



Board Member Handbook 2021-2022

DeKalb Board of Education

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Unity of Purpose, Roles & Responsibilities, Norms, Agreements

This handbook reflects the governance team's work on the creation of a framework for effective board governance. This involves ongoing discussions about the unity of purpose, roles, commitment to norms and agreement on protocols and formal structures that will enable the governance team to perform its responsibilities in a way that best benefits the students of DeKalb County. The Board Member Handbook outlines the practices that build and sustain a positive Board/Superintendent relationship and define a culture of quality, equity, and respect.

The Board Member Handbook was approved by the DeKalb Board of Education on

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Although the DeKalb Board of Education (DBOE) Handbook reflects the policies and procedures of the DeKalb Board of Education and Georgia Statutes, the DeKalb County School District received permission from the Austin Independent School District (AISD) to use the AISD Board of Trustees-Board Member Handbook as the prototype for the DBOE Handbook.

Therefore, the DeKalb Board of Education and the DeKalb County School District acknowledges the Austin Independent School District in Austin, Texas for its work to write and produce the AISD Board of Trustees- Board Member Handbook. The DeKalb County School District further acknowledges the Texas School Boards Association for the support and assistance provided to AISD during the development and writing of the AISD Board of Trustees-Board Member Handbook. Finally, the DeKalb County Board of Education thanks AISD for granting written permission to the DBOE to use in whole or in part, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Board of Trustees-Board Members Handbook in the development and production of the DeKalb County Board of Education Handbook.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface: The Purpose of the Handbook	5 Section
One: Board Governance	6
Corporate Nature of the Board of Education	6
Governing Principles	7
Mechanisms of Governance	8
Board Organization and Structure of Work	10
Chair and Vice-Chair Roles	10
Board Secretary Role	10
Committees	11
Calendars	11
Board Self-Evaluation	12
Section Two: Board Oversight	13
Duties of the School Board and the Superintendent	13
Duties of the Board	13
Duties of the Superintendent	14
Mechanisms for Oversight and Management	14
The Board’s Relationship with the Superintendent and Staff	
Hiring of Personnel	15
Direction to the Superintendent	15
Direction to Staff	16
Board-Superintendent Covenants	17
Monitoring Superintendent Performance	17
Steps of the Evaluation Process	18
Timeline of the Evaluation Process	20
Summative Evaluation Process	21
How the Performance Rubric Works	22
Section Three: Board Meetings	23
Commitment to Open Government	23
Meeting Schedule and Structure	23
Television Coverage	23
Types of Board Meetings	24
Work Sessions	24
Business Meetings	24
Community Input Meetings	24
Special Board Meetings	25
Emergency Meetings	25
Committee Meetings	25
Executive Sessions	25
Public Hearings	25
Closed Sessions (Often Referred to as Executive Sessions)	26
Board Meeting and Executive Session Agendas	26
Agenda Preparation and Posting	27
Agenda Structure	28
Meeting Materials Delivery	28
Questions and Concerns Regarding Agenda Items	28
Board Meeting Protocols	

Operating Rules	29
Special Provisions on Motions	29
Citizen Conduct during Meetings	29
Citizen Communications at the Board Meeting	30
Procedures for Addressing the Board	30
Board Response during Community Input	31
Public Hearings	31
Procedures for Public Hearings	31
Closed (Executive) Sessions	31
Grievances and Complaints	32
Individual Board Member Participation in Grievance Hearings	32
Board Member Conduct during Meetings	33
Section Four: Individual Board Member Protocols/Board Norms	34
Board Norms	34
Code of Conduct	38
Conflicts of Interest	39
Board Member Communications	40
Communications w/Other BM Outside of a Post Meeting	40
Communications with the Public and Patrons	41
Communications Received by the District	41
Citizen/Employee Complaints to an Individual Board Member	42
Whistleblower Protection	42
Expressions of Concern other than Complaint	43
Use of Social Media	43
Board Member Communications with the Media	43
Board Member Communications with Prospective Vendors	44
Involvement in Elections	44
Prohibition on use of Public Funds in Advocacy Activity	44
Participation in Board Elections	44
Request for Records, Information, or Reports	45
Visit to School Campuses	45
Volunteering	46
Access to District Technology	46
Access to Legal Counsel	47
Legal Counsel to the Board	46
Continuing Education Requirements	47
Board Members in the First Year of Service	47
Experienced Board Members	48
Travel Reimbursement	49
Process for Addressing Board Member Violations	49
Board Commitment	50
Appendices	50
Board Approved Vision, Mission, Goals (Strategic Plan)	
Strategic Plan Dashboard Measures	
Board Policies	
Open Meetings Act	
Annual Board Training Log - 2020-2021	
Annual Board Training Plan – 2020-2021	
Preface: The Purpose of this Handbook	

Governance Mission Statement

The DeKalb Board of Education should be a united board that reflects collective perspectives/visions, priorities, and approaches to improve student performance and fiscal management. Further, to synchronize the collective individual board members' knowledge and skills into an effective and efficient decision making apparatus.

Under Georgia statute, the Board of Education, as a governing body has the exclusive power and duty to govern and oversee the management of the public schools of the district. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-50) This handbook describes the general means and manner through which the DeKalb County Board of Education will carry out this statutory charge.

In order for the Board to operate as a governing body, individual Board members should be familiar with and respect the standards expressed here. The Board recognizes that in some instances the Board is agreeing to discuss limits beyond those strictly required by law or policy. The handbook itself is not intended to carry the force of law or policy. The expressions here are intended to be dynamic, affirmative expressions of the understandings of the Board about how to operate as a governing body. The handbook does not supersede law or duly adopted Board Policy, including policies adopted or amended before or after the adoption or amendment of the handbook.

The Board will review the contents of the handbook annually as part of the Board self-evaluation. The Board may also review the handbook periodically, as when a new member joins the Board. The Designee from the Superintendent's staff/Executive Assistant to the Board (to be named at the appropriate time) will maintain the handbook and will recommend updates, if a legal or policy change necessitates a change to the handbook.

SECTION ONE: BOARD GOVERNANCE

Corporate Nature of the Board

Being elected to a local school board is often equated with directly representing a voting constituency; however, being on a school board is not a purely representative function. Once elected, a Board member serves as a trustee, on a body corporate. The Board of Education, as a corporate body, has been entrusted with the assets and resources of the public schools of the district and is expected to employ them for the general educational good of the community.

Unlike other public offices, such as city council member, state legislator, or county commissioner, the constituencies of a school board member, as a trustee of public education, are the student population and the taxpayers of DeKalb County, not necessarily a group of voters. This principle is often hard for patrons to understand. However, it is essential for the effective functioning of the Board that its members recognize and respect their status as trustees rather than simply as representatives and that they understand their status as members of a corporate body.

This status as a corporate Board of Education has certain implications for Board members in practice. Most notably, as a general matter, only the Board, sitting as a corporate body in a legally called meeting, has authority to act on behalf of the district. Individual members, unless expressly authorized by the Board, have no authority to act for the Board.

See Policies: AB – School Board Legal Status, ABA – Board Authority, and ABC – Board Member Legal Status

The DCSD Board and its members will adhere to the spirit of its corporate nature in the governance and oversight of management of the District. Ideally, the Board will seek to make decisions and take action for the District as a matter of consensus. However, when consensus is not obtained, decisions and actions of the Board are represented by the majority vote of the members. Members recognize that decisions once made are the action of the Board as a whole, not solely of the majority. Members voting in the minority, although free to express dissent from the decision, will respect the decision of the Board and promote its successful implementation.

Governing Principles

The Board recognizes the value of articulating basic principles that will guide its deliberations and actions as it performs its work of governing the District. The principles that will guide the Board in its work are as follows.

Board governance will be guided by the Board Principles which include:

See Policy: BAB – School Board Governance

District Leadership: The Board members, together with the Superintendent and Senior Staff, set the strategic direction, review financial objectives, and establish a high ethical tone for management and leadership.

Active Board: The Board members are well informed and vigorous in their oversight of management.

Culture and Values: The Board dedicates itself to assuring a culture of collaboration, transparency, and continuous learning. The Board values open communication and input and prioritizes the best interests of the classroom as most important.

Compliance with Laws and Ethics: The Board members adopt and oversee enforcement of the District’s Code of Conduct and Code of Civility that set forth the legal and ethical standards for the conduct of the District’s’ operation.

Continuous Improvement: The Board members remain abreast of new developments in governance best practices, and they suggest new procedures and practices, as they deem appropriate, to be implemented by the Superintendent and staff.

Board action will be guided by a commitment to the goals embodied in the Strategic Plan. These goals are:

- Goal Area I: Student Success with Equity and Access
- Goal Area II: Stakeholder Engagement
- Goal Area III: Staff Efficacy and Excellence
- Goal Area IV: Internal and External Communication
- Goal Area V: Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency

See Board approved: Vision, Mission, and Goals (Strategic Plan) on 12-3-2013.

The Board is committed to continuous improvement in the District and continuous improvement in its capacity to govern effectively. To promote continuous improvement in the District, the Board will be guided by the following:

- The Board will advocate on behalf of students, the District, and public education within the community, region, state, and nation.
- The Board will support the Superintendent and administration in the realization of the Vision and Goals and in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and other District plans and will avoid involvement in administrative detail.
- The Board will connect the District with the entire community around the Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan by promoting and engaging constructive input from students, staff, parents, and the community.
- The Board will ensure Superintendent excellence through monitoring progress on the Goals, Strategic Plan, Board Annual Priorities, and District dashboard measures at the prescribed times.

To promote continuous improvement in the Board as a governing body, the Board will be guided by the following:

- The Board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The Board, not the Superintendent or staff, will be responsible for excellence in governing. The Board will use the expertise of individual Board members to enhance the performance of the Board as a body but will not substitute individual judgments and opinions for the Board's collective values.
- The Board will hold itself accountable for governing with excellence. This self-discipline will apply to attendance, beginning meetings on time, coming to meetings fully prepared, and respect for and adherence to the distinction between the role of the Board and the role of the Superintendent.
- The Board will direct and inspire the District through the careful establishment and monitoring of written policies reflecting the Board's values, perspectives, and aspirations. The Board's major policy focus will be on the intended long-term benefits for students, not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those benefits.
- Board development will include orientation of candidates for the Board and new members of the Board in the Board's governance process, as well as annual discussion of Board functioning for continuous improvement. The Board will also focus its annual team-building session on improving Board effectiveness.

Mechanisms of Governance

Georgia statute requires the Board to adopt a vision and comprehensive goals for the District and the Superintendent (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-59).

The DSCD Board governs through a variety of vehicles. Foremost among these are:

- The Mission
- The Vision
- The Goals
- The Strategic Plan
- Board Annual Priorities
- Board Policy
- The District Budget

These documents provide the framework for Board decision making and administrative action. The Board will be guided by these documents in consideration of all items that come before the Board and will, as a general matter, act in a manner consistent with the framework provided by them.

The Mission describes the fundamental purpose of the District. The Board keeps the Mission in mind in all actions to ensure that the work of the Board is both consistent with the Mission and promotes District success in accomplishing its Mission.

The Vision represents the aspirations of the Board for the District. The Board will attempt to act within the spirit of the Vision and be guided by the Vision in taking action that affects the future of the District. Goals and the Strategic Plan are driven by the Vision and are the chief vehicles for bringing the Vision to reality.

Goals represent the priority issues for the Board in realizing the Vision. They serve as a touchstone for Board actions, but more importantly, they provide direction to the administration and staff by articulating priorities and expectations. As such, they are also a primary basis on which District and administrative success are measured.

Goals also provide a statement of the Board's priorities to the community, which has entrusted them to act in their behalf.

The Strategic Plan serves as the implementation document for the achievement of Goals, the realization of the Vision, and the accomplishment of the Mission. Board adoption of the Strategic Plan represents the Board's commitment to support the strategies and actions outlined in the plan. The plan serves as a guideline in ongoing Board decision making regarding basic programs and services in the District.

See Policy CA – Goals and Objectives

Board Annual Priorities represent the Board's special concerns for the year, within the context of the Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan. They are the matters on which the Board believes that special time, effort, and resources should be expended during the year to ensure progress toward the Vision. They provide direction for the administration in planning and budgeting resources for the year and are one of the bases on which District and administrative success are measured.

Board Policy is the fundamental set of directions the Board had adopted to govern the operation of the District in accomplishing the Mission and realizing the Vision. In adopting policy, the Board is providing a framework within which the administration and its staff, the District's students and parents, the community, and the Board itself are expected to act.

More specifically, Board Policy sets the parameters within which the Board authorizes the Superintendent to take action for the District. As a general matter, the Board will uphold Superintendent actions taken in accord with Board Policy. Concerns about Superintendent actions taken within the framework of Board Policy should be handled through appropriate channels, such as a reconsideration of policy.

See Policy BDC – Policy Adoption and BDF – Board Review of Administrative Regulations

The District Budget, like Board Policy, provides a framework within which the administration will operate in accomplishing the Mission and realizing the Vision. The budget establishes the fiscal parameters within which the Superintendent may act.

See Policy ABB – Board Powers and Duties and DC – Annual Operating Budget

The DCSD Board of Education approved the Strategic Plan Vision, Mission, and Goals on December 3, 2013.

For a statement of the District’s vision, mission and goals see

<http://www.dekalb.k12.ga.us/strategic-plan/>.

Board Organization and Structure of Work

Effective functioning of a corporate Board depends in large measure on clearly defined structures for how the Board carries out its work. The Board has developed the following structures for organizing its work to assist in promoting effectiveness and efficiency.

Officers and Roles

Officers of the Board consist of a Board Chair and Vice-Chair. The Board Officers work as a team in carrying out the following duties.

See Policies BBA – Board Officers and BAB – School Board Governance

Board Chair

1. Serve as the initial spokesman and first in line of authority in all board actions;
2. Consult with and advise the Superintendent in all matters of policy from the Board;
3. Ensure that all members of the Board are equally informed regarding the pertinent issues of the District;
4. Preside at all meetings;
5. Expedite the action on agenda at all meetings of the Board;
6. Serve as the official representative of the Board unless another member is designated by the Board to do so;
7. Decide questions of order in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised;
8. Appoint all committees unless otherwise directed by the Board in accordance with Board Policy BBC – Board Committees;
9. Sign the minutes and other official documents that require the signature of the Chair;
10. Call special meetings of the Board whenever conditions set out for special meetings have been met; and
11. Have the right, as other members of the Board have, to make motion, vote, second motion, and fully participate in discussion.

Vice Chair

1. The Vice Chair shall assist the Chair and shall perform the duties and obligations of the Chair when the Chair is absent or incapacitated. The Vice Chair shall have such other powers and duties as the Board may from time to time determine.
2. In the absence of both the Chair and the Vice Chair at a meeting, the attending members shall elect one of their members to preside.

The Superintendent shall be the Secretary of the Board and perform all duties established by Georgia law or delegated by the Board.

Board Secretary

The Board Secretary is an employee of the District and is not a member of the Board. The Board Secretary shall take the official minutes of all Board meetings and public hearings and will provide minutes to the Superintendent for review and approval in a timely manner. In addition, the Board Secretary provides clerical and organizational support to Board members by:

- Ensuring that accurate records of all Board meetings
- Ensuring that Board meeting notices are duly posted
- Executing documents as directed by the Board
- Performing other duties as directed by the Board
- Forwarding Board written correspondence and e-mail
- Maintaining the Board calendar of events
- Contacting Board members concerning possible meeting dates and time
- Assisting the Board with constituent contacts as needed
- Making travel arrangements and reservations for Board trainings or conferences
- Maintaining Board files
- Assisting with Board purchases
- Tracking completion of Board member training credits
- Providing assistance to the Superintendent's office in assembling weekly Board deliveries to Board members and other duties as assigned by the Superintendent or a designee

Committees

Committees appointed by the Board are used to support the work of the Board. Committees will respect any and all delegation of authority from the Board to the Superintendent.

Committee Types: The Board may appoint two types of committees:

1. **Committees of the Board** are special "ad hoc" committees commissioned for a particular reason within a specific time frame for an identified function to include Board members and non-Board members. See Policy BBC – Board Committees
2. Advisory committees may be appointed by the Board, and include members other than Board members.
See Policy BBF – Advisory Committees

Additional policies that reference committees include:

See Policies: BAB – School Board Governance and BC – Board Meetings

Calendars

The Board will maintain two calendars that structure the Board's work and ensure ongoing review and support of the Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan.

Annual Agenda Planning Calendar: To ensure its commitment to continuous improvement in District and Board governance, the Board will approve and follow an annual agenda planning calendar. The calendar will list as agenda items in the appropriate months any annual tasks tied directly to the Board's work in pursuit of the Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan.

See Policies: BC – Board Meetings and BAB – School Governance

Included among the items to be incorporated in the calendar are the following:

- Annually: Formalize a plan to review and reaffirmation or approval of the Vision, Goals, Strategic Plan, and Board Annual Priorities; finalization of the Superintendent’s evaluation for the past year; and approval of performance objectives for the Superintendent in alignment with the Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan for the upcoming year.
- Twice each year: Discussions by the Board about means to improve its own performance.
- Twice each year: Board retreats to focus on (i) Board development (e.g. presentations by futurists, demographers, staff, etc.); (ii) matters aligned to the Vision, Goals, Strategic Plan, and Board Annual Priorities; and (iii) Board governance and/or the Board/Superintendent relationship.
- Annually: Discussions on governance matters, including orientation of new Board members in the Board’s governance process.

The annual agenda planning calendar will also include:

- all monitoring activities by the Board related to the Goals, Strategic Plan, Baseline Expectations of the Superintendent, and dashboard measures developed in support of the Strategic Plan;
- regularly scheduled matters related to the development, approval, and monitoring of the District Budget;
- matters related to SPLOST or facility work and contracts;
- actions related to policies, personnel, and evaluation of the Superintendent;
- reviews by major department heads; and
- other items pertaining to major business of the Board

The Board will take action to update the annual agenda planning calendar each year.

Board Activities Calendar: The Board Secretary will maintain on a continuing basis a comprehensive weekly Board calendar of events and activities (the “Weekly Board Activities Calendar”), including events and activities that link the Board and District to its students and families, its employees, and the community-at-large. This information is used by organizers of events to plan for the attendance of a Board member and by the Board Secretary to ensure proper postings are made and provide notifications to event planners as appropriate.

Board Self-Evaluation

The Board will conduct an annual self-evaluation at its spring retreat or at a time between its spring retreat and its final annual evaluation of Superintendent performance. The evaluation will consist of a review of the principles and protocols incorporated in this handbook and a review of Board actions over the previous year for consistency with the principles and protocols.

The outcome of the self-evaluation should be a reaffirmation of the principles and protocols or amendment of them.

See Policies: BC – Board Meetings and BAB – School Governance

SECTION TWO: BOARD OVERSIGHT

As noted in the Preface, under Georgia statute, the DeKalb County Board of Education, as a governing body has the exclusive power and duty to govern and oversee the management of the public schools of the district (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-59).

Although the primary mechanisms available to a Board for governance of a district—development of vision and goals and the adoption of policy and a budget—are fairly clear in statute, the means and manner by which the Board carries out its responsibility to oversee district management are less clearly defined. The lack of definition can be a source of confusion among Board members

and between the Board and the Superintendent about their respective roles. This confusion can cause unnecessary inefficiencies in the functioning of the district.

To promote clarity in how the Board, as a corporate body, oversees management and avoids unnecessary inefficiencies in operations, the Board adheres to the definition of roles, the mechanisms for oversight, and the principles and protocols outlined in this section of the handbook.

Duties of the School Board and the Superintendent

Board Policy delineates specific duties to the Board and to the Superintendent in their respective capacities as the governing and overseeing body, on the one hand, and as the chief executive officer of the District, on the other. The Board respects and adheres to this policy distinction in roles.

Duties of the Board

The DeKalb County Board of Education shall faithfully execute all powers and duties assigned to it by the Constitution and laws of Georgia. The Board's powers and duties include the following:

See Policy ABB – Board Powers and Duties

1. Enact policies for the efficient and effective governance of the District.
2. Select, hire, and evaluate the Superintendent.
3. Approve an annual budget.
4. Review and approve financial reports and review audits as requested.
5. Set the Local educational millage rate as necessary for the operation of the District and its schools.
6. With the input of the Superintendent and staff, establish policies to strengthen the academic achievement of all students in the District.
7. Working with the Superintendent and staff, periodically evaluate the District's strengths and weaknesses and develop goals for continuous improvement.
8. Periodically conduct a self-assessment of the Board's governance and performance.
9. Work with the Superintendent to ensure that all employment decisions are based on individual merit, without regard to family, political, or other connections.
10. Enact policies for progressive discipline in student matters, resorting to suspension and expulsion of students only as necessary to ensure safety in the schools.
11. Work with the Superintendent to ensure that adequate facilities are available to educate all students in the District.

See Policy: BAB – School Board Governance

Duties of the Superintendent

The Superintendent's duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Assuming administrative responsibility and leadership for the organization of education programs, services, facilities, and staff appraisal.
- Assuming administrative authority and responsibility for the assignment, supervision, and evaluation of all personnel of the district other than the Superintendent.
- Overseeing compliance with facilities standards.

- Initiating the termination or suspension of an employee or the nonrenewal of an employee's contract.
- Managing the day-to-day operations of the district, including implementing and monitoring plans, procedures, programs, and systems to achieve clearly defined and desired results in major areas of district operations.
- Administering and preparing the budget.
- Providing leadership for the attainment and, if necessary, improvement of student performance in the district.
- Ensuring adoption of the student code of conduct and other student disciplinary rules and procedures as necessary.
- Recommending policies to be adopted by the Board and implementing the adopted policies.
- Developing administrative regulations, as needed.
- Organizing the district's central administration and consulting with district-level committees.
- Submitting reports as required by state or federal law, rule, or regulation.
- Providing joint leadership with the Board to ensure the team's responsibilities are carried out.
- Carrying out any other contractual duties assigned to the Superintendent by the Board.

See Policy: ABD – School Superintendent Legal Status

Mechanisms for Oversight of Management

In the context of duties of the Board and Superintendent, respectively, the Board's duty, as a body corporate, to oversee the management of the District can be understood in the following way:

- The Board's duty is to establish expectations for the District and its administration through the Vision, Goals, Strategic Plan, Board Annual Priorities, and Board Policy. The Board also defines the resources, through its budget, and the parameters, through Board Policy and the Basic Expectations for Superintendent Performance, within which the District will operate.
- The Superintendent's duty, as the chief executive officer of the District, is to develop and implement plans, programs, systems, and procedures to accomplish the expectations within the parameters established by Board Policy and the District Budget; monitor the success of the plans, programs, systems, and procedures in meeting expectations; and to adjust them, as needed, based on the results achieved.
- The Board's duty is to review and assess the results achieved by the Superintendent in line with Board expectations, the District Budget, and Board Policy.

See Policies: ABB – Board Powers and Duties, ABA – Board Authority, BAB – School Board Governance, ABD – School Superintendent Legal Status, and CEI – Superintendent Evaluation
 In short, the Board focuses on the desired results of District action; the Superintendent focuses on the means of achieving the results, within Board Policy. The Board does not, as a general matter, assess the plans, programs, systems, or procedures developed by the Superintendent themselves, except through approval of the budget and in ensuring consistency with Board Policy. The Board, rather, assesses the results of the plans.

Accordingly, the Board's primary mechanisms for overseeing the management of the District shall be:

- reports related to progress on Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan
- dashboard metrics in the Strategic Plan

- baseline expectations for Superintendent Performance
- other formal directives provided to the Superintendent by the Board as a whole

**The Board’s Relationship with the Superintendent and Staff
Hiring of Personnel**

Board Policy specifies that the Board hires and evaluates the Superintendent. The Superintendent has sole authority to make recommendations to the Board regarding the selection of all other contractual personnel.

The Superintendent shall have the authority to employ personnel in accordance with the policies of the Board and shall assign personnel to positions authorized by the Board.

The Board of Education employs personnel only on the recommendation of the Superintendent.

The Board of Education members, collectively and individually, shall remain neutral and not become involved in the review of applications for vacant positions and in the screening process, except in the recruitment and selection of the Superintendent. The Board of Education shall refrain from applying pressure on the Superintendent to employ persons on the basis of any criteria other than professional or occupational qualifications.

The Superintendent shall have authority to employ and assign personnel for positions authorized by the Board, provided that assignments at the level of executive director and above are approved by the Board.

See Policies: GBD – Professional Personnel Hiring, CGB – Administrative Personnel Positions CGD – Administrative Personnel Hiring, GCB – Classified Personnel Positions, ABB – Board Powers and Duties, and ABD – School Superintendent Legal Status

Direction to the Superintendent

The Board instructs the Superintendent through the Vision, Goals, Strategic Plan, Board Annual Priorities, written policies, and District Budget. These documents prescribe the organizational outcomes to be achieved and describe the organizational outcomes and actions to be avoided. The Board supports a reasonable interpretation of those policies by the Superintendent. The Superintendent is authorized to make all decisions, establish all regulations and practices, and develop all activities the Superintendent deems appropriate to achieve the Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan, within the parameters established by Board Policy and the District Budget.

See Policy: ABD – School Superintendent Legal Status

Only decisions of the full Board acting as an entity are binding on the Superintendent.

Accordingly:

- Decisions or instructions of individual Board members, Board Officers, and committees are not binding on the Superintendent.
- If Board members or committees request information or assistance without Board authorization, the Superintendent may redirect the request to the full Board for authorization if, in the Superintendent’s opinion, the request requires a material amount of staff time or resources or is disruptive or unreasonable. Board members, however, will not be refused information that the District would be obligated to provide to a member of the public.

See Policies: BBI – Board Staff Communications and BAB – School Board Governance

Board/Superintendent Communication: Timely and effective communication between a

Board and Superintendent is a crucial factor in providing effective leadership in a school district. Accordingly, the Board and Superintendent have developed the following practices to assist in effective communications:

- With respect to providing information and counsel to the Board, the Superintendent will provide the Board with information the Board believes is sufficient to allow the Board to make highly informed decisions. The Superintendent shall be responsible for complying with Board directives.
- The Superintendent will communicate information in a timely fashion to all Board members through Board meetings and closed sessions, Board deliveries, voicemail messages, telephone calls, and one-on-one meetings.
- Board members will keep the Superintendent informed through telephone calls, voicemails, e-mails, personal visits, dialogue meetings, and requests for closed session or open meeting discussions.
- The Board's official connection to the operational organization is the Superintendent; however, to facilitate accurate, timely, and quality communication, the Superintendent may designate other senior staff members as Board contacts. In addition, administrators who are designated as "staff support" for officially appointed Board committees may serve as direct contacts for purposes of supporting the work of the committees.

Direction to Staff

The Superintendent is the Board's official link to the operational organization. It is crucial to the effectiveness of the District, given the corporate nature of the Board and the size of the organization, that the Board honor the unique link to the organization through the Superintendent. In addition, all authority over and accountability of the staff is considered to be the responsibility of the Superintendent.

Out of respect for the role of the Superintendent as chief executive officer of the District and for the smooth and effective functioning of the organization:

- The Board will not give direction to persons who report directly or indirectly to the Superintendent.
- The Board will not evaluate any staff member other than the Superintendent, except upon the request of the Superintendent.
- Except as required by law or as requested by the Superintendent, the Board will not participate in decisions or actions involving the hiring, evaluating, disciplining, or dismissal of any employee other than the Superintendent.

See Policy: ABD – School Superintendent Legal Status, BBI – Board Staff Communications, and BAB – School Board Governance

Board-Superintendent Covenants

The creation of an effective relationship between a Board and Superintendent is an essential element in successful leadership for a district.

In order to build and maintain productive and effective relationships between the Board and the Superintendent, both the Board and the Superintendent seek to maintain a system of communication and interaction that builds upon mutual respect and trust that models all the way down to every child.

To further that aim, the Board and the Superintendent will:

1. Exercise honesty in all written and interpersonal interactions, seeking with great care to avoid misleading information.
2. Demonstrate respect for the opinions and comments of each other.
3. Focus on issues rather than on personalities.
4. Maintain focus on the Vision, Goals, Strategic Plan, and Board Annual Priorities.
5. Communicate with each other in a timely manner to avoid surprises.
6. Criticize privately, and praise publicly.
7. Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
8. Openly share concerns, information, knowledge, and desired outcomes.
9. Make every reasonable effort to protect the integrity and promote the positive image of the District, Board, Superintendent, staff, and each other.
10. Respond to requests and inquiries in a timely manner.
11. Give each other time to think through issues and, equally, the time to finish verbal statements and responses.
12. Share credit for successful District initiatives, actions, and awards, and avoid blame for the failure or ineffectiveness of legitimate District initiatives or actions.
13. Assume good intent on the part of other Board members and the Superintendent.
14. Work together to ensure a succession plan for the organization.

Monitoring Superintendent Performance

One of the Board's fundamental responsibilities in overseeing the management of the District is assessing the effectiveness of the Superintendent as educational leader and chief executive officer of the District. Because the Board consists of seven members but must function in its assessment, as always, as a corporate body, it is important that the Board have a clearly defined mechanism for assessing Superintendent performance that focuses on results rather than manner of performance.

Accordingly, the Board will view Superintendent performance as being identical to organizational performance. Superintendent job performance will be monitored systematically against the Superintendent's job expectations as measured by reasonable organizational progress on the Vision, Goals, Strategic Plan, Board Annual Priorities, and the dashboard metrics. In addition, the Board will consider reasonable performance of provisions in the Superintendent's contract.

See Policy: CEI – Superintendent Evaluation

The Board will use the following Superintendent Evaluation Process developed by the board consultant based on the requirements provided by the Board.

Steps of the Evaluation Process

The DCSD evaluation process mirrors the timeline of the fiscal year. Beginning in July, the Superintendent will develop goals for the upcoming academic year. By August, the Superintendent and the Board will reach consensus on the goals, and the Superintendent will begin implementing strategies to accomplish goals as agreed upon with the Board. In December, the Superintendent will conduct a self-evaluation to assess strengths and weaknesses in attaining the outlined goals. After the Superintendent conducts a self-evaluation, then he/she will communicate with the Board the scope and sequence of the evaluation process that includes other stakeholders. Between March and May, senior administration and principals will evaluate the Superintendent's performance, followed by the Board's evaluation of the Superintendent's performance. Data will be collected by an independent source from the senior administration and principals and will be analyzed and disaggregated separately, as will data from the Board. After each Board member evaluates the Superintendent, the entire Board will then come together and

develop a consensus rating for each goal and indicators for each goal. This will occur before the final evaluation meeting. During the final evaluation meeting, a consultant will present the results produced by stakeholder evaluations, and the Superintendent will have ten business days to respond to the Board's evaluation of him/her. This must occur before June 30.

Step 1: Superintendent's Goal-Setting (July-August)

Each school year, the Superintendent will inform the board that an evaluation of his or her performance should be conducted near the end of the fiscal year (June 30). The evaluation process begins with the Superintendent setting goals for the upcoming academic year. Once the Superintendent finalizes his/her goals for the year, they are shared with the Board. Once the Board and the Superintendent come to consensus on the goals, then action steps toward accomplishing goals and the evaluation process take place.

Step 2: Superintendent Self-Evaluation (December)

In preparation for discussions related to the evaluation, the Superintendent will assess his or her own performance at mid-year. The Superintendent's annual self-evaluation of progress toward meeting performance goals encourages reflection on his/her experiences. It also provides a structure to consider future goals and determine strategies for achieving goals. The self-evaluation process is also useful in promoting the Superintendent's professional development. Data from self-evaluations may not be objective enough to use in evaluating the Superintendent for summative purposes. However, self-evaluations at the middle of each year can reveal discrepancies in perceptions of performance between the Superintendent and the Board and may be very useful in generating dialogue to discuss discrepancies revealed.

Step 3: Meeting Between Superintendent and District School Board (February)

At this meeting, the Superintendent will provide members of the Board with a complete set of materials guiding the evaluation process and an explanation of the process, the timeline, and the rubric used to determine the Superintendent's level of performance. The Superintendent and members of the Board will agree on the conditions of the evaluation including its scope, timeline, goals, evidence, and documentation necessary to demonstrate proficiency or lack thereof. The Superintendent will also share with the Board the results of the self-assessment and his or her plans for each area to address during the year. Such areas may include items that need improvement as well as areas of strength that should be expanded and enhanced the following year. The Board will also approve the client survey to be completed by senior administration and principals during this meeting.

Step 4. Stakeholder Survey for Senior Administration and Principals (March-May)

Senior Administration and Principals will evaluate the Superintendent's performance based on the established goals for the year. Both senior administration and principals implement the Superintendent's goals, and they work hand-in-hand with teachers and students in the district. Data from these surveys will be analyzed and disaggregated by cluster and grade level. These data will provide feedback to the Superintendent and the Board on the perception of the Superintendent's performance throughout the district.

Step 5: District School Board Rating of Superintendent (May-June)

Members of the Board will independently rate the Superintendent's performance using the Rubric for Evaluating DCSD Superintendents. They will then meet to discuss their individual ratings and to agree upon a single rating for each of the goals and each indicator associated with the goal. The board should make every effort to achieve consensus on the Superintendent's ratings. This consensus rating will be shared with the Superintendent. Individual ratings may be shared, but that is not a requirement of the evaluation process.

Step 6: Final Evaluation Meeting (June)

The Superintendent and the Board will discuss the Superintendent's progress toward achieving goals established for the year and the level of performance on goals. This discussion will include analysis of data from the Superintendent's self-evaluation, stakeholder surveys completed by both the senior administration and principals, and the Board's summary evaluation of the Superintendent, all of which have been prepared in advance of the meeting. Should additional data or documents need to be brought into the discussion, the Board and Superintendent will agree on the information needed for the review and a timeline for providing it for the Board's consideration.

Figure 1. Evaluation Process



Timeline of the Evaluation Process

1. Superintendent's Goal Setting for Upcoming Academic Year—July - August
2. Superintendent's Self-Evaluation—December
3. Meeting Between Superintendent and Board to Discuss Scope and Sequence of Evaluation Process—February
4. Client Survey for Senior Administration and Principals—March – May
5. District School Board Rating of Superintendent—May-June
6. Final Evaluation Meeting—June (before June 30)

The table below outlines the responsibilities of the Board and the Superintendent during the entire evaluation process.

Table 1. Superintendent and Board Responsibilities

Superintendent Responsibilities	Board Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the DCSD Evaluation Process. • Prepare for Step 3, the meeting with the board to agree upon the guidelines for conducting the evaluation. This preparation will include bringing forth a completed self-evaluation, reviewing performance goals and determining which ones have been met and which are short of being completed, and identifying change initiatives underway. • Gather data, documents, and evidence to support performance in relation to the goals and progress toward attaining them. • Develop and implement strategies to improve personal performance or attain goals in areas individually or collaboratively identified. • Finalize end-of-year evaluation and develop goals for the upcoming academic year with the board as soon as student achievement data are received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in training to understand and implement the DCSD Evaluation Process. • Ensure that all steps of the evaluation process are conducted as described by the consultant. • Identify the Superintendent’s strengths and areas for improvement and make recommendations for improving performance. • Ensure that the Superintendent’s summary evaluation worksheet contains accurate information and accurately reflects the Superintendent’s performance. • Participate in the evaluation discussions and guide the Superintendent in establishing goals for the subsequent year.

Summative Evaluation Process

Assessment of the Superintendent’s overall performance occurs only at the summative evaluation stage, which comes at the end of the evaluation cycle. The ratings for each performance goal are based on multiple sources of data and are completed only after pertinent data from all sources are reviewed. The integration of data provides the evidence used to determine the performance ratings for the summative evaluation.

There are two major considerations in assessing job performance during summative evaluation: 1) the actual performance goals, and 2) how well they are being met. The goals and indicators provide a description of well-defined expectations.

Definitions of Ratings

The rating scale provides a description of four levels of how well the goals (i.e., duties) are completed on a continuum from “Exemplary” to “Unacceptable.” The use of the scale enables the Board to acknowledge effective performance (i.e., “Exemplary” and “Proficient”) and provides two levels of feedback for the Superintendent if expectations are not being met (i.e., “Developing/Needs Improvement” and “Unacceptable”).

The Superintendent’s performance will be rated using the following descriptors:

Exemplary: The Superintendent performing at this level maintains performance, accomplishments, and behaviors that consistently and considerably surpass the established performance standard, and does so in a manner that exemplifies the division's mission and goals. This rating is reserved for performance that is truly exemplary and is demonstrated with significant student academic progress.

Proficient: The Superintendent meets the performance standard in a manner that is consistent with the division's mission and goals and has a positive impact on student academic progress.

Developing/Needs Improvement: The Superintendent is starting to exhibit desirable traits related to the standard, but has not yet reached the full level of proficiency expected (i.e., developing) or the Superintendent's performance is lacking in a particular area (i.e., needs improvement). The Superintendent often performs less than required in the established performance standard or in a manner that is inconsistent with the division's mission and goals and results in below average student academic progress.

Unacceptable: The Superintendent consistently performs below the established performance standard or in a manner that is inconsistent with the school division's mission and goals and results in minimal student academic progress.

How the Performance Rubric Works (for the Board and the Superintendent)

The Board has two tools to guide their judgments for rating the Superintendent's performance for the summative evaluation: a) the goals and indicators and b) the performance rubric.

Sample Indicators

Indicators are used to identify performance of the major job goals.

Performance Rubric

The performance rubric is a behavioral summary scale that describes acceptable performance levels for each of goals agreed upon by the Board and the Superintendent. It states the measure of performance expected of the Superintendent and provides a general description of what a rating entails. The rating scale is applied for the summative evaluation. The performance rubrics guide Board members in assessing how well the Superintendent performed a goal. They are provided to increase reliability among Board members and to help the Superintendent to focus on ways to enhance his/her leadership practices. Please note: The rating of "Proficient" is the expected level of performance. A Superintendent who is new to the division or position may be considered "developing" in a standard. Additionally, the recommended performance rubrics presented here may be modified at the discretion of the school board.

SECTION THREE: BOARD MEETINGS

The Board conducts its business primarily through regularly called meetings and in special circumstances, called meetings. A critical element in ensuring effective meetings is clarity and consistency in meeting structure and procedures. Consistent structures and procedures help both the Board and the public know what to expect in meetings and how to have appropriate input.

In order to facilitate effective functioning of the Board in its meetings, the Board adheres to the principles and protocols in this section.

See Policies: BC – Board Meetings, BAB – School Board Governance

Commitment to Open Government

The Board is committed to the principles of open government as outlined in Georgia statute (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-59) regarding open meetings. The Board recognizes that since it has been elected by the public to conduct District business on the public's behalf, the public has a right to be present when the Board is conducting business. Accordingly, the Board will conduct business only in legally called meetings that have been posted in advance, in accordance with Georgia statute (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-59).

The principles of open government also dictate that the public be informed about what items the Board will discuss and take action on at its meetings, so that members of the public can decide if they wish to be present. Accordingly, the Board will discuss and take action at its meetings only on items that appear on the agenda for the meeting, posted in accordance with statute unless the Board agrees to add an item to the agenda for action, as necessary.

While the Board acknowledges and respects the right of the public to be present for its meetings, it also recognizes that meetings of the Board, while open to the public, are meetings of the Board and for the Board. They are not meetings of the public. Public participation in the meetings will be invited at appropriate times, including those specified below.

Meeting Schedule and Structure

All meetings of the Board of Education must be properly posted to give advance notice of each and every meeting and the topics to be discussed in accordance with Georgia law. All meetings of the Board of Education are open to the public, except for Closed Sessions, also called Executive Sessions, discussed in more detail below. The Board of Education holds official meetings every month. The Board's meetings, as described in more detail below, include Work Session, Business Meetings, Special Meetings, Community Input Meetings, and Committee of the Whole Board Meetings.

Television Coverage on Channel 24

All public portions of the Board's Regular meetings are televised on DCSD Cable Channel 24 and streamed live via the Internet. Special meetings (where action may be taken), Work Sessions (where no action is taken), Business meetings (where action is taken) and Public Hearings are also televised. Committee of the Whole Board Meetings are not televised. In the event that a Committee of the Whole Board meeting is combined with another televised meeting, the entire meeting is televised.

Types of Board Meetings

Work Sessions

There shall be a work session of the Board each month at a time and date determined annually by the Board and announced by advertisement in two consecutive issues of the official organ for legal announcements. Generally, work sessions shall be held on the first Monday of each month. The Board may modify this schedule as allowed by law.

Such meetings shall be in accordance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia, and these meetings shall be designed for the preparation of the consent agenda for the Business Meeting, to address other policy and legislative matters and for in-depth presentations on school system operations.

It is the intent that Work Sessions are not designed for formal vote, but if action is needed on an emergency or time-sensitive item, specific action may be taken.

See Policy: BC – Board Meetings

Business Meetings

There shall be a business meeting of the Board each month at a time and date determined annually by the Board and announced by advertisement in two consecutive issues of the official organ for legal announcements. Generally, Board Business Meetings shall be held on the first Monday of each month. The Board may modify this schedule as allowed by law.

Such meetings shall be in accordance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia, and at these meetings the Board shall transact business properly brought before it.

If the date of a meeting falls on a legal holiday in Georgia, such meetings may be held on the next succeeding business day. The first meeting held in January of each year shall include any required organizational matters including, but not limited to, the election of a chair and vice-chair, affirmation of compliance with the Board ethics and conflict of interest policies and other items as required by law or policy.

See Policy: BC – Board Meetings

Community Input Meetings

The DeKalb County Board of Education encourages the public to be involved in public education. To facilitate public input, the Board shall conduct a monthly Community Input Session in accordance with board policy. The Community Input Session is intended to allow speakers an opportunity to address issues before the Board or other subjects pertinent to the Board or the DeKalb County School District. Such meetings shall be held in accordance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia.

See Policy: BCBI – Public Participation in Board Meetings

Special Board Meetings

Special meetings of the Board for any purpose may be called by the Chair, by the Superintendent as Secretary Ex-Officio to the Board, or through the Chair at the request of a majority of members. Such meetings shall be in accordance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia. A Special Meeting is any meeting not regularly scheduled on the first Monday of the

month and include, but is not limited to, Student Appeals, Personnel Cases, Legal Matters, and Acquisition of Land.

See Policy: BC – Board Meetings

Emergency Meetings

An emergency meeting may be called when special or emergency circumstances occur and are so declared by the Board. A meeting may be held with less than 24-hours' notice upon giving such notice of the meeting and subjects expected to be considered at the meeting as is reasonable under the circumstances. Notice shall be given to the legal organ and to any other media representative who has made a written request to receive such notices within the previous calendar year. The reason for holding the meeting within 24 hours and the nature of the notice shall be recorded in the minutes.

Committee Meetings

Ad hoc Board committee meetings shall be held as set out in Board Policy BBC, Board Committees. Such meetings shall be in accordance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia.

Executive Sessions

In compliance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia, no closed meetings of the Board or any committee of the Board shall be devoted to the consideration, discussion or presentation of matters required by law to be presented, considered or discussed in open meetings. In the event that one or more persons in an executive session initiates a discussion that is not authorized by law, the Chair or presiding member shall immediately rule the discussion out of order and all present shall cease the questioned conversation. If one or more persons continue or attempt to continue the discussion after being ruled out of order, the presiding officer shall immediately adjourn the executive session.

See Policy: BC – Board Meetings

Public Hearings

The Board shall conduct public forums from time to time, especially when dealing with controversial issues or matters of deep community concern, to receive input from citizens on policy issues, the educational program, and school administration. Such forums shall be in accordance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia.

See Policy: BCBI – Public Participation in Board Meetings

Closed Sessions (Often referred to as Executive Sessions)

In compliance with the open meeting requirements of the State of Georgia O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3 et seq., no closed meetings of the Board or any committee of the Board shall be devoted to the consideration, discussion or presentation of matters required by law to be presented, considered or discussed in open meetings. In the event that one or more persons in an executive session initiates a discussion that is not authorized by law, the Chair or presiding member shall immediately rule the discussion out of order and all present shall cease the questioned

conversation. If one or more persons continue or attempt to continue the discussion after being ruled out of order, the presiding officer shall immediately adjourn the executive session.

Items that may be discussed in closed sessions include:

- Private consultation with an attorney, regarding pending or contemplated litigation, a settlement offer, or a matter in which the duty of the attorney to the Board under the Georgia Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Georgia clearly conflicts with the requirement for open meetings.
- Purchase, acquisition, disposal, appraisal, or lease of real property
- The appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of a public officer or employee or to hear a complaint or charge against an officer or employee, unless the employee who is the subject of the deliberation or hearing requests a public hearing. This provision does not apply when the Board discusses an independent contractor who is not a school employee, such as an engineering, architectural, or consultant firm or when the Board discusses a class or group of employees, not a particular employee.
- Deliberation of a case involving discipline of a public school student
- Deliberation regarding a public school student if personally identifiable information about the student will necessarily be revealed by the deliberation, unless the student's parent or guardian or a student over 18 years of age requests an open meeting in writing. Directory information, as defined by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), may be revealed in open session but only to the extent permitted by law.
- Deliberations necessitated by emergency conditions involving public safety or the preservation of property or public services

Board Meeting and Executive Session Agendas

The meeting agenda is the vehicle through which the Board informs the community of the items it will be discussing at the meeting so that members of the public can decide if they wish to be present for the meeting. As a consequence, and given the complexity of District business in an organization of the District's size, preparation of the agenda must be carefully planned, following regular protocols in its construction and posting. The Board adheres to the following with regard to its agendas.

Agenda Preparation and Posting

The Superintendent or designee, in collaboration with the Board Office, prepares the agenda for each Board meeting in accordance with protocols established by the Superintendent. Agenda items may be added by the Superintendent through appropriate consultation with the Board Officers.

Any Board member may propose a subject for consideration by the Board. Ideally, such requests should be made to the Board Officers and/or Superintendent, in writing, prior to the meeting.

Board members should exercise the opportunity to place items on an agenda with an appreciation for the Board's oversight, not management, role. Consequently, topics that are not yet timely for Board consideration or which may involve the Board in day-to-day operations is discouraged.

In accordance with the board policy, no item can be placed on the agenda less than 24 hours in advance of a meeting, except in an emergency as defined by board policy.

The Superintendent's office is responsible for the posting of the agenda, and all notices of regular Board meetings shall be available to the general public, and posted in the lobby of the Board auditorium located at 1701 Mountain Industrial Boulevard, Stone Mountain, at least one week in advance, as well as on the Board website, according to Policy BC - Board Meetings.

The agenda shall be provided at least 24 hours prior to the meeting for members of the Board to have an opportunity to suggest items to be removed from or placed on the agenda and to ask for additional information on an agenda item. The Board shall use a consent agenda procedure when appropriate, and the agenda shall be followed once approved. The Board shall depart from the agenda only when it becomes necessary to do so as determined by the concurrence of a majority of the members present.

See Policy: BC – Board Meetings

Agenda Structure

Review of Agenda Items

During the monthly work session, agenda items are presented by the Superintendent and/or his designee, to the Board for consideration. During the presentation, the Board, Superintendent and designated staff engage in an exchange, to include how the item supports the mission of the District. By agreement of the full Board, the item moves to a consent agenda for the monthly business meeting, or by request, an item can be moved to the business meeting as an Action Item for separate discussion and/or vote.

Community Input

The DeKalb County Board of Education encourages the public to be involved in public education. To facilitate public input, the Board shall conduct a monthly Community Meeting in accordance with board policy. The Community Meeting is intended to allow speakers to address issues before the Board or other subjects pertinent to the Board or the DeKalb County School District.

See Policy: BCBI – Public Participation in Board Meetings

Meeting Materials Delivery

As a courtesy, Board members are typically provided a copy of the Board agenda and supporting documents one week prior to the regular monthly meeting.

Questions and Concerns Regarding Agenda Items

In order to ensure efficient and fully informed discussion of items on the agenda, Board members are encouraged to advise the Superintendent, Board Officers, or Superintendent's designee of questions or concerns on agenda items before the Board meeting. Providing the questions before the meeting gives the Superintendent and staff an opportunity to prepare well-researched and

fully informed responses. Fully informed responses are helpful in generating public confidence in the Board and the administration.

Board Meeting Protocols

The Board strives for meetings that are efficient and at the same time allow for full and fair deliberation of issues before the Board. These two aims, plus the commitment to open government as prescribed by statute, suggest the need for operating protocols for the Board's meetings.

Given the volume, complexity, and importance of the business charged to the Board, it is imperative that Board meetings operate in a manner that is productive, respectful, and fosters collaboration among the Board. In addition, many members of the public mistakenly think the purpose of Board meetings is to allow the public to participate in Board deliberations. Instead, Board meetings are meetings of the Board held in public, not public meetings. In order to maintain a focus on Board deliberations, the Board will adhere to the following protocols in the conduct of its meetings.

Operating Rules

As a general guideline, the Board shall observe the parliamentary procedures outlined in Robert's Rules of Order as Newly Revised, 10th Edition. As a deliberative body of fewer than 12 members, the Board will follow the special procedures for small assemblies to the extent applicable. The procedures for small assemblies allow for more relaxed deliberation of items, including the option to discuss an item before a motion is on the floor. However, to ensure both an orderly meeting and strict adherence to the statutory requirement that the public have advance notice of the subjects to be discussed at the meeting, the Board will also adhere to the following:

See Policies: BC – Board Meetings

- When an item on the agenda is reached:
 1. The presiding officer will announce the item for discussion and possible action.
 2. The Superintendent or appropriate staff member may make a comment, statement, recommendation, or presentation regarding the item.
 3. The Board may discuss the item and raise questions.
 4. Action is taken by means of a motion and a second, followed by an electronic vote (or hand vote of Board members present).
- The Board also has the option of not taking action on an item.
- Board members shall seek recognition from the presiding officer if they wish to speak.
- All discussion shall be directly related to the agenda item currently under deliberation.
- The presiding officer will keep the discussion on the agenda item at hand and shall halt discussion that is not germane to that item.
- If, during discussion, an inquiry arises regarding a subject not posted in advance, the presiding officer will halt discussion and may suggest that the topic be placed on a future agenda.
- Motions that require a second under Robert's Rules for large assemblies will require a second at Board meetings.

Special Provisions on Motions

In order to ensure clarity on the action the Board is taking, Board members are requested to write down main motions and amendments to main motions before making them on the floor. The written version should be provided to the Board Secretary for accurate reflection of Board action in the minutes.

The Board Chair or presiding officer will follow the order of motions listed in determining if a motion made by a member is in order or not. Board members should consult the order of motions document before making a motion to ensure the motion is in order.

Citizen Conduct during Meetings

Board meetings are held in public to conduct the business of the District.

The Board does not tolerate disruption of the Board meeting by members of the public. If, after at least one warning from the presiding officer, any person continues to disrupt the meeting by words or actions, the person will be removed from the meeting. The presiding officer will request that the person be escorted from the meeting by a DSCD police officer. Signs or placards are not permitted in the meeting room.

Citizen Communications at the Board Meeting

The Board will allot time at each regular meeting for a Community Input Session. The Board encourages citizens to make their comments, concerns, and ideas known to the Board during this segment of the meeting. Citizens are not restricted to addressing only items that appear on the agenda. They may address items not on the agenda, as well.

According to Board Policy BCBI – Public Participation in Board Meetings, individuals will not be denied the opportunity to address the Board on the basis of their viewpoint. However, the Board will not allow abusive language, threats, comments, jeers, applause, or shouts from the floor. Disruptive persons will be asked to leave the meeting room. The presiding officer may terminate public comments that are profane, vulgar, defamatory, or disruptive.

Speakers should be courteous and professional. Speakers may offer objective criticisms of school operations and programs, but the Board will not hear complaints about specific personnel or individuals connected with the District in a public session. Other channels provide a more appropriate forum for consideration and resolution of legitimate complaints involving individuals.

Procedures for Addressing the Board

In order to ensure a fair and consistent opportunity for citizens to address the Board, the Board will follow the following protocols during Community Input:

- Before addressing the Board, individuals are urged to seek a satisfactory solution to their concerns by following the proper staff and administrative channels.
- Individuals wishing to speak may submit a request in writing to the Board Office via letter, fax, or e-mail no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the Community Meeting. Such request shall include the individual's name, address, topic to be addressed, previous steps taken to resolve the concern, and the group (if any) that the individual is representing. If an individual is unable to attend the meeting after signing up in advance, he/she may appoint a substitute speaker by calling the Board Office by noon of the meeting day.

- In addition, speakers may complete a Request to Comment card in person between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Cards must be completely filled out, providing the information listed in the preceding paragraph.
- An organization may sign up to speak by designating a duly authorized spokesperson and one alternate, who may speak only if the primary spokesperson is unable to attend. By signing up and addressing the Board on behalf of an organization, the speaker is representing that he or she has been duly authorized by that organization to make the comments presented.
- Speakers shall have a maximum of three (3) minutes each and must stop speaking promptly when their time is up.
- To allow time for the Board's other business, the public comment period will be a maximum of one (1) hour or 20 speakers. At the Board's discretion, the comment period may be extended for a specified amount of time or a specific number of additional speakers.
- To allow the Board to receive input from as many stakeholders as possible, individuals who speak during a Community Meeting one month may only speak at the next month's meeting if there are spaces remaining after all non-repeating speakers have signed up.
- The Board will not deliberate or make decisions regarding any subject that is not on the posted agenda.

Board Response during Community Input

The Board will not engage in dialogue with the speaker during the Board meeting. However, the Board or Superintendent may provide specific factual information or recite existing policy to clarify some inquiries or issues. The Board may direct the Superintendent to investigate item(s) and report back to the Board as appropriate.

Public Hearings

The Board will schedule public hearings when required by law or to gather information from the public on issues of special interest. The Board requests that citizens not refer to students or employees by name during public hearings.

Procedures for Public Hearings

To ensure a fair and consistent opportunity for citizens to address the Board during public hearings and to respect the principles of open government, the Board will adhere to the following protocols during public hearings:

- A person shall sign up on-site, the day of the hearing, first come-first serve, and one hour prior to the start of the hearing.
- Up to 30 citizens may sign up to speak. Each speaker will be limited to two minutes and the hearing lasts up to one hour.
- No person is permitted to sign up for another person or to exchange or yield time to persons not signed up.
- The Board will not answer questions or engage in a dialogue with the public during the public hearing.

The Board may provide specific factual information or recite existing policy to clarify inquires or issues raised.

Closed (Executive) Sessions

The Board may enter into a closed session, also known as an Executive Session during a public meeting only for the reasons allowed by law. To ensure compliance with the law and respect for the principles of open government, the Board will comply with the following protocols regarding closed meetings:

- The Board will convene in an open meeting with proper posting prior to the presiding officer's announcing that the Board will enter a closed session. The presiding officer will read aloud the agenda item to be discussed and the statutory authorization for entering into a closed session to deliberate upon the item.
- During the closed session, the Board will deliberate only upon the item that is authorized for closed-session deliberations. The presiding officer will cut off any conversation not related to the item.
- The Board will not take action on any item in a closed session. By law, all Board actions, including voting, must occur in an open meeting.
- Discussions and information shared during a closed session shall remain confidential.
- Under Georgia law, the Board must maintain an affidavit, signed by all board members present, attesting to the agenda and discussions each closed session with the official meeting records.
- Because handwritten or electronic notes taken by individual Board members during a closed session to memorialize the deliberations could be considered the equivalent of an official notes, therefore confidential under law, Board members are strongly discouraged from taking notes during a closed session. Disclosure of such notes could be considered a criminal offense.

Grievances and Complaints

The District has developed a series of policies and procedures to assist employees, students, parents, and community members in getting expeditious attention to and resolution of complaints and grievances they may have against the District. For purposes of this section, the words complaint and grievance are used interchangeably. As a last step in the District's process, the complainant may present the grievance to the Board.

See Policies: GAE(2), GAE(3), JAA, and KNBA(R)

From time to time, the Board will be called upon to hear the appeal of a complaint or grievance by an employee, parent, student, or community member filed in accord with one of these policies. The Board may choose to review the complaint during a meeting as the final stage in the District complaint process. Based on the nature of the complaint, the board may deliberate in a closed meeting, and, if applicable, take action in an open meeting.

See Policies: GAE(2), GAE(3)

The Board will be provided with a record of the case, including documents filed in relation to the complaint and actions taken at earlier stages of the process. In instances when oral argument on a grievance is presented at a Board meeting, the Board will hear the grievance and may ask the administration to provide explanations for decisions at earlier levels. The Board will then consider the grievance.

In response to a grievance, the Board is empowered to:

- grant the grievance, and reverse the decision of the administration;
- deny the grievance, and uphold the decision of the administration; or

- grant the grievance in part and deny in part, thus modifying the decision of the administration.

Although the Board has full authority in response to a grievance to reverse the administration's decision, the Board will extend a degree of deference to administrative decisions in matters that are reserved by law or policy to the administration. In general, the Board will not substitute its judgment for that of the administration when the decision was made in accordance with law, facts, policy, and ethical standards.

Individual Board Member Participation in Grievance Hearings

When considering the merits of a grievance, Board members should consider only the evidence presented to them as part of the formal grievance—typically, the written material provided and information and arguments at the hearing itself—and be impartial in the decision making. If a Board member is unable to ignore information received from external sources, the Board member should consider abstaining from participation in the grievance. Prior knowledge of aspects of a situation before the Board does not constitute bias unless the Board member is not capable of judging the situation based solely on the evidence before the Board.

A Board member should consider recusal and abstention from participation in a grievance or any other matter when required to do so by law or whenever the Board member determines, based on the Board member code of ethics and his or her own assessment of the circumstances, that he or she would be impaired in participating as an impartial decision maker.

Board Member Conduct during Meetings

Since Board meetings are in public and because staff invests significant time and resources to preparing for meetings, the Board is committed to ensuring appropriate attention to the proceedings. In addition to respecting the rules of order the Board has agreed to follow, Board members will adhere to the following protocols during discussion and presentations:

- To ensure that all speakers receive the respect of the Board during their comments, Board members will refrain from sidebar conversations during presentations by staff members, fellow Board members, or members of the public.
- When staff other than the Superintendent, are addressing the Board and a Board member has a question regarding the presentation, the question shall be addressed to the Superintendent and/or presenter unless the Superintendent requests that questions be addressed to the presenter or another designee. Questions will be respectful of the expertise and efforts of District staff.
- Private notes, whether handwritten or electronic, exchanged among Board members during a public meeting may constitute official records and may raise questions under Georgia's open government statutes. As a consequence, Board members are expected to refrain from the exchange of private notes during a meeting.

SECTION FOUR: INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBER PROTOCOLS/NORMS

Serving on a Board is not an activity in which many school Board members and fewer members of the public have extensive experience. It is not the same as working within an organization or simply being a member of a group. As a consequence, there can be many opportunities for a Board member to engage in actions that can create inefficiencies within the organization or lead to unnecessary difficulties—often in a spirit of goodwill and with the intent to be helpful.

To expedite effective service for its members and to ensure that they function cohesively as a corporate body and efficiently with the administration, Boards generally develop certain guidelines and parameters for Board member behavior.

To assist Board members in complying with legal obligations and to encourage cohesive and efficient operations by the Board, the Board has developed a Code of Conduct for its members and has established additional guidelines for Board member actions.

These guidelines are intended to help Board members perform their duties efficiently, in the spirit of open government and corporate boardsmanship, and in a manner that assists the public while not creating unnecessary burdens for District staff.

Board Norms

The Board approved DeKalb County School Board of Education Norms and Standards on May 6, 2013.

As a collective body of the DeKalb County Board of Education, we value public education and embrace the opportunity to serve as responsible stewards in partnership with the Superintendent, administrators, teachers, staff, families, and other community stakeholders. We strive to establish an educational system of excellence, which fosters high academic achievement for all students.

As members of the DeKalb County School Board, we recognize that we are accountable for our actions, as well as our decisions. We will act in a manner which promotes responsibility, accountability, decisiveness, and transparency as we carry out our duties as servant leaders of the DeKalb County Board of Education. To this end, we will work collaboratively, forming coalitions and not engage in competition. We will operate as a collective unit and engage in professional development as a board and as individuals.

In the areas of board interaction, community engagement, communications, and time management we commit to the following guiding principles.

Board Interactions and Interpersonal Relationships:

- **We will treat each other with respect at all times.**
We will exhibit mutual respect for each other; exhibit respect individual differences, as well as respect for different opinions espoused by each board member.
- **We will practice active listening.**
We will attend while others are speaking; not talk over each other when speaking; and wait our turn.
- **We will form board cohesion.**

We will strive to work with board members with a spirit of harmony, cooperation, respect, and connectedness.

- **We will engage in culture building.**
We will strive to become culturally competent, respecting the cultural difference of board meetings and others.
- **We will be aware of and responsible for our nonverbal as well as verbal behaviors when communicating.**
We will be mindful of the verbal and nonverbal messages and implications being conveyed during our communication with each other.
- **We will be accountable for self-behaviors and their impact on other board members.**
We will be responsible for our own individual behaviors, as well as how they impact other board members; including taking responsibility for correcting any behaviors that might negatively affect individual board members and the board as a whole.
- **We will respect individual differences and individual opinions of each board member.**
We will be mindful of and respectful of cultural and other differences of each board member, as well as differences in thoughts, expressed opinions, and member votes on presented items.
- **We will form board cohesion.**
We will strive to work with each board member with a spirit of harmony, cooperation, respect, connectedness, and positive regard.
- **We will work to empower the board as a whole, to carry out its responsibilities.**
We will consistently work to encourage and support the board during the course of carrying out its fiduciary responsibilities.
- **We will do our best to remain informed of incidents within the District.**
We will (as much as possible) review and remained abreast of information pertaining to the District regarding incidents and occurrences within the District, as they relate to the education and academic success of all students.
- **We will engage in continuous interpersonal learning and growth.** We will engage in responsible, intentional, and continuous relationship building with board members, the Superintendent, the administration, teachers, staff, and other stakeholders.
- **We will work to empower the board as a whole, in order to carry out its responsibilities.**
We will consistently work to encourage and support the board of education during the course of carrying out its duties.

Interaction with District Administrators and Staff:

- **We will recognize, respect, and accept that the Superintendent is the only employee who reports directly to the DeKalb County Board of Education.**

We will not make any effort to assume the role of evaluators of administrators working with staff or other employees within the DeKalb County School District. This is the sole responsibility of the Superintendent.

- **We will respect all administrators, staff and other employees of the DeKalb County School District, verbally and nonverbally.**

We will show respect to and with all DeKalb County School District employees, including administrators, staff, and other employees, in words and deeds. We will respect their feelings, opinions, and thoughts in our daily interactions, during board meetings, as well as other times of interaction. We will not engage in threats or bullying tactics.

- **We will not attend staff meetings or staff trainings unless invited.**

We will only attend staff functions if and when invited by administrators and staff.

- **We will support and build effective interpersonal relationships with the Superintendent.**

We will work consistently to respect, support, and empower the Superintendent as he carries out his duties to the school district and the community.

- **We will remember our role and duties as members of the DeKalb County School Board, being careful to not cross lines with other district employees.**

We will respect and remain mindful of the different roles within the school system, including, but not limited to the school board, the Superintendent, the administration, teachers, and staff.

- **We will assist administrators, staff, and other District employees in following the designated protocol and process for the chain of command.**

We will inform and guide administrators, staff, and other District employees of the stated protocol and process in following the chain of command when dealing with issues and concerns they face within the DeKalb County School District (i.e., Principal, Regional Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and Superintendent).

- **We will respect individual differences and individual opinions of each board member.**

We will be mindful of and respectful of cultural and other differences of each board member, as well as differences in thoughts, expressed opinions, and member votes on presented items.

Community & Stakeholders Interactions:

- **We will respect parents, students and other stakeholders verbally and nonverbally, within the DeKalb County School District at all times.**

We will verbally and nonverbally respect all individuals and groups, while attending board and community meetings, while presenting at board meetings, and during any form of communication,

- **We will seek to understand and respect diverse opinions and perspectives espoused by board members and others.**
We will respectfully engage in effective listening as we seek to gain understanding and clarity of different opinions put forth by board member and others.
- **We will build trusting relationships.**
We will strive to encourage open and honest communication with board members, the Superintendent, the administration, teachers, staff, parents, students, and other stakeholders on a consistent and continuous basis.
- **We will assist parents, the community, and other stakeholders in following the designated protocol and process for the chain of command.**
We will inform and guide parents, the community, and other stakeholders of the stated protocol and process in following the chain of command when dealing with issues and concerns related to the education of children within the DeKalb County School District (i.e., Principal, Regional Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and Superintendent).

Media and Public Relations:

- **We will recognize and respect a single official voice as that of the board chair (or vice chair, as appropriate).**
The chair (or vice chair, as appropriate) will respond to any and all official and public media inquiries directed to the full board; providing official statements and responses on behalf of the full board.
- **We will speak with one voice.**
We will do our best to compromise on issues before us; engage in consensus building until we reach a decision as a collective unit. We will support the decisions, words, and actions agreed upon by the full board, both privately and publicly.
- **We will engage in constructive communication with the media.** We will work to ensure that any communication with the media about the DeKalb County School District, including the board, the Superintendent, administrators, and other employees is helpful and not harmful.

Time Management

- **We will be on time for all meetings.**
We will make every effort to attend all board related and other District related meetings on time. We will assume individual responsibility for informing the board chair or its designee for tardiness to board meetings or absence from board meetings.
- **We will be informed and prepared to discuss the agenda items to be considered at all board meetings.**
We will read all material provided in preparation for all regularly scheduled board meetings.
- **We will respect each other's during board meetings.**

We will make every effort to be brief in our comments during each board meeting, adhering to reasonable time constraints and avoiding repetitious comments previously made by other board members.

- **We will not rush nor prolong discussions during board meetings for personal reasons.**

We respect time allotted for all presentations at board meetings and if the allotted time has ended we will follow Robert's Rules of Order for extending the discussion.

Code of Conduct

The Board has developed the following Code of Conduct for its members.

The Board and each member on the Board commit to ethical, businesslike, and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum.

Accordingly:

1. Board members will represent the interests of the stakeholders of the entire District as well as interests of the stakeholders in the single member's district where applicable. This accountability to the whole District supersedes:
 - any conflicting loyalty a member may have to other advocacy or interest groups;
 - loyalty based upon membership on other Boards or staffs;
 - conflicts based upon the personal interest of any Board member who is also a relative of a student in the District; or
 - conflicts based upon being a relative of an employee of the District.
2. Board members shall not attempt to exercise individual authority over the organization.
 - Members' interaction with the Superintendent and with staff must recognize the lack of authority vested in individual Board member.
 - Members' interaction with the public, media, or other entities must recognize the same limitation and the inability of any one Board member to speak for the Board except to repeat explicitly stated Board decisions.
 - Members will not publicly express individual negative judgments about the Superintendent, staff, or fellow Board members. Any such judgments of the Superintendent, staff, or fellow Board members, if made, shall be made only after a discussion in closed session.
3. Members shall maintain confidentiality appropriate to sensitive issues and information, especially those matters discussed in closed session for which protection of information is required by law.
4. In order to build and maintain productive and effective relationships amongst themselves and with the Superintendent and staff, Board members shall maintain a system of communication and interaction that builds upon mutual respect and trust.

Accordingly, Board members will:

- exercise honesty in all written and interpersonal interactions, seeking with great care to avoid misleading information;

- demonstrate respect for the opinions and comments of others;
- focus on issues rather than on personalities;
- maintain focus on the Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan, and Board Annual Priorities;
- communicate in a timely manner to avoid surprises;
- withhold judgment on issues until fully informed;
- be fair and impartial in all decisions and actions;
- be continuously guided by what is best for all students of the District;
- respect decisions of the full Board;
- make no personal promise or take private action that may compromise a Board member's performance or responsibilities;
- criticize privately, and praise publicly;
- use closed sessions appropriately, judiciously, and in accordance with law;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality;
- openly share concerns, information, knowledge, and desired outcomes;
- make every reasonable effort to protect the integrity and promote the positive image of the District, the Board, the Superintendent, the staff, and one another;
- respond to requests and inquiries in a timely manner;
- give each other time to think through issues and, equally, the time to finish verbal statements and responses;
- diligently prepare for meetings and be punctual and regular in attendance; and
- share credit for successful District initiatives, actions, and awards, and avoid assigning blame for the failure or ineffectiveness of District initiatives and/or Board actions.

Conflicts of Interest

Board members must avoid participating in decision making when they have conflicts of interest, since the integrity of the office and public confidence in the district depend upon that. It is imperative, then, that Board members know board policy and applicable state laws regarding conflict of interest. To assist in that, the Board has developed the following protocols that all Board members must follow. If a Board member is unclear in any way about whether a conflict may exist in his or her case, the Board member should advise the Board Chair, who may seek advice of the Legal Counsel to the Board.

First and foremost, Board members shall be familiar with and comply with all provisions in Policies BH – Code of Ethics, BHA – Board Member Conflict of Interest, BAB – School Board Governance and GAGD - Staff Nepotism, regarding code of ethics, conflicts of interest, board member qualities, nepotism, required disclosures, and prohibited activities.

The Board and its members will adhere to the following:

- If a Board member has a personal or private interest in any matter pending before the Board, the member shall disclose such interest to the Board, shall not vote on the matter, and shall not attempt to influence the decisions of other Board members.
- A member of the Board shall not receive any compensation other than the authorized salary for services rendered to the District. This provision shall not prohibit members from receiving reimbursement for authorized expenses incurred during the performance of Board duties as permissible by law.
- The Board shall not enter into any contract with any of its members or with a firm in which a member has a financial interest.
- A Board member is expected to avoid any conflict of interest in the exercise of the member's fiduciary responsibility. Accordingly, a Board member may not:
 - disclose or use confidential information acquired during the performance of official duties as a means to further the Board member's own personal financial interests or the interests of a member of the Board member's immediate family;

- accept a gift of substantial value or economic benefit which would tend to improperly influence a reasonable person or which the Board member knows or should know is primarily for the purpose of a reward for official action;
- engage in a substantial financial transaction for private business purposes with a person whom the Board member directly or indirectly supervises; or
- perform an official act which directly confers an economic benefit on a business in which the Board member has a substantial financial interest or is engaged as a counsel, consultant, representative, or agent.

Board Member Communications

The responsibilities of the Board to respect the principles of open government and the obligation of the Board to function as a corporate body necessitate care by individual members in their communication and correspondence with others. Although Board members sacrifice none of their free speech rights upon joining the Board, communications that in other circumstances may have little unexpected impact can have significant consequences when they come from a sitting member of the Board.

To minimize the unnecessary difficulties that can arise from Board member communications, the Board has developed the following protocols.

Communications with Other Board Members Outside of a Posted Meeting

Open and Public Meetings, O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1

One of the most vexing but important restrictions on Board member communication concerns communications among Board members outside of a posted meeting. The principles and laws concerning open government do not permit deliberation among limited members of the Board outside of a called meeting or among Board members in numbers less than a quorum outside of a meeting if the members meet in a small number for the purpose of circumventing the law.

For many Board members, this seems a difficult burden, but the purpose of these restrictions is to ensure the public's right to hear its business being discussed.

To assist Board members in complying both with the law and with the principle of open government, the Board has developed the following protocols:

- Board members may engage in limited communications among themselves outside of Board meetings, whether in person or by phone, e-mail, text, or other means. However, conversation on District business among a quorum of the Board outside a meeting is strictly prohibited.

This prohibition demands that Board members be aware of special circumstances that may constitute a quorum even when a quorum of the Board is not present and not engaged in contemporaneous communications.

Walking Quorum: A "walking quorum" occurs when members of a governmental body deliberately hold serial meetings of less than a quorum outside of a public meeting and then at a subsequent public meeting ratify the decisions made in private in an attempt to circumvent the law. The verbal exchange necessary for a deliberation of public business to meet the definition of a "meeting" subject to open government statutes is not limited to in-person communications. E-mails, texts, and other non-contemporaneous communications among a quorum of the Board can add up to a violation.

Communication to a Quorum of the Board: The Board acknowledges responsibility for using appropriate communication strategies among and between Board members.

Gatherings of a quorum of the Board for social purposes only are allowed so long as no District business is discussed.

Communications with the Public and Patrons

Board members are elected by the public to serve and, in general, want to keep the public informed about District actions and hear the thoughts of the public. However, managing communications with the public and ensuring that those communications do not cause unnecessary difficulties for the Board or the District can be a difficult issue, given the laudable desire of the public to be involved.

Individual Board members may and should communicate with members of the community as they deem appropriate. However, the volume of communications between Board members and the public and the nature of certain communications suggests the need for protocols in initiating and responding to communications. The Board has developed the following protocols to assist its members.

Communications Received by the District

While Board members strive to be responsive to stakeholders, it is not possible for them to respond to every inquiry due to the volume of correspondence. As a consequence, the Board and administration will adhere to the following procedures:

- Letters and faxes addressed to individual board members and received in the Superintendent's office will be delivered to that board member within three business days. In the event more time is needed, the board member will receive notification of the estimated time of delivery. If an item is urgent or time sensitive, the Board member will be contacted by e-mail or telephone. The Board Secretary acknowledges receipt of the e-mail and informs the sender that the message has been forwarded to the individual board member and to the appropriate administrator(s). The administration ensures that an appropriate response is provided on behalf of the district.
- If the Board Chair responds to an inquiry in writing, all Board members receive a copy of the response.
- The Board of Education encourages oral and written input. Individuals' e-mail addresses and any personally-identifiable student information are confidential by law and will not be made available to the public by Board members. However, individual Board members may share any correspondence with fellow Board members and/or with the Superintendent as appropriate.

The administration will follow comparable procedures with regard to correspondence addressed to the Superintendent: correspondence will be routed to the appropriate staff member for response, generally within 5 days of receipt, and confidentiality will be appropriately maintained.

Citizen or Employee Complaints to an Individual Board Member

Board members are frequently approached by employees and District patrons with requests for assistance with a personal complaint involving the District or a desire simply to have someone listen to the matter. The Board has adopted a series of policies that include GAE(2), GAE(3) JAA,

and KNBA-R to provide for the efficient and timely District handling of employee, student, parent, and citizen complaints.

Because, under these policies, the Board sits as an appellate body in complaints, individual Board members must take special care in their communications with employees and members of the public when presented with complaints.

Accordingly, Board members will adhere to the following procedures when presented with a complaint:

- The Board member should listen to the complaint to better understand the critical issues.
- If the issue constitutes a complaint that should be handled under one of the District's complaint policies, the Board member should:
 1. Refer the parent, student, or citizen to the Superintendent for to assist in addressing the concern or complaint.
 2. Make them aware of the District Policies GAE(2), GAE(3) JAA, and KNBA-R procedures in place to address citizen concerns or complaints and remind them that Board members must remain impartial in case the matter requires Board action in the future.

Board members should not attempt to resolve complaints on their own. If a member becomes too involved in a complaint that ultimately comes before the Board, he or she could be required to recuse him or herself from the Board's deliberation on the matter to avoid complaints of unfair bias.

See Policies: GAE(2) – Complaints and Grievances, Certified Employees, GAE(3) - Complaints and Grievances, Non-certified Employees JAA - Equal Educational Opportunities, and KNBA-R - Complaints about Instructional Materials

Whistleblower Protection

The Whistleblower Protection Policy, GAGC – Employee Ethics, encourages all employees of the District to report any activity in the District constituting fraud, waste, and abuse relating to any program and operation in the District. The District shall not retaliate against an employee for disclosing a violation of, or non-compliance with a law, rule, or regulation to either a supervisor or a government agency, unless the disclosure was made with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard for its truth or falsity.

See Policies: GAGC – Employee Ethics, GAGC-R(1) – Employee Ethics, and GBU-R(1) – Professional Personnel Ethics

Expressions of Concern other than Complaints

Often times, communication from an employee or citizen is not a specific complaint but is a general concern. Board members are advised either to follow similar procedures of referring the employee or citizen to the Superintendent for efficient and appropriate attention to the concern or to invite the employee or citizen to approach the full Board during Community Input.

Use of Social Media

The rise of blogs, Facebook, and other social media has allowed Board members the opportunity to communicate with a large public both more easily and more immediately than ever before. However, the use of these means of communication poses serious legal and operational concerns of which Board members must be fully aware. Board members must exercise extreme caution in their use.

Among the issues Board members should be aware of are the following:

- Public postings by a Board member that express an opinion about pending items of school business can be viewed later as evidence of bias.
- Board members will respect the fact that any post that constitutes a public record must be retained and archived according to the District's records retention schedule.

In addition to these concerns, Board members must consider the Board's identity as and commitment to functioning as a corporate body; its commitment to deliberate as a body in public meetings; and the Board Chair's status as official spokesperson for the Board. All of these should be considered in weighing any use of social media in communications with the public. The use of social media by Board members can, in certain circumstances, be perceived as undermining any or each of these principles by which the Board has agreed to be guided.

See Policy: Internet Acceptable Use

Board Member Communications with the Media

The Board believes in ensuring that appropriate and accurate information is provided to the local media. The Board and administration have developed channels to ensure appropriate District communication with local media. From time to time, however, individual Board members may be approached by media for comments or information.

To ensure media access to Board members and at the same time avoid confusion, the Board has developed the following protocols:

- The Board Chair shall generally serve as the official spokesperson for the Board. However, under special circumstances, the Board may appoint a different spokesperson for the Board.
- Individual Board members may respond to media inquiries as they deem appropriate; however that individual speaks in his or her individual capacity and not on behalf of the Board as a whole and should make that clear in working with the media.
- A Board member who receives calls from the media is encouraged to notify the Superintendent or Director of Communications.

Board Member Communications with Prospective Vendors

Vendors shall not contact Board members individually for the purpose of soliciting a purchase or contract between the time a request for proposal or bid is formally released and a recommendation is made by the administration to the Board. If a vendor violates this prohibition during this timeframe, consideration of the vendor for award shall be invalidated. Board members shall be notified of possible violations and actions taken.

The above language is included in each and every invitation to bid and request for proposal the District issues valued at \$100,000.00 or greater.

See Policy: DJE - Purchasing

Should a Board Member be contacted by a vendor to discuss a proposal in any form of fashion, the board member is required to advise the vendor that communication of any sort with a Board

member regarding the proposal is inappropriate within the context of Board Policy DJE and the State's procurement laws and could result in disqualification.

Involvement in Elections

There are a few occasions when Board members want to serve as advocates for the District, such as when the District has asked the community to support a bond issue to help the District more effectively accomplish its Mission and realize its Vision. However, Georgia law places certain restrictions on Board members and other District officials with regard to such advocacy efforts. Similarly, Board member involvement in other elections can create unexpected difficulties of which Board members should be aware. The Board has developed the following guidelines to assist its members in such circumstances.

Prohibition on Use of Public Funds in Advocacy Activity

Georgia law prohibits District employees or officials (including Board members) from knowingly using public funds, directly or indirectly, for political advertising to advocate for or against a candidate or measure that will appear on a ballot.

At the same time, Georgia law does not restrict Board members, acting independently and without the use of public funds, from engaging in political advocacy. A Board member invited, for example, to speak at a community meeting in favor of a bond proposal may do so.

Accordingly, Board members will be cognizant of this provision and seek advice of the Board Chair before engaging in any advocacy activity that may involve a direct or indirect use of public funds when that activity is related to an election or ballot measure. The Board Chair may seek advice of District counsel.

See Policy: BHC – Board Member Political Activity

Participation in Board Elections

Georgia law does not prohibit a Board member from advocating the election of candidates for the Board, so long as the advocacy does not involve the direct or indirect use of public funds. However, Board member support of candidates for the Board in a Board election can have an adverse impact on the ability of the Board to function cohesively and constructively as a corporate body.

Accordingly, Board members are encouraged to remain neutral in Board elections other than their own and are discouraged from participating in advocacy efforts for those running for the Board. Before engaging in activities in support of candidates for the Board, members will be cognizant of the potential adverse impact of their advocacy activity.

Requests for Records, Information, or Reports

Board members sometimes feel the need for information in addition to that provided by the administration in the context of pending District business. Likewise, they sometimes would like information about the District that is not directly related to pending business.

An informed Board is an effective Board, but requests for information and records by individual Board members can easily become burdensome to staff who are asked to gather the information, especially if the requests do not pertain to pending business.

To ensure access to information without creating burdens, the Board has developed the following protocols:

- An individual Board member, acting in his or her official capacity, has the right to seek information pertaining to District fiscal affairs, business transactions, governance, school operations, and personnel matters, including information that properly may be withheld from members of the general public in accordance with Georgia Open Records Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70).
- Individual Board members shall not have access to confidential student records unless the member is acting in his or her official capacity and has a legitimate educational interest in the records. In such cases, individual Board members shall seek access to the records from the Superintendent District Public Information Specialist. At the time access to the records is provided, the Board member shall be advised of his or her responsibility to comply with confidentiality requirements.
- Board members may e-mail or call the Superintendent, Board Officers, or the Chief of Staff to ask questions or request information.
- The Superintendent may redirect a Board member's request to the full Board for authorization if, in the Superintendent's opinion, the request requires a material amount of staff time or resources or is disruptive or unreasonable. Board members, however, will not be refused information that the District would be obligated to provide to a member of the public.
- Written responses to information requests from the Board will be distributed to all Board members in a timely manner.
- Individual Board members shall not make written or oral requests for information directly to campus principals or other administrators.
- A Board member requesting information for personal reasons will file a public information request in accordance with Policy BE – School Board Records and BE-R – Public Records, Inspection and Reproduction. In these cases, Board members will have no greater or lesser access to the information than the public.

See Policies: BE – School Board Records and BE-R – Public Records, Inspection and Reproduction

Visits to School Campuses

From time to time, Board members may wish to visit a campus in their official capacity or as a parent or volunteer. While visits to campuses in these capacities are not discouraged, a Board member's presence on campus can be unnecessarily confusing to staff or disruptive of school activities if not conducted properly. To ensure that visits are productive and supportive of District activities, the Board has developed the following protocols:

- While present on a school campus, Board members should remember their unique role in the District and avoid signaling that they are present to inspect the campus or solicit input about school operations.
- Board members who wish to visit a campus in any capacity other than their official capacity, including as a parent, shall do so in accordance with District Policy BBI. Such visits shall not be permitted if their duration or frequency interferes with the delivery of instruction or disrupts the normal school environment.
- Board members may be invited to attend public events, receptions, groundbreaking, dedications, ribbon cuttings, and other campus events. Board members should limit attendance at such events to occasions for which they have received an invitation.

See Policy: BAB – School Board Governance and BBI – Board-Staff Relations

Volunteering

Board members are permitted to serve in limited volunteer roles within the District; however, volunteer service should be merely informal and not involve a routine obligation. Board members must not assume roles that would normally be performed by employees at the direction of District staff. As with other campus visits, the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and Principal should be informed in advance if a board member plans to volunteer in the District.

See Policy: BBI – Board-Staff Relations

Access to District Technology

Electronic and mobile technologies have become essential tools in the efficient conduct of District business. The District makes such technologies available to the Board and has developed the following protocols for their use.

- Board members may be issued devices or access to District technology resources, including e-mail accounts, primarily to expedite the performance of their official duties. Limited personal use of District technology is permitted if the use imposes no tangible cost on the District and does not unduly burden the District's technology resources. Any use of District technology resources requires the Board member's acceptance of the District's acceptable use agreement and the District may monitor the Board member's use in accordance with system procedures.
- Board members will be familiar with and comply with all provisions of Policy IFBG – Internet Acceptable Use and IFBG-R(1) – Internet Acceptable Use, regarding use of technology, including compliance with requirements to retain certain records contained on either District or personal technology resources.
- Board members will bear in mind that records created using District technology resources may constitute school district records and may be subject to the public disclosure under the Georgia Public Information Act.

See Policies: IFBG – Internet Acceptable Use, IFBG-R(1) – Internet Acceptable Use, IFBGA – Electronic Communications, IFBGA-R(1) – Electronic Communications, IFBGB – Web Pages

Access to Legal Counsel

The Board and its members will, from time to time, need to seek advice of counsel to ensure appropriate action on the part of the Board. Access to counsel, however, can place a strain on District resources if not used prudently. Because resources are limited, the Board has developed the following protocols in seeking advice of counsel.

See Policy: BBE – School Attorney

Legal Counsel to the Board

Legal Counsel provides consultation to the administration in matters requiring legal services. The duties of Legal Counsel as pertains to the Board include:

- working with the Board on matters that involve the Board and
- bringing legal issues to the Board's attention.

The Board also retains Legal Counsel to the Board specifically to advise the Board and represent the interests of the Board. The Legal Counsel to the Board is available, within reasonable limits, to serve as a consultant to individual Board members and to advise them in execution of their responsibilities. The Legal Counsel to the Board is selected by the Board of Education in collaboration with the Superintendent and reports directly to the Board.

Individual Board members with a legal inquiry are encouraged to direct the inquiry to the Board Chair who will seek advisement from Legal Counsel to the Board, as appropriate.

See Policy: BBE – School Attorney

Continuing Education Requirements

Board members generally recognize the value to staff of ongoing professional development to ensure that staff remains both aware of good practices and alert to change within their profession. The Board, too, believes in professional development for itself. The State Board of Education has likewise developed an annual requirement for continuing education for Board members which the Board respects and to which the Board adheres. The requirement ensures that Board members remain aware of best practices related to the functions of a Board as well as changes in law that affect the work of a Board.

Individual members are expected to comply with all requirements for continuing education each year. The requirements are as follows.

Board Members in the First Year of Service

Board members in their first year of service must participate in the following:

- An orientation to the local District. This is provided by the Board Chair and appropriate staff and is provided within 60 days of the member's election to the Board.
- Georgia Schools Board Association requires New Board Members - First Year Of Service (15 Hours Required); Individual Training must include New Board Member Orientation Roles & Responsibilities, As Well As Whole Board Training (Best Practices)
- A team-building session with the Superintendent and the rest of the Board. This annual session is intended to enhance the effectiveness of the Board as a corporate body and the Board and Superintendent as a leadership team. The team-building session concludes with a review of the State Board of Education's Framework for School Board Development and an assessment by Board members of additional continuing education needs, based on the review of the Framework.
- At least 10 hours of additional continuing education related to the areas of need identified in the Framework. This additional training may be obtained from a number of conferences held throughout the year and online at the GSBA website. The Board Secretary will provide notices of and invitations to Continuing Education Training opportunities and conferences throughout the year. The Board Secretary and Superintendent's Office Staff will assist Board members with training/conference registrations and travel arrangements.
- Training, approved by the Attorney General, on the responsibilities of the Board and its members under Georgia statutes regarding open meetings. This training must be taken within 90 days of a member's taking office.
- Training, approved by the Attorney General, on the responsibilities of the Board and its members under Georgia regarding public information. This training must be taken within

90 days of a member's taking office; however, the Board may delegate this training to an appropriate member of the staff who handles public information requests.

Experienced Board Members

After the first year of service, Board members must participate in the following:

- Georgia Schools Board Association requires Veteran Board Members - One Or More Years Of Service (9 Hours Required); Individual Training must include GSBA Board Best Practices; School Law; Board Chair and School Finance Workshops , as well as Whole Board Governance
- An update to the Georgia Education Code. This is required only in years that include a legislative session. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that experienced Board members are familiar with recent changes in statute regarding public schools.
- A team-building session with the Superintendent and the rest of the Board. This annual session is intended to enhance the effectiveness of the Board as a corporate body and the Board and Superintendent as a leadership team. The team-building session concludes with a review of the State Board of Education's Framework for School Board Development and an assessment by Board members of additional continuing education needs, based on the review of the Framework.
- At least five hours of additional continuing education related to the areas of need identified in the Framework. This additional training may be obtained from a number of conferences held throughout the year and online at the GSBA website. The Board Secretary will provide notices of and invitations to Continuing Education Training opportunities and conferences throughout the year. The Board Secretary and Superintendent's Office Staff will assist Board members with training/conference registrations and travel arrangements.

The District is the official record keeper of board member continuing education credit information. The Board Secretary to the Board of Education keeps an accounting of Board attendance at continuing education events and the number of credit hours received. The chart is provided quarterly to Board for planning purposes.

Additionally, the District must file two annual collection reports with the Georgia Department of Education based on annual deadlines. The LBG Annual Training Report (previous year's activities) is required pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-51, and the LBG Training Plan (proposal for current year) is required in accordance with State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.36 Local School Board Governance.

Travel Reimbursement

Because of the Board's commitment to its own professional development, each Board member will have an established travel budget for attending governance or education-related conferences, conventions, or other purposes relevant to the work of the Board. Board members will receive periodic reports on the status of travel accounts, and members are expected not to exceed the allocated budget. In extenuating circumstances, the Board Officers may consider a reallocation of individual travel allotments to meet the best interests of the Board as a whole.

All reimbursement to Board members shall be in accordance with Policy DJE-R(1) – Purchasing and BBBE – Board Member Compensation and Expenses. In particular, to ensure appropriate use of funds, the Board will adhere to the following protocols:

- Reimbursement to Board members for reasonable travel expenses for attendance at regional, state, or national conventions, conferences, and workshops shall be made by the District when attendance is authorized and deemed by the Board to be necessary in the conduct of public schools within a 60-day time frame from the time of submittal of completed documentation.
- The District may not pay the travel expenses of spouses and other persons who have no responsibilities or duties to perform for the Board when they accompany a Board member to Board-related activities.
- As specified in Policy DJE-R(1) – Purchasing, in the event that a Board member received a travel advance for which a balance is due to the District, the repayment shall take place within 60 days of the end of the travel.

See Policy: Policy DJE-R (1) – Purchasing and BBBE – Board Member Compensation and Expenses

Process for Addressing Board Member Violations

The principles and protocols in this handbook have been developed to ensure that the Board is a positive force in moving the District forward and that it functions effectively as a corporate body in governing and overseeing the management of the District.

It is essential for the success in this effort that all members of the Board respect the principles and protocols included in this manual, as well as adhere to Board Policy. To that end, the Board has developed a process for working with members who may be acting in violation of these principles and protocols or of Board Policy.

In the event of a member’s willful and continuing violation of policy or these protocols, the Board will seek remedy by the following process:

1. Private conversation between the offending member and the Board Chair or his or her designee.
2. Discussion in closed session between the offending member and the full Board.
3. After a discussion in closed session and with direction from the Board, a written reprimand, citing specific policy violations, will be sent by certified mail to the offending member by the Board Chair or other board member designated by the Board.
4. Completion of 3-6 hours of professional development as appropriate for violation of policy or protocol
5. Upon an affirmative vote of one more than quorum, public censure of the offending Board member.

See Policy: BH – Board Code of Ethics

BOARD COMMITMENT

This handbook reflects the Board’s commitment to leadership of the highest quality in establishing and working toward the Board’s vision for the DeKalb County School District. Board service requires each Board member to direct his or her time, energy, and talent into a collective, corporate leadership effort. Focusing each individual member’s ideas and passions through the lens of Board leadership entails teamwork, patience, restraint, and wisdom. The purpose of this

handbook is to support the Board members in this delicate and demanding process. Improving the lives of the children of DeKalb County is the great reward for this effort.