



# NEBO SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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**SECTION:** B – Board Governance and Operations  
**POLICY TITLE:** Board Communication Protocols  
**FILE NO.:** BH  
**DATED:** June 10, 2015

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### **1. PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY**

This policy is designed to provide a framework for effective and open communication between the Board of Education and the Superintendent, administrative staff, employees, parents, students, patrons, and news media. In establishing these communication protocols, it is important to consider and recognize certain foundational and guiding principles:

- 1.1 The Board's primary function is to establish, review, and evaluate financial budgets, policies, and goals by which the District and schools are to be administered. The implementation and administration of the educational programs and general business of the District and schools is the responsibility of the Superintendent along with District and school administrative staff.
- 1.2 The authority of the Board is derived from Utah law and effectuated through official actions taken as a group during public Board meetings. An individual Board member does not unilaterally have authority to take official action on behalf of the Board.
- 1.3 Board members have a duty to uphold their constitutional oath of office and to observe and follow applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations, and District policies.
- 1.4 Board members should only act within the scope of their authority in order to minimize the risk of exposing themselves and/or the District to liability and damages. Board members should avoid becoming personally involved in matters outside their scope of authority that may infringe upon individual rights afforded by grievance, appeal, and other due process procedures required by law and/or District policy.
- 1.5 Board members shall not disclose information concerning confidential and legally privileged matters, including specifically, information obtained during Board closed sessions.
- 1.6 As elected officials, Board members have a duty to represent and respond to their constituents. Board members also represent the entire District and have a duty to strive to serve in the overall best interests of students, parents, patrons, and employees throughout the District.
- 1.7 Board members should follow the principles set forth the Nebo School District Board of Education Code of Conduct as adopted by Nebo School District Policy #BBF.

- 1.8 Generally, official communications from the Board to administrative staff and employees will be communicated through the Superintendent; and generally, official communications and reports to the Board from administrative staff and employees will be submitted through the Superintendent. Notwithstanding the foregoing, this shall not be construed as denying the right of Board members, administrative staff, and employees to communicate with one another in appropriate circumstances.

## 2. GENERAL COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Board members should listen carefully and/or read the concerns of individuals.
- 2.2 Board members should afford individuals the opportunity to be heard, and respond to them in a dignified, respectful manner by thanking them (in person, on the telephone, or through email or letter) for the information they have shared.
- 2.3 Board members may communicate to the individual that their concerns will be shared with the Board, and that they should expect to receive a response to their concerns from the Board President, the Superintendent, or a member of the Nebo School District administrative staff.
- 2.4 Board members have the right to speak on their own behalf, but must clearly communicate that their comments are their own and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Board.
- 2.5 Official statements or responses on behalf of the Board shall be prepared by the Board President and Superintendent in coordination with the Public Information Officer and other individuals as applicable. The official statement or response shall be issued by the Board President or, if appropriate, by the Board Vice President, Superintendent, Public Information Officer, or other designated individual at the direction of the Board President.

## 3. SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION TOPICS / ISSUES AND PROTOCOLS

For additional guidance in responding to administrative staff, employees, parents, students, patrons, or the news media on specific topics and issues, Board members may wish consult the protocols attached as Exhibit "A".

## 4. EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Email communications by Board members with administrative staff, employees, parents, students, patrons, and news media may be considered a public record under the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA) (Utah Code Ann., Section 63G-2-101, et seq.), and as such, particular care should be taken to assure that email communications are appropriate and follow the requirements set forth in Nebo School District Policy #EH, Records Access and Management / GRAMA. The following are some guidelines when communicating by email.

- 4.1 Email communications should be clear and complete. Care should be taken to use proper language and grammar and avoid using "texting" short hand and acronyms.
- 4.2 Determine whether an email message requires, or may be appropriate or advisable to include, an attachment or reference to a particular document or source.
- 4.3 Do not communicate by email on urgent items that need an immediate response.
- 4.4 During face-to-face communications people rely on both verbal and body language to assist in communicating or understanding the message. It is difficult to convey the same type of information using email. Email communications are more likely to be misinterpreted than face-to-face communication. Especially in more complicated matters, consider whether an email is an appropriate means of communication.
- 4.5 District email addresses are the property of the District, regardless of whether they are being utilized on a District owned or personal computer or mobile device.

- 4.6 Be aware that the intended recipient may forward and share email communications with others. Also, be aware that an email message can easily be posted online or printed in the newspaper.
- 4.7 Emails should be retained in accordance with Nebo School District Policy #EH, Records Access and Management / GRAMA, and are subject to public record requests under GRAMA and subpoenas.

## 5. NEWS MEDIA

If a member of the Board is contacted by the news media for a statement regarding an issue, the Board member should:

- 5.1 Determine whether the news media request can be handled through an individual response or requires an official statement from the Board.
- 5.2 If it is determined that it can be handled by an individual response, first review and become familiar with any information, resources, and materials that may be available related to the news media request. This information may be found in policies, budgets, financial statements, Board meeting minutes, etc. Contact the Superintendent or other District or school administrative officials if assistance is needed to obtain information, resources, and materials.
- 5.3 If it is determined that it requires an official statement from the Board, acknowledge the individual's request and let them know that the matter will be forwarded to the Board President. The official statement will be issued as per Section 2.5 above.
- 5.4 If the Board has already issued an official statement on the matter, the Board member may respond accordingly. A copy of the response to the individual should be sent to the Board President and Superintendent.
- 5.5 If the communication is sent to the entire Board, it is best to acknowledge receipt of the message and let the individual know that a response will be handled by the Board President.

## 6. SCHOOL VISITS

- 6.1 Board members who are parents or grandparents of students enrolled in the schools in Nebo School District have the same access rights to visit schools and classrooms for purposes relating to their children's or grandchildren's education. Likewise, Board members may attend any school activities and events that are open to the general public.
- 6.2 If an individual Board member is interested in visiting schools or classrooms in his/her official capacity as a Board member, he or she should inform the Superintendent of such visits and make arrangements for visitations through the respective school principals. Such official visits shall be regarded as expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. Official visits by Board members will be carried on under Board authorization and with the full knowledge of school administrative staff, including the Superintendent and other applicable supervisors.

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### **EXHIBITS**

Exhibit "A" – Specific Communication Topics / Issues and Protocols

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### **REFERENCES**

Board Governance Handbook, Board of Education of Nebo School District  
Coming to Order – A Guide to Successful School Board Meetings, Utah School Boards Association  
The Key Work of School Boards Guidebook, Nation School Boards Association

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### **FORMS**

None

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**EXHIBIT “A”****SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION TOPICS / ISSUES AND PROTOCOLS**

The following are suggested protocols for addressing specific topics and issues:

1. **District Policies, Goals, and General Governance:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to policy, goal, or general governance issues/concerns of the District, the Board member should:
  - 1.1 Determine whether the issue, concern, or question can be handled through an individual response or requires an official statement from the Board.
  - 1.2 If it is determined that the issue, concern, or question can be handled by an individual response, first review and become familiar with any information, resources, and materials that may be available related to the issue, concern, or question. This information may be found in policies, budgets, financial statements, Board meeting minutes, etc. Contact the Superintendent or other District or school administrative officials if assistance is needed to obtain information, resources, and materials.
  - 1.3 If it is determined that it requires an official statement from the Board, acknowledge the individual's issue, concern, or question, and let them know that the matter will be forwarded to the Board President. The official statement will be issued as per Section 2.3 above.
  - 1.4 If the Board has already issued an official statement on the matter, the Board member may respond accordingly. A copy of the response to the individual should be sent to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - 1.5 If the communication is sent to the entire Board, it is best to acknowledge receipt of the message and let the individual know that a response will be handled by the Board President.
2. **District Department Administration and Operations:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to the administration or operation of a particular District department, the Board member should:
  - 2.1 Acknowledge the individual's issue/concern.
  - 2.2 Inform the individual that their issue/concern falls within the administration of the District and that they should: (a) contact the specific District department's director or supervisor; or (b) in the event the issue/concern directly involves the director or supervisor, then contact that individual's supervisor (in the case of a director, the Superintendent should be contacted; and in the case of a supervisor, the director over that department should be contacted).
  - 2.3 If the individual who contacts the Board member does not feel comfortable making the initial contact with the District administration, offer to forward their issue/concern to the applicable District administrator.
  - 2.4 The Board member should copy any written response or communication to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - 2.5 Upon receiving notice of the issue/concern, the applicable District administrator will appropriately address the issue/concern at the lowest possible level. If necessary, the District administrator may refer and/or involve other individuals to properly address the issue/concern.
  - 2.6 The District administrator responsible for addressing the issue/concern will communicate the status or disposition of the matter to the referring Board member (to the extent reasonably permissible under law and policy), and provide a verbal report or copy of the communication to the Board President and Superintendent, as appropriate.

3. **School Administration and Operations:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to the administration or operation of a particular school, the Board member should:
  - 3.1 Acknowledge the individual's issue/concern.
  - 3.2 Inform the individual that their issue/concern falls within the administration of the school and that they should: (a) contact the school's principal; or (b) in the event the issue/concern directly involves the principal, then contact the Director of Elementary Education or Director of Secondary Education, as applicable.
  - 3.3 If the individual who contacts the Board member does not feel comfortable making the initial contact with the school/District administration, offer to forward their issue/concern to the applicable school/District administrator.
  - 3.4 The Board member should copy any written response or communication to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - 3.5 Upon receiving notice of the issue/concern, the applicable school/District administrator will appropriately address the issue/concern at the lowest possible level. If necessary, the school/District administrator may refer and/or involve other individuals to properly address the issue/concern.
  - 3.6 The school/District administrator responsible for addressing the issue/concern will communicate the status or disposition of the matter to the referring Board member (to the extent reasonably permissible under law and policy), and provide a verbal report or copy of the communication to the Board President and Superintendent, as appropriate.
  
4. **Employment and Personnel Matters:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to employment or other personnel matters, the Board member should:
  - 4.1 Acknowledge the individual's issue/concern.
  - 4.2 Inform the individual that their issue/concern falls within the administration of the school/District and that they should: (a) contact the school's principal (in the event the issue/concern involves an employee at a school); or (b) contact the District department's supervisor (in the event the issue/concern involves an employee at the District). If appropriate, the individual may also be informed that depending upon the nature of their issue/concern, there are applicable laws and District policies which address and govern specific matters and dispute resolution procedures, such as discipline, leave and orderly termination; scope of employment; bullying, discrimination, and harassment; ADA Amendments Act of 2008, Certified, Classified, and Administrative Employee Handbooks, etc.
  - 4.3 If the individual who contacts the Board member does not feel comfortable making the initial contact with the school/District administration, offer to forward their issue/concern to the applicable school/District administrator.
  - 4.4 The Board member should copy any written response or communication to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - 4.5 Upon receiving notice of the issue/concern, the applicable school/District administrator will appropriately address the issue/concern at the lowest possible level. If necessary, the school/District administrator may refer and/or involve other individuals to properly address the issue/concern. Depending upon the nature of the issue/concern, it may be appropriate and advisable to involve applicable District directors and the Director of Human Resources.

- 4.6 The school/District administrator responsible for addressing the issue/concern will communicate the status or disposition of the matter to the referring Board member (to the extent reasonably permissible under law and policy), and provide a verbal report or copy of the communication to the Board President and Superintendent, as appropriate.
5. **Parent and Student Matters:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to parent and student matters, the Board member should:
- 5.1 Acknowledge the individual's issue/concern.
  - 5.2 Inform the individual that their issue/concern falls within the administration of the school and that they should contact the school's principal. If appropriate, the individual may also be informed that depending upon the nature of their issue/concern, there are applicable laws and District policies which address and govern specific matters and dispute resolution procedures, such as academic credit and grading; conduct and discipline; bullying, discrimination, and harassment; school attendance; dress and grooming; participation in athletics and other extracurricular activities; school enrollment, special education, Section 504, etc. In the event the individual's issue/concern is not governed by a specific law or District policy, then the provisions and procedures set forth in Nebo School District Policy #KLD, Parent/Patron Dispute Resolution will govern.
  - 5.3 If the individual who contacts the Board member does not feel comfortable making the initial contact with the school administration, offer to forward their issue/concern to the applicable school administrator.
  - 5.4 The Board member should copy any written response or communication to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - 5.5 Upon receiving notice of the issue/concern, the applicable school administrator will appropriately address the issue/concern at the lowest possible level. If necessary, the school administrator may refer and/or involve other individuals to properly address the issue/concern. Depending upon the nature of the issue/concern, it may be appropriate and advisable to involve the District of Elementary Education or Director of Secondary Education, as applicable.
  - 5.6 The school administrator responsible for addressing the issue/concern will communicate the status or disposition of the matter to the referring Board member (to the extent reasonably permissible under law and policy), and provide a verbal report or copy of the communication to the Board President and Superintendent, as appropriate.
6. **General Patron Matters:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to a general patron matter that does not fall within any of the other specific topics / issues described in this Section 3, the Board member should:
- 6.1 Acknowledge the individual's issue/concern.
  - 6.2 Inform the individual that because their issue/concern is not governed by a specific law or District policy, then the provisions and procedures set forth in Nebo School District Policy #KLD, Parent/Patron Dispute Resolution will govern. A copy of Nebo School District Policy #KLD may be provided to the individual along with instructions that they should contact the appropriate individual(s) and follow the specific dispute resolution guidelines outlined therein.
  - 6.3 If the individual who contacts the Board member does not feel comfortable making the initial contact with the school/District employee or administration as per the dispute resolution guidelines set forth in Nebo School District Policy #KLD, then offer to forward their issue/concern to the applicable school/District employee or administrator.
  - 6.4 The Board member should copy any written response or communication to the Board President and Superintendent.

- 6.5 Upon receiving notice of the issue/concern, the applicable school/District employee or administrator will appropriately address the issue/concern at the lowest possible level by following the dispute resolution guidelines of Nebo School District Policy #KLD.
  - 6.6 The school/District administrator responsible for addressing and making the final decision on the issue/concern will communicate the status or disposition of the matter to the referring Board member (to the extent reasonably permissible under law and policy), and provide a verbal report or copy of the communication to the Board President and Superintendent, as appropriate.
7. **Bidding and Procurement Matters:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to a bidding or procurement matter, the Board member should:
- 7.1 Acknowledge the individual's issue/concern.
  - 7.2 Inform the individual that their issue/concern falls within the administration of the District and that they should contact the Director of Operations.
  - 7.3 If the individual who contacts the Board member does not feel comfortable making the initial contact with District administration, offer to forward their issue/concern to the Director of Operations.
  - 7.4 The Board member should copy any written response or communication to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - 7.5 Upon receiving notice of the issue/concern, the Director of Operations will appropriately address the issue/concern at the lowest possible level. If necessary, the Director of Operations may refer and/or involve other individuals to properly address the issue/concern.
  - 7.6 The Director of Operations will communicate the status or disposition of the matter to the referring Board member (to the extent reasonably permissible under law and policy), and provide a verbal report or copy of the communication to the Board President and Superintendent, as appropriate.
8. **Contract and Legal Matters:** If a member of the Board determines that a communication they have received relates to a contract or other legal matter, the Board member should:
- 8.1 Acknowledge the individual's issue/concern.
  - 8.2 Inform the individual that their issue/concern falls within the administration of the District and that they should contact the District's Legal Counsel.
  - 8.3 If the individual that contacts the Board member does not feel comfortable making the initial contact with the District administration, offer to forward their issue/concern to the District's Legal Counsel.
  - 8.4 The Board member should copy any written response or communication to the Board President and Superintendent.
  - 8.5 Upon receiving notice of the issue/concern, the Districts' Legal Counsel will appropriately address the issue/concern at the lowest possible level. If necessary, the District's Legal Counsel may refer and/or involve other individuals to properly address the issue/concern.
  - 8.6 The District's Legal Counsel will communicate the status or disposition of the matter to the referring Board member (to the extent reasonably permissible under law and policy), and provide a verbal report or copy of the communication to the Board President and Superintendent, as appropriate. Notwithstanding the above, legal communications may be further restricted, disclosed only to certain individuals, or communicated in a certain manner in order to preserve "attorney-client" and/or "work-product" privileges.