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Board Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

This handbook serves as a resource to the Board of Education of Granite School District (Board). The Board has established specific policies regarding the composition, authority, and responsibility of the Board (see Board of Education of Granite School District Policies (District Policy) Article II.A. through II.L.). Other Utah State statutes and Utah State Board of Education (State Board) rules may apply to the Board, and the Board should be knowledgeable of all such statutes, rules, and policies. (In particular, see Utah Code §53G-4-201 *et seq.*). This handbook does not replace any applicable statutes, rules, or policies. It is simply intended as an informal reference manual to help Board members carry out their duties and to describe best practices for Board members.



BOARD CHARGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Board has adopted a Charge and Responsibility:

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

The Board is composed of seven elected board members. One member of the Board is elected from each of the seven voting districts that make up the Granite School District (the District). The

Board appoints the superintendent of schools and the business administrator, who serve as non-voting executive officers of the Board.

ELECTIONS FOR BOARD POSITIONS

Elections for board positions are spelled out in District Policy II.A. and in Utah Code §20A-14-201 *et seq.* An individual running for a position on the Board in one of the seven precincts must be a resident of that precinct for at least one year prior to the election, and elected board members shall remain a resident in the precinct throughout the board member's term of office. Newly elected board members are sworn in at the January board meeting immediately following the election.

Board members are elected to a four-year term of office at alternate elections. Alternate elections mean only half of the Board is elected every two years—one member is elected from precincts I, II, and IV at one election and one each from precincts III, V, VI, and VII at the next election. Those interested in running for a board position must timely file a declaration of candidacy with the county clerk and pay the requisite fee. Elections are governed and administered by Salt Lake County under Utah State election laws. Prospective and current members should consult relevant state laws when seeking to run for a position on the Board.



Board members should not discuss elections or and campaigning during board meetings. Also, board members should understand the limitations placed on district employees during elections.

Memorandum 82 discusses employee limitations in offering endorsements or speaking on behalf of the District, and Memorandum 42 (Section 13 of the Fiscal Policy Manual) discusses use of District facilities by candidates. Board members and candidates should be sensitive to the limitations in those policies and use discretion while campaigning.



BOARD LEADERSHIP

The Board selects a president and vice president to lead the Board. Board members are sworn in at the January board meeting immediately following the election. Following the swearing in of newly elected board members, the incumbent president of the Board will call for nominations from the other board members for the positions of board president and board vice president. Board members may also self-nominate. The board president shall call for a vote and a nominee must receive a majority of votes of the board members present. Should no nominee receive a majority of votes, further nominations may be made, and subsequent rounds of voting shall be conducted.

The essential duties of the board president and vice president are defined in District Policy Article II.A. The duties of the president include:

1. Presiding at all meetings and advancing the business of the Board.
2. Representing the District and speaking for the Board in official capacities and on official occasions.
3. Working with the superintendent to develop agendas for all board meetings and discussing strategy for advancing the business of the Board.
4. Coordinating and communicating board priorities and directives with and through the superintendent.
5. Facilitating internal operations of the Board and engaging the active and faithful participation of all board members.

District Policy is not specific with regard to the duties of the vice president. However, the vice president may assist and advise the president on all duties, and the vice president shall perform the duties of the president in the case of the absence or incapacity of the president.

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BOARD

The power and authority of the Board is conferred by the Utah State Constitution and Utah Code §53G-4-401. Individual members of the Board serve and represent constituents unrestricted and unimpaired by membership on the Board. However, as stated in District Policy Article II.C., the power and authority of the Board belongs to the Board as a body through collective action. Board members have no individual authority to act on behalf of the Board. The Board's power and authority are exercised as a body by taking official

action through voting in duly scheduled board meetings. Therefore, individual members of the Board should not speak on behalf of the Board without prior board approval.

The Board’s duties and responsibilities are discussed in detail in District Policy Article II.B and II.C. These include but are not limited to the following executive, legislative, and quasi-judicial duties and responsibilities:

1. Executive

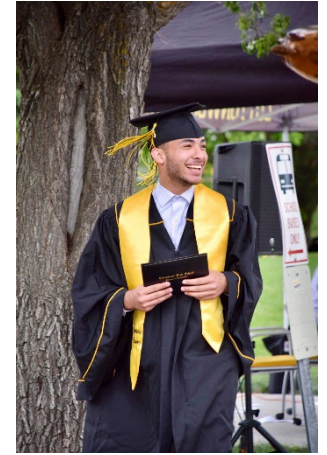
- a. Hiring and evaluating the superintendent.
- b. Hiring and evaluating the business administrator.
- c. Continuously appraising the management of the school system.
- d. Receiving feedback from patrons and members of the school community and communicating to the Board and superintendent to improve policies and outcomes.
- e. Approving collective bargaining agreements.

2. Legislative

- a. Establishing policies that promote outstanding educational programming meeting the needs of all students in the District.
- b. Adopting operating and capital budgets and ensuring sound fiscal management of public resources.
- c. Establishing school boundaries and making decisions regarding facilities.
- d. Accepting state and federal funds and approving fees, levies, bonds, donations, and other revenue sources according to state and federal law.

3. Quasi-Judicial

- a. Ruling on appeals of administrative decisions.



BOARD MEMBER ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to performing general board business through board meetings, board members are expected to fulfil assignments including, but not limited to:

- 1. Attending and representing the Board at graduation reviews and graduation ceremonies.
- 2. Carrying out assignments made by the board president, including fulfilling board committee assignments.
- 3. Attending events at the direction of the board president on behalf of the Board.
- 4. Collaborating with other boards of education inside and outside the state of Utah, receiving training and ongoing professional development -, and engaging in occasional leadership and support roles in organizations and associations to which the board belongs.
- 5. Attending meetings on behalf of the Board with local school or District PTA, local and District community councils, and state and local legislative or executive bodies as appropriate.



The Board, collectively and individually, takes full responsibility for Board decisions and behavior. To merit the public trust bestowed upon each board member by constituents, board members must conduct board business with transparency and integrity. The Board has established commitments and ethics to articulate the general expectations for board members (see District Policy Article II.C.), and board member conduct is discussed in more detail below.

3. The Board continuously evaluates progress.

The Board strives continuously for improved outcomes. As such, the Board consistently monitors progress of district goals and compliance with district policies. The Board should utilize data from administration and staff and rely upon such data to make informed decisions.

EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARDS

The Board understands that an effective school board can positively impact student achievement, and thereby strives to consistently exhibit the eight characteristics of effective school boards as outlined by the Center for Public Education. The Board will:

1. Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.
2. Possess strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.
3. Be accountability driven and spend less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.
4. Build a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communication structure to inform and engage

PRINCIPLES OF BOARD GOVERNANCE

Remembering three principles of board governance will help keep the Board focused on its most important responsibilities:

1. The Board understands its role and delegates authority.

Questions often arise regarding the role of board members and the degree to which board members should direct the affairs of the District. The Board specifically appoints a superintendent and a business administrator to manage the operation of the District and its schools. A good rule of thumb is to think in terms of an end versus the means to an end. Board members should be interested in the end results—answering big-picture questions such as: What? Why? How much? Board members can delegate to the superintendent the means or methods for achieving the desired ends—answering more narrow questions such as: How? When? Where? Who? Otherwise stated, the Board is responsible for the mission, goals, and policies of the District.

The administration can thereafter develop and implement objectives, strategies, action plans, and procedures.

2. The Board takes responsibility for itself and its actions.

both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

5. Be data savvy, and embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.
6. Align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.
7. Lead as a united team with the superintendent and business administrator, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
8. Participate in team development and training to build shared knowledge, values, and commitments for improvement efforts.



COMMUNICATION BY BOARD MEMBERS

1. General Communications

Board and individual board members' written communications are subject to the Government Records Access and Management Act ("GRAMA").

Utah Code § 63G-2-101 *et seq.* GRAMA is a Utah law that permits persons to review and obtain copies of documents that are in the custody and control of the Board and the District, subject to some exceptions. While exceptions exist, board members should consider all written communications potentially subject to review under GRAMA.

2. Board Member Communications

There are no statutory restrictions for board members communicating between and among themselves in numbers that do not constitute a quorum, or a majority of the Board. If the number of board members present in a discussion constitutes a quorum of the Board, then discussions are subject to the rules for meetings under the Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA). Utah Code §52-4-101 *et seq.* Chance or social gatherings by members of the Board do not constitute a meeting under the OPMA. If a quorum is present, members of the Board may discuss administrative or operational matters when no board action, current or future, is required and if no public funds are spent. In any event, members of the Board should use discretion not to attempt to further the business of the Board unless the Board is convened in a properly noticed meeting under the provisions of OPMA.

According to the OPMA, almost all meetings of the Board are open to the public, all meetings are recorded, and minutes are kept. All board business should be transacted in an open meeting, and the public may be allowed to address the Board in open meetings. The Board is trained annually on OPMA and shall be familiar with the limited circumstances and strict procedures under which a private or closed meeting may be held. Outside of those specific circumstances, board members must converse openly so that all members of the public can hear the communication and the communication is made part of the record in an open meeting.

Board members often communicate electronically using email, text, or other computer applications. Board members should be aware that conducting board business via electronic means can constitute an electronic meeting under OPMA. Board members should avoid engaging in communications via electronic means that further the business of the Board with a quorum of Board members copied on the communication. In practice, board members may want to avoid “Reply All” when initiating or responding to communications with board members.

3. Communications with the Superintendent and Staff

Regular communications are issued by the superintendent for the purpose of keeping the Board informed regarding District programs and events. Board members are free to communicate in private with the superintendent regarding District issues, although the superintendent shall remain open to discuss those issues with the other members of the Board. When board members receive information that raises questions or concerns about the District, they should communicate that information to the superintendent. Board members may discuss educational matters with District and school staff, but staff members shall keep the superintendent informed of all such communications.

4. Communications with the Public

Board members should, when writing, speaking, or meeting with community members on educational matters, make it clear that their views do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board or of their colleagues on the Board. Board members may be approached individually by citizens who wish to discuss, whether verbally or in writing, general board business such as the budget, policies, or curriculum. Patrons are also likely to express specific concerns on educational matters to board

members such as such student discipline, an employee’s performance, or a school program.



Board members can help resolve concerns and complaints of patrons by referring them to administrators or departments that can best address the issues. When presented with a concern or complaint, board members can state:

If you don't mind, would you please put your concern in writing and send it to me? I will forward your concern directly to the superintendent. You will be contacted by a District official to help you address the concern. If your concern is not resolved, please follow up with me, and I will make sure the superintendent looks into it further.

Board members should keep in mind that directing the patron to the correct department or District official will allow the problem to be addressed sooner and more effectively. Rather than attempt to resolve patrons’ concerns, board members are advised to connect patrons to appropriate staff members. Furthermore, there may be instances in which the Board will hear an appeal involving the specific concern or complaint, and a board member who has already discussed the matter with the complaining person may have to recuse her/himself

from the appeal process because of the prior knowledge or involvement.

Board members should feel free to discuss issues with patrons that have been addressed by the Board and made part of the public record. Board members may wish to express the Board's position regarding such matters. Additionally, board members may discuss their own views but should take care to not undermine Board decisions in such communications. If a matter has not been addressed by the Board in a public meeting, a board member can refer the patron to an administrator who has expertise and/or administrative responsibility related to the issue. If appropriate, a board member can also inform the patron the issue will be taken under advisement and will be addressed with the superintendent and the Board according to the proper procedures.

Board members should avoid making guarantees or commitments to individuals, particularly when the board member has no authority from the Board to do so. Board members should not make commitments on upcoming votes, make promises about personnel issues, or make pledges about a contract or expenditures of public funds. Generally, there are multiple sides to a story, so board members should be careful not to make promises to parents about the outcomes of investigations, discipline, or placement decisions. Board members should make it clear they cannot share confidential information learned in their role as a board member.

If you are asked for information from reporters or media outlets, contact the superintendent and the communications director for assistance. Do not answer questions from attorneys without speaking to the superintendent and the director of Policy and Legal Services.

BOARD TRAINING

The Board shall be trained annually, under the direction of the board president, on OPMA and board ethics. New board members are strongly encouraged to attend the orientation session organized by the Utah School Boards Association (USBA). Board members also have access to the district learning management system, and through that system, board members will be assigned certain tasks to complete, including signing conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements. Board members may also be assigned to voluntarily participate in other trainings at the Board's discretion.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Each board member shall be issued a password protected electronic device to use for board business and will be required to sign terms and conditions for use.



EMAIL

Board members are assigned individual district email addresses. Board members are strongly encouraged to use their school system email rather than a personal email address when communicating as a board member. Board members are also strongly encouraged to check their district email daily. Board member emails related to the school system and all board business are subject to

disclosure under GRAMA, regardless of what email account is used.

SCHOOL VISITS

Board members are encouraged to visit schools. When visiting schools, board members should notify the principal prior to visiting the school. Board members are required to wear their District identification badge and are expected to sign in when entering a school. Board members should avoid visiting schools during periods of testing and should refrain from disrupting instruction to the extent possible. Board members are cautioned that staff and student schedules may not accommodate unexpected visits, and that the normal business of the school day takes priority. In accordance with the communication guidelines in this handbook, board members should communicate with the superintendent any concerns they may hear while visiting a school.

COMPENSATION

Board members are entitled to be compensated in the amount agreed upon by the Board for carrying out their board duties. Board compensation is determined in accordance with state law. Amendments to the Board's compensation schedule must first be discussed at a public hearing and subsequently approved by the Board (see Utah Code §53G-4-204). Board members are also eligible to participate in the district's health, dental, accident, and life insurance plans.

CONFERENCES AND CONVENTIONS

Board members may elect to attend state and/or national conventions. Participation at such conventions shall involve prior advisement and conform to the budget authorization process (see Administrative Memorandum 15). Board travel requests shall be discussed and approved at a Board meeting prior to the conference and/or convention.

Expenses for such activity shall include travel, registration, food, and lodging. Travel arrangements shall be coordinated through the business office. Typically, board members will be provided with an appropriate per diem in advance of travel in order to cover costs of meals and incidentals.



LEGAL LIABILITY AND THE BOARD

As a general rule, and in accordance with the Utah Governmental Immunity Act, board members are immune from personal liability for actions taken in the normal course of business and in the exercise of board duties (see Utah Code §63G-7-201 e.g., activities such as voting, discussing board business, and making representations during a regularly scheduled board meeting). Board members who act on specific direction/authorization from the Board can also expect coverage for their actions. Board members must be aware, however, that governmental immunity has limitations. For example, board members can be sued individually (and should not expect Risk Management coverage) for acts that are beyond the course and scope of their duties, acts that violate civil liberties, and criminal acts and other statutory exclusions (e.g., fraud, willful misconduct, and providing false testimony). Board members should use care in the exercise of their duties and seek legal guidance if they have questions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST/FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

Board members must meet the requirements of the Utah Public Officers' and Employees' Ethics Act, Utah Code Ann. §67-16-1 *et seq.* Board members shall disclose annually any direct or indirect financial interest that they have in any corporation or business that furnishes goods or services to, or otherwise does business with the District and/or any transaction made with the District in which the board member or a close relation to the board member has a financial interest. These requirements are designed to prevent a board member from being placed in a position where her/his interest in public schools and her/his pecuniary interests might conflict. Board members shall strive to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest even if a conflict may not actually exist.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Board members may have access to confidential information and records pertaining to students, parents or guardians, patrons, employees, contractors, volunteers, retirees, donors, or other individuals or entities associated with the district. The information board members have access to may contain sensitive financial information, personal information of patrons, personally identifiable student information, and other sensitive information. All such information is protected by state and federal laws. Board members shall sign

the confidentiality agreement required by all District employees.

Board members agree to access, use, and/or disclose confidential information only as required and permitted in performing their assigned duties, including oral, written, or electronic communications or documents. Some confidential information may be shared with District employees, volunteers, affiliates, or contractors on a “need-to-know” basis. However, board members shall not misappropriate or misuse confidential information at any time and shall safeguard confidential information. If a board member becomes aware of a breach of confidential information, the board member shall report the breach to the superintendent immediately.

BOARD MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

Board members agree to abide by the commitments and ethics articulated in District Policy Article II.C., the District’s code of conduct related to students, District Policy Article V.C.14., and with educator standards articulated in Utah Administrative Code R277-217. Additionally, board members agree to refrain from conduct that would constitute a violation of basic causes for disciplinary action for district employees as outlined in District Policy Article IX.A.4.C. and conduct that is discriminatory, harassing, or retaliatory as outlined in District Policy Article V.C.1. Abiding by these basic standards of conduct will engender trust and respect for board members and the office they occupy.

Further, to promote a strong working relationship, board members will:

1. Endeavor to be on time to board meetings and participate fully.
2. Notify the board president and superintendent, with as much advance notice as possible, when

the board member cannot attend a meeting for professional or personal reasons.

3. Make requests for information or add topics to the agenda through the board president or vice president. (See Article II.D.)
4. Be familiar with the issues and read the materials provided in advance of the meeting in order to be fully prepared to discuss issues and take action on agenda items.

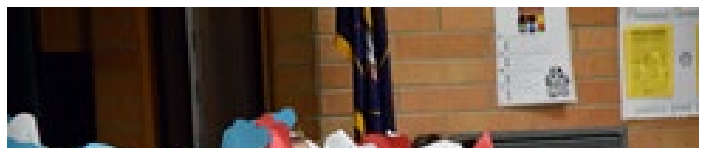


5. Address questions or concerns with the board president and the superintendent in advance of the board meeting to avoid surprises and unnecessary conflict.
6. Approach each issue with an open mind and show respect for diverse opinions.
7. Issues not on the board agenda should not be introduced during the board meeting.
8. Refrain from repetitive discussion on an agenda item that needlessly lengthens a meeting.
9. Avoid dominating debate, thereby denying colleagues an equal opportunity to discuss the matters at hand.
10. Participate in continuing education activities and, after attending a conference, workshop, or convention paid for by the District, provide a report to other board members for the benefit of the Board.
11. Have the courage to share personal perspectives but respect the perspectives and intentions of others and defer to the ultimate decisions of the Board.

12. Respect the role and decision-making authority of the superintendent in communications with constituents and colleagues, both public and private.
13. Attend school or District PTA, community council, and other meetings according to your assignments, ability, and interest. Listen and respond, as appropriate, but avoid dominating the discussion or advancing personal agendas.
14. Support the role of the superintendent at board meetings by deferring to the superintendent's expertise as appropriate, asking for clarification on agenda items, allowing the superintendent time to provide adequate follow-up on questions and concerns, and request permission of the board president before asking questions of anyone in the audience.
15. Follow through on assignments.
16. Maintain civil dialogue by speaking respectfully and listening carefully to others.
17. Maintain in confidence conversations of a sensitive nature with fellow board members, the superintendent, and staff.
18. Take concerns and complaints to the superintendent and appropriate administrators, and refrain from trying to resolve concerns and complaints unilaterally.
19. Refrain from gossiping or speaking negatively about patrons or district personnel.

BOARD MEETING PACKET

The upcoming meeting agenda and documents for board meetings, where possible, shall be made **available on the Thursday** before each board meeting. With the exception of documents reviewed during closed executive sessions, such as documents pertaining to personnel and legal matters, board meeting materials are also available to the public on the District's website. In accordance with state law, board meeting materials will be retained permanently.



BOARD MEETINGS

District Policy Article II.D. specifically addresses legal requirements for board meetings and compliance with the OPMA. Beyond the legal requirements, the Board has developed practices and procedures to ensure the meetings are conducted in an orderly and effective manner.

1. Board meetings are generally convened on the first Tuesday of each month. Administrative reports are delivered to the Board at 5:00 p.m. This session provides an opportunity for staff to report to the Board on educational programming, business matters, administrative issues, compliance efforts, and other areas of interest to the Board. The Board may elect to hold a closed executive session to discuss matters that qualify for closed meetings under the OPMA. The Board generally takes a break for dinner and reconvenes at 7:00 p.m. for its regularly scheduled Board meeting to conduct the bulk of board business. Board business generally includes:
 - a. Recognizing students, patrons, district employees, and others for achievements and exemplary work being performed in the district.
 - b. Receiving public comment from patrons and local leaders.
 - c. Deliberating and voting on personnel matters involving separations, leaves of absence, and new hires.
 - d. Deliberating on and adopting policies, calendars, fee schedules, and other items on first and second readings.
 - e. Considering financial reports.
 - f. Approving or rejecting requests and recommendations related to budgets, administrative appointments, and many other administrative matters.
 - g. Awarding high value contracts, procuring real property and high-costs goods and services, and approving agreements such as collective bargaining agreements.
 - h. Holding mandatory public hearings for tax levies, boundary changes, school closures, bonds proposals, and board member compensation.
 - i. Delivering individual reports to other board members.
2. During board meetings, the Board has the option to enter into a closed executive session for reasons enumerated in the OPMA. Those reasons include discussions regarding: an individual's character or competence, collective bargaining strategy, litigation strategy, strategy about buying or selling real property, deployment of security personnel or systems, investigative proceedings involving criminal conduct and a few other areas. The Board may close a meeting to the public to gather information and deliberate on any of the topics listed, but before the Board takes any formal or final action, the meeting must be opened back up to the public.

3. Most months, the Board also convenes a study session to allow Board members to receive in-depth reports from the superintendent and staff regarding areas of concern or items that require more extensive consideration. The agenda may include action items and the board may conduct board business during the study session. Study sessions may be cancelled if the Board has too few agenda items to warrant a meeting. Study sessions as well as public hearings on specific agenda items are defined as board meetings.
4. Exceptions are made to the board meeting schedules to accommodate holidays, elections, and other significant events.
5. All meetings are conducted using basic procedural guidelines. Strict procedures are not required, but the Board maintains effective practices that promote decorum, efficiency, and productivity. The following are useful suggestions for conducting and participating in effective board meetings.
 - a. All action items on the agenda require a motion by a board member; a second to the motion; discussion of the motion by board members; and a vote by board members.
 - b. Other than the consent agenda, the Board should limit each motion to one idea or issue. Items on the consent agenda may be removed and considered separately upon a motion and majority vote.
 - c. Board members should not make a new motion while another motion is being discussed.
 - d. A motion may be amended and votes on the amendments must be taken before acting on the original motion.
 - e. Before a vote on a main motion is taken, business can be interrupted by a motion to table the main motion; to postpone action; to refer the motion to further study; or to withdraw it from consideration. The subsidiary motions must be disposed of prior to action on the main motion.
 - f. Debate can be closed formally with a motion to move the question and a two-thirds affirmative vote.
 - g. When the president senses the discussion has ended, a vote may be taken without a formal motion to close debate unless a member objects.
 - h. Motions to adjourn with a second, are not subject to debate and shall be immediately voted upon.
 - i. Before a motion is voted upon, it should be repeated aloud.
 - j. The president, by virtue of membership on the board, is expected to vote on each issue voted on by the board.
 - k. If a special majority is required to pass a particular motion, the president should inform the members of that requirement prior to the vote being taken.
6. Public comment is welcome in board meetings. Members of the public who wish to address the Board in a board meeting shall sign up prior to the meeting with the communications department. Board members generally take public comments under advisement but do not respond in an open board meeting. Individuals making public comments in board meeting must indicate their name and address for the record (excluding minors), and depending on the number of individuals signed up for public comment, public comments shall be limited to three minutes or less. The board will generally limit the number of general public comments to

three per meeting. The Board may also allow for public comments on specific agenda items, and the number of patrons allowed to speak on specific agenda items will be left to the discretion of the board president. During public hearings, as many members of the public who wish to speak will be given the opportunity to sign up and address the Board, but the same requirements for signing up, identifying oneself, and time limits will apply.

