

Ordinance 2025/26-40

Section 2-2.6:1. Aspirational Statements; School Board Norms; Protocols; and Consequences for Violations. — A. The School Board adopts the following aspirational statements to express goals, values and desires of the School Board and its members:

1. Speak candidly and courteously to each other and listen to dissenting or different viewpoints with an open mind.
2. Help each other to depersonalize disagreements.
3. Be respectful of the different staff roles and responsibilities throughout the school division.
4. Maintain awareness of the different roles that School Board members play such as a board member, citizen, parent, etc.
5. Maintain open communication with other School Board Members, the administration and the community-at-large.
6. Members should not rely completely on social media in order to formulate their decisions regarding School Board business, but should consider opinions from all stake holders as well as the opinions of the administration and fellow members on the School Board.
7. Once the School Board approves an operating budget for Suffolk Public Schools, members of the School Board are expected to advocate with members of the governing body for passage of the School Board's adopted budget.

B. The School Board adopts the following norms to ensure the successful exchange of information amongst Board Members and the public at large:

1. During public meeting discussions, Board Members are not to use language based on their usual construction and common acceptance that are construed as insults or intimidating.
2. The official spokesperson for the School Board is the chair of the School Board. However, members of the School Board are allowed to express their own point of view when making comments to the media, at any public gathering, in print, or on social media regarding actions of the School Board or matters involving Suffolk Public Schools, without having to first indicate they are expressing their own point of view.
3. When posting information on social media from any meeting of the School Board, members of the School Board are to reference the official public record of the meeting.

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4. School Board Members may contact each other one by one. However, School Board Members are not to assemble in groups of more than two outside of a public meeting and discuss public business.
5. School Board Members may communicate with the school superintendent by phone, email or in-person meetings. In-person meetings between individual School Board Members and the school superintendent and/or two School Board Members and the school superintendent are encouraged.
6. School Board Members serving on standing committees are to report on the work of standing committees in a written report provided to the full School Board as an information item. This report can be either approved or draft minutes from the meeting of the standing committee.

C. The School Board adopts the following protocols for obtaining reports from the Office of the School Superintendent, handling information received from the Office of the School Board Attorney, responding to public comments during public meetings, interacting with employees of Suffolk Public Schools and visiting property of Suffolk Public Schools.

1. A Board Member cannot request that a report be generated by the office of the school superintendent that will require considerable work or time, unless a majority of the Board at a public meeting of the School Board votes to require that the report be generated. Considerable work or time means research that requires more than 60 minutes to generate as determined by the school superintendent.
2. Information received by a Board Member from the Office of the School Board Attorney that is labeled "Attorney Client Communication Privilege," "Attorney Work Product Confidential," or "Confidential Communication" must not be shared with third parties, unless authorization has been given by the School Board.
3. School Board Members are to listen to Public Comment and Public Hearing presentations, but are not to comment, deliberate or take-action on them during the public comment time. However, at the conclusion of any public meeting, with the concurrence of the School Board chair, a Member of the School Board can request that the superintendent investigate any citizen comment or concern that specifically pertains to the operations of Suffolk Public Schools that was mentioned during public comments and report back to the School Board at a subsequent meeting.
4. Individual School Board Members are not to communicate with any employee of Suffolk Public Schools for the purpose of directing, managing, or evaluating an employee's work performance or job responsibilities.
 - (i) School Board Members are encouraged to visit schools in order to familiarize themselves with the operations of Suffolk Public Schools.

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However, before visiting any of the public schools, members of the School Board must notify the school superintendent. Board members may not visit schools during standardized testing.

- (ii) When visiting schools, School Board Members:
 - (a) Must check in at the main office during the school day, and notify the principal of their presence on campus;
 - (b) Must notify the building principal that they are visiting the school in their role as a board member, versus when they are visiting the school in another role (*i.e.*, as parent/guardian, relative or emergency contact, professional or organizational affiliation, etc.);
 - (c) Must follow all school policies and procedures;
 - (d) Cannot go into a classroom unless invited by a teacher or escorted by an administrator;
 - (e) Must bring any concerns raised as a result of school visits to the attention of the superintendent and not subordinate administrators or staff.
 - (f) Must not interfere with school operations.
5. School Board Members may volunteer at schools, but must complete the Suffolk Public Schools' volunteer connect application in order to become a school volunteer.

D. Should the chair of the School Board receive notice of a claim that a member of the School Board has violated either School Board norms found in subsection B or protocols found in subsection C, and if the School Board chair determines based on a conversation with both the member of the School Board who filed the claim and the alleged violator, that it is more likely than not that the violation occurred, then the School Board chair may issue to the member of the School Board a letter of warning. The member of the School Board will then have five (5) business days to appeal in writing the chair's decision to the full School Board, and to request review by the School Board in either a closed or open meeting.

Should a member of the School Board file notice of a claim that the chair of the School Board has violated either School Board norms found in subsection B or protocols found in subsection C, the claim must be forwarded to the vice-chair of the School Board. If the vice-chair of the School Board determines, based on a conversation with both the member of the School Board who filed the claim and the chair of the School Board, that it is more likely than not that the violation occurred, then the vice-chair of the School Board may issue to the chair of the School Board a letter of warning. The chair of the School Board will then have five (5) business days to appeal in writing the vice-chair's decision

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to the full School Board, and to request review by the School Board in either a closed or open meeting.

Should the chair of the School Board file notice of a claim against any member of the School Board alleging that a member of the School Board has violated either School Board norms found in subsection B or protocols found in subsection C, the claim is forwarded to the vice-chair of the School Board. If the vice-chair of the School Board determines, based on a conversation with both the chair of the School Board and the member of the School Board against whom the claim has been filed, that it is more likely than not that the violation occurred, then the vice-chair of the School Board may issue to the member of the School Board a letter of warning. The member of the School Board will then have five (5) business days to appeal in writing the vice-chair's decision to the full School Board, and to request review by the School Board in either a closed or open meeting.

For any subsequent offense occurring within twelve (12) months of the first offense, the member of the School Board will be issued a formal notice of the alleged violation(s) and afforded an opportunity to respond to the allegations in a closed meeting of the School Board. If the charges are founded, the consequences imposed by the School Board will be the following:

- (i) Second Offense — Letter of Warning Issued by the School Board.
- (ii) Third Offense — Public Censure at a public meeting of the School Board
- (iii) Fourth Offense — Removal from standing committees

E. All hearings of the School Board in which the School Board will discuss disciplining one of its members will take place in a closed meeting of the School Board, unless at least three members of the School Board vote to have the matter heard in an open meeting. (Adopted June 12, 2025, Ordinance 24/25-91)

Legal Authority - Virginia Code § 22.1-78.