

# MADISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## School Board Operating Protocols

In the interest of effective governance and for the purpose of enhancing teamwork among members of the board and between the board and administration, we, the members of the Madison Central School Board, do hereby publicly commit ourselves collectively and individually to the following operating protocol:

1. **Mission comes first.** Advancing academic achievement and youth development for all students in the district. The board's work will reflect that highest priority.
2. **Clearly State Goals.** The board will set clear goals for themselves and the superintendent. The board and superintendent will set clear goals for the Madison Central School District. Such goals will cohere with the mission and strategic plans of the district.
3. **Practice the governance role.** The board will emphasize planning, policy-making, and communication rather than becoming involved in the management of the schools. Toward that end, we will
  - 3.1. **Utilize CEO input.** The superintendent is the chief executive officer and should make recommendations, proposals or suggestions on most matters that come before the board
  - 3.2. **Act only as a body.** Individual board members do not have authority. Only the board as a whole has authority. We agree that an individual board member will not take unilateral action. The board president serves as the official spokesperson for the board and will communicate the position(s) of the board on controversial issues. When board members serve on various school committees their role shall be defined by the board as silent observer or active participant.
  - 3.3. **Monitor interactions with staff:** Except when functioning in ordinary roles as a parent or district resident, we will refrain from visiting schools or engaging in substantive contact with staff unless authorized by the board to do so. (*Appeal of Silanno, Matter of Bruno*).
  - 3.4. **Request information or action judiciously:** To avoid overstepping our authority or disrupting staff productivity, we will request information or action from staff through the superintendent and from the superintendent through the board president. ("Copy" the superintendent or BOE president for simple requests, but work through the superintendent or board president for others.) We agree that the more complicated or time consuming a request appears to be, the more that request should be scrutinized for its coherence with stated district or board priorities.
  - 3.5. **Follow the chain of command.** The last stop, not the first, will be the board. We agree to follow the chain of command and insist that others do so. While the board is eager to listen to its constituents and staff, we will refer constituents and staff to the person who can properly and expeditiously address the issue. The board will not be a ball carrier for others – but rather, will encourage others to present their own points, problems or proposals when discussing issues. All personnel complaints and criticisms as well as compliments received by the board or its individual members will be directed to the superintendent.

4. **Model the way:** The board will conduct its meetings with the same decorum we expect of staff, and we will follow the consensus better practices of effective school boards. Toward those ends we will
  - 4.1. **Debate the issues, not one another.** Conduct at a board meeting is very important. We agree to avoid words, actions, and expressions that create a negative impression on an individual, the board or the district. While we encourage debate and differing points of view, we will do it with care and respect to avoid an escalation of negative impressions or incidents.
  - 4.2. **Not spring surprises on other board members or the superintendent.** Surprises to the board or the superintendent will be the exception, not the rule. There should be no surprises at a board meeting. We agree to ask the board president or the superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting.
  - 4.3. **Avoid marathon board meetings.** To be efficient and effective, long board meetings must be avoided. Points are to be made in as few words as possible; speeches at board meetings will be minimal. If a board member believes s/he doesn't have enough information or has questions, either the superintendent or board chair is to be called before the meeting.
  - 4.4. **Practice efficient decision-making.** Board meetings are for decision-making, action and votes, not endless discussion. We agree to move to the question when discussion is repetitive.
  - 4.5. **Speak to agenda issues.** 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, not to individual members of the leadership team.
  - 4.6. **Executive/closed sessions will be held only for appropriate subjects.** Board members will be extremely sensitive to the legal ramifications of their meetings and comments.
  - 4.7. **Annually conduct a self-assessment/evaluation.** The board will address its behavior by yearly self-evaluation and by addressing itself to any individual problems, such as poor meeting attendance or leaks of confidential information

Adapted from model provided by the Washington State School Districts' Association

Approved and adopted by MCS June 19, 2012