

## **BOARD - STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

### **I. PURPOSE**

To ensure that Board members have access to accurate information concerning the school system.

### **II. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all official communications and reports between the Board and Staff.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

District Staff – all employees of the district, including but not limited to central office administration and staff, school staff, principals, assistant/vice principals, teachers, etc. This does not include staff specifically dedicated to the Board Office.

Executive Staff – members of the Superintendent’s cabinet and any other employees designated as such by the Superintendent.

### **IV. POLICY STATEMENT**

The Board desires to maintain open channels of communication between its members and district staff. The basic line of communication will, however, be through the Superintendent or Chief of Staff, unless exceptions apply.

#### **District Staff Communications to the Board**

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary<sup>(1-5, Legal References)</sup>, all official communications or reports to the Board or any Board committee from principals, supervisors, teachers, or other district staff members shall be submitted through the Superintendent or designee.

District staff members are also reminded that Board meetings are public meetings. As such, they provide an excellent opportunity to observe at first hand the Board's deliberations on problems of staff concern.

### **Exception**

This necessary procedure shall not be construed as denying the right of any employee to address a member of the Board or the Board as a whole in accordance with statutory provisions, applicable Board policies <sup>(1-7, Cross References)</sup> and/or established Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Further, there will be no retaliation against any person who exercises their recognized individual and public employee constitutional and statutory rights.

### **Board Communications to District Staff**

All official communications, requests for information, suggestions, and concerns will be communicated to district staff members through the Superintendent or Executive Staff, except requests for information and materials maintained on a routine basis or where otherwise provided by law and/or Board policy. The Board is responsible for refraining from directing district staff concerning administrative matters or day-to-day activities. Any problem of a serious nature shall be directed to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will employ all such media as are appropriate to keep staff fully informed of the Board's problems, concerns, and actions. The Superintendent shall annually provide Board members with a list and primary duties of the Superintendent's Executive Staff designated to directly communicate with and respond to Board Member's requests.

### **Visits to Schools**

Visits to the schools will be made whenever, in the judgment of the Board, such visits are necessary. Official visits by the Board will be carried on only under Board authorization and with the full knowledge of staff, including the Superintendent, principals, and other supervisors.

Individual Board members interested in visiting schools will inform the principal of such visits and make arrangement for visitations. Individual Board member's visits shall be regarded as informal expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes.

## Disclaimers

“Official Communications” does not include job-related issues as provided by law; evidence to any person, the department of education or general assembly or testimony before any committee of the general assembly, regarding any action, policy, regulation, practice or procedure, including but not limited to, the waste of public education funds, mismanagement, falsification of state required reports, inaccurate compilation of statistical data or reports or abuse of authority by locally employed, elected or appointed officials or employees of an LEA; or activities that are in violation of the criminal or civil code of this State or the United States or any regulation intended to protect the public health, safety or welfare.<sup>(1-5, Legal References)</sup>

This policy is not intended to contravene employee rights and responsibilities set forth in any State or Federal laws, including but not limited to T.C.A. 50-1-304, 49-50-1401 et seq., 8-50-601 et seq., federal or state human rights and/or civil rights laws of the United States Constitution.

Board Members are not authorized to direct the work of district staff. Staff may not be disciplined for failing to follow instructions of a Board Member.

## V. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. A district staff member is responsible for providing the information requested by the Board member if the information is maintained on a routine basis and responsible for referring other requests to the Superintendent.
- B. The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring information requested by the Board is provided.
- C. Individual Board members are responsible for complying with the provisions of this policy.

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### Legal References:

- 1. TCA 8-50-602
- 2. TCA 8-50-603
- 3. TCA 49-50-1401-1411
- 4. U.S. Const. amend. I
- 5. TCA 49-2-301

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### Cross References:

- 1. 4001 Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance
- 2. 4002 Staff Ethics
- 3. 4003 Conflict of Interest
- 4. 4010 Harassment of Employees
- 5. 4055 Employment-Related Complaints and Grievances
- 6. 1009 Non-Discrimination Statement
- 7. 4039 Employee Whistleblower Protection