

Governance Team Protocols

Big Walnut Local Schools

The governance team, which consist of school board members, superintendent and treasurer, are all committed to operating the Big Walnut Local School District in a manner that ultimately is in the best interest of all of the students of our community. The mission of the Big Walnut Local School District is to “inspire and guide each student to his or her maximum potential”.

While seeking to fulfill that mission, we intend to be fiscally responsible in a manner that inspires community and staff’s confidence. We also want to be transparent while abiding by the statutes of the state of Ohio, as well as any applicable federal laws and regulations.

We recognize that we have different roles according to our official positions of board members, superintendent and treasurer. We also recognize that we have different levels of authority depending on those positions, the laws of our state and the issue that is at hand. We expect all members of the governance team to act within the bounds of our roles and accompanying authority.

We offer these stated protocols as a commitment toward our desire to function as a governance team that seeks the best outcomes for all of the students of Big Walnut Local Schools.

Governance

1. A school board meeting is a meeting of the school board that is held in public - not a public meeting.
2. School board members and the rest of the governance team agree to seek and support solutions that will provide the greatest benefit to all of the students of our district. Once the school board has taken official action, governance team members will respect the official position of the majority of the school board.
3. School board members agree to recognize and respect that their decision making authority exists only when a quorum of the board meets and action is taken by the majority. Individual members have no authority until they act as part of the board majority. Recognizing that others may believe that they have individual authority, each member of the school board will attempt to dissuade the public of the notion of that perceived authority.
4. The school board will emphasize planning, policy making and communication, rather than becoming involved in the day-to-day management of the school system.
5. The board holds the superintendent responsible for overseeing the administration of its policies, the execution of board decisions and the operations of the district’s programs (specifically including the hiring, evaluation, handling of personnel issues and operating the district in a fiscally responsible manner) while keeping the board informed about the district’s operations.
6. The school board also holds the treasurer responsible for the effective management of all aspects of the district financial operations, within the constraints of the district resources. The treasure is also responsible for financial planning, analysis of data, proper record-keeping, establishment of effective internal financial procedures and controls, as well as the financial reporting to the school board and other authoritative bodies.

7. The board also recognizes its share of the governance responsibilities, as the community representatives, and will offer advice and consultation when appropriate.
8. We acknowledge the importance of superintendent committees and the superintendent agrees to utilize them to focus on specific topics in-depth, to prepare for presentation to the full school board for deliberation and possible action. The superintendent will consult with each school board member prior to appointing school board members to a superintendent committee. The superintendent will determine with the school board the criteria for choosing board member appointees.
9. School board appointees to community positions and school board committee representatives will be chosen after the school board has posted the positions. The governance team will review the applications and the superintendent will make a recommendation to the school board. The school board will make the final decision regarding the appointees.

Communication

1. The governance team recognizes the importance of proactive communication and agrees that there will be no surprises. If school board members have questions or concerns, they agree to contact the superintendent and/or the treasurer well in advance of a meeting.
2. Generally speaking, we agree that meeting discussions will be limited to the agenda and items will not be added to the agenda unless it is determined by the superintendent and school board president that it would be detrimental to delay the issue until a subsequent meeting.
3. If a school board member wishes to add an item to the agenda, he or she should make a request to the school board president who will consult with the superintendent.
4. If school board members have a question for a staff member that is strictly made as a parent, they will ask it, but will preface the questions with a firm statement that the board member is asking strictly as a parent, so that the staff member understands that it is really not a board question or being asked in the role of school board member.
5. School board members will channel requests for information, reports and/or data through the superintendent, treasurer and/or the school board president rather than directly to staff. The Superintendent or Treasurer will determine if the request can be fulfilled. The superintendent and/or the treasurer will have the discretion to decide if the answer should be shared with the entire school board.

6. When school board members have questions for the superintendent or treasurer about issues, they will talk directly to the superintendent or treasurer and will make it clear that it is a personal question of their own. The superintendent and treasurer will be expected to ask if this is an issue for only this one board member or for a majority of the board. If it is an issue for only that one board member, the administrator will deal solely with that person.
7. When a board member wants the superintendent or the treasurer to create new reports or data collection, the request will be made to the board president, who will determine if the board majority would want time and effort spent on such a request. If the president believes that the majority would desire that action, he/she will discuss it with the superintendent and/or treasurer and raise the issue at the next board meeting for discussion and decision by the full school board.
8. When a staff member or member of the community comes to a board member with a concern or complaint, the board member will refer the person back into the organizational "chain of command" for further discussion and solution. The board member will also use the opportunity to inform the person of the school board's role and lack of involvement in the day-to-day operations of the school district. Since the district administration values the opinions of board members, the board member may also choose to give input to the superintendent/treasurer regarding the concern or complaint.
9. We will make every effort to promote a positive image for our school system. The governance team (especially the superintendent) will be visible in the community, maintain confidentiality when appropriate (particularly regarding issues discussed in executive session) and will respect the open meeting laws.

Continuous Improvement

1. School board members agree to participate in formal training organized by the superintendent and the school board president and conducted by organizations such as OSBA, BASA, ESCCO or an independent consultant.
2. The superintendent and treasurer recognize the importance of their own professional growth and development and will participate in experiences to further his/her own knowledge and understanding to advance the work of the school district.
3. All new school board members will participate in the school board orientation session conducted by the superintendent, treasurer and the school board president.
4. Since it is the responsibility of the school board to evaluate the superintendent and the treasurer's effectiveness in all of the matters mentioned in their job descriptions, the governance team agrees to set aside time, at least on an annual basis, for evaluation (by a majority of the school board) of the superintendent, the treasurer and the school board.

- a. Since the superintendent and treasurer also intend to seek comprehensive solutions to problems and will create a clear structure for decision-making, these structures may be revisited at any time, including during the annual evaluations of the individual.
- 5. We recognize the importance of honoring our protocols, and we agree to take responsibility for reminding one another when we do not abide by these written protocols.
- 6. We will regularly review the governance team's progress toward adhering to our agreed upon protocols and/or consideration of preferred changes or additions to these written protocols.