

SOUTHWEST INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board Operational Procedures

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Revised March 4, 2024
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BACKGROUND

Purpose

Southwest Independent School District's Board Operating Procedures have been established based on approved legal policies and adopted local policies. Formal adoption and adherence to these procedures ensure the Board of Trustees operates as a cohesive team to accomplish the district's vision, mission, and goals.

The Board President shall ensure these Board Operating Procedures are reviewed, updated as required, and approved.

The roles and responsibilities used in these Board Operating Procedures align with TASB. (<https://www.tasb.org/members/enhance-district/texas-school-board-roles-and-responsibilities.aspx>)

Board Operating Procedures Agreement

These procedures represent a mutual understanding among Trustees and between the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent. These procedures do not supersede the adopted Board Policy; rather, they are intended to serve as a guide.

The Board will review Board Policy (LOCAL and LEGAL) related to Governance and the Board Operating Procedures annually. This review should occur prior to March 30th of each school year and be approved prior to April 30th of each school year.

Any Board member may propose additions, changes, or modifications to these procedures. A Board Policy can be brought before the Board in an open session as an agenda item. The policy can then be reviewed and discussed in an open meeting for possible revision.

A supermajority of the team (5 of 7 trustees**) must agree to any changes to the Board Operating Procedures.

I. Candidate/New Board Member Orientation

- A. The Superintendent will conduct the District Orientation for newly elected Board members. This orientation should include sessions with personnel from Curriculum and Instruction, Business and Finance, Administration and Human Resources, and Special Programs. The Superintendent will also provide information regarding TASB New Board Member Training.
- B. The Superintendent will coordinate meetings between new Board members and members of the Superintendent's Senior Staff.
- C. The Board President will schedule a Board/Superintendent team-building retreat following each election
- D. The Board President shall assign a mentor to each trustee who is new to the Board.

II. Required Board Training

- A. Trustees shall complete all required training and submit documentation upon completion of each training. Current Board training sessions are listed on the TEA webpage [<https://tea.texas.gov/health-safety-and-discipline/school-boards/school-board-member-training/school-board-trustee-training>].

III. Meetings

Regular meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of each month. Meeting dates may be adjusted due to district-approved holidays.

- A. Patrons addressing the Board
 - 1. Patrons may address the Board during the Citizens to Be Heard portion of the agenda or may speak on a specific agenda item by registering prior to the meeting. A designated staff member will maintain the registration or sign-up list
- B. Guidelines for addressing the Board shall be read by a staff member or the Board President prior to Citizens to Be Heard.
 - 1. Comments shall not exceed three (3) minutes for general public comments. The presiding officer may adjust the allotted time to accommodate the number of speakers; however, comments shall not be limited to less than one (1) minute per speaker. [See Policy BED (LOCAL)]

2. The Board will accept written as well as oral information.
3. Groups of more than three people wishing to address the same item will be encouraged to appoint one person to represent the group's views to the Board.
4. With the consent of the Board, the Board President may limit the number of people addressing the Board on the same topic.

C. Board response to patrons addressing the Board [See Policy BED (LOCAL)]

1. Board members may refer patron concerns to the Superintendent for review and handling by the appropriate staff.
2. Board members may present specific facts or existing policies.
3. The Board shall not deliberate, discuss, or take action on any subject not listed on the meeting agenda.
4. The Board President may direct the Superintendent to investigate matters and report findings back to the Board at a designated meeting or through other appropriate communication.
5. Board members requesting additional information shall direct those requests to the Superintendent
6. The Board President shall not permit negative or personally disparaging comments regarding individuals.

D. The Board shall use parliamentary procedures, Roberts Rules of Order, newly revised, as a guide for the conduct of Board business. [See Policy BE (LOCAL)]

1. Discussions shall be addressed to the Board President and then the entire membership.
2. Discussions shall be directed solely to the business under current deliberation.
3. The Board may set a time limit for any specific Board Agenda item. If the Board has set a time limitation on a specific Board Agenda item and that time has elapsed, the Board President shall halt discussions.
4. Aside from these limitations, the Board President shall not interfere with debate so long as members wish to address themselves to an item under consideration.

E. Placing Agenda Items on a Posted Board Meeting Agenda

1. The deadline for submitting items for inclusion on the agenda shall be the **fifth** working day prior to the board meeting.
 - a. All submissions must be provided in writing by the established deadline.
 - b. Submissions must include the proposed wording for the agenda item; however, wording may be revised to ensure alignment with Board policies and agenda formatting guidelines.
2. In consultation with the Board President, the Superintendent's Office shall prepare the agenda for Board meetings.
3. The Superintendent shall include on the preliminary Board Agenda any subject that has been timely submitted by a Board member.
4. The Board President shall have final determination regarding agenda items included on the official and final Board meeting agenda.
5. The Board President shall ensure that topics requested by the Board or individual Board members are either placed on the agenda or scheduled for deliberation at an appropriate future meeting.
6. The Board President shall not remove a subject requested by a Board member from the agenda without the specific authorization of that Board member.

F. Discussion of Motions

1. All discussions shall be directed solely to the business currently under deliberation.
2. All Board members will be recognized by the Board President prior to giving their comments.
3. The Board President will allow each member an opportunity to speak before giving the floor to a Trustee who has already made comments about the agenda item.
4. Trustees shall be courteous to each other and the patrons when addressing the Board.
5. Trustees shall refrain from making statements to each other, to citizens addressing the Board, or to the media that would be interpreted as critical of other team members. Statements should be made based on why Trustees personally support or oppose a motion, not in response to comments made by other team members.

6. Except in cases of emergency, Trustees should not be requested by the Superintendent or members of staff to vote on an item on which there has not been adequate time to review all material. Whenever possible, all materials and information should be provided in advance rather than on the day of the meeting.
7. Once a vote is taken by the Board, each decision is an action by the whole and binding upon each member and should be supported by each member.

IV. Communication

- A. The Superintendent, Board President, and Trustees will strive to make sure that all information is shared equally with all Trustees.
 - a. The Superintendent and Board President (or their designee) shall meet by the Friday before a Board meeting to review agenda items.
 - b. This is not an open meeting, and no other board members will be present.
- B. The Board will officially communicate with the community through the district communication platforms, such as the SW Points of Pride newsletter.
- C. Individual Board members will have the opportunity to contact Senior Staff members for general information with prior notice to the Superintendent. If the request pertains to a patron or employee complaint or individual concern of a Trustee, the Superintendent should be notified that that information is being requested.

To facilitate the required tracking under Texas Education Code section 11.1512, the board adopts the following operating procedures:

- a. Tracking is not required by Section 11.1512 when a board member requests records or a report during a board meeting.
- b. If a board member, acting in his or her official capacity, requests specific records maintained by the District from the Superintendent outside of a board meeting, the Superintendent will respond by informing the board member that the request is subject to being tracked under Section 11.1512 and providing the member with the appropriate form for a board member's request for records.
- c. If the board member proceeds with the request and completes the form, the administration will track the request and respond in accordance with administrative regulations. For tracking purposes, the "cost" of the request will be calculated as if the board member requested one complete set of the records, even if duplicates are provided to the rest of the Board. The cost will be calculated using the Texas Attorney General's rules for charges under the Texas Public Information Act. No cost will actually be charged to the board member.
- d. If the board member's written request seeks access to records that are confidential under the Texas Public Information Act or other law, the Superintendent may provide access to the records in full, provided that the board member is making the request in his or her official capacity. If the district provides records or documents, additional security controls may be required.

- e. If a board member wishes to request district records in a personal capacity, as opposed to his or her official capacity as a board member, the member may use the district's procedure for requests for public information by the public. The district will respond to the request following its standard procedures for all public information requests.
- D. Individual members shall not direct or require District employees to prepare reports derived from an analysis of information in existing District records or to create a new record compiled from information in existing District records. Requests to the Superintendent regarding the preparation of reports shall be made by board action.
- E. Requests from individual Trustees for anything related to the operation of the school district should be directed to the Superintendent. All requests for information will be shared with all Board members for transparency.
- F. Board members will communicate concerns or questions about board agenda items prior to the board meeting through phone calls or face-to-face meetings.
- G. Board Members may respond to phone calls and written correspondence, including email, text messages, or social media from constituents, but should bear in mind:
 - a. that any such response may be subject to the Public Information Act requests and may be applicable to the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 - b. Board Member retains the right to respond to an individual, but must understand that such communication may be interpreted as being an official statement of the Board.
 - c. that any response or participation in concerns may force a board member to recuse themselves from future grievance proceedings.
- H. Any Trustee who chooses to participate in social media interactions with patrons of the district should add a disclaimer to their account that indicates that *their posts on social media are their individual opinions and do not represent the official position of the Board or District*. In addition, Board Members should remember the rapid nature of social media communication and always hold themselves to an expectation of professionalism in any and all communications.
- I. Requests for information pertaining to agenda items shall be submitted as early as possible to allow the administration time to prepare. The Superintendent shall inform the requesting member if their request cannot be complied with prior to the meeting, and the information shall be prepared as soon as possible.
- J. Any reports prepared for one member shall be delivered to the remaining members.
- K. Any correspondence on behalf of the Board should be viewed and approved by the Board prior to submission for publication.

- L. A Trustee should be aware of the implications if an individual Trustee submits a letter for publication. While a Trustee maintains all rights of a private citizen, the public may interpret the private opinion as expressing a SWISD official position.
- M. A trustee who wishes to examine a new initiative that would impact district resources (budget, staff time, etc.) should direct the idea to the Superintendent for review. The Superintendent will review the idea or direct it to staff for review.

V. School Visits

- A. Individual Trustees, in their capacity as Board members, are welcome to visit any school or District facility. The trustees shall provide advance notice. Trustees will check in with the principal upon arriving at a campus, except when on campus in their role as a parent/grandparent/spouse.
- B. Outside of a member's official capacity as a Trustee, the Trustee has the same access to any building or District Facility as the general public.
- C. Board members will be notified of special district events, meetings, and campus-level events by the Superintendent's office.

VI. Complaints

- A. The Board member will refer the citizen to the appropriate person/chain of command or to the complaint resolution procedure as described in the Student-Parent Handbook or Board policy.
- B. If the request or complaint is considered sensitive, the Board members shall inform the Superintendent or other administrator through a summary of the situation and all pertinent information. [See Policy BBE (LOCAL)]

VII. Confidentiality of Materials

- A. Board Packet information marked "For Board Members Only" or "Confidential" is not to be shared with family members, community members, or school employees.
- B. All items shared in closed sessions are considered confidential unless otherwise listed in Board agenda minutes or read aloud in open session.

VIII. Board Travel [See BBG (LOCAL)]

- A. Attendance at required training sessions and the annual educational state and national school board conventions qualifies for reimbursement.
- B. School district rules for reimbursement apply, including limitations on costs per day, turning in itemized receipts, and allowable costs for travel.
- C. All travel reimbursement requests must be turned in at least 1 month after the date of travel.

IX. Creation of Board Activity Calendar

- A. The Superintendent's office shall maintain a Board Activity Calendar, which lists campus and district activities to which Trustees are invited. Trustees are requested to notify the Superintendent's secretary of planned attendance at any of the scheduled activities so that Board representation may be coordinated among Trustees to the extent appropriate.
- B. Board members will only have access to school or district events open to the general public; no special access will be allowed unless otherwise organized by the Superintendent.
- C. Board members are asked to stay in the designated areas during school and district events, and may not have special access to areas not designated by the Superintendent.

X. Board Officers and Terms

- A. The Board will elect a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary who shall be members of the Board. This will occur annually during the regularly scheduled May meeting. [See BDAA (LOCAL)]
- B. Board Officers shall serve for a term of one (1) year or until a successor is elected by a majority vote of members in attendance. Officers may succeed themselves in the office.
- C. Prior to being considered for the position of Board President, a trustee must serve on the Board for a minimum of one year.

XI. Electioneering

- A. Board members may not use state or local funds or other resources of the district to electioneer for or against any candidate, measure, or political party.
 - 1. District resources include monetary, District building and property, District materials, and favorable access granted from being a Trustee that is not granted to community members.

2. An officer or employee of a district may not spend or authorize the spending of public funds for a communication describing a measure if the communication contains information that the officer or employee knows is false, and is sufficiently substantial and important as to be reasonably likely to influence a voter to vote for or against the measure.

XII. Action Committees

- A. The Board President shall appoint Board Members to special committees created by the Board to fulfill specific assignments.
- B. The function of committees shall be fact-finding, deliberative, and advisory, but not administrative.
- C. Special Committees shall report their findings to the Board and shall be dissolved upon completion of the assigned task or a vote of the Board.
- D. The Superintendent and Board President are ex officio members of all Board committees unless changed through a Board action.

SWISD BOARD of TRUSTEE NORMS

As Board of Trustees, We Declare Our Commitment to Growth, Service, and Results

Board Trustee Values/Beliefs

We will develop a shared vision based on the core values of the district and community while respecting our individual views.

Board Trustee/Superintendent Communication

We will communicate effectively as a team of 8 to focus on maximum achievement for ALL.

Board Trustee Interaction with Each Other

We will model respectful dialogue and contribute to an atmosphere of trust and openness.

Board Trustee/Staff Interactions

We will request all information through agreed-upon channels and in keeping with our governance.

Board Members in the Public Sphere

We will conduct ourselves with integrity and represent the district at all times. We ALL lead by example.

Community/Parent Engagement

We will respectfully inform, educate, and engage our community. If concerns arise, they will be directed to the appropriate personnel.

Board Preparation/Development

We will recognize the importance of professional growth and development and agree to participate in experiences designed to further our knowledge and understanding. Learning is continuous and lifelong.

We will set aside time in the fall, annually, for self-evaluation and to review our progress toward adhering to our agreed-upon norms and beliefs.

We will study the agenda prior to the meeting and clarify questions in advance.

Robert's Rules of Order

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for conducting orderly meetings that accomplish goals fairly. Benefits of the parliamentary procedure include the following:

- Justice and courtesy for all
- Maintenance of order
- Consideration of one item at a time
- All sides get heard
- Ability for each member to provide input
- Establishes majority rule
- A quorum must be present for business to be conducted
- Personal remarks or side discussions during debate are out of order
- Only one question at a time may be considered, and only one person may have the floor at any one time
- Silence gives consent. Those who do not vote allow the decision to be made by those who do vote.
- The Chair should always remain impartial.
- Basic Definitions Motion – A formal proposal made to bring a subject before an assembly for its consideration and action.
- Begins with “I move that...” Second – A statement by a member who agrees that the motion made by another member be considered. Stated as “Second,” or “I second the motion.”

Amendment – Before the vote is taken on a motion, it may be amended by:

- Striking out words
- Inserting or adding words
- Striking out words and inserting others in their place
- Substituting one (1) paragraph or resolution for another Presiding officer/Chair – The individual who facilitates the meeting, usually the President. In the absence of the President, the Vice President is next. If neither are present, the Secretary calls the meeting to order and conducts an election for a Chairman Pro Tem (a presiding officer for that meeting only).

Role of the Presiding Officer:

- To introduce the business in proper order per the agenda
- To recognize speakers
- To determine if a motion is in order
- To keep the discussion focused on the pending motion
- To maintain order
- To put motions to a vote and announce results, General procedure for Handling a Main Motion
- A member must obtain the floor by being recognized by the chair

- Member makes a main motion
- A motion must be seconded by another member before it can be considered
- If the motion is in order, the chair will restate the motion and open debate
- The maker of a motion has the right to speak first in debate

The main motion is debated along with any secondary motions that are debatable.

- Debate on Subsidiary, Privileged, and Incidental motions (if debatable or amendable) takes precedence over debate on the main motion and must be decided before debate on the main motion can continue.
- Debate is closed when: Discussion has ended, or A 2/3 vote closes the debate.
- The chair restates the motion, and if necessary, clarifies the consequences of affirmative and negative votes
- The chair calls for a vote by asking, “All in favor?” Those in favor say “Aye.” Then asking, “All opposed?” Those opposed will say “no.”
- The chair announces the result General rules of Debate for small Boards
- All discussion must be relevant to the immediately pending question
- No member should speak more than twice to each debatable motion. The second time takes place after everyone wishing to debate the motion has had an opportunity to speak once
- All remarks should be addressed to the chair – no cross-debate is permitted
- Debate must address issues, not personalities
- When possible, the chair should let the floor alternate between those speaking in support and those speaking in opposition to the motion
- Members may not disrupt the assembly
- Rules of debate can be changed by a 2/3 vote or general consent without objection