

Irvington Union Free School District



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IUFSO GOVERNANCE TEAM HANDBOOK

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IUFSB GOVERNANCE TEAM HANDBOOK

The purpose of the Irvington Governance Team Handbook is to provide a helpful and clear resource for members of the Board of Education (“BOE”) and Superintendent of the Irvington Union Free School District (“District”) (together who form the “Governance Team”) to inform the broader school community of the general practices by which the BOE and Superintendent work to fulfill their responsibilities.

This handbook is useful for new BOE members and board veterans who seek to work effectively with professional educators and the public to fulfill the District’s mission, vision, goals and strategic plans. Together with the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, the Administrators, and other staff members, the BOE and Superintendent strive to work collaboratively to promote outstanding instruction and student achievement, well-being, and civic participation, in each of the District’s schools: Dows Lane, Main Street School, the Middle School and the High School (the “Schools”). The Superintendent and BOE have distinct and separate roles, responsibilities, and legal authority in carrying out the District’s goals but must operate interdependently as members of the District’s Governance Team. Together, the Superintendent complements the BOE’s legislative, fiduciary, and judicial functions.

This manual is intended to outline how the board wishes to conduct business as a body. A violation of any provision of this procedure does not necessarily affect the validity or legality of any board action otherwise properly adopted.



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I. Roles, Responsibilities & Protocols

A. Board of Education: Overview

The BOE is a public corporate body that exists separate from its members. Regardless of changes to its membership, the BOE can act only by a majority vote of the BOE or a legally constituted quorum of the BOE (four Board members for a seven member Board). The Board shall oversee District personnel, affairs, and properties in accordance with its limited power and duties assigned by the New York State (“NYS”) constitution laws, regulations, and judicial decisions. The Board primarily acts as a policy setting body and delegates the administration of schools to the Superintendent and staff.

B. The Role of the Board of Education

The governance role of the BOE is to focus on end results, ensure that the District’s established mission and vision are being upheld, approve and monitor the District’s short- and long-term goals, update and monitor policy, and vote on recommendations made by the Superintendent. As members of the Governance Team, the BOE should be asking the following: *What are we doing? Why? How does it benefit instruction and student achievement, wellbeing, civic participation? How much will it or has it cost? How well are we doing?”*

1. In carrying out its responsibilities, the BOE, as an entity, shall:
2. primarily act as a policy-setting body with a focus on the District’s vision, goals and policy (What? Why? How Well? How Much?). BOE policies provide general, ongoing guidance and direction to the District;
3. adopt long term District goals based on the District’s Strategic Plan. The BOE shall monitor and review the progress of the District goals and strategies based upon an adopted timetable and reevaluate and adjust, as necessary;
4. approve annual District goals that are aligned with the District’s Strategic Plan as developed by the Administration and adopted by the BOE. The BOE shall receive progress updates of the annual District goals from the Administration based upon an adopted timetable. Goal discussions must occur at public meetings;
5. delegate the administration and management of the schools to the Superintendent, not directly run the District’s day-to-day management of the schools;



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6. delegate to the Superintendent the responsibility for achieving the District's short-term and long-term goals, as demonstrated by evidence-based outcomes.
7. represent the school community and work to build public trust and support for the Schools and public education;
8. be accountable for the fiscal management of the District, including its allocation and alignment of financial resources, review and adoption of the budget, and authorization, investment and borrowing of funds, as necessary and required under the law. The BOE shall be transparent and welcome input from the community in the review and understanding of the District's budget and financial resources;
9. require the District's administrative rules and regulations to be consistent with its policies and Open Meetings Law;
10. as "public officers" under the law, take an oath of office to uphold the law and to faithfully discharge their duties;
11. understand that BOE decisions are binding on all Board members regardless of how an each individual Board member votes;
12. ensure that individual BOE members are members of a collective body and cannot act on behalf of the BOE or District without support of the majority of the BOE or quorum of the BOE. All BOE members have equal power and authority when it comes to decision making;
13. annually evaluate itself, its practices and protocols to safeguard compliance with BOE policies;
14. aim to reach decisions through consensus;
15. recognize that authority to act rests with the entire Board or a quorum of the Board and that business can only be transacted at official meetings;
16. recruit and hire the Superintendent;
17. evaluate the performance of the Superintendent annually during the fiscal District year, including meeting as a BOE to discuss it prior to providing written comments and then providing a written evaluation to the Superintendent;
18. work with Superintendent to develop goals, monitor or participate in negotiations, and ratify all Collective Bargaining Agreements;
19. work with Superintendent to develop priorities when hiring for District administrative positions, including interviewing finalists;



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20. approve all terms and conditions of employment contracts and benefits, including granting tenure; and
21. provide sufficient alignment of resources for professional development programs for administrators and staff to meet District's vision, goals, and policies.

C. The Role of the Individual Board Member

Each individual BOE member shall:

1. serve as a member of a corporate body and have no authority as an individual BOE member unless supported by a quorum of the BOE or the full BOE;
2. attend all BOE meetings. The BOE functions as one body comprised of individual members and, as such, is only able to be truly successful if all members are participating, debating, deliberating and voting in public. If a BOE member must be absent, he or she shall properly notify the BOE President of unavailability or an absence as soon as possible;
3. serve as a member of the district governance team along with all BOE members and the Superintendent;
4. focus on policy, vision and goals, and rely on the administrative team for problem solving;
5. participate in new board member orientation and other in-house education and training offered by the Superintendent; commit to ongoing professional development; and strive to be well informed about governance, policies, practices and protocols in the District;
6. endeavor to make the best decisions on behalf of all students with a commitment to the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obligation;
7. serve as the 'eyes and ears' to the community and promptly share all relevant information learned as a BOE member with the BOE President who will circulate to the full BOE and the Superintendent;
8. only direct the Superintendent to work on a project, via the BOE president, and with the support of a majority of the BOE or the full BOE;
9. follow Open Meetings Law, the BOE-adopted governance protocols and processes, and District policies;
10. BOE members will strive to include the full BOE and Superintendent in BOE communications for the purposes of transparency and mutuality and exclusively



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use the BOE-assigned District email address for all BOE-related information, requests, or questions shared with the full BOE and Superintendent, avoiding use of personal email and text messages;

11. participate in at least one BOE-standing committee and attend all such committee meetings;
12. may serve as a liaison to one or more District partner organization (Village, PTSA, IEF, District-wide Committee, WPSBA, BOCES, etc.)
13. send BOE meeting information requests to the BOE President and Vice President (the "Executive Board") and Superintendent ahead of the board meeting and respect the "no surprise" rule;
14. be well informed about District policy, procedures, facilities, financials, and all other relevant information;
15. strive to attend student, District and community events, when available, and BOE sponsored programs;
16. participate in outside educational programs (NYSSBA, WPSBA, BOCES, etc.) and legislative meetings;
17. consistently model mutual respect and civility;
18. guide community members to follow the chain of command (i.e., teacher, principal or assistant principal, Superintendent, BOE);
19. clarify when speaking as a parent or private citizen and not as a BOE member;
20. always inform staff when they are acting as a parent advocating for their children attending District schools;
21. never disclose, allude to, or reference confidential information when speaking with any member of the school community, the public, staff, etc. (unless in Executive Session).

D. BOE Officer Roles: President and Vice-President (the Executive Board)

The BOE President shall provide leadership for the BOE and seek to exercise good judgment in carrying out the District's vision and planning its short term and long term goals. The BOE President must be not only a good leader but also a navigator, planner, organizer, communicator, interpreter, confidant, liaison, conscience, caretaker and



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troubleshooter. The BOE President serves as a liaison between the BOE and the Superintendent. The Vice President shall act in the President's capacity in the event of the President's absence. Together, the President and Vice President comprise the Executive Board of the BOE. The Vice President should, as a matter of course and habit, be present in all phone calls and meetings with the Superintendent to ensure that the Executive Board is receiving information as a single body.

1. Election of BOE Officers
 - a) Officers of the BOE shall be nominated and elected by the simple majority of the Board at its Annual Organizational Meeting for a term of one (1) year. They will take their oath as officers at this meeting along with newly elected members.
 - b) The elected officers of the BOE of Education are:
 - i) President
 - ii) Vice President
2. The President shall:
 - a) conduct meetings of the BOE in an orderly fashion and in accordance with parliamentary procedure to ensure that meeting discussion stays focused on agenda topics;
 - b) welcome the participation of community members at BOE meetings. Set the tone of cooperation and mutual respect while at the same time ensure that order is maintained, and business before the BOE is handled efficiently and in a fair and dignified manner;
 - c) speak on behalf of the BOE to reflect the Board's intent and District's position when answering questions at public meetings or when replying to emails from community members; written responses on behalf of the BOE to community members should be shared with the BOE in advance when the content of the reply is substantive;
 - d) call special meetings as necessary or on request. Any BOE member may call a special meeting of the Board according to Education Law, 1606;
 - e) appoint committees of the BOE which is generally determined at the annual Organizational Meeting, and subsequently appoint members to the committees,, taking into account each BOE members' strengths, interests and talents;
 - f) serve ex-officio as a member of all committees;
 - g) execute documents approved by a vote of the BOE;
 - h) write or delegate the writing of a regular community newsletter ("Board Briefs") to another BOE member and share a draft with the BOE prior to distribution. Responsibility for drafting the newsletter shall be determined in conjunction with appointment of committees



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- i) perform the usual and ordinary duties of the office, such as speaking on behalf of the BOE at events, including Back to School, Commencement, or other events;
 - j) make sure all BOE members have equal and timely access to the same information, whether by email, phone or in person;
 - k) hold a standing meeting, along with the Vice President, with the Superintendent to share questions from the BOE, review topics, and to help plan agendas for upcoming BOE meetings. This meeting is typically at a standing day and time so BOE members know when they can send their questions to the President and when to anticipate the President's update;
 - l) promptly and consistently send to the BOE, or delegate to the Vice-President to send, an update in writing of 'just the facts' and not sensitive material or opinion posts of each standing or substantive meeting with the Superintendent;
 - m) set the standard for all BOE members to only use their BOE email address for BOE-related communications (avoiding personal email or text messages), to never allow a communication involving a quorum of the BOE to evolve into a defacto meeting to include only 'the facts' while excluding personal commentary and/or confidential information, and to only engage in decision making at posted board meetings;
 - n) serve as the liaison for the BOE to the district's counsel regarding the superintendent, legal matters, collective bargaining, and other appropriate matters;
 - o) serve with the Superintendent as the media contacts for the District;
 - p) lead the Superintendent's annual evaluation process in accordance with the Procedures for the Evaluation of the Superintendent, which is on file in the District Office.
3. The Vice President, in the absence of the President, shall:
- a) act in the President's capacity in the event of the President's absence and fulfil all of the usual and ordinary duties and responsibilities of the office identified above;
 - b) be present, to the extent possible, when the President meets with the Superintendent of Schools pertaining District business, such as the development of Board of Education meeting agendas.

E. Key Statutes Governing BOE

The Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) governs rights of access to government records, while the Open Meetings Law concerns the conduct of meetings of public bodies and the right to attend those meetings.



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The Open Meetings Law, often known as the “Sunshine Law”, gives the public the right to attend meetings of public bodies, listen to the debates and watch the decision making process in action. It requires public bodies to provide notice of the times and places of meetings, and keep minutes of all action taken. Because the school boards are public bodies, the Open Meetings Law requires school boards meetings where school district business will be discussed to be open to the public. Public business includes not only binding votes of the board, but also any activity that is preliminary to such a vote or involves consideration of a matter than could be the subject of board action.

School district’s records are subject to the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) and the law defines “record” as “any information kept, held, filed, produced or reproduced by, with or for an agency...in any physical form whatsoever...” except records or portions of records that fall within one of several categories of deniable records.

1. Board of Education as body corporate (Education Law § 1701)
2. Open Meetings Law (Public Officers Law § 100-111)
3. Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) (Public Officers Law § 84-90)
4. Concept of Quorum (General Construction Law § 41)
5. As a public officer, a school board member takes an oath of office to uphold the law and to faithfully discharge his/her duties (Public Officers Law § 10). As stated above, a school board is a corporate public body and as such can act only by a majority of the BOE. Individual BOE members have no inherent powers to act by reason of holding office.
6. Generally, the BOE deals with numerous issues, some of which may not be disclosed publicly. This duty to maintain confidentiality provides, “no municipal officer may disclose confidential information acquired by him in the course of his official duties or use such information to further his personal interests” (General Municipal Law § 805-a). An Executive Session is a portion of the school board meeting that is not open to the public. It can take place only upon a majority vote of the BOE taken at an open meeting. Executive sessions are permitted for only a limited number of specific purposes and with certain limited exceptions, no official action can be taken on issues discussed in executive session without first returning to open session. (Educ. Law § 1708 and Public Officers Law § 102-105.) As stated in Section II D, permissible executive session topics include:
 - a) matters that will imperil the public safety if disclosed;
 - b) matters that may disclose the identity of law enforcement agency or informer;
 - c) information pertaining to a current or pending criminal investigation or prosecution;
 - d) discussion regarding proposed, pending, or current litigation;



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- e) collective bargaining under the provision of the Taylor Law;
- f) the medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation or matters leading to the appointment or employment or promotion or demotion or discipline or suspension or removal of a particular person or corporation;
- g) the preparation, grading, or administration of exams;
- h) proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof;

F. The Role of the Superintendent:

The governance role of the Superintendent is to focus on the means, determine the strategies to achieve short- and long-term goals, develop regulations for policy implementation, document and report progress, and recommend courses of action to address the stated goals. As a member of the Governance Team, the Superintendent is responsible for addressing the following questions: *How are we doing the work to achieve the determined goals and mandates? When and where are we doing such work? Who is doing such work?"*

In carrying out his/her responsibilities, the Superintendent shall:

1. provide visionary, inspirational and ethical leadership to enable the District to continually improve the educational experiences of all students;
2. serve as the Chief Executive Officer and be responsible for the administration of the District, specifically, Academics & Curriculum, Finance, Operations, Human Resources, Student Achievement, and District Vision;
3. enforce all provisions of the law and all regulations and rules relating to the management of the Schools;
4. recommend and carry out all policies adopted by the BOE and ensure that the rules, regulations and directives of the BOE are enforced;
5. lead instruction and provide information to the BOE on such matters as standards, curricula, assessment, and other matters related to student learning progress;
6. prepare, and assist with the preparation of, periodic reports by administrators for the BOE to keep track of the progress of each BOE short-term and long-term goal-related activity or project, and as requested by the BOE;



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7. hold a standing meeting, along with the President and Vice President of the BOE to answer questions from the BOE, review topics, and to help plan agendas for upcoming BOE meetings;
8. attend BOE meetings;
9. provide regular weekly updates to the BOE;
10. hold administrative and teaching staff accountable for attaining the short term and long term goals and objectives of the BOE as set forth in the Strategic Plan;
11. assess the needs of the Schools, including capital improvements and repairs of facilities and fields, bond acquisitions, security and emergency requirements, transportation services, etc., and develop plans with BOE to address them;
12. recommend and manage annual and long-term fiscal plans, including preparing and presenting to the Board a preliminary annual budget and ensuring that the budget, as adopted by the Board and approved at the annual meeting, is properly administered;
13. supervise and direct the management and operations of all schools in the District, as well as all educational, social and recreational activities;
14. supervise, manage and assign all personnel with the assistance of administrative staff; (recruit, hire, evaluate, promote, discipline and terminate staff in accordance with state law and District policies);
15. negotiate, approve, and represent the District, with counsel and other administrative staff, with regard to the Collective Bargaining Agreement process, and staff complaints and grievances;
16. establish and approve professional development programs for teachers and staff; delegate authority to other staff members and at all times have the final responsibility for carrying out the mandates of the District;
17. oversee an effective community relations program, including building collaborative relationships with business, civic and governmental groups, parents and other residents;
18. communicate with counsel and share such discussions with the BOE as appropriate;
19. facilitate orientation for new BOE members and organize an annual BOE retreat, and follow-up retreats, as necessary and requested by BOE;



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20. provide the BOE with an end of the year “Reflection” prior to the date set by the President to provide the Superintendent with a fiscal year-end Evaluation.
21. submit the data from the School Report Card and/or other such reports of student/District performance as prescribed by and in accordance with requirements of the Commissioner of Education.

G. Committee/Liaison Roles

1. The BOE may create Ad Hoc Standing Committees, District-Wide Advisory Committees and/or Task Force Committees (collectively referred to as “Committees”) to support and assist the BOE in the performance of its duties. Such Committees must not interfere with the Superintendent’s delegated authority.
2. Ad Hoc Committees are created by the BOE and are not decision making bodies. Such Committees may include Policy, Buildings & Grounds, Communications, and Curriculum They shall include at least two (2) BOE members as well as staff members who attend by invitation from the Superintendent.
3. The BOE is required by law to have an Audit Committee. The Audit Committee shall be established by Board resolution as a Board advisory committee or as a committee of the whole. Should the Board choose to have a committee of the whole, all BOE members are required to attend any such meeting(s), which is held at least once per year. All other Committees should endeavor to meet once a month.
4. All BOE members are expected to hold positions on established Committees.
5. BOE members shall be selected at the annual Organizational Meeting, or a subsequent summer meeting, by the BOE President.
6. The BOE President shall appoint members of the BOE as liaisons to various internal and external organizations including, but not limited to, District Safety Committee, District Wellness Committee, Irvington Education Technology Advisory Group, Irvington Community Advisory Board, Irvington Education Foundation, Irvington PTSA, Irvington Village, Quad Districts, Westchester Putnam School Boards Association, etc.
7. The Committee liaison or Board committee members shall make a verbal report at subsequent public BOE meetings.



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8. The Committees shall help expedite the work of the BOE and serve to make recommendations to the BOE for it to discuss and act upon as a whole. The BOE may adopt, reject or modify all or any part of a Committee recommendation.
9. The Committees shall establish annual goals for its work and meet regularly, at least once per month, at the convenience of its members. For Committee meetings subject to the Open Meetings Law, as stated in (7) below, a member of each Committee shall take minutes of the meeting and the minutes shall be posted no later than the Committee liaison report at the BOE meeting.
10. Committees cannot exercise authority over the administration or staff.
11. Committee meetings subject to the Open Meetings Law must be open to the public (unless items can be legally discussed in Executive Session at which time they would move into Executive Session). The dates of the meetings shall be posted by the District Clerk on the District calendar in advance of the meetings. The following types of meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Law:
 - a) Meetings of a Committee or Subcommittee consisting solely of Board members that discuss or conduct District business.
 - b) Meetings of a Committee where a quorum of the Board is present, which quorum may be established by non-Committee Board members joining the same table or meeting with Committee Board members to discuss District business.
 - c) Meetings of advisory Committees where the core Committee membership, generally fifty percent or more, consists of Board members.
 - d) Meetings of District-wide shared-decision-making Committees, to the extent that the Board may not adopt a shared-decision-making plan without the Committee's collaboration and participation.
 - e) Meetings of School-based shared-decision-making Committees where:
 - (1) the District's shared-decision-making plan grants the Committee decision-making authority; or
 - (2) the Committee is authorized to make to make recommendations the Board must consider before taking action, even when the Board does not follow the recommendations.

Meetings that do not meet the above criteria are not subject to the Open Meetings Law and related requirements.



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II. Board Meetings

A. Public Meetings – Organization and Agenda Setting

Board members suggesting items of business must submit the item to the Superintendent at least seven school days prior to a regular meeting and five school days prior to a special meeting. Items will not be added to the agenda later than these time periods, unless the item is of an emergency nature and authorized by the Superintendent in consultation with the Board President. The Executive Board and Superintendent will meet in person or over the phone the week prior to the BOE meeting to review the Superintendent's proposed agenda. Some agenda topics proposed by BOE members may be added at this point to the extent that those subjects are practical; but many agenda items require preparation from the administrative team and cannot be added to the upcoming agenda. Thus, those topics will be scheduled for a future meeting. The BOE will receive the final agenda via BoardDocs on Friday. BOE members are strongly encouraged to carefully read the agenda and all supporting materials over the weekend. Meeting preparation is one of the most important responsibilities of a BOE member. Should a BOE member have questions related to the agenda, they should be presented to the administration by the Monday morning preceding the meeting.

1. All meetings of the BOE and of Committees (where applicable) are to be held in public pursuant to the Open Meetings law. There are limited exceptions as identified in I. (G) and II. (D)(1)(a) below. An Executive Session is a portion of a school board meeting that is not open to the public. Once the Superintendent and BOE President have agreed that a discussion topic meets the legal standard for an Executive Session discussion, the BOE President shall call for a motion to recess into Executive Session by stating, "*Be it resolved, that the BOE hereby recesses into Executive Session for the following purpose:*" (and then include a statement from the list of legitimate purposes or as provided by legal counsel.) There are NO exceptions. Once the Executive Session concludes, the BOE must reconvene to the public meeting before closing the business of the BOE. Minutes taken at an Executive Session where no action was taken by formal vote are not available to the public.
2. Public notice of meetings, including BOE, Committee meetings (where applicable) and Executive Sessions, must be provided 72 hours in advance of the meeting on www.irvingtonschools.org. A special meeting may be called upon 24-hour notice to Board members. To hold a BOE meeting, there must be a quorum of BOE members, a minimum of 4 members. An agenda is not required as part of public notice although it is good business practice. The law does require, however, that documents to be discussed be made available both prior to and at the meeting.



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3. At a BOE meeting in the Spring, the Executive Board and Superintendent will propose a BOE meeting calendar for the following fiscal school year. The BOE as a whole will discuss the proposed agenda topics and suggest additional topics. This calendar discussion may include topics for public discussion as well as presentations from District staff (e.g. principals, director of technology, etc.). The Executive Board and Superintendent will have the final responsibility of scheduling and organizing the Annual Calendar. The Annual Calendar will be posted on www.irvingtonschools.org.
4. The BOE shall meet no later than August to discuss goal setting, consistent with Section I(B)(2) above.
5. The Governance Team can agree to use a “consent agenda” at its BOE meetings. A consent agenda is a board meeting practice that groups routine business and reports into one agenda item. The consent agenda can be approved in one action, rather than filing motions on each item separately. Using a consent agenda can save the BOE time at a public meeting. A consent agenda moves routine items along quickly so that the BOE has time to discuss other important issues.
6. The BOE President is ultimately accountable for the meeting agenda to provide an orderly and efficient method of conducting the business of the BOE. As to the agenda:
 - a) preparation of the agenda is the responsibility of the Superintendent;
 - b) the Superintendent and the BOE President share the responsibility for final agenda setting, including consent agenda items;
 - c) should a BOE member have questions related to the agenda, the BOE member shall so inform the BOE President and Superintendent no later than Monday morning preceding the meeting, to the extent possible.
 - d) the BOE President is accountable for the overall meeting length, including the number of agenda items and the time allotted to each topic;
 - e) it is the goal of the Governance Team to ensure that the BOE’s public business as set forth in the agenda is completed within **two** (2) hours at the public meeting.
7. On an ongoing basis, BOE members may suggest additional agenda items to the Executive Board and Superintendent:
 - a) BOE members may suggest agenda topics during a public meeting. It is the obligation of the BOE President to then follow up with the Superintendent to either schedule the request or to respond to the Board Member as to why the topic will not be added to the agenda.
 - b) BOE members may email the Executive Board and Superintendent who will then discuss the timing and necessity of the request and subsequently report back to the requesting member and the BOE, who



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- can decide whether to include the suggested agenda topic at a public meeting.
- c) BOE members shall respect that not all agenda topics will be scheduled either due to the lack of majority support or due to the priority of topics already scheduled.
8. It is the mutual responsibility of the BOE President and BOE members to ensure that each member's agenda items are being addressed in a timely fashion.
 9. Whenever possible, BOE members shall inform the Superintendent and the BOE President in advance of any questions that they intend to raise at the BOE meeting. Such questions should be provided via email to the entire Governance Team by Monday at noon in advance of the BOE meeting. The rationale behind this process is to avoid surprises and to give the Superintendent and his administrative team time to prepare for the public questions.
 10. The Superintendent will subsequently update the BOE about these questions and their answers in advance of the BOE meeting or as soon as possible, depending on the nature of or time required to address the request. If significant time or effort is required, the question may require a majority of the BOE's approval.
 11. The District Clerk will assist the Superintendent and President in the preparation for the public BOE meeting.
 12. The District Clerk will keep minutes of the public BOE meeting. (See **Appendix E** Guidelines for Meeting Minutes). Minutes of school board meetings must be made available to the public within two weeks of the date of the meeting. A video recording of the meeting should be posted as soon as possible, typically the same week.

B. Meeting Dynamics

1. Public meetings should start promptly at their advertised starting time. Even if BOE members are late, the meeting should start on time. The Governance Team should strive to complete the public business at meetings within 2 hours.
2. In both public meetings and Executive Sessions, BOE members will respectfully listen to their colleagues, as well as administrative and district staff, without interruption to ensure that each BOE member and staff members can express their point of view.



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3. The BOE president shall focus, facilitate, organize discussions and determine next steps to ensure all BOE members may speak and be heard before follow-up(s) by BOE members who have already spoken on that topic.
4. The BOE and administrative team will always model mutual respect and civility.
5. Robert's Rules of Order, Revised govern meeting procedures.

C. Public Participation in BOE Meetings

1. Public participation is welcomed during Community Comment items on the agenda, however, there is no statutory requirement that school boards must allow people attending the right to speak;
2. The agenda will include a specified time for public comment;
3. A sign-in sheet may be provided for members of the community that will include their name and topic;
4. School boards have authority to adopt rules and regulations governing the opportunity for members of the public to speak at BOE meetings. At each meeting, the BOE President will read the District's statement on public commentary with an emphasis on civility and mutual respect;
5. Interruption of BOE discussion is not permitted;
6. Members of the public will be asked to state their name and address and be advised that each person is entitled to a maximum of 3 minutes of speaking time in order to allow other community members time to speak. If a community member desires to speak more than once, they will do so at the discretion of the BOE President. The BOE President may invite the speaker to share their additional thoughts via email in order to expedite the rest of the meeting;
7. Community Comment shall last no longer than 20 minutes unless permitted by the Board President. No individual speaker will be permitted to speak for longer than three minutes;
8. Members of the BOE will NOT engage with the public nor respond to questions asked during public forum. The BOE President shall acknowledge the speaker and direct next steps. (The Superintendent may respond should it be deemed appropriate and judicious, given the nature of the matter at hand.)



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D. Executive Sessions

1. As indicated above, an Executive Session is a portion of a school board meeting that is not open to the public. It is permitted only for a limited number of specific purposes, as set forth below.
2. Legal Requirements for Executive Session
 - a) Permissible Executive Session topics:
 - i) matters that will imperil the public safety if disclosed;
 - ii) matters that may disclose the identity of law enforcement agency or informer;
 - iii) information pertaining to a current or pending criminal investigation or prosecution;
 - iv) discussion regarding proposed, pending, or current litigation;
 - v) collective bargaining under the provision of the Taylor Law;
 - vi) the medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation or matters leading to the appointment or employment or promotion or demotion or discipline or suspension or removal of a particular person or corporation;
 - vii) the preparation, grading, or administration of exams;
 - viii) proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof;
 - b) In accordance with Open Meetings Law, all Executive Sessions shall be conducted during the course of an Open Meeting. Therefore the BOE must give appropriate notice of an Open Meeting and recess to Executive Session from the Open Meeting. Once the Executive Session concludes, the BOE must reconvene to the Open Meeting before closing the business of the BOE.
 - c) Once the Superintendent and BOE president have agreed that a discussion topic meets the legitimate legal standard for an Executive Session discussion, the BOE will call for a motion to recess into Executive Session: BE IT RESOLVED, that the BOE hereby recesses into Executive Session for the following purpose:
 - d) A Board may not take action in executive session except to vote on disciplinary charges against a tenured teacher.



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III. **Communication And Information Sharing**

In order for the Governance team to function, established communication protocols need to be respected. The following address both internal and external communications:

A. Internal BOE Communication Protocols

1. All communications should be consistent with the Open Meetings Law and contain 'only the facts' and not personal commentary, opinion, confidential material, or inflammatory statements;
2. BOE members should never use their BOE email (nor their personal email or text messages) for any discussion of confidential matters, debate issues, to seek consensus, or to conduct a de facto BOE meeting;
3. BOE members will strive to include the full BOE and, usually, the Superintendent in BOE communications for the purposes of transparency and mutuality and exclusively use the BOE-assigned District email address for all BOE-related information, requests, or questions shared with the full BOE and Superintendent, avoiding use of personal email and text messages;
4. BOE members may only engage in decision making at public board meetings and must be sure they do not meet informally as a quorum to converse about District topics;
5. The President should promptly share all substantive information, presenting only the facts to all BOE members to ensure all have equal and timely access to the same information;
6. The BOE President and Vice President will aim to meet regularly, generally weekly, with the Superintendent; the President will promptly send an update to the BOE after these meetings to ensure that all BOE members know the information simultaneously.

B. Governance Team: BOE and Superintendent

1. The BOE president shall endeavor to share with all BOE members and the Superintendent (when appropriate) all substantive communications between the President and any particular BOE member.



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2. BOE members should copy the BOE President on email communications with, including, but not limited to, all communication with the Superintendent, staff, and members of the community.
3. BOE members should consistently and promptly share information and communications (emails, phone calls, letters, etc.) with the BOE President and the Superintendent (as appropriate) and broadly, across the BOE and with the Superintendent to maintain a practice of “no surprises,” particularly at public meetings. All BOE members shall have timely and equal access to all information.
4. Between meetings of the BOE, members should inform the Superintendent and President of matters occurring in the community which affect the interest of the District.
5. BOE members should direct all questions regarding District business to the Superintendent (or Designee, e.g., Assistant Superintendents as per the Superintendent’s discretion) and copy the President rather than directing questions to individual principals, directors, etc.
6. The Superintendent shall provide regular written updates to the BOE. The Superintendent’s “Weekend Update” includes District matters and is a vehicle for ensuring all BOE members are aware of the work of the entire BOE, as well as answering any questions or issues that have arisen and providing a timetable for addressing such questions.
7. All questions that BOE members email to the Superintendent (and cc: entire BOE) will be included in the Superintendent’s following update along with the answer(s) and/or status and timetable as possible.
8. The BOE President and Vice President shall have a standing meeting with the Superintendent and report promptly to the BOE immediately following in a “Board Only” email update.
9. Never allow a communication involving a quorum of the BOE to evolve into a defacto meeting, to include only “the facts” while excluding personal commentary and/or confidential information, and to only engage in decision making at posted board meetings;

C. BOE Communications with Staff

1. When a BOE member has information requests for the administration, the BOE member shall first go to the BOE President who will aim to maintain a reasonable



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balance of volume, content and tone while ensuring the full BOE is aware of the requests.

2. When a BOE member requires technical assistance with a BOE agenda topic that is beyond the scope of the Superintendent's expertise, the Superintendent will ask the appropriate leadership team member to handle the request and will keep the full BOE apprised as the assistance is addressed.
3. When a BOE information request appears to require a burdensome amount of time to answer, the full BOE will be kept informed that the following options may be used to meet the request:
 - a) the Superintendent may set an optional informational meeting (with the BOE member making the request) prior to the upcoming BOE meeting so the Superintendent can share the information;
 - b) the Superintendent will discuss with the BOE President and the BOE member making the request possible alternatives to address the request;
 - c) the BOE President may place the request on a future BOE agenda for discussion to determine if there is quorum or full BOE support for the request.
4. BOE directed questions and subsequent answers will be shared with the full BOE in the Superintendent's weekly update unless deemed 'Urgent' and requiring full BOE distribution ASAP.
5. As a general practice, BOE members should only communicate with the administration on matters related to BOE business through the Superintendent, who will then relay them to the appropriate administrator, and provide a response.

D. External Communications

1. Public – Parental and Staff Concerns

BOE members will direct parents who call with complaints to work up through the hierarchy by talking to the teacher, the principal, appropriate central office staff, and the Superintendent before further involving BOE members;

 - a) BOE members will relay other more substantive criticisms, complaints, or suggestions to the BOE President, who in turn will assure circulation to the full BOE and refer them to the Superintendent;
 - b) The Superintendent will facilitate the problem solving, with staff assistance as necessary and will include status reports on any parental and staff concerns initially sent to the BOE in the Superintendent's weekly update;



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- c) BOE members shall not attempt to solve the problem, including any fact finding;
- d) The BOE will strive to discourage anonymous complaints and not respond to anonymous complaints.

2. E-mails

The BOE will only use the District assigned email for all board-related communications;

- a) Letters to the BOE and written responses by the BOE president or District administrator shall be posted on the District website, maintained by the District Clerk or as designated by the Superintendent, so as to provide community members equitable access to the information shared. Contact information of the letter writer or commenter will be not be shared;
- b) All communications sent in care of the BOE should be distributed promptly to all BOE members and the District Clerk;
- c) All emails and letters sent to the BOE will be distributed simultaneously to the full BOE and should receive an immediate receipt acknowledgement;
- d) The BOE President will determine how best to reply to inquiries sent to the BOE after consultation with the Superintendent. The BOE may be consulted as appropriate with the goal of promptly sending the reply;
- e) BOE members act as the 'eyes and ears' to the community and should promptly share all information learned as a BOE member with the BOE President who will assure circulation to the full BOE and the Superintendent, who will handle the problem-solving.

3. Media

- a) The Superintendent, BOE President, or designee will serve as a spokesperson in response to media inquiries; the Superintendent handles statements on behalf of the District; the BOE President handles statements on behalf of the BOE;
- b) All official statements of BOE positions, as well as related responses to media inquiries, come from the BOE President and/or Superintendent (or their designees);
- c) All media inquiries received by BOE members should be forwarded or referred to the BOE President and/or the Superintendent and the BOE should be alerted about this inquiry;
- d) When an occasion arises in which the Superintendent or a BOE member should not be the spokesperson, the District will assign a public relations representative or legal counsel to speak on the District's behalf.



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IV. BOE Policies & Regulations

A. Purpose

1. BOE Policies are important and binding practices set in place by the BOE. A policy is a guide for discretionary action. It must be narrow enough to give clear guidance but broad enough to leave room for administrative discretion.
2. Adopting policy statements is the job of the BOE. Regulations for carrying out BOE policies are generated by the Superintendent and other District Administrators, in conjunction with the BOE.
3. Policies address a wide range of issues and are organized into sections within the Policy Binder. Those major sections are:
 - a) 1000 – By-Laws;
 - b) 2000 – Internal Operations;
 - c) 3000 – Community Relations;
 - d) 4000 – Administration;
 - e) 5000 – Non-Instructional/Business Operations;
 - f) 6000 – Personnel;
 - g) 7000 – Students; and
 - h) 8000 – Instruction.

B. Policy Revision Procedure

1. Policies shall be reviewed and revised on a regular basis by the standing Policy Committee. The Policy Committee shall consist of two BOE members, Superintendent and other administrators. One alternate BOE member may be appointed.
2. Once the Policy Committee has performed its review and revision responsibilities, it will make recommendations to the BOE in a public meeting. The recommendations will be presented as a “first read”. The Board will not take any official action on any policy on first reading, unless a majority of the Board decides that it is necessary to do so. At a subsequent meeting, not to occur sooner than 30 days, the policy will be presented as an action item to be accepted or rejected by a quorum of the BOE.
3. Recommendations for policy changes come from New York State School Board Association (or Erie I BOCES) and are based on changes in the law or responses to critical events happening in schools across the state and nation. Once the District receives such a recommendation, it is critical for it to review in



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order to ensure that the District's policies are compliant with law and/or best practice.

4. Policy location
 - a) <http://boardpolicyonline.com/?b=irvington>

V. New BOE Member Orientation And Ongoing Professional Development

1. BOE orientation will begin following the BOE election.
2. In addition to an initial orientation that can commence before the Oath of Office, the Governance team will arrange a series of meetings scheduled after the new member is elected, which shall include:
 - a) meeting with the Superintendent and legal counsel to review board protocols, Open Meetings Law, Executive Sessions, and to be educated on the critical business facing the School District;
 - b) meeting with current BOE officers to review the Governance Handbook and learn about the role of the District Clerk;
 - c) meeting with each of the Assistant Superintendents, Principals, and Department Directors to learn more about their respective major responsibilities and initiatives;
 - d) tour of school facilities with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations and/or Director of Buildings and Grounds;
3. BOE members acknowledge that training is ongoing and continuous. If a BOE member requests or seeks information or knowledge in a certain subject area, it is the responsibility of that BOE member to make their request known to the Executive Board and Superintendent. The Superintendent shall take appropriate steps to ensure that the BOE member's information and/or education is satisfied or shall respond with reasonable explanation of denial.
4. Newly elected BOE members must successfully complete New York State mandated training within the first year of service. This training covers the essentials of school BOE governance and a minimum of six hours in fiscal oversight, accountability, and fiduciary responsibilities. See NYSSBA (for both training programs) and WPSBA (for the essentials of school BOE governance). Where possible, members are encouraged to attend in-person training sessions. The District Clerk will manage registrations for training sessions.
5. Newly elected BOE members are strongly encouraged to attend the WPSBA "Now That You've Been Elected" new board member workshop. All BOE



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members are encouraged to attend at least one WPSBA or NYSSBA seminar/workshop on “Negotiation” and “School Law.” The District Clerk will arrange for registration and payment of fees associated with the workshop.

VI. Collective Bargaining: A Primer For New Board Members

1. IUFSD has four different bargaining units:
 - a) Irvington Faculty Association (“IFA”) - (7/1/09-6/30/16)
 - b) Irvington Administrators Association (“IAA”) (7/1/09-6/30/16; 1 year extension 6/30/17)
 - c) CSEA - Clerical (7/1/15-6/30/20)
 - d) CSEA - Custodians (7/1/10-6/30/17)
2. Role of the Board of Education in Negotiations
 - a) “Legislative body” charged with the duty of approving any additional monies necessary to fund the provisions of a successor collectively negotiated agreement. (Civil Service Law 204-a)
 - b) Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) is between the BOE and the Union
 - c) BOE gives the authority for any increases in money
3. Duty to Bargain in Good Faith
 - a) Both parties approach the table with a sincere desire to reach an agreement (Lynbrook PBA, 10 PERB 3067 (1977))
 - b) Public Employment Relations Board (“PERB”) looks to the intent of the parties
 - i) Willingness to exchange proposals
 - ii) Willingness to discuss the issues
 - iii) Willingness to explain the rationale of negotiating positions upon request
 - iv) Willingness to accommodate the idea of compromise
 - c) “Hard bargaining” is not a per se violation of good-faith bargaining
 - d) It is proper for the BOE to submit demands to freeze or even decrease current levels of benefits.
4. Process of Negotiations
 - a) “Face-to-face” negotiations
 - b) Impasse - Criteria used by PERB when impasse is declared:
 - i) District’s ability to pay
 - ii) Comparability- what are other Districts in the area doing?
 - c) Mediation



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- d) Fact Finding
- e) Intense Mediation
 - *** No binding arbitration
- 5. Triborough Amendment to Taylor Law
 - a) Increment or “step” movement a teacher receives each year until they reach “top” step
 - b) “Lane” movement or the increase in pay for credits
 - c) Triborough Amendment made such movement automatic regardless of whether the CBA is expired.
- 6. Confidentiality in Collective Bargaining
 - a) BOE fiduciary responsibility is only met by confidentiality respecting bargaining positions and strategy
 - b) Disclosing bargaining positions and strategy destroys the ability to bargain
 - c) Success requires BOE and negotiations team unity
 - d) Commissioner of Education: BOE members who reveal information discussed during an Executive Session properly convened by a majority of the board may be subject to removal. (*Appeal of Nett and Raby*, 45 Ed Dept Rep 259 (2005))