

**Cassadaga Valley Central School District  
Board of Education Member Protocol**

This document is designed to be an overview of School Board member protocol. It will be used as a tool to educate newly elected members as well as the school community regarding the work of a school board member. This will be reviewed and adopted annually at the Board's re-organizational meeting and is meant to be a living document.

**Board Member Roles/Orientation:**

1. A board member's concern must be the educational welfare of all children attending our schools while maintaining a fiscally responsible annual budget.
2. Newly elected board members will attend an orientation meeting with the superintendent and board president and/or at least one incumbent board member within 45 days of their election. Their orientation will focus on general District information, an overview of programs and operations, and a review of a typical board meeting and board packet. Newly elected board members will be required to attend the mandated fiscal training and will be encouraged to attend other regional trainings designed to enhance their service on behalf of the District.
3. A board member's role is one of governance, not school management; thus, authority for the administration of our schools lies with the superintendent and staff. Board members should make every effort to convince individuals to follow the chain of command; thereby, working to resolve their own issues. However, issues or concerns expressed to Board members should be brought to the attention of the superintendent.
4. A board member must work with other members to establish, understand, and support District policies and obey the laws of New York and the United States.

**Ethics & Legal Responsibilities:**

5. Board members are expected to refrain from using their board position to benefit themselves, family members, or business associates and avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof. In keeping with this ethical stance, Board members sign a conflict of interest statement each year.
6. A board member must respect the confidentiality of privileged information whether received during executive session or via any confidential communication.

7. Board members are expected to render all decisions based on available facts and informed, independent judgment and to support an employment process designed to select the most qualified candidate available. Hiring district staff requires joint action by the board and superintendent and is a core responsibility of the governance team. The Board's role is to set forth criteria and hold the superintendent accountable for the performance of his/her staff.

#### **Building Visits:**

8. Board members are encouraged to attend District activities open to the public or when invited to do so by building personnel. When Board members plan to visit a school building they should contact the Superintendent and work through the District office to schedule the visit with the appropriate building principal. They should refrain from making unannounced or surprise visits to any district building. However, when it comes to their own child's school, board members enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other parent and should be treated accordingly.

#### **Communication:**

9. Just as the Superintendent speaks for the District, the board president speaks for the board. In the event of an emergency or special circumstance the board may designate another spokesperson, such as the school attorney. If a board member wishes to offer a public statement but is not the designated spokesperson they must include a disclaimer similar to the following, "I wish to make clear that I am not speaking on behalf of the Board or the District, but as an individual citizen."
10. To insure effective communication board members are encouraged to check their school email on a regular basis.
11. Board members may communicate with each other to ask questions and gather clarifying information, but it is important to keep in mind that gatherings of more than two members of a five member board represents a quorum. While Board members are not prohibited from socializing with each other they must be ever mindful of the tenets of the Open Meetings Law. In light of this fact, an effective way to share information relevant to district business or issues scheduled to come before the Board is to relay the information to the board president for placement on a future agenda or to the superintendent for distribution to all members in a Board update.
12. Board Members should feel free to contact our District Clerk with questions about routing Board functions such as schedules and meeting details.

13. Board members should direct all questions concerning District matters to the Superintendent rather than to individual administrators. The Superintendent will then take responsibility for gathering answers or distributing information.

**Meetings:**

14. Board members are expected to make every effort to attend all board meetings and committee assignments. If a member must be absent from a meeting or committee assignment he/she should alert the District Clerk in advance.

15. Board members are expected to review the full board packet and become informed concerning the issues to be considered during BOE meetings and ask questions or express concerns to the superintendent at least one business day prior to a meeting to provide time for answers to be prepared prior to the meeting. If a board member requests additional information and it is able to be provided in advance of the meeting, all board members will receive a copy.

16. Any Board member may request that an item be placed on an agenda for board consideration by contacting the Board president prior to his/her agenda preparation meeting with the superintendent. The superintendent and board president will jointly determine whether to include the item. Board members may also introduce potential agenda items during board discussion under Board Business. If it is the will of the Board, the item will be considered at a future meeting.

17. During the public comment section of the meeting, board members will listen to comments, and the president will guide the discussion. Further, with board approval, the president may direct the superintendent to investigate matters brought forward during public comment and report findings to the board at a later meeting.

18. Members of the public will be reminded that personnel matters and individual student matters are not proper subjects for public comment.

19. Board members are expected to express their personal opinions but, once the board has acted, accept the will of the majority.

20. Committees may be established by the board if an issue arises that requires more time and attention than the board feels can be provided during the course of a board meeting. Committees are established in response to a successful motion to refer the issue to committee.

**Building a Strong, Respectful, & Skilled Board Team:**

21. Individual members will help to establish a positive tone throughout the District by demonstrating consistent support of faculty, staff and other Board members.
22. Individual board members, and the board as a whole, will engage in professional development activities such as appropriate conferences and workshops designed to enhance the work of the school board and are encouraged to be active participants in Chautauqua County School Board Association events.
23. The full board will conduct an annual evaluation of its own performance that will include a discussion of annual goals for the Board as well as goals for the District to consider.