



Board/Superintendent Expectations

Board Expectations:

1. Board members treat each other and staff with respect.
2. The Superintendent and staff treat all Board members with respect.
3. The Superintendent will provide a weekly update email every Friday.
4. The Superintendent will notify Board members of the following school emergencies by text:
 - a. Weather delay and school closure
 - b. Student/staff emergency, death, significant injury and act of violence
 - c. School active shooter, lockdown, fire, etc.
 - d. Serious bus accidentby email:

From Superintendent with press release for any emergency notification prior to media release. Weekly updates will include other non-emergent info.
5. The Regular Board Meeting packets and supporting documentation will be posted no later than the end of the day Tuesday prior to the scheduled Tuesday Board meeting.
6. All questions or requests for information will be responded to within 72 working hours of the business work week. If the information requires more than 72 hours to gather, the Board will be informed as such.
7. All Board members will receive the same information. If one Director requests additional information, administration will send the same information to the whole Board. This applies to any request made via email, phone and text.
8. The Superintendent will meet with the Board President (along with one additional Director) to review and discuss the Board meeting agenda on the Monday two weeks prior to the Board Meeting. Packet will be electronically posted for Board review one week prior to the Board meeting. It is the responsibility of the Board to review the packet. Questions related to the packet materials will be sent to the Superintendent, with a cc to the executive assistant, by 10:00 a.m. Friday prior to the Board meeting. Staff will work to answer questions and send a response back to the Board by noon on Monday. This will allow the Board ample time to review responses.
9. The Superintendent will ensure Board members are well informed in a timely manner - no surprises.
10. Integrate Board policies/procedures into agenda when necessary.

Superintendent Expectations:

1. Direction to the Superintendent is only given at Board meetings by the majority of the Board.
2. Any questions, comments or concerns for staff are to be sent to the Superintendent and cc: the Board President and the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will direct the information to the appropriate individual(s) for a

response. Board members will not communicate directly with cabinet, principals or any staff members through email, phone calls, or text messages.

3. Board members are respectful toward the staff and of the staff's time.
4. Requests for placing items on the agenda will be sent to the Superintendent, Board President and the Executive Assistant. The Board President and Superintendent will determine which upcoming meeting the agenda item will be added.
5. Board members provide timely feedback and a summative evaluation of the Superintendent's performance according to the evaluation process timeline.
6. Board members will ensure the Superintendent receives information, direction and questions in a timely manner - No surprises.
7. Superintendent or designee is responsible for all hiring processes.



Foundational Principles of Effective Governance

As the corporate entity charged by law with governing a school district, each School Board sits in trust for its entire community. The obligation to govern effectively imposes some fundamental duties on the Board:

1. The Board Clarifies the District Purpose.

As its primary task, the Board continually defines, articulates and re-defines district ends to answer the recurring question – who gets what benefits for how much?

Effective ends development requires attention to at least two key concerns: student learning and organizational effectiveness.

- Ends express the benefits the school district should deliver, thereby providing the entire system with clarity of purpose and a clear direction. A School Board rarely creates district ends; rather, it most often detects them through listening and observing.
- Ends reflect the district's purpose, direction, priorities and desired outcomes and are recorded in statements of core values/ beliefs, mission, vision and goals.
- In effective school districts, every part of the organization is aligned with the ends articulated by the School Board in written Board policy.
- Well-crafted ends enable the School Board to effectively and efficiently monitor district performance and assess organizational success (Principle 5).

2. The Board Connects With the Community.

The School Board engages in an ongoing two-way conversation with the entire community. This conversation enables the Board

to hear and understand the community's educational aspirations and desires, to serve effectively as an advocate for district improvement and to inform the community of the district's performance.

- Community engagement, also called public engagement or civic engagement, is the process by which school boards actively involve diverse citizens in dialogue, deliberation and collaborative problem solving around common concerns.
- Effective community engagement is essential to create trust and support among community, Board, Superintendent and staff.
- A Board in touch with community-wide concerns and values will serve the broad public good rather than being overly influenced by special interests.
- The School Board must be aggressive in reaching out to the community - the district's owners - to engage people in conversations about education and the public good. In contrast, people who bring customer concerns to Board members should be appropriately directed to the superintendent and staff.

3. The Board Employs a Superintendent.

The Board employs and evaluates one person – the Superintendent – and holds that person accountable for district assessment performance and compliance with written Board policy.

- An effective School Board develops and

maintains a productive relationship with the Superintendent.

- The employment relationship consists of mutual respect and a clear understanding of respective roles, responsibilities and expectations. This relationship should be grounded in a thoughtfully crafted employment contract and job description; procedures for communications and ongoing assessment; and reliance on written policy.
- Although the Board is legally required to approve all employment contracts, the Board delegates authority to the Superintendent to select and evaluate all district staff within the standards established in written Board policy.

4. The Board Delegates Authority.

The Board delegates authority to the Superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff. Such authority is communicated through written Board policies that designate district ends and define operating parameters.

- Ultimately, the School Board is responsible for everything, yet must recognize that everything depends upon a capable and competent staff.
- "Delegates authority to" means empowering the Superintendent and staff to pursue Board ends single mindedly and without hesitation. A Board that does (or re-does) staff work disempowers the staff. High levels of Superintendent and staff accountability require high levels of delegation.
- Delegation is difficult for anyone accustomed to direct action. However, to appropriately stay focused on the big picture and avoid confusing the staff, members of the School Board must discipline themselves to trust their Superintendent and staff and not involve themselves in day-to-day operations.

5. The Board Monitors Performance.

The Board constantly monitors progress toward district ends and compliance with written Board

policies using data as the basis for.

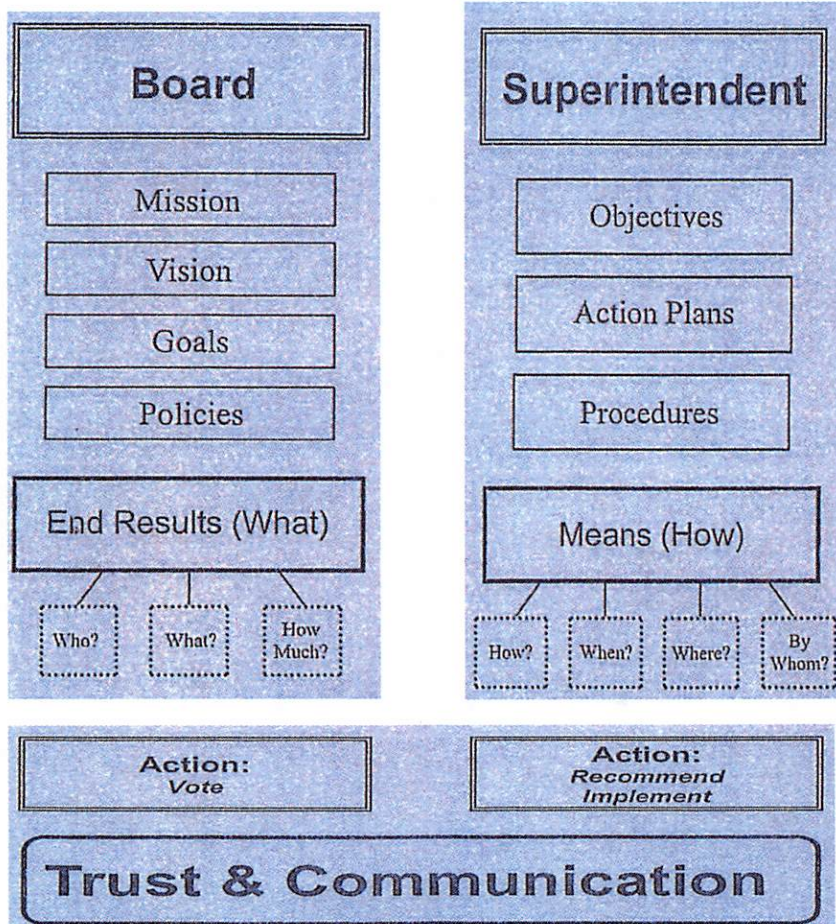
- A School Board that pursues its ends through the delegation of authority has a moral obligation to itself and the community to determine whether that authority is being used as intended.
- Unless the Board is clear about what it wants, there is no valid way to measure progress and compliance.
- A distinction should be made between monitoring data (used by the Board for accountability) and management data (used by the staff for operations).
- The constructive use of data is a skill that must be learned. The Board should have some understanding of data, but will typically require guidance from the staff.

6. The Board Takes Responsibility For Itself.

The Board, collectively and individually, takes full responsibility for Board activity and behavior - the work it chooses to do and how it chooses to do the work. Individual Board members are obligated to express their opinions and respect others' opinions; however, Board members understand the importance of the Board ultimately speaking with one clear voice.

- The School Board's role as trustee for the community is unique and essential to both the district and community.
- While the Board must operate within legal parameters, good governance requires the Board be responsible for itself, its processes and contributions. Board deliberations and actions are limited to Board work, not staff work.
- The Board seeks continuity of leadership, even as it experiences turnover in membership. The Board accomplishes this by using written Board policies to guide Board operations, by providing thorough orientation and training for all members, and by nurturing a positive and inviting Board culture.

Board-Superintendent Roles



Communicate effectively by setting meeting protocols

The wise superintendent heads off surprises by using time early in his or her tenure coming to consensus with the board on meeting protocols such as these:

Meeting protocols

1. To ensure that the board's meetings are conducted with maximum effectiveness and efficiency, trustees will:
 - Come to meetings adequately prepared.
 - Identify issues of concern before the meeting, whenever possible.
 - Not interrupt each other during debate.
 - Not engage in disruptive and disrespectful side conversations.
 - Minimize unnecessary repetition.
 - Not monopolize the discussion.
 - Address the merits of the issue being discussed without appealing to the biases, prejudices, and emotions of the audience.
 - Support the chair of the meeting's efforts to facilitate an orderly meeting.
- Communicate openly and actively in discussion and dialog to avoid surprises.
 - Value equal participation of all board members.
 - Practice respectful body language.
 - Listen actively when other board members speak; and
 - Don't surprise or embarrass each other or members of the staff.
2. The board will attend to consent agenda items as expeditiously as possible. An item may be removed from the consent agenda upon request of one member before the meeting is convened.
3. In order to share meeting leadership, two board members per month will be responsible for managing and facilitating that month's scheduled work sessions.
4. The board will monitor the effectiveness of its meetings through a debriefing process at the end of every meeting;



A Balcony Agenda: Board Work vs. Staff Work

One hallmark of a successful school board is the ability to distinguish between board work and staff work. Closely related to that hallmark, of course, is the willingness to consistently use that ability. That is, successful boards choose to do the board's work and empower staff to do the staff work.

One powerful way to distinguish board work from staff work is to think about the board as functioning from a "balcony perspective." In this metaphor, the balcony is distinguished from the dance floor. Board members who wish to have the value of the balcony perspective - the ability to see the big picture, the ability to see the horizon (the future), the ability to connect with the entire community, the ability to powerfully tell the district's story - must discipline themselves to resist the allure of the dance floor, i.e., the place where the day-to-day work of the district is done.

The board should be concerned that its agenda is focused on the valuable work that only the board is empowered to do. The agenda must not engage the board in simply rehashing or second-guessing the work of the staff.

A school board should look closely at its meeting agenda and ask: "Is this board work?" or "What part of this is board work?" Once they are assured that most agenda items are truly of a "balcony perspective," board members can be confident they are doing the work that is uniquely theirs.

Another way to assess the agenda is to ask if it is focused on the "what" vs. the "how." On any given item, the board's job is to define "what" benefits or services the district is being asked to deliver. The "how" is best left to the staff.

For example: **What** we want are students who can read. **How** to deliver that end - instructional methods, curriculum considerations, time on task - should be left largely to the discretion of the staff, the trained experts in these matters.

Typically, the determination of the **what** (or ends) is a values-driven matter of judgment. "Ends" is the kind of work well suited to a seven-member board working from "the balcony." The matter of **how** (or means) is best suited to a staff that can be expected to apply professional expertise and be held accountable for results. Staff work is the activity of "the dance floor."

A successful board insists that its agenda stays focused on ends and the goals of the district. Such an agenda enables the board to avoid the alluring distractions of day-to-day operations.



The board member's responsibilities

There should be no surprises at the board meeting.

The major responsibility of each board member is to be prepared. This means studying the agenda and supporting documents. Any questions or need for more information should be referred to the superintendent or board president before the meeting. If a board member has received a complaint or is dissatisfied with the agenda, he or she should call the superintendent prior to the meeting and try to resolve the problem.

Raising issues with the superintendent or board president ahead of the meeting also allows them time to develop thoughtful answers that might not be possible without time to gather information.

Also, a board member who is not thoroughly prepared may be embarrassed at the meeting and cause needless delay in reaching decisions on agenda items.

The board should devote most of its time to major issues and policy discussion and strictly avoid conversation, discussion, or debate with members of the audience; members should not play to the audience. A school board member does not represent a particular area, interest, or group. Each member must work for the welfare of all the children in the district and base decisions on what is best for the total community rather than a particular area, vested interest group, or organization.

School board members sometimes demand more information before voting on a tough issue or additional time to study the matter. Board members, of course, must feel reasonably comfortable with their votes. Sometimes this means trusting the judgment of the superintendent or other staff expert. Sometimes it means delaying a decision for further research. And sometimes it means recognizing that a decision must be made quickly without all the desirable facts on hand.

When a board member refuses to vote without further information, a variety of legitimate reasons may be cited for the abstention:

- The abstaining member disagrees with majority sentiment and wants to block a decision;
- The member failed to adequately study the information already provided;

- It truly is advisable to postpone the decision pending further research or study;
- The board member honestly needed more time to make an informed decision.

Some other important responsibilities for the individual board member:

- Know and follow board policies that govern meeting procedures;
- Keep an open mind in board deliberations;
- Be prepared to compromise where possible to reach a decision the entire board can support;
- Respect the confidentiality of privileged information that is made available in closed meetings or in written material from the superintendent - leaking information to favored friends violates the trust of both the board and the individuals whose reputations might be harmed;
- Ask questions when you don't understand or ask "why?" when you don't know the reason for something.

Also see Appendix E, "Making the Board Meeting Work is Every Member's Job."

The superintendent's responsibilities

Before the board meeting, the superintendent should meet with the board president to establish the agenda, clarify any points of concern, and provide a list of people who have asked permission to address the board and the subjects of their interests.

Also prior to the meeting, the superintendent should meet with top administrative staff. At this time, the completed agenda is distributed and plans made for staff participation in presenting items.

During the board meeting the superintendent's involvement will depend on the nature of the agenda items and the expectations of the board. The superintendent's role must be clearly spelled out in the board policy manual. The superintendent should not dominate board meetings. His or her chief roles are to coordinate the preparation of the agenda and carry out decisions made at the board meeting.

The superintendent should not be expected to repeat orally at length what was already written and distributed in advance. However, he or she can clarify complicated matters to the public, as well as to the board. Other staff members should speak at meetings only at the request of the

superintendent. If the superintendent is to be held accountable, board communications with the staff must be through the superintendent. However, wise superintendents utilize the expertise of appropriate staff members by involving them in presentations at board meetings.

During the meeting, the superintendent should write notes about action taken by the board that will require staff implementation.

Administrative recommendations - When the agenda is planned, the superintendent should make a recommendation or take a position on most action items. During the board meeting, members of the board discuss and vote on these recommendations. In general, boards tend to approve the recommendations made by their superintendents assuming that the superintendent has adequately researched the issue and weighed the alternatives in light of existing board policy.

Where a recommended decision has financial implications, care must be taken to align board decisions with available district resources, such as staff, facilities, and operating funds. Steps may be needed to find the necessary resources by reprioritizing existing programs or seeking new sources for funds.

If the board rejects all or a part of the superintendent's recommendation, the board should ask the superintendent to return to the board with a revised recommendation. When the final board decision is made, the superintendent is obligated to support and implement the board's decision.

Following the meeting, the superintendent is accountable for seeing that board decisions are carried out and is delegated the authority necessary for doing so. Some decisions will require immediate implementation; others can be delayed. There may be a time lag between board action and implementation. Variables to be considered by the superintendent include the board's priorities; resources available, such as the size of the administrative staff; the need for a timetable; and the scope of the assignment. If the superintendent has an adequate administrative staff, much of the work can be delegated. In a small school district, the superintendent probably will do most of the work and will need to establish priorities. A timetable that lists tasks, dates started, and dates to be completed is useful. Deadlines must be realistic. Tasks that require several months to complete need to be carefully scheduled and monitored. In future meetings, the

superintendent can make progress reports to the board on how its decisions are being implemented.

Monitoring administrative performance

- The school board relies heavily upon the superintendent for leadership and action. The board is the "governing" body and the superintendent is the "manager" of the enterprise. This means the board must place a good deal of trust in the superintendent. But a school board must be satisfied that the superintendent is managing the district within board policies.

Here are some questions that each board must resolve for itself:

- 1) Is our board making the decisions that it ought to be making, or is it bogged down with administrative decisions? Is the superintendent making policy decisions?
- 2) Does the board receive effective leadership from the superintendent in the form of information, advice, and recommendations on board actions?
- 3) Do the board and superintendent understand and support one another? Is there mutual trust and respect?
- 4) What kinds of problems are coming to the board? Would they be more readily solved by adequate policies and planning?
- 5) Is the board adequately informed about the district's problems, progress, accomplishments, and needs? Do board members and the superintendent agree on what the schools are supposed to accomplish?
- 6) Do board members feel comfortable with the programs and operations of the school district? Are they comfortable with the work of the superintendent? Is the feeling based on fact, informed opinion, or blind faith?
- 7) Is the board using data rather than personal perception to monitor district performance?
- 8) What systems are in place for the board to evaluate and provide feedback regarding superintendent performance?

A board that does not have satisfactory answers to the above questions probably should consider re-viewing the board-superintendent relationship and installing a system for monitoring performance of both the board and superintendent. An effective monitoring and evaluation system benefits the board and the superintendent because it forces them to sit down together and spell out their respective roles and responsibilities and to agree on how the performance of those responsibilities will be evaluated.

Sample Policy - Board Attorney

The School Board may enter into agreements for legal services with one or more attorneys or law firms to be the Board Attorney(s). The Board Attorney represents the School Board in its capacity as the governing body for the School District. The Board Attorney shall not represent another client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest, unless permitted by the Ill. Rules of Professional Conduct adopted by the Ill. Supreme Court. The Board Attorney serves on a retainer or other fee arrangement as determined in advance. The Board Attorney will provide services as described in the agreement for legal services. The District will only pay for legal services that are provided in accordance with the agreement for legal services or are otherwise authorized by this policy or a majority of the Board.

The Superintendent, his or her designee, and Board President are each authorized to confer with and/or seek the legal advice of the Board Attorney. The Board may authorize a specific member to confer with legal counsel on its behalf.

The Superintendent may authorize the Board Attorney to represent the District in any legal matter until the Board has an opportunity to consider the matter.

The Board retains the right to consult with or employ other attorneys and to terminate the service of any attorney.

*From PRESS Policy 2:160,
Illinois Association of School Boards*

The school board attorney

Few school boards are able to function without ready access to legal counsel. The job of the school administrator, too, is fraught with a growing number of legal pitfalls.

Most boards find they do not need an attorney in attendance at all meetings (although some do). Rather, matters needing legal study are referred to counsel through the superintendent, or the attorney is asked to be on hand whenever a particular

matter makes it advisable. In any event, each school board should have a policy that sets forth how it will fill its needs for legal assistance. Board members need to know how they will select and work with an attorney.

The *sample policy* above provides some options.

Other resources

The Superintendent Evaluation Process: Strengthening the Board/Superintendent Relationship available on the IASB website at www.iasb.com/trainingI-evaluation-process.pdf



Ten Meeting Time-Wasters

There must be one million ways to waste time at a meeting. Here are ten of the more popular time-wasters.

- 1) **Straying from the agenda.** Discussion of agenda item A can remind someone of a related problem called B. It is the president's job to keep the discussion focused on A and leave B for another time.
- 2) **Arguing among board members** or between board members and members of the audience. Although board members should be free to express their thoughts and feelings to one another, not much gets done when emotions take over. And the board should not be exchanging comments with the audience when conducting business at a regular board meeting.
- 3) **Focus on minutiae.** Obsession with small matters means the big matters get short shrift. And there is no end to the number of small matters that compete for the attention of board members.
- 4) **Doing over what was done wrong the first time.** Boards should feel free to admit mistakes and make corrections. But most mistakes that need to be corrected occur when the board makes decisions that should have been delegated to experts on the staff.
- 5) **Attempts at unanimity** Efforts to find a common ground don't always succeed. Sometimes people just disagree. Vote and move on, accepting the fact that sometimes you will be on the losing side.
- 6) **Rehashing the past.** The past cannot be changed. Forgive and forget or be prepared for a long and acrimonious meeting.
- 7) **Failure to delegate.** If a decision is not delegated to the staff, then it will end up on the board agenda. Who do you wish to hold accountable? This could be one of those decisions that need to be done over (*see item 4*).
- 8) **Failure to use policy.** A board has two options when presented with a problem - call the superintendent's attention to the board's policy on the topic or attack the problem head on and solve it. Solving all of the problems that come up at school will run a meeting into the wee hours.
- 9) **Failure to adopt clear rules of order.** If the board has no rules governing its meeting procedures, then it's fair to expect chaos rather than order. It can take longer to debate how we will debate the issue than the debate itself.
- 10) **Small talk.** It's a good idea to be informal and friendly and enjoy the meeting. But discussions of family and current events can go on too long.



Exhibit I | Some Symptoms of Bigger Problems

Use this list to see if your board displays some of the symptoms of ineffective board meetings. Once you have identified some symptoms, the next step in eliminating them is to seek out the real causes by scheduling an evaluation meeting. Or use the form in *Exhibit J* to launch a board discussion.

- Decisions that should be made by the administration show up on the agenda for board action.
- Major policy decisions that should be made by the board are being made by the staff.
- Items brought up for action by board members catch the superintendent by surprise.
- Items brought up for action by the superintendent catch board members by surprise.
- Some board members seem to receive more information from the superintendent than others do.
- The press is regularly critical of closed meetings or other board procedures.
- Board meetings are being used as a platform to reach the public by members of the board or representatives of special interest groups.
- Meetings run too long.
- Meetings don't run long enough.
- In spite of lengthy discussions, decisions don't get made.
- There is disagreement as to what the board actually decides.
- Significant meeting time is spent discussing items previously decided.
- Disagreements concerning parliamentary procedure stymie board decision-making.
- Meetings produce ill will among board members or between board members and superintendent.
- Board decisions frequently produce unanticipated criticism.
- Citizens and employees persist in contacting board members to get their school problems resolved.
- The board frequently takes action without referring to its existing policies.

If your school board regularly experiences any of these problems, an evaluation of how the board operates may be beneficial.