

## **BUILDING A STRONG SCHOOL BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT TEAM**

Excellence in performance among the School Board, Superintendent, and other employees of the District is the best way to achieve our common goal: **A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR EACH STUDENT IN OUR DISTRICT.** Every individual employed by the District has a significant part to play. To be most effective, the efforts of all must be integrated. A special obligation of the Board Members and Superintendent is to set an example of leadership which encourages and requires such integration.

The public expects the best educational expertise, communication, planning, and decision-making to support decisions which are ultimately tested against the facts that schools are for students and schools belong to people of this District. The Board/ Superintendent team will live up to high standards of behavior and performance which we believe will benefit all people in the District, especially students in our schools.

We agree that adherence to the following set of principles will ensure effective guidance and operation of this Board/Superintendent team and will accentuate a positive, open and productive environment for all.

### **LIST OF OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

#### ***PURPOSE***

1. Educational Advocate
2. Team Mission/Focus
3. Human Resource Development

#### **HUMAN INTERACTION**

4. Positive Relationships
5. Open Communication
6. Handling of Public Concern
7. Interactiveness Within the Team

#### **ACHIEVING RESULTS**

8. Meeting Agenda
9. Team Decision-Making
10. Planning, Goal-setting, and Accountability

## **PURPOSE**

### **Operating Principle #1: Educational Advocate**

Statement:

- We believe that the single most important responsibility of the citizens of this District is to ensure the development of our youth.
- Each team member will seek out and communicate support for the progress being made in education in this District.
- Team members pledge high levels of support for programs within the District which are aimed at increasing the learning opportunities of all of our students.

### **Operating Principle #2: Team Mission and Focus**

We will seek and find ways to meet the learning needs of people in this District.

- Each team member has the freedom and opportunity to express their own beliefs about quality education and has the responsibility to share such beliefs within the team.
- The Board and Administrative group will work as a team to find the best ways to meet the needs of the learners in the schools of our District.
- Each team assumes responsibility for doing what is in the best interest of all of the learners in the District's schools.

#### **A. Operating Principle #3: Human Resources Development**

Statement:

We are supportive of life-long learning for ourselves and other adults in the District.

- We believe excellence in student growth and development is best assured through the continuous personal and professional development of all employees in the District.
- We believe this team of professionals must provide leadership and an example that life-long learning of all people in our District is essential.
- We will set goals on an annual basis which will ensure our continued growth and development as team members.

## **HUMAN INTERACTION**

### **Operating Principle #4: Positive Relationships**

Statement:

We recognize that it is absolutely essential to remain positive in working together as a team.

- We will strive to see the good in others
- We will look for and recognize the positive contributions of each team member.
- We will seek ways to turn obstacles into opportunities.
  - We will maintain a sense of hope, optimism and humor in working together.
  - We will speak openly and honestly to each other.
  - We will give, and accept, constructive feedback amongst team members.
  - We will recognize that all feedback is given from a position of personal respect and is predicated on a deep concern for what is best for the success of the District.
  - We will strive to work in helping relationships with others and will avoid adversarial roles.

#### **Operating Principle #5: Open Communication**

- Effective communication requires high levels of trust.
- Board members should offer praise to District employees personally and publicly.
- Criticism of individuals in the District will not be communicated personally to them without consulting the Superintendent and will not be aired at meetings or the community at-large.
- Information permitted by statute to be discussed in executive session, as well as confidential information shared between team members, will remain confidential. Sharing of such information with unauthorized persons at any time is totally unacceptable. If such sharing does occur, board leadership will propose corrective action to the board as a whole.
- If the Superintendent needs to communicate concerns about another team member, the first step should be to discuss the matter with the person involved. If a resolution is not reached at this time, a mutual plan of action will be developed to ensure a resolution of the issue.

#### **Operating Principle #6: Handling of Public Concerns**

Statement:

We will handle public concerns in tactful, orderly and effective ways. We shall:

- Accept and listen to the individual's concern
- Explain that the Board and Administrative team have established a process for handling concerns.
- Ask if he or she has discussed the issue with the person immediately responsible.
- Express appreciation to the individual for presenting the concern.

- Affirm the desire to reach a satisfactory solution.
- Encourage the person to follow the established process.
- Assure the person that the Superintendent will be informed of the complaint.
- Ask the person to report back on the progress or resolution of the concern, if appropriate.

In addition, each Board member commits to:

- Allowing only the Board chair to answer e-mails and issue public communications in order to ensure a consistent message in support of the District.
- Going directly to the Superintendent with multiple or consistent concerns about any employee's performance.

### **Operating Principle #7: Interactiveness Within the Team**

Statement:

We are responsible for quality interaction with each other as team members.

- Each person is accountable to the team for his or her own actions.
- Each team member will remain receptive to divergent views of other members.
- Should concerns about another team member arise, the person with the concern will share privately his or her views with the individual on a one-on-one basis.
- If a resolution of the concern is not reached between the team members, a third person on the team will be mutually identified to assist in the resolution of the concern.
- Team members have a right and a responsibility to let one another know when a topic is being overly or inappropriately discussed.
- Team members will commit themselves to utilizing meeting time to the optimum advantage of moving the District toward achievement of its Vision.

## **ACHIEVING RESULTS**

### **Operating Principle #8: Meeting Agenda**

Statement:

We choose to conduct our meetings in an open and orderly fashion.

- Board meeting agendas are developed cooperatively between the Board Chair, Vice-chair, and the Superintendent and will give precedence and priority to items related to the strategic plan and the District's Vision and Mission.
- Board meeting agendas are open and publicized to encourage meaningful dialogue.
- Surprises at decision-making meetings from board members are unwelcome and counter-productive.

- Any prepared agenda changes will be mutually determined by the Board Chair, Vice-chair, and the Superintendent before the meeting. All board members shall have an opportunity to accept or reject those changes. There is a 7:00 p.m. Tuesday deadline for new items to be considered for any traditional Thursday meeting.
- Information upon which decisions are to be made is publicized prior to decision-making meetings in adequate time for free discussion.
- Any member of the public wishing to have an agenda item considered by the Board should work with the Superintendent to go through development and discussion process.

### **Operating Principle #9: Team Decision-making**

Statement:

We have defined an orderly and effective process of decision-making. Prior to the Board making decisions, the administration will:

- Present all team members with the pertinent facts concerning the situation. Receive input from persons to be affected by the decision.
- Analyze and organize collected data.
- Develop multiple solutions and show cost/return benefit, including at least one minimum cost
- Present those solutions to the Board with a recommendation.
- Provide a plan to implement the decision which contains an on-going monitoring system
- Make a recommendation for the Board to consider.

The Board will then:

- Discuss the recommendation and reflect on its ability to support the mission and vision of the District.
- Ask for further information if necessary.
- Ensure that those affected by the decision have been communicated with and have been heard from.
- Act on the recommendation and support the decision and its effective implementation, regardless of individual vote on the issue.

After a decision is made, the Administration will:

- Communicate the decision to those affected.
- Contact people with concerns about the way in which the issue is resolved so as to keep communications open.
- Report progress and challenges of decision implementation to the Board.

### **Operating Principle #10: Planning, Goal-setting and Accountability**

Statement:

We desire to ensure accountability through a methodological and orderly process.

- The team is committed to a comprehensive planning process leading to mutually acceptable goals and their accountability.
- The plan shall prescribe responsibilities for each individual along with an assessment of progress in measurable terms at regular intervals.
- The team will be highly supportive of a comprehensive planning process within the District which will form the basis for specific actions and results within the District.

Together, the Board and the Superintendent will:

- Set goals for the actions and achievements of Board members, the District and the Superintendent.
- Perform self-evaluations to determine process and effectiveness in reaching District goals.
- Be advocates for each team member's individual area of strength and experience, but will hold the administration, through the Superintendent, accountable for achieving the District's goals and progress towards the Vision and Mission.