

# Operating Principles of South Hamilton School Board and Superintendent

*To demonstrate our commitment to Respect each other, Develop Relationships and Trust*

Reintroduced, reviewed, and approved January 13, 2020

## Introduction

The members of the South Hamilton Board of Directors and the Superintendent of the South Hamilton Community Schools are committed to working together as a team. *We will build on the tradition of excellence that has characterized our schools.*

Working effectively as a team requires a healthy environment with high levels of trust and respect for ALL individuals. To promote trust, respect and effective teamwork, we agree on these operating principles

We will:

- Keep the focus on issues of **student achievement** at the forefront and as the centerpiece of our work together.
- Define and communicate our goals, both short-and long-term.
- Treat students, staff, the public, and each other with respect.
- Support the Superintendent and hold him/her accountable in the implementation of district goals and work.
- Communicate concerns with each other in a timely manner.
- Create opportunities for meaningful participation and input early in the decision-making process.
- Evaluate the work of the Board and Superintendent quarterly as per the South Hamilton Board Meeting Calendar.
- Work in partnership with the community; including all public and private school shareholders.
- Develop the primary need to make good decisions for students.

Operating Principles - School Board and Superintendent

### Roles of the Superintendent and Board Members

We agree to the following roles and responsibilities to enable the Board and Superintendent to work effectively as a team and make good decisions in a timely manner.

*“Good people, with good information, will make good decisions.”*

The role of the **School Board** is to:

- Prioritize and keep district resources focused on student learning;
- Set priorities;
- Approve the budget and district policy – which includes, being fiscally responsible to the stakeholders of the district;
- Hire and evaluate the Superintendent;
- Listen to and represent the whole community;
- Be an advocate for public education – which includes, supporting collaborative efforts with other entities
- Be supportive of students, staff and administration;
- Support participation and involvement in decision-making;
- Direct concerns and criticisms to the Superintendent or Principal in a timely manner; and
- Support actions taken by the Board and clearly differentiate personal opinion.

The role of the **School Board** is NOT to:

- Carry out policies or micro-manage;
- Create surprises;
- Abdicate board responsibility;
- Press narrow personal agendas;
- Manage staff or facilities;
- Indiscreetly share district information or make public judgment or
- As individuals, make promises that would appear binding upon the Board and/or District.

The role of the **Superintendent** is to:

- Provide recommendations and implement board policy;
- Build a positive environment throughout the district;
- Serve as a resource to the Board;
- Act as the primary district communicator;
- Provide support, leadership, and vision for the district;
- Bring options and recommendations to the Board;
- Ensure district and staff accountability;
- Be the “day-to-day” decision-maker;
- Manage and delegate the work of the district and
- Be the designated spokesperson for the Board

The role of the **Superintendent** is NOT to:

- Make policies;
- Create surprises;
- Assume Board responsibilities;
- Press narrow personal agendas; or
- Discourage open discussion and feedback.

### Communications

The ability to clearly communicate is likely the most single important aspect for a successful relationship. School board members provide a critical link among schools, parents, and the community. With their involvement in school and community issues, school board members are uniquely positioned to listen to input/concerns/suggestions of all people who have a stake in education. We hold the belief that we must work with the schools and the community for successful results.

Regular communication between the Superintendent and the members of the South Hamilton School Board is crucial. Various communication strategies fall into three categories: personal interactions, telephone contacts and written/e-mail information.

***Personal Interaction:*** Opportunities for formal and informal interactions should be provided. The Board President and Superintendent shall communicate on a weekly basis. The Superintendent is encouraged to call or meet with individual board members every few weeks to provide opportunity to dialogue.

***Telephone Contacts:*** When emergencies occur, the telephone is the best toll for instant communication to all board members. The Board President and the Superintendent are encouraged to confer by telephone on issues as they arise or develop.

***Written/e-mail Information:*** To keep the board members informed on operational matters, the Superintendent will send correspondence, bulletins and e-mail messages. Periodic correspondences or e-mail messages outlining major events and activities will keep all informed. When issues/circumstances arise which may be of interest to the Board, for consistent and timely information disbursement, e-mail will be the used as the desired method.

**Briefings** will be sent to the board members on a weekly basis; this will help keep board members informed on important events/activities that happened over the week.

### Planning

The Superintendent and the Board shall collaboratively plan yearly objectives and goals. The Board adopts the yearly objectives and goals for the district by which the Board provides direction for the Superintendent. The Superintendent oversees the implementation of the objectives and goals throughout the entire organization.

### Assessment

The Superintendent and the Board will assess the work of the school district at sessions scheduled throughout the year. Periodic assessments of the board-adopted objectives and goals for the purpose of accountability will take place.

### Community and/or Employee Contacts

When staff or community member(s) contact either in person, by phone, e-mail, or other correspondence the Board members will:

1. Listen to the comments;
2. Inform the individual of the appropriate channels regarding the issue. Assist them by informing the individual of the correct procedures to resolve the issue;  
And
3. Inform the Superintendent and/or the building administrator of the relevant issue.

When issues and/or communications are received that may impact district policies or operations, the Superintendent will keep the Board appropriately informed.

The substance of anonymous complaints that may impact district policies or operations should be shared between the Board and Superintendent even though they cannot be investigated.

### Confidentiality

Without exception, all information received and/or discussed in executive sessions will remain confidential. Information given in confidence, particularly when planning and exploring alternatives within the confines and laws that determine executive privileged information must also remain confidential.

Public debate and information, while open and honest, must not disclose information held to be confidential as defined by executive session laws.

### District Negotiators, Attorneys, and Consultants

The Superintendent or his/her designee is the contact with the district's attorneys, consultants, or negotiators. If the Board needs to consult with the district's attorney, consultant, or negotiator, the Board, by majority action, may request such a meeting.

The Board President, on behalf of the Board, may contact the district's attorney in reference to the Superintendent's contract and share that information with other board members

### The Media

The Superintendent or his/her designee is responsible for communicating official district positions to the media. Individual board members may state personal positions to the media as long as they make it known that they are NOT speaking on behalf of the Board or District.

### Site Visitations

Board members are welcome in all schools and facilities at any time. A protocol for Board Members' visits will be developed by the principals and uniformly applied.

### Agenda Setting Process for Regular Board Meetings

The Board President will hold an agenda conference with the Superintendent prior to each board meeting. If a board member wishes to have an item placed on the board meeting agenda for discussion or action, the Superintendent and/or Board President should be advised prior to these conferences.

Significant issues not set on the agenda or addendum will not be presented by either the board members or administration except for announcements that require no action by the Board.

Before each meeting, the board members will read the available agenda materials and may contact the Superintendent or the appropriate senior staff member prior to the meeting if clarification is needed. Each agenda item requiring action by the Board and all reports to the Board will be accompanied by appropriate information provided by the Superintendent in board packet. The board packets will be delivered at least four days prior to the board meeting to allow board members the time to review all documents and ask questions before the meeting if necessary.

Decision-making

For good decisions to be made there must be: clear definition of and focus on issues, adherence to a clearly defined process, involvement of those affected early in discussions, development of alternative solutions, and recommendations for actions consistent with district goals. Final decisions will consider educational research, proven practices, and community input in making decisions.

***We agree to work with each other in an open, honest manner and to disagree respectfully.***

Date: January 13, 2020

Dr. Ken Howard, Superintendent  
Mr. Dave Gordon, Board Vice President  
Mrs. Meryl Scarrow, Board Member

Mrs. Joely Swenson, Board President  
Mrs. Leigh Miller, Board Member  
Mr. Jay Moline, Board Member