

**Pelham Public Schools
Pelham, New York**

**Board of Education
Governance and Communication Practices and Protocols**



BOE Meetings

1. Board Members should make an effort to pose questions that they have to any of the central office administrators in advance of the Board meeting via Google Docs except for executive session items, which will be done via phone or in person. There will be a running Doc, but for meeting weeks, all questions should be posed by 9 am on the day of the meeting.
2. The Board President will decide how consent agenda items will be taken at the meeting in advance.
3. Board Members may access the District Clerk as a resource to obtain information, or to clarify technology problems in media such as email or Google Docs.
4. The Board will publish annually a pamphlet online describing their protocols and practices related to the functioning of the meetings.
5. The Board agrees to use BoardDocs to archive and provide access to information from weekly packets and Board of Education meetings.
6. The Board President will manage public comment at meetings. Board Members will be attentive, respectful, and refrain from side comments, unrelated use of electronics, etc.
7. Unless otherwise indicated, all Board Members are free to respond to public questions at Board of Education meetings.
8. Board meetings will include updates on finance and facilities, the Four Pillars of the Strategic Plan or other items as needed.
9. The Board will meet quarterly and/or as needed, in executive session without the Superintendent, to review progress on Board development, adherence to Board protocols, and to review his/her performance. It shall be the responsibility of the Board President and Vice President to provide the Superintendent with timely updates on all on such matters.

With Superintendent of Schools

10. The Board President is the primary contact of the Superintendent of Schools. As such, it is expected that the Superintendent shall maintain regular communication with the Board President on matters of importance. It is the President's responsibility to share appropriate information with the entire Board in a timely fashion.
11. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent to maintain regular communication with all Members of the Board of Education.
12. The Superintendent will provide the Board with a detailed update of items of importance via the Board letter, which will be uploaded to BoardDocs as needed, but at least bi-weekly by Thursday before a Tuesday meeting. Materials to be discussed at Board meetings will be available on BoardDocs, typically by the Thursday before a Tuesday meeting. Board Members will be responsible for reading the packet and contacting the Superintendent with any questions by Tuesday morning.
13. The Superintendent will use email or Google Docs as a tool to provide information to the full Board of Education, mindful at all times that emails are subject to Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).
14. The Superintendent will immediately inform the Board of major issues pertaining to student matters (medical emergencies, arrests, significant altercations, etc.). This may be done through email or telephone.
15. Any Board Member may contact the Superintendent at any time regarding issues or questions. Emails regarding Board business should be copied to the Board President. Replies from the Superintendent should also include a copy to the Board President. The Superintendent generally will share the response with the rest of the Board.
16. The Superintendent will meet on a regular basis with the President and Vice President to plan Board meeting agendas and items for discussion with the full Board of Education.
17. The Superintendent will refer requests for information from members of the Board that are considered to take substantial amounts of time to the full Board for consideration.
18. Comments regarding the performance and/or actions of individual Board Members and/or the Superintendent are always done in person and not in email.

19. **Communication Vehicles.** Emails will be used for routine, informational communication. Email is subject to FOIL and care should be taken to assure that email discussion does not violate the Open Meetings Law. Civility of content and tone is essential in all communication, including email, as the Board and Superintendent have a responsibility to show respect and mutual consideration for all.

With Board Members

20. Communication should flow from Board President to Members and vice versa. The Board President will be responsible for sharing information pertaining to Board work with all Board Members on a timely basis, including substantive communications between the President and the Superintendent, staff members, community members or other Board Members.
21. All substantive issues brought to individual Board Members from community members should be raised with the Superintendent.
22. Relevant emails of concern should be forwarded to the Board President.
23. The Board President will be responsible for communicating and/or sharing information to the full Board.
24. Intra-Board Communication - by telephone, email or in person - is essential, but should be consistent with guidelines for public and executive session decision-making.

Central Administration

25. All Assistant Superintendents will provide a brief weekly update that will be sent to the Board in the weekly packet with all corresponding back-up materials. All issues should be referenced and explained so that the issue could be put into its proper context.
26. Board Members will have the prerogative to call the Superintendent or an Assistant Superintendent to ask clarifying questions or raise issues. Board Members will use their judgment when contacting Assistant Superintendents, remembering at all times that they and all other personnel report to the Superintendent, and no individual Board Member has authority to issue directives.
27. Questions regarding process or more substantial issues should be brought to the Superintendent with a copy to the Board President for follow-up.

28. All communication with administrators other than Assistant Superintendents will go through the Superintendent.
29. Committee members and liaisons are responsible for providing the Board with an update from their committee meetings on a regular basis. Any minutes prepared by the committees shall be made available to all Board members and, as practicable, a Board Member on each committee shall be responsible for providing the Board with timely updates on the committee's work. Upcoming meeting dates should be shared with Board colleagues via the Board calendar so interested Board Members may attend to observe the meeting, always being mindful of adherence to the Open Meetings Law. Board Members will also have the opportunity to share information about their committee work and community liaisons at the monthly business meetings.
30. All items for Board action will be presented at least a week in advance whenever practicable.

With Community

31. Formal external communications is the responsibility of the Public Information Specialist. When the communication is to come from the Board of Education, Members of the Board will be asked for input. Board input may be solicited on other communications as well.
32. All e-mails received by individual Board Members may be forwarded in form or substance to boe@pelhamschools.org and may be published and/or read at public meetings. The preservation of confidentiality of all students and staff will be strictly adhered to. All written correspondence will be promptly acknowledged. The Board President will work with the Public Relations Specialist and/or the Superintendent to coordinate responses to emails and may ask other Board Members to respond on behalf of the Board. In some cases, a form response may be developed to facilitate prompt handling of a volume of email on a particular issue.
33. Anonymous communication shall not be responded to by either the Board of Education or Superintendent.
34. Board Members will direct parents who call with complaints to communicate up the hierarchy of authority - talking to the teacher, the guidance counselor, the principal, and the Superintendent before involving Board Members. They will not offer to research the problem and call the parent back. Depending on the seriousness of the issue, Board Members may also want to make the Board President and Superintendent aware of the issue. Board Members should relay substantive criticisms, complaints or suggestions to the full Board and the Superintendent. The Superintendent and staff are expected to address the issue. Board Members do not attempt to solve the problem or act

as the intermediary between the school and the individual raising the question.

35. The Board President serves as the Board's liaison to the Council of the PTAs. Members of the Board are always welcome to attend those monthly meetings.
36. The Superintendent joins the Board President for periodic meetings with the local municipal leaders - the Town and Villages. Upcoming meetings and agendas will be shared with the full Board in advance.
37. Nothing in the above is meant to prohibit or discourage Board Members from speaking to community members about matters of public interest where the Board Member merely provides publicly available information.

Board Roles and Responsibilities

38. Board members have authority to act as members of the corporate board as a whole, but have no authority to take action or speak on behalf of the Board as a whole.
39. New Board members shall participate in an orientation process, which includes introductory meetings with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents, fellow Board members, and District counsel. Board members shall acquaint themselves with District policy, procedures, and financial information relative to their fiduciary responsibility.
40. New York State law requires both financial and Board governance training for voting members of a school board to be completed within the first year of their first term. Registration for these trainings may be facilitated through the Board Clerk.

Adopted: September 8, 2015