

Grady County Schools System Governance Team Operating Protocol

The School Board of the Grady County Schools System (GSS) wishes to be thought of by staff members, families, community, business and fellow public servants in the following manner.

- An effective team
- Shared beliefs about what is possible for all students
- Accountable
- Decisive
- Informed
- Professional
- Responsible stewards
- Ambassadors for excellence in school governance

For the purpose of enhancing teamwork among members of the board and between the board and the administration, we the members of the Grady County Schools System (GCSS) Senior Governance Team (board and superintendent) hereby publicly commit ourselves collectively and individually to the following operating protocol:

I. All Children

The GCSS Governance Team

Have a strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.

II. The Board of Education

A. Governance Roles and Responsibilities

The GCSS Governance Team agrees they:

- a. Are accountability driven and are committed to spending less time on operational issues and maximum time focused on policies to improve student achievement.
- b. Will support the district policies currently in place.
- c. Will continue to annually study and review policies for effectiveness.
- d. Will appropriately engage key stakeholders in the development of deletion of policies and policy revisions.
- e. Will maintain and apply district policies consistently while being cognizant of and recognizing the potential uniqueness of any given situation.
- f. Will be fiscally responsible stewards of finances.
- g. Will be accountable for managing resources and aligning finances to meet the goals defined in the district's strategic plan. Lead as a united team, exemplifying strong collaboration and mutual trust.

- h. Will serve as ambassadors for the Grady County Schools System and utilize interactions with stakeholders as an opportunity to educate on the strategic plan initiatives and the process for providing input to the work of the district and its priorities.

B. Strategic planning

The GCSS Governance Team is committed to:

- a. A vision of high expectations for student achievement, quality instruction and clearly defined goals through a strategic plan toward that The GCSS Governance Team vision.
- b. Annually develop, adopt, and advocate for the implement the work plan in support of the GCSS Strategic Plan.
- c. Embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.

C. Self-assessment/evaluation

The GCSS Governance Team agrees that:

- a. Annually, the Governance Team will self-assess its performance against the Georgie State Standards for School Boards and the Code of Ethics.
- b. Annually, the Governance Team will sign certification of individual and collective commitment to the Georgia State Standards for School Boards and the Code of Ethics.
- c. The Board will set clear goals for themselves based on the results of the self-assessment/evaluation.

D. Conduct as a Board Member

1. Committee of the Whole

The GCSS Governance Team

- a. The Board acts only as one body. Individual Board members do not have authority to act unilaterally. Only the Board as a whole has authority.
- b. An individual board member will not take unilateral action. The Board Chair will communicate the position(s) of the Board to the Superintendent on controversial issues.

2. Decision making processes

The GCSS Governance Team is committed to:

- a. Following the collective decision making process by supporting decisions made by the board and/or the administrative team once a decision is made.
- b. The Superintendent and Administrative Team will support the majority decision(s).

E. School Visits

The GCSS Governance Team agrees that:

- a. All school visits should be conducted for a specific purpose.

- b. Board members may visit schools when invited by school administration or district staff.
- c. Board members may visit schools by making arrangements with district or school administrators at least 24 hours in advance.
- d. Board members must follow visitor procedures.
- e. This protocol does not preclude Board members from attending school functions as a parent should his/her child attends that school or a community member.

F. Professional Development

The GCSS Governance Team is committed to:

- a. Pursuing additional professional development to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for our improvement efforts.
- b. Being recognized as a Standard Bearer for excellence in school governance.

III. Board of Education and Superintendent Relationship

A. Chief Executive Officer

The GCSS Governance Team agrees that:

- a. The Superintendent is a key member of the Governance team, although functioning in the role as the Chief Executive Officer of the school district.
- b. The Board supports the Superintendent to act as the Chief Executive Officer of the school district, charged with handling all operational issues and implementing the board-approved policies and strategic plan.
- c. The Board is responsible for setting the Superintendent's annual performance goals in alignment with the strategic plan and providing feedback to the Superintendent by-annually through a formative and summative evaluation process.

B. Chain of Command

The GCSS Governance Team agrees that:

- a. The last stop, not the first, will be the Board. We agree to follow the chain of command and insist that our staff do the same.
- b. While the Board is eager to listen to its constituents and staff, each inquiry about the day to day operations is to be referred to the person who can properly and expeditiously address the issue.
- c. Requests made by Board members that will likely require considerable time or have political implications will go through the whole board via the Board Chair to the Superintendent.
- d. All personnel complaints and criticisms received by the Board or its individual members will be directed to the Superintendent.

IV. Communication

The GCSS Governance Team agrees that:

A. An Effective School Board exemplifies a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and is committed to establishing and maintaining a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

B. Communication among Board Members/Superintendent:

- a. The Superintendent will communicate with all Board members regularly.
- b. When a Board member has information or data to share with the other Board members and/or staff, that Board member will provide the information or data to the Superintendent who will distribute to pertinent parties.
- c. All stakeholders' questions', input and discussion should be directed to the Superintendent who will communicate them as appropriate to the Board.
- d. Board members may attend events/activities for the community, but should refrain from gathering as a quorum or openly discussing board business except during called board meetings.
- e. Expression of ideas, opinions and intentions to stakeholders are prefaced or clarified as personal expression, and not representation of the Board's ideas, opinions or intentions.

C. Communication with the News Media:

- a. Board members will be kept informed of incidents and district position and or position statements.
- b. Communication by Board members to the news media should be helpful to the District and not harmful.
- c. The Board Chair is the official spokesperson for the Board of Education.
- d. The official spokesperson for the District is the Superintendent of his/her designee.

D. Communication with staff:

- a. The Superintendent is the only employee that works for and reports directly to the Board of Education.
- b. Board Members may always contact the Superintendent.
- c. Incidental questions for staff members should be copied to the Superintendent to ensure that each Board member has the same information.

E. Meeting protocol

The GCSS Governance Team agrees that:

- a. Conduct at a board meeting is very important. We desire to have a legacy of a well-functioning and effective board. We agree to avoid words and actions that create a negative impression of an individual, the board or the district.

- b. There should be no surprises at board meetings. Requests for an item to be placed on the agenda should be submitted to the Board Chair who will seek input from the whole board prior to inclusion on the agenda.
- c. We will be opened minded and willing to “deeply listen” to all speakers/presenters.
- d. We can disagree and will do so using common courtesy and respect for others.
- e. We will not react to impromptu complaints on the spot, but will assure any individual(s) that the school district will follow-up.
- f. Board Member commendations should focus on current students, staff, parents and/or other present-day stakeholder support. Recognition of GCSS alumni should be directed to the Alumni link on the district webpage.
- g. Board meeting will be conducted using Robert’s Rules of Order.
- h. Board Members should look to the Board Chair to be recognized to speak during Board meetings.
- i. We will be efficient and effective; long board meetings must be avoided. Points are to be made in as words as possible; speeches at board meetings will be minimal. If a board member believes she/he is lacking information or has question, either the Superintendent or the Board Chair is to be contacted prior to the meeting.
- j. Board meetings are for decision-making, action and votes, not endless discussion. We agree to move to the questions when discussion becomes repetitive.
- k. The Board will not play to the audience. We agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and attend to our fellow Board members. Facts and information needed from the administration will be referred to the Superintendent.
- l. Executive/closed sessions will be held only for appropriate subjects. Executive sessions will be held only when specific needs arise. Board members will be extremely sensitive to the legal ramifications of their meetings and comments in executive/closed sessions.