

The Role of the School Board

As the entity legally charged with governing a school district, each school board is responsible to its community to govern efficiently and effectively. This obligation imposes some fundamental duties on the board.

Vision

The board, with community input, envisions the educational future of its community and then formulates the goals, defines the outcomes, and sets the course for its district. An effective board:

- Provides direction through its planning and goal-setting efforts and by evaluating progress toward goal achievement.
- Develops a well-crafted district vision statement, goals, and outcomes that enable the board to monitor district performance and evaluate success.
- Ensures that the district vision, goals, and outcomes are articulated in written board policy, reflected in every part of the organization, and mirrored in the budget planning and implementation efforts.
- Uses clear, focused, attainable, and measurable goals and outcomes to make sure gains in student achievement are being made.

Structure

To achieve its vision, the board establishes a structure and hires a superintendent to accomplish that vision. An effective board:

- Creates an organizational structure and environment in which all students are provided the opportunity to attain their maximum potential.
- Selects and employs one person – the superintendent – as the district’s chief executive officer to lead and manage the district and holds the superintendent accountable for district performance and compliance with written board policy.
- Evaluates the superintendent’s performance and its own performance annually.
- Delegates the authority to the superintendent to recommend and evaluate all district staff within the standards established by written board policy and subsequently acts on the superintendent’s recommendation(s) at its meeting(s) as required in statute.
- Accepts ultimate responsibility for the care, management, and control of the district.
- Understands that the day-to-day operations of the district will be conducted by the staff.

Accountability

The board is accountable to the community for constantly monitoring the conditions affecting the district as a whole. An effective board:

- Has a duty to itself and the community to determine whether the authority delegated to the superintendent is being used as intended.
- Uses data and other indicators as the basis for assessing progress toward district goals and compliance with written board policy.
- Recognizes the distinction between “monitoring data” (data used by the board to address accountability) and “management data” (data used by the staff for operations).

Advocacy

The board advances its vision by focusing on student achievement, partnering with the community, and being proactive in addressing issues that affect education on local, state, and national levels. An effective board:

- Uses ongoing, two-way communications to build trust and support among community, board, superintendent, staff, and students.
- Focuses on community-wide concerns and values that best support student achievement rather than being overly influenced by special interests.
- Utilizes a system of public relations that allows it to formalize the flow of information into and out of the district.

Conduct and Ethics

The board, as a whole, provides leadership to the community on behalf of the district by conducting its business in a fair, respectful, legal, and responsible manner. An effective board:

- Takes full responsibility for its activity and behavior.
- Encourages its members to express their individual opinions, respect others' opinions, and vote their conscience.
- Speaks with one voice after reaching a decision.
- Spends its time on board work rather than staff work.
- Provides for orientation and ongoing training for all board members.
- Follows its established policies, including the chain-of-command, by directing people with concerns to the appropriate staff.
- Sets an example of respectful and civil leadership.