

# Strengthening Governance Through Communication

**School Board Retreat**  
**Saturday, January 24, 2026**



# Purpose & Outcomes

Building strong governance through communication



# Great on Their Behalf

## Understanding the Governance Mindset

### Effort ≠ Impact

Success in governance is not solely about the amount of effort put forth; rather, it is the **impact** of that effort that ultimately drives student outcomes and progress.

### Adult Behavior

The behaviors and decisions of adults in the system significantly influence student experiences and **outcomes**, highlighting the need for focused leadership and intentional actions from the board.

### Courage Over Comfort

Embracing difficult conversations and making **bold decisions** can be uncomfortable but are essential for meaningful governance and fostering environments where students can thrive.



# Governance Communication

**Defining roles and responsibilities clearly**

## **Collective Authority**

Effective governance relies on **shared decision-making**, where all stakeholders contribute their insights, fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring that diverse perspectives inform policies and actions.

## **Policy-Based Action**

Actions taken by the board must be grounded in established policies, promoting accountability and clarity in decision-making while aligning the district's initiatives with its mission.

## **Superintendent as Conduit**

The superintendent serves as the bridge between the board and the community, ensuring seamless communication, relaying vital information, and promoting a cohesive understanding of governance objectives.



# Communication Breakdowns

Understanding common pitfalls in dialogue

## Good Intentions

Despite **well-meaning intentions**, communication can falter when it lacks clarity. Misinterpretations arise, leading to actions that do not align with desired outcomes and creating unnecessary confusion.

## Individual Responses

Responses can vary widely among team members, often resulting in inconsistent interpretations of policies. This **inconsistency undermines the collective effort** to ensure effective governance and communication.

## Inconsistent Routing

When information is not routed properly, it can create gaps in communication. This inconsistency can lead to missed opportunities for collaboration, affecting overall governance effectiveness.



# Governance vs. Management Scenarios



Participants will read various scenarios to identify the appropriate board roles and select responses that align with established protocols, emphasizing the importance of clear governance in decision-making processes.



# GOVERNANCE IN ACTION: ROLES, BOUNDARIES, AND PROTOCOL ACTIVITY

## OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this activity is to strengthen board members' ability to distinguish governance from individual action by applying established Charlottesville City School Board protocols to real-world scenarios, reinforcing how disciplined adult behavior and clear role boundaries support effective decision-making and system coherence.

## Activity Protocol:

- Step 1: Identify the Board Role
- Step 2: Apply the CCS Board Protocols
- Step 3: Select a Protocol-Aligned Response

## DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

- How does this scenario illustrate the difference between adult effort and governance impact?
- What adult behavior change is necessary to ensure clarity, consistency, and trust in this situation?

# Time to Recharge and Reflect

Take a moment to **stretch and reconnect**. This break is essential for maintaining energy and focus, allowing you to engage more fully in the upcoming activities. Breathe deeply and relax.



# Effort vs. Impact

## ADULT EFFORT

Adult effort actions may not yield significant impact. It's essential to evaluate these actions critically to understand their real contributions to governance outcomes for students and families.

## GOVERNANCE IMPACT

Actions aligned with established protocols create coherence within the system. Recognizing impactful behaviors helps shape future governance and enhances overall educational effectiveness for the school community.

# Sorting Actions: Effort vs Impact



In this activity, participants will evaluate various actions by categorizing them based on their effort and actual impact, fostering discussions on how these choices affect board behavior and decision-making.



# **SORTING ACTIONS: EFFORT VS IMPACT ACTIVITY**

## **OBJECTIVE:**

Participants will analyze common board actions to distinguish between adult effort and governance impact, using individual reflection and collective dialogue to build shared understanding and move toward consistent, impact-driven board decision-making.

## **Activity Protocol:**

- Step 1: Individual Reflection
- Step 2: Gallery Walk
- Step 3: Whole Group Discussion

## **DISCUSSION PROMPTS:**

- What patterns do you notice across the actions that were most frequently labeled as effort versus impact?
- Which actions require the greatest discipline or behavior change from the Board in order to move from effort to impact?

# Governance Guardrails

## Ensuring Clarity and Accountability

### Constituent Concerns

Addressing constituent concerns is essential for effective governance. Protocols provide a structured way to engage with community members, ensuring their voices are heard and valued.

### Information Requests

Clear protocols for handling information requests help maintain transparency. This ensures that stakeholders receive timely and accurate information, fostering trust and accountability within the community.

### School Visits

Establishing guidelines for school visits enhances the board's connection with schools. Protocols ensure consistent engagement, allowing board members to observe and support educational environments effectively.



# Navigating Governance Protocols

This section focuses on **locating and understanding** key protocols, identifying necessary steps for implementation, and establishing clear boundaries to ensure effective governance practices within the Charlottesville City School Board.



# Language Practice Lab

Enhancing communication and clarity

## Neutral Language

Practicing **neutral language** is essential for effective governance. It helps to ensure that communication remains objective and focused on the issues at hand, minimizing misunderstandings.

## Maintaining Boundaries

Maintaining clear **boundaries** in communication is crucial for governance. It protects individual roles and responsibilities, fostering an environment where everyone understands their contributions and limitations.

## Routing through Superintendent

Routing communication through the **superintendent** streamlines the process and ensures that all messages align with district policies, promoting consistency and clarity among all stakeholders involved.

# Time to Stretch and Reset

Taking a break is essential for maintaining focus and energy during this session. Use this time to stretch, reflect on what you've learned, and reconnect with colleagues before continuing.



# Consistency in Governance

## Building Trust and Reducing Confusion

### Reduces Confusion

Consistent governance practices minimize misunderstandings, enabling stakeholders to navigate processes effectively. Clear communication ensures everyone is aligned, reducing the potential for misinformation and confusion.

### Builds Trust

When governance actions are consistent, stakeholders develop trust in the system. This transparency fosters a positive environment where everyone feels valued and confident in decision-making processes.

### Protects Staff Time

Establishing consistent protocols allows staff to focus on their core responsibilities rather than clarifying procedures. This efficiency enhances productivity and promotes a well-functioning governance structure.

# Boundary Stress Test Activity



In this session, participants will examine a high-pressure scenario, identifying potential risks and applying established guardrails to ensure effective governance while maintaining focus on student outcomes and community trust.



# BOUNDARY STRESS TEST ACTIVITY

## OBJECTIVE:

Participants will examine a high-pressure governance scenario to identify risks, apply established guardrails, and determine responses that protect effective governance, student outcomes, and community trust.

## Activity Protocol:

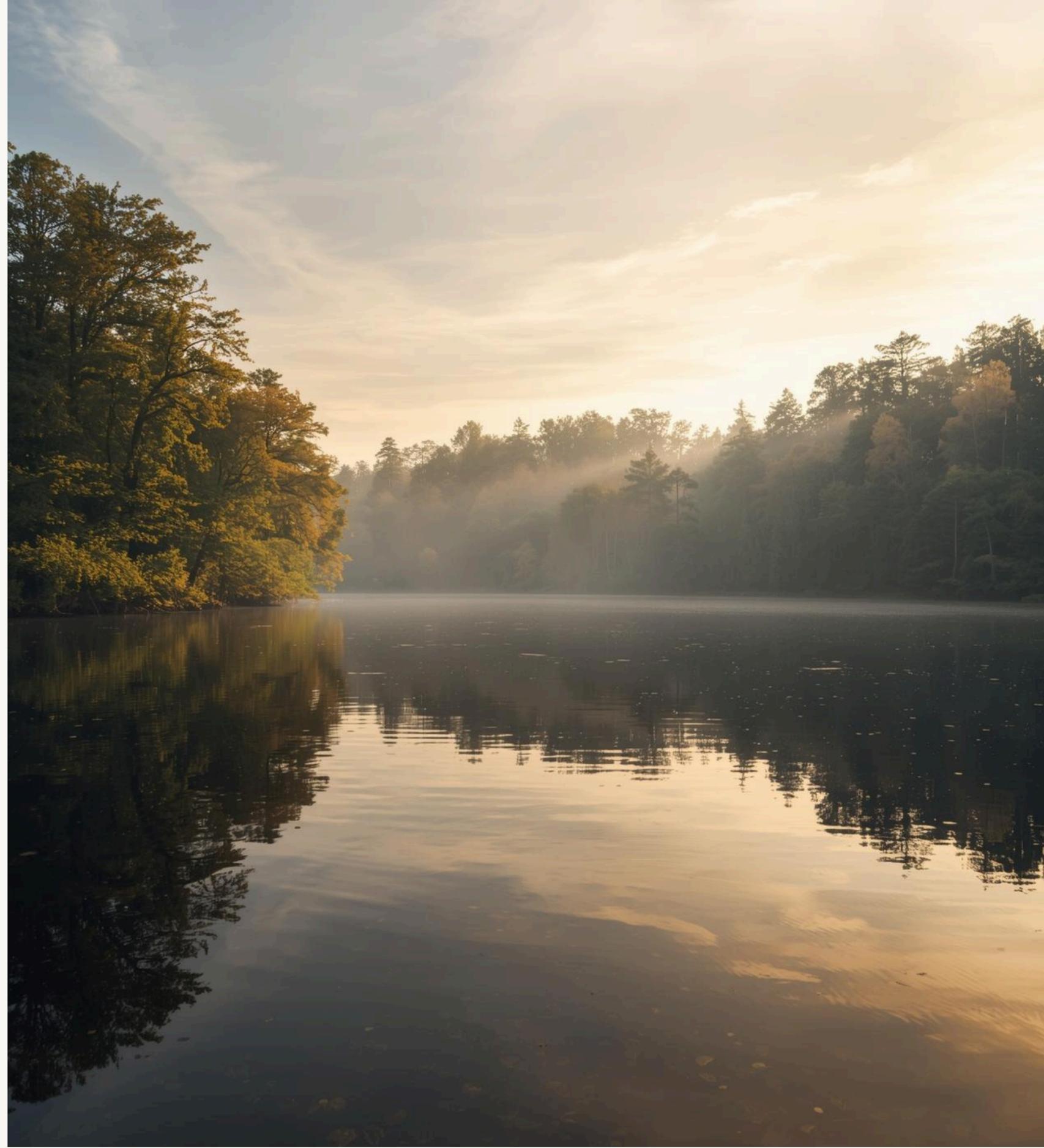
- Read the scenario and identify the sources of pressure and potential governance risks.
- Apply established guardrails and protocols to determine the appropriate board response.
- Reflect on how disciplined governance protects students, staff, and community trust.

## DISCUSSION PROMPTS:

- What governance risks emerge when urgency or public pressure drives individual action?
- How do guardrails help the Board respond with clarity, consistency, and credibility in high-pressure situations?

# Take a Moment to Breathe

Use this time to **reflect on your thoughts** and experiences during today's session. Ground yourself with mindfulness, and prepare to engage with the upcoming activities refreshed and focused.



# Personal Commitment to Growth

Reflect on one specific practice you will carry forward from today's session to enhance governance and communication. **Consider** how this will impact your role and the students you serve.





# Closing Thoughts

Thank you for your engagement today