

BOARD-STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

The Albemarle County School Board supports the concept of two-way communication between the Board and employees of the Board. The Superintendent is the official representative of the School Board as its Chief Administrative Officer in its relations and communications with its employees. All reports and recommendations to the Board from any officer or employee under the direction and supervision of the Superintendent shall be made through the office of the Superintendent except when otherwise specifically directed by the Board. All Board directives requiring or authorizing an action by an officer or employee or requiring any report shall be directed to the Superintendent.

In all interactions with staff and between and among members, the School Board shall follow its established protocols.

Adopted: July 1, 1993
Amended: March 24, 1997; December 11, 2003, August 16, 2004; March 9, 2006

Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, Section 22.1-253.13:7.B.1

**ALBEMARLE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
AGREEMENT OF PROTOCOL**

1. The Chairman or designee of the Board will speak officially for the Board on Board-approved actions.
2. The Superintendent represents and will speak for the school system on daily operations.
3. The Superintendent or designee will communicate immediately with Board members on matters that are legal, controversial, sensitive to press reaction, or involve public safety.
4. Pertinent background information about agenda items must be available to School Board members at least five calendar days before School Board meetings (with the exception given to disciplinary actions coming to the Board). Requests for information about agenda items should be directed to the Superintendent or the appropriate staff.
5. At Board meetings, members will make information requests to the administrative staff through the Superintendent. The Superintendent will advise the Board member on the availability of the information.
6. Board members may call individual staff members for general information. Such information will be distributed to all members of the Board. Should the information request require significant time or generation of new information on the part of the staff, approval of the Superintendent shall be required.

Staff/Board Guidelines

Agenda Preparation Process

The following procedures have been developed to ensure that Board agendas will not only be completed and ready for delivery to Board members but will have had sufficient review by the Superintendent, School Board Chairman, and/or Vice-Chairman. The deadline for agenda items is ten calendar days before the Board meeting (see Enclosure 1 - Schedule for Preparation/Distribution of Agenda). The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Clerk, and Superintendent will meet periodically to discuss items that will appear on the Board agenda. In general:

1. Items requested to be placed on the agenda will be submitted to the Superintendent and/or Chairman (or delegated to the Clerk) to be discussed for short- and long-range planning. Requests by Board members and the public should be made as far in advance as possible. Note: Often, a Board member may bring an issue up at a Board meeting, in which consensus is reached to have an item scheduled on the Board's agenda (or in Superintendent's Letter). The public is encouraged to speak under Public Comment or after the agenda item is presented. However, the public may submit a request to the Clerk's office, which will be given to the Superintendent and Chairman who will decide if the request should be honored or handled in a different manner.
2. An agenda should not be overloaded with lengthy documents or controversial issues all at one meeting. Guidelines for ordering agenda items:
 - A. All action items will be scheduled on the Board's regular meeting agenda first to help reporters meet deadlines and give the audience the decisions that they came to hear. Also, place urgent items first, using discretion when scheduling controversial issues on the agenda in order to get through all other items on the agenda.
 - B. Consider who your presenters will be. If there are out-of-town presenters then agenda items, including information items, may be scheduled as priority items and listed higher on the agenda.
 - C. All information items will be scheduled up to two times on the Board's regular agendas before scheduled for action. Public comment will be taken on information items only. By receiving public comment during information items, it will allow the media to report about the issue, the public to speak about the issue, and the Board to reflect on the public's input before taking action at another meeting.
 - D. Last minute material will not be provided to the Board at meetings, unless approved by the Chairman. If possible, material should be presented to the Board at the end of the meeting, such as school newsletters and other mail.
 - E. Closed Meetings, whenever possible, will be scheduled before the Board meeting. Occasionally, Closed Meetings will be scheduled after the meeting.
 - F. Whenever possible, meetings will end at by 10:00 p.m.
3. Staff and Board members will adhere to the agreed-upon timeline in submitting items to the Clerk.

Items received after the timeline will normally be postponed to a future meeting. This procedure will

- A. Allow the Clerk to advertise and assemble packets on time;
- B. Reduce negative impact on the Copy Center and cost to school system in dollars, staff time, and morale;
- C. Allow the Superintendent to review and sign items for accountability and clarity;
- D. Give adequate time for Board members to review packets;
- E. Allow the Superintendent/Chairman at their agenda-setting meetings to determine a self-monitoring timeline for Board meetings. The Assistant Superintendents will submit monthly, in writing, to the Superintendent and copied to the Clerk their agenda item requests to be placed on that month's agenda, with recommended staff time necessary in order to present the agenda item. The Chairman and Superintendent will then determine the Board discussion time necessary.

If a department head has an agenda item that he or she would like scheduled on the agenda, this process must be followed:

- A. Obtain approval from the appropriate Assistant Superintendent.
- B. The Assistant Superintendent will obtain approval from the Superintendent.
- C. The Superintendent/Chairman or designee will notify the Clerk's office regarding the item placement.

The Clerk will then do the following:

- A. Distribute the tentative agenda and deadline date on E-mail to School Division department heads, key staff, Superintendent, and Board members.
- B. Request department heads to review the tentative agenda. Any changes or additions to the agenda initiated by a department head will require approval through the process listed above.
- C. Send a final E-mail with noted changes prior to Board meeting, reflecting the final approved agenda.

Board Reports:

All agenda item reports and/or executive summaries (see Enclosure 2 – Staff Guidelines for Board Reports) must go through the following process:

- A. The person who has prepared the agenda item must sign the document, have it reviewed by his or her supervisor, then submit it to the Clerk's office by the deadline date. If signatures are not in place, then the Clerk will send the item back for signature.
- B. If a staff member is unable to meet the designated deadline, prior approval must be obtained through the appropriate Assistant Superintendent, who will then communicate to the Superintendent the reason why the deadline cannot be met. The Clerk's office must also be notified with this information.
- C. The Clerk will then give all information to the Superintendent for his review and signature. Sometimes, an agenda item is sent back for additional work before the Superintendent approves it. If this should occur, the agenda item must go through the above process again.

All finalized and Superintendent/Chairman-approved agenda items (hardcopy and electronic copy) must be in the Clerk's office ten calendar days before the meeting for processing. Six calendar days before the meeting, the Board packet will be provided to Board members. The agenda will be posted on the website by the end of the day Friday when Board Packets are distributed. Reports to the Board will be posted to the website ideally by the end of the day Friday but no later than noon on the next business day. Agenda items are then copied and/or placed on a disk and are distributed to the following:

1. Full Board Packet (minus confidential information – see *)
 - School Board Members; Superintendent; Two Assistant Superintendents; School Board Attorney; County Attorney; *Public Copy, *Building Level Administrators' Association; *Albemarle Education Association; *Four to Media
2. Partial Board Packet (agenda and staff report cover sheets only) – Department Heads and Principals
3. Agenda Only – PTOs; Media; Specific Mailing List

All staff members who submit agenda items to the Clerk that have been Superintendent/Chairman-approved and made a part of the Board packet will receive a copy of the agenda item and supporting documentation for their records.

All attempts will be made to ensure that everyone on the distribution list will receive their Board packet (partial or full) in a timely manner, no later than six calendar days before the Board meeting.

The approved agenda is published in The Daily Progress the Sunday before the meeting. The Daily Progress requests that the ad be sent to them by Wednesday of the week before the meeting (the following Thursday is the Board meeting). The School Board's upcoming tentative agendas are published in the Board-to-Board Memo at the front of the Board Packet, which is distributed to School Board members and key staff.

Public Testimony

The public is encouraged to address the Board under Public Comment or during the agenda item during the regular meetings of the month. However, when an individual and/or organization would like to be formally scheduled on the Board agenda, the individual and/or organization must do the following:

- a. Put the request in writing to the Superintendent or Chairman and send it through the Clerk's office.
- b. The Superintendent and Chairman will discuss the issue and decide if the request should be scheduled on the Board agenda.
- c. A letter is submitted to the individual and/or organization regarding the outcome of the request.

Board members may ask that items be scheduled on the agenda at any Board meeting, given that Board consensus is reached. On the other hand, Board members may follow the procedure as noted above.

The public is encouraged to attend School Board meetings and to speak about items on the agenda. At regular meetings, when action items are scheduled, the public will not be allowed to present to the Board. The public will be allowed to speak about any information item on the agenda, including other matters not listed on the agenda.

Individuals and organizations are encouraged to sign in with the Clerk at least half an hour before the meeting begins. Organized groups can also request up to ten minutes to speak, as long as the request is received two days prior to the scheduled meeting. The Chair will then either grant or deny the request and notify the group. The Chairman will then call forth individuals who signed up. Public Testimony Guidelines are as follows:

1. Thirty minutes before the start of the meeting (usually 6:00 p.m.) there will be a sign-up sheet for members of the public to sign up if they wish to speak before the Board. The sign-up period will end 15 minutes after the start of the meeting (usually at 6:45 p.m.). After that time, the sign-up sheet will be withdrawn, and no one else will be permitted to speak. The Chairman will remind the public to sign up with the Clerk at the beginning of the meeting.
2. Signing up for someone else is discouraged and limited to you and another person.
3. Three minutes will be allowed for each presenter to speak. A color-coded card system will be used to time presentations. However, the Chairman may, at the discretion of the Board, extend the timeline to no more than five minutes.
4. The green card means the speaker is two minutes into the presentation; the yellow card means the speaker is 2.5 minutes into the presentation, and the red card means the speaker is at the three-minute limit of the presentation and must wrap up.
5. If a speaker represents a group, he or she may want to have others in agreement to stand while he or she speaks, rather than having all speak on the same issue.
6. In order to give all speakers equal treatment and courtesy, the Board requests that speakers note the following:
 - A. Sign in with the Clerk before the meeting.
 - B. At the speakers' podium, please state name.
 - C. Address comments to the Board as a whole.
 - D. State position and give facts.
 - E. Debate is prohibited.
 - F. Give written statements and other supporting material to the Clerk. Please note that written statements are made a part of the permanent records of the Board. In addition, the speaker is unable to complete the presentation in the time allotted, a copy of the presentation will be provided to Board members.
7. Speakers are generally allowed one appearance per meeting, although the Board can allow exceptions. Board meetings are formal proceedings and are recorded digitally and on tape. For that reason, speakers are requested not to speak from their seats or out of turn.

Unless Board members and the Superintendent ask generic questions about the speaker's presentation for clarity, engaging the individual in debate is prohibited. The Chairman will thank the speaker for his or her presentation. Board members are encouraged to accept the remarks as information. The Board should not attempt to make decisions on the spot when the issue is first raised. Potentially controversial issues may be introduced as staff reports. Often, Board members and/or staff bring up a particular issue later in the meeting that a member of the public addressed (usually under Other Business by Board Members/Superintendent) in order to obtain additional Board direction. For those presentations requiring follow up and a staff response, the Clerk's office will coordinate with the Superintendent and Chairman to ensure that this is done.

Periodically, the Board will receive a list of Pending Items requested from previous Board meetings that require follow up by staff.

Letters Received by the Clerk's Office or Copied to the Albemarle County School Board Are Managed Through the Following Process:

1. The Chairman is notified about the letter.
2. The Chairman reviews the letter to determine if the Board or staff should respond.
3. If the Board should respond to the letter, the Chairman or designee will draft send a response to the letter.
4. If the Chairman feels that staff should respond to the letter, the Chairman will send a letter to the writer indicating that the issue has been delegated to the Superintendent in an attempt to resolve the issue at the appropriate knowledge-response level. If this is unsuccessful, then the School Board will resolve the issue. The individual's letter and staff's response is provided to School Board members.
5. If a letter is addressed to the Superintendent or to a staff member and the Board is copied through the Clerk's office, the School Board can anticipate receiving a copy of the letter and the response to the letter by staff. However, the letter will be held in the Clerk's office until the Clerk has received staff's response; then both letters will be sent to the School Board. The Board is then given the opportunity to understand both sides of the issue. This process also allows staff to be able to settle the issue at the appropriate knowledge-response level. The Chairman is made aware of the situation and, often discusses the issue in advance with the Superintendent.
6. If an individual Board member receives a letter that he or she wishes staff to respond to and share with the Board, then the Board member is requested to provide the information to the Clerk. Both the letter and the Superintendent's response will be provided to Board members.

All incoming and outgoing letters are placed in a notebook in the School Board Conference Room for review and an e-mail list of letters is sent to the Board members and key staff weekly.

Handling of Electronic Mail

Protocol for responding to E-Mails sent directly to the entire School Board

1. Clerk's office is subscribed to the public E-Mail distribution list and retains copies of all correspondence sent to SchoolBoard@albemarle.org . Clerk acknowledges receipt of every message within two business days by E-Mail.
2. For E-Mails addressing a subject the Chairman has determined requires a prepared response, the Chairman will prepare (or have prepared by staff/designee) a response and circulate a draft copy to the entire School Board. School Board members can provide feedback on the prepared response at the next School Board meeting. With the consensus of the School Board, or in the absence of any discussion at the meeting, the Chairman may proceed by having the clerk respond by E-Mail with the prepared response for as long as is appropriate on the issue in question, not to exceed one year from the date of the School Board meeting held following the date the draft statement was circulated to the School Board.
3. School Board members will not receive a copy of every reply E-Mail message, however they may inquire with the Clerk (or review files) to determine the specifics of the response to any specific E-Mail communication.
4. For E-Mails addressing a subject the Chairman has determined does not require a prepared response, or for which no determination has been made, the Clerk's office shall reply to all School Board members informing them of the status of the communication (i.e. under review by Chairman; replied to by Chairman with copy of reply provided to School Board; no further action to be taken by Chairman).
5. This protocol does not prohibit the School Board Chairman or designee of the Board from speaking officially for the Board on Board approved actions, as described in Policy BG. In addition, this protocol does not prohibit an individual Board Member from responding to the author of the E-Mail with their individual opinions so long as it is clear that the member is not speaking officially on behalf of the entire School Board. Each Board Member is responsible for archiving their applicable inbound and outbound E-Mail for FOIA compliance.

Protocol for responding to E-Mails sent directly to multiple Board Members. Often messages will be sent to specific Board Members with known views on a particular issue or to the constituent's magisterial representative plus the At-Large representative.

1. An individual Board Member may reply to E-Mails expressing their individual opinions so long as it is clear that the member is not speaking officially on behalf of the entire School Board. Each Board Member is responsible for archiving their applicable inbound and outbound E-Mail for FOIA compliance.
2. Board Members are encouraged, but not required, to copy the Clerk's office on their E-Mail replies to these communications. This courtesy will allow the Chairman and Superintendent to be informed of important issues that may ultimately involve the communication to the entire School Board.

Protocol for responding to E-Mails sent directly to an individual Board Member

1. An individual Board Member may reply to E-Mails expressing their individual opinions so long as it is clear that the member is not speaking officially on behalf of the entire School Board. Each Board Member is responsible for archiving their applicable inbound and outbound E-Mail for FOIA compliance.
2. If the School Board Member wishes staff to respond to the E-Mail, the Board Member will forward the E-Mail to the Clerk's office and Chairman. The E-Mail and any response from the Superintendent are sent to the entire School Board.

Protocol for responding to E-Mails sent to Superintendent or to a staff member and copied to Board Member(s)

1. Follow Staff/Board Guidelines for letters received by the Clerk's office and sent to Superintendent or to a staff member and copied to Board Member(s).
2. The School Board Chairman or designee of the Board may also reply officially for the Board on Board approved actions, as described in Policy BG. In addition, this protocol does not prohibit an individual Board Member from responding to the author of the E-Mail with their individual opinions so long as it is clear that the member is not speaking officially on behalf of the entire School Board.

Handling of Public Concerns Via Telephone or in Person

1. Listen to the individual's concerns.
2. Explain that the Board and administration have a process of handling concerns.
3. Determine if the individual has discussed the issue with the person responsible.
4. Express appreciation to the individual for voicing concern in order to let the person know someone is listening to his or her concern.
5. Affirm that a decision will be reached in a timely manner.
6. Encourage the individual to follow the established process at the appropriate knowledge-response level (teacher, principal, Superintendent/designee, School Board representative, etc.) and then appeal to the School Board.
7. Assure the individual that the Superintendent will be informed.
8. If the individual submits a concern in writing, timely resolution of that concern will occur, with copies of all documentation provided to the departments involved.

The School Board Has Developed Protocols for Itself that Are Reviewed at Its Annual Retreat as Follows:

1. The Chairman or designee of the Board will speak officially for the Board on Board-approved actions.
2. The Superintendent represents and will speak for the school system on daily operations.
3. The Superintendent or designee will communicate immediately with Board members on matters that are legal, controversial, of interest to news agencies, or involve public safety.
4. Pertinent background information about agenda items must be available to School Board members at least six calendar days before School Board meetings (with the exception of disciplinary actions coming to the Board). Requests for information about agenda items should be directed to the Superintendent or appropriate staff.

5. At Board meetings, members will make information requests to the administrative staff through the appropriate Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent. The Superintendent will advise the Board member on the availability of the information.
6. Board members may call individual staff members for general information. Such information will be distributed to all Board members. Should the information require significant time or generation of new information on the part of the staff, approval of the appropriate Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent shall be required. (Approved: June 1, 1992; Revised: June 23, 1993, June 19, 1995, February 1998; Reviewed: January 18, 1996, June 16, 1997, January 1999; June 19, 2000; February 9, 2002)

Guidelines for Time Allocated to Research Issues and Processing of Requested Materials:

1. Responses to requests for information requiring 15 minutes or less of staff time for preparation (information which is already assembled and available) should be handled immediately by the office receiving the call.
2. Responses to requests for information requiring 15 to 60 minutes of staff time for preparation should be referred to the appropriate staff head or principal for action (some flexibility is allowed). The Superintendent or his designee will determine the priority of the request and inform the customer of the anticipated response time.
3. Responses to requests for information requiring more than 60 minutes of staff time for preparation should be referred to the Superintendent's office for action. The Superintendent or his designee will inform the individual of the anticipated response time.
4. Requests for copies of public records or other information under the Freedom of Information Act will continue to be handled in accordance with applicable legal requirements. The School Board's legal counsel will be informed whenever a Freedom of Information Act request is received, so that a proper and timely response is prepared and delivered.
5. A \$.10 per sheet copying charge will be calculated and the requestor must pay this charge at the time the information is received. Therefore, the information must be picked up (unless a prior arrangement has been made) since it will not be faxed or mailed. An additional charge will be assessed if research time is needed. This information will be provided to the requestor.

School Board Verified-Candidate Protocol

1. Candidates should receive an information packet about the school system once they have been verified as official candidates.
2. Candidates should be placed on the full Board packet mailing list to receive Board packets (at no cost) through the November election, minus Closed meeting information.
3. One-on-one informational meetings with the candidates will be scheduled as requested.
4. After the election in November, newly elected Board members will be given a staff orientation.
5. The School Division will not participate in candidate public forums.

Minutes

1. Minutes are the official record of business transacted by the Board and are a legal resource and artifact to the public and future boards. The Clerk is responsible for taking minutes and recording them.
2. Minutes will reflect the exact language of motions, who made them, who seconded them, and who voted which way. A general summary of the meeting will be provided, including staff reports, recommendations, and points on which Board consensus was reached.
3. Minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting by a majority of the Board who attended the meeting that the minutes reflect. Board members requesting minor editing revisions are encouraged to contact the Clerk's office to request those changes rather than pulling the minutes during a Board meeting. However, if a requested change reflects a change in "intent," then the Clerk will notify the Board member, and the minutes will have to be pulled in open session at the Board meeting where the Board must approve the recommended change.
4. The Clerk's office will maintain Board-approved minutes for posterity as required by law and will keep Board meeting tapes/CDs as back up for up to three years.

Additional Information:

1. Almost all Board meetings are held in Room 241 of the County Office Building, with the exception of special meetings, which may be held in Room 320 or another location.
2. The Clerk's office requests that Cover Sheets/Executive Summaries and enclosures be sent as an E-mail attachment before the Board meeting. This information is incorporated into the Board Packets and in the minutes as a part of the public record. The day after the Board meeting, the Clerk's office notifies all departments/parties about Board action taken.
3. The Clerk's office provides a semi-monthly Board Briefs which provides an overview of the Board's regularly scheduled meetings. The Board Briefs are distributed electronically to more than 1,800 people and businesses and are posted on the website. Five copies of the publication are sent to each school for placement within the school. There is also a small mailing list that receives hard copies of the publication.
4. The County Attorney will prepare the motions for Closed Meetings based on input that he receives from the Chairman and/or Superintendent.
5. Monthly financial reports will be placed on the consent agenda.

Approved: August 1995

Revised: February 1998, February 1999, February 2000; June 19, 2000; April 14, 2005; March 9, 2006