



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.*

## Board Norms for the Washington State Board of Education

Adopted by the Board, November 5, 2015

- Board meetings will focus on State Board of Education goals as articulated in the Strategic Plan, while recognizing that other matters may also be part of a meeting agenda.
- At board meetings, and in all communications with the public and staff, Board members will maintain the dignity and integrity appropriate to an effective public body.
- Every board member should play a meaningful role in the Board's overall operations. Each member expects of others a dedication to the work of the Board and will endeavor to understand the views of other members and to engage in civil discussion. The Board embraces healthy debate on policy issues.
- The purpose of Board meetings, is to discuss policies that help all students to succeed and to graduate college- and/or career-ready. Agendas, presentations, and discussions for each board meeting should reflect this overarching purpose.
- Board meetings should include the following procedures:
  - Board meetings should start on time and end on time.
  - Meeting materials should be made available one week in advance (see Bylaw Article V section 2) and should consistently be of high quality.
  - Board members are expected to consistently attend and prepare for Board meetings and to read the materials in advance of the meeting (see Bylaw Article III, section 2).
  - Each staff presentation should start with clarity of the purpose of the presentation and the decision to be made or issue to be considered.
  - Board members should hold their questions (except for brief clarifying questions) until the end of each presentation, or until the presenter offers a designated "pause" for questions.
  - Each Board member expects of others a commitment to speak with purpose during each discussion. The Board Chair – or his/her designee – will provide leadership to ensure that the discussions and deliberations are leading to a focused outcome.
  - Board meetings should be a forum for Board discussion. Staff and guest presentations should be structured to facilitate this discussion, not supplant it.
- When considering policy proposals, each board member expects of others an opportunity for advance review. The Board agrees to a "no surprises" mode of operation – all significant proposals should be sent in advance of the meeting (preferably before Board packets are sent) to the Chair and Executive Director for their consideration in constructing the agenda and advance materials for the meeting.

- Board members may submit proposed agenda items to the Chair or Executive Director (see Bylaw Article V, section 2) for consideration by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will respond to member proposals, as appropriate.
- Although the Board is composed of appointed and elected members, Board members strive for commonality and unity of purpose through their deliberations.
- Board members will maintain the confidentiality of executive sessions.
- Members of the SBE should support board decisions and policies when providing information to the public. This does not preclude board members from expressing their personal views. The executive director or a board designee will be the spokesperson for the board to the media (same as Bylaw Article III, section 3).
- Each year, the Board may choose 1-3 issues to explore and learn more about over the next year with a goal of identifying one or possibly two new initiatives to include in the next iteration of the Strategic Plan. The exploration is not necessarily a commitment to future Board action, but rather lays the groundwork to identify and build the SBE's capacity on possible initiatives where the SBE could have a significant impact.  
 Process for selection of these 1-3 issues:
  - During a set time period, Board members send the Executive Director suggestions of issues for the Board to consider.
  - Executive Director gathers suggestions, and where appropriate groups or combines related issues.
  - Executive Director analyzes how the suggestions fit into the present Strategic Plan and SBE staff capacity to work on each issue.
  - Executive Committee reviews suggestions and reports back to Board at a subsequent meeting about suggestions and possible recommendations for 1-3 issues.
  - At a subsequent meeting the Board votes on 1-3 issues to work on in coming year.
- For these selected 1-3 issues , the SBE staff will provide Board members with 1) background materials to read (or links to resources); 2) identification of key outside experts and possible partners for an SBE initiative; 3) identification of key questions and issues (including suitability of the area for SBE involvement); 4) description (tentatively, for initiation of discussion) of possible approaches and solutions, including how other states are addressing the issue; and 5) any other information requested by the Board or Executive Committee, or considered appropriate by the Executive Director.
- At a future Board meeting, probably as part of the annual Strategic Plan review, the Board may vote to include one or more of these issues in the SBE Strategic Plan work plan.