



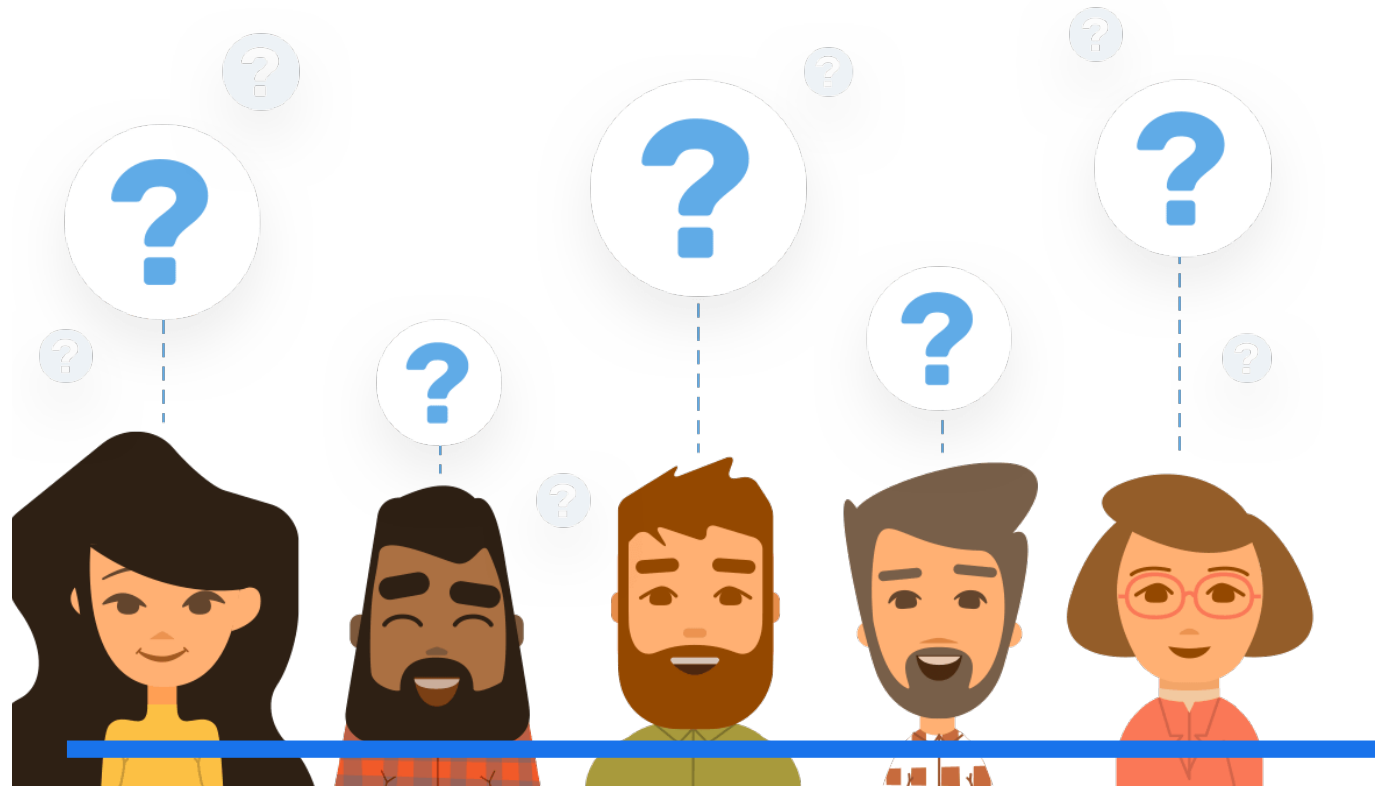
Greater Cleveland School  
Superintendents Association  
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Tuesday, January 21, 2025

Some thoughts on  
working positively  
with your Board of  
Education members

Working with the board is analogous to a **team sport**.

The skills and experience of each **player** contribute to the success of the **team**.

How well do you know your **players**?





# Do you know which board members...

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Are alumni of your district?

Have college degrees or served in the military?

Attended a career center?

Really understand school finance?

Are 'besties' or 'frenemies' with other board members or administrators?

Have personal or family challenges that could affect their availability or effectiveness?

Have a passion for special education, student achievement, early childhood education or district operations?

Have jobs that require odd hours or significant travel?

Understand and respect their role?

Have good relative knowledge of your district's achievement position when compared to neighboring or similar districts?

Have good relative knowledge of your district's financial position and/or school finance?

Are scared to make mistakes at board meetings?

Are naturally introverted?


Aspire to higher political office?

Do you know  
which board  
members...

# Board Member elections November 2025


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Pre-election,  
say “NO” to  
these:

- ❖ Supporting one incumbent over another
- ❖ Supporting any incumbent, beyond talking about their accomplishments as part of the current or previous board
- ❖ Planting yard signs related to school levies or board members
- ❖ Attending fundraisers for one board candidate but not others
- ❖ Getting involved with union or civic endorsements of candidates
- ❖ Publicly showing your distaste for any candidate



Pre-election,  
say “YES” to  
these:

- ❖ Have messaging ready – and stick to it – about district ‘wins’ connected to recent board work.
- ❖ Encourage staff and community members to do their own research about candidates, their history of support for public education and knowledge of your district’s challenges.
- ❖ Offer a personal meeting with you, treasurer and current board president.
- ❖ If you meet with candidates, ask for their “why”
- ❖ Share your district priorities and goals
- ❖ Ask whether they have questions or would like any context or verification of perception

## Post-Election...

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### DON'T

- Publicly bemoan the results
- Let poor behavior on the part of those newly-elected poison your future working relationship





# Post-Election...

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## DO:

- Call winners to congratulate them within a day of election
- Invite newly elected board members to all board meetings leading to January 1
- Call election losers (especially incumbents)
- Have a statement ready for the media
- Celebrate or commiserate privately
- Set individual meetings with all incumbent or newly elected winners and current president and/or vice president to discuss six-month plans and priorities





# Tips for Board Meetings

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It's a board meeting. Involve the board president in drafting or confirming the agenda.

Confirm with board president that ideas from other board members for meeting content have been heard or supported.

Emphasize items or attachments you need all members to read, consider and understand before the meeting.

Make sure to reiterate that you're available to answer questions related to the agenda before the meeting.

Encourage the practice of formally adopting the agenda at the beginning of the meeting as well as the use of a consent agenda.



## Help establish a positive meeting culture

### Establish

- Establish the expectation and agreement that all members will arrive \_\_\_ minutes ahead of each meeting to greet one another, staff or community members who are present, etc.

### Ensure

- Ensure all board members know of and are introduced to VIP guests and any who have been asked to present or to be in attendance for executive session.

### Encourage

- Encourage board president to be deliberate about asking for discussion and input from all other members, especially in areas where consent agendas are utilized.

### Create

- Work to create a sense of district celebration or positivity around the board meeting. It should not look or feel like drudgery!







Review with new board presidents basic parliamentary procedure, your public participation policy and strategies to address unruly members of the public or of the board.

Consider a meeting between you, treasurer, new board president and board attorney to answer questions and smooth meeting practices.

Be intentional about finding things to (publicly) thank the board or board members for.

To the extent possible, be specific about commitments, answers or timelines. Ask board members to be specific.

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When referring to **board work**, try to use words like “policy”, “governance”, “Board direction” “advise”, “guide,” “unified” and “consensus”.

When referring to **your work**, or that of other administrators, try to use words like “plan”, “manage”, “implement”, “lead”, “supervise”, and “determine”.





- Encourage board members to talk one-on-one
- Meet 2-3 times per year with each board member
- At these meetings, ask for their top three current wins and challenges

Tips for positive board/board and board/administrator relationships





## Tips for positive board/board and board/administrator relationships

- Welcome and even encourage appropriate discussion at board meetings
- Have a process to make sure all know questions or challenges to the draft agenda before the board meeting are okay.
- Your goal is to give them everything they need to be able to understand and support your recommendations.
- Communicate equally and in a timely fashion with all board members.
- Send an occasional “I see you” message to each board member.



## Tips for positive board/board and board/administrator relationships



- Board president should be a 'funnel' not a 'filter'
- Consistency of general behavior
- Response time
- Address "breaks" in expectation or unprofessional behavior promptly

Seems obvious, but...be  
transparent!



Share your  
thinking,  
perspective and  
expertise



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- Say, “Given the direction the board has indicated, my team has discussed several options/timelines....”
  - Say, “I/my team is ready to address \_\_\_\_\_. There are a few ways we could go. Here are the trade-offs for each...”

Share your  
thinking,  
perspective and  
expertise



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- Say, “This is why I believe my recommendation is the right one for our students and staff.”
  - Say, “I know this is a big decision. Feel free to ask questions or for anything I can provide for clarification.
  - Say, “These are the indicators we’ll be looking for to know that we’re on the right track.”



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This IS the board's business



# Help the board think and act strategically...



ALIGN WORK DIRECTLY  
TO GOALS AND TALK IN  
THESE TERMS



ENCOURAGE THE BOARD  
TO REINVEST AND  
REDISCUSS VISION,  
MISSION AND GOALS  
ANNUALLY



LEARN AND UTILIZE THE BEST  
PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR  
SUPERINTENDENT PERFORMANCE  
AND ENCOURAGE THE BOARD TO  
KNOW AND UNDERSTAND SAME FOR  
THEMSELVES.

Thoughts or  
questions?

