

RSB Work Session
Tuesday, August 25, 2026 6:00 PM Alaskan

ZOOM
500 Big Dog Salmon Way
Angoon, AK 99820

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Discussion Items - Focus: Board Development
 - 2.1. BoardBook Overview
 - 2.2. Policy Online Overview
 - 2.3. Board Resources
 - 2.3.1. Roles & Responsibilities for School Board Members & Superintendents
 - 2.3.2. AASB-School-Board-Handbook
 - 2.3.3. 8 Characteristics of Effective School Boards
 - 2.3.4. 12 Tips for Being a Great Board! – Association of Alaska School Boards
 - 2.3.5. Guidelines for Public Comment
 - 2.3.6. School Board President Key Roles and Responsibilities
 - 2.4. AASB Resources
3. Board Member Comments
4. Adjourn Meeting

Roles & Responsibilities

For School Board Members
& Superintendents



association of
ALASKA
school boards

August 2022

AREA	SCHOOL BOARD	SUPERINTENDENT
General	Governs the district, hires the superintendent, establishes expectations, and evaluates self and the Superintendent.	Advises the Board, is executive of the district, the Board's only employee through contractual relationship.
Policy	Reviews suggestions from Superintendent, debates and adopts .	Responsible for ensuring policies are current, responsible for recommending and implementing policy.
Meetings	President or chairperson is in charge of meetings.	With the board chair is responsible for preparation of agenda and subsequent preparation of board meeting packet, ex officio member of the board, serves as resource during meeting.
Budget/Finance	Adopts and monitors , responsible for audit adoption.	Prepares , administers and monitors the budget and audit, ensures budget compliance.
Curriculum	Establishes criteria, approves and monitors curriculum and assessments.	Recommends , oversees efforts, evaluates curriculum and assessments.
Personnel	Establish criteria, approves or rejects recommendations, handles grievance appeals as appropriate.	Interviews, recommends, hires, evaluates. Promotes and implements staff training, adjudicates grievances.
Negotiations	Provides guidelines, ratifies contracts.	Monitors process within guidelines (depends on district size), frames contract proposals.
Student Services	Establishes criteria, approves and monitors .	Recommends , administers efforts, maintains legal perspective.
Facilities	Develops policies on use.	Implements policy, creates rules and regulations pursuant to policy.
Public Relations	Creates a positive image, can represent district at community functions.	Creates a positive image; directs staff effort, maintains stakeholder communications throughout district and community.

In General

THE BOARD Governs the district

1. Represents public education and serves as a liaison between the schools and community.
2. Elected policy-making body is required by law to establish rules to govern the schools and students.
3. Recruits and hires the superintendent, establishes and approves their contract, gives direction through written goals, evaluates based on goals.
4. Invests the superintendent with those powers and duties it may legally delegate in accordance with board policy and state/federal laws.
5. Empowers the superintendent to be the educational leader of the district.
6. Requires professional leadership from the superintendent.
7. Attends educational conferences, workshops and trainings to increase governance skills and better understand their role as a board member.
8. Approves a planning process that includes stakeholders in the development of a comprehensive long-range plan for student achievement.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Manages the district, advises the board

1. Serves as the chief executive officer of the board and is responsible to the board for implementing board policies, actions, and directions.
2. Is employed at the pleasure of the board.
3. Administers the district in accordance with board policies and guidelines, rules, regulations, state and federal requirements.
4. Delegates authority to other staff members.
5. Provides educational leadership to the board staff, students and community.
6. Responsible for the overall operation of the schools.
7. Identifies district needs.
8. Participates with appropriate professional associations, attends conferences, workshops and other professional development opportunities.
9. Implements the comprehensive strategic plan.

Expectations & Relationship

THE BOARD Governs

1. Establishes process and criteria for the recruitment, interview, and selection/hiring of the superintendent.
2. Establishes contract provisions for superintendent.
3. Provides the superintendent with written goals of expectation of performance upon which they will be evaluated.
4. Evaluates the superintendent at least once a year.
5. Demonstrates trust and respect for the professional judgment of the superintendent.
6. Conducts annual self-evaluation of the board's effectiveness in conducting the business of the board.
7. Annually sets goals and/or priorities for the Board to improve its effectiveness.
8. Demonstrates trust and respect for the superintendent and for his/her right to have opinions that may differ from theirs.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Manages

1. Provides the board with materials as requested from the board as a whole.
2. Assures personal professional qualifications meet the criteria established by the board.
3. Holds a valid superintendent's certificate and maintains certificate, or is a qualified chief school administrator.
4. Provides board with written goals and objectives to meet the board's expectations and defines their goals for the district.
5. Demonstrates trust and respect for the board members and for their right to have different opinions from theirs.
6. Acts as advisor to the board in areas needing policy development and revision.
7. Encourages the board to evaluate its roles and responsibilities and participates with them during this evaluation.
8. Works together with the board for the good of the district and student achievement.

Policy

THE BOARD Adopts policy

1. Adopts policies for the governance and management of the school district.
2. Clearly defines the intent of the board and actions necessary for implementation.
3. Reviews, and may adopt, administrative procedures, rules and regulations to ensure they honor the intent of the board's policy.
4. Reviews and evaluates board policy on a regular annual basis.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Advises on & implements policy

1. Acts as advisor to the board in areas needing policy development or revision.
2. Drafts written policy and provides board with data and information supporting the policy recommendation.
3. Maintains up-to-date written manual of district policies; ensures policies are accessible to all school employees and the community.
4. Implements district policies and assures the staff, student and community are aware of the intent and importance of those policies.
5. Develops and implements rules, administrative regulations and procedures necessary to implement the board's policies.
6. Assists the board to evaluate policies by identifying areas where the board should revise or rewrite policies as needs of the district or laws and regulations change.

Budget & Finance

THE BOARD Adopts & monitors

1. Establishes priorities for the fiscal management of the district.
2. Receives the audit report from the auditor and with them, explores the internal controls of the district, major changes in fiscal procedures, adequacy of budget preparation and other concerns of the board and/or the auditor.
3. When used, appoints the budget committee.
4. Provides the superintendent with the Board's priorities in the development of the budget.
5. Approves, adopts and monitors an annual budget.
6. Provides leadership in securing community support for budget.
7. Establishes the limit for a budget transfer that can be done without board approval.
8. Reviews and approves warrants to pay bills, purchase supplies, equipment or services in accordance with board policy.
9. Adopts policies for the accounting of all school funds, and for the reporting of fiscal information to the board.
10. Recruits, interviews and hires an external auditor who is directly responsible to the board.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Prepares, administers, monitors, audits details

1. Serves as the district budget officer.
2. Prepares a detailed budget based on the board's priorities and parameters.
3. Presents a budget to the board and budget committee for their consideration and approval.
4. Seeks board approval for expenditures according to board policy.
5. Administers the budget and assures expenditures of district funds are within the legal requirements of the budget.
6. Coordinates efforts to obtain community support for district financing.
7. Establishes a control system and oversees monthly report for financial accounting in accordance with board policy and state law.
8. Obtains board approval to transfer funds exceeding amount set by board policy.
9. Provides the board with a list of bidders for purchases exceeding amounts established by law or district policy.
10. Assists the auditor by assuring that pertinent staff and appropriate information is available on request.

Curriculum & Instructional

THE BOARD Establishes criteria, approves, monitors

1. Establishes an educational philosophy and goals for the instructional programs of the district.
2. Adopts and/or changes standards (curriculum) and instructional programs as necessary or as recommended by the superintendent.
3. Follows state standards.
4. Regularly reviews student achievement data.
5. Reports to the community on the status of education in the district.
6. Identifies and adopts graduation requirements.
7. Periodically requests reports from professional staff relative to assessments and instructional programs.
8. Adopts curricula material.
9. Uses school climate data in decision-making.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Recommends, oversees staff efforts, evaluates

1. Advises the board on the educational needs of the students, the requirements of DEED, and other directives.
2. Recommends policy for the selection of curricula, instructional materials and equipment in accordance with state standards and legal requirements.
3. Recommends curricula materials for adoption to board.
4. Reports to the community on the status of education in the district.
5. Recommends assessments to the board. Implements testing program appropriate to the educational objectives.
6. Recommends appropriate graduation standards and methods to measure their attainment.
7. Assigns staff to instructional areas and reports such information to the Board.
8. Regularly schedules presentations and reports by staff on various segments of the instructional program.
9. Provides leadership to the staff and board in the continuous development, implementation, and evaluation of the instructional programs.

Personnel

THE BOARD Establishes criteria and/or rejects

1. Employs certificated and classified staff members based on the recommendation of the superintendent.
2. Establishes criteria to be used in hiring in policy.
3. Adopts policies for personnel management.
4. Ensures job descriptions are in place.
5. Reviews staff evaluation procedures.
6. Adopts policy on the evaluation of personnel.
7. On appeals, upholds or set aside disciplinary actions or terminations of staff after a thorough review of supporting documentation.
8. Promotes good working relations with staff and maintains lines of communication with staff as appropriate.
9. Recognizes the board does not have a right to review staff evaluations.
10. Receives and acts on personnel recommendations from the superintendent.
11. Conducts an annual evaluation of the superintendent, the Board's only employee.

THE SUPERINTENDENT

Interviews, recommends, hires, evaluates, promotes, trains

1. Recommends to the Board the employment, promotion, transfer, retirement, or dismissal of all certified and classified staff.
2. Responsible for the supervision of all employees of the district.
3. Establishes job descriptions for all positions.
4. Delegates authority to staff members, as appropriate.
5. Provides the board with information regarding employee work assignments.
6. Recommend staff disciplinary actions to the board in accordance with board policies and legal requirements.
7. Supervises the evaluation of all staff and conducts or supervises evaluations of administrators under his/her supervision.
8. Establishes procedures for the recruitment, hiring, and assignment of staff and establishes expectations for staff.
9. Fosters good working relationships with staff and maintains open lines of communication with employee organizations.
10. Serves as the board's liaison with staff.
11. Develops a systematic plan for evaluating the performance of all district staff.
12. Documents recommendations for tenure, retention, or dismissal. Identifies corrective actions taken on proposals and verifies full compliance with legal requirements and board policy.

Collective Bargaining

THE BOARD Provides guidelines, ratifies contracts

1. Grants recognition to bargaining units in the district.
2. Designates the bargaining unit as the exclusive negotiating representative of the employees in the unit.
3. Determines district issues to be presented for negotiations.
4. Approves contracts.
5. Selects negotiator; appoints negotiating team.
6. Establishes guidelines and criteria for the collective bargaining process for all units.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Monitors process within guidelines

1. Provides the board with job titles included in the composition of the unit.
2. Verifies the bargaining unit represents a majority of the employees in that unit.
3. Acts in a support role for the board.
4. Provides factual data and makes necessary management recommendations.
5. May serve as an advisor to negotiating team. Normally is not the negotiator.
6. Administers and ensures compliance of contracts.

Students

THE BOARD Adopts policies for care and control

- 1.** Adopts policies for the provision of student services including admission, attendance, rights and responsibilities, safety, discipline and welfare.
- 2.** Adopts policies necessary to cover students' special needs and challenges.
- 3.** Adopts policies necessary to assure appropriate safety and health needs of students.
- 4.** Reviews student handbooks on an annual basis.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Recommends, implements, directs

- 1.** Implements student policies adopted by the board.
- 2.** Recommends appropriate policy and rules to maintain adequate services and appropriate control of students.
- 3.** Directs and supervises all student activities, instructional, extra-curricular, and co-curricular.
- 4.** Develops and implements programs that provide for special needs students.
- 5.** Develops and implements written procedures to deal with health and safety emergencies.

Facilities

THE BOARD Develops policy on use of facilities

1. Establishes policies for the appropriate use and the proper operation and maintenance of school district building and ground.
2. Adopts policy governing use of district facilities, grounds and equipment.
3. Works with the City or Borough to identify appropriate school sites when applicable.
4. Approves the hiring of architects or other consultants as necessary.
5. Decides on the consolidation and closings of schools.
6. Collaborates with the municipality/borough on the issuance and sale of bonds to fund construction projects where applicable.
7. Determines projects to be submitted for consideration by DEED for construction.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Implements policy, writes procedure, makes recommendations

1. Provides for the proper upkeep of facilities and maintenance of equipment.
2. Prioritizes long-range plans for preventive maintenance of buildings, equipment and ground.
3. Assigns and supervises facilities maintenance staff.
4. Works with architects, staff and consultants.
5. Recommends and supervises the public use of buildings, facilities and equipment.
6. Collects information and makes recommendations to the board.
7. Acts in an advisory capacity to board in planning and construction.
8. Submits application to DEED for construction and/or major maintenance projects.

Meetings

THE BOARD In charge of

1. Meets together to transact all business of the district only in an officially called meeting.
2. Establish, through policy, the operational procedures for maintaining control of the board meeting.
3. Has clear protocol for inclusion of items onto an agenda.
4. The board president, in consultation with the superintendent, develops the agenda for the board meeting.
5. Identifies for the superintendent the amount of information expected for good decision-making.
6. Complies with Open Meeting Act and refrains from misuse of Executive Sessions.
7. Read the board packet, and come prepared to participate in meetings.
8. Notify Superintendent of potential issues/questions before the meeting.
9. Follow adopted rules of order in meetings.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Serves as a resource to the board

1. Serves as an advisor and ex-officio member to the board.
2. Assures compliance with all legal requirements relative to posting of notices and maintenance of meeting records.
3. Provides Board members, in advance of the meeting, with sufficient information and data to assist them in making informed decisions.
4. Identifies areas of business that boards must address at meetings and works with the board president in the development of the agenda.
5. Implements board decisions and instructions developed at meetings.
6. Notifies staff and students of boards' actions relevant to them.
7. Assures the scheduling and holding of board meetings meets the requirements of the law.
8. Advises the board on the Open Meetings Act and the legalities of entering into Executive Session.

Community Engagement & Relationships

THE BOARD Creates a positive image of the district

1. Acts as liaison between the schools and the community.
2. Maintains awareness of community attitudes, values, and interests.
3. Actively participates in programs that build good community relationships.
4. Appoints advisory or parent committees and outlines their responsibilities.
5. Encourages the community to follow appropriate channels for expressing ideas or concerns for the district via the superintendent.
6. Ensure opportunities for youth to take a leadership role in decision-making, governance, climate-building, and school improvement.
7. Represents the schools at community functions and school functions.
8. Cooperates with the news media for dissemination of information.
9. Channels complaints or grievances through the appropriate channels.

THE SUPERINTENDENT Creates a positive image for the district, directs communication

1. Informs the community about its schools.
2. Recommends community relations activities.
3. Works with parent groups and other organizations to share about district programs and activities.
4. Offers the board opportunities of how the district will to engage families.
5. Serves as the board's liaison with advisory/parent committees.
6. Establishes a working relationship with the news media.
7. Serves as the liaison with the community to resolve complaints or grievances, makes recommendations to the board for resolution of such issues that cannot be solved at the administrative level.
8. Provides opportunities for the community to welcome and support district/school staff.
9. Ensures engagement measures are built into annual accountability structures.
10. Builds bridges between the district, key organizations, community leaders, and governmental representatives.

Notes



Notes



association of
ALASKA
school boards

ALASKA SCHOOL BOARD HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE
LEADERSHIP THROUGH
BOARD STANDARDS

3RD EDITION 2012



To: Board President and Superintendent

From: The Staff of AASB

Tips for Using the Alaska School Board Handbook as an Orientation System for New Board Members

WHY – We’ve found that very few school boards in the state have managed to establish a well-organized, comprehensive orientation process for newly elected board members. The need is obvious, but in most districts it seems that more pressing business takes priority and orientation, when it does occur, is in an incomplete manner at best. Almost every experienced board members has at one time or another said, “If I had only known....”

WHAT – The Alaska School Board handbook was developed with new board members in mind. It’s been designed to provide some guidance on basic boardsmanship, built on Board Standards, to help new board members access information that will assist them in getting started on the right foot from the very beginning of their service.

HOW – It will be even more meaningful if you customize this handbook by adding district-specific information in the form of key policies or other appropriate references to bring this generic information into sharper focus for your particular board members’ needs.

Since expecting board members to become familiar with every district policy is unrealistic, we hope this handbook can be made into a quick reference to policy on the most critical topics new board members should know. At the end of each chapter you’ll find a list of key policies to include that we feel would be particularly relevant to the text we’ve prepared. If your district policy manual utilizes the AASB policy system it should be an easy matter for you to locate and insert the recommended policies. If you have another codification system, it’s likely that you’ll have policies on topics similar to those listed.

At the end of each chapter we’ve also included a suggested list of reference material for inclusion in the form of summarized information on such items as the district’s vision, goals, strategic plan, district profile, organizational chart, negotiated agreements, assessments, testing schedule, school calendar, business partnerships, and annual board calendar. You’ll find the suggested lists to be more complete than this, but undoubtedly you’ll think of some items that we’ve overlooked.

WHEN – Obviously the best time to begin orientation for new members is as soon as possible after the election. Even though this orientation system is designed to organize that process, it’s clear that all this material can’t be covered in just one or two short sessions.

Our Board Handbook reviewers suggested that perhaps the board president and vice-president could prioritize and schedule some time with new members to break the orientation process down into more bite-sized pieces. They recommended starting with a review of the sections on Structure and Conduct and Ethics to begin with, to familiarize new members with the essential elements and organization of the district as well as to the major roles and responsibilities and protocols of the school board.

When that ground has been covered sufficiently, then other portions could be scheduled to follow over a reasonable

period of time. It was also suggested that other experienced board members could be assigned as mentors to new members for different topics, to facilitate more board interaction and to speed up relationship-building to enhance board teamwork.

Undoubtedly every board that chooses to use this handbook to assist in their orientation process will develop their own unique approach. However you choose to use it, we hope you will find it a valuable resource that will become an established part of building a consistently effective school board in your district that is truly focused on student achievement!

ALASKA SCHOOL BOARD HANDBOOK

• • • • •
A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP THROUGH BOARD STANDARDS

— 3RD EDITION 2012 —





Published by the Association of Alaska School Boards
1111 W 9th St
Juneau, Alaska 99801

© 2008

All Rights Reserved

ISBN: 0-9746668-0-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2003113818

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior, written permission of the publisher, excepting brief quotes used in connection with reviews written specifically for inclusion in a magazine or newspaper.

3rd Edition, September 2012

Printed in the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TAB 1

Introduction	5
-------------------------------	---

TAB 2

Organization of Alaska's Educational System

Historically, Today, Challenges	7
Map	9
Diagram "Governing Alaska's Schools"	10

TAB 3

Creating a Vision

Developing a Vision	11
Focus on Educating Students	11
Vision Guides Decision Making	11
Key Policies to Include	12

TAB 4

Providing Structure

Management Systems	13
Budget/Finance	14
Long and Short Term Plans	14
Instruction and Curriculum	15
Data	16
Compliance with Legal Requirements	16
Personnel	17
Support Services	18
Student Services	18
Key Policies to Include	19

TAB 5

Accountability: Measuring Performance

Student and Program Evaluation	21
Long and Short Term Plans	22
Superintendent Evaluation	23
Board Self Assessment	23
Reports	24
Key Policies to Include	25

TAB 6

Advocacy: Champions of the Vision

Celebrating Achievement	27
Advocates for Children, Families and Others	28
Establishing Partnerships	29
Promote Board Service	30
Political Advocacy	30
Key Policies to Include	30
40 Developmental Assets	31

TAB 7

Conduct and Ethics

Reflect Service to the Community on Behalf of Students	33
Board / Superintendent Relations	34
The Board President's Role	35
Meetings	35
Meeting Types	35
Committees	36
Board Development: Continual Improvement	37
Board Expenditures; An Open Book	37
Key Policies to Include	38
Alaska Open Meeting Act	39
Addendum: Basic Parliamentary Procedure	41

TAB 8

Glossary	45
---------------------------	----

TAB 9

AASB Services and Contact Information	49
--	----

I. INTRODUCTION

— WELCOME —

Congratulations! Your decision to run for the school board was an important step toward some of the most meaningful work you'll ever take on. Your election by your community is an affirmation of their confidence in you. They've entrusted you with the education of those they hold most dear - their children. It's an awesome responsibility.

The years you spend on the school board will be some of the most challenging, frustrating and rewarding years of your life. It will also be a time for personal growth as you are called upon to learn or expand your knowledge and skills. Very few school board members come to the board table fully prepared for the responsibility of comprehensive planning, multi-million dollar budgets, understanding federal and state statutes and mandates, communications, planning, curriculum design, evaluation systems, political lobbying and labor relations. The list is actually much longer, and at times can seem overwhelming.

— PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK —

This brings us to the purpose of this handbook. Many of the contributing writers have been school board members or administrators themselves and understand the confusion and frustration that can occur when new board members are faced with the magnitude of the responsibility they've committed to taking on. This handbook is designed to give you a handy reference that breaks down many of your responsibilities into more "bite-sized" pieces. Think of it as a board orientation system.

— HANDBOOK ORGANIZATION —

We've organized this information around the AASB Board Standards Framework, which clearly identifies the four major functions of a school board:

VISION

The board creates a shared vision to enhance student achievement.

STRUCTURE

The board provides a structure that supports the vision.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The board measures district performance toward accomplishing the vision and reports the results to the public.

ADVOCACY THE BOARD CHAMPIONS THE VISION.

Another critical heading in the Board Standards Framework is Conduct and Ethics. Although not technically a "function" of the board, the manner in which the board conducts its business is essential to its overall effectiveness and level of public trust, so you will find specific information relating to Conduct and Ethics that will help you understand how to build and sustain the human dynamic that is so important to good governance.

We hope you find this handbook to be a handy reference throughout your board service. We've tried to supply some basic information about "boardsmanship" to help you understand your responsibilities. We've also packaged it so that you can add relevant information from your own school district for easy reference.

— TIPS FOR USING —

For a school board using this as an orientation program for new members: In setting up the handbook in binder form for the first time, you may want to refer to the "Key Policies" and "References" that are suggested at the end of each chapter to determine if there are other district-specific items that would be especially useful to a new board member. In scheduling orientation sessions, you may want to acquaint your new board members with the Structure and Conduct and Ethics sections to begin with, to familiarize new members with the essential elements and organization of the district as well as to the major roles and responsibilities and protocols of the school board.

When that ground has been covered sufficiently, then other portions could be scheduled to follow over a reasonable period of time. You may want to consider assigning other experienced board members as mentors to new members for different topics, to facilitate more board interaction and to speed up relationship-building to enhance board teamwork.

For new board members using this handbook on their own: If your board hasn't established a formal orientation program, you may want to ask the superintendent and board secretary

to help you locate the key policies and references suggested at the end of each chapter, so that you can include them in your handbook binder for quick reference. The board president and superintendent will be your best mentors on a regular basis. Beyond that, you may wish to ask the superintendent to suggest key staff members that you can access to ask questions of, such as the business manager, personnel director or curriculum specialist, to help round out your self-orientation. As mentioned above, we'd recommend that you start your study with the sections on Structure and Conduct and Ethics, then address the other chapters as time and interest allow.

Please remember that the Association of Alaska School Boards is your organization and we stand ready to answer your questions and lend assistance whenever you need it. More information about our services and how to contact us can be found under Tab 9 in this handbook.

Your effectiveness as a school board member will translate into success for the students in your school district. We wish you well!

DEFINITIONS

SCHOOL BOARD - A school board is a democratically elected body that represents public ownership of schools through governance while serving as a bridge between public values and professional expertise.

Purpose of School Boards - School boards provide local leadership, governance, democratically elected body that and accountability for public education represents public ownership of schools by ensuring that schools reflect through governance while community expectations and needs, serving as a bridge between public values make the best use of available resources, and professional expertise. and advocate for the needs of children.

Developed by the AASB Board Standards Committee, 1998.

2. ORGANIZATION OF ALASKA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Most people who run for the school board do so first because they are concerned about the children and schools in their own community. It doesn't take long, however, before board members begin to realize that there is a lot of history and many outside influences that will impact the decisions they make about those schools.

Developing a broader understanding of Alaskan education in general equips school boards to make even better decisions. The most effective school board members are those who understand their schools and their role in the context of "the big picture."

HISTORICALLY

Early Schools - While education historically occurred in Alaska through the oral and cultural traditions of the Alaskan Native people, the first formal schools in Alaska were established in the 1780's by the Russians who came for the fur trade. After the U.S. purchased Alaska in 1867 education was neglected until schools started to be established by missions and the Alaska Commercial Company in the 1870's.

Government Schools - The first U.S. Government Schools were established after the passage of the "Organic Act" in 1884. Initially, a dual system of education for white students and Native students was developed. In 1900 Congress approved an act allowing civil government in Alaska and towns were allowed to incorporate and create their own school systems for white students, while Native education continued under federal authority. In 1917 the new Territorial Legislature assumed responsibility for creating a unified school system for white students, but most Native students were still schooled separately under the authority of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Many Native students were sent to boarding schools outside Alaska.

State System - With the advent of statehood in 1959, the new Alaska State Constitution assumed the responsibility to "establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State..." and a centralized Alaska State Operated School System (S.O.S.) was created for the unincorporated area of the state. In-state regional boarding schools were established in the 1960's for rural high school students. However, many BIA schools continued to operate until the 1970's.

Molly Hootch - In 1972 a class action suit was filed against the state to challenge the practice of forcing Native children to attend high school away from home. The resulting settlement was known as the "Molly Hootch Consent Decree" and state voters approved a school construction bond that provided for high schools in all of the state's rural areas.

REAA's - In 1975 the Legislature disbanded S.O.S. and created 21 Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAAs) within the state's Unorganized Borough - the single largest creation of school districts and school boards in United States history. For the first time residents of rural Alaska were able to assume full responsibility for governing their own schools.

TODAY

Governance - All school districts in Alaska, whether in incorporated areas or REAAs in the Unorganized Borough, are governed by locally elected school boards. School boards in both types of districts have essentially the same kind of responsibilities and authority. Additionally, REAAs are required by law to establish advisory school boards in each community that is served by a school.

Authority of the School Board - All school boards operate under the authority and constraints of the U. S. Constitution, and federal and state statutes and regulations. Their ability to make decisions for their districts are impacted by the contents of those documents, as well as court decisions and local collective bargaining agreements with employees. School boards are authorized to create their own set of governing statements within parameters of higher law, and these are generally compiled in the school district policy manual. (See "Governing Alaska's Schools" diagram, p.10)

- AS 14.08.101 -Powers: Regional School Boards
- AS 14.14.090 -Duties of School Boards (City and Borough)
- AS 14.14.100 -Bylaws and Administrative Rules

Authority of Individual Board Members - Because a school board is a governmental body, it can take action only by a decision by the majority made at a public meeting. The individual board member has no authority other than to cast a vote at such a meeting. A board member who attempts, without authorization, to speak for the board, to correct members of the staff, or to make other individual decisions is

acting outside his or her official capacity.

Number and Type of Districts - At the present time there are a total of 53 school districts in Alaska. They represent two kinds of school districts: 34 in incorporated areas (cities and boroughs) and 19 REAAs. (See Map of Alaska's School Districts, p.9)

Size - Student populations in various districts range in size from 20 to 50,000. Corresponding budgets range from about \$693,000 to \$649,000 million. Some districts are compact and consist of a single site, while others have multiple communities dispersed over vast geographic areas.

Funding for Programs and Facilities - Unlike many other states, the majority of funding for school operations in Alaska comes from the state government. Nearly one-third of the state's total operating budget goes to support public education and is distributed through a complex and sometimes controversial funding formula adopted by the Legislature. Federal funds for impact aid and special title programs also account for a large share of school funding in Alaska.

The main difference in the two types of school districts is that REAAs receive 100% of their basic school funding from the state, since communities in the Unorganized Borough essentially have neither a tax base nor a means for collecting taxes. School districts in incorporated areas are required to contribute to their schools, either through local taxes or in-kind contributions. They also have the ability to raise funds beyond "basic need," within established limits.

Another notable difference between the two types of districts lies in how facilities construction is funded. Incorporated areas have the ability to bond at the local level if the electorate approves, with the state reimbursing the local government for a percentage defined by the legislature. REAAs are totally dependent on the Legislature for 100 percent of school construction funds.

CHALLENGES

Trying to provide a quality education in Alaska presents some unique challenges for school boards. The cost of education continues to exceed the available funding. Distances, geographic isolation and small school sizes make it difficult to replicate the kind of education program available in larger

schools. There are on-going tensions between residents and legislators of both rural and urban Alaska regarding needs and equitable allocation of resources, and these tensions ultimately impact the work of school boards. Meeting the accountability mandates from both the state and the federal government provides additional pressures as school boards strive to maintain local control over decisions regarding student achievement.

AASB has been a unifying force that has helped school boards continue to speak for the needs of all of Alaska's children with one voice. Our programs and services are designed to address the differences between different kinds and sizes of districts, yet provide for information and sharing on issues of common interest.

SOUTHEAST
Annette Island Schools
Chatham Schools
Craig City Schools
Haines Borough Schools
Hoonah City Schools
Hydaburg City Schools
Juneau Borough Schools
Kake City Schools
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools
Klawock City Schools
Pelican City Schools
Petersburg City Schools
Sitka Borough Schools
Skagway City Schools
Southeast Island Schools
Wrangell City Schools
Yakutat City Schools

Regional Educational Attendance Areas
City School Districts
Borough School Districts

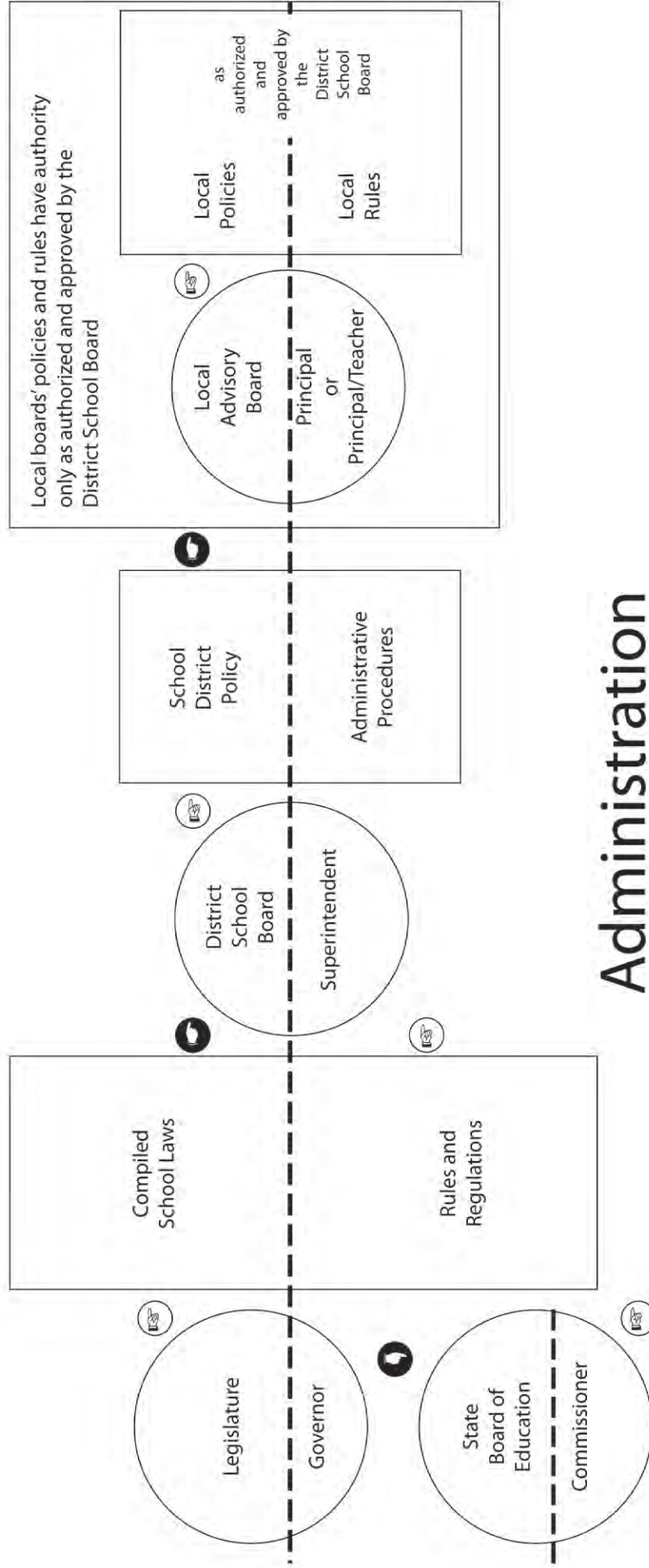


Policy

State

District

Local



Administration



1111 West 9th Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Phone: (907) 463-1660
Fax: (907) 586-2995

Legend:



Directions of legal authority
(Example: Legislature has authority over districts
which have authority over advisory boards.)



Decision written into law

Other Factors Affecting Board Decisions:

Negotiated
Agreements
with employees

Courts also make decisions that affect
schools and school law. For example,
they rule on constitutionality and
legislative intent of laws.

3. CREATING A SHARED VISION

BOARD FUNCTION:

The board creates a shared vision to enhance student achievement.

STANDARD 1.1

Board develops a dynamic shared vision for education that reflects needs and community priorities.

STANDARD 1.2

Board keeps the district and community focused on educating students.

STANDARD 1.3

Board demonstrates its strong commitment to the shared vision by using it to guide decision making.

DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION

Several ideas worth examining are expressed in Standard 1.1, ideas that we as locally elected board members passionately believe in.

A dynamic vision is powerful and active. Nothing frustrates newly elected board members more than their inability to make immediate, meaningful changes to the educational system. However, it is more important to establish a shared vision rather than ramming something through without proper input. This vision should address the short-term needs of students but also look to the future and be flexible enough to meet challenges that cannot be anticipated. Who knows what the students of the 21st century will need to know? The board's shared vision should be prepared to move in directions that our children need to prepare them for adulthood.

A shared vision. The implication is that we as individual board members do not operate in a vacuum. Life is full of compromises and none of us are able to effect all the changes we would like. But, the changes we can accomplish should be a group effort with input from all concerned with the outcome, including students, parents, staff and community. A board member too far in front or too far behind is an ineffective board member. A good board member is usually a consensus builder. This is so important in vision building. This vision should belong to the entire board and community as a collective vision so that everyone can "catch" that vision and share it with others at a moment's notice. That collective vision will

not have everything in it that each board member wanted and it will also have something in it that not all wanted, but instead will be a composite of everyone's ideas.

A vision that reflects student needs and community priorities. Local control is an issue that is "near and dear" to all our hearts. The board vision for one district will be different from another district's vision. Each community has high expectations and standards, but how each arrives there may be very different. Why, for example, will one district consolidate while another chooses not to? Because each community, represented by their board, has varying visions. Create a vision that puts student needs first and reflects the priorities that are important in your community.

FOCUS ON EDUCATING STUDENTS

We need to remind ourselves daily what our job is-to educate students. And we need to remind our communities daily what our job is-to educate students. If we really believe that the hope of the future lies in the young people of our nation, state and communities, then our vision must reflect that belief. We cannot be sidetracked into issues that are not about education. Many would have the schools being all things to all people. We do not have the resources to accomplish all things. The way to send that message is to have a vision that focuses students, board members and the entire community on the task at hand-educating students.

Making it a conscious practice to refer back to the board's vision regularly helps the board stay focused on priorities, rather than allowing it to be sidetracked by the multitude of smaller issues that are often more like brushfires.

THE VISION GUIDES DECISION MAKING

Are boards committed to the vision guiding its decisions? If so, the vision should belong to us all, not just one person or group of persons. And once the board agrees on that vision, then it should resolve to be committed. Each board is a team brought together from different walks of life for a common good-the education of our children. Each board member needs to believe in the vision and

demonstrate commitment to the vision.

The vision as a guide to decision making. What a powerful tool for school boards in their governance role! We in the Association of Alaska School Boards frequently ask ourselves the question, “Is it good for kids?” as we deliberate on issues. This “vision making” process is a common sense approach to answering that question on a local level. Each board’s visions will reflect what is good for the kids of the district. Families, elders, and citizens will cooperatively develop the vision to best meet our children’s needs. Then we can resoundingly answer, “Yes,” when we make decisions and are asked, “Is it good for kids?” Each budget decision, each curriculum review, each board election, each staff hire, each superintendent evaluation can be aligned to the district vision.

Vision setting is all about direction setting. The direction boards want to go in is to enhance student achievement. All boards are encouraged to adopt local board standards and to formalize the vision. It’s the right thing to do.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Identify a process for gathering input from stakeholders - parents, students, staff, community advocates, businesses, government agencies and higher education - in order to identify their core beliefs and common values that will be the basis for a draft vision statement. Strategic planning is a commonly used process that starts with identifying a shared vision.
- Formally adopt the vision for the district.
- Communicate the vision frequently and consistently to the entire community through a system of planned communication.
- Develop long-range, strategic plans for the district that are based on the vision.
- Regularly refer to the vision when making decisions about policy and district operations.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Has our board adopted a vision statement that was developed with stakeholders? Does it make student achievement a top priority of the school board, staff and community?
- How is the vision communicated to the community?
- Is there a long range or strategic plan in place to support the vision?
- Does the board regularly refer to the vision when setting district policy?
- Do we use the vision as a guide when making resource, budget and other operating decisions?
- Do we periodically review the vision statement with stakeholders to make sure it continues to reflect community beliefs and values?

KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

BP 6010 Goals And Objectives: Student Achievement

REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- District’s vision statement (with date of adoption), mission statement, and list of core beliefs and values.
- Information about where the vision statement is posted (i.e. in schools, on district publications, etc.).
- Summary outline of the district’s strategic plan (vision, mission, major strategies, goals, etc.).
- Timetable for vision/strategic plan review and update.

4. PROVIDING STRUCTURE

BOARD FUNCTION:

The board provides a structure that supports the vision.

STANDARD 2.1

Board establishes a management system that results in effective decision making processes and enables all people to help the district achieve its vision and make the best use of its resources.

STANDARD 2.2

Board ensures that long and short term plans are developed and annually revised through a process involving extensive participation, information gathering, research, and reflection.

STANDARD 2.3

Board sets high instructional standards based on the best available information about the knowledge and skills students will need in the future.

STANDARD 2.4

Board acts to ensure vision and structure comply with legal requirements.

STANDARD 2.5

Board encourages and supports innovative approaches to teaching, learning and the continuous renewal of education.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Each person who chooses to run for a seat on their local board is expected by the electorate to be a leader. The citizens of your community trust the board to be a body that creates and abides by policies that will provide the best public school system for their children. The public abhors chaos and expects boards to conduct district business in an organized, professional manner that expedites the job of educating children with the least fanfare possible. After all, public schools are not about school board members, they are about children.

Policies are the rules by which a school board governs and a district operates. Policies help students, district employees, parents and others know what to expect of the district and what is expected of them. Implementation and enforcement of policies ensure a district's fair, uniform treatment of everyone.

Policies also provide continuity over time. Board members and superintendents may leave the district, but ongoing board policies will provide an institutional memory and framework for consistent governance of the district. A set of comprehensive, up-to-date policies will help a board when it is faced with difficult issues. By developing and adopting policies before an issue demands action, a board can ensure it has adequate time to consider an issue fully with input from staff and community and, if necessary, obtain the appropriate legal advice to ensure the policy is legally sound.

The board's policies should be friendly. Policy should reflect the manner in which the community desires district business to be conducted and gives administration clear, broad direction as they make day-to-day decisions. Board policy is the "heart and soul" of any local district, yet too often the policy manual is not opened until a problem arises. Board Standards demand that board members become familiar with their policy and regularly review each section to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to the business of student achievement. Board members are also responsible for ensuring that the superintendent regularly reviews all district documents, including administrative procedures and student handbooks, for compliance with board policy. We are policy makers and our policy is how we provide structure to the local district.

Policy manuals should be readily available to students, staff, parents and community members. Too often, policy manuals are found to be out of date, having sat unopened in school offices and libraries. Many districts are moving their print version of the manual to their website to ensure that policies are not only accessible, but that everyone is using the same version of the manual. AASB has an online policy service that can help boards ensure everyone in the district uses the same policy when making decisions and following procedures.

Having an annual calendar can help a school board pay attention to their major responsibilities and provide structure to their meetings. Developing a calendar can help identify routine items a board deals with every year. New board members, and new superintendents, will appreciate knowing when items such as the budget, contracts, audit review, retreats, policy updates, goal setting and self-assessment are scheduled.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Adopt policies that support your vision, provide structure, and hold everyone accountable.
- Establish a policy committee that includes all district stakeholders.
- Review policies on a regular basis.
- Update policies annually for legal compliance.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Do our policies describe what we want our district to achieve?
- Are our policies up-to-date?
- What is the schedule for policy review?

BUDGET/FINANCE

In these times of financial constraint the effective use of resources becomes even more critical. If boards provide a structure and allow the community to evaluate the board on how well it actually performs, then the budget process will likely become less painful. Most citizens are supportive of education and willing to pay whatever it costs as long as they have assurance that the money is being spent wisely. Well-planned structure, widely communicated to the public, is the best vehicle for instilling confidence in the locally elected school board and building that support for public education.

The budget represents a dollars-and-cents statement of the community's educational hopes and aspirations for its children, and serves as a planning and accountability tool.

Think of the school budget as consisting of three parts: an educational plan; an expenditure plan to carry out the educational plan; and a financial plan to show from where the funds will come.

The board's role includes adopting the goals, determining the general parameters of the budget, developing and communicating a philosophy of budgeting that should

be applied throughout the school district, reviewing and evaluating staff proposals for the budget and adopting the budget itself.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Adopt a budget that supports the vision.
- Use data to link instructional needs to instructional resources.
- Provide transparency with district financial district reports.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Which comes first, our priorities or the budget?
- Is the budget easy to understand?
- What is our budget cycle and calendar?
- Who is involved in developing the budget?
- How does this budget increase student achievement?

PARTICIPATION IN LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM PLANS

The local board cannot operate in a vacuum or exclude from the decision making process those who elect them, or those who pay for the work that needs to be accomplished.

"Schools need to operate more like a business." That statement often comes more from lack of knowledge than from fact. We must bring the community with us on this journey. That involves welcoming citizens as planners and decision makers and making them partners instead of adversaries.

We must be action-oriented rather than reaction-oriented. Families entrusting their children must have confidence in the board. One of the best ways to foster

that confidence is to have in place a logical plan that enables a board to utilize its resources in ways that clearly lead toward student achievement. There are many types of plans. Whatever type used must involve the community and allow for their input into the education of their children. This type of strategic, long and short term planning is not inflexible, but safe and dynamic, meeting the needs of students and allowing for unanticipated needs as well.

When the board is thoroughly familiar with long and short term plans and makes reference to them during decision-making, it is bound to be more focused and effective. Undoubtedly issues that don't fit within the plan will arise from time to time that could cause a less focused board to suddenly change course. Your plan can serve as your compass and keep you and your district headed toward "true north." Being steadfast about this will engender confidence from your community when they see that you are serious about accomplishing what your plan is set out to do.

Communities and schools benefit when they work together. The community sees an improvement in the quality of life for its children, and has a sense of ownership and pride in the schools because community members believe they have the ability to influence the board's policy decisions. When the community works on the "inside," it can ensure a certain level of accountability from the school board.

The school board benefits from good relations with the community. Parental and community involvement often have a positive effect on student attitudes and performance. The district may have better success with students who are at risk for poor academic performance or dropping out when the community embraces the school and its programs.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Establish an expectation for planning through policy.
- Require the plan to be implemented and regularly evaluated.
- Ensure community and staff are involved in the process.
- Build public understanding and support for the schools.
- Don't allow "hot-button" issues to derail the plan; be consistent in following what has been laid out until it has been officially revised by stakeholders as part of a regular renewal process.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

Does our district have an updated strategic plan?

Does the board establish annual priorities or goals?

Is a broad-based group involving the board, community members, students, and staff involved in creating and updating the strategic plan?

Does the board consider the vision and goals of the strategic plan when making decision?

INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM

The purpose of creating structure should always be to ensure higher student achievement. That comes about through the setting of high standards. The development of curriculum, measurement of student comprehension of material, disaggregating of test data to identify weak areas, approval of the best qualified staff hiring and the selection of our district's educational leader (the superintendent) are critical functions of school boards. Boards are not professional educators but are governance officials elected to oversee the public school system. Boards are responsible for setting high standards and then providing the resources necessary to achieve them. The other necessity is holding the district's educational leaders accountable for implementing those programs, which achieve standards the board has set. Having an

organizational structure that expects high standards for all students will build a public school system in your community that is supported by all its citizens.

The school board is responsible for establishing and maintaining a course of study. School board members should be aware of state student achievement standards, program offerings, graduation requirements, assessment tools and results, and their own district's curriculum, as well as federal accountability requirements.

Boards can play a major role in determining the success of the educational program by establishing a process for its development and review. Boards can begin this involvement by supporting a process that identifies the educational needs of the district and establishes educational goals to meet those needs. Boards that play an active role in establishing goals for their districts take the lead in directing the education of their students.

To be truly involved in establishing the educational program for the district, a board must be informed of student achievement. The board can compare what was actually learned with what was intended by the educational program to determine whether the educational goals are being met. Districts with no clear approach to developing and evaluating the educational program will be hard pressed to inform the public or the board about student achievement.

DATA

Boards will be exposed to a wide array of data in their work. It is important for the board to spend time analyzing the data and understanding its relevance in raising student achievement. Some boards find it helpful to schedule times on their annual board calendar to examine student data. It is important for board members to be able to understand the data and how to relay that information to constituents. As budgets are created it is critical to understand the performance of the district through good data analysis so that resources can be allocated to the appropriate needs. Likewise, as boards approve their curriculum an understanding of

data will lead to good questions from the board. The data analysis will show where student achievement gaps exist.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Discuss and establish high instructional standards.
- Use data to evaluate the instructional program.
- Align curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What do we want students to know?
- Are all of our students learning?
- How is the curriculum developed, reviewed and assessed?

COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

We live in a litigious society and any resources used in defending board decisions or district actions are resources that could have been used on furthering student achievement.

One of the best ways for a school board to ensure compliance with legal requirements is by annually making sure the board policies are up-to-date legally and reflect any changes that occur in related federal or state statutes or regulations or court decisions.

Simply having policies in place is not enough however, if the district employees aren't diligent in following those policies. It's essential that administrators and other staff are clear that their decisions must be aligned with policy direction. In cases where there is no policy for guidance, the superintendent should have the authority from the board to seek legal counsel when significant questions arise, to make sure that any course of action taken is sound and in compliance with law. Advice sought prior

to taking action is usually less expensive than advice sought after the fact!

Most boards employ an attorney on an as-needed basis. The attorney is utilized for recommendations on labor negotiations, due process hearings, staff non-retentions, student expulsions, contract disputes and variety of other issues likely to have legal problems. Since this service can be very expensive, boards have protocols in place on how and when contact is made with their attorney. Typically only the board president and the superintendent are authorized to contact the school attorney.

As the board receives financial reports, it is a good idea to keep an eye on legal expenditures. If the budget for this line is unusually high, or expenditures exceed the budget it may indicate the need for the board to update its policies, to make sure that adequate policy guidance (or more staff training in how to follow them) is in place.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Keep board policies up to date legally.
- Ask for assurance that district staff uses policies for guidance in making decisions.
- Review legal expenditures periodically.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How does the board keep its policies up to date?
- Has the district had any significant legal problems in the past year or two?
- What percentage of our budget is set aside for legal costs?

PERSONNEL

The school board employs the district's teachers, administrators, and support staff. These individuals shape the formal education of children as well as

the environment in which the schools operate. The superintendent recruits, recommends and supervises the district's employees under the guidance of the school board.

School districts negotiate over terms and conditions of employment with employees' representative groups. These terms and conditions of employment are contained in a collective bargaining agreement.

It is the responsibility of the school board to establish an effective district personnel program. The board should develop and adopt policies on many employee relations issues, including how the district will select a chief negotiator for collective bargaining negotiations, and how it will ensure that equal employment opportunity will be provided. The board should review the staff evaluation process on an annual basis.

All districts have professional development opportunities for teaching staff. The board has a responsibility to review those professional development plans to ensure they meet the vision of the district and directly address its goal of enhanced student achievement. Certainly, board members must always remain within their governance role, but board members taking an interest in assuring that teachers are given appropriate staff development sends a powerful message. A message that says we are adamant that our staff is properly trained in enhancing student achievement in our community.

As with the teaching staff, board members must also provide themselves with the training needed to accomplish their work. AASB offers many opportunities through leadership sessions, boardsmanship academies, in district workshops, online training and the annual conference. Always share with your constituency that you are training yourself to be a better board member. This is not a frivolous use of money but rather a wise investment in the person entrusted to ensure that student achievement is always the priority.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Hire and evaluate a superintendent and work together to achieve the vision.
- Establish criteria and policies for staff recruitment, evaluation and retention.
- Support professional development linked to the district vision and strategic plan.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What is the board's role in hiring, supervision, evaluation or firing?
- How does the board receive information about professional development?
- What is the board's role in negotiations?
- Are there things I should be aware of when communicating with staff?
- How should I handle staff concerns or complaints?

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Hire and evaluate a superintendent and work together to achieve the vision.
- Establish criteria and policies for staff recruitment, evaluation and retention.
- Support professional development linked to the district vision and strategic plan.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What is the board's role in hiring, supervision, evaluation or firing?
- How does the board receive information about professional development?
- What is the board's role in negotiations?
- Are there things I should be aware of when communicating with staff?
- How should I handle staff concerns or complaints?

SUPPORT SERVICES

School districts cannot carry out their mission without support functions. In some districts students can't be educated without first being provided transportation to school. Clean and well-maintained buildings provide a comfortable and safe place for children to learn. Support staff also provides secretarial and logistical services that help teachers and administrators focus their attention on student learning. The list of support services is quite large, since the work of a school system is a complex operation.

It is the school board's responsibility to ensure that school support services occur

in an efficient manner and in support of the educational mission of the district. Because of this, board members should be familiar with the support services required to operate the district.

STUDENT SERVICES

Services are available in many forms including programs for special needs, as well as other largely federal programs targeted to assist students with unique backgrounds.

District employees or contract workers from other districts or service providers may provide special education services. Often these services are extensive but board members must remember that the services provided are driven by the student's individual education plan (IEP). These plans are guided by federal and state law and mandate that a team of stakeholders participate in their formulation. The parent, regular classroom teacher, special education staff, and a school or district administrator are usually represented in these teams.

Other student services that are available in many schools and districts include federal programs such as Indian Education, Migrant Education, Johnson O'Malley, Title I (ESEA) and the like. In some cases these programs are administered by the district whereas local tribal governments administer others.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Survey students to identify needs.
- Prioritize student services so sound budget decisions can be made.
- Review options to identify the most effective means of providing student services.
- Study grant proposals as they come before the board for approval.
- In the case of programs that interface with the district but are administered by other agencies, request a review of the programs and their intentions.
- Invite the administrative agency controlling a grant that provides services to students to a meeting to learn about the program firsthand.
- Ensure policies are in place for student access.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What percent of the budget goes to student services?
- Which services does our district provide?
- Which student services are contracted out to another service provider?
- How does the district coordinate the various support programs in the best interest of the student?

KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

BP 3000 Concepts And Roles: Business And Non-Instructional Operations

BP 4000 Concepts And Roles: Personnel

BP 2121 Superintendent Contract

BP 2122 Superintendent Job Description

BP 4141 Negotiated Agreement

BP 5000 Concepts And Roles: Students

BP 6141 Curriculum Development And Evaluation

REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Summary of strategic plan / goals
- Student performance standards/state and district
- Budget summary (graph of revenues and expenditures)
- Calendar of district staff in-services with topics
- Organizational chart
- List of key district personnel and contact information
- Superintendent contract
- Superintendent job description
- Negotiated agreements
- Profile of district:
- Number of school sites
- Average Daily Membership (number of students in full time equivalency)
- Pupil-teacher ratio
- Ethnic make-up of district
- Poverty levels
- Standardized test results
- Student statistics (annual change in ADM, transiency rate, attendance rate, dropout rate, graduation rate)
- Number of students receiving special education services
- FTE staff; budget amount, etc.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY: MEASURING PERFORMANCE

BOARD FUNCTION:

The board measures district performance toward accomplishing the Vision and reports the results to the public.

STANDARD 3.1

Board receives regular reports on student progress and needs based on a variety of assessments to evaluate the quality and equity of the educational program.

STANDARD 3.2

Board evaluates superintendent and board performance annually and reports the results to the public.

STANDARD 3.3

Board ensures long and short term plans are evaluated and revised with the needs of the students in mind.

STANDARD 3.4

Board uses an understandable format to periodically report district performance.

Accountability is about evaluating the shared vision and telling the public how the district is doing in achieving the vision. It is directly related to student achievement!

Accountability is a broad responsibility, but no aspect of accountability is more important than the academic achievement of students and their success beyond their public school experience. Accountability means accepting your fair share of responsibility for outcomes. In public education, all stakeholders share accountability for success. The board should measure district performance based on progress toward accomplishing the district's vision. The results are reported to the public in a clear, understandable format.

Care should be taken to ensure that attention is paid to a variety of district activities that provide data to guide board action. These components are:



STUDENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

If school boards are about student achievement and if the board's vision for the local district dictates that no other task is more important than student achievement then board members need to educate themselves on district assessments! Many assessments are in the forefront today...

- Norm-reference required CAT6/Terra Nova,
- State benchmark assessments,
- High School Graduation Qualifying Exam,
- College placement exams - SAT and ACT, plus
- Many localized assessments.

Districts administer and facilitate a variety of tests and assessments and are sometimes guilty of scanning lightly over the results. Most board members understand their roles as governance officials but have neither the desire nor qualifications to fully interpret the test results.

However, as governance officials, boards have a responsibility to ensure that the district is administering appropriate assessments needed to properly identify the needs of their students. Boards should know where the weaknesses exist in the school system prior to administering the Alaska High School Qualifying Examination or any other assessment!

Every board should require a comprehensive list of all assessments that are being administered, the students tested, and the purpose of each test. Board work sessions open to the public need to be devoted to understanding the test results.

Today, an additional responsibility is the requirement that test data be disaggregated. Disaggregation simply means that the board is able to see test scores separated by many criteria including ethnicity, economic status, gender, or school location. By seeing this data boards are able to determine where weaknesses exist-not to affix blame, but rather to implement corrective actions to maintain equity for all kids. While disaggregation is sometimes difficult to accomplish in districts with very small student enrollment, boards must provide an equitable education for all students. Disaggregation of data, now required by the federal Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is an important way for districts to ensure that ALL students are receiving the benefit of the board's vision.

Program and curriculum evaluations are important components in the process of ensuring that all children are learning at high levels and meeting the prescribed standard. Districts are instituting defined frameworks to guide development, selection, and adoption of curriculum, programs, and materials. Board members should look for these tools to be sure that recommendations for adoption have been screened using these established frameworks.

School boards must be ready to insist that ineffective programs are altered or discontinued if necessary to increase student achievement. All school districts face financial constraints. Boards simply cannot afford to do “business as usual” when requiring higher standards from students. Each program must be evaluated to determine if it still accomplishes its purpose and if the purpose remains a valid goal.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Obtain a list of all major assessments going on in the district.
- Schedule regular work sessions to review student achievement data.
- Ensure that board decisions are based on this data.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Are our policies in place to support student assessment and program evaluation?
- Are our programs and assessments aligned to district and state standards?
- What assessment reports do we receive? Are the results presented in a manner that promotes understanding?
- Is our assessment program complete and does it utilize multiple measures of student achievement?
- Do our publics - teachers, parents, students, and community - understand what our assessments measure?
- Is there evidence that teachers utilize assessment results to guide instruction? Revise curriculum? Select materials?
- Are the board, school, student, and family receiving assessment results in an understandable and timely manner? How and when does this occur?

LONG AND SHORT TERM PLANS

Although long and short term plans are identified as an essential part of the structure of the school district, they also carry a critical role in accountability.

Ideally these plans are developed with the participation of the school board, administration and an appropriate group of stakeholders or constituent groups. Simply making plans, however, does not guarantee that change and growth will occur and result in student achievement. Planning should be seen as a cycle of continuous improvement that includes implementation, regular monitoring, annual evaluation and revision if necessary.

Plans, whether long term/strategic plans or short term plans, must be reviewed at least annually to assess whether expected progress is being made and expected outcomes are occurring. This provides an opportunity to renew the plan so that it will have a greater impact on student achievement. The renewal may ultimately influence board decisions on budget, staffing, curriculum or student services. As much as possible the annual review should include a representation of the stakeholders who originally designed it. Once the plan is updated, the board should formally act to accept it, thereby authorizing the superintendent to implement the plan.

Today, more and more districts are engaged not only in a district plan but school-based plans as well. How school-based plans are developed, reported, and approved should be evident. This is particularly important in light of new federal requirements related to Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Alaska’s mandated assessment program required for high school graduation.

Because of the comprehensive nature of planning that is ongoing in most districts, board members should be cognizant of the workload for the staff and community agencies to successfully implement the established vision. Remember that the plan should direct staff to focus on the highest established priorities. This requires discipline on the part of both staff and the board.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Require and schedule an annual review and renewal of significant district plans (i.e. Strategic Plans).
- Take formal action to approve the renewed plans.

Questions You Can Ask

- Is the strategic plan updated annually?
- How are the results of the strategic plan presented?

Is the reporting format in clear and quantifiable terms?

- How are the school board and staff held accountable for achieving the goals of the strategic plan?
- Is student achievement part of the superintendent's evaluation?

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION

One of the most important functions of the board is the evaluation of its superintendent. An evaluation instrument and process should be mutually established with specific timelines to accomplish the annual evaluation in a timely manner.

The evaluation of the superintendent is a review of his/her performance over the entire previous year. Often board members are unaware of the many actions taken by the superintendent and experience frustration when completing the evaluation. Many boards have found value in requiring the superintendent to complete a self evaluation in preparation for the boards' evaluation.

It is common practice for the superintendent to establish specific goals with board concurrence. These goals, as well as the district's comprehensive plan, become the basis for the evaluation. Often provisions for the evaluation are outlined in the employment contract to help solidify the process.

Care should be exercised by both parties if separation (retirement, voluntary departure, or dismissal) is occurring to better ensure that the completion of specific reports and projects are appropriately outlined in writing and fully addressed either by the outgoing superintendent or the incoming chief school administrator.

Board members should be apprised of the process used in the evaluation of the superintendent and the timeline for accomplishing the evaluation within an established framework.

Care should be exercised by both parties if separation (retirement, voluntary departure, or dismissal) is occurring to better ensure that the completion of specific reports and projects are appropriately outlined in writing and fully addressed either by the outgoing superintendent or the incoming chief school administrator.

A summary of the superintendent's evaluation should be made available to the public following completion of evaluation and any contract negotiations associated with the contract. Typically the summary would highlight accomplishments and any target areas the board and chief school administrator will be focusing on for the next year. In more rural communities, where the press may not readily be available, other established communication channels should be utilized to share that the evaluation has taken place and the results of the evaluation.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Review the evaluation process periodically to ensure it is effective.
- Develop a schedule for evaluating the superintendent.
- Report a summary of results to the public.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What are the timelines for the superintendent evaluation?
- Does the board adhere to the stated timelines?
- Is the superintendent held accountable for the overall direction and well-being of the district?
- Is student achievement part of the superintendent's evaluation?

BOARD SELF ASSESSMENT

Feedback is essential to self improvement and the growth of a district and an annual self assessment should be the norm for a board focused on excellence. It is appropriate, when the district is securing feedback required by law for all certificated staff, to also ask the public to comment on the performance of the board. This external feedback can then be utilized in affirming perceptions that the board has of its own performance.

Many boards utilize a facilitator to assist them with the process of self assessment to both ensure that the self assessment occurs and that all board members have the opportunity to participate freely in the self assessment. Assessments generally address the board's prescribed goals

as well as targets established through the comprehensive plan. AASB has developed a board self assessment based on board standards that many boards use. The self assessment is available on the AASB website at www.aasb.org or by calling AASB at (907) 463-1660.

Modeling the importance of accountability throughout the system by conducting an annual board self assessment can be a powerful statement for everyone associated with the district. The superintendent should be present at all board evaluation deliberations and asked to contribute as appropriate to the discussion.

Though boards can do a self assessment on their own, many high functioning boards report that bringing in a neutral facilitator to lead the self assessment

discussion is more valuable. AASB staff is available to provide board self assessment facilitations.

A written summary of the board's self assessment and resulting plan for improvement should be presented to the public in a manner consistent with local practice. Lots of energy and thought go into the assessment and sharing with the public establishes a climate of transparency as well as ensuring the public that self improvement is key to long term success.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Review your assessment process periodically to ensure it is effective.
- Add board self assessment to your annual calendar.
- Report a summary of results to the public.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- When does the board self assessment typically occur?
- Does the board develop its own plan of improvement based on self assessment results?
- Is the superintendent involved in the discussions surrounding the board self assessment?

REPORTS

The board is able to gauge the pulse of the district through the reports and board packets provided on an ongoing basis by the administration. These reports help ensure that planned activities are taking place and the progress is being made toward the district's vision. However, reports can sometimes become overwhelming for the board and cause the superintendent to spend an inordinate amount of time gathering and compiling information at the expense of other critical responsibilities. There should be an ongoing dialogue between the board and superintendent to determine what is "enough" and what is "too much."

Reports can be highly routine in nature such as the monthly financial report or specialized in nature such as a report compiled by a task force appointed by the board. Regardless of the report, the board should read each report thoroughly and be able to present concerns and/or recommendations.

Many reports will fall in the "standing" report category and include:

- Monthly financial reports
- Grant Applications
- Facilities and Construction
- Personnel
- Policy Updates

Other reports will be highly specialized in nature and include:

- Curriculum Adoptions
- Textbook Selection
- Comprehensive Planning Adoption
- Budget Development Status
- Student Academic Performance

Board members should feel comfortable asking questions about any report keeping in mind that many hours of work on the part of district staff and/or community volunteers went into the final report. Board members with a special interest in a particular area may find it beneficial to serve on the committee/task force or request verbal progress reports either privately with the superintendent or as part

of a board meeting agenda.

If it seems that the request of an individual member will take significant staff time, the request should go to the board first to make sure the board concurs that the concern warrants that expenditure of staff time.

Local communities elect boards and empower them with the responsibility for educating their most precious possession—their children. Boards owe them the courtesy of regular reports on how well their responsibilities are being carried out.

Reports will help board members ensure that the vision of the district is being accomplished and therefore should be taken seriously.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Schedule routine reports on the board calendar.
- Determine what kinds of reports need to be made available to the public throughout the year.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Does the board have a clear procedure on requesting reports?
- Are reports presented by staff and the superintendent concise, understandable, and professional in appearance? Do reports reference targeted strategic plan goals or objectives?
- Are timelines established for board receipt of routine reports?
- Do staff and board members adhere to time limits when reports are presented to and discussed by the board?
- Is there a mechanism for individual board members to learn more about a topic of interest or concern?
- How do I know which questions should go to the superintendent and which should go to the board as a whole?

KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

BP 3400 Business: Management Of District Assets/Accounts

BP 3460 Business: Periodic Financial Reports

BP 4115 Personnel: Evaluation/Supervision BP 0500 Curriculum: Review And Evaluation

BP 0510 School District Report Card BP 0520 School Accountability/School Improvement BP 6010 Student Achievement

REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Calendar of major academic assessments including dates tested, grade level
- Targeted date for availability of student results; distribution timeline to board, school, family, and student.
- Reports outlining test performance and Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requirements.
- 6-year curriculum review and adoption cycle.
- Membership on major curriculum, assessment, and instructional material adoption committees.
- Timeline for review and refinement of long term/strategic plans.
- Make-up of long term/strategic plan committee(s).
- Progress reports on targeted strategic plan activities.
- Any documents established to guide the superintendent evaluation.
- Forms and process utilized for the board self-assessment.
- A board calendar with routine reports the board can expect annually.

6. ADVOCACY: CHAMPIONS OF THE VISION

BOARD FUNCTION

The board champions the vision

STANDARD 4.1

Board leads in celebrating the achievements of students and accomplishments of others who contribute to education.

STANDARD 4.2

Board advocates for children and families and establishes strong relationships with parents and other mentors to help support students.

STANDARD 4.3

Board establishes partnerships with individuals, groups, and organizations to promote educational opportunities for all students.

STANDARD 4.4

Board promotes school board service as a meaningful way to make long term contributions to the local community and society.

STANDARD 4.5

The board is proactive in identifying and addressing issues that affect the education of students.

In 1991 the AASB Board of Directors made an important determination. For the public to better understand what the purpose of school boards actually is, boards must focus more clearly on what is best for children. A child advocacy statement was created and an association goal encouraging child advocacy was developed. Today, AASB is correctly perceived as an organization that advocates for children. The same perceptions are at work in each of your local communities.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT

It seems as if every newspaper, news magazine, talk show, government report,

or task force wants to tell the world what is wrong with public education. Advocating for children means telling

families, communities, politicians, non-educators, and especially children, what is right with education.

Today's public school students are receiving an education unsurpassed in the nation's history. Public schools are teaching more content, raising the achievement standards, and raising our own expectations for all children.

Public schools educate children with special needs-both mental and physical. They welcome children who speak a tremendous diversity of languages. Public schools believe that children of every religion deserve the best we can give. Boards value the diversity found in a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds and strive to have young people accept and respect these differences. Increasing numbers of high school students take the SAT and ACT exams each year. And, their scores continue to rise every year. Alaska's graduates are being accepted into state colleges, private universities and technical schools and succeeding in their post-secondary studies. Kids are entering the increasingly complex work force and are showing that they are ready to take over for us. Our graduates are becoming husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, and showing a maturity that exceeds that of previous generations. Is public education doing its job? You bet! School boards need to spread that message. Advocacy demands that we celebrate the district's successes, and those successes are the students and those that support the students.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Recognize students who have distinguished themselves during your board meeting.
- Recognize adults who supported the young people who earned the award.
- Recognize school staff and community members who distinguished themselves.
- The board could begin each meeting with a brief report that highlights some of the positive things happening in the district on behalf of kids.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How does this board recognize students for outstanding accomplishments, both academic and extra curricular?

- How does this board recognize staff and community members, businesses, and organizations for their contributions?
- How are the successes of our district communicated to the public?

ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND OTHERS

It takes a whole village to raise a child. This popular saying may be interpreted by some as usurping the authority and responsibility of parents. Here is another interpretation. A school board's vision of a caring community is one in which every adult in that community is supporting parents, as parents raise their children. In years past, if a student misbehaved it seemed as if every adult that knew about it was ready and willing to help correct the misbehavior! Kids quickly came to understand that a family had expectations and that those expectations were reinforced by other adults as well.

What does this have to do with board advocacy? As board members you are in a unique position to facilitate the participation of every adult in your community to become involved with children. In the book, *Helping Kids Succeed-Alaskan Style*, the chapters on support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, even the constructive use of time, all directly relate to the relationships that adults must build with youth if they are to be successful. Boards need the families of students as partners and vice versa. Ultimately it makes our communities a better place in which to live.

Building communities with strong support for education doesn't just happen. It takes work. AASB believes in promoting the shared responsibility for educating all youth. AASB's Alaska ICE (Initiative for Community Engagement) encourages communities to actively support youth both inside and outside the school house. This is done primarily by promoting the Asset Building Framework. Assets are the positive experiences and qualities that nourish healthy development. By building assets in youth, and encouraging healthy adult relationships with kids, AASB is doing its part to help build healthy, caring communities where kids flourish. (See Asset Framework p. 28 put here once book is laid out)

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Become a champion for increasing the support of children and youth throughout the district. Convene both public and private stakeholders to begin efforts to coordinate a community or district-wide vision for this support.
- Partner with other organizations in creating child-friendly public places, and safe places for teenagers to gather.
- Encourage municipal and village leaders to support and expand community-building initiatives.
- Make sure that the school staff is prioritizing your parent involvement policy.
- Through resolution, policy, training, and resource allocation, make asset development a top priority in the district.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Do we have a policy that encourages parent and community involvement?
- How do our schools involve parents?
- Does our school board actively discuss or promote Asset Building?
- How does the school provide opportunities for students to develop respectful and supportive relationships with one another and with positive adults?

ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS

Do school boards have all the answers? No. Boards need partners from the community to assist in educating children. They make the school lessons relevant to real life. We see examples of this occurring all over Alaska. Boards need to ensure they are encouraging and recognizing these efforts. Partnerships need not be limited to urban Alaska and "big business," although these are

wonderful opportunities. Many rural boards invite elders into the schools to teach the traditional ways-hunting, fishing, dancing, story telling, beading, sewing, and many other extraordinary and critical skills.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Initiate opportunities to involve stakeholders in meaningful activities with students.
- Work with the staff to identify community resources to provide basic academic and enrichment activities to extend learning opportunities.
- Adopt policy that supports fostering partnerships with business, organizations and agencies.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Does the board have policies to encourage partnerships?
- What business, organizations or agencies currently partner or collaborate with the school district or individual schools to extend learning opportunities?
- What kinds of opportunities are in currently in place for our kids as a result of these partnerships?
- How does the board ensure that the school communicates regularly with parents about school activities, goals, and expectations?
- Do your schools provide meaningful opportunities for parents to volunteer?

PROMOTE BOARD SERVICE

Board members make amazing sacrifices to serve the needs of children. Why do they do it? Because they are engaged in a noble cause-leading the education of children.

There isn't another group of elected officials that have such an impact on communities and its families. School boards are entrusted with the most precious possession of each family-their child. Board policies and decisions will affect the entire lives of every student in the district.

If board members create a vision and stay the course, constituents will know that they've elected the correct person for the job and boards will be applauded for their work as advocates for youth.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Inform people of board elections, purpose, and responsibilities.
- Develop a marketing campaign to promote school board service.
- Provide a "basic orientation" to board service candidates after they file to run.
- Refer candidates to the AASB website at aasb.org

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What information does the board/district make available to encourage people to run for the school board?
- What information is available to help and learn more about what board service entails?

POLITICAL ADVOCACY

An active legislature, responding to many worthwhile organizations, requires special attention from school boards so that lawmakers continue to give top priority to public education. School boards must learn the tactics of politics and lobbying if public schools are to remain strong. A strong and united school boards association plays a major role in the legislative arena.

Lobbying is the process whereby information is exchanged and constituent's views are made known to elected officials. The emphasis is on representing a point of view, not necessarily on getting a particular bill passed. Your viewpoint, if well expressed and backed up by facts, may be influencing government policy, causing those involved with the issue to give thought to your arguments and to adjust to them.

Your senator and representative are the most important legislators for you. Get well acquainted with them. Personal visits and written communications with lawmakers and their staff are part of a continuous year-round dialogue.

Some board members feel uncomfortable lobbying, as if there is something wrong with it. The fact is, you are doing the legislator a favor. You are bringing them a sample of

how the local, voting population feels on the issue. School board members are important to the legislators as a source of information and understanding on issues. Put yourself in their shoes. Wouldn't you rather make decisions based on solid, reliable, information and a good understanding of what the majority of your constituency wants?

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Invite your legislators into your schools, and provide them with important information on your district. Get to know your legislators and their aides.
- Stay abreast of proposed legislation that may impact your school district through regular reports from the superintendent.
- Join the AASB Legislative Network to receive weekly legislative bulletins or attend board training on lobbying, the legislative process, and updates on complicated legislation.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What are the critical issues facing the school district this year? Is there proposed legislation to address these issues?
- Are our legislators in the Majority or the Minority? How effective might they be in assisting the district?
- Have we selected a Legislative Liaison to serve on the AASB Legislative Network? Does the board review AASB's weekly Legislative Bulletin?

REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Calendar of dates where the community and school intersect. (i.e. Dates of parent/ teacher conferences, community open houses, and athletic/ cultural events.)
- List of business partnerships.
- List of names and addresses of significant community leaders who spend time in the school.
- List of the community based committees and the names, addresses, and phone numbers of members.
- List of student and community awards, and update the list as individuals earn these distinctions.

KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

BP 1000 Concepts And Roles: Community Relations

BP 6020 Parent Involvement

*Asset Building***THE SEARCH INSTITUTE'S LIST
OF 40 ASSETS****EXTERNAL ASSETS:****SUPPORT**

1. Family support - Family life provides lots of love and support
2. Positive family communication - Youth and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and youth is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
3. Other adult resources - Youth receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
4. Caring neighborhood/village - Youth experiences caring neighbors.
5. Caring school climate - School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. Parent involvement in schooling - Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the youth succeed in school.

EMPOWERMENT

7. Community values youth - Youth perceives that adults in the community value young people.
8. Youth as resources - Youth are given useful roles in the community.
9. Service to others - Youth serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. Safety - Youth feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood/ village.

BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

11. Family boundaries - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the youth's whereabouts.
12. School boundaries - School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. Neighborhood/village boundaries - Neighbors/ villagers take responsibility for monitoring the youth's behavior.

14. Adult role models - Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. Positive peer interactions - Youth's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. Expectations for growth - Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the youth to do well.

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

17. Creative activities - Youth spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre, or other arts.
18. Youth programs - Youth spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/ or in community organizations.
19. Religious community - Youth spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. Positive, supervised time at home - Youth is out with friends "with nothing special to do," two or fewer nights per week.

INTERNAL ASSETS:**COMMITMENT TO LEARNING**

- 21. Achievement expectation - Youth is motivated to do well in school.
- 22. School engagement - Youth is actively engaged in learning.
- 23. Homework - Youth reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- 24. Bonding to school - Youth cares about her or his school.
- 25. Reading for pleasure - Youth reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

POSITIVE VALUES

- 26. Caring - youth places high value on helping other people.
- 27. Equality and social justice - youth places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28. Integrity - Youth acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- 29. Honesty - Youth “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
- 30. Responsibility - Youth accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31. Healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes - Youth believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

SOCIAL SKILLS

- 32. Planning and decision-making - Youth knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. Interpersonal competence - Youth has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34. Cultural competence - Youth has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. Resistance skills - Youth can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution - Youth seeks to resolve

conflict nonviolently.

POSITIVE IDENTITY

- 37. Personal power - Youth feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”
- 38. Self-esteem - Youth reports having a high self-esteem.
- 39. Sense of purpose - Youth reports that “my life has a purpose.”
- 40. Positive view of personal future - Youth is optimistic about her or his personal future.

7. CONDUCT AND ETHICS

BOARD FUNCTION:

The board and its individual members conduct district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner.

STANDARD 5.1

Board and its individual members perform in a manner that reflects service to the community on behalf of students.

STANDARD 5.2

Board demonstrates commitment to continually improving teamwork, problem solving, and decision making skills through a conscious program of board development.

STANDARD 5.3

Expenditures for board activities are clearly identified in the budget, related to the district vision and open to public scrutiny.

When the AASB Board Standards Committee met in 1998 to develop standards, the first four standards-vision, structure, accountability and advocacy-were fairly easy to formulate and made sense to everyone. It was “common sense” boardsmanship. But the committee felt that something was missing. As they brainstormed to come up with a model school board, the idea emerged that the most important element for any individual board member as well as the collective board was to possess something they labeled Conduct and Ethics.

As the AASB Board of Directors presented the new Alaska Board Standards to the Legislature and to board members from other states, it left a meaningful impression on each audience. This is the “heart and soul” of Board Standards. How can boards possibly hope to accomplish any of their goals unless they actively and consistently live their personal and board lives with the highest ethical behavior? Many board members have learned the lesson that you don’t stop being board members when the meeting closes! And every eye in the community is on us both in and out of the boardroom.

are our community’s future.” If that statement is true, then the highest service to your community is to ensure that your children receive an education that will enable them to take over the reins upon reaching adulthood. School board service is not a stepping-stone to higher political office or a way to advance one’s personal agenda. School board service is not about “me” or any other issue other than the kids in your communities. Board members must conduct themselves in a manner that engenders trust. Individuals may not agree with us but they must believe that what boards are doing is what they believe is best for students with no ulterior motive.

“Reflecting service to the community on behalf of students” requires a deeper understanding than what might be understood at first blush. One of the basic tenets of being a good board member is to remember that even though you might have been elected by a designated area, your job is to help determine what is best for all the students in the district, not just in your election district or your particular community. This requires a concerted effort on the part of every board member to strive for an unusual degree of statesmanship. It often means being prepared to explain a board decision to your constituents when they may not be happy about it, but you will know you’ve done the right thing if it is done in the best interest of all students.

REFLECT SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY ON BEHALF OF STUDENTS

The key phrase here is “service to the community.” Board members often use the phrase, “our children

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Review adopted Board Standards periodically.
- Annually review the board's Code of Ethics in the district policy manual and re-commit to that code.
- Annually conduct a board-self assessment that includes an examination of how the board conducts itself in carrying out the district's business and results in an identifiable plan for improvement. Survey the community on their opinion in this area on a periodic basis.
- Periodically review the Conflict of Interest statute and board policy.
- Memorize the district's "chain of communications" protocol so you know how to direct complaints appropriately without compromising your objective governance role, which may ultimately require you to be the hearing body to make the final determination on a complaint.
- Become familiar with the legal requirements of the Open Meetings Act and the district policy on the use of e-mail for communications, which places parameters on how board member converse with each other, the staff or the community in the interest of open government.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- When does the board conduct its annual self-assessment?
- How do I appropriately handle public concerns or complaints in a way to help "serve" my community yet observe my role as a board member?

BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS

One of the most essential elements necessary for an effective school board is the relationship they have with their superintendent. Teamwork is the hallmark of a sound relationship, based on shared goals, mutual trust, open communications and a clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent.

A "textbook" description of appropriate roles suggests that

the board is the policy body and the superintendent is there to administer those policies. In actual practice the distinction is rarely that clear, however, so it is critical that the board and superintendent develop clear expectations of the other and are in full agreement as to how those roles are observed. Formal documents such as district policies and the superintendent's job description help in defining what the board and superintendent are responsible for. Regular board self-assessment and evaluation of the superintendent will help the team continue to examine their respective roles and keep communications open.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Establish protocols for open communication between the board and superintendent that will foster mutual trust and confidence.
- Review the goals of the district, as well as goals set by/for the board and the superintendent. Discuss the role of the board and superintendent in accomplishing those goals.
- During an annual board development work session, schedule some time for discussion of board / superintendent expectations about respective roles and responsibilities in general.
- Review existing communications practices between the board and superintendent to determine if they meet the needs of all involved. (Is there enough or too much? Is information distributed equitably to all team members?)
- Don't damage trust by bringing "surprises" to the board table.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- When does the board and superintendent have a discussion about their respective roles and responsibilities?
- What communications practices are in place that support open communications between individual board members, the board as a whole, and the superintendent?
- Who do I go to when I have questions about district operations or the board agenda?

THE BOARD PRESIDENT'S ROLE

As the board's designated leader, the president performs the following tasks:

- Plans the agenda with the superintendent, with input from board members
- Opens the meeting
- Runs the meeting according to the rules of order and bylaws established by the board
- Announces the order of business
- Recognizes members who wish to speak
- Rules a motion out of order or puts it to a vote
- Announces the results of each vote
- Enforces all questions of order
- Authenticates by signature all the board's acts, orders and procedures
- Requires speakers to identify themselves
- Rules inappropriate comments out of order
- Enforces time limits
- Adjourns the meeting
- Whenever necessary, help the board stay focused on the district's vision, goals and plan when discussion wanders into unrelated areas; re-direct and re-focus the board's attention on established priorities.

MEETINGS

A school board carries out its duties and exercises its powers through official action taken at a properly convened meeting. Most boards use Parliamentary Procedure to help focus the discussion and organize the session.

The actions taken at board meetings should support the district's Vision. Planning and preparing for board meetings is a board responsibility.

An executive session is a closed meeting attended only by the board and those invited by the board. Executive sessions may only be called to discuss topics specified by the Open Meetings Law (AS 44.62.310-312) and must

be convened at an open meeting by a majority vote of the board. The motion to convene an executive session must include the general topic to be discussed but doesn't

need to be so specific to indicate the particular issue. (See AS 44.62.310, p.56)

The topics boards may discuss in executive session are:

- Matters, the immediate knowledge of which would clearly have an adverse effect on upon the finances of the districts
- (i.e. deciding which parcel of land to purchase for building a new school or contract negotiations strategy).
- Subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person, provided the person may request a public discussion (i.e. a discipline hearing taken against an employee).
- Matters which by law, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential.
- Matters involving consideration of government records that by law are not subject to public disclosure. (For example, reviewing a teacher's personnel file.)

MEETING TYPES DEFINED

(All meetings of a school board are subject to the Alaska Open Meetings Act AS 44.62.310-312)

Regular Meetings: Regularly scheduled meeting of the board; may be monthly, bi-monthly or weekly, depending on the schedule set by the board. Agenda for regular meetings is set in advance; reasonable public notice is posted with date, time, place and agenda. Open to the public.

Special Meetings: Called to discuss specific issues, usually where time is a factor in making decisions. Discussion is confined to items listed on agenda. Public notice must be at least 24 hours and should include date, time, place and agenda. Open to the public.

Executive Session: Used sparingly, this allows the board to go behind closed doors for discussion on a specified topic during a regular or special meeting, as long as the topic

under discussion meets criteria set forth in state law. No decisions may be made in executive session; any formal action made as a result of executive session discussion must be made in an open meeting.

Public Hearings: Held to gather public input on a particular issue. No deliberation occurs on the part of the board at a public hearing and no action is taken, but the issue under discussion is usually calendared on an agenda of a regular or special meeting for further discussion or action by the board. Reasonable public notice is given.

Work Sessions: Held to allow the board to participate in informal discussion on a particular topic as a means of gaining more in-depth knowledge; also is the format most boards use when scheduling in-district school board training. Reasonable public notice should be given. Public may attend but public participation is at the discretion of the board.

Committee Meetings: Committees established by the board to work on special issues must be limited to less than a majority of the board in their membership. Committee meetings must be given reasonable public notice.

Organizational Meeting: First official meeting of each year, at which the board elects officers.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Exhibit respectful conduct toward each other and the superintendent, publicly and privately, even in times of disagreement.
- Make decisions as a group only at properly called meetings; recognize that individual members have no authority.
- Publicly support decisions of the majority even when individual views may be in opposition.
- Observe strict confidentiality on all discussion that occur in executive session.
- Develop the agenda jointly with the superintendent.
- Prepare thoroughly for each meeting by reading all supporting materials and formulating questions in advance.
- Provide adequate opportunity for public

participation.

- Use the meeting to discuss and assess the district's instructional program, goals, and results.
- Include time during meetings to review the district's Structure.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How is our board meeting agenda developed?
- Do we have a calendar for our meetings?
- How much time do we spend on Vision, Advocacy, Accountability, and Structure?
- Is our meeting one held in public, or is it a public meeting? What is the difference?
- How do I appropriately express my own views when they are in opposition to the board?
- What is appropriate and legal when communicating with staff, the public or other board members about school matters both in and out of board meetings?

COMMITTEES: ASSISTING THE BOARD

A board's decision-making process may rely on the use of committees. These may be standing committees of the board or board committees on special topics that include staff and/or citizens. Occasionally a board will appoint a citizens committee to gather information.

The following are issues to consider when forming committees:

Members - Identify critical stakeholders in the issue the committee is working on and strive to provide balanced representation.

Purpose - Clearly state the purpose for which the committee is being formed; this will assist in clear communication to committee members who may not necessarily have been privy to the original discussion that resulted in the committee being formed.

Parameters - Identifying the parameters of the committee's charge will clarify the expectations of those who appointed the committee. If there are policies that direct a particular

committee's work, include those here. This will prevent the committee from exceeding their charge and meeting with frustration later.

Tasks - State the specific tasks that need to be accomplished in order to satisfy the committee's purpose. Where possible, identify who is responsible for seeing each task to completion.

Timelines - Identify the timelines for various tasks so that there is a clear expectation by all involved as to when certain things will be done, and how closure to the committee's work will occur.

Policy - Identify relevant Board policies and administrative regulations.

Resources - Identify staff members, funds or other resources available to help the committee complete its tasks.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT: CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

It has been said, the most awkward looking animal on our planet, the camel, was undoubtedly designed by committee! The camel has a reputation for being a vile tempered, vicious, spiteful beast that one should never turn their back on. Why then would we ever want to set up school boards on the committee model? The public elects board members, sometimes in the same election, who are conservatives and liberals and everything in between! On boards we have parents and non-parents. Women and men. We comprise every ethnic makeup imaginable. Boards are made up of college graduates, high school graduates and dropouts. None of them are alike, and yet they're supposed to arrive at a common vision. How do boards do that?

Effective boards approach their duties as a team, just as any sports team approaches its goal of winning the game. Board members argue and cajole for position, but at some point they all compromise and reach consensus. No one gets everything they want and all of them have to give up something important.

Within a board who uses this model the only winners are the students. With the different types of members

on each board it is essential that everyone avail himself or herself of every opportunity for board development. Board members owe it to their students to become the best possible board member they can be.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Provide an orientation for new board members immediately upon their election, so they are familiar with the board's role, protocols and district operations, and can become constructive contributing members of the board from the outset of their board term.
- Develop an annual plan for board development that requires every board member to commit to appropriate activities to strengthen personal skills, knowledge and teamwork.
- Report back to the public on board development activities in a way that clearly identifies the value to the school district in fostering student achievement.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What can I expect as an orientation to board service in general and the district in particular?
- How do I access board development opportunities that will allow me to gain knowledge or develop skills that will help me be a more effective board member?
- What kind of report am I expected to give after attending a board development activity?

BOARD EXPENDITURES: AN OPEN BOOK

Nothing makes the public perk up more than an inappropriate use of public funds. As discussed under the Budget/Finance section in the chapter on Structure, an open budget process is an important way to assure the public that public dollars are being spent wisely in support of student achievement.

This assurance must extend to how the board spends the dollars it budgets to support its own function. Boards need to be able to explain how the financial resources it

allocates for itself are directly tied to the district's vision. There should be a firm commitment from each board member that funds dedicated to board development will result in increased knowledge and skills that will ultimately benefit their students.

Since the board has an obligation to make sure that the district is in legal compliance at all levels, board members should monitor the expenditures for legal costs, which are typically included in the board section of the budget.

When the defining question "Is it good for kids?" can be answered "Yes!" to expenditures in this budget section, then you will have fulfilled the trust of the citizens in your community.

WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Annually determine the board development opportunities they feel are important to keeping their board prepared to do their job effectively, and build a reasonable and justifiable budget to invest in that endeavor.
- When board members travel out of district or hold an in-district board development workshop, provide a public report at the next board meeting and for the media to highlight knowledge or skills gained that will benefit students.
- Make sure that "Is it good for kids?" is a criteria that is used when budgeting and expending dollars to support the board.

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How much of the board's budget is set aside for board development opportunities?
- What other kinds of expenses are included in the board section of the budget?
- Which board development opportunities may I be expected to participate in over the next year and how do I access those?

KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

BP 1312 Public Complaints About The Schools

BB 9000 Role Of Board And Members

BB 9010 Public Statements

BB 9011 Disclosure Of Confidential Information

BB 9012 Communications To And From The Board

BB 9270 Conflict Of Interest

BB 9271 School Board Code Of Ethics

BB 9321 Executive Session

BB 9322 Agenda/Meetings

BB 9323 Meeting Conduct (Protocols)

REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Board Standards
- Most recent board plan of improvement (from board self assessment) if any
- Annual Board Calendar
- Superintendent's Contract

ALASKA OPEN MEETINGS ACT

AS 44.62.3 IO. GOVERNMENT PUBLIC MEETINGS.

- (a) All meetings of a governmental body of a public entity of the state are open to the public except as otherwise provided by this section or another provision of law. Attendance and participation at meetings by members of the public or by members of a governmental body may be by teleconferencing. Agency materials that are to be considered at the meeting shall be made available at teleconference locations if practicable. Except when voice votes are authorized, the vote shall be conducted in such a manner that the public may know the vote of each person entitled to vote. The vote at a meeting held by teleconference shall be taken by roll call. This section does not apply to any votes required to be taken to organize a governmental body described in this subsection.
- (b) If permitted subjects are to be discussed at a meeting in executive session, the meeting must first be convened as a public meeting and the question of holding an executive session to discuss matters that are listed in (c) of this section shall be determined by a majority vote of the governmental body. The motion to convene in executive session must clearly and with specificity describe the subject of the proposed executive session without defeating the purpose of addressing the subject in private. Subjects may not be considered at the executive session except those mentioned in the motion calling for the executive session unless auxiliary to the main question. Action may not be taken at an executive session, except to give direction to an attorney or labor negotiator regarding the handling of a specific legal matter or pending labor negotiations.
- (c) The following subjects may be considered in an executive session:
 - (1) matters, the immediate knowledge of which would clearly have an adverse effect upon the finances of the public entity;
 - (2) subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person, provided the person may request a public discussion;
 - (3) matters which by law, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential;
 - (4) matters involving consideration of government records that by law are not subject to public disclosure.
 - (d) This section does not apply to
 - (1) a governmental body performing a judicial or quasi-judicial function when holding a meeting solely to make a decision in an adjudicatory proceeding;
 - (2) juries;
 - (3) parole or pardon boards;
 - (4) meetings of a hospital medical staff;
 - (5) meetings of the governmental body or any committee of a hospital when holding a meeting solely to act upon matters of professional qualifications, privileges or discipline;
 - (6) staff meetings or other gatherings of the employees of a public entity, including meetings of an employee group established by policy of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska or held while acting in an advisory capacity to the Board of Regents; or
 - (7) meetings held for the purpose of participating in or attending a gathering of a national, state, or regional organization of which the public entity, governmental body, or member of the governmental body is a member, but only if no action is taken and no business of the governmental body is conducted at the meetings.
 - (e) Reasonable public notice shall be given for all meetings required to be open under this section. The notice must include the date, time, and place of the meeting and if, the meeting is by teleconference, the location of any teleconferencing facilities that will be used. Subject to posting notice of a meeting on the Alaska Online Public Notice System as required by AS 44.62.175 (a), the notice may be given using print or broadcast media. The notice shall be posted at the principal office of the public entity or, if the public entity has no principal office, at a place designated by the governmental body. The governmental body shall provide notice in a consistent fashion for all its meetings.
 - (f) Action taken contrary to this section is voidable. A lawsuit to void an action taken in violation of this section must be filed in superior court within 180 days after the date of the action. A member of a

governmental body may not be named in an action to enforce this section in the member's personal capacity. A governmental body that violates or is alleged to have violated this section may cure the violation or alleged violation by holding another meeting in compliance with notice and other requirements of this section and conducting a substantial and public reconsideration of the matters considered at the original meeting. If the court finds that an action is void, the governmental body may discuss and act on the matter at another meeting held in compliance with this section. A court may hold that an action taken at a meeting held in violation of this section is void only if the court finds that, considering all of the circumstances, the public interest in compliance with this section outweighs the harm that would be caused to the public interest and to the public entity by voiding the action. In making this determination, the court shall consider at least the following:

- (1) the expense that may be incurred by the public entity, other governmental bodies, and individuals if the action is voided;
- (2) the disruption that may be caused to the affairs of the public entity, other governmental bodies, and individuals if the action is voided;
- (3) the degree to which the public entity, other governmental bodies, and individuals may be exposed to additional litigation if the action is voided;
- (4) the extent to which the governing body, in meetings held in compliance with this section, has previously considered the subject;
- (5) the amount of time that has passed since the action was taken;
- (6) the degree to which the public entity, other governmental bodies, or individuals have come to rely on the action;
- (7) whether and to what extent the governmental body has, before or after the lawsuit was filed to void the action, engaged in or attempted to engage in the public reconsideration of matters originally considered in violation of this section;
- (8) the degree to which violations of this section were wilful, flagrant, or obvious;
- (9) the degree to which the governing body failed to

adhere to the policy under AS 44.62.312 (a).

- (g) Subsection (f) of this section does not apply to a governmental body that has only authority to advise or make recommendations to a public entity and has no authority to establish policies or make decisions for the public entity.
- (h) In this section,
 - (1) "governmental body" means an assembly, council, board, commission, committee, or other similar body of a public entity with the authority to establish policies or make decisions for the public entity or with the authority to advise or make recommendations to the public entity; "governmental body" includes the members of a subcommittee or other subordinate unit of a governmental body if the subordinate unit consists of two or more members;
 - (2) "meeting" means a gathering of members of a governmental body when
 - (i) more than three members or a majority of the members, whichever is less, are present, a matter upon which the governmental body is empowered to act is considered by the members collectively, and the governmental body has the authority to establish policies or make decisions for a public entity; or
 - (ii) the gathering is prearranged for the purpose of considering a matter upon which the governmental body is empowered to act and the governmental body has only authority to advise or make recommendations for a public entity but has no authority to establish policies or make decisions for the public entity;
 - (3) "public entity" means an entity of the state or of a political subdivision of the state including an agency, a board or commission, the University of Alaska, a public authority or corporation, a municipality, a school district, and other governmental units of the state or a political subdivision of the state; it does not include the court system or the legislative branch of state government.

*Addendum***BASIC PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

- ☐ Parliamentary procedure is a logical process designed to aid group deliberations in a democratic society.
- ☐ If the procedure is cumbersome, it should be changed
- ☐ To be most effective, the procedure must make sense
- ☐ Parliamentary procedures do not have the force of law
- ☐ They do not bind anyone or any group unless formally adopted
- ☐ The adopted procedures remain in effect until rescinded permanently or set aside for a particular instance
- ☐ Parliamentary procedures may not supersede laws or regulations

MAIN MOTIONS

A **main motion** brings business before the board for action:

- ☐ It requires a second
- ☐ It can be debated
- ☐ It may be amended. If amended, the amendment must be considered prior to acting on the original motion
- ☐ It must be adopted by majority vote
- ☐ It can not conflict with bylaws or policy of the board
- ☐ Each motion should deal with only one point
- ☐ Each motion must be recorded in the board minutes

Main Motions Not In Order

- ☐ No main motion is in order which conflicts with national, state, or local law.
- ☐ No main motion is in order, which presents substantially the same question as a motion previously, rejected during the same session.
- ☐ A main motion that proposes action outside the scope of the organization's object as defined in the bylaws.

STEPS IN HANDLING A MOTION**1. A member makes the motion**

- ☐ A long motion should be written out and passed to the Chairman. It is best to have motions properly worded by the Superintendent/staff.
- ☐ A few brief words of introduction or explanation may precede the making of the motion, but the debate should not begin at this point.
- ☐ The mover of the motion may request the assistance of the Chairman in getting a precise wording of the motion. This should be done before the Chairman formally places the motion before the board.

2. Seconding a motion

- ☐ If no member seconds the motion, the motion fails. The Chairman must be sure that all have heard it before proceeding to other business.
- ☐ A second merely implies that the motion should come before the meeting and not necessarily that the motion is favored. You are not required or obligated to vote for a motion just because you make or second the motion.
- ☐ Some things that do not require a second include:
 - Nominations
 - Call for a division of the assembly
 - Parliamentary inquiry
 - Point of information
 - Point of order

3. The stating of the question by the Chairman

- ☐ When a motion that is in order has been made and seconded, the Chairman formally places it before the assembly by stating the question.
- ☐ The Chairman must state the question unless:
 - ☐ It is out of order.
 - ☐ The wording is not clear. If the wording is not clear, the Chairman must see that it is put in order before it is stated.
 - ☐ Until the Chairman states the questions, the maker has the right to revise it.

- ☐ Modifying or withdrawing a motion
- ☐ Until the Chairman states the question, the maker has the right to modify the motion or to withdraw it entirely.
- ☐ After the Chairman has stated the question, the motion becomes the property of the assembly, and the maker cannot modify or withdraw the motion without the assembly's consent.

4. Debate on the question

- ☐ Turn first to the maker of the motion to see if he/she wishes to speak.
- ☐ Debate must be confined to the merits of the pending question.
- ☐ The Chairman has the same rights as all other members unless your bylaws or rules specify otherwise.
- ☐ The speaker should not be interrupted so long as he/she does not violate the rules of the assembly.
- ☐ The presiding officer cannot close debate so long as any member who has not exhausted his right to debate desires the floor, except by a CALL FOR THE PREVIOUS QUESTION, which requires a two-thirds vote if someone "calls the question" the Chairman may ask "Is there any objection to calling the question?" If there is unanimous consent, you may close debate. If there is not unanimous consent, you must vote on the CALL FOR THE QUESTION.

5. Putting the Question

- ☐ Before calling for the vote the Chairman must repeat the motion pending so that everyone knows what the vote is about.
- ☐ The normal method of voting is by voice vote unless the board has agreed to a different type of voting such as a show of hands or a rising vote. DO NOT vary the way you vote according to your opinion of the importance of the motion.
- ☐ The Chairman must always call for the negative vote no matter how near unanimous the vote may appear.
- ☐ If the voice vote or a rising vote appears to be inconclusive any member of the assembly may call for a "division of the house" so that an accurate count can be taken.

6. Announce the voting result. Action On A Main Motion

1.Refer To Committee:

- ☐ Requires a second
- ☐ Set deadline for a report back to the board
- ☐ Motion is debatable (call for question)
- ☐ Requires a majority vote

2.Table A Motion:

- ☐ Requires a second
- ☐ Can not be debated (do not call for question)
- ☐ Requires a majority vote
- ☐ No time is set for removing from table. It is only removed after progress is made.

3.To Take From The Table (To Remove):

- ☐ Requires a second
- ☐ Can not be debated (do not call for question)
- ☐ Requires a majority vote
- ☐ Can be removed after there has been progress

4. Postpone Motion:

- ☐ Requires a second
- ☐ Can be debated (call for question)
- ☐ Can include future date for considering motion
- ☐ Requires a majority vote

5. Motion To Reconsider:

- ☐ Mover of motion must have voted with the prevailing side, in other words, the mover must be one who voted with the majority for or against the original motion
- ☐ Requires a second
- ☐ Can be debated (call for question)
- ☐ The motion to reconsider can be made only on the same day the vote to be reconsidered was taken.

- ☐ Requires a majority vote

6. Rescind A Motion:

- ☐ The motion to rescind can be applied to any action taken providing that none of the action involved has been carried out in a way it is too late to undo.
- ☐ The motion requires (a) a two-thirds vote or (b) a majority vote when notice of the motion has been provided in the call of the meeting
- ☐ Mover of the motion to rescind must have voted with the prevailing side
- ☐ Can not be done at the same session at which the motion was acted Upon
- ☐ Can be debated (call for question)
- ☐ Requires a second.

7. Close Debate:

- ☐ Requires a second
- ☐ Can not be debated (do not call for question)
- ☐ Requires a majority vote
- ☐ Applies to any debatable motion

8. Recess & Adjournment

- ☐ A recess is a short intermission within a meeting which does not end the meeting or destroy its continuity.
- ☐ An adjournment terminates the meeting.
- ☐ Requires a second and requires a majority vote
- ☐ Can not be debated

8. GLOSSARY

AASA The Alaska Association of School Administrators, the state professional organization for school administrators. Also, the American Association of School Administrators.

AASB The Association of Alaska School Boards is the state advocacy organization for public school governance in Alaska, which is an affiliate of the National School Boards Association.

AASG Association of Alaska School Governments, a student-run organization that provides leadership training and lends a student voice on issues at the local, state and national levels. Sponsored by the Alaska School Activities Association, Inc.

ADM Average Daily Membership—a formula used to determine the average number of students enrolled in a school system, usually for determining the amount of money a district will receive from state or federal sources.

ASAA Alaska School Activities Association, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization established to direct, develop and support Alaska's high school interscholastic sports, academic and fine arts activities.

AFT American Federation of Teachers, the national teacher union affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

ALASBO Alaska School Business Officials, a professional association which provides programs and services to promote the highest standards of school business management practices.

ALASKA ICE AASB's Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement.

Advisory School Board A group chosen to advise on educational issues within a community, which does not have final decision making power.

Arbitration A method of settling disputes through recourse to an impartial third party whose decision is usually final and binding on both parties. The term normally refers to collective bargaining. Mediation is the term used when the third party decision is advisory only.

ASAA Alaska School Activities Association, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization established to direct, develop and support Alaska's high school interscholastic

sports, academic and fine arts activities.

Assessment Processes of appraising or evaluating student work. (See Evaluation, Testing.)

Assets/Asset Building Key building blocks in children's lives that help them grow up strong, capable, and caring-successful. Based on research on resiliency done by the Search Institute in Minnesota. Researchers found 40 assets kids need to be successful. The more assets kids have, the more successful they are.

AYP Adequate Yearly Progress, a measurement of NCLB used to determine whether schools and groups within schools have met the benchmarks established for student achievement.

Bargaining Unit A group of employees that has been recognized by the employer for purposes of collective bargaining.

Budget An estimate of proposed expenditures for a given period or purpose; and the proposed means of financing for it. A plan of action in terms of money.

Capital Expenditures Money spent for the construction of facilities, major renovation, or items which are required to be inventoried (fixed assets).

Certificated Employees A person whose contract requires that he hold a certificate from the state.

Charter School Autonomous schools that are given regulatory freedom in exchange for meeting performance standards specified either in contracts or charters. In Alaska, charter schools are public schools run under the auspices of a local school board.

Chief Executive Officer (See Superintendent)

Classified Employees Include all non-certificated employees, excluding director-level exempt administrators and principals. e.g. Food service workers, maintenance personnel, school secretaries, bus drivers, teacher aides.

Collective Bargaining The attempt of employee and employer representatives to reach an agreement on conditions of employment, usually implying the presence of a union, and usually pertaining to wages and working conditions.

Contract The general term used for agreement between the teacher and the employer, and a general term used for agreements between teacher and students relating to individualized study.

Curriculum A course of study offered by a school or one of its parts. Curriculum is what students should know, be able to do and be committed to (content), how it is taught (instruction), how it is measured (assessment), and how the educational system is organized (context).

EED Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Evaluation The process of testing, appraising, and judging achievement, growth, product, and process or changes in these using formal or informal techniques.

Executive Session A non-public meeting which under Alaska law may be held only for limited reasons.

Federal Impact Aid Money granted to school districts in lieu of property taxes for federally owned property in the district.

Foundation Formula A formula set by legislative action that determines the amount of money allocated by the state per student.

Grievance A statement of dissatisfaction, usually concerning the interpretation of a collective bargaining agreement.

Grievance Procedure A method of dealing with a statement of dissatisfaction which is set out in the collective bargaining agreement, and allows the work place to continue operation without interruption.

HSGQE Alaska's High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, mandated by the legislature. Also known as Exit Exam. Passage is required in order for students to receive a diploma.

IDEA Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. (See Special Education.)

IEP Individual Education Plans developed by professionals and parents to lay out a course of study suitable for the student.

Impasse The point in labor negotiations at which either

party determines that no further progress can be made toward reaching an agreement. Technical impasse refers to that point at which agreement is supposed to be reached and is not, but when parties continue to bargain in good faith. In public employment, impasses are often resolved by the intervention of a neutral third party, such as a mediator or fact finder.

In-service General term used to include the activities and assistance given to school district staff to help them become more effective teachers.

Mediation In the course of collective bargaining, a process by which a third party attempts to assist the negotiators to reach an agreement.

Multiple Intelligences Howard Gardner proposes that all humans are endowed with seven forms of intelligence: mathematical/ logical, linguistic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, and kinesthetic. Schools usually emphasize the linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligences.

NCLB No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, (see ESEA) providing significant increased accountability and new requirements for states and local schools. Institutes significant reforms in federal education programs and establishes new requirements for districts receiving federal funds.

NEA National Education Association, one of two major teacher unions in the United States.

Negotiated Agreement The written agreement between two parties, often referring to collective bargaining between employer and employee groups.

Nontenured A teacher who has not achieved tenure in employment, e.g., probationary

NSBA The National School Boards Association is the national advocacy organization for public school governance.

Policy A statement adopted by a board of education or administrative agency outlining principles to be followed with respect to specific matters; usually requires rules or regulations to be adopted or its implementation and is broad enough to provide for administrative decision

regarding the manner in which it is to be implemented, although its implementation in some manner is mandatory.

Policy Manual The compiled written policies of a school district, which outlines the principles to be followed in governing the district.

PTR Pupil-teacher ratio-The average number of pupils per teacher in a system or school.

Public Law 874 Federal law that provides funds to school districts.

QSI Quality Schools Initiative

REAA Regional Education Attendance Area designation given to school districts established in the Unorganized Borough.

Recall The procedure by which the qualified electors of a given area may remove from office those officials who have been elected by the voters of the same area such as city, borough or REAA school board members.

SCCS School Climate and Connectedness Survey

Special Education Acronyms

ADA Americans with Disabilities Act

FAPE Free appropriate education

FERPA Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

IDEA Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act or P.L. 94-142)

IEE Independent educational evaluation

IEP Individualized education program

LEA Local education agency (school district)

SESA Special Education Service Agency

SED Severely Emotionally Disturbed

SpEd Special Education

504 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Statutes Laws enacted by the legislative branch upon which educational regulations are based.

Superintendent The chief executive officer of a school district who is hired by the school board and manages the district according to law and adopted policy.

Title I, Title II, etc. Refers to the various titles of the programs of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Title I Targeted federal assistance in high poverty schools.

Title II Teacher quality programs (preparing, training and recruiting programs).

Title III Federal funds used to implement language instruction to foster English fluency.

Title IV Safe and drug-free schools and communities (includes after-school programs).

Title V State and local innovative programs (charter schools, focus on minorities, etc.)

Title VI Local flex demonstrations, rural education initiative (funds for rural schools).

Title VII Special programs for Native Americans.

Title VIII Federal impact aid for districts affected by military bases, Indian reservations and other non-taxable federal land.

Title IX Consolidation planning and administration, waivers, school prayer, equitable access to school facilities.

Title X McKinney-Vento Act. Monies to ensure education for homeless youth.

Tenure The system of school employment in which the teacher or other employee, having served a certain probationary period, retains his position indefinitely and is protected by statute or by rule of the school board.

Testing Terms

Achievement Tests Achievement tests are designed to measure the things that a student knows and can do. Most of the tests that students take in school are achievement tests.

Alternative and authentic assessments Tasks which measure student learning by requiring him/her to demonstrate application of what has been learned through a real life situation. For example, testing writing by asking a student to write a composition or have students use math skills to determine take home pay after taxes. These assessments are important because they enable students to show that they can use the skills they have been taught.

Criterion-referenced tests Criterion-referenced tests are designed to compare a student's performance with clearly defined curricular objectives, skill levels, standards, or areas of knowledge (rather than with scores of a sample of other students).

Disaggregated data Data broken out for specific groups within the total student population, such as by race, gender, number of college prep courses taken, family income level.

High stakes test A test that has significant consequences for a student, school or school district. The SAT and the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam are high stakes tests for students.

Longitudinal testing Examining the performance of a single student or a group of students by considering their test scores over time. For example, comparing a student's first grade and second grade test scores.

Norm-referenced tests Norm-referenced achievement tests measure basic concepts and skills commonly taught in schools throughout the country. These tests are not designed to measure a specific school district's curriculum, but rather the knowledge generally taught at a particular grade level. Results from norm-referenced tests provide information that compares students' achievement with that of a representative national group or "sample." Student test results are presented in the form of a comparison score. E.g. 75th percentile means that student scores at or above the score of 75% of his peers.

Quartile Scores of a test divided into quarters according to the highest one-fourth of the scores, the next highest one-fourth, and the like. Student performance is often discussed in terms of the number or percent of students falling below each quartile or scoring in each quarter.

Scoring rubric or scoring guide. The set of criteria used in the evaluation of a student product or performance along with rules for assigning points to each criterion. The rules correspond with carefully described levels of performance for each criterion. Scoring rubrics could be used for student products, such as a piece of art, or student performances, such as a speech or a piano concert.

Standardized tests "Standardized" means that the test is always given and scored the same way. Typically, the same questions are asked and uniform directions are given for each test. Specific time limits are set and student performance may be compared with all the other students taking the same test, or with a set of predetermined standards or criteria. Tests that are used for important decisions or to compare the performance of one student or school to another are usually standardized.

USDOE United States Department of Education

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

1111 W. 9th St
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Tel: (907) 463-1660 Fax: (907) 586-2995

Email: aasb@aasb.org

Web: www.aasb.org

For a complete staff listing, visit our website under
Contacts: www.aasb.org/contacts/html

Center for Public Education



Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards

Chuck Dervarics and Eileen O'Brien

AN **nsba** PUBLICATION

Copyright © 2019 Center for Public Education. All rights reserved.



Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards

More than 90,000 men and women are members of local school boards in the United States, all serving as important trustees of the nation's public education systems. According to the National School Boards Association, these public officials serve on 13,809 elected or appointed boards in the U.S.

Most of the public knows that school boards do things like set the budgets, establish school boundaries and set school policies. But does school boards' work affect student achievement? The higher media visibility of teachers and principals in the push for better learning, while important, has led some to question whether school boards matter.

From a research perspective, it's a complex question. Isolating what makes an effective board—that is, one that impacts student achievement—involves evaluating virtually all functions of a board, from internal governance and policy formulation to communication with teachers, building administrators, and the public.

But the answer is: Yes, they do. In this research brief, NSBA's Center for Public Education looks at indicators of school board effectiveness. From this research, it is clear that school boards in high-achieving districts exhibit habits and characteristics that are markedly different from boards in low-achieving districts. In the most dramatic examples from this research, scholars compared districts with similar levels of poverty and disadvantage to determine factors that separate high-performing districts from those with low performance. In many cases, these differences included the approaches taken by local school boards.

So what do these boards do? Here are some examples:

- Boards in high-achieving districts are more likely to engage in goal setting and monitoring their progress.
- They are increasingly data savvy—identifying student needs and justifying decisions based on data.

- Board members possess detailed knowledge of their district, including initiatives to jump-start success.
- Board members have crafted a working relationship with superintendents, teachers, and administrators based on mutual respect, collegiality and a joint commitment to student success.

For the full list of eight characteristics of effective school boards, keep reading.

Background on the studies

Despite the pivotal role of school boards in the nation's educational framework, comparatively few studies focused on the practices and effectiveness of elected or appointed boards. As Sam Stringfield and Deborah Land noted in their 2002 study, *Educating At-Risk Students*, "quantitative and qualitative studies of board effectiveness are virtually non-existent," (Land and Stringfield, National Society for the Study of Education, 2002). Nonetheless, while there may be no magic bullet to assess boards comprised of individuals with divergent views, there is a consistent body of research examining the characteristics and practices of effective school boards. (For the purpose of this paper, effective boards are those operating in high-achieving districts, particularly those that are making significant strides despite serving large numbers of disadvantaged students.)

Much of the research cited here focuses on school board/district practices and approaches gleaned through interviews, surveys, observations and qualitative measures rather than in-depth quantitative information. Several studies also date back to the early 2000s or earlier; as a result, the data have limitations.

Nonetheless, the research base now includes notable studies comparing the practices of boards in high-achieving districts and contrasting those with practices of boards in lower-achieving districts. Several of these include detailed case studies exploring the evolution of districts from low performing to high achieving—a process that includes discussion of the school board role. In addition, scholars have used quantitative methods to assess the effect of district leadership on student achievement; often, this assessment includes data and trends related to school board operation, thus providing rich details on the evolution and, in some cases, transformation of local boards.

Taken together, these reports provide a sound basis to explore the role played by school boards in student achievement. The pertinent studies for this paper fall into three general areas:

- Meta-analyses of education research, with a focus on the practices of boards, superintendents, and other school leaders;
- Case studies of high-achieving districts, with a focus on the evolving role of school boards; and
- Studies that compare school board practices in districts with similar demographics but substantially different student outcomes as reflected by annual assessments and other factors.

Meta-Analysis: In 2006, J. Timothy Waters and Robert Marzano of Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) examined 27 studies since 1970 that, they concluded, included rigorous quantitative methods to assess the effect of school district leadership on student achievement. Their analysis, *School District Leadership That Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement: Meta-analysis of Influence of District Administrators on Student Achievement*, looked at more than two

dozen studies covering more than 2,800 districts and 3.4 million students. Of the 27 studies examined, 14 had information about the relationship between district leadership and average student academic achievement.

Case Studies: Several studies on district leadership focus at least in part on board activities. The Learning First Alliance study, *Beyond Islands of Excellence*, (Togneri and Anderson, 2003), examined the practices in five school districts with high student test scores despite moderate to high student poverty levels. Districts in the study were Aldine, Tex., Independent School District; Chula Vista, Calif., Elementary School District; Kent County Public Schools in Maryland; Minneapolis, Minn., Public Schools, and Providence, R.I., Public Schools.

Also, a study of 10 districts in five states, *Getting There from Here* (Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman, 1997), sought to identify the effect of quality governance on student achievement. Included in the analysis was an examination of the relationship between school board and superintendent and characteristics of effective board leadership. Researchers selected the districts to reflect diversity in size, geography, student achievement, graduation rates, dropout rates, board/superintendent relations and race/ethnic factors.

Studies with Comparison Districts: One of the richest data sets available is the Lighthouse I study of the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB). Looking at similar districts with either unusually high or unusually low records on student achievement, the project examined the role of boards and how they relate to student achievement. In studying Georgia districts, Lighthouse I contrasted the knowledge, beliefs, and actions of school board members from high- and low performing districts. Since conducting this original study in 1998-2000, IASB has expanded the project into an action research approach, identifying pilot districts in Iowa for further testing of this concept (Lighthouse II) and launching a multi-state project focused on board leadership (Lighthouse III). Multiple Lighthouse research papers were cited in this report, including *The Lighthouse Inquiry: School Board/Superintendent Team Behaviors in School Districts with Extreme Differences in Student Achievement* (Iowa Association of School Boards, 2001), *The Lighthouse Re-*

EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARD

1. Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision
2. Effective school boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.
3. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.
4. Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.
5. Effective boards are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.
6. Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.
7. Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
8. Effective school boards take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts.

search: *Past, Present and Future: School Board Leadership for Improving Student Achievement* (Iowa School Boards Foundation, 2007) and in the Thomas Alsbury-edited *The Future of School Board Governance: Relevancy and Revelation* (2008).

In addition, *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement* (MDRC for Council of Great City Schools, 2002) examined what it termed “fast-moving” urban districts and compared them with slower-moving districts of similar size and demographics. In selecting the districts, researchers looked for cities with improvement in reading and math in more than half of their grades through spring 2001. Districts also had to achieve growth rates faster than their respective states and narrow racial achievement gaps. The project ultimately focused on Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the Houston Independent School District, the Sacramento, Calif., United School District, and a subset of New York City schools known as the Chancellor’s District. One key research question was to examine district-level strategies used to improve student achievement and reduce racial achievement disparities. Several of these strategies involved school boards.

Finally, a 1993 report on school leadership in British Columbia, Canada, *The Politics of Excellence: Trustee Leadership and School District Ethos*, concluded that districts with a productive “ethos” produced higher-than-expected student achievement and lower-than-expected costs over time (LaRocque and Coleman, 1993). The role of the board was part of this district “ethos.”

In reviewing these studies, it is reasonable to conclude that school boards in high-achieving school districts look different, and that they often feature characteristics and approaches that differ from those in lower-achieving districts.

Eight characteristics of effective boards

1. Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.

In comparing district leadership and student achievement, Waters and Marzano (2006) identified five specific district leadership responsibilities that positively correlated with student achievement:

- Establishing a collaborative process to set goals;
- Establishing “non-negotiable goals” (that is, goals all staff must act upon once set by the board) in at least two areas: student achievement and classroom instruction;
- Having the board align with and support district goals;
- Monitoring goals for achievement and instruction; and
- Using resources to support achievement and instruction goals.

“Publicly adopting broad five-year goals for achievement and instruction and consistently supporting these goals, both publicly and privately, are examples of board-level actions that we found to be positively correlated with student achievement,” they said. Typically, they adopted the goals with specific achievement targets and benchmarks. “The board ensures that these goals remain the top priorities in the district and that no

other initiatives detract attention or resources from accomplishing these goals.” The districts also provided professional development to board members and examined the effectiveness of such training.

In *Beyond Islands of Excellence*, Togneri and Anderson (2003) provided examples of the positive effects of goal setting. In its case studies, the majority of high-achieving districts adopted specific goals and boards adopted policies to consistently support them. At three case study sites—Kent County, Md., Minneapolis, and Providence—boards adopted broad strategic plans that contained both goals and the action steps needed to attain them. To assess progress on a regular basis, Kent County and Minneapolis also added indicators of success to the plan so board members could review gains or address challenges.

Each district also adopted what Togneri and Anderson termed a simply stated vision of student success. For goals on student achievement, board members identified brief, one-line vision statements such as “All our students will achieve on grade level” and used them in public and staff presentations. Significantly, the report said, school boards and superintendents also carefully examined how to stretch limited dollars to focus sufficient funding on the goals.

The Lighthouse I studies (2001, 2007) also offer important details about the importance of identifying goals. In high-achieving districts, board members adopted goals and had detailed knowledge about their relationship to curriculum, instruction, assessment and staff development. As a result, these public officials could identify not only the purposes and processes behind school improvement initiatives but also the board’s role in supporting these efforts. By comparison in low-achieving districts, board members were “only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives,” researchers noted. “They were sometimes aware of goals, but seldom able to describe actions being taken by staff members to improve learning.”

Notably, these differences extended down to the staff level. In high-achieving districts, staff members could link the school board’s goals to building-level goals for student learning and explain how the goals impacted classrooms. “Staff members identified clear goals for improvement, described how staff development supported the goals, and how they were monitoring progress based on data about student learning.” By comparison in the low-achieving districts, “There was little evidence of a pervasive focus on school renewal at any level when it was not present at the board level.”

2. Effective school boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.

In the Lighthouse I studies (2001, 2007), board members consistently expressed their belief in the learning ability of all children and gave specific examples of ways that learning had improved as a result of district initiatives. Poverty, lack of parental involvement and other factors were described as challenges to be overcome, not as excuses. Board members expected to see improvements in student achievement quickly as a result of initiatives. Comments made by board members in Lighthouse were indicative of the differences. In a high-achieving district, one board member noted, “This is a place for all kids to excel.” Another board member noted, “Sometimes people say the poor students have limits. I say all kids have limits. I believe we have not reached the limits of any of the kids in our system.”

Yet in low-achieving districts, board members frequently referred to external pressures as the main rea-

sons for lack of student success. Board members often focused on factors that they believed kept students from learning, such as poverty, lack of parental support, societal factors, or lack of motivation. Board members expected it would take years to see any improvements in student achievement. For these board members, the reasons for pursuing change often were simple ones—to meet state mandates (and avoid sanctions) and a desire to not “have the lowest test scores” in the state.

In addition, board members in low-achieving districts offered many negative comments about students and teachers when they were interviewed by Lighthouse researchers. Said one, “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make them drink. This applies to both students and staff.”

In one low-performing district, teachers made 67 negative comments about students and their parents during Lighthouse interviews. In a similar number of interviews in a high-performing district, there were only four such comments.

3. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.

According to Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman (1997), another characteristic of quality governance is the ability to focus on student achievement while spending comparatively little time on day-to-day operational issues. In interviews with hundreds of board members and staff across the districts, they found that high-performing boards focus on establishing a vision supported by policies that target student achievement. Yet poor governance is characterized by factors such as micro-management by the board; confusion of the appropriate roles for the board member and superintendent; interpersonal conflict between board chair and superintendent; and board member disregard for the agenda process and the chain of command.

Case studies of individual districts in other studies support many of these findings. In Chula Vista, Calif., the board took its policy role seriously and developed policies that supported instructional reform. As profiled in Togneri and Anderson (2003), the focus began when top administrators recognized a need for a new cadre of exceptional principals and asked the school board for help. In response, the board approved a policy with higher salaries for principals, giving the district more leverage to attract quality candidates to the district. Later, the board granted the central office greater flexibility to provide principal raises and bonuses. Members also supported the superintendent in dismissing principals who did not meet performance standards; this smaller but still significant action reflected the policy and partnership approach adopted earlier by the board.

Other case studies in this report were replete with examples of board commitment to policy and accountability, something often reflected through visions and strategic plans. In Aldine, Tex., board members made sure to adopt strategic plans that placed children’s learning needs front and center. As one Aldine board member explained, “Everything we do is based on what’s best for the children, period. Whether you are dealing with an administrative issue or a student issue, we ask, ‘What’s best for the children?’”

With everyone on board to promote achievement, boards encouraged their staffs to tackle difficult issues and seek innovative solutions. As a result, the districts engaged in a collegial policy-making process that emphasized the need to find solutions. An administrator in Kent County, Md., summed up the board’s work as follows: “The board recognizes its role as a policy-maker. [Board members] are very professional.

They never humiliate each other. They have no hidden agendas. The goal is what is best for the children.”

Boards held the superintendent and his or her colleagues accountable for progress but did not engage in the daily administration of schools. Explained one board member: “I am not a professional educator.... [The superintendent and her staff] are the professionals, and we say to them, “These are the results we want to see; you are in charge of how to do it.”

Likewise, Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy’s case studies (2002) include similar findings. The groups concluded that fast-moving districts had developed a consensus among board members and other leaders on the identification and implementation of improvement strategies. This required a new role for the school board, which focused on decisions “that support improved student achievement rather than on the day-to-day operations of the district.”

In Lighthouse II (2007), researchers identified five pilot school districts and provided technical assistance and support to the boards based on research findings documented in Lighthouse I.

Results from this study also showed that districts made gains when they were able to focus on achievement rather than administrative issues. In the majority of districts, boards spent more than double the amount of time on policy and student achievement than they did prior to Lighthouse II. It was also common for these districts to schedule additional work sessions on student achievement. (More information on Lighthouse II is in the sidebar on the next page).

A DOZEN DANGER SIGNS

While this paper did not specifically focus on characteristics of ineffective school boards, it may be helpful to review some of the descriptions of ineffective boards mentioned in the research:

1. Only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives, and seldom able to describe actions being taken to improve student learning
2. Focused on external pressures as the main reasons for lack of student success, such as poverty, lack of parental support, societal factors, or lack of motivation
3. Offer negative comments about students and teachers
4. Micro-manage day-to-day operations
5. Disregard the agenda process and the chain of command
6. Left out the information flow; little communication between board and superintendent
7. Quick to describe a lack of parent interest in education or barriers to community outreach
8. Looked at data from a “blaming” perspective, describing teachers, students, and families as major causes for low performance
9. Little understanding or coordination on staff development for teachers
10. Slow to define a vision
11. Did not hire a superintendent who agreed with their vision
12. Little professional development together as a board

4. Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

The Lighthouse I studies are particularly relevant in conveying this theme. Looking across high- and low-achieving districts in Georgia, school board members in high achieving districts had strong communication between the superintendent, staff, and each other. They received information from many sources including the superintendent, curriculum director, principals, teachers, and sources outside the district. While the superintendent was a primary source of information, he or she was not the only source. In addition, findings and research were shared among all board members. By comparison, in low-achieving districts, board members expressed concern that not all information was shared or shared equally. As a result, researchers said, “Some felt left out of the information flow.”

In high-achieving districts, school board members could provide specific examples of how they connected and listened to the community, and were able to identify concrete ways they promoted this involvement. Likewise, staff members in these districts described the boards as supportive, noting that these public officials “would respect and listen to them.” In interviews, board members were quick to note how they communicated actions and goals to staff. One strategy was to schedule post-board meetings to provide teachers and administrators with in-depth briefings on policy decisions.

By comparison, school boards in

CONVERTING RESEARCH TO ACTION: LIGHTHOUSE II

Building on the success of Lighthouse I—which identified the different knowledge, beliefs and actions of school boards in high-achieving districts—the Iowa Association of School Boards expanded the initiative to begin embedding these ideas in other jurisdictions.

Under Lighthouse II, from 2002 to 2007, IASB identified five pilot districts in Iowa and offered technical assistance and support to the board, superintendent, and, at some sites, district leadership teams. The goal was to move entire districts from one set of assumptions, beliefs and practices to another: the set possessed by the high-achieving districts in Lighthouse I. After five years of work, the project showed significant gains:

- In three of the five districts, the time spent on policy and student achievement during regular board meetings increased from 16 percent to 37 percent.
- By the end of the project, boards in all five districts regularly scheduled extra time for boards to focus on student achievement.
- Four of the sites showed significant increases—some as high as 90 percent—in the number of staff and board members who could consistently describe the district’s school improvement goals.
- At all sites, 83 percent to 100 percent of all staff and board members reported a clear, district-wide focus on improving literacy.
- All districts, by year 3 of the project, agreed strongly that local school boards can positively affect student achievement.
- By year 3, significant gains on a measure of reading comprehension were seen at every grade level in one district. In addition, in the fourth year of the study, four of the five sites showed statistically significant gains in student reading and/or math for at least two grade levels on the statewide norm-referenced measure of achievement.

Starting in 2008, IASB launched the Lighthouse III project, through which the association is working with several states to outline best practices for school boards and state school board associations.

low-achieving districts were likely to cite communication and outreach barriers. They were quick to describe a lack of parent interest in education; in fact, they were able to list only a few efforts to solicit community involvement. Compared with board members from high-achieving districts, they frequently noted frustration with the lack of community involvement and said there was little they could do about it. As for relationships within the district, staff members from the comparison low-achieving districts contacted for the research often said they didn't know the board members at all.

While such findings perhaps could be limited to high- and low-achieving districts in Georgia, other research highlights similar findings. Similar factors were evident in Waters and Marzano's 2006 meta-analysis of 27 studies. In this study, the authors found that high-achieving districts actively involved board members and community stakeholders in setting goals.

While individual board members did pursue their own issues, the researchers said, there was a reluctance to place these issues at center stage. "When individual board member interests and expectations distract from board-adopted achievement and instructional goals, they are not contributing to district success, but in fact, may be working in opposition to that end." School board members realized, the authors noted, that these issues can be a distraction from core district goals.

5. Effective boards are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.

In the Lighthouse I study, board members in high-achieving districts identified specific student needs through data, and justified decisions based on that data. In addition, board members were not shy about discussing trends on dropout rates, test scores, and student needs, with many seeking such information on a regular or monthly basis.

By comparison, board members in low-achieving districts tended to greet data with a "blaming" perspective, describing teachers, students and families as major causes for low performance. In one district, the superintendent "controls the reaction of the board to recommendations by limiting the information he gives to them." The Lighthouse I study contrasts this with the policy of a high-performance district, where the superintendent "believes sharing information will get them to react and encourage engagement." Board members in this district view data as a diagnostic tool, without the emotional response of assessing blame.

Board members in lower-performing districts also provided little evidence of considering data in the decision making process. In these districts, board members frequently discussed their decisions through anecdotes and personal experiences rather than by citing data. In many cases, the study noted, "The board talked very generally about test scores and relied on the interpretation made by the superintendent." As a result, board members believed the superintendent "owned" information, leaving it to the top administrator to interpret the data and recommend solutions.

Togneri and Anderson (2003) also emphasized how effective school boards embraced data. Boards in high-achieving districts were not afraid to confront negative data and, in fact, used it as a basis to improve teaching and learning. In Minneapolis, a renewed emphasis on data has helped drive improvement. Yet back in the mid-1990s, the district showed a wide achievement gap between white and minority students and posted a high school graduation rate barely above 40 percent. When the city's Chamber of Commerce

failed to support the school board's request for a tax increase, the board began a fundamental rethinking based on goals and data. It hired a new superintendent with a strong foundation in instructional improvement. Together, the board and superintendent developed goals and performance indicators to rank and monitor school progress. This process ultimately helped build trust among school and community leaders, eventually leading to district progress and, later, successful new tax proposals beneficial to schools.

Minneapolis was typical of the report's study districts, which "had the courage to acknowledge poor performance and the will to seek solutions." With the board, superintendent and community supporting the new process, the district developed a vision focused on student learning and instructional improvement with system-wide curricula connected to state standards with clear expectations for teachers.

6. Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.

Successful boards recognize the need to support high priorities even during times of fiscal uncertainty. One leading example is in providing professional development for teachers, administrators and other staff. According to LaRocque and Coleman (1993), effective boards saw a responsibility to maintain high standards even in the midst of budget challenges. "To this end, the successful boards supported extensive professional development programs for administrators and teachers, even during times of [fiscal] restraint," they wrote in *The Politics of Excellence: Trustee Leadership and School District Ethos*.

Lighthouse I researchers (2001, 2007) also identified research-based professional development for staff as one of seven "conditions for improvement" typically evident in high-achieving districts. From the board's perspective, members did not simply provide funding for such professional development – they could cite specific examples of activities and their link to improvement plans. "In high-achieving districts, board members described staff development activities in the district and could describe the link between teacher training and board or district goals for students," the study noted. "Board members described a belief in the importance of staff development activities focused on student needs."

In low-achieving districts, however, board members said teachers made their own decisions on staff development based on perceived needs in the classroom or for certification. "Board members knew there was a budget for staff development but were unsure whether there was a plan for staff development," the study noted. In fact, board members frequently made "disparaging remarks" about staff development, calling it an ineffective strategy.

Lighthouse II, as noted in Alsbury (2008) further reinforced this point. Boards not only took an active interest in professional development but also provided the infrastructure for such programming to succeed. "For most boards, this required significant changes in the allocation of resources (people, time and money) and would not have happened without a clear understanding of the characteristics of quality professional development and a belief in the importance of improving the knowledge and skills of educators in order to improve student outcomes."

Additional evidence is available in the Snipes, Doolittle and Herlihy's 2002 analysis of high- and low-achieving districts. In high-achieving districts, the board and superintendent support uniform professional development built on curriculum. In lower-achieving districts, professional development may vary extensively

from school to school. One example was in Sacramento, Calif., where teachers received at least 18 hours of in-service training per year based on uniform curricula. New teachers also received six full days of instructional training, and teachers had common planning periods to encourage collaboration on lesson plans and strategies to address student needs. In the Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., schools, weeklong seminars for Advanced Placement teachers, leadership retreats for principals and financial support for attaining national board certification were among effective strategies by the district to improve curriculum.

Waters and Marzano (2006) also touts the importance of professional development. While not specifically examining the school board role in this process, this study on leadership notes that “a meaningful commitment of funding must be dedicated to professional development for teachers and principals. This professional development should be focused on building the knowledge, skills and competencies teachers and principals need to accomplish a district’s goals.”

7. Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.

In *Getting There from Here*, Goodman and colleagues (1997) concluded that those with a strong board/superintendent relationship had greater student achievement as measured by dropout rates, the percentage of students going to college, and aptitude test scores. Goodman’s review of characteristics of quality governance included several that were directly related to school boards and their relationships:

- A trusting and collaborative relationship between the board and superintendent;
- Creation by the board of conditions and organizational structures that allowed the superintendent to function as the chief executive officer and instructional leader of the district;
- Evaluation of the superintendent according to mutually agreed upon procedures; and
- Effective communication between the board chair and superintendent and among board members.

Likewise, Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy (2002) also emphasizes the importance of these factors. In successful districts, boards defined an initial vision for the district and sought a superintendent who matched this vision. Nowhere was this truer than in Sacramento, Calif., one of the case study sites. In 1996, a mayor’s commission concluded that the city schools, beset with high superintendent turnover and other problems, had “a lack of accountability and deplorable building conditions.” A group of individuals focused on progress won seats on the school board, and they quickly bought out the contract of the old superintendent and hired one sharing their views. The new superintendent and board sought input from thousands of community stakeholders and ultimately adopted an action plan with specific achievement benchmarks based on student assessments such as the SAT-9. The board and superintendent also established seven “vital signs” of success, including high rates of kindergarten readiness; a student attendance rate of at least 95 percent; increased proficiency of English Language Learners; and objectives that at least 90 percent of students attain math and reading proficiency and graduate high school. Within four years, the district saw consistent gains in math and reading plus a drop in the disparity between white and Hispanic student achievement.

In contrast to this “moving” district, comparison districts had no such impetus to work toward success. Boards were slow to define a vision and often recruited a superintendent with his or her own ideas and

platform. The differences between the districts only increased over time, as boards and superintendents in high-achieving districts jointly refined their visions over time, assessed district strengths and weaknesses and had all signs of a stable relationship. By comparison, less successful districts featured boards and superintendents that were not in alignment, as the superintendent “may develop solutions without board involvement.” Such boards also may not hold superintendents accountable for goals.

8. Effective school boards take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values, and commitments for their improvement efforts.

Board member development and training is a clear theme within this research base. In high-achieving Lighthouse I study districts (2001), school board members said they regularly participated in activities in which they learned together as a group. They cited frequent work and study sessions with opportunities for inquiry and discussion prior to making a final decision. In low-achieving districts, however, board members said they did not learn together except when the superintendent or other staff members made presentations of data.

Other studies focused on this subject as well, sometimes within the context of the responsibilities of an effective superintendent. In the 2006 Waters and Marzano meta-analysis, for example, one key goal for superintendents is to produce an environment in which the board is aligned with and supportive of district goals. The study suggests that supporting board members’ professional development is one of several ways that superintendents can help realize this goal.

In their study on effective governance, Goodman and colleagues (1997) emphasized in detail the importance of formal training for board members. They recommended orientation workshops for new members soon after their election. Their “sample policy statement” on orientation included a commitment by the board and administrative staff to help all new members learn board functions, policies and procedures. Chief responsibility for orientation should reside with the superintendent and board chair, they noted, but this work should include meetings with top administrative personnel to examine services, policies, and programs. As a guide, the report cited policies in Kentucky requiring a specific number of hours of training for board members based on their experience. This ranged from a high of 12 hours of annual training for board members with zero to three years experience to four hours a year for those with at least eight years of board service. Emphasizing the importance of the board/superintendent relationship, the study also recommended that superintendents participate in orientation and development workshops alongside their board members.

Elsewhere, two of the effective districts in the Togneri and Anderson (2003) study utilized formal training and professional development for school board members. In Kent County, Md., the board adopted the Baldrige in Education process, which created a strong working relationship among the central office, board, principal and teachers. In Minneapolis, the school board engaged in the Carver method, which emphasizes the board’s role in establishing goals, setting indicators, aligning resources to goals, monitoring progress, and communicating with the public.

Finally, LaRocque and Coleman (1993) illustrated the value of both formal and informal learning activities for board members. According to these researchers, effective school districts in Canada offered a mixture of learning activities for their board members, or “trustees,” including retreats, special meetings, work

sessions, school visits and even social events. As a result, the trustees had a “willingness to meet regularly with the professionals in the district to discuss what was happening and what should be happening.” This commitment conveyed to staff the importance of district goals and the importance of the staff members’ work in supporting them. In addition, they noted, “The successful boards did not just rely on district staff reports...They obtained information about programs in different ways and from different sources, and sought opportunities to interact directly with administrators and teachers.”

Related finding: Stability of leadership

In the 2002 Snipes et. al study, researchers noted that fast-moving districts had political and organizational stability, as evidenced by low rates of school board and superintendent turnover. Goodman’s research echoed all of these points, concluding two characteristics of high achieving districts were long tenures by superintendents and school board members and regular retreats by senior staff and board members for evaluation and goal setting purposes.

Similarly, Togneri and Anderson (2003) note the long tenure of board members and superintendents in high-achieving districts. “They set their courses and stayed with them for years,” the study said. Among the five successful districts profiled, superintendents in three districts had been at their jobs for at least eight years. In most of those profiled, the majority of board members had been serving in that capacity for 10 or more years. “That continuity allowed superintendents and boards to grow together in their approaches to change and to better understand each other’s work.”

Conclusion

During the past 15 years, a number of research studies have begun to document the value that school boards and their members add to the development of an effective public education system. This fledgling base of research provides a foundation for boards and other policymakers. The research also is timely, since it coincides with a period in U.S. public policy that has focused substantially greater attention on accountability in public education. Much of this research has contrasted boards in low-performing and high-performing districts, thereby providing best practices for new and veteran board members nationwide. While there is a need for additional research—a study on boards in districts with mid-range achievement might be one useful step—it is increasingly clear that board members in high-performing districts have attitudes, knowledge and approaches that separate them from their counterparts in lower-achieving districts.

Based on the studies included in this report, it is clear that school boards in high-achieving districts hold a high, shared vision about the capabilities of both students and staff—they believe that more is possible and are motivated to improve results for students. They are policy and accountability driven, focusing their time and energy on governance-level actions related to student achievement and classroom instruction. They engage in goal-setting processes that can drive action in the district to improve. They align resources—including staff professional development—around those goals. They are data savvy—using data to both diagnose problems and to monitor and drive continuous improvement efforts. They communicate with and engage staff and community and work well together as a team and in collaborative leadership with their superintendents. And, they commit to their own learning, building the knowledge and skills it takes to govern during a period of educational reform.

CENTER FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

In this era of fiscal constraints and a national environment focused on accountability, boards in high-performing districts can provide an important blueprint for success. In the process, they can offer a road map for boards in lower-achieving school districts nationwide.

This report (2011) was written by Chuck Dervarics and Eileen O'Brien. O'Brien is an independent education researcher and consultant in Alexandria, Virginia. Much of her work has focused on access to quality education for disadvantaged and minority populations. O'Brien has a Master of Public Administration from George Washington University and a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from Loyola University, Chicago. Chuck Dervarics is an education writer and former editor of Report on Preschool Programs, a national independent newsletter on pre-k, Head Start, and child care policy. As a writer and researcher, he has contributed to case studies and research projects of the Southern Education Foundation, the American Council on Education, and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, often focusing on issues facing disadvantaged populations. Dervarics has a Bachelors degree from George Washington University.

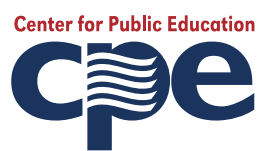
About CPE

The Center for Public Education is a national resource for credible and practical information about public education and its importance to the well-being of our nation. CPE provides up-to-date research, data, and analysis on current education issues and explores ways to improve student achievement and engage public support for public schools. CPE is an initiative of the National School Boards Association.

nsba.org/CPE

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is a not-for-profit organization representing state associations of school boards and their more than 90,000 local school board members throughout the U.S. Working with and through our state associations, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership.

nsba.org



1680 Duke Street, 2nd Floor, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3493
nsba.org/CPE • nsba.org



12 Tips for Being a Great Board!



Timi Tullis, AASB Associate Executive Director

Recently at the end of an on site Board Workshop the Board Chair asked “What are the things really good boards do to make them function well?” It got me thinking and talking to other colleagues about this topic. Here are some of my thoughts!

Good boards:

- have a clear and defined way to **onboard new members**. This should NOT be left to the superintendent, nor is it a ‘one and done.’ Rather, it is something done over the course of 9-12 months and allows members to take in information at a nice pace, versus drinking from a hose trying to digest everything in one sitting.
- schedule **an annual board self-assessment** to discuss how the board is functioning as a team. If an outside facilitator is used, (which we recommend) it is also a great time for some other board development topics to be discussed.
- **evaluate their superintendent** on a set schedule and tie the evaluation to the strategic goals of the district. We suggest starting the process in December, and having it completed by March if at all possible.
- hold **work sessions on an ongoing basis**, either monthly or every other month. During work sessions the board is able to focus on a topic more thoroughly, and not have the same rules guiding them as they would at an officially called meeting. Work sessions are a great time to learn as a team together.
- ensure the district has **an ACTIVE and UPDATED Strategic Plan** with measurable outcomes. The board should then expect updates from the superintendent on the plan, and

can use the plan as a base for the superintendent's evaluation process.

- attend conferences, participate in webinars, read articles and have discussions (at work sessions), or come together to advocate for districts when there is a call to action. Boards **learning together** are stronger.
- **focus on student achievement data.** Ask for data, dig into the data and use it to help set goals to move forward as a district.
- listen to the **youth voices**, establish and encourage a youth to sit on the board in an advisory role and be sure to ori
- develop and work on **healthy communication between the superintendent and the board.** Assume best intentions and go to the superintendent with issues BEFORE jumping to conclusions.
- do their homework and **come to meetings prepared** to discuss the work on the board. Go over each of the reports and IF there are questions ask the superintendent in advance of the meeting.
- make sure the **policy manual** is up to date and become familiar with policies. These are the guidelines that have been established for the district and tell the community and staff the guiding principles that have been set by the board.
- understand the **role of the board vs the role of the leadership** and administration. The board sets the vision and governs, and the leadership manages and carries out the vision of the board. This covers everything from policy development to curriculum and instructional material. Understand your role.

If your board focuses on these areas and commits to working as a team for the betterment of all students in your district, you too can be considered a 'great board.' Never forget to invest in yourselves and your board! AASB is here to help you with any of the above topics. Please reach out to us at any time.

. . .

📁 annual board self- assessment, Board Workshop, data, How to be a good board, policy manual updates, professional development, role of the board, Strategic Planning, superintendent evaluation, Timi Tullis, youth voices

To advocate for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance.

1111 W 9th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 463-1660
aasb@aasb.org

HOME

ABOUT AASB

SERVICES

TRAINING & EVENTS

PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

Subscribe to our monthly Commentary Newsletter



Guidelines for Public Comment in Local Government



The public comment period is an essential part of local government meetings. These are our guidelines for public comment periods in local government. They refer to ordinary business and work or study meetings of councils, boards and committees. Public hearings and quasi-judicial hearings are governed by different rules.

It is important for elected officials and for the public to be very clear about the purpose of the public comment period. This is an opportunity for members of the public to inform the governing body about their views. The meeting itself belongs to the governing body. The public does not PARTICIPATE in the decision-making. Instead, it PROVIDES INPUT to the governing body, which takes the input into consideration in making its decisions.

A governmental body must craft its requirements with care in order to to preserve the free speech rights of its citizens. If questions arise about the public comment period, consult your attorney. State law and regulations and your specific bylaws or rules of procedure have higher standing than Robert's Rules of Order, other parliamentary authorities, or these guidelines.

➡ over



► **TIME CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Establish specific periods for public comment during your meetings, in a way that is consistent with your community's expectations and customs.
2. Set a length of time by which each period will conclude, unless the council votes to extend it.
3. Set a time limit for each individual to speak.
4. Speakers may not give their time to other people.

► **WRITTEN GUIDELINES**

5. Provide printed copies of the guidelines and expectations.
6. Review the guidelines at the beginning of each comment period if necessary, and explain that this is the time for citizens and residents to express their views in order to inform the council. Explain that the council will not engage in dialogue with the public during this time.
7. The council has the right to set limits on what subjects may be addressed, how long public comment will be, and how many times people may speak. All such limits must be viewpoint neutral: they must not favor one point of view over another.

► **DURING PUBLIC COMMENT**

8. Check your state law as to whether you may require speakers to give their name and address.
9. Require all speakers to address their remarks to the chair.
10. Require all speakers to keep to the time limits. It is important to be consistent for the appearance of fairness. Some jurisdictions provide a visible public timer, so the speaker knows how much time is available.
11. The chair should thank each speaker, whether positive or negative.
12. In general, it is best not to respond at all to public comment. However, the chair may provide brief factual information, if appropriate. This must not degenerate into lecturing or criticism.
13. The chair must not under any circumstances enter into back-and-forth exchanges with the public. See our blog entry below for more information.
14. We recommend using surnames to address speakers. If you use first names for some speakers, use them for all.
15. Councilmembers refrain from speaking during this portion of the meeting.
16. Have staff ready to note input or questions from the public and to provide responses at a later date. Do not call on staff to give public answers on the spot.

► **BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS**

17. Model courtesy and respect and encourage members of the public to do the same.
18. The public has the right to make critical and harsh remarks. Courts have consistently found that public bodies may not require members of the public to follow the rules of decorum that apply to council members themselves. (See our blog entry below for more information on decorum rules.)
19. Members of the public do not have the right to disrupt the meeting. However, mere words most likely do not constitute a disruption in themselves. All concerned should become familiar with case law on this point, and be able to determine when conduct becomes truly disruptive.
20. The council may prohibit demonstrations (booing, hissing, clapping). These can be chilling to discourse and inhibit free speech, both on the part of the elected officials and of the public.

21. Consult with your attorney and develop an action plan for steps to take in case of disruption. The League of California Cities has excellent material available on their website. In cases of serious disruption, state law may allow you to adjourn the meeting to a different location.
22. Be very cautious about ordering a disruptive member of the public to leave the meeting. It may be advisable to give three warnings to cease from the disruptive behavior before taking any action. Consult with your attorney before doing this.

► **RESPONSIVENESS TO THE PUBLIC**

23. The body language and manner of the chair and other elected officials are critical to running successful public comment sessions. Councilmembers should listen to each person speaking as if there were no one else in the room.
24. Councilmembers should keep an interested expression on their faces and refrain from checking electronic devices, whispering to each other, or otherwise demonstrating lack of interest in what the public is saying.
25. It is helpful to see oneself on video in order to gauge the impression given to the public. We recommend a facial expression that projects warmth and genuine interest. If a speaker is highly negative, it is appropriate to keep a neutral, serious expression. Do not frown, grimace, sigh, or roll your eyes.
26. It is vital for elected officials to be responsive to their public, and to appear responsive. Given the limitations on the public comment period, we recommend establishing other channels to connect with your public, such as community forums, personal discussions, “coffee with the mayor,” a form on your website, surveys, etc.

► **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

27. The council has the right to invite anyone to speak whom it wishes to hear from at other times than the public comment period. This is done by unanimous consent or a majority vote.
28. Provide clearly marked paper inviting individuals who are not heard during the public comment period due to time constraints to provide written comment for the council.
29. We recommend that detailed public comment should not be included in the minutes. It is sufficient to say, “Public comment was given.” See our blog entry below for more information.

► **SAMPLE POLICY**

- Now is the time to hear from our public. We welcome your comments which are very important to us. Note that all comments are limited to three minutes.
- As a reminder, please go to the podium to comment. It is helpful for the council if you would give us your name. Please address your remarks to the chair.
- Note that we will not be entering into dialogue at this time. The purpose of this agenda item is for YOU, the public, to inform US, the council, about your views.
- If members of the public have factual questions, staff will be glad to address them. Please speak with the executive assistant who is seated next to the dais.

More information:

- [Don't get into back-and-forth exchanges during public comment](#)
- [Don't include detailed public comment in meeting minutes](#)
- [Citizen's Guide to Effective Conduct of Public Meetings](#)
- [Inappropriate remarks on local government councils](#)

Do you have feedback on these guidelines for us? We are always eager to improve our publications. Visit our website at www.jurassicparliament.com/category/effective-local-government for much more information on local government issues. Contact us at info@jurassicparliament.com or 206-542-8422 with your suggestions. We look forward to hearing from you!

Guidelines for Public Comment in Local Government

© Jurassic Parliament 2018. All rights reserved.

TERMS OF USE

This article is provided for personal use. The user may not modify, publish, license, create derivative works from, transfer or sell any information or services contained in this publication or obtained from our website, or use the content of our website for public or commercial purposes, including any text, images, audio or video, without the written permission of Jurassic Parliament. Jurassic Parliament reserves the right to update our website at any time without notice to you. If you would like to use or quote this material for any purpose other than expressly as authorized herein, contact the Jurassic Parliament office.

DISCLAIMER

This material is provided for general educational purposes. Jurassic Parliament makes no representation about the suitability of the information contained in the documents and related graphics published as part of these services for any purpose. All such documents and related graphics are provided "as is" without warranty of any kind. Jurassic Parliament hereby disclaims all warranties and conditions with regard to this information, including all warranties and conditions of merchantability, whether express, implied or statutory, fitness for a particular purpose, title and non-infringement. Nothing written here constitutes legal or business advice. Readers with specific questions are advised to seek an appropriate credentialed authority to address their issues.

P.O. Box 77553, Seattle, WA 98177

TEL 206.542.8422 | EMAIL info@jurassicparliament.com

www.jurassicparliament.com



association of
ALASKA
school boards

Key Roles & Responsibilities

For School Board
Presidents

February 2022



As a School Board Member, you are a leader in your community. As School Board President, you are also the leader of your School Board. Being elected as Board Chair you are now in the position to be focused on facilitating the work of the board in addition to your own perspective and interests. As Board President you are **“the most important and least important member of the Board at the same time”** (Ann Macfarlane, Jurassic Parliament).

Serve as a model for the rest of the Board, other members of the Board can't be expected to behave better than the President.

Building an Effective Team

- Ensure that everyone understands and has copies of essential board documents:
 - Policy
 - Bylaws
 - Standards
 - Norms
- Develop clear, shared goals, and a visionary mission-oriented focus.
- Ensure the district has an active strategic plan.
- Establish a common understanding of how the Board will operate, including procedures and norms of behavior and communication.
- Promote healthy deliberations of the Board team.
- Build a relationship with the Superintendent.
- Focus the Board on learning their roles and responsibilities, as well as always growing as professionals.
- Ensure members are kept fully informed. The President and the Superintendent should make sure that all information is accurate and reliable.
- Ensure a proper Superintendent evaluation is conducted annually.
- Provide training & annual review in Media, OMA, Ethics, Fiscal Accountability,
- Coordinate the Board self-assessment process where the Board also reviews the effectiveness of their goals.

Expectations & Relationships

- Represent the Board when speaking to the public.
- Act as a sounding board for the Superintendent and serve as a liaison between the Board and the Superintendent.
- Encourage all Board members to educate themselves on being good Board members.
- Report to your community about school operations and Board actions via numerous avenues and opportunities.
- Encourage the Superintendent to come to you with problems that might come to the Board.
- Schedule a Board work session for the purpose of reorganizing as a team.

Meetings

- Work with the Superintendent to plan the meeting agenda.
- Preside over all board meetings.
- Understand basic parliamentary procedures, including votes and motions.
- Ensure all members have the opportunity to participate.
- Be responsible for orderly conduct of all board meetings.
- Act as a resource to the Superintendent on decisions that may require further information between board meetings.
- Organize the Board's work:
 - Electing officers
 - Orienting for new school board members
 - Appointing all committees, including ad-hoc & task forces
 - Establishing the Board-administrative team
 - Adopting policies, rules and procedures to guide the Board and the school district's operations
- Support and defend the policies and programs adopted by the Board.
- Ensure the Board gives authority to the Superintendent for administration of the schools.
- Keep the Board aware of its commitment to work as a unified body whose greatest concern is the education of all students in the District's schools.
- Direct everything through proper channels.
- Know the difference between policy and administrative regulations (AR) and help the rest of the Board make this distinction.

The Key to Success

Presiding at Board Meetings is just part of the job!



Scheduling of Meetings

- What do the Board's by-laws say about meeting schedules?
- Map out the entire year while establishing the school calendar.
- Stay consistent with days/evenings, times, and locations.



Creating Meeting Agendas

The agenda is the Board's "road map" for effectively conducting a meeting. Working in partnership with the Superintendent, the Board President plans the agenda for each Board meeting. The Superintendent may prepare a draft agenda to review with the Board President, or the two may meet first to discuss the agenda.

- Work with the Superintendent and Board secretary/administrative assistant on adding agenda items.
- Know the reason each item is on the agenda.
- Prioritize order and placement of items on the agenda.
 - Ensure important items are prioritized.
- Predict problems that might arise from an agenda item.
- Estimate how much time each agenda item might take.
- Know what reports the Superintendent and staff members will make.
- If an item refers to policy, list the policy number.
- If an item is part of the district strategic plan, list the goal it aligns with.
- Ensure there is time for public comments.
 - Ensure rules for public comments/participation are shared.
- Identify celebrations and recognition of staff, students, or community to occur at the meeting.
- Identify routine items to be placed on a consent agenda.
- Include time to speak to future agenda items.



Before the Meeting

As a leader of the Board, the Board President also takes responsibility for ensuring, or delegating to the Board secretary or Superintendent, to:

- Ensure all Board members receive meeting/information packets in the time frame outlined in the district's by-laws.
- Ensure Board members, the public, and media know dates, times and locations of meetings.
- Arrange seating so all Board members can see and hear one another, and the audience can see the Board. AASB recommends a U-shaped set-up.
- Make the Board room as comfortable for visitors as possible.
- Have enough chairs, good ventilation and attractive surroundings.
- Have the District's Vision, Mission and Strategic Goal Areas posted in the room.
- Ensure members of the public, or observers, are greeted and have information on who the Board members are, how people can address the Board, and why the Board goes into executive sessions.
- Provide all visitors with clear information about how and when they can comment on agenda items.



AASB Tip: Facilitators

When the Board is first getting used to doing a regular self-assessment, and a superintendent evaluation, it may be a good idea to have a facilitator for the first year. A facilitator will push the Board to dig deeper and have the difficult conversations necessary to push it to improve. After the Board has gone through the process, the Board can then decide if in subsequent years to continue with a facilitator or continue on its own.



Chairing the Meeting Checklist

The President's style of presiding is as important as the rules they follow. Knowing the rules, and using common sense, will determine their leadership ability.

- ✓ Start and end meetings on time (as advertised).
- ✓ Set a positive tone for the meeting.
- ✓ Speak in order to be heard by everyone.
- ✓ Welcome members, the public, and guests to the meeting.
- ✓ Delay discussion and voting on any issue before the Board until a motion and second have been made.
- ✓ Encourage all members to express themselves
 - Keep track of which members have spoken, and who has yet to speak.
- ✓ Keep discussion centered on the issue.
- ✓ Encourage all members to express themselves by promoting discussion and allowing individuals on all sides of an issue the opportunity to be heard.
- ✓ Progress through the published agenda efficiently in order to conclude the meeting in a reasonable period of time.
- ✓ Repeat all motions in their entirety a number of times:
 - When the motion is made
 - Before taking the vote.
 - When announcing the result of the vote
- ✓ Announce the results of the vote, and the action to be taken.
- ✓ Treat all Board members fairly and equally.
- ✓ Ensure all meetings comply with Alaska's Open Meetings Act.
- ✓ Ensure accurate minutes are kept to document actions.
- ✓ Ask someone to preside while taking the floor to speak on an item.
- ✓ Adhere to the adopted rules of order.
- ✓ Declare the meeting adjourned.

The President as a Member of the Board

Being Board President does not take away an individual's rights as a Board member. The President may curb their participation to allow others to speak first, but the President can, and should, have an opinion. As an elected official the President is **expected** to take part in Board actions. However, as the Board's leader, the President must be cautious to not dominate the discussion or force an opinion on the Board.

The President may make motions and does not have to leave the chair role to participate in discussions. AASB recommends the Board President turn over the chair to the Vice-President when making a motion, so the Board President doesn't get in the position of ruling on his or her own motions.

The Board President, like all Board members, is expected to vote on each motion, provided there is no conflict of interest.

Executive Session

Executive Session exists so the public can be aware of what an elected governing body is doing. There are four reasons a Board can enter executive session:

Matters, the immediate knowledge of which, would clearly have an adverse effect upon the finances of the public entity.

Subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person, provided the person may request a public discussion.

Matters which by law, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential.

Matters involving consideration of government records that by law are not subject to public disclosure.

When the Board come out of Executive Session, the President will reconvene back into the open meeting, then preside over deliberations and actions which result from time in Executive Session.



AASB Tip: Consent Agenda

The Superintendent and Board President can determine which items are administrative, routine, and/or non-controversial and list them on the agenda as “consent items”. At the meeting any Board member could remove an item from the consent agenda and place it on the regular meeting agenda for discussion. All remaining items on the consent agenda are handled with one single motion. The President asks, “Do I hear a motion to approve consent agenda items A through H?”

Leadership Outside of Meetings

The School Board’s authority is granted to the Board – not individual school Board members, including the School Board President. Outside Board meetings, the President is simply a community citizen. Individual members of a Board have no power. The Board only has power when convened in an official public meeting.

- Ensure all members receive the same information, or communication, at approximately the same time so no one feels left out or isolated.
- Insist members use the Board-adopted procedure for handling complaints and suggestions.
- Contact and communicate with every member frequently and repeatedly.
- Ask for suggestions and recommendations for improvement of your leadership.
- Be consistent in your treatment of all members; don’t show partiality.
- Remind yourself regularly, you are setting a model of behavior for others to follow.

Orienting New Board Members

Orienting new school board members is essential for their understanding of their role. It is the President’s responsibility to ensure new members are brought up to speed on:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Governance vs Management;
Roles & Responsibilities | • Board culture |
| • District Policies | • Background information |
| • The Strategic Plan and Goals | • Curriculum and instructional material |
| • Budget | • Communication Flow |
| | • Open Meetings Act |

Board Self-Assessment

The Board President is responsible for the annual board self-assessment process, a recommended best practice to ensure that boards are fulfilling their duties & responsibilities. Options include self-evaluation tools or hiring a facilitator to assist with the evaluation. Each Board should choose the evaluation format that best fits its situation. AASB offers several resources to assist school Boards with this annual review.

As President, the steps and elements of evaluation are:

- Schedule at least one evaluation yearly.
- Get buy-in from the entire Board.
- Establish the process, including the tool the Board will use.
 - If necessary, hire a facilitator.
- Schedule and advertise the evaluation work session.
- Use results to develop a Board self-improvement plan.
 - Stick to the plan.

Reasons for conducting a board self-assessment:

- The Board will become more effective in working together on behalf of the students.
- The Board will improve its relationship with the Superintendent.
- The Board will become more effective in communicating with the public.
- The Board will allocate more resources to finance the items outlined as priorities.

As a Member of
the Board

Professional Development

Ongoing professional development is critical for board members to stay current and be effective in their role as school board members. School Board Presidents are responsible for encouraging members to commit to activities to strengthen their skills, knowledge and teamwork.

Opportunities Include:

- AASB Leadership & Legislative Academy (January or February)
- AASB Spring Boardsmanship & Legislative Academy (March or April)
- AASB Fall Boardsmanship Academy (September)
- AASB School Law and Equity Academy (December)
- AASB Annual Conference (November)
- NSBA National Conference & Exposition (April)
- AASB Webinar Series (Live & on-demand throughout the year)

Working With the Superintendent

Just as a Board Chair needs cooperation among Board members, they also need the cooperation of the Superintendent to make a complete team.

The Board Chair/President will find the Superintendent to be a reliable and essential resource. They are equipped to handle the day-to-day administrative details of the school district, while the President and the Board tackle the essential tasks of planning and policy-making.

Shared Responsibilities

The Superintendent shares certain responsibilities with The President. This includes:

- Serving as spokesperson for the Board.
- Communicating information.
- Soliciting community support for the school district.
- Helping develop policies and programs through recommendations to the Board.
- Acting as an advisor to the Board.

Urge Board members to relay all concerns, problems, issues and information relating to Board or school issues to the Superintendent.

Ask Board members to use Board policy for handling complaints so citizen or staff concerns are relayed to the Superintendent, or to the person immediately responsible for solving the problems.

Deal with problems by starting with the Superintendent. The Superintendent and Board President set the tone and direction for the school district. The better each party communicates, the better combined leadership they will have.

Communicating with Your Superintendent

Because there are so many ways the Board President and the administrative team work together, it is essential to approach each other with trust and respect. The Board President needs to be able to discuss and agree openly and honestly regarding their roles and responsibilities.

- Talk frequently with the Superintendent to give and receive information about the Board and district operations. Don't wait for the one or two times a year during the formal evaluation.
- Encourage and help the Superintendent keep the Board well enough informed so Board members don't hear surprises from others, including problems.
- Board members should first hear about issues regarding the District from the Superintendent or Board President.
- Schedule ample time at work sessions and retreats to discuss important matters such as the Board's performance, Superintendent's performance, and the relationship between the Board and Superintendent.
- Include the Superintendent at the table in every meeting, including discussion of the Board self-assessment, and the evaluation of the Superintendent's performance.
- Deal with problems by starting with the Superintendent. The Superintendent and Board President set the tone and direction for the district. The better their communication, the better the combined leadership.



AASB Tip: Superintendent Communication

Help the Superintendent identify what information and details the Board needs to make good decisions and ensure Board members receive sufficient information on issues in advance of Board meetings or actions. Ask for relevant facts and additional data when needed on behalf of the Board.

Evaluating the Superintendent

The Board President coordinates the superintendent evaluation process on behalf of the Board. A few general guidelines:



REFLECT

Reflect on Board policy to establish and guide evaluation.



CONDUCT

Conduct evaluation annually. Engage the Board in reviewing the timelines and procedures the Board has approved.



DEVELOP

Develop a sound understanding of the evaluation process, and the steps necessary to complete it.



FACILITATE

Facilitate the process or ask for help. AASB offers a Superintendent evaluation service which provides facilitators to help the Board and Superintendent set goals and indicators and evaluate progress throughout the year.



GOALS

During the formal evaluation discussion, keep the Board's focus on the agreed-to goals and indicators.

What are the district goals or priorities the Board gave the Superintendent?



ACTION

Most often these conversations are held in Executive Session; be sure to come out of the session and take action in the open public meeting.

Often this action is to extend or approve a modification in the Superintendent's contract.

At the end of each year, the Board President has the responsibility to make sure a written document is put into the Superintendent's personnel file.

The Importance of Community Relations

People will form opinions of what organizations do whether or not those organizations try to interpret their own activity. If school districts don't speak up for themselves, others will, and public opinion may get out of control.

The Board President leads the Board in conveying messages to the public.

Today's educational system is much more complex than it was a few decades ago. It faces obstacles that were unheard of then, such as: social media, new media scrutiny, increased competition, demographics, and rampant cynicism.

While schools have improved their educational services to better respond to an increasing demand of complex student needs, it is

ironic the perceptions lag behind the reality. Education absorbs many public anxieties about values, cultures, race, crime, taxes and jobs.

Recognize angry reactions from the community go with the territory. When anger arises during a school Board meeting, it is up to the Board President to defuse the situation using compassionate language. It may mean taking a short break at which point the Board President, in their kindest tone, declares a five-minute break. The President must not give in to the impulse to yell, become combative or let anger show during a meeting.

Lastly, remember when responding to communication, you are representing the full Board rather than your own perspectives.

Community Relations



INTERNAL GROUPS

Groups of people directly associated with the school district include:

- Students
- School Board members
- Administrators
- Principals
- Teachers
- Paraprofessionals
- Support Staff
- Executive Administrative Assistants
- Bus drivers
- Maintenance workers
- Food Services Staff

EXTERNAL GROUPS

Those people who are part of the school community outside of the school have indirect relationships with the school or school district:

- Families & Guardians
- Community Organizations & Businesses
- Tribes
- Civic groups
- Elected officials
- Media
- Government agencies
- Professionals
- Seniors
- Other Community Members

The Many Faces of Our Community/Communities & Groups

Communities is plural because in every District, there are different groups of people with different interests in what is happening in schools. There is no effective way of reaching all groups the same way.

Family Support

Family support is vital to the success of a school. As much as children need their families' love and support, our schools can use their nurturing as well. Families need to feel connected and welcomed in their child's school. It is the responsibility of the school Board to help achieve this goal by supporting family engagement initiatives and urging an "open-door" policy.

Students

No stakeholder group is more important to the positive perception of schools than students. The more positive students feel about their school, the more positive the community will feel about their schools.

Community
Relations

As Board President, here are ways to support a positive school climate:

- Recognize student achievement at each meeting. Emphasize all areas of achievement, not just test scores or sports!
- Support youth leadership opportunities, including student councils, youth leadership trainings, and having a student school board representative.
- Invite student input into Board discussions.
- Set a standing time on your board meeting agenda for student input.
 - Invite student representatives from different groups to present.
- Ensure every child has an opportunity to participate in at least one quality extra-curricular program.
- Talk with the students. Having honest conversations with students can be the quickest way to improve school climate.



AASB Tips: Engaging with the Community

- 1. Stop Talking.** You can't listen while you are talking.
- 2. Empathize with the Other Person.** Try to put yourself in their place so you can see where they are coming from.
- 3. Ask Clarifying Questions.** When you don't understand, when you need further clarification.
- 4. Stick to the set time limit.** Follow the Districts by-laws as they outline speakers time limits.
- 5. Look at the Other Person.** Looking individuals in the eyes as they talk helps you concentrate too and makes them feel you are listening.
- 6. Leave Your Emotions Behind** (if you can). They may prevent you from listening well.
- 7. Control Your Anger.** Try not to get angry at what they are saying. Your anger may prevent you from understanding their words or meaning.
- 8. Get Rid of Distractions.** Put down any papers, pencils, etc., you have in your hands; they may distract your attention.
- 9. Don't Argue Mentally.** When you are trying to understand the other person; it is a handicap to argue with them mentally as they are speaking.
- 10. Avoid Classifying Speaker.** Too frequently we classify a person as one type of person and then try to fit everything they say into what makes sense coming from that type of person.

Media Relations

The role of President becomes more important to the community and the reporters covering the work of the Board.

Lead the Board in developing a plan and related policies for working effectively with the media. Identify messages the Board would like to communicate to the community.

Ensure Board members understand what the District's policy says about speaking on behalf of the Board.

Schedule activities at Board meetings to celebrate success. Invite the media, they probably won't report all the results but they likely will report some.

Try to meet regularly with the reporters who cover the district. This might mean visiting their offices, getting together for lunch, chatting with them at community meetings or having a media briefing.

Community
Relations

The Board President provides the leadership in communicating with the community and helping to build an understanding of the needs of its schools and generating public support to meet those needs. One of the most effective and efficient means of accomplishing this is through the media and the reporters covering the work of the Board.

The President not only needs to be skilled at listening, but should set an example for other Board members. Every Board member should strive to become a good listener.

Advocacy Action Plan

By participating in advocacy programs and events, including those sponsored by AASB and NSBA, the Board can help set legislative agendas by examining the school district's needs and setting legislative priorities. The Board President should take the following action:

- Select or have the Board elect a legislative liaison for each level of government.
- Participate in legislative opportunities through AASB such as the Legislative fly-in's each Spring.
- Participate in the National School Boards Association's Federal Relations Network (FRN). Members of these networks receive updates throughout the legislative sessions highlighting pertinent education legislation and requesting action on a number of school-related bills.
- Provide regular advocacy briefings at Board meetings to report on recent legislative activity.
- Develop and submit resolutions to AASB. Each year AASB legislative priorities are based on resolutions and belief statements adopted by the Delegate Assembly at AASB's Annual Conference.
- Ensure the Board is represented at legislative functions, especially those directly involving education issues. This can include city council meetings, AASB's legislative fly-ins, NSBA's Federal Relations Network Conference; and the AASB delegate assembly.



HABITUAL

In order to have a real impact on policy decisions made in Juneau and Washington, D.C., remember the golden rule – make advocacy a habit.



YEAR-ROUND

Effective advocacy for education is a year-round job. It's not enough to wait until there is a crisis in Juneau or on Capitol Hill. To win in the advocacy game, Boards need to work throughout the year to develop and nurture relationships with members of the State Legislature and Congress and/or their key staffers.



ACTIVE

Tools to help the Board in its advocacy work include passing advocacy policy and/or developing an advocacy action plan for the District. The Board President has a responsibility to make sure the Board takes an active role in the legislative and advocacy process.

This plan will explicitly state the District's commitment to advocacy for education, with the regular advocacy actions it will implement. It can also include:



A review of background information on issues.



Actions which will be taken regarding education issues.



Details on how to send letters or emails to the District representatives.



Suggestions to meet with the District's representatives during both state and national visits OR when they visit your communities. This is a great time to set up the meeting to discuss critical issues.



Identify the issue(s) most important to the school district to discuss with members of the legislature/Congress, and/or send a letter(s)/email(s).



Arrange time for members of Legislature/Congress to visit schools in the district in the fall. This can be a request the Board President or Advocacy Committee Chair makes in a letter, email, or in-person.

14 Pointers for the Board President

Following are some pointers to guide the President in leading the Board to achieve its maximum effectiveness.



1. Get to know the Board members

The Board President probably already has some information about their personal lives, but getting to know and understand viewpoints, interests, strengths, weaknesses, and their approach to decision-making and problem-solving will help improve the relationship with the members. Learn which Board members like to analyze information, to discuss at length, or move an entire agenda at once. Recognizing these traits in Board members will help the President to bring out their best qualities.



2. Realize the collective knowledge of the Board is superior to that of an individual

Everyone brings their own backgrounds, experiences and unique perspectives to an issue, and when a Board explores solutions with each member's full participation, the outcome is usually more creative and cost-effective than it would be otherwise.



3. Establish a tone of cooperative leadership

Emphasize cooperation and work to reduce conflict. The Board President has the major responsibility for establishing good working relationships with the Superintendent and other administrators and among school Board members. Set the tone for Board member relationships by speaking of the need for cooperation and mutual respect, and by allowing for diversity of opinion.



4. Firmly take charge of school Board meetings

Be prepared, positive, and assertive in steering discussion and keeping it on target. Use the power of the presidency to keep the Board dealing with Board business rather than wandering into unproductive, political, or philosophical areas. Move on when it's time to move on. It's this power of the President that keeps a meeting from turning into a circus when touchy topics are on the agenda. Learn the Board's operating procedures. Using judgment about when to be firm and when to be lenient about applying the procedures is the true test of knowledge and skill.



5. **Lead the Board, but don't be so far ahead of the other Board members or constituents**

The President personifies the Board. A good President will allow the Board to be viewed as good. A weak or ineffective President will lead to the public also viewing the Board as weak and ineffective.



6. **Include each Board member in the decision-making process**

The President may have been elected by a certain coalition on the Board, but as President, you are the group's leader and often expected to be the mediator. Don't play to one side. Share information and consult each Board member on an equal basis. Initially, this may be uncomfortable, but in the long run, the Board will be more effective if all members think they are being treated fairly. Besides, Board majorities shift on Boards. They can shift from issue to issue, and the President may be in the minority someday. The others will remember that.



7. **Communicate with Board members & district administrators frequently**

As Board President, be in close contact with the district administrators. Make sure the Board members are immediately notified of any newsworthy incident. Develop a system of communication for other issues, whether it be a weekly report from the President through the information packet, a telephone call or a text message to a member. In order to represent the Board accurately to administration, the President needs to know their pulse.



8. **Listen**

Recognize the issue on the table or being discussed privately with the President may be rooted in another concern all together. The overwhelming quality necessary for effective Board leadership is to listen. People who address the Board must be reassured they have been understood and their concerns are noted. It helps for the President to say something like, "The Board appreciates you coming to voice your thoughts. While the Board cannot respond due to open meeting laws, your comments have been noted." People at meetings or hearings keep saying the same thing over and over because they are not sure the Board understands since they do not respond to comments. The smart Board President listens carefully and tries to make sure everyone understands what is going on. Eye contact is an important part of good listening. It shows that the Board is listening.



9. **Make sure Board members know the President can be trusted**

The Board President may often be their sounding Board for ideas or complaints. Their concerns are real-- don't gossip about them. Where appropriate, address these concerns without pointing fingers or naming names. If Judy complains to you that Mark dominates discussion at meetings, then use leadership skills to make sure everyone has an opportunity to be heard.



10. **Be prepared for meetings**

Part of the Board President's homework is being involved in planning the Board meeting agenda and going over upcoming items with the Superintendent. Also included in the President's take-home assignments is thorough preparation for each Board meeting, including making sure all necessary background materials are made available to fellow Board members. It takes twice as much homework time to be a good Board President as it does to be a prepared Board member.



11. Plan for Board development

It's up to the President to ensure the Board continuously becomes more effective. This includes both setting an example, encouraging Board members to attend local, state, regional, and national meetings - and bring back the word to the other members of the Board. It also includes planning Board retreats, self-evaluations and other workshops designed especially for the Board.

Workshops, meetings, and professional development are what help keep school Board members, not what size community they serve- open to new ideas in education. Meetings add perspective unavailable in a local community.



12. Build the Board/Superintendent relationship

A Board President needs to understand and to interpret for others the difference between the roles of the Board and the Superintendent. The Board President should make sure Board members understand their proper role as policy makers who work through the Superintendent. There is definitely a teaching role on the part of the Board President, especially when new members come on Board. The fine line between what is policy and what is administration makes it essential that the Board President be able to clarify such situations for the Board as a whole.

Another part of the Board President's role in

establishing the proper Board/Superintendent relationship is to foster a sense of integrity where the Board and Superintendent can be trusted to be honest with one another.

At the very least, the Board and Superintendent should generally agree to praise publicly and criticize privately.

The Board President can help foster a feeling of mutual trust and respect by interpreting Board action to the Superintendent and vice versa. The Board President can offer the Superintendent support, serve as a sounding Board, give constructive criticism when needed, and help analyze individual and community reactions to district action.



13. **Build good relationships**

The Board President is in an excellent position to help foster good relationships between the Board and the staff, the Board and the media, the Board and the public, the district and other community and government organizations and among Board members themselves.

The President can encourage Board recognition of staff accomplishments and two-way communications with school employees. They can ensure members of the community feel welcome at Board meetings and have access to the Board. They can maintain communications with other community leaders and government officials and can serve as a Board spokesman to the press.



14. **Stay cool, even if you come under attack**

It's inevitable some school Board decisions, no matter how carefully deliberated, will upset some members of the community.

Advocates for Alaska's Youth

Association of Alaska School Boards

1111 W 9th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

aasb@aasb.org
(907) 463-1660



association of
ALASKA
school boards