

**THORNDALE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Board of Trustees**

**STANDARD OPERATING  
PROCEDURES**

**Adopted December 14, 2009**

## DUTIES / RESPONSIBILITIES

### Duties of the Board:

Govern the district (with the advice of the superintendent)

### Duties of the Superintendent

Manage the district (within the framework of policies and priorities adopted by the board)

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, priorities, and values embodied in the operation of the district while also making sure implementation is carried out by a trained professional with a wide range of experience. It also ensures that the board has the advice of someone well-versed in the immense complexity of school 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 that the board and superintendent need to review priorities and procedures to make sure 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 and priorities 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.

The superintendent functions as the educational leader and chief executive officer of the district and is, throughout his 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 policymaking responsibilities of the board.

To avoid confusion and provide harmonious and progressive direction for the district, both superintendent and 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. Accepts administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning, operation, supervision, and evaluation of the education programs, services, and facilities of the district.
2. Accepts authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of personnel and makes recommendations for employment and termination of employees.
3. Prepares and submits to the board a proposed budget.
4. Recommends policies to be adopted by the board and develops administrative regulations to implement those policies.
5. Provide leadership for the attainment of student performance.

## I. DEVELOPING BOARD MEETING AGENDA

### A. Who can place items on agenda?

1. Agendas are created by the administration and presented to the Board.
2. Any member of the Board of Trustees, with the concurrence of the President of the Board or one other member, may request that a subject be included on the agenda for one meeting. That request shall be forwarded to the Superintendent or President of the Board.
3. The Superintendent shall include on the agenda all trustee-requested items that have been timely submitted.

### B. When is the agenda finalized?

1. Items on the agenda must be placed there by noon five calendar days in advance of the meeting, unless delay in acting or discussing an added agenda item could seriously effect the operations of the District.
2. No item can be placed on the agenda less than 72 hours in advance of the meeting unless an emergency or urgent public necessity exists.
3. Any agenda item added to the agenda after the original posting shall be done so in accordance with state laws.

### C. When are Board members notified of a Board Meeting?

1. Board members shall be notified of a meeting:
  - a. At least 72 hours prior to a regular or special meeting.
  - b. At least 2 hours prior to an emergency meeting.
2. Board members will be advised through the superintendent's agenda analysis as to complex agenda items and the administration's recommendations.

### D. Items for Executive\Closed Session

1. All personnel issues must be conducted in an executive\closed session unless specifically required by the Texas Open Meeting Law, or
2. Anything that violates right to privacy, i.e., Texas Open Meeting Act, Texas Open Record Act, cannot be placed on the open agenda.

### E. Use of Agenda (All school board meetings are meetings held in public but **are not public meetings**. This means that the public's business is done in public but the public may participate only as allowed by law and policy. All governmental bodies must have agendas to drive their meetings.)

1. Routine items
2. Annual renewals of ESC Region 13 and TEA items (grant applications, etc.)
3. Budget amendments

4. Tax refunds from the county appraisal district
5. Financial information
6. Minutes of regular and special Board meetings
7. Updates of Board policy
8. Personnel items
9. Routine bid recommendations (anything already budgeted and less than \$25,000 for a single item purchase)
10. As recommended by the Superintendent
11. Reports from Campus Administration, Technology Director, Athletic Directors
12. Approval of agenda is an action item and the board may consolidate items on the agenda or may take agenda items in a different order than posted to expedite the Board meeting and/or for people in attendance at the Board meeting.
13. Approval of future board meetings is also an action item on the agenda for the Board at all regular Board meetings.
14. There is an Open Forum item on each monthly regular school board meeting agenda and it may be included on any special school board meeting agendas. An Open Forum agenda item will not be on emergency board meeting agendas nor on work session board meeting agendas.
15. Each agenda will include a superintendent's report agenda item.

**II. CONDUCTING BOARD MEETINGS** – Anytime four or more Board members are gathered to discuss school district business, it is considered a meeting.

**A. Persons addressing the Board.**

1. Any patron/citizen may address the Board at any regular monthly Board meeting at a time identified by the Board President.
2. If the patron's request to address the Board specifically identifies an agenda item, the Board President shall ensure that the patron's comments are heard prior to action on the specific agenda item.
3. A patron must sign up on the form provided for that purpose at least fifteen minutes prior to the beginning of the meeting. The topic described on the form shall be complete and in sufficient detail as to determine appropriateness of topic prior to addressing the Board.
4. Patron comments may be on items listed on the agenda or other areas of school district operations, but shall not include complaints/comments about employees or officials of the district nor about students.
5. Each patron will be limited to five minutes, with the total time allocation for audience participation limited to thirty minutes (unless the time is increased or decreased by majority vote of the Board present).
6. If three (3) or more persons sign up to address the Board on a single item, a spokesperson will be selected to speak for the group. In any event, no more than fifteen minutes shall be allotted for a single topic.

**B. Board response to patrons addressing the Board.**

1. Board members will listen attentively to comments.
2. Board President may ask Superintendent to clarify an item.
3. Board members will not respond or enter into discussion with the audience during the meeting as:
  - a. Items on agenda will be discussed as appropriate and scheduled on the agenda.
  - b. Items not on the agenda do not permit Board members to respond or discuss.

**C. Non-allowable comments (Board/audience).**

1. The Board will **not** entertain comments on individual personnel by name or position or officials in public session (employees or Board members).
2. The Board will **not** entertain comments on individual students in public session. (It is extremely important that each board member know that they must be the triers of the facts once any issue has followed Board policy by seeking administrative remedy and the issue is brought before the full board.)

**D. Hearings**

1. During public hearings the Board is assembled only to gather input.
2. The Board will not answer questions or enter into dialogue except with their attorney in the case of an employee hearing or a student discipline hearing.
3. At the conclusion of the hearing or at a subsequent meeting the Board will determine the results of the hearing by being the triers of the facts.
4. Rules for the hearing will be strictly adhered to:
  - a. The Board will limit response to 5 minutes per testifier (or as assigned/modified by Board President, as allowed by Board Policy).
  - b. Testimony is to be presented orally or in writing, as detailed in Board Policy.
  - c. The Board will not allow duplicate testimony.
  - d. The Board will not allow derogatory comments.
  - e. Board members will ask questions only as required for clarification since they are acting as a tribunal.
  - f. The Board President will act as presiding officer, and conduct the hearing. The Board President may set appropriate time limitations, may exclude witnesses from the hearing, and make other procedural rulings if appropriate.
5. Hearings held in executive session follow essentially the same procedures, but public audience is prohibited.

- E.** The Board shall be guided by parliamentary procedure as detailed in Robert's Rules of Order or as spelled out in Board Policy.
  - 1. All discussion shall relate to the business currently under deliberation.
  - 2. The Board President shall halt inappropriate discussion
  - 3. The Board President shall:
    - a. Recognize members prior to them giving their comments.
    - b. Be responsible for acting as presiding officer during hearings.
  
- F.** Town Meetings/Open Forums
  - 1. Procedures for town meetings/open forum shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.
  - 2. The Board President, Superintendent or designee shall lead discussions.
  
- G.** Discussion of motions
  - 1. 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.
  - 2. The Board President may make motions, second motions, and enter into debate.

### **III. VOTING**

- A.** The Board President will have the right to vote on all action items.
  
- B.** Except in a conflict of interest as defined by law, Board members shall have the right to vote on all action items.

(All Board members shall vote their conscience and once the vote is taken, all board members shall support the vote no matter where their vote fell on the issue.)

### **IV. EMPLOYEE OR CITIZEN COMPLAINT TO INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBER**

- A.** When a person complains to a Board member regarding school personnel, a student, or an administrative issue:
  - 1. Redirect the employee, citizen, or student through the system to seek administrative remedy by beginning with the teacher, coach, or sponsor.
  
  - 2. Remind the employee, citizen, or student of due process and that the Board member must remain impartial in case the situation goes before the board.
  
- B.** Refer employee, citizen, or student to appropriate person in the chain of command.  
**ANY PERSON WHO HAS A COMPLAINT MUST GO THROUGH CHAIN OF COMMAND.**

- C. A Board member should advise the Superintendent of a substantive or significant complaint ASAP.
- D. Board members and administrators may be liable both individually and collectively.

## **V. BOARD MEMBER VISIT TO SCHOOL CAMPUS**

- A. Board members are encouraged to attend any school event as their time permits and to support activities.
- B. Board members are not to go into teacher's classrooms or campuses for the purpose of investigation or evaluation.
- C. Board members shall make reasonable efforts to contact the appropriate administrator prior to their visits, when not attending a scheduled activity.
- D. Board members are given district passes which encourages them to attend all athletic events both at home and away as their time permits to support those activities.

## **VI. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. The President of the Board will meet with the Superintendent on a routine basis to discuss issues of the District as their time permits.
- B. Request for information of the Superintendent from a Board member will be communicated to all Board members.
- C. The Board will communicate through public hearings, Board meetings, and publications.
- D. Unless otherwise approved by the Board, individual Board members cannot speak in an official capacity or otherwise represent the views of the Board. Please remember everything you say and do is noticed.

## **VII. EVALUATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

- A. The summative evaluation will generally be conducted in December or January.
- B. The Board President obtains input from all other members on the approved indicators which are based on State Law, Local Board Policy, and the Superintendent's job description.

- C. The evaluation will be conducted by consensus in executive session.
- D. The Superintendent's contract will generally be considered in January.

## **VIII. EVALUATION OF THE BOARD**

- A. Routine assessment of the status of Board/Superintendent team will generally be conducted in November.
- B. Evaluation is conducted in executive session on a schedule determined by the Board.
  - 1. Are we following our code of conduct?
  - 2. Are we following our operating procedures?
  - 3. Is the team of eight functioning?
  - 4. Were goals effective?

## **IX. ANONYMOUS PHONE CALLS/LETTERS**

- A. The Thorndale Independent School District Board of Trustees encourages input; however, anonymous phone calls or letters will not receive the Board's attention, discussion, or response and will not be referred to the administration.

## **X. PETITIONS**

- A. The Thorndale Independent School District Board of Trustees encourages input; however, petitions will not receive the Board's attention, discussion, or response, and will not be referred to the administration.

## **XI. REVIEWING BOARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

- A. Standard Board Operating Procedures will be reviewed and updated as needed.

## **XII. MEDIA RELEATIONS**

- A. Board Meeting: Every effort will be made to cooperate with the news media to ensure complete and accurate coverage of all Board meetings.
- B. News Release: News releases of a political or controversial nature, as well as those concerning the overall operation of the district schools, or that involve more than one campus shall be made by the Superintendent.
- C. Routine news items can be released at the campus level.
- D. During Crisis: The Superintendent or his/her designee serves as the official spokesperson for the district to the media and press. If a Board member chooses to respond to a request for an individual comment or opinion from the media, they should clearly qualify any statement as being the opinion of the individual Board member and not representative of the Board as a whole or the school district.