with community stakeholders while maintaining confidentiality regarding sensitive matters, including items discussed in executive sessions, and refraining from discussing the intentions of fellow board members.
- Incorporate good, timely, open, and constant communication.

Adopted: 2013

Revised: 11/13/25

- Support and encourage each other in serving the public at the highest level of professionalism and ethical conduct.
- Assign new board members a Board Mentor who has served at least two years. The Board Mentor will agree to be an additional layer of support and a point of contact for a new board member in their first year of service. New board members are encouraged to establish connections with a mentor through GSBA or during the New Board Member Orientation. This initiative aims to support their understanding of roles and best practices while fostering relationships with fellow district board members.

## **H Communication Among Board Members/Superintendent**

The Governance Team agrees:

- To maintain respectful and timely communications.
- To refrain from inundating the superintendent with daily phone calls but will reach out in emergencies.
- To direct concerns or questions to the superintendent during times of crisis when the school district is making decisions about how to respond or to prepare for a potential closing.
- The board chair and superintendent will maintain daily contact. The concerns from the board members will be relayed by the board chair to the superintendent and information will be gathered. The board chair will then share updates with the entire board.
- To expect the superintendent to communicate regularly with all board members through mutually agreed upon methods.
- To direct all stakeholder questions, input, or discussion, to the superintendent who will communicate them as needed to the board.
- The superintendent should attempt to respond within 24 hours depending upon the nature of the issue.
- When a board member has information or data to share with other board members and/or staff, board member will provide the information/data to the superintendent who will distribute to pertinent parties.
- When board members receive emails from constituents, the board chair will ensure to reply to all in their response.
- Requests for information directed from individual board members to the superintendent that necessitate considerable time and effort must receive approval from the majority of the board.
- To be respectful of the superintendent's time by making phone calls or sending non-urgent emails and texts during business hours, specifically between 7:30 a.m. and before 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Adopted: 2013

Revised: 11/13/25

- Confidentiality is presumed unless explicitly indicated otherwise, and members are encouraged to engage in private discussions with discretion.
- In the event the superintendent is unable to fulfill their duties, the Board communications chain of command will be as follows:
  - Incident (emergency or information urgent in nature) occurs.
  - Board Chair receives emergency information or information urgent in nature.
  - Board Chair immediately contacts Vice Chair and Board Legal Counsel (if necessary)
  - Board Chair contacts Superintendent and/or their designee.
  - Board Chair and Vice Chair determine strategy for contacting each BOE member in a timely manner.
  - Board Chair and Vice Chair determine next step and relay next steps to entire BOE.
  - Board Chair and Vice Chair contact Board Office Executive Director & Staff in a timely manner of next steps involve notifying the public, an emergency-called meeting, preparing necessary documents related to emergency, making sure Board Room or suitable space is available for called meeting and securing third party involvement (example – contacting Judge for swearing in).

**SEE END OF DOCUMENT FOR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL FLOW CHART**

## **I Communications with Staff**

The Governance Team agrees:

- The superintendent is the only employee that reports directly to the Board of Education.
- To go through the superintendent when wanting to communicate with staff.
- To be a cohesive team.
- If there are concerns regarding a staff member or a school issue, the board member will speak privately with the superintendent about the issue, unless the superintendent directs them to share the concern otherwise (i.e., with another staff members).
- It is essential to always maintain a standard of respect and courtesy towards all staff members.
- There will be no surprises during staff presentations at board meetings.
- When board members receive inquiries or concerns from stakeholders, it is important to direct these matters to the superintendent or their designee.

## **J Self-Assessment**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Complete an annual governance team self-assessment aligned with the required eight domains.
- Develop and implement action plans based on the self-assessment results.
- Sign annually, certification of individual and collective agreement of the Georgia State Standards for School Boards, the Code of Ethics, and the Conflict-of-Interest Policy.

## **K Communication with the News Media**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Adhere to Regulation BBA – R (1): Board Officers - Duties of the Chair [Board Officers-Duties of the Chair](#)
- Have the board chair provide his/her statement to the full board ahead of time.
- Designate the board chair as the official spokesperson for the board when it pertains to matters of the board. Individual board members are strongly discouraged from speaking to the media – on matters that effect the board as a whole. Board members approached by the media for comments related to their specific area of the district are encouraged to inform board leadership and the superintendent, and to work with Communications in preparing comments.
- Designate the superintendent or his designee as the official spokesperson for the school district.
- A process to ensure that board members are kept informed of incidents, district positions, and position statement.
- Not to go on camera or radio for interviews unless questions are provided in advance, ensuring that the content is not subject to manipulation during the editing process.

## **L Social Media Communications**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Use social media as a tool to promote positive and important news about the school district.
- Not engage with the public on controversial topics on social media.
- Not respond to negative comments on social media.
- Be positive and mindful of how their actions on social media reflect on the whole Board.

Adopted: 2013

Revised: 11/13/25

- Be mindful on posting about politics.
- Stay away from responding during a crisis and rely on the district social media sites to relay critical information.
- Send any social media information that may further an awareness of community concerns or controversy to the superintendent and board chair.

## **M Board Meetings**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Conduct meetings in accordance with Board Policy: BC: Board Meetings  
[Board Meetings](#)

## **N Vendors/Potential Vendors**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Adhere to Policy: BBI: Board Staff Relations  
[Board-Staff Relations](#)
- Adhere to Policy: DJE: Purchasing  
[Purchasing](#)
- Adhere to Policy: BHA: Board Member Conflict-of-Interest  
[Board Member Conflict of Interest](#)
- Not ask for donations for individual schools or for the district.
- Refer vendors to the superintendent or district vendor portal.
  - Vendor Services  
<https://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/divisions/finance/vendor-services>

## **O Legal Political Elections**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Be mindful when supporting local candidates and how this could impact relationships/future relationships.
- Adhere to Policy: BHC: Board Member Political Activity  
[Board Member Political Activity](#)

## **P Addressing Concerns Regarding Board Norms and Protocols Among Board Members**

The Governance Team agrees to:

- Adhere to Policy: BH Under Enforcement of Ethics – Enforcement of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policies

Adopted: 2013

Revised: 11/13/25

### [Board Code of Ethics](#)

- Have private conversations between board & superintendent in Executive Session.
- Report the matter to State Board of Education for next steps.
- Remain focused on the academic success of the DeKalb County School district students and in turn, remain committed to following the Board Norms and Protocols as closely as possible.
- Recognize that honest and open communication regarding best governance practices is paramount to successful governance and positive working relationships.
- Attempt to resolve any perceived deviation from Board Norms and Protocols in the following manner:
  - Board member with a concern about another Board member will express the concern to the Board member privately and seek to resolve the concern.
  - If the concern is unresolved, the Board member with the concern about another Board member will discuss the concern with Board Chair and/or Superintendent privately.
  - The Board Chair will meet with the Board member of concern and remind them of their Code of Ethics, best Board governance practices, the team commitment to following the Norms and Protocols as well as any potential impact a deviation from best practices could have on the school district.
  - If the aforementioned actions, in the view of the Chair, do not bring resolution, then the Board Chair and one other Board member shall meet with the noted Board member, remind them of their Code of Ethics to follow governing policies and protocols, and seek to garner a commitment to display appropriate action
  - If the Board Chair is the member of noted concern, the Vice Chair and/or Superintendent will hear the concern from any Board member. The Vice Chair will meet with the Chair and include the superintendent or another Board member.
- Refer to Policy BH's provision, "Upon a motion supported by a two-thirds vote, the board may choose to conduct a hearing concerning a possible violation of this Code of Ethics by a member of the Board" if the above steps are unsuccessful.

## **Q            Emergency Contact Protocol**

- If there is an emergency related to superintendent, board chair or vice chair will notify full board.
- If called meeting is needed, proper notice will be given to board office staff.
- Engage communications, internal or external, as needed based upon board chairs discretion.
- The superintendent will designate two people to be notified in case of their absence.

### **Emergency Communications Protocol Flow Chart**

1. Incident (emergency or information urgent in nature) occurs.
2. Board Chair receives emergency information or information urgent in nature.
3. Board Chair immediately contacts Vice Chair and Board Legal Counsel (if necessary).
4. Board Chair contacts Superintendent and/or their designee.
5. Board Chair and Vice Chair determine strategy for contacting each BOE member in a timely manner.
6. Board Chair and Vice Chair determine next step and relay next steps to entire BOE.
7. Board Chair and Vice Chair contact Board Office Executive Director & Staff in a timely manner if next steps involve notifying the public, an emergency-called meeting, preparing necessary documents related to emergency, making sure Board Room or suitable space is available for called meeting and securing third party involvement (example – contacting Judge for swearing in).