



Harvard School Committee Operating Norms

Revised by the School Committee May 28, 2019

Vision Statement:

The Harvard Public Schools community, dedicated to educational excellence, guides all students to realize their highest potential by balancing academic achievement with personal well-being in the pursuit of individual dreams. The students engage in learning how to access and apply knowledge, think critically and creatively, and communicate effectively. They develop the confidence and ability to collaborate, and contribute to their local, national and global communities.

Purpose

We annually approve and monitor the District Improvement Plan and budget that supports the implementation of district goals, supervise and evaluate the Superintendent, and set School Committee policies and goals that foster continuous improvement.

We embrace individuals of all backgrounds and abilities, and we strive to create a welcoming environment for all students, one that values diversity, equity and inclusion.

Governance:

The School Committee will conduct its business in a manner accessible to the public, and in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.

We respect the need for all Committee members to have adequate time to prepare for meetings. Meeting materials will be submitted in time to be included in committee meeting packets, which will be distributed to members no later than 2 business days prior to a meeting.

Members will come to meetings well-prepared to discuss issues on the agenda and to participate in efficient decision making. Deliberation and thorough discussion of matters is encouraged. Members agree to debate the issues, not one another, and always assume positive intent.

We shall conduct business through a set agenda that advances district goals. Any member may place an item on the agenda through the Chair. The Chair and Superintendent will ensure the agenda is appropriately balanced to ensure there is adequate time for deliberation of each issue. As a general practice, we will endeavor not to vote on a new issue in the same meeting in which the issue is presented. Emerging items shall be addressed in subsequent meetings through planned

agenda items, unless it is determined by the School Committee Chair that it would be detrimental to delay the issue.

School Committee members agree to thoughtfully seek and support solutions using a wide range of options that avoid confirmation bias and reality-test our assumptions, for the greatest benefits to students. Wherever possible, the committee will involve members of the community, parents, students, faculty, and the administration in the consideration of major initiatives and significant changes. Once the School Committee has taken action, Committee members will support the official position of the School Committee.

School Committee members agree to recognize and respect that their authority exists only when a quorum of the Committee meets and not as individual Committee members.

The Superintendent and the School Committee recognize the importance of working collaboratively with town officials, boards, and committees, and we will actively seek ways to enlist their support in our efforts to support our students. The Superintendent and the School Committee will strive to lead the district as a unified team, each from their respective roles, with a strong partnership and mutual trust.

We adopt Roberts Rules of Order as our guide.

Communication

The Superintendent and the School Committee practice proactive communication and whenever possible, members will bring important issues or challenging questions to the Superintendent's attention prior to a meeting in keeping with the "no surprises" philosophy. If School Committee members have questions or concerns, they agree to contact the Superintendent and/or Chair well in advance of a meeting.

Members will work collaboratively and share information within the parameters of the Open Meeting Law. In particular, when an informational request is made of the Superintendent or the Chair, every effort should be made to share the requested information with all committee members as long as nothing in the request or response constitutes deliberation.

It is the role of the Chair to act as the spokesperson for the Committee. Members will direct requests for comments by the media to the Chair. As individuals, Committee members are welcome to express their own personal views and opinions, while clearly indicating that they speak only for themselves.

Members will check district email at least once every other day and respond to communications in a timely manner.

We believe that healthy organizations promote active community engagement, and we recognize the importance of public input. We want to hear the opinions and views of others, even when those opinions may differ from our own. Where contentious issues arise requiring more public discourse, we agree to utilize subcommittees or public hearings to give the public a voice in important matters affecting our students.

Authority and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Superintendent to oversee the hiring, evaluation and handling of personnel issues and to manage the day-to-day operations of the school district; it is the responsibility of the School Committee to evaluate the Superintendent's effectiveness in these matters.

We respect the Superintendent's role as the administrator for the district and his/her oversight of the schools' administrators, who in turn manage their respective faculty and staff.

Committee members will channel requests to staff through the Superintendent. Requests for information, reports, etc., will be sent to the Chair and/or Superintendent. Committee members are encouraged to share information with the Superintendent that they feel is important to the management and/or leadership of the district.

Committee members will refer questions and concerns they receive from members of the school community to the proper chain of command. Committee members understand that due to privacy concerns they may not receive direct feedback on the disposition of the questions and concerns that they forward.

We shall not use our positions for personal or partisan gain nor shall we take any independent actions that may compromise the School Committee as a whole.

When member assignments to subcommittees and/or liaisons change there will be a formal handoff to the new assignee. This will include the former member making an introduction to relevant committee chairs, and providing the new member with some background on current topics and issues relating to that committee, board or group.

Evaluation and Improvement

The School Committee will evaluate its performance on an annual basis and will assess the results of the evaluation to determine areas in need of improvement and any actions required to make those improvements.

School Committee members and the Superintendent appreciate the benefits of professional growth and development and agree to participate in experiences designed to further their knowledge and understanding and to advance the work of our public schools.

All new School Committee members will attend the required MASC orientation within their first year of service.

We recognize the importance of honoring our agreed upon norms and we agree to hold ourselves and each other accountable for upholding them.

We shall review, revise, and reaffirm these operating norms on an annual basis.