

# Cold Spring School District Governing Board

## Board Guidelines for Communication

Adopted by the Governing Board: April 10, 2017

The Cold Spring Governing Board recognizes that clear and effective communication is a vitally important component of their responsibilities as elected representatives of the public.

Respectful, constructive, and effective communications enhance the ability of Board members to: represent the entire Cold Spring School District community, encourage public participation, build understanding and consensus, share information, and promote student achievement and well-being. The intent of these guidelines is to promote innovative, consistent, and appropriate communications between Governing Board members and their constituents.

### **Communication Between Governing Board members**

Board members must always be mindful of the Brown Act when communicating with each other by phone, via email, or in person, and must always conduct themselves in strict accordance with its requirements and provisions.

### **Communication with District Staff and Administrators**

Requests for specific information made by a Board member to District Staff or Administrators shall be made through the Superintendent/Principal. In order to insure that the information is shared in a consistent manner, the Superintendent/Principal will distribute the information to all Board members.

If a Board member wishes to provide information to the other Board members on a specific topic, the information shall be sent to the Superintendent/Principal so that he/she can distribute it to the entire Board.

A Board member who is a parent at Cold Spring School may of course discuss any matters or concerns regarding his/her individual child with that child's teacher(s). However, when a Board member is present on the school campus, it is important to remember that individual board members do not create directives on policy or budgetary matters. The Board, as a whole, makes those decisions.

### **Email Communication with the Community**

*Responding to emails directed to the Board as a whole:*

We agree that the Board President is our spokesperson and will answer emails directed to the whole Board. The Board President will acknowledge receipt of the email and, if appropriate, encourage a face-to-face meeting or phone call. The Board President will forward the email to the Superintendent/Principal, and together they will determine if the comments/issues raised in

the email are within the purview of the Board or if they are best addressed and resolved by District Staff and/or Administrators.

In some cases, it may be appropriate for the Superintendent/Principal to answer an email on behalf of the Board. The Superintendent/Principal will respond and send a copy to each Board member, so they know the response.

The Board agrees to direct any District Staff issue to the Superintendent/Principal, and not contact District Staff directly. The Board agrees that all legal questions will be directed to the Superintendent/Principal.

*Responding to emails sent to less than all five Board members:*

The Board agrees that the Board member(s) who receive an email with an issue will forward it to the Board President and the Superintendent/Principal. The Board President will acknowledge receipt of the email and, if appropriate, encourage a face-to-face meeting or phone call. The Board President will forward the email to the Superintendent/Principal, and together they will determine if the comments/issues raised in the email are within the purview of the Board or if they are best addressed and resolved by District Staff and/or Administrators.

In some cases, it may be appropriate for the Superintendent/Principal to answer an email on behalf of the Board. The Superintendent/Principal will respond and send a copy to each Board member, so they know the response.

The Board agrees to direct any District Staff issue to the Superintendent/Principal, and not contact District Staff directly. The Board agrees that all legal questions will be directed to the Superintendent/Principal.

*Email concerns*

The Board recognizes that unlike a personal conversation, the Board has no control over where and to whom an email is forwarded, and that words can be cut/pasted out of context. For these reasons, the Board wants to encourage personal and direct communications.

The Board also recognizes that email is not a secure vehicle of communication. Therefore, Board members shall never use email to communicate sensitive or confidential information.

## **Social Media**

Social media refers to online technology tools that enable people and organizations to communicate, collaborate, and share information and resources over the internet. Examples include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, SnapChat, Instagram, blogs, and other websites.

- Board authorization is not required for a Board member to open a personal or professional social media account.
- Board members should use social media with the same level of professionalism and responsibility as they would when officially representing the Board.
- Online postings should remain positive – do not engage in negative or critical conversations online.

- Re-tweets, likes, and favorites could be perceived as endorsements. Always check before sharing.
- Search hashtags (#) before using them to ensure they are appropriate and positive.
- Accounts should be updated and monitored regularly and offensive material must be removed within 24 hours of notice.
- Always respect the privacy of students, staff, parents, community members, and other Board members.

### **Individual Verbal Communication**

Board members may communicate in one-on-one conversations with individual community members, or at public gatherings at the school or elsewhere in the community. These communications can be an effective way to promote the Cold Spring School District mission and vision to the public.

- When speaking, the Board member should communicate as clearly and as accurately as possible.
- In general, the Board President will speak on behalf of the Board, unless he/she designates another Board member to do so.
- When conveying a personal statement, the Board member must identify it as a personal opinion and not the opinion of the Board as a whole.
- Board members shall not communicate as individuals about student or staff discipline or matters of negotiation, unless designated by the Board President to do so.
- Always respect the privacy of students, staff, parents, community members, and fellow Board members.
- Any public statements should be consistent with the District's mission and vision. Public statements should avoid criticism of the intentions or actions of the other Board members, students, staff, parents, and community members.

### **Individual Communication with the Media**

Board members may be contacted by media officials for comment or an interview. The following should be kept in mind when responding to media requests:

- Only the Board President or his/her designee will act as the official spokesperson for the Board. This does not, however, bar individual Board members from speaking to the media.
- When speaking or corresponding with the media, individual Board members shall not present an opinion as the position of the Board, unless they have been authorized to speak on the subject by the Board President.
- When speaking or corresponding with the media, individual Board members shall uphold the decisions of the Board and the implementation of any Board resolutions once they have been passed.
- When speaking with the media, individual Board members should clearly identify as personal opinions any statements or positions that are not necessarily those of the Board.
- A Board member contacted by the media should inform, at a minimum, the Board President and the Superintendent/Principal if the Board member will be commenting on District-wide issues.

