



Mount Vernon School Board Operating Protocols

For enhancing teamwork among members of the Board and between the Board and administration, we, the Board of Directors, hereby publicly commit ourselves collectively and individually to the following operating protocols.

Roles and responsibilities

We are members of a leadership team of six (five Directors and the superintendent) dedicated to working collaboratively for the best interest of our students, parents, staff, and community.

We are committed to model the leadership expected at every level of the district. We will follow best collaborative practice in our deliberations, believing better decisions will result from our individual commitment to learn and understand varying perspectives as we work to build consensus.

Successful organizations are the result of the strong and effective leadership. In order for members of our team to be active players, they must know their roles.

Roles of the Board and Superintendent

School Board - Governs (Guides/Directs)	Superintendent - Manages (Administers/Operates)
Decides What	Decides How
Requests Information	Seeks and Provides Information
Considers Issues	Provides Recommendations
Creates, Reviews, Adopts Policy	Recommends, Implements Policy, Approves & Reviews Plans
Adopts Plans and Monitors Implementation and Progress	Reports Progress
Supervises & Evaluates Superintendent	Contracts with Personnel
Approves & Reviews Budget	Formulates Budget

What our Roles Do NOT Encompass

The role of the School Board is not to:	The role of the Superintendent is not to:
Carry out policies or micro-manage or develop budgets.	Make policies.
Direct any staff other than the superintendent.	Direct the Board.
Intentionally withhold material information from the Board or superintendent that could reasonably affect Board deliberations or district operations.	Create Surprises.



What our Roles Do NOT Encompass continued

Abdicate Board responsibility.	Assume Board responsibilities.
Advance personal interests that conflict with the superintendent's fiduciary obligations.	Press narrow personal agenda.
As individuals, make promises that would appear binding upon the Board and/or district.	Discourage open discussion and feedback.

Board Operating Protocols

We, the members of the Board, are committed to serving the students and residents of Mount Vernon. We strive to provide the highest quality public education, recognizing that systemic change and a focus on equity will be necessary to meet the needs of all the students in our district.

To achieve that goal, we have established this operating protocol, which will serve as a code of conduct and ethics to help govern our actions at meetings and in our role as Directors.

We believe that the success of the Mount Vernon School District depends on shared vision among the school Board, students, staff, parents, and community, we commit to uphold these principles consistent with applicable law and Board policy.

We commit to conduct ourselves professionally and respectfully for each other, for all members of the Mount Vernon School District, and for all school district residents. This respect is based on our fundamental belief in the goodwill of all of these district participants. We especially value the hard work of the Mount Vernon School District staff and we will show appreciation in our actions as a Board and as individuals.

We exemplify the behavior codified in the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) School Board Standards and in the Individual School Director Standards. *This includes standards for equity and inclusion. The Board holds the conviction that all students can learn and achieve regardless of circumstances and this requires inclusive instructional environments, and culturally relevant and differentiated instruction that creates a culture of belonging.

We will comply with the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), including quorum and serial communication requirements, and will avoid deliberations that constitute a meeting under OPMA outside properly noticed public meetings.

We formulate annual and long-term district goals, key strategies, and priorities for progress, in collaboration with school district staff and, when appropriate, with parents, and community members. We will support conscientiously and whole-heartedly the



superintendent's efforts to achieve those goals, but will not otherwise involve ourselves in the management of district affairs.

We will keep the superintendent reasonably informed of material discussions with district staff concerning district operations or policy, except where prohibited by law (including whistleblower protections, personnel complaints, or attorney-client matters).

Board members will make reasonable efforts to raise significant agenda items in advance when practicable, recognizing that emergent issues may arise. After Board action, members will accurately represent and support the Board's final decision, while retaining their right as elected officials to explain their individual votes. To facilitate this process, we will review all Board meeting agenda materials provided and seek clarification or additional information from the superintendent as needed prior to meetings.

We will make it our responsibility to communicate the interests and opinions of all our constituents to the school district and to communicate the district's goals, progress, and needs to our community and to its legislators. This will require extra efforts to ensure the voices of our historically marginalized populations are heard and considered in deliberation and decision making.

Board Meetings

Board meetings provide the forum for where decisions are made.	Regarding Board Meetings, we will: • Invest time to discuss and study systemic issues that impact equitable student achievement. • Conduct meetings in a manner that balances efficiency, thorough deliberation, and equitable participation, while also allowing adequate time and consideration of underrepresented voices and issues impacting equity. • Review agenda items prior to Board meetings. • Request any additional information from the Board president or superintendent. • Ask the Board president or superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting. • Expect the Board president to be cautious of time and observe the Board's protocol. • Refer additional facts and information needed by the Board to the superintendent for follow-up.
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Board Meetings: Executive Sessions Executive Sessions will be held when specific needs arise as allowed by law. These include: • Acquiring or selling real estate. • Qualifications of an applicant for employment by the Board. • Qualifications of a candidate for appointment to elective office such as a school Director. • Discussion with legal counsel of enforcement actions, litigation or potential litigation.	Regarding Executive Sessions, we will: • Comply with all legal requirements governing executive sessions. • Respect the confidentiality of all privileged information, including that discussed in executive session. • Discuss a permissible topic in executive session, but take final actions in public, as is required by the Open Public Meeting Act.
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Communications

Communications Between the Board and Staff	The following communications procedures are established: A. Staff Communications to the Board • Routine operational reports to the Board shall be transmitted through the superintendent, except where law, policy, or formal Board process permits direct communication. • Operational complaints should generally be referred to the superintendent unless the complaint concerns the superintendent or involves legal or statutory reporting obligations. • This will not deny any staff member's right to appeal to the Board regarding administrative decisions, provided that the superintendent will have been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed according to the applicable procedures on complaints and grievances. B. Board Communications to Staff • All official communications, policies, and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members through the superintendent. • The superintendent will employ all such media as are appropriate to keep staff fully informed of the Board's priorities, concerns, and actions. • Requests for information from staff by Board members will be taken to the superintendent or approved staff. Board member requests for operational information shall be coordinated through the superintendent, except for publicly available information or where authorized by Board policy. The superintendent will provide information in a timely manner.
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Communications Between the Board and Staff Continued	C. Visits to Schools or other facilities • Such visits will be regarded as expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. • Visits undertaken in an official representative capacity on behalf of the Board require prior Superintendent authorization. • Attendance at public school events does not require authorization. D. Social Interaction • Staff and Board members share a keen interest in the schools and in education. When they meet at social affairs and other functions, informal discussion on such matters as educational trends, issues, and innovations can be anticipated. E. Direct discussion of specific personnel performance matters outside authorized process is not appropriate.
Working with District staff about our own children	In order to work effectively with district staff about our own children we agree to: • Remember that we are parents (grandparents) first. • Follow the same process that we expect all parents to follow: meet with the teacher first, then follow the chain of command. • Be clear that we are speaking to the teacher as a parent. (i.e., "My child is having this problem. How can I help them?"). • Understand that sometimes our spouse or significant other may be the right person to handle the situation. • Inform the superintendent if the matter could reasonably create a perceived conflict of interest or escalate beyond the school level.
Communications between Board and community - complaints or concerns	The Board encourages public input through a variety of print and electronic media. In order to respond effectively to community members who share a concern or complaint with us, we agree to: • Remember that receiving information from an individual or a group is not the same as having total knowledge of the topic or issue. Board members should seek complete information before forming conclusions. • Utilize the 4 Rs to ensure the person speaking feels valued and heard: • Receive by listening openly to what the other person is saying.



Communications between Board and community - complaints or concerns - continued	• Repeat by paraphrasing back or asking questions for clarification. • Request what the person sees as a solution to the problem; and/or what they want you to do with the information. – Encourage individuals to follow established district complaint procedures, including referral to the superintendent when appropriate. – Encourage patrons to present their own issue to the person who can address their issues properly and expeditiously. – If appropriate, explain the district complaint policy and how it can be accessed. • Report to the superintendent – Call the superintendent to give him a heads-up about the constituent issue so that the superintendent is able to understand the total picture. – Describe our response to the constituent so that the superintendent hears directly from us, and is not caught in the middle. The superintendent will deal with the issue as necessary and, when appropriate, determine how best to inform the total Board.
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Board Conduct

The Board's Conduct	We will: • Conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with professional standards and the Board's fiduciary obligations. • Base our decisions on the available facts and not independent judgement. • Avoid allowing any individual or organized interest to unduly influence Board decisions. • Represent the needs and interests of all the children in the district as outlined in the district's mission statement. • Not abuse our official position. • Not use district facilities, resources, or position for the purpose of advancing the interest of ourselves or any other individual or individuals. • Make every attempt to attend in person all Board functions, including committee meetings. • Serve on committees as a silent observer or active participant, as defined by the Board. • Represent the District by being visible and active in the community. • Accept responsibility for Board decisions and accurately represent Board actions, while retaining the right to explain one's vote as an elected official.
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The Board's Conduct continued	• Refrain from actions that materially interfere with Board governance or district operations. • Endeavor to hear all members' opinions and listen objectively. • Encourage debate and differing points of view. • Conduct discussions with care and respect.
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Board Authority

The Board's Authority	We recognize: • That only the Board as a whole has authority. • Individual Board members do not possess decision-making authority except as authorized by Board action or law. • The Board president serves as the official spokesperson for formal Board positions. • That the Board emphasizes planning, policy-making and public relations rather than being involved in the management of school operation. • Individual Board members shall not purport to act on behalf of the Board without authorization. • The individual Directors do not give direction. The Board as a whole gives direction. • Exercise oversight responsibilities through policy, planning, advocacy, public relations. • Avoid directing day-to-day operations, which are delegated to the superintendent. • Delegate the management of the schools to the superintendent. • Set clear goals for the superintendent.
The Board and Superintendent Relationship	• Surprises to the Board or the superintendent will be the exception, not the rule. • The Board recognizes the superintendent as the chief executive officer and expects recommendations, proposals, and suggestions on most matters before the Board. • The Board president meets with the superintendent and keeps all Board members informed of Board matters/information. • At the weekly Director's meetings, Board Directors may meet individually or in pairs with the superintendent, provided such meetings comply with OPMA and do not constitute serial deliberations.



The Board's Professional Development

Board's Professional Development	We will: • Conduct a self-evaluation every two years. • Address performance or conduct concerns through established Board procedures and/or due process. • Model life-long learning. • Participate in opportunities that provide professional growth. • Encourage members to take advantage of opportunities to inform themselves about current educational issues through individual study and participation in programs providing needed information. • Encourage members to disseminate information to other members.
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The Board and Superintendent Roles in Negotiations

The Board and Superintendent Roles in Negotiations	We will: • The Board shall provide appropriate input and direction to the superintendent in the collective bargaining process. • Trust our negotiating team to do the best job that they can. • Remind staff that there is a process in place, that the staff and district each have an identified negotiating team, and that any questions or issues need to go through the defined negotiation process.
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Board members will acknowledge their review of this document annually.

Board Member _____

Date 8/5/26

Board Member _____

Date 8/5/26

Board Member _____

Date 08/5/2026

Board Member _____

Date 8/5/2026

Board Member _____

Date _____

Superintendent _____

Date 8/5/2026