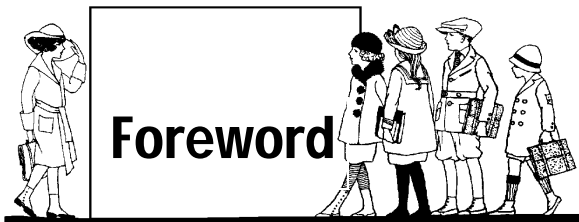


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Tab 1

Foreword



This Resource Directory has been created to assist school board members to understand and carry out the basic roles and responsibilities of elected members of school boards.

The goal of all VSBA development activities is to provide board members with the information, skills, and strategies necessary to provide effective policy leadership and maintain appropriate educational oversight. The Vermont School Boards Association has adopted Standards for School Boards: A Framework for Effective Governance. Additionally, the National School Boards Association has developed a helpful resource entitled, *The Key Work of School Boards*, which focuses on eight important work priorities for the school board. VSBA staff has integrated the Standards and the NSBA Key Work principles within all board development materials and workshops. You will find more information about these initiatives integrated throughout this Directory.

On an annual basis, the VSBA staff offer one free board development activity for every member school board and additional services on a fee for service basis, including facilitating the self-assessment of overall effectiveness of the leadership team. Please take a moment to review the board self-assessment instrument found in Tab 6. If your board is interested in having VSBA staff facilitate a self-assessment process for your leadership team and assist with goal development, please contact the VSBA office.

In addition, the VSBA retains a cadre of experienced school board members, administrators, and consultants to provide customized services such as understanding the role of effective boards, superintendent searches, governance analyses, public engagement activities, VELA roles clarification, and Policy Governance implementation.

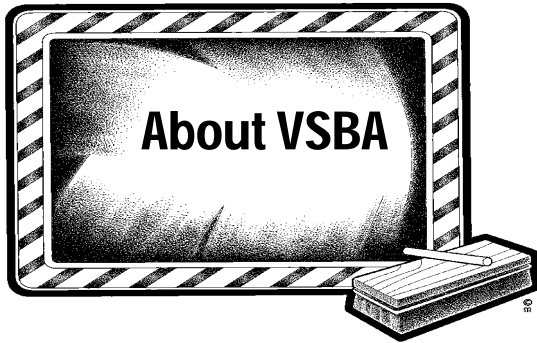
Board members often ask about the financial liability related to serving as a publicly elected official. Below is an excerpt from Vermont law that identifies how board members are protected from financial liability. However, your district's Errors and Omissions insurance coverage requires that all staff, administrators, and school board members follow your policies and law for this coverage to remain in force.

16 VSA § 1756. Protection of school directors, teachers, employees, and board members in damage suits.

(b) Each board of school directors or supervisory union board of directors shall insure against liability ... with minimum coverage ... not less than \$300,000.00 per person and \$500,000.00 per occurrence for bodily injury and \$50,000.00 per occurrence for property damage.

Common exclusions from liability insurance coverage include:

- Criminal, fraudulent, malicious or dishonest acts
- Oral or written material that slanders or libels a person or organization
- Oral or written material that violates a person's right of privacy



The Vermont School Boards Association is a non-profit membership organization founded in 1936 and incorporated in 1963 for the purpose of supporting Vermont school boards.

The VSBA provides a wide variety of services, resources, and publications to its members, including:

- Statewide board development activities and annual conference;
- Regular information including a newsletter, legislative reports, Vermont Education Lawbook;
- Customized work with local, union, and supervisory union boards;
- Superintendent search services;
- Phone, mail, and electronic replies to questions, including interpretation and assistance with federal and state programs and regulations;
- Statewide electronic school employee and administrator recruitment system for all member school districts;
- Professional development and board development DVDs;
- Availability of cost-efficient district insurances, human resources, facilities management, and employee wellness programs through the Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust (VSBIT); and
- Coordination of activities with other organizations promoting high quality public education in Vermont.

Website Materials

- Teacher and Para-educator salary and benefit resources;
- Model school board policies;
- Virtual newsletters;
- Member to Member page (give advice or ask questions of other board members);
- PowerPoints of professional development;
- Order DVDs, Vermont law books, resource directories;
- Register for upcoming professional development.

In addition to serving the needs of school board members in Vermont, the VSBA works with the National School Boards Association (NSBA) to improve public education throughout the nation. The VSBA is governed by a board of directors elected by the membership. Included on the VSBA Board are: President, First and Second Vice Presidents, Treasurer, Past President, 8 Regional Presidents and 8 Regional Vice Presidents from throughout the state, as well as two Members-at-Large. The VSBA Board meets monthly to establish policies governing operations of the Association and to discuss and act on issues important to the membership.



2008-2013

Vision

Creating Learning Communities Through School Board Leadership

Mission

The Vermont School Boards Association is committed to improving education for all children by supporting school boards so they function effectively, use resources wisely, and develop strategic and action plans that transcend high leadership turnover and short-term political pressures. The VSBA advocates on the local, state and national levels to create effective policy and legislation resulting in high quality and cost-effective education. The Association also promotes communication among educators, community members, and policy makers so that consensus is reached on the needs, goals, and continuous improvement of education throughout Vermont.

Goals

VSBA supports member school boards by:

Advocating for high quality public education at the local, state, and national levels;

Researching, collecting, and disseminating information to school boards;

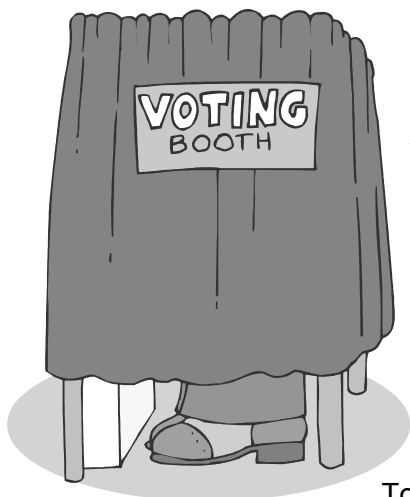
Providing education and training to prepare and assist board members;

Providing additional services to support boards in carrying out their leadership roles;

Enhance VSBA board and staff operations.

Please visit www.vtvsba.org for staff names, email address and pictures!

Becoming a School Board Member



We are in an era of changing and expanding public perceptions of what schools are and ought to be. As communities hold schools accountable, expect them to offer more services, serve more students and resolve increasingly complex problems, board members come to realize the tremendous importance, high demands, and commitment that the job of a school board member requires. More than ever before, school board members perform a critical role in providing community-based leadership that is the basis and strength of Vermont's system of education.

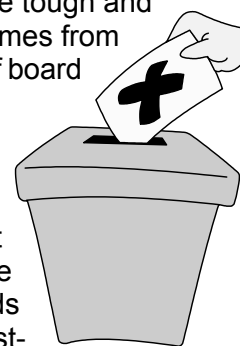
To serve on a school board is to experience a great American tradition, to provide free education for all students through representative democracy.

School board membership is among the highest forms of public service. It requires a commitment and loyalty beyond those of most other public offices. Effective school board members continue to study and train to perform their diverse and complex roles to the best of their ability. Just as research and work outside the classroom are important to student success, so is advance preparation and continual learning essential for school board members.

This kind of responsible leadership entails hard work and perseverance, often with few tangible rewards. Conduct your own quest to define and shape the job of being an effective school board member. Inquire about sources of information in your school building or district office. Read the VSBA Standards for School Boards, your board policies, the Vermont Education Lawbook, and remain current about education policy matters. Formulate your questions and seek satisfactory answers. Identify and use your resources effectively. Your personal effort in learning the basics of board operation will be infinitely valuable to you, the school board, administrators, as well as students, staff, and the community.

It's an exciting time to serve on a school board. Education has the attention of lawmakers and citizens of Vermont, as well as the nation. The education system faces some tough and complicated issues. The grass roots leadership to deal with these issues comes from the committed and conscientious citizens who have accepted the hard work of board membership.

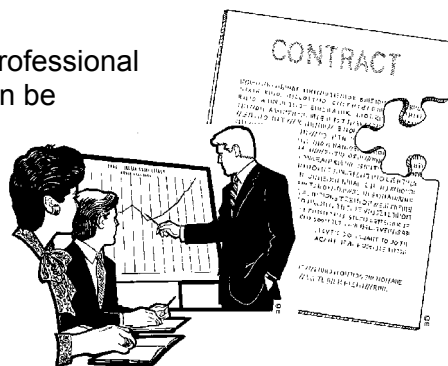
School board members serve their communities for many different reasons. Remember, you're not expected to know everything about running a school. Your job is to govern not become directly involved in operations. Your greatest asset is your experience as a community member which helps you provide direction and oversight of school operations. The common thread that binds board members together in service is the desire to provide high quality and cost-effective educational experiences for all students.



Local Resources for New Board Members

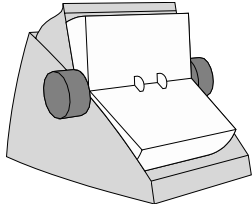
Experienced school board members can attest to a need for assistance in wading through mountains of information while conducting the business of the board. Board members don't work full-time at this job (although there are certain times of the year that one might question that premise), so understanding where information resources can be readily found is important. Below is a list of resources (most of which should be available in your local school or supervisory union office) you will find helpful in understanding how your district works.

- School vision, mission, goals, and strategic or action plan
- Policy manual
- Past board meeting minutes (both local and supervisory union)
- Current board goals and annual agenda
- Negotiated agreements
- Salary schedules and benefit comparisons for professional and non-certified staff (statewide compilation can be accessed on VSBA web site).
- Budget information
- Town Report or Annual School Report
- Current enrollment figures
- Student, teacher, and/or parent handbooks
- Curriculum guides
- Portfolio assessment materials
- Student Performance Data
- School web site
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges self-assessment & visiting team reports
- Vermont Education Law Book (copies available through VSBA or from your superintendent)
- Vermont Department of Education school comparisons web site
http://data.ed.state.vt.us/apg/public_area_select_q.html



State and National Resources

Sometimes regional, state, national and even international comparative information becomes important. In the instance of teacher negotiations, the base teacher salary and benefits package for school districts in your region may be pertinent to decisions your board makes when involved in the collective bargaining process. When evaluating Vermont's student SAT scores, national comparisons of states that test more than 50% of students provide very different analysis than when all state SAT scores are lumped together. Information like this is available from the organizations listed below.



Vermont School Boards Association

2 Prospect Street, Suite 4

Montpelier VT 05602-3579

Tel: 802-223-3580 or 800-244-VSBA [8722]

Fax: 802-223-0098 Web site: www.vtvsba.org

The VSBA has a library of current publications as well as video and audio resource materials. Topics in the library include passing budgets, negotiations, public engagement, parent involvement, school crisis planning, superintendent evaluation, as well as sample job descriptions for various education positions, and much more. Many PowerPoint presentations and DVDs developed from specific workshops, are available from the VSBA web site and by calling or emailing VSBA staff.

Vermont Department of Education

120 State Street

Montpelier VT 05620

Phone: (802) 828-3135

Web site: www.state.vt.us/educ

The Department of Education is an agency of state government that offers services to the Vermont educational community, to assist school leaders to plan, build, maintain, improve and operate schools in accordance with state law.

National School Boards Association

1680 Duke Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: (703) 838-6722

Website: www.nsba.org

The National School Boards Association is a federation of state associations of school boards across the United States. Its mission is to foster excellence and equity in public education through school board leadership. The NSBA achieves its mission by representing the school board perspective before federal government agencies and with national organizations that affect education, and by providing vital information and services to state associations of school boards and local school boards throughout the nation.

NSBA advocates for local school boards as the ultimate expression of grassroots democracy. NSBA supports the capacity of each school board-acting on behalf of, and in close concert with, the

people of its community - to envision the future of education in its community, to establish a structure and environment that allow all students to reach their maximum potential, to provide accountability for the community on performance in the schools, and to serve as the key community advocate for children and youth and their public schools.

Founded in 1940, NSBA, through the federation of state associations, represents 95,000 local school board members, virtually all of whom are elected. These local officials govern 14,890 local school districts serving the nation's more than 47 million public school students.

NSBA policy is determined by a 150-member Delegate Assembly of local school board members. The 25-member Board of Directors translates this policy into action. Programs and services are administered by the NSBA executive director and a 150-person staff. NSBA is located in metropolitan Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20202

Phone: 1-800-USA-LEARN (872-5327)

Website: www.ed.gov

The U.S. DOE was created in 1980 by combining offices from several federal agencies. Its original directive remains its mission today — to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation. The agency's 4,500 employees and \$63.3 billion budget are dedicated to:

- establishing policies on federal financial aid for education, and distributing as well as monitoring those funds;
 - collecting data on America's schools and disseminating research;
 - focusing national attention on key educational issues;
 - prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education.
-

National Center for Education Statistics

1990 K Street, NW

Washington, DC 20006

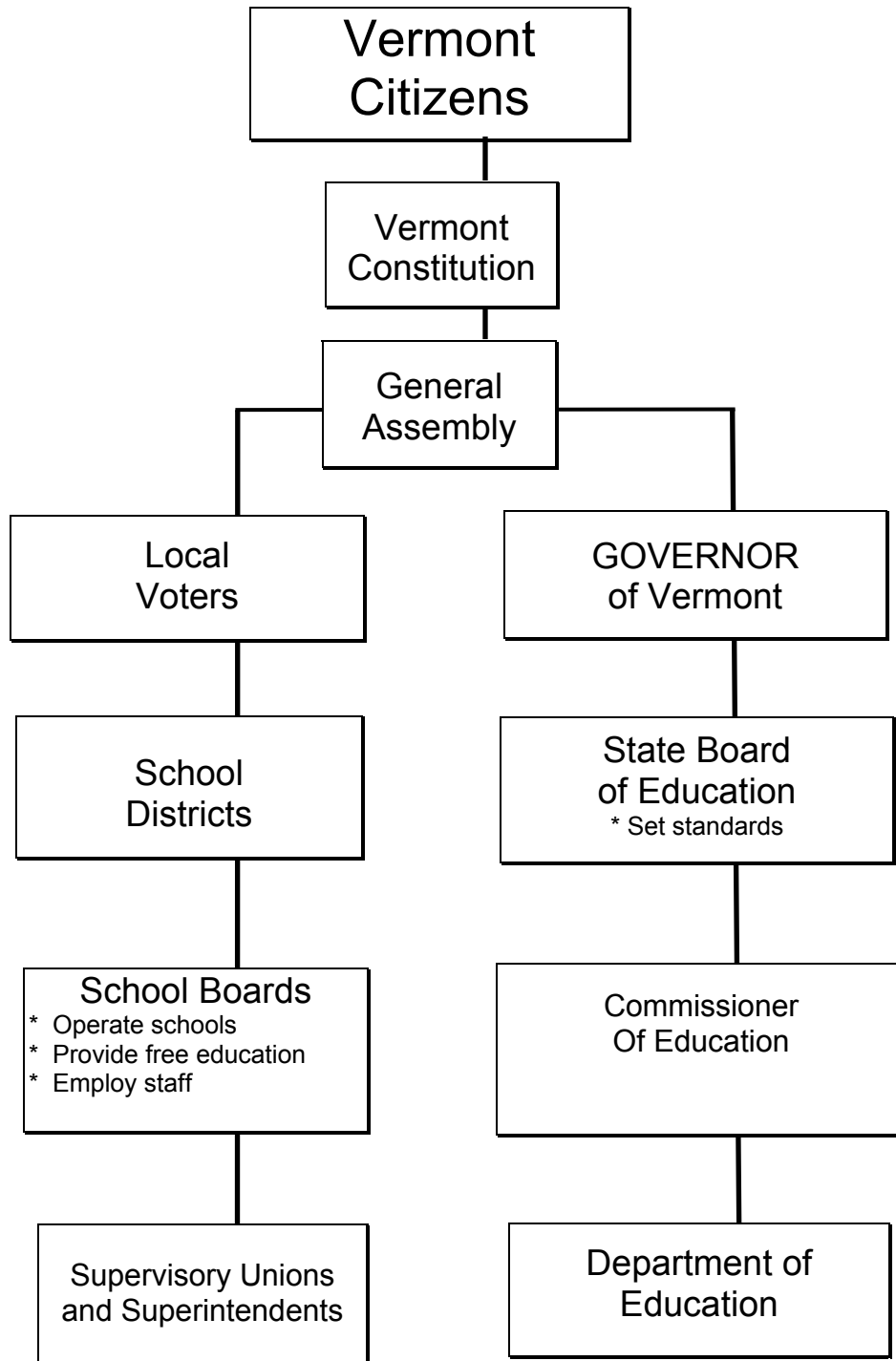
Phone: (202) 502-7300

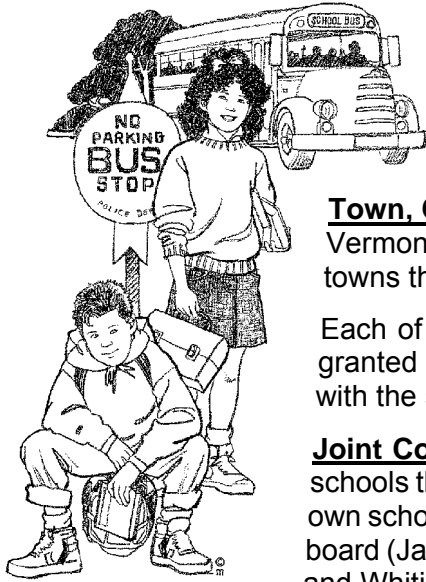
Website: www.nces.ed.gov

The purpose of the National Center for Education Statistics is to provide clear, complete information about NCES' mission and activities, and to serve the research, education, and other interested communities.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data that are related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES is located within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences.

Chart of State Public School Governance





Vermont School Districts

Vermont law grants governing authority to several types of entities. See the descriptions below for more details.

Town, City and Incorporated School Districts (*262) Each town or city in Vermont constitutes a school district. The only exceptions are the handful of towns that contain "incorporated school districts."

Each of Vermont's 12 incorporated school districts operate under a charter granted by the legislature. These districts usually include just part of a town, with the section not included forming the town school district.

Joint Contract Boards (*5) Ten school districts have contracted to operate schools through the formation of joint contract boards. Each town maintains its own school board as well as sending voting representatives to the joint contract board (Jay-Westfield, Chittenden-Mendon, Athens-Grafton, Hancock-Granville, and Whitingham-Wilmington are examples).

Union School Districts (*35) A union school district is established when two or more school districts agree jointly to own, construct, and operate schools (Harwood & Brattleboro Union Schools are examples).

Unified Union School Districts (*4) A unified union school district is a union school district that serves grades PK-12. When two or more towns form a unified union school district, each town elects representatives to form one school board (Blue Mountain Union and Twinfield Schools are examples).

Interstate School Districts (*2) The two interstate school districts listed below serve students in New Hampshire and Vermont towns. Each district is driven by complex interstate funding and governance rules.

Dresden - Hanover, NH and Norwich, Vermont;

Rivendell - Orford, NH and Vershire, Fairlee and West Fairlee, Vermont

Independent Technical Centers (*3) Overall, there are twenty-one regional technical centers, three of which are governed by an independent board of directors. Operations in the others are overseen by the local high school board of directors. However, six high schools run their own comprehensive vocational programs.

Supervisory Unions (*46) In Vermont, all school districts, except towns or cities employing 40 or more teachers, are members of supervisory unions. The public schools in each supervisory union are under the general supervision of a superintendent of schools.

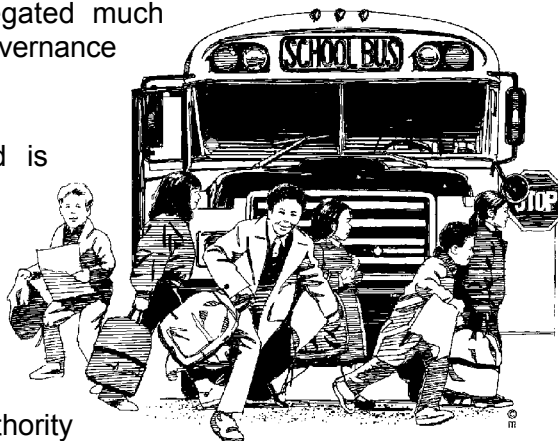
Supervisory Districts (*12) – A supervisory district tends to be larger communities like Burlington, Rutland, and Montpelier. They contain many schools but are governed by only one school board.

*** Quantity as of January 2008**

Vermont School Governance

Vermont Legislature The body that has delegated much authority and responsibility for Vermont school governance to local school boards.

State Board of Education The State Board is composed of 10 members, two of whom are students (only one student may vote), appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the senate and with consideration for representing all geographic areas of the state. The board supervises and manages the Department of Education and oversees the state's educational system. It is given specific authority to make rules governing school accountability, educator licensing and other subjects within its control. Policies of the board are implemented through the commissioner of education, as are the direction and supervision of state programs.



Commissioner of Education The commissioner is appointed by the state board of education, subject to the approval of the governor. The commissioner is the chief executive officer and secretary of the state board. The commissioner is required to make reports to the board concerning the public educational system and to make recommendations to promote the educational interests of the state. The commissioner hires deputy commissioners, division directors and staff as necessary. Their duties are prescribed by the commissioner. The commissioner carries out regulations, rules and policies set by the state board. Superintendents must report annually to the commissioner concerning the needs, conditions and progress of their schools. (Supervisory union/district board chairs must report to the commissioner when a superintendent leaves or before a new one is hired.)

State Department of Education The Department of Education is organized into divisions headed by directors who, with deputy commissioners, report directly to the commissioner. Thus, the commissioner, the deputies, the directors and their staffs comprise the state department of education. The personnel of this department provide services that assist school districts to plan, build, maintain, improve and operate their schools in accordance with state law.

Legal Status of School Districts All school districts in the state have been established as municipal corporations with all the powers of independent municipalities. They have been delegated powers and duties by state law to assist the state in supervising and managing public schools.

Legal Status of School Boards School board members are school district officers, not town officers. They are elected by the voters in each district. When the board convenes, its members function within parameters established by the legislature. Board members are representatives of the voters. They work to ensure the delivery of high quality public education.

Tab 2

Standards For School Boards

Standards for School Boards

A Framework for Effective Governance

Adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors, 2006

Effective school boards are critical to the success of our schools. Yet what does an effective board look like? The VSBA Board of Directors developed the following Vermont Standards for School Boards based upon the work of the National School Boards Association, other state school board associations, and research in the area of governance.

The VSBA Board believes that having a clear set of standards for school boards will allow our organization to better support boards in their ongoing efforts to successfully lead school systems focused on student learning. The standards will provide the foundation for VSBA programs and services. In addition, the standards encourage boards to reflect on their current practice and engage in discussions to increase their effectiveness as a board.

Guiding Assumptions

- The future welfare of our communities, state and nation depends upon the quality of education provided in public schools.
- Effective leaders have a positive effect on student learning and public schools.
- A common, agreed-upon set of standards for board work can substantially contribute to board success.
- The role and responsibilities of a governing board must be clearly defined.
- Boards promote the success of each student.
- Board members work together in a spirit of respect and cooperation and view diversity as an asset.

This Resource Directory is organized using the format of the Standards for School Boards.

Vision (Tab 4)

The board, with extensive community participation, envisions the district's educational future and then formulates goals, defines outcomes, and sets the course for its public schools.

Assumptions:

- Defining the vision and mission of the district is the first obligation of the board
- The board serves on behalf of the entire community
- The board must engage its community in developing the district vision and mission
- The vision and mission of the district focuses on preparing students for their future
- The budget of the district reflects the vision, mission, and strategic planning priorities

Performances

The board is able to:

- Solicit and consider various view points
- Set priorities
- Communicate the vision, mission, and strategic plan

Knowledge

The board and each board member have knowledge and understanding of:

- The district vision, mission, and beliefs
- The relationship of the budget to district planning
- Strategies to involve and communicate with the community
- The knowledge, skills, and experiences students will need to be well-prepared and productive citizens

Structure (Tab 5)

To achieve the vision, the board establishes a structure and creates an environment through policy to ensure all students the opportunity to attain their maximum potential.

Assumptions:

- The development and maintenance of school district policies is the central job of school boards
- Policies set the direction for the system and ensure prudent action by the administration, the staff, and the board
- Written policies foster stability and continuity
- Written policies clarify board-administration relations
- Written policies save time and effort for the superintendent and board

Performances

The board is able to:

- Adopt policies reflecting community values
- Employ qualified administration
- Establish clear delineation of board, board chair, and administration roles and responsibilities
- Delegate responsibility for implementing policy
- Keep policies up-to-date

Knowledge

The board and each board member have knowledge and understanding of:

- District policies
- Policy adoption process
- Board and superintendent roles and responsibilities
- The superintendent's job description and contract
- Roles within a multi-town union/supervisory union district

Accountability (Tab 6)

Because the board is accountable to the community, it regularly assesses student learning, staff, itself, and all conditions affecting education.

Assumptions:

- The board is accountable for its own conduct
- The board is accountable for the district achieving its goals within available resources
- The focus of the board drives the priorities of the district
- The board's attention is focused on student learning

Performances

The board is able to:

- Focus on student outcomes
- Communicate district performance to the community
- Develop a responsible budget
- Ensure reflective evaluation is built into the system at all levels
- Stay informed of significant district programs, activities, and issues
- Acknowledge concerns and questions raised by the community
- Accept and reflect on criticism
- Assess its own performance

Knowledge

The board and each board member have knowledge and understanding of:

- Student performance data
- How the budget is used to address district goals
- Board and superintendent evaluation processes and tools
- District/supervisory union policies
- State and federal laws as related to public education

Advocacy (Tab 7)

The board serves as the key advocate on behalf of students and its schools in the community to advance the vision for education. Therefore the board requires leadership in securing community support for the district's vision and mission and the resources needed to achieve them. The board also promotes the welfare of the district and all students through the political process at the local, state, and national levels.

Assumptions:

- The board is the liaison between the community and the district as well as between the district and the state and federal governments
- The board is in the best position to garner community support for the district
- The board is in the best position to inform state and federal representatives of the local impact of current or proposed legislation
- The board understands and is an advocate for students/families from all socio-economic backgrounds

Performances

The board facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- Communication occurs throughout the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which schools operate
- There is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups
- There is ongoing communication with local, state, and federal legislators

Knowledge

The board and each board member have knowledge and understanding of

- Principles of representative governance
- The political, social, cultural, and economic systems and processes that impact schools
- Global issues and forces affecting education
- The importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society
- The needs and dynamics of poverty
- Effective communication skills

Conduct and Ethics (Tab 8)

The board conducts district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner.

Assumptions:

- The board believes in the right of every student to a free, quality public education
- The board adopts and follows a code of conduct
- The board brings ethical principles to the decision-making process
- The board accepts the consequences for upholding its principles and actions
- The board uses its influence constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families
- Each board member subordinates one's own interest for the good of the school community

Performances

The board:

- Accepts responsibility for school operations
- Treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect
- Protects the rights and confidentiality of students and staff
- Demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to the differences in the school community
- Conducts effective meetings
- Engages in ongoing professional development, as individuals and as a board
- Provides an orientation for all new board members

Knowledge

The board and each board member have knowledge and understanding of:

- The values and needs of the diverse school community
- Professional code of ethics
- The rights and confidentiality of students and staff
- The legitimate authority of others
- When and how to seek advice on legal and contractual obligations
- Parliamentary procedures
- Open meeting laws
- Appropriate channels for resolving concerns of students, parents and the community

Tab 3

Community

Community

The board acts on behalf of the entire community to provide educational benefits for students. The board must solicit input from the community, recognizing that the members of the community hold diverse and sometimes competing opinions. The board has an obligation to inform the community of the successes and challenges facing the district.

Questions for the board to ask:

1. What are we doing now to hear from our community?
2. What information do we need to gather from the community?
3. What are the groups within the community we need to target?
4. How can we best engage these groups?
 - a. Where-when- how can we maximize attendance?
5. What is our time frame for gathering feedback?
6. What resources are available to assist us?
7. What do we do with the information we receive?
8. How do we plan to educate the community regarding what will be required of our school(s) to prepare students for the future rather than the present?

How can the VSBA help?

The VSBA offers school board professional development workshops and DVDs regarding preparing and sharing your budget with the community.

Education “Stakeholder” Groups

The school board should seek out key opinion leaders from the following list of stakeholder groups and involve them in public engagement activities or when developing a school’s vision/mission.

External

Parents
Taxpayers
Small Business Owners
Large Employers
Labor Union Leaders
Town Officers
Social Service Providers
Senior Citizens
Low Income Tenants
Renters/Homeowners
Non-Profit Directors
Farmers
Religious Leaders
Second Home Owners
Higher Education Leaders

Internal

Students
Teachers
Principal
Superintendent
Aides
Custodians/Secretary
Parents
Volunteers

Identifying 5 Classes of Influentials

When developing a public engagement strategy use the list below to align with individuals in your community who match the roles of “influentials”, for maximum impact, concentrate 80% of your advocacy effort on these key people who community members tend to respect opinions thereof.

Type	Role	Effect on Others
1. Role Models	Act out the desired behavior, show how to do it	Admiration, emulation
2. Opinion Leaders	Influence behavior & opinion by giving (or withholding) social acceptability, providing expertise	Peer pressure, desire to go along; trust
3. Power Leaders	Provide official approval or sanction	Fear based on power to reward or punish
4. Cheerleaders	Add emotion, adrenaline, team spirit; wave the pom-poms	Boost morale & can-do feelings, even in incredulous situations
5. Celebrities	Gain attention for the topic through their visibility	Attraction, awareness

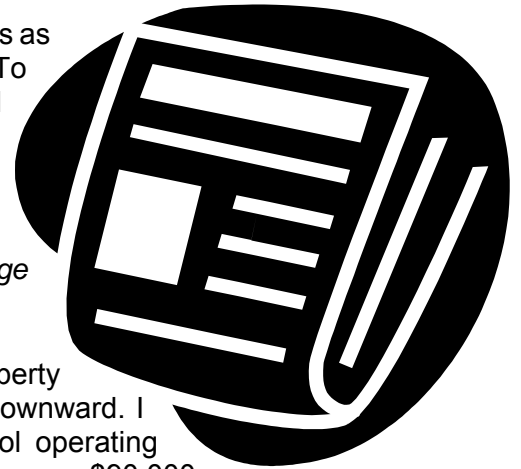
Strategies That Address Constituent Groups

- Which of these advocates for change are in your district?
 - “Tear Down” list probably not reachable; don’t waste your time
 - “Cost Cutters” are the real challenge because it’s in vogue
 - “Reorganization” advocates can be allies; e.g. magnet schools
- Make a behavioral list:
 - What precisely do they do or attempt to do that must be dealt with?
 - What would you like them to do, not do etc.?
- Research (formal or informal) to know the true level of support they actually have vs. the noise they make
- Know how the stakeholders will make their decision
- The only solution today: build relationships with opinion leaders and make them your third party advocates
 - They have credibility, which earns you trust
 - Rule: make “critics” part of the solution whenever possible

Source: Jackson, Jackson & Wagner

Practical Language For Talking With The Press

George Bernard Shaw once termed the English and the Americans as “two peoples separated by an ocean and a common language.” To make sure you don’t erect a language barrier between the local press and your board, use straightforward, plain talk. Here are some examples of right and wrong ways to respond to questions when you’re meeting the press.



1. **Question:** *What will the new tax rate mean to an average homeowner?*

Bad Answer: “First of all, you have to consider that property valuations have increased, thus the tax rate was adjusted downward. I would say, based upon this and our rising need for school operating revenues, the increase is nominal. I believe it will raise the taxes on a \$90,000 residence by about \$8 a year.”

The Problem: This answer is defensive in tone, offers information the reporter did not seek, and turgidly puts off the conclusion in deference to a buildup.

Good Plain-Talk Answer: “The impact will be slight. It will mean an increase of about \$8 per year on a \$90,000 residence.”

2. **Question:** *What is the purpose of this field trip?*

Bad Answer: “Our school district believes that significant enrichment of the educational experience occurs when out-of-facility functions include multiple levels of participation between our personnel and our patrons.”

The Problem: The “buzz words” of education-speak make an untimely appearance.

Good Plain-Talk Answer: “The trip will bring together our teachers, students, and parents to share a learning experience. They will find out more about the subject and each other.”

3. **Question:** *What will the district do if the teachers walk out?*

Bad Answer: “We might try to keep classes open by using volunteers or supervisory personnel. If it is not possible, we might close the schools and try to make up the time by adjusting the school calendar at a later date. We have a number of options, and these are some of them.”

The Problem: Answering hypothetical questions is not productive. This answer opens a whole can of emotional worms and is likely to provoke public concern over options that might never be employed.

Good Plain-Talk Answer: “We have a number of contingency plans and, as appropriate, we will discuss them when they’ll be put in place. It is not useful to talk about “ifs.” At this time, negotiations with our teachers are proceeding, and we continue to seek a reasonable agreement.”

4. **Question:** *You voted against closing the school, but lost. What will you do now?*

Bad Answer: “I plan to report to my constituents and see if I can get the matter reconsidered. As I said in the board meeting, I think this is a terrible inconvenience to the students and parents involved.”

The Problem: This answer oversteps the bounds of working together as a board. Reasonable persons can disagree, but majority rules. If there is significant interest in reconsidering the issue, your constituents will make their feelings known to the board. There is no point in exacerbating an already difficult situation.

Good Plain-Talk Answer: “I offered my opinions during the meeting, and the board heard the public input. The majority still felt that closing the school was in the best interests of the school system, and I must defer to the majority.”

A good overall rule of thumb: Don’t speculate if you don’t want your answer to appear in print. And, sometimes, plain talk can be a replacement for what isn’t said. Rather than refusing to talk to a reporter or not returning a reporter’s telephone calls, employ the plainest talk of all: Say, “I have no comment at this time,” and explain briefly why you can’t speak or choose not to speak.

Having the reporter write that you “declined to comment” is more desirable than reading “school officials were not available for comment” or “repeated calls to school board members went unanswered.” A “no comment” indicates some reasoned judgment for withholding information. No response implies you are hiding information.

Source: Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Working with the Media

Frequently it appears to boards that the media are preoccupied with the negative. In reality, the media also do much to promote schools. Local newspapers often carry feature articles about the good things happening in schools; they present valuable information to the public. For example, a local Vermont paper had a great picture and story of "I Love to Read and Write" activities on the same page with an article based on budget information for forthcoming town meeting.

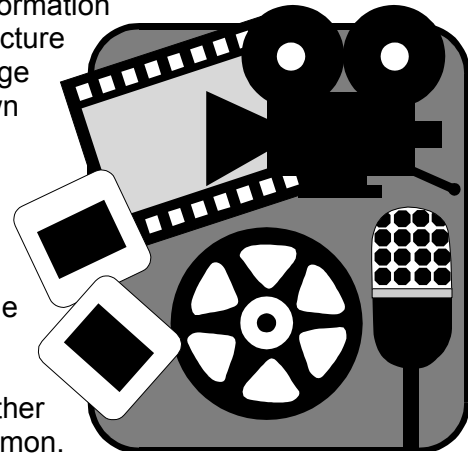
Working effectively with the news media requires an understanding that, even in adversarial situations, boards and media depend on each other. The media need boards and schools as a source of community news, and boards need the media as a means of communicating with their communities.

Newspapers are more likely to report school news than any other news medium; radio and television coverage is less common.

Obviously, more extensive coverage of a school board is likely to occur during a crisis.

When there are hot and controversial issues that make the headlines, boards need to know how to deal with the quick-paced spotlight and the stress that goes with it. If this happens to you, look to your resources to assist you in coping.

It is important that school boards establish an understanding, during board reorganization following the election, about how the board will "speak with one voice" during contentious or highly political situations. This means that a single spokesperson, agreed to by the board, delivers a predetermined media message. The spokesperson is often the board chair. However, it might be the superintendent or a board member with particular expertise or public speaking skills. What's important here is the board proactively prepares in advance for possible "media moments." Examples might include a hazardous materials spill, teacher strike, or death of a student or staff. It is also effective strategy, during an emergency, to proactively deliver pertinent information to the community by calling ongoing press conferences. Use the "*Media Communications Plan*" and "*School Crisis Press Release*," found on the next two pages, to focus the district's media communications message.



Media Interview Plan

1. In one, brief paragraph please state the key point or objective in doing the interview. This statement should reflect what you, the school board, would like to see as the lead paragraph in a newspaper story or broadcast news report about your story.
2. What are the three facts or statistics you would like the public to remember as a result of reading or hearing about this story?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. Who is the main audience or population segment you would like this message to reach

Primary:

Secondary:



4. What is the one message the audience needs to take away from this report/interview?
5. Who in your school district will serve as the primary point of contact for the media?

Name:

Phone:

Date and time available:

Source: Robert Howard, Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA

School Crisis Press Release

_____ Public School

At _____(time) on _____ (date) the following accident (incident) occurred: _____

At this time we have: (A) no confirmation of the injuries or damage:
or
(B) confirmed the following injuries or damage.

(Do not identify students by name, merely state the number of students involved and/or any property damage that has occurred).

The prognosis for those involved is (good) (fair) (critical).

The school district is responding in the following manner:

At the current time the matter is being investigated by local authorities and is considered to be a criminal investigation. The school district does not wish to take any action that may interfere with a pending criminal investigation. Therefore information will not be released without the prior approval of local authorities.

We will keep you updated as we learn further information.

We ask the general public to avoid traveling in this area unless it is necessary.

We ask parents of children in the school with questions to contact us at _____.

Thank you for your cooperation.

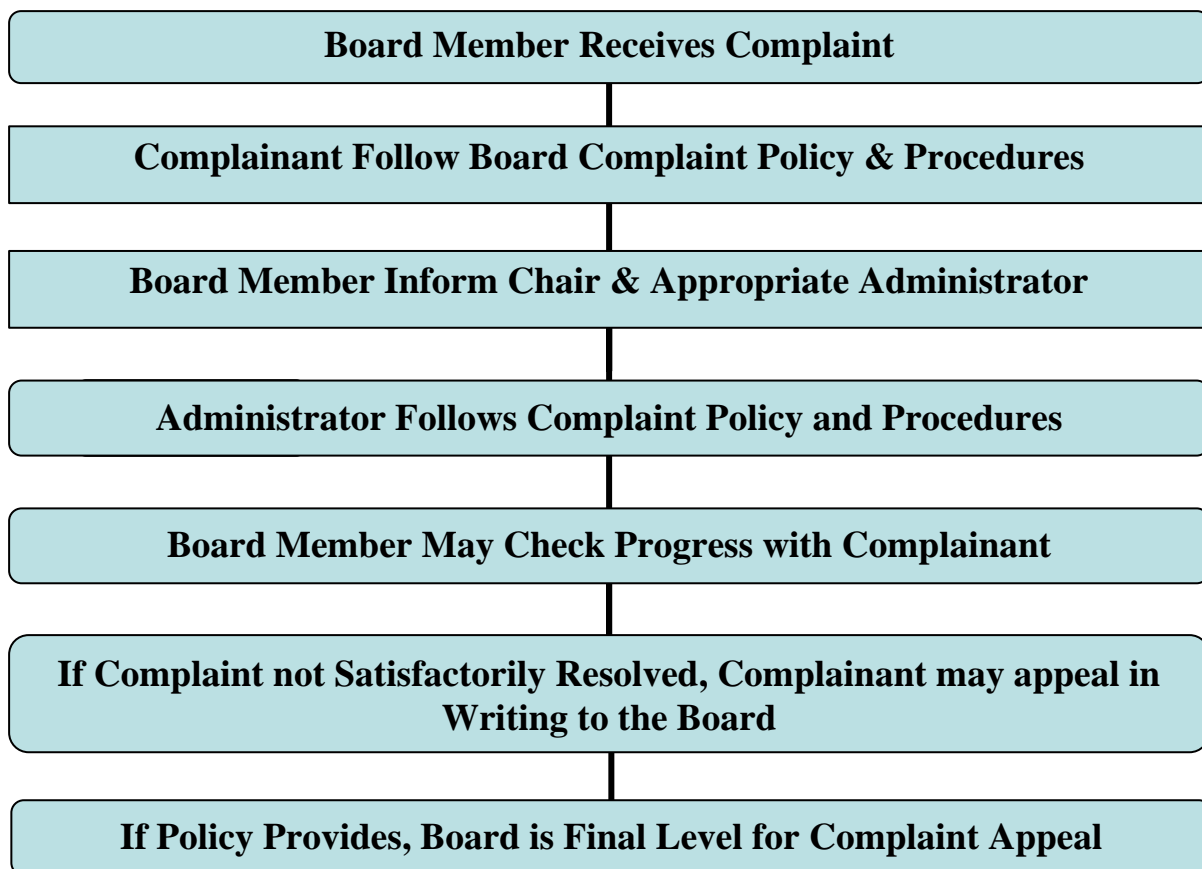
Source: Oklahoma State School Boards Association

Complaint Resolution Process

Board members often receive complaints from staff, parents, and/or community members. It is important to have a structure in place to formally respond to these complaints. The steps outlined in this Complaints Resolution Process diagram will help the board deal with dissatisfied individuals.

First and foremost, the board should adopt and utilize a complaints policy and administrative procedures. This clarifies the “Chain of Command” through which complaints are received and responded to. Generally, the complaint is directed first to the teacher for recourse. If not satisfied, the next level would be the principal. The third step is the superintendent. The Board is the final level of complaint appeal.

Individuals often erroneously believe they should register their complaint directly with the board. It is the board member’s responsibility to help the complainant use the above system. Board members should not intervene at the first levels of recourse. However, it is appropriate to reconnect with the complainant to monitor how the process is going.



You may see the model policy for complaint resolution by visiting www.vtvsba.org, then select Policy.

Tab 4

Vision

Vision

The board, with extensive community participation, envisions the district's educational future and then formulates goals, defines outcomes, and sets the course for its public schools.

Questions for the board to ask:

1. What is our current vision/mission?
2. When was it created and who was involved?
3. Is it focused on results for students rather than what the district will do?
4. Is it focused on what students need to learn to be prepared for a future that is rapidly changing? [future focus]
5. What does the board need to learn about before beginning to revise of the vision?
6. What resources are available to assist us?
7. How will the board involve the community to revise the vision?
8. How will the board involve the administration and staff to revise the vision?
9. Is our vision realistic given the resources we have available to achieve it?
10. Have we established priorities?
11. How will we share our final vision with the community? [Recognizing the vision may go beyond what the board heard from the community, as it will include what the board learned during the process from staff and outside sources as well.]
12. What is our time frame?

How can the VSBA help?

1. The VSBA can facilitate annual work sessions for individual school boards to help them create visions/missions, strategic plans and goals.
2. The VSBA can facilitate meetings regarding Policy Governance with your board and community.

VISION

Your vision is what you want to become—the ideal tomorrow you want to create today. The more clearly you can see your vision and describe it to others, the more compelling it becomes. An explicit vision directs and shapes an organization. Vision, values, mission, purpose, and goals are all components that convey the shared core beliefs of the organization. The organization itself has no vision; rather, the people in the organization determine a shared vision. Developing a shared vision for student achievement that reflects the common values and core beliefs of a school district is the starting point for school boards that want to focus on student achievement. This shared vision is the kernel of the mission and goals that not only direct the board's actions but also gain the commitment of the entire community to improving achievement for all students. Engaging the entire community in creating the vision generates support for the resources necessary to make the vision a reality.

Building a Shared Vision

Building a shared vision requires that you first are able to agree on your core values and beliefs. Knowing what you really value individually and collectively guides your aspirations and your mission as a district.

Your vision should inspire. The process for determining your vision is like discovering your destiny. For school districts, that destiny must lie in improving achievement for all students. A vision with anything less than student achievement as the top priority cannot fulfill the original mission of public education.

Most importantly, your vision cannot end with the written statement. Organizations that complete the writing process and believe that they have a vision are mistaken. Writing is only the beginning. Moving the vision from paper into practice is the challenge. The vision

takes form in the day-to-day actions of everyone in the organization. In a school district, "everyone" includes both the employees and the other stakeholders—parents, community advocates, business, government agencies, and higher education. Engaging the total community makes the vision more likely to be achieved. The school board's responsibility is to work with the community to develop student achievement as the top priority. And making it the top community priority will help you ensure that it becomes a reality because it will garner the necessary financial resources and human energy.

To achieve such total commitment, the board must take multiple steps. First, you must have a process for gathering input from the stakeholders in order to identify their core beliefs and common values. Once those values are delineated, you need a process for drafting a vision statement. After the draft statement is written, you must test the vision. Seek feedback from the stakeholders to ensure that the core beliefs are reflected in the statement and that the vision inspires commitment to student achievement as the highest priority. When the vision statement is complete, the dissemination process begins.

Communication of the vision to the entire community is essential. It is important that you as board members can articulate the key points of the vision. You should repeat these essential points at every opportunity when you are together and when you are out in the community. By constantly repeating and embracing these key components, you will develop the constancy of purpose needed to sustain your vision. This constancy of purpose will guide your leadership.

Try the self-assessment in the next section to help determine whether your board already has processes in place to work through each

of these stages and is ready to build its vision. Perhaps your visioning process is already complete and you are ready to proceed to the framework for implementing your vision. If so, move to page 43 and complete the nine planning steps that were developed by the Tennessee School Boards Association. If, on the other hand, you would like to know more about building a shared vision, consult the Vermont School Boards Association. Your state association can provide these services or can offer guidance on various consultants and the quality of their work. Also consider whether you may have staff within the district who can use or modify the strategies provided by your state association and serve as facilitators for the process. The VSBA can provide strategies intended for those who do not wish to turn the process over to an external resource.

In addition to a self-assessment, the following pages contain other resources to board members in the visioning process:

1. Questions that could provide the basis for dialogue among board members and between the board and the superintendent.
2. Differentiated responsibilities of the board and the superintendent in the vision-setting process.
3. Considerations student achievement planning teams can make as they develop an action plan to jump-start the comprehensive student achievement planning process in their districts.
4. Resources that can be used to help in the process of visioning.
5. A profile of a school district that has been successful in community engagement in its visioning and strategic planning.

Each succeeding chapter contains a similar list of tools and resources for board members and the planning team to use.

Vision Self Assessment

Use this tool to assess your initial understanding of vision and also to get a sense of where you are as a board on this key action. Indicate the degree to which your board/district has achieved the following elements for establishing a vision for improving student achievement.

	Fully Achieved	Mostly Achieved	Partially Achieved	Beginning to Achieve
Our board has established a written vision that commits to student achievement as the top priority of the school board, staff, and community.				
Stakeholder representatives (school board, senior leadership, district staff, school staff, employee organizations, parents, community advocates, higher education, business leaders, and students) helped create the vision.				
As a board we have discussed the core beliefs and values of our school district and community, and these values are reflected in our vision.				
Our vision is clearly articulated and known to all stakeholders in the community.				
We frequently revisit and reaffirm our vision to ensure our constancy of purpose.				
Our vision is the basis for all long-range, strategic planning and policy decisions.				
Our vision is the guiding force that sets the framework for how we operate as a district.				
We base our resource and budget decisions on our vision. Everything we do as a board of education aligns to achieve our vision.				

Vision Questions the School Board Should Ask Itself:

- Does the school board play a central role in fostering and guiding community dialogue about the vision for its schools?
- Is community broadly defined-staff, parents, students, service organizations, school site councils, union representatives, higher education, business, and so on?
- Do the district's vision and mission reflect the student achievement expectations and needs of the community?
- Do the school board and superintendent act as a team to communicate the vision and make it a reality?
- Is there a strategic plan to implement the vision?
- Does strategic planning focus on student achievement, and is the community engaged in planning processes?
- What policies need to be in place to support strategic plan initiatives?
- How do we continuously assure our vision is future-focused?

Vision Questions the School Board Should Ask the Superintendent:

- Have specific plans been developed to engage the community in the vision and strategic planning processes, and how do the plans ensure that participants are representative of the community?
- What are the district's student achievement strengths and weaknesses? How do students compare to students in other districts? Where does the vision need to take us?
- How do the short- and long-term goals of the strategic plan promote student achievement?
- How are school improvement plans integrated with district strategic plans?
- What strategies will be used to improve achievement and how were they selected-best practices and research based?
- What indicators are used to measure progress at the district and school level?

~~ from the Key Work of School Boards, National School Boards Association

Engaging the Community in Vision

The board should determine the major components for any Vision session, including:

1. Purpose of the session:
 - a. Educate community about future: what will be required to be a well-educated student in the 21st century
and/or
 - b. Request input in creating a Vision
or
 - c. Request input on draft Vision Statement
2. Identification and invitation to participants;
 - a. What group(s) want to hear from?
 - b. How many sessions need to have?
3. Meeting format (large group, focus group, etc);
 - a. All the same or variety of formats?
4. Location and timing;
 - a. What will gain most attendance?
5. Determining the questions to be asked;
 - a. Same at all sessions with all groups?
6. Welcoming, conducting and ending the meeting;
 - a. Roles?
7. Ensuring all appropriate physical arrangements are made;
8. Ensuring participants receive appropriate follow-up

The board's primary role is to listen. We will add our comments as appropriate, but we will not participate as equal partners in the conversation.

In order for us to be able to use your comments later, we will record the main points we hear. Our recorder this evening is _____

We will be listening to multiple community and staff groups over the next ___ months. Based on what we learn, the board we will draft a new Vision Statement to provide future direction for our district. There will be opportunities for the community and staff to review the draft prior to board adoption.

Are there any questions?

Then let's start.

Sample Question #1

What should be our overall goal for students when they graduate from _____? [What does it mean to be a well-educated student in the 21st century?]

Sample Question #2

Look at the list you generated. Is there anything missing? If we produce students who excel in these areas, have we done our jobs?

Sample Question #3

We realize that the district cannot respond to all these areas with equal resources and attention at the same time. What should be the top priority of the district at this time? Which of the other areas should command the next priority? What about the third priority?

Sample Question #4

Would you agree to meet with us again in a few months to review our draft Vision Statement?

Planning: A Joint Venture

From the Tennessee School Boards Association

What To Plan

The board's plan should be the framework of all that happens in the school district. The plan should define the ideal for each segment of the board's operation and project what will be accomplished toward the board goals during each year included in the plan. A time table should be included with target dates for reaching milestones.

The Challenge to Local Boards

The need for local school boards to engage in educational planning has never been greater. As boards confront educational reform, a major challenge is to manage reform and not be the victim of it-to direct rather than react. To do this, boards must move from operating only in crisis situations toward systematic planning. Without clearly-defined goals incorporated into well-defined plans, a board can always expect to be responding to one crisis after another.

Success is seldom a matter of luck. If schools are to be exceptionally good, it is imperative that boards consider uncommon goals and uncommon methods of reaching them. Boards should resist the temptation to be overly conservative since boards tend to accomplish the goals which they establish by this process.

A basic principle of this planning procedure is that the board is responsible for establishing the purpose of the plan and the staff is responsible for establishing the methods. The purpose springs from a vision initiated by the board. It includes both the mission statement and the goals.

Method includes objectives for each goal and strategies for achieving each objective. When adopted by the board, it becomes the strategic plan.

A more detailed discussion of this planning procedure follows:

Planning Procedures

Who's Responsible?

Planning Activity

BOARD

1

Make a commitment to plan.

The school board and superintendent should have a preliminary session on planning. In this session, they should consider the possibility of adopting a mission policy of the school district, set up beliefs of the board of education, and outline a calendar of planning activities, and members of the board must make a commitment to plan. If the board does not make a commitment but gives planning a high priority you cannot expect staff members to consider it a very high priority.

Who's Responsible?

Planning Activity

BOARD

2

Establish a guidance system for planning.

A guidance system consists of:

- A. Beliefs-A list of statements which summarize the board's basic beliefs.
 - B. Vision-A mental model of an idealistic future for your school system.
 - C. A Mission Statement-A statement which describes the ultimate purpose and scope of the school district
 - D. Planning Categories-Key result areas used to record school district goals and objectives and to divide the plan into manageable parts.
-

BOARD

3

Involve the community.

Plan and conduct a series of meetings where the community is given the opportunity to react to what is happening in the school district. Primarily, the board is seeking suggestions for improvement in the school district, not hearing gripes. Three rules should be observed during these community sessions: 1. The persons conducting these meetings are not there to answer questions but to hear information, Therefore, persons conducting the meeting should not defend the school system but simply hear suggestions and complaints and thank people for them. 2. It's okay for participants to complain, but only if they offer a suggestion for improvement. 3. Do not promise that what is suggested will be done. Promise that the board will consider all suggestions.

STAFF

4

Analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

This phase involves the collection and analysis of data about the school district. This will require a review of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, in order to build on strengths, eliminate weaknesses, take advantage of opportunities and avoid threats.

BOARD

5

Set goals.

The board should go through, a process of brainstorming in listing all of the potential goals that are suggested. Then, a system of putting a priority on the goals should be used. Each goal should be considered in terms of importance, cost, and the effort required to accomplish the goal. Goals judged important by every member of the board should be included in the long range plan. Other goals maybe added by majority vote, but it is recommended that, except in the most unusual circumstances, only those goals accepted by every member of the board should be included in the plan.

Who's Responsible?

Planning Activity

STAFF

6

Develop objectives and strategies for each goal.

The staff should be assigned the responsibility of developing objectives and strategies for each goal. Frequently, each goal is assigned to a committee headed by a staff member. The committee works on measurable objectives and strategies. Objectives are divided into annual objectives and long range objectives. Each objective should be measurable and include a time line, Additionally, resources which will be required to implement any objectives should be identified in the proposal made to the board.

BOARD

7

Adopt the plan.

The board considers each objective and strategy in view of the resources necessary to accomplish the objective and the relative importance of each. The board then adopts an annual and long range plan.

BOARD/STAFF

8

Promote the plan.

Present the plan to the staff.

Generally administrators and staff have already been working on the plan, but they should have the opportunity to hear a presentation of the entire plan from the superintendent and/or the board. It is important that the administrative and supervisory staff be committed to the plan before it is presented to other staff members. In fact, administrative and supervisory staff members usually present the plan to the staff. Most staff members will already have some involvement in developing at least one objective' of the plan but this is their opportunity to see the entire plan. An enthusiastic person who is totally in support of the plan should present it.

Present the plan to the community.

Community meetings such as PTA meetings, civic clubs, and other groups should be scheduled when possible to consider the school district's plan. School board members should be involved in the presentation of these plans as often as possible. This is a great public relations opportunity for school board members.

STAFF/BOARD

9

Evaluate the plan.

Each objective in the plan is measurable and has a deadline for completion. At the specified time, the plan should be evaluated and a report of the success or lack thereof should be presented to the board. As a result of the evaluation, the plan may be modified and the process begun again for a new year.

Tab 5

Structure

Structure

To achieve the vision, the board establishes a structure and creates an environment through policy to ensure each student the opportunity to attain his or her maximum potential.

Questions for the board to ask:

Policy

1. When was our policy manual last reviewed?
2. Do we have all the required policies in place?
3. Are there policies or sections of policies which should be changed to procedures or rescinded?
4. Are there areas where we do not yet have a policy where we should?
5. What resources are available to assist us?
6. What is our time frame?

Budget

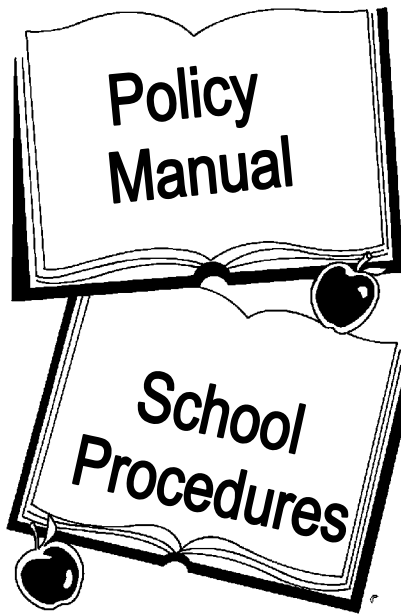
1. How does our budget support our vision and the priorities we established?
2. Will our budget gain community support?
3. How will we inform our community about what our budget is designed to accomplish and the impact it will have on local taxpayers?
4. What resources are available to assist us?

Hiring Superintendent

1. What does the district need to accomplish in the next five years?
2. What skills and characteristics will be needed in a superintendent given what we want to accomplish?
3. What resources are available to assist us in the search process?
4. What is our time frame?

How can the VSBA help?

1. The VSBA offers model policies on the website (www.vtvsba.org).
2. The VSBA offers school board professional development workshops and DVDs on issues such as negotiations, preparing the school budget, presenting the school budget, and roles and responsibilities.
3. The VSBA has a link on the www.vtvsba.org website to the VELA Roles and Responsibilities website which supplies a sample (adaptable) roles layout for a school district.
4. The VSBA offers a password protected data website which includes teacher and para-educator salaries and benefits for every school district contract statewide.
5. The VSBA contracts with supervisory unions/districts to facilitate superintendent searches.



The development and maintenance of school district policies is the central job of school boards. The Vermont statute entitled "Powers of School Boards" lists thirty-one specific duties delegated to local boards by the General Assembly. The very first responsibility on the list is the duty to "Determine the educational policies of the school district."

The policy making role of school boards is difficult for several reasons. Primary among these is that the meaning of the word "policy" is not entirely clear, and most boards wrestle at one time or another with the problem of distinguishing between policy making (the board's job) and policy implementation (the job of administrators).

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) provides a definition for the word "policy" which is helpful when attempting to separate the legislative responsibility of the board from the executive responsibilities of professional administrators. The NSBA defines policy this way:

"When we speak about school board policy we speak about the power to set directions for the school system, to bring about prudent action by the administration, the staff, and the board itself.

"A soundly constructed policy will...tell the administration enough so that it can get working on the task in accordance with the board's wishes..."

Another definition is that a policy approved by the board describes what should be done while implementation procedures, designed and carried out by administrators, describe how tasks will be carried out.

Board policy describes a broad statement of intent. It should leave implementation details to the school administration. As you become familiar with your policies, you will see some that are more detailed in terms of procedure than others. The policies on harassment, for example, list specific procedures to be followed in handling a potential harassment case. When policies are so specific, it is usually because the law requires or encourages specificity.

Developing and maintaining a policy manual is time-consuming work. It requires vigilance on the part of both administrators and board members. There are compelling reasons for taking the time to develop policy, however, and the NSBA again counsels local boards to keep those reasons in mind.

"Just as laws of legislatures must be in writing, the policies and regulations (procedures) of a school board should be in writing. State legislatures and the public demand it, and courts take boards to task when they attempt to enforce measures that have not been written down and made known."



Five Practical Reasons for Attending to Policy

1. **Written policies foster stability and continuity.** School board members come and go; staff people leave, retire, or are separated. But policy endures. A policy book, containing current policies and procedures, permits smooth transitions and continuity of leadership decisions when change takes place.
2. **Written policies available in an organized collection keep people informed about the board's goals and its position on major educational and operational issues.** When any public body operates in the sunshine of full disclosure there can be no charges of secrecy. Accountability becomes reality.
3. **Written policies and procedures clarify board-superintendent relations.** When the board gives the superintendent the authority he or she needs to effectively utilize staff skills, the superintendent can administer the school system and maintain a focus on increasing student achievement.
4. **Written policies and procedures save time and effort for administrators.** When problems arise the administrator does not have to go to the board each time for a decision. Board direction is provided through policy statements.
5. **Written policies save time and effort for the board.** Where policy and procedures exist, there need not be long board discussion on details of administration--that's the administration's job. There need not be a rerun of arguments on a problem that has been settled before. "We enacted a policy and reviewed procedures relating to that issue last year" is all that needs to be said to end the discussion and to move on to the next order of business.

The Policy Development Process

Policy is developed by a school board in consultation with the administration and those most directly affected by the policy in question. Board policy will usually be a fairly broad statement of intent. It should leave the administrative details to the people most qualified to carry out the board's intent: the school administration. The board should reach agreement on the substantive policy issues before preparing or reviewing a draft. This will ensure the integrity of the policy development process. It is never good practice for a board to accept a written policy without having a thorough discussion of the issues behind that policy.

In addition, Vermont law requires that any policy be adopted at a "*regularly scheduled school board meeting, after public notice of the board's intent to do so, stating the substance of the proposed regulations, at least ten days prior to the board's consideration of the regulations.*" [16 V.S.A. §563]

Boards are required to adopt policies in many areas by federal and state legislation. In addition, boards may want to consider other areas for policy development.

Recommended Process:

1. Discuss the implications of each policy area
2. Determine if a policy is in the best interest of the district
3. Come to agreement on the broad values underlying each area
4. Draft a policy statement that reflects those values
5. Solicit input from the staff and community
6. Finalize and adopt the policy
7. Delegate to the administration the creation of procedures to carry out the policy statement

Guiding Questions when Developing Policy:

1. What are the values we have in this area?
2. What do we worry about?
3. What are we currently doing?
4. What are the outcomes we want to achieve?
5. What do we need to know to make an informed decision?
6. Whose input do we need?
7. What risks are we exposing the district to?
8. What are decisions for the board and at what point is the board comfortable delegating to the administration as procedure?

Administrative Procedures

(Rules & Regulations)

It is the role of the superintendent to develop administrative procedures for use when implementing each policy. Boards may *“also approve or disapprove rules and regulations proposed by the principal or superintendent for the conduct and management of public schools...”* (16 VSA section 563).

The VSBA recommends that each administrative procedure be copied on a different colored page and be included in the school manual with each respective policy.

The board’s role is to adopt policies. The administrations’ role is to develop, disseminate, and implement administrative procedures that describe how each policy will be implemented.

Posting all board policies and procedures on the school web site and including relevant policy and procedure language in teacher, staff, and student handbooks is an important communication strategy. Many school and community conflicts can be alleviated when individuals learn in advance how the board will make decisions on specific issues. However, it is essential that the board follow prescribed policies and support administrators as they make day to day decisions based on policies and procedures.

For Further Assistance

The VSBA publishes a model policy manual with examples of all required school board policies and others Vermont school boards may consider adopting. They are designed to be models only and should be tailored to meet local needs and values. The model policies may be viewed on the VSBA web site at www.vtvsba.org.

The VSBA also has an extensive library of sample policies from the National School Boards Association and some policies from other Vermont school districts.

The VSBA recommends that school boards fully review and adopt all existing and new policies every 3-5 years. In the five-year policy update cycle, this means review 1/5th of all current and new policies each year for five years. Then start the cycle over again. This process is more manageable when the board identifies specific policies to be reviewed at each monthly board meeting.

The VSBA offers policy review, development and alignment assistance. Contact the VSBA office for more information.

Policy Governance

Starting in 2006 four districts in Vermont transitioned their board operations to a Policy Governance system. In 2007, additional districts began the training process to implement Policy Governance. In 2008 and beyond, districts continue to inquire about the merits of the Carver Policy Governance process. This system of governance operation more directly clarifies the roles of the school board and superintendent and increases accountability more than the traditional governance structure that Vermont school districts have used in the past.

The VSBA, working in partnership with the Vermont Department of Education, administered a Wallace Foundation grant that trained 10 Policy Governance facilitators in 2005. These facilitators are available to support districts that decide to transition to a Policy Governance system.

In a Policy Governance system, with few exceptions, traditional board policies, which are legally mandated by state or federal law, are delegated to the superintendent to implement through approval of the school board consent agenda.

The next page provides an overview of what Policy Governance is and how it works.

Policy Governance

Policy Governance®, created by Dr. John Carver, is a model of governance designed to empower boards of directors to fulfill their obligation of accountability for the organizations they govern. The model enables the board to focus on the larger issues, to delegate with clarity, to control management's job without meddling, to rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization; to truly lead its organization.

In contrast to the approaches typically used by boards, Policy Governance separates issues of organizational purpose (ENDS) from all other organizational issues (MEANS), placing primary importance on those Ends. Policy Governance boards demand accomplishment of purpose, and only limit the staff's available means to those which do not violate the board's pre-stated standards of prudence and ethics.

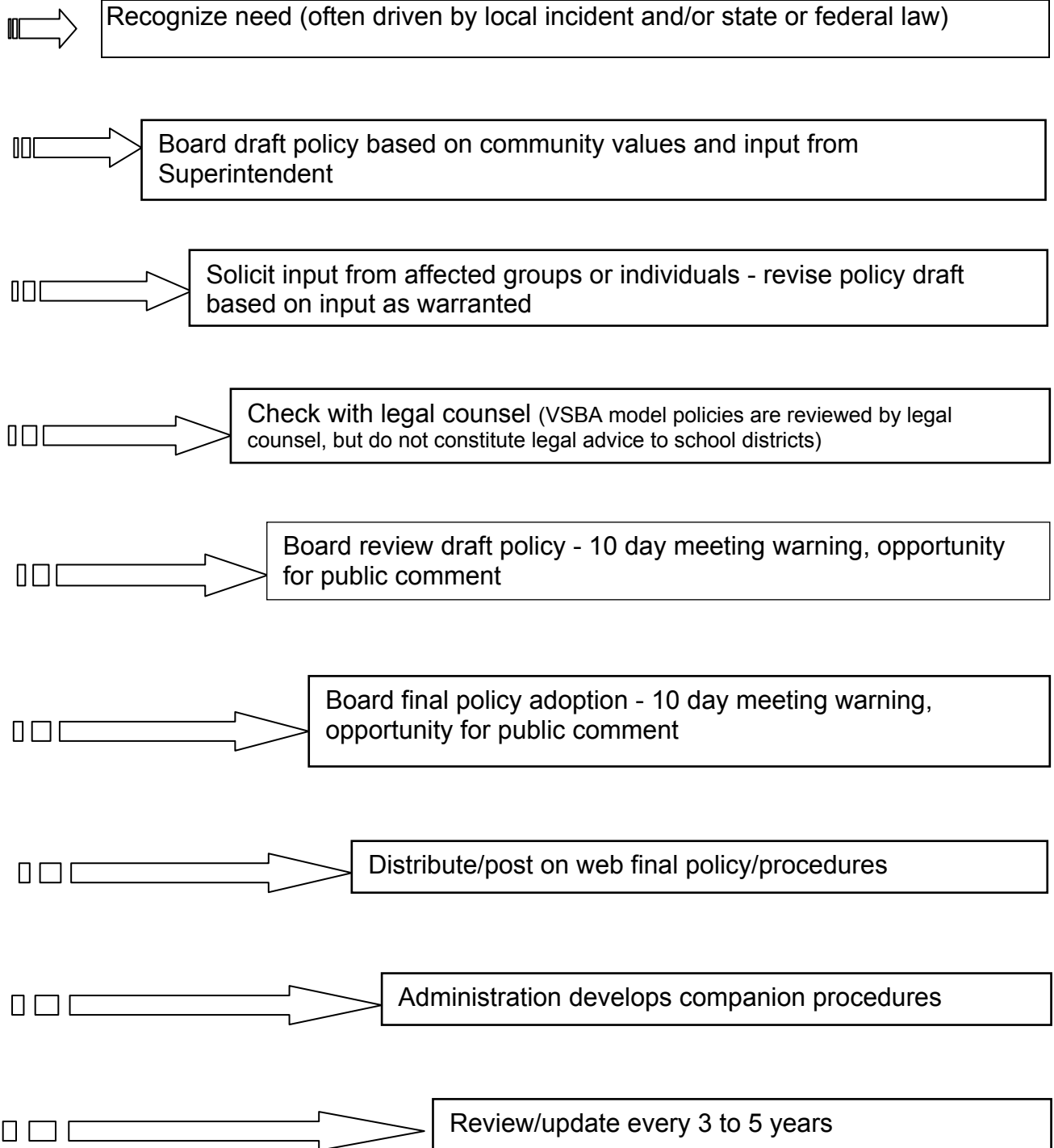
The board's own Means are defined in accordance with the roles of the board, its members, the chair and other officers, and any committees the board may need to help it accomplish its job. This includes the necessity to "speak with one voice". Dissent is expressed during the discussion preceding a vote. Once taken, the board's decisions may subsequently be changed, but are never to be undermined. The board's expectations for itself also set out self-imposed rules regarding the delegation of authority to the staff and the method by which board-stated criteria will be used for evaluation. Policy Governance boards delegate with care. There is no confusion about who is responsible to the board or for what board expectations they are responsible. Double delegation (for example, to a board committee as well as to the CEO) is eliminated. Furthermore, boards that decide to utilize a CEO function are able to hold this one position exclusively accountable.

Evaluation, with such carefully stated expectations, is nothing more than seeking an answer to the question, "Have our expectations been met?" The board, having clarified its expectations, can assess performance in that light. This focused approach reduces the mountains of paperwork boards often feel obliged to review. Moreover, those boards which worry that they are only furnished the data management wants to give them find that, in stating their expectations and demanding a relevant and credible accounting of performance, they have effectively taken over control of their major information needs. Their staff no longer has to read their minds.

Policy Governance is a radical and effective change in the way boards conceive of and do their job. It allows greater accountability. Board leadership isn't just rhetoric. It's a reality.

Traditional Policy vs. Policy Governance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many narrow policies ▪ Based on circumstance ▪ Focused mostly on operations ▪ Directs all employees ▪ Proscribes means ▪ Confuses roles ▪ Stagnant ▪ One of many drivers ▪ Board actions and decisions usually are unrelated to policy ▪ Reactive management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few broad policies ▪ Based on community values ▪ Focused on results rather than operations ▪ Directs superintendent only ▪ Establishes limits on means that may be used ▪ Clarifies roles ▪ Dynamic/future oriented ▪ Single driver of actions ▪ Decisions at policy level

Policy Adoption Process



Comparing Private Sector and Public School Budgeting

One of the most commonly asked questions by the public regarding school system operations is “Why can’t school districts operate like private industry?”

- School districts operate in a fishbowl environment. Private industry does not. School districts must comply with sunshine meeting laws to conduct most of their business and are required to invite public comment on most of their operations. While public companies may have annual stockholders meetings, their purpose is to evaluate performance, not direct it.
- Public school districts are nonprofit organizations. Private industry is a profit and loss operation.
- Since school districts are nonprofit educational institutions, there are no “tax” savings of which to take advantage.
- School systems rely heavily on real estate taxes and other subsidies for financial support. Public support through taxation is always difficult and controversial.
- Public schools are required to educate all students regardless of capabilities.
- Unfunded mandates have played havoc with school district finances.
- School boards are accountable to voters. The private sector is quite different, in that decisions are made by a small group of people, interested in a profit motive.
- Risk and competition are viewed much differently in the public and private sectors.
- Equitable funding of education operations is an example of the uniqueness of public school operations that is not paralleled in private industry, but because of the nature of school systems, may have a revolutionary impact on education.

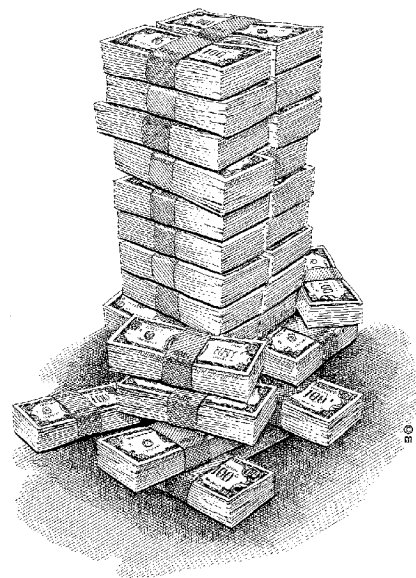


*Patrick Sable, Business Manager
West Mifflin Area School District, Pennsylvania*

Keeping an Eye on the Budget

Once the school budget has been adopted, the board takes on an oversight responsibility, monitoring expenditures to ensure that the money is used for the goals the board has specified and is within the spirit and intent of the authorizations. In Vermont, school boards are authorized to determine how budgeted funds will be spent once the electorate has approved a budget. Proper monitoring requires:

- Reviewing financial reports regularly; preferably monthly. Most boards want to know four things: How much did we budget? How much have we spent? How much is left? And, if the answer to the last two questions is unexpected, what happened? To answer these questions, the administration should provide a revenue report, appropriations report, and cash report; a report of expenditures; and a report on net worth.
- Understanding the district's ongoing financial status. Studying the regular financial status reports from month-to-month should answer the question. This information, along with spending rates and spending projections, reduces the possibility of slashing programs later in the year. Proper monitoring prevents actions that may have an adverse effect on educational programs.
- Being wary of budget fund transfers. Moving money from one budget fund to another is a potential troublemaker but a common request.



Budget transfers are best dealt with through policies that spell out the board's intent on transfers from fixed charges (heat, light, insurance, and so on) to other budget items, and its intent on transfers to and from non-fixed charges (textbooks, supplies, and equipment). The board should decide how it wants to act on budget transfers and how often monthly, quarterly, or semiannually.

- Being alert to the year-end condition of the budget. Even if your budget is in good shape at the end of the fiscal year, be on the lookout for a rise in the number of budget transfer requests, a shortfall in the budget line for contingencies, and shortages in some major funds and surpluses in others. Don't fall into the error of saying, "Well, it's the end of the year. It doesn't much matter what we do." What the board does to the budget this year will affect *next year's* budget.

*Source: Becoming A Better Board Member
National School Boards Association*

Superintendent & Board: Working As A Team

Vermont law designates the superintendent as the chief executive officer for the supervisory union and each school board s/he serves. On behalf of each school board, the superintendent:

- 1) carries out the policies adopted by the school board relating to the educational or business affairs of the school district;
- 2) works with the principal to connect action plan goals with the vision, goals, and objectives for the school district, and articulates these priorities with the needs and desires of other schools in the supervisory union/district;
- 3) recommends that the school board employ or dismiss persons as is, in his/her judgment, necessary to carry out the work of the school district;
- 4) furnishes the commissioner such data and information as required.

No single area is more critical in board relations than working with your superintendent. It is worth thoughtful consideration. Here are tips for you to consider as you work with your superintendent:

- 1) work to maintain mutual respect and honest communication
- 2) allow give and take; be open to recommendations
- 3) a superintendent is a career executive; allow him/her to do the job
- 4) share information you may get from the community
- 5) establish a fair and objective evaluation system
- 6) do your homework; keep current and informed
- 7) accept the fact that mistakes do happen

Boards can reasonably expect that their superintendent:

- 1) has personal/professional integrity
- 2) be knowledgeable about educating children
- 3) is sensitive to feelings, beliefs, and commitments of community, staff, board, and students
- 4) is skilled in delegation and communication
- 5) is prudent in the management of school funds and facilities
- 6) has experience with personnel management and evaluation

Remember your principal. Particularly in Vermont supervisory unions, where one superintendent serves several boards, the principal becomes the middle manager with whom boards work closely. The principal is the right-hand person to the superintendent.

As you work with your school administrators and fellow board members, you will have disagreements. Balance your role on the team with the right to express your individuality and to retain your own values.

Forging a Working Relationship Within The Leadership Team:

A Focus On Board Retreats and Work Sessions

The communication channels and relationships you maintain with your board are critically important to the board's effectiveness and efficiency. No individual board member has any personal authority; it is only when a majority of board members agree and take action at a legal meeting that the work of the board gets done. As a board, you can take steps to nurture board relationships and repair potential splits before they become dangerous.

An excellent way to work on board relationships - and brainstorm ideas - is the board retreat. It's a bit like busy parents going out to dinner together and leaving the kids at home. A comfortable atmosphere away from home, where the telephone doesn't ring and where someone else cooks and washes the dishes can do wonders for a relationship. At a board retreat, you leave the kids at home but you do talk about them. And you do talk with each other.

Many boards in Vermont utilize a relatively simple and not very costly form of board retreat. For example, they go to a nearby quiet country inn or board member's house for the day. They have breakfast and lunch together, follow an agenda with someone taking good notes of what's covered, and they spend some informal social time together before going back to the real world. At retreats, often called "leadership work sessions," boards assess progress, set up new committee structures, strengthen relationships with administrators, and establish annual and long-range goals." Retreating" from time to time is a worthwhile investment in improving board operations.

Getting to better know board members and administrators is invaluable. With a deeper understanding of personal interests and style, it's much easier during difficult board deliberations to be assertive and open, in a mutually respectful way.

Boards conduct retreats with independent facilitators or on their own. It depends on what they've set as outcomes. If you contract with a facilitator, you can expect him or her to take direction from you for desired outcomes, to keep you on track, and to provide a detailed organized report about work session outcomes. Be clear up front about work session expectations.

VSBA staff often facilitate board retreats and charge a nominal expense for this service.

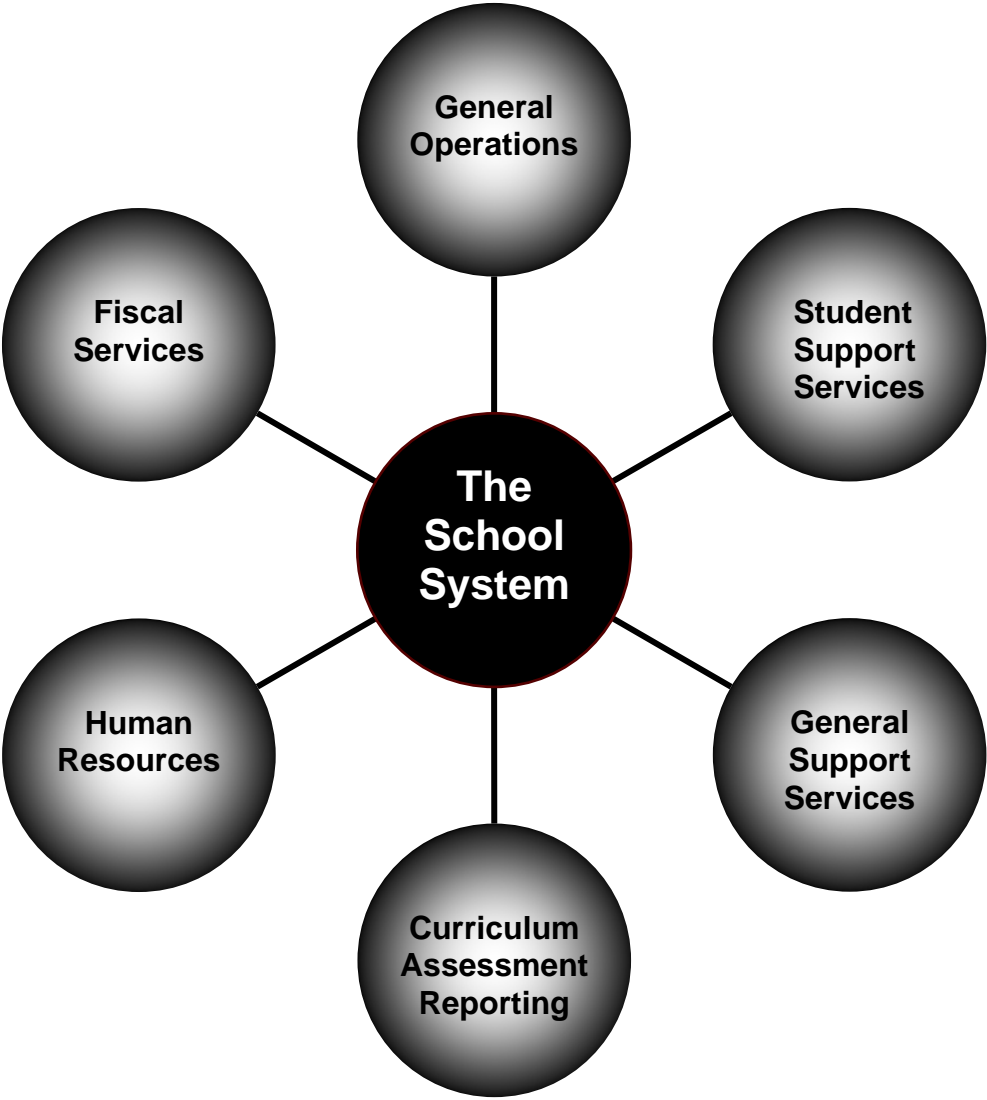
School Board & Administrative Roles & Responsibilities

The resources found on the next two pages are a sample of the leadership roles that the school board, superintendent, and principal are responsible for. This guide was prepared with the intent to more clearly delineate leadership roles and help eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort, improve communication, and strengthen the school leadership team. The roles and responsibilities have been developed as a tool to begin and maintain dialogue between members of each school district and supervisory union leadership team. Throughout Vermont's unique culture and varied governance systems there exists great variation in the scope of leadership duties. Thus, we recognize that one model does not fit all systems.

The following sample roles and responsibilities resources were prepared by the Vermont Education Leadership Alliance (VELA), funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant, and operated under the auspices of the Vermont Principals, Superintendents, and School Boards Associations. You can access all VELA resources by going to the VSBA web site at www.vtvsba.org and clicking on the Vermont Education Leadership Alliance link.

VSBA staff assists school leadership teams to further expand, clarify, and agree to a set of specific roles and responsibilities using the VELA management and function resources found on the web site and profiled in this Resource Directory.

The Functions of School Systems



HUMAN RESOURCES/PERSONNEL: Supervision and Evaluation

Overview: Supervision and Evaluation of all employees of the system helps assure continuous systemic improvement.

GUIDING QUESTIONS	SCHOOL BOARD	SUPERINTENDENT	PRINCIPAL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is our policy on supervision and evaluation for all staff? ◆ What is our current system of supervision and evaluation of all staff and is it working well? ◆ What is the process used to evaluate the superintendent? Is the process tied to goals? ◆ Does the board engage in self evaluation and solicit feedback from the school and broader communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is the supervisory union level model/system being used? ◆ Is the supervision/evaluation system working as designed? For staff? For administrators? ◆ Is there a professional development program in place at all levels to support the supervision/evaluation model? ◆ Who implements the evaluation/supervision system? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is the goal of supervision and evaluation process at the supervisory union/district level for staff? For administrators? ◆ What model of supervision is used in the district? Who is the person at the central office with whom to work on issues related to supervision/evaluation? ◆ Who is responsible for supervision of each staff member? ◆ What are the resources available to implement the system? ◆ What do contracts say about the process—time lines, forms, types of observations, etc?

Preparing for Negotiations

In the opinion of one veteran negotiator for school districts, “Successful negotiating is one part face-to-face discussion and nine parts homework.” Collective bargaining requires preparation that is lengthy, detailed, logical, and thoughtful. Long before the process of negotiating begins, the board must provide clear sense of the direction it intends to take in negotiating and how it intends to reach the objective of securing a reasonable contract.

In preparing for negotiations, boards should account for local variables. Although your board may have consulted other districts, private consultants, or state and national organizations, questions of dynamics can substantially alter the standard steps for preparing to negotiate.

For example, the size of the school district will affect the kind and extent of planning a board must do. In a smaller district, informality may be the rule, and the negotiators may know each other well. Generally, the larger the school district, the more complex negotiations become and the more complex the items to be addressed in planning will be.

Here are some other factors that can dictate the course of the board’s (and its administration’s) planning activities:

- * The amount of pressure that exists. The board will have to modify its approach if teachers are particularly militant, if the district’s financial position has changed markedly, or if a strike deadline is hanging over the board.
- * Your own attitudes. If the board is convinced it’s not going to give an inch, or if it is locked into a certain posture dictated by legal or financial considerations, planning must be adjusted to account for handling these limitations.
- * The current state of employee relations. If employee relations are amicable, the degree of planning may be altered by the simple fact that there will be less to negotiate. Conversely, if the administrators, the board, and the employees have been engaging in a war over policy issues, planning efforts will have to include a strategy for keeping those issues off the bargaining table.

PROCEDURAL STEPS

Once the board has considered local adjustments, its preparation should involve four steps. To complete these steps, the board will need to rely heavily on the administration.

RESEARCH THE EXISTING CONTRACT

Past performance under an existing contract should provide the board with a quick reference to areas likely to be addressed in the upcoming negotiations. For example, if principals report that a significant number of grievances filed under the existing contract had to do with safety considerations, the board should watch for work environment issues to come to the table. If numerous teachers take advantage of educational benefits, such as sabbatical leave or tuition reimbursement, the board can expect the union to seek to keep these benefits. The process, however, does go both ways: If the board feels the benefits are too costly, it can plan to use them as bargaining chips in exchange for concessions in other areas.

One function of researching the existing contract is to identify those provisions to which both parties can agree early in the negotiations and to local weaknesses or possible sticking points that will require more detailed planning and tougher bargaining.

Another function of researching the existing contract is to consider the impact of recent changes in the law, whether state or federal, as well as landmark legal cases. The Americans with Disabilities

Act requires reasonable accommodations in some instances, thus affecting transfer clauses and sometimes seniority provisions. Similarly, Family & Medical Leave Act provisions can drastically affect leaves of absence provisions if not taken into account in collective bargaining. The lesson: Research your existing contract and policies, and recent state and federal law, before you negotiate.

All grievances and arbitration cases should be cataloged by article and section in the old contract to see if language modification is necessary. To find out what areas are in particular need of attention, survey building principals on what language works and which does not. Survey central office for suggestions on operations and finances. Survey board members to determine critical issues from their points of view. After the surveys are in, compile a list of issues, and let those who participated in the survey review the results.

GATHER SALARY DATA AND OTHER INFORMATION

(www.vtvsba.org – select Salary folder) Many factors will affect what kinds of wage and benefit proposals a district can put on the table with any degree of reasonable assurance they will be accepted. Budget data, anticipated tax rates, growth projections, capital requirements, inflation rates, projected interest rates, and the direct cost of fringe benefits will play a dual role. They will help the board frame negotiable limits for economic proposals, and they will help the board formulate counter proposals to unreasonable union demands.

Comparability is another factor. Comparative data from nearby school systems is certain to be a factor in the negotiations. Often, the first negotiated contract in an area will become a bellwether for union or board negotiators, providing a basis for either escalation or moderation of demands in neighboring districts.

The comparability issue can be internally sensitive if a school district is bargaining with more than one exclusive representative (union) for separate contracts. For example, if maintenance workers agree to an 8% pay raise, teachers may not be willing to settle for 7%. The same is true for administrative raises, particularly those given during the negotiation process in other bargaining units.

The importance of wage and other statistical data cannot be overstated. A settlement that is visibly inferior to other contracts in the same area will be seen by union members as a “victory” for the school board at their expense. You can be sure that union negotiators are aware of this attitude and will seek to avoid such a “defeat.”

Have your business office develop cost data for use in bargaining. If your teachers are paid on a salary grid, locate the number of teachers on each step and column and have that data available for each team member, as well as the board. Cost out the cost of increments (movement of teachers up a step) without any raises. This produces a fixed or built-in cost. Cost out what 1% will cost, and how that figure will escalate each year of a multi-year contract. Determine cost-of-living increases or other budget factors that apply to your fixed costs. Cost out each fringe benefit that applies to teachers. Determine what percentage these costs are when compared to salaries. This information is essential at the bargaining table, and it may also be useful later in impasse resolution procedures or when comparing with other contracts from similar districts.

ESTABLISH PARAMETERS AND POSITIONS

One of the board team’s most important roles is deciding how to negotiate and what to negotiate. Your team’s first decision might be, for example, whether to “counter” or “initiate” (i.e., argue union proposals or make your own). Most boards find raising their own issues to be preferable because it allows them to negotiate from the strength of being on the offense.

As the team begins to map out the issues it expects to be placed on the table by either party, it should develop several positions per issue. Bargaining, after all, is a give-and-take process, and most boards (particularly on economic issues) find it useful to have low, middle, and high-range proposals quickly at hand.

Establishing parameters and positions is no more than examining facts and assembling preliminary proposals that will move the negotiations toward the predetermined areas of settlement sought by the board. The board should set priorities among those areas. But remember that it is easy to be tough in May, but is much more difficult two weeks into a teacher strike in September to remember why you picked that particular issue to fight for. Parameters should be reasonable and clearly communicated to the bargaining team, and they should be honored when returned with a tentative agreement.

PLAN A STRATEGY

Strategy sessions should include key members of the administration, any outside negotiators the board will be using, and every board member. It is in the strategy sessions that most boards develop priorities for the negotiations. Also, the strategy sessions will usually include an assessment of the union's likely posture. Short-term, at-the-table strategy should be left to the bargaining team, however.

Part of the board's strategy is to determine: who will make public statements the superintendent, board president, or chief negotiator; whether individual board members should speak, and if so, to what extent; and whether the board will stand firm on issues to the extent of a strike. If a strike is possible, the board should develop and adopt a strike plan that is sensitive to outside and/or past issues that can affect the success of everyone's efforts:

- * be willing to take a risk for the success of the collaborative effort
- * do its homework!

*Source: Updating School Board Policies,
National School Boards Association*

Negotiating With School Employees



	Teachers (Title 16, Chapter 57)	Municipal Employees (Title 21, Chapter 22)
Employees Covered	Any person licensed as teacher who is not an "administrator." [Sec.1981]	Any employee of "municipal employer" except: (1) elected officials, (2) supervisors, (3) probationary status employees, (4) confidential employees, (5) certified school employees.
Recognition of Employee Bargaining Unit	Employees select unit, recognition by board mandatory. American Arbitration Assn. supervises disputed election. [Sec.1991, 1992]	Employees select unit, recognition by board mandatory. State labor relations board supervises certification of unit. [Sec.1723, 1724]
Delegation	Negotiation may be delegated by board; not final ratification. [Sec.2009]	Negotiation may be by "designated representative" or legislative body. [Sec.1725]
Mandatory subjects of bargaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Salary * Related economic conditions of employment * Grievance procedures * Any mutually agreed upon matters not in conflict with statutes. [Sec.2004] 	* Wages, hours and conditions of employment ("directly affecting economic circumstances, health, safety or convenience"... not "bargainable matters of inherent managerial policy.")
Agency service fee	Authorized subject of bargaining.	Authorized subject of bargaining. [Sec. 1734]
Mediation	By joint agreement at impasse. [Sec.2006]	On request of either party, or on initiative of commissioner of labor. Mediator appointed by commissioner of labor. [Sec.1731]
Factfinding	On request of either party. No required factors for consideration. Non-binding recommendations public after 10 days. [Sec.2007]	On certification by mediator. Required factors for consideration. Non-binding recommendations public after 10 days.
Arbitration	Binding Interest Arbitration available by mutual agreement. Jurisdiction of arbitrator defined by statute. [Subchapter 4]	By agreement or vote of municipality. Required factors for consideration. Decision binding unless vacated by court on specific grounds. [Sec.1733]
Finality	Board may declare after full compliance with statutory process. On matters in dispute only. [Sec.2008]	No finality provision.
Strikes and Injunctions	Limited right to strike. Enjoined only for "clear and present danger to sound program of school education." [Sec2010]	Limited right to strike. Enjoined if "danger to health, safety, welfare or public," or after entering binding arbitration. [Sec.1730]

Lessons Learned On The Way To Collaborative Bargaining

Collaborative bargaining is a process where both the board negotiations team and the teacher's union agree to receive advance training and to work together to reach agreement on mutual bargaining points. It is much less adversarial than traditional collective bargaining.

- The process of collaborative bargaining is slower on the front end than collective bargaining.
- Training is critical. It must be thorough and not rushed because of the desire to begin problem solving.
- Writing things down on a flip chart or blackboard is important to help focus the group.
- Goals and group agreement should be renewed periodically. Begin each meeting by reading the goals and agreements.
- The information and data needed should be available at the first meeting. It should be precise and open, especially when dealing with money issues.
- It is critical to share concerns and discomfort about group process and personal issues with the group while it is in session.
- Teachers and the Board should have a back-up person attend the training in order to facilitate an easier transition caused by the possible loss of a regular member.
- The need for joint communication from the team to their respective constituents is imperative.
- It may be difficult to overcome baggage from previous years of collective bargaining (i.e., language, procedure).
- Complex contract language developed through collective bargaining needs to be reduced to language that can be easily understood.
- Between meetings, it may be easy to forget some of the reasoning that led to agreements and understandings from the previous meeting. Therefore, we recommend accurate notes and timely dissemination of the same.
- The team must:
 - * understand the process
 - * understand the issues
 - * be willing to work towards mutual agreement/consensus

Tab 6

Accountability

Accountability

Because the board is accountable to the community, it regularly assesses student learning, staff, itself, and all conditions affecting education.

Questions for the board to ask:

Results

1. Have we established expected results clearly?
2. Have we provided the resources needed to achieve the results?
3. How do we currently monitor progress toward results? Is it effective?
4. What indicators would convince us that we are making reasonable progress toward results?
[looking for trends over time]
5. What resources are available to assist us?
6. What is our time frame?

Limits

1. How do we currently monitor compliance with policies? Is it effective?
2. What information do we need to ensure compliance with policies?
3. What resources are available to assist us?
4. What is our time frame?

Board Process

1. How do we currently monitor our own effectiveness as a board? Is it effective?
2. What resources are available to assist us?
3. What is our time frame?

Superintendent

1. What is our current superintendent evaluation process? Is it effective?
2. Is the evaluation process based on progress toward reaching our vision within available resources and limits?
3. Have we delegated appropriate authority to the superintendent to carry out his/her responsibilities?
4. What is the time line for the evaluation process?
5. What resources are available to assist us, including other evaluation models?

How can the VSBA help?

1. The VSBA offers electronic self assessment and superintendent evaluation surveys than can be tabulated for a customized report.
2. The VSBA provides a school board professional development DVD titled Superintendent Evaluation. Contact the office for a copy or order online.

Information and Decision-Making

Not all decisions are board decisions. A board typically receives a lot of information and often feels obligated to discuss and react to all information presented. Effective boards understand it should be clear whether the communication is being sent for information purposes only, for input, or for actual decision-making.

What information does a board need to perform its role effectively?

1. To make informed **decisions** about expected results and reasonable limitations
2. To monitor progress towards results, to **monitor** system for acceptable performance
3. **To keep informed**- this should not take a lot of meeting time, the board should not act on the information, but the board needs to be informed of significant information such as:
 - a. media coverage
 - b. legal implications
 - c. controversial issues
 - d. material changes to programs and staffing

What about **input** from the board? The board should be proactive rather than reactive. The board should provide input upfront in setting policies and limitations. Once a decision has been delegated to the administration, the board's role is to monitor progress, but not to provide input into the implementation.

School Board Self-Assessment Survey

_____ (School Name)

_____ **School Board Member**

_____ **Administrator**

Please identify your role. Check the boxes below that best identify your response to each question about the board's performance. If you haven't formed an opinion about a specific question then leave it blank. There are no right or wrong answers; your personal views are important. The easiest way to complete this survey is from the VSBA web site, www.vtvsba.org, and click on the blue "Self-Assessment" link. VSBA staff will compile results and share the common trends and differences of opinion with the board and administrators at the scheduled board work session. The information will help the board assess its effectiveness, identify priorities, and create short and long-term goals for the leadership team.

SETTING THE VISION		Agree	Agree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
1.	The board regularly discusses where the district should be headed 3-5 years into the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	The board regularly solicits input from the community when establishing the future vision of the district.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	The vision reflects community priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	The vision is written in terms of expected results for students rather than activities the district will engage in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The vision is realistic given available resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ESTABLISHING STRUCTURE		Agree	Agree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
6.	The board adopts and follows policies to ensure that school resources are used appropriately and effectively to meet district goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The board has developed an ongoing system to review & update all policies every three to five years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	The budget reflects the district vision and mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	The board delegates responsibility for implementing policy to the administration.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	There is a process for soliciting and responding to input from staff and community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

OPERATING WITH APPROPRIATE CONDUCT AND ETHICS		Agree	Agree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
11.	The board adopts an has signed a Code of Conduct that outlines leadership team expectations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	The board makes decisions that are consistent with the district's vision, mission and goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13.	The board follows a consistent process when making decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Board members have the information needed to make informed decisions and understand their potential impact.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Once a decision is made, regardless of differing opinions, board members work to support it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Board members consistently maintain confidentiality regarding executive session information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Regular board meetings are efficient and generally last no more than 2-3 hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Board members are respectful to other board members, administrators, staff, and visitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Board members annually participate in board development activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	The board allocates funds for board member development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	The board encourages community leaders to run for open board positions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	New board members are assisted by experienced board members and administrators to become familiar with the work of the board.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<u>ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY</u>		Agree	Agree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
23.	The board regularly evaluates student progress toward meeting established school goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	The board regularly evaluates its performance in meeting established board goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	The board annually evaluates the superintendent's progress in meeting district goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	The board ensures adherence to policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27.	The board keeps the community informed of district performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<u>ADVOCATING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION</u>		Agree	Agree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
28.	The board is actively involved at both local and state levels in advocating for education legislation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.	The board keeps the community informed on educational issues and the needs of the district.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

VSBA Superintendent Evaluation Process

Statement of Philosophy:

The evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools is a vital process toward creating and maintaining a healthy school organization. The School Board accepts that organizational outcomes must be clearly and explicitly stated in order to; (1) ensure the Superintendent understands what is expected of her/him; and (2) ensure the School Board understands what to expect of the Superintendent. The School Board also accepts that the evaluation process must be objective, based on targeted measures, and rely on information from sources that are qualified to provide feedback.

Definition of terms:

1. **Objective:** targeted measures must be objective outcomes agreed upon by the entire Board.
2. **Targeted:** measured outcomes must be clearly stated at the beginning of the year (or cycle) and not be changed half-way through the evaluation process.
3. **Qualified:** people asked to provide evaluative comments must be qualified to do so. That is, they must have specific knowledge/experience of the Superintendent's roles, responsibilities, and of her/his actions to achieve the measured outcomes.

Evaluation Assumptions:

- The Supervisory Union/Supervisory District Board has the authority and responsibility to evaluate the Superintendent. (16 VSA sect. 241)
- The Superintendent's job description is a dynamic tool which clarifies expectations and provides authority.
- The Board may collect evaluative input from other entities that are qualified and objective.
- There is a productive working relationship between the Board and the Superintendent.
- The evaluation process is based on a continuous improvement model.
- The Superintendent provides information to the Board on the progress of district goals throughout the year.
- The Board is looking for trends that show progress toward achieving district goals.
- The greatest value in the evaluation process is the dialogue between the Board and Superintendent about progress of the district.
- If there are a number of unacceptable areas identified in the evaluation process, the Board needs to determine the next steps to address them, which may include implementing a remedial plan.

Purpose:

The evaluation process and tools serve to:

- continuously improve the functioning of the District;
- clarify the expectations and authority of the Superintendent;
- provide feedback to the Superintendent regarding performance expectations in key areas;
- provide the groundwork for establishing future goals;
- strengthen the relationship between the Superintendent and the Board.

Overview:

In light of the purpose, the Board should:

- consider the evaluation instrument to be a template and customize it to meet district goals and needs;
- review the outcome areas each year but may not want to evaluate them all annually – all areas should be evaluated on a 3-5 year cycle;
- ensure that the indicators reflect their expectations as a Board;
- make it clear to all the Boards and the Superintendent that the goals and indicators will be instituted throughout the next evaluation cycle;
- ensure that the Superintendent will only be evaluated in the areas where she/he has been given the authority to carry out specific duties.

Implementation Steps:

Each Supervisory Union/Supervisory District Board should follow the steps outlined below to carry out a fair and comprehensive Superintendent evaluation process.

1. Decide whether the full SU Board or executive committee should customize and manage the process.
2. Review the Superintendent evaluation instrument template.
3. Identify which outcome areas align with district goals and will be the focus of the evaluation cycle.
4. Customize the indicators in selected areas to meet District expectations.
5. Align the Superintendent's job description so she/he is provided with the authority to meet expectations.
6. Identify how the Board(s) will provide input in the process.
7. Establish a time line and communication process.
8. Identify who will collect and tabulate the input.
9. Train all input providers on how to complete the evaluation instrument.
10. Board members track information delivered during the year related to indicators.
11. Complete the evaluation instrument.
12. Tabulate the data (VSBA service (\$250) Survey Monkey... or home grown)
13. The Board and the Superintendent engage in dialogue about the results.
14. Use the results to inform future work and the Superintendent contract.
15. Start the evaluation process again.

Vermont School District/Supervisory Union Superintendent Evaluation Instrument

Superintendent: _____

Evaluator: Board member Board as a whole Date: _____

Performance Indicators

(Use indicators below as examples and do not rate each one. These are listed only to help you in thinking about the standard.)

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Outcome Standards</i>
Student Learning	<p>Students are making progress toward achieving outcomes identified by the board.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific progress is evident. 2. Student learning is defined based on the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful. 3. Data and information collected is reliable, valid, and believable. 4. Data is regularly presented and is communicated in understandable forms. 5. Data is used for future planning and improvement. 6. Effective methods of providing, monitoring, evaluating, and reporting student achievement are used. 7. Student learning indicators include measures beyond graduation. 8. Surveys generally demonstrate student satisfaction with their school program. 9. Preparing students for post-secondary education and/or entrance into the job market. 10. Data is disaggregated, analyzed, and explained. 11. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments:</p> 	

Instruction	<p>Students receive the highest quality instruction</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum is aligned across the system. 2. Students are engaged in their work. 3. Instructional best practices are described and used. 4. Adopted programs are fully implemented and effectiveness regularly monitored. 5. Teachers continually improve their instructional practices. 6. Faculty and stakeholders are involved in the enhancement, renewal, and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. 7. Feedback about effective instruction is encouraged. 8. Professional development and teacher evaluation are focused on improving instructional practices. 9. Teachers understand and utilize knowledge about different learning styles and particular student needs. 10. Students and teachers work in an environment of shared respect and open feedback. 11. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments:</p>	
Community Relations	<p>Community is satisfied with performance and supports the school</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents communicate satisfaction with school experiences. 2. A community process exists to develop and implement a shared vision that focuses on improving student achievement. 3. Budgets are consistently supported by the community. 4. Community members are involved in school activities. 5. Students participate in community service learning activities. 6. A process is in place and followed to listen to and resolve complaints. 7. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments:</p>	

Human Resources	<p>The environment supports the staff performing their best work.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff are treated fairly. 2. Teaching staff work effectively within their classroom, throughout the school, across district schools, and with the community. 3. Operations are clearly defined, communicated, and implemented. 4. Personnel contracts are adhered to. 5. Effective collective bargaining strategies advance and promote student learning. 6. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments:</p>	
Policy	<p>Policies are adhered to and administrative procedures are followed.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The superintendent serves as a resource to the board in developing, adopting, and updating policies. 2. Procedures are developed and available to the board, staff, students, and the public. 3. Procedures are aligned with board policy and comply with all laws, rules, and regulations. 4. Procedures are reviewed and revised periodically. 5. Legal counsel is judiciously used to proactively prevent /respond to civil and criminal liabilities. 6. The superintendent understands the system of public school governance and differentiates between the policy making and administrative roles. 7. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments:</p>	

Finances	<p>The district is an effective steward of financial resources.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budgets reflect district goals for student achievement. 2. District expenses do not exceed revenues. If this occurs, a plan is developed and presented to the board for remediation within an acceptable time line. 3. Finances are managed in accordance with GASBE and GAAP standards. 4. The annual audit shows no material deficiencies and audit recommendations are effectively implemented. 5. Multi-year budget plans are used for planning purposes. 6. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments:</p>	
Facilities	<p>The district is a good steward of capital resources.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All buildings meet safety, health, and construction codes. 2. Facilities and equipment are not subject to improper wear or insufficient maintenance. 3. Multi-year plans for maintenance, repairs, and facility upgrades are in place. 4. Ongoing inspection and reporting systems are utilized. 5. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments:</p>	
Board Relations	<p>The superintendent fosters a relationship of mutual respect and support.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The superintendent assists the board in developing clear policies that meet federal and state requirements. 2. The superintendent understands and communicates legal liability to the district. 3. The superintendent supports the board chair to maximize the effectiveness of board operations. 4. The superintendent regularly informs the board about the business of the district and alerts the board about critical issues and areas that may have impact on the district. 5. The superintendent maintains a future-focus on emerging trends and research.

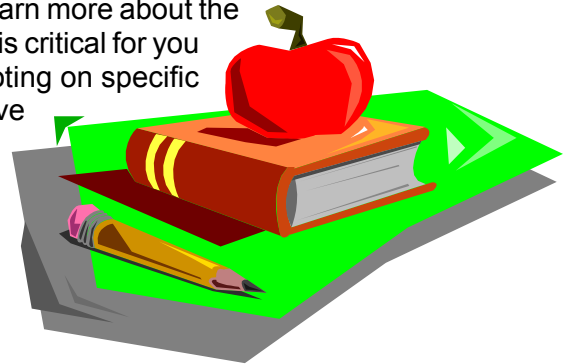
	<p>6. The superintendent follows agreed upon board-superintendent guidelines.</p> <p>7. The superintendent meets deadlines and follows up on commitments and assignments.</p> <p>8. Other:</p>
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comment:</p>	
<p>Safety</p>	<p>Students, staff, and community members are physically and psychologically safe in the school.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The superintendent creates and implements practices and procedures that promote safe school environments. 2. A school-based climate of tolerance, acceptance, and civility are in place and continually monitored. 3. Parents, staff, and students report feeling physically and emotionally safe and respected in school. 4. Crisis plans exist and are routinely practiced. 5. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
<p>Written Comments</p>	
<p>Communication</p>	<p>The superintendent promotes two-way communication with students, staff, parents, and the community as a whole, including building effective relationships with the media.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication systems are in place that effectively keeps all parties informed. 2. Systems are in place to monitor internal and external perceptions of the district. 3. The superintendent demonstrates effective communication skills in formal and informal settings. 4. Involvement of all stakeholders is promoted. 5. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is: <input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	

Written Comments:	
Ethics	<p>The district operates in an ethical manner.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The superintendent manifests a professional code of ethics and demonstrates personal integrity. 2. The superintendent models accepted moral and ethical standards in all interactions. 3. The superintendent explores and develops ways to find common ground in dealing with difficult and divisive issues. 4. Moral and ethical practices are established and followed in every classroom, school, and throughout the district. 5. The superintendent promotes for staff, administrators, and self opportunities for growth in professional competence. 6. Other:
<p>The superintendent has sufficient authority to achieve this standard? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>The superintendent's rating for this standard is:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding</p>	
Written Comments:	

Questions Board Members Should Ask When Discussing Curriculum Policy

(Most questions were developed and are used by the Barre Town School Board)

School board members are not expected to know everything about the operation of a school. In most communities the school is the largest business in the area and board members are elected from a broad demographic cross-section of voters and generally don't have much experience in the field of education. Providing curriculum policy oversight is one of the most important but difficult jobs that the board will undertake. Thus, as board members learn more about the intricate dynamics of board operation and school leadership it is critical for you to gather necessary information prior to consideration and voting on specific issues. Below are questions that you may use to receive essential information when considering adoption of curriculum policy and overall program evaluation.



Remember, the power is in the question!

- Why are teachers and administrators focusing on this area of curriculum now?
- Are the school's current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices and policies compatible, effective and aligned with local, state and national standards?
- Will adoption of the proposed curriculum support the goals of the annual action plan?
- What professional development implications should be considered?
- Will adoption of the proposed curriculum affect the negotiated contract?
- What policy implications emerged from the curriculum study committee report?
- What are the financial implications associated with the development and implementation of a new or revised curriculum (personnel, materials, other resources)?
- How will learner outcomes be assessed?
- How does the proposed curriculum meet the unique learning needs of all children?
- What are the implications for the use of technology in the proposed curriculum?
- Are there community service or school-to-work learning opportunities available within the proposed curriculum?
- How will teacher evaluation be linked to student performance in this area of the curriculum?
- Are there any areas of the proposed curriculum that parents or advocacy groups might express concerns about?

Questions and Answers on the Oversight Role of School Boards Regarding Special Education



What role can I, as a school board member, play in the area of special education?

The school board should oversee all aspects of education in your district. The board should set the direction, the general guidelines that special educators and the Local Education Agency (LEA) representative on Individual Education Program (IEP) Teams should follow in determining the services needed by children and in implementing IEP plans. The best way to formalize this is to adopt a school district policy on special education that spells out such things as the commitment to providing an appropriate education to all children in your district, the boards desire to assure that all school staff are fully aware of and qualified to employ a variety of teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs of all children, the commitment to provide education in a cost effective manner, a plan for reviewing the progress of students with disabilities in the general curriculum, and other relevant topics.

Board members should be knowledgeable about the law governing special education and be aware of board responsibilities. The board should assure that the district employs the staff needed to carry out the planned program and that they are knowledgeable about the special education field. Be sure that the school provides an environment conducive to increasing student learning and ongoing educator professional development. Be aware of costs and revenues, and assure that confidentiality laws are respected.

The board should pay particular attention to setting up an accountability system with the administrators. Determine together what indicators of progress assure that special education programs are resulting in educational benefits for all students and agree upon methods and time frames by which the school board will be kept informed of progress. Ask about your school statistics in terms of numbers of special education students and costs compared with those of other districts.

You should communicate and advocate for special education within the context of general education in your community. Become familiar with support programs offered by the school and the results achieved by children who access special education services.

Can I ask questions about IEP programs or must I just approve payment of program costs?

The board should ask your administrators for assurance that programs have been evaluated both in terms of educational appropriateness, cost effectiveness, and that they are implemented by qualified providers. Become informed about the types of questions IEP teams ask regarding educational benefit and educational necessity on which IEP decisions for supplementary aides, services and accommodations are based.

As a school board member, can I be a member of the IEP team?

Case law indicates that school board members may not serve as members of IEP teams, except when a board member's child has an IEP. Each member of the team is a required participant because of their special area of expertise or knowledge of the student.

Who can be a member of the IEP team and who is our school's representative?

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires the following individuals to be members of the IEP team. They include:



- parents,
- at least one regular education teacher,
- at least one special education teacher or services provider,
- an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation,
- a representative of the local educational agency who is:
 - (1) qualified to provide or supervise specially designed instruction;
 - (2) knowledgeable about the general curriculum; and
 - (3) knowledgeable about the availability of resources.



Who can help us be sure that we are carrying out our responsibilities in a cost-effective way?

The Department of Education performs program and fiscal reviews of all supervisory unions/districts in Vermont. Ask your superintendent for a copy your district report. Review the reports to determine where your spending patterns are in relationship to other regions of the state that are similar to you. Contact other superintendents or school boards for ideas on how your school district can provide high quality programs in a cost-effective manner.



What do the confidentiality laws allow us, as a school board, to know about special education programs in our school?

Boards should know what programs are and are not available in their schools. They should know the number of children in their schools who are served under Act 230, and the number of children served under 504 and IDEA. They should be clear on what procedures are used by IEP teams to determine what programs or services for students are educationally necessary in order for individual students to benefit from their education experience. Board members should discuss with the special education administrators the responsibility of the school to provide to students a program of reasonable cost that will enable them to benefit from their education. The board should know what experience, education and training school personnel have received and how decisions to provide services, supports and accommodations are made.

Boards are not allowed to discuss the specific details of an individual child's program. This would be considered a violation of confidentiality under the federal Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA).



What kind of training on confidentiality should be held at our school?

Board members and all school personnel should be trained on the FERPA requirements annually. The special education administrator can assist with this training.

What relationship is there between the teacher's skills in presenting materials using different approaches and behavior management techniques and the number of students referred for special education?

The skills a teacher needs today to effectively educate a class of students with very diverse needs is quite different now than it was even 10 years ago. Teachers need to have access to relevant professional development that targets the current needs of children in their classroom. Building principals and school boards need to recognize this need and take a strong leadership role to support professional development for all educational staff.

What should an effective professional development plan contain?

A professional development plan should link closely to the strategic and action plans for the school. Professional development for educators and para-professionals should include topics that focus on the developmental stages of children, learning styles, behavior management techniques, as well as content and pedagogy topics that are relevant to the education of all children. Special educators and teachers who work with children with very specific needs should have access to professional

development that targets the instructional methodologies, program development and support needs of children with disabilities. Additionally, special educators and para-professionals require additional training and certification under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA).



What happens when a student's parents are not satisfied with the decisions of the IEP team?



Parents have a variety of options. They can request another meeting to voice their concerns and ask additional questions. They can ask to obtain an independent evaluation. They can also exercise their due process rights for mediation, an administrative complaint investigation, or a due process hearing.

Are there ways we can handle differences of opinions within our district? How? What resources are available?

IEP teams should remember that building principals and the special education administrators are available to help when conflict arises. Conflict is a natural part of life. Knowing whom to call upon for help can assist in the speedy resolution of differences of opinion. Schools can request mediation from the Department of Education. This service is provided at no cost to the school or family. Both parties must agree to participate. Mediation can be requested by calling 802-828-3136.

How can I respond to community concerns that costs are so high?

Invite community members to participate on action planning and budget committees. Develop strategies for building the budget based on student data. The budget should support a strategic plan that is based on your data and professional development needs of staff to support the implementation of the plan.

Are there ways to decrease the number of students needing special education services?

Review your assessment data annually. Identify what needs to be in place for all students in your school to be successful. Frequently children will be referred for a special education evaluation just because a support option or accommodation that should be available for all students is missing from the system.



Ask your superintendent to contact schools with similar characteristics to your school who have low child count numbers. Find out what they have built into the capacity of their school to meet the needs of their students without the necessity to require special education services. Sometimes it can be something simple like creative utilization of staff and delivery models for services within the classroom setting.

How can we judge when we should pursue due process? What other options are available?

Due process is appropriate to pursue if the school feels they have appropriately evaluated the student, have developed an appropriate program for the student that will result in educational benefit and have managed the special education process in compliance with IDEA. Due process should be pursued in situations where the school has a responsibility to make sure a student is appropriately evaluated and served.

The best alternative to due process is mediation. Many differences of opinion are able to be resolved with the assistance of a trained mediator.



How is our Educational Support Team functioning? How should it be functioning?

Under the requirements of Act 157, all schools in the state are required to have in place an educational support system. Educational support teams are available to school staff and parents to provide a forum for discussing difficulties students are having in school. Creative solutions for supports and interventions can be designed that enable the school and family to work together to help the student experience academic success.

(With thanks to Susan Cano Special Education Director for the Lamoille North SU)

Indicators of Achievement and School Quality

Tests are not the sole indicator of how a student, school, or supervisory union/district is performing. There is much more to education than percentile ranks. You will find a description of indicators below that provide the school board, parents and community members with more comprehensive effectiveness measures for how students and schools can be evaluated. Some of these indicators are based on objective data, while others are more subjective in nature. Five broad categories of indicators are presented for board consideration.

Additional Indicators of Achievement and School Quality
<u>Student-Based Indicators</u> % of Students Taking College Admission Tests % of Students Taking Advanced Placement Courses/Tests % of Students Going on to College or Other Post-Graduation Options % of Students Meeting State Standards Dropout and School Completion Rates/Promotion and Retention Rates
<u>Teacher -Based Indicators</u> % of Teachers with Majors or Minors in Teaching Areas % of Teachers Attaining Regular Certification # of Teachers Achieving National Board Certification Identify Teacher Expertise, Experience, Recognition Awards, etc.
<u>Parent and Community-Based Indicators</u> % of Parents Involved at Home and in School Level of "Customer" Satisfaction with School Graduates
<u>Curriculum and Equipment-Based Indicators</u> Average Age of Textbooks Adequacy of Scientific Lab and Field Equipment Effective Use of Technology in Student Learning
<u>Other Indicators</u> Business and Education Partnerships Innovative Projects Student-Teacher Ratio After-School Programs Regional Per-Pupil Spending Comparisons County Child Well-Being Indicators

Tab 7

Advocacy

Advocacy

The board serves as education's key advocate on behalf of students and its schools in the community to advance the vision. Therefore the board takes leadership in securing community support for the district's vision and mission and the resources needed to achieve them. The board also promotes the welfare of the district and each student through the political process at the local, state and national levels.

Questions for the board to ask:

1. How do we inform the community of the successes and challenges facing the district?
2. Do we receive regular updates during the Vermont legislative session?
3. Do we take positions as a board and communicate those positions to our representatives as well as the appropriate legislative committees?
4. Do we invite our representatives to meet with the board and community?
5. Are we involved in the VSBA resolutions process?
6. What resources are available to assist us?
7. What is our time frame?

How can the VSBA help?

Be sure one person from your board is your VSBA Government Relations Network (GRN) and is reporting regularly to the board.

VSBA Government Relations Network

There is no substitute for grass-roots organization when it comes to influencing legislative decision making. In order to improve our grass-roots network of school boards, we are asking that each school board in Vermont select one member to be its representative to the VSBA Government Relations Network (GRN).

Representatives to the GRN will receive frequent email status reports from the VSBA and detailed legislative updates from the VSBA, VSA and VPA throughout the coming legislative session.

In addition, we will keep GRN representatives in touch with developments in Washington by forwarding information and calls to action from the National School Boards Association's Federal Relations Network.

GRN representatives will also be asked, on occasion, to help us communicate with local legislators on issues of importance to public education. This is vitally important. We know that nothing carries more weight with legislators than calls from home.

In return for increased and improved communication from us, we will also ask that GRN representatives keep their fellow board members apprised of activities in Montpelier and Washington by sharing our legislative alerts with their boards.

Please register for the GRN at www.vtvsba.org.

Communicating With Legislators

MAKE SURE YOUR LEGISLATORS KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT AN ISSUE

- A. Write a short letter that gets to the point, is easy to read, and therefore will likely be read.
- B. Phone as a follow-up to a letter or instead of a letter.
- C. Testify at public hearings and before legislative committees
- D. E-mail - some legislators use the state system
- E. Be cordial and thoughtful when communicating. If a letter ends up being long and angry sounding, use it for venting, but don't send it.
 - 1. Be careful about accusations about "the state" or the universal "you" as it is likely to make legislators defensive.
 - 2. Making your points with specific data; "anecdotes" can be effective.
 - 3. Bringing students to testify can be effective depending on the subject matter.
 - 4. Whether testifying, talking on the phone or writing a letter, being brief and to the point is most likely to be convincing.
 - 5. If you have several people who want to testify before a committee or at a public hearing either divide up the testimony or have one person testify and then introduce the others who are there to support the position.
- F. Maintain credibility. Check out rumors before reacting, use reliable sources; don't give your legislator a chance to "write you off" because of bad information.

KEEP INFORMED

- A. Use your professional association as a source.
- B. Check the Legislature's web page: www.leg.state.vt.us. This site includes a legislative directory, weekly schedule of events, the bill tracking system, the full text of bills, acts and resolves, daily postings of journals and calendars, and the Vermont statutes and constitution.
- C. Newspapers may be useful for basic information, but check out the issues raised in the articles (details might be misleading).
- D. Use your Legislators
 - 1. Be patient they might not know particulars but should be willing to find out.
 - 2. Can have material mailed to you.

PROPOSING LEGISLATION

- A. Your Legislator should be willing to propose a bill for you; don't be shy about asking
- B. Work with your professional association to support larger issues.

by Bill Talbott, the Chief Financial Officer at the Vermont Department of Education and a former legislator from Monkton, and Martha Heath, a legislator and school board member from Westford.

Tab 8

School Board Conduct & Ethics

School Board Conduct and Ethics

The board conducts district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner.

Questions for the board to ask:

1. Do we have and follow a Conflict of Interest policy?
2. Have we reviewed, adopted and signed the Code of Conduct?
3. Do we have a process for encouraging people to run for seats on the board?
4. Do we engage in board development activities?
5. Do we have a good process for handling diverse opinions and making decisions?
6. Do we each honor the decision of the board regardless of how we voted?
7. Do we have a clear written process for handling complaints and under what conditions the board considers a complaint?
8. Do we spend more time thinking about the results we want in the future rather than information on what has already happened or is happening now?
9. Do we have current board goals?
10. Do we have an annual agenda that maps out how we will use our meeting time over the year to meet our goals?
11. What resources are available to assist us?
12. What is our time frame?

How can the VSBA help?

1. The VSBA has a model for the school board "Code of Conduct" listed on the website (www.vtvsba.org) Downloads subpage.
2. The VSBA has a model policy for the Board Member Conflict of Interest (Code B3) listed on the website (www.vtvsba.org) Policy subpage. This is required policy by state law.
3. The VSBA offers a school board professional development DVD regarding the role of the school board chairperson. Order by calling the office or visiting the website.

The following is the VSBA school board “Code of Conduct”. You may find an updated version on the website (www.vtvsba.org) Downloads subpage.

School Board Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct has been developed and recently revised by the Vermont School Boards Association to help school boards carry out the important education decision making role while maintaining effective relationships with school administrators, staff, and community members. Given the complexity of Vermont’s education governance structure, nothing is more important than clarifying appropriate roles and responsibilities for the school board, superintendent, and principal(s).

A school board member has no legal powers unless participating at a legally warned school board meeting, or acting on behalf of the school board after the board formally grants authority to do so. Thus, it is essential that every school board member work as a member of the broader leadership team to perform board duties and act in a manner consistent with the Code.

Board members can demonstrate personal commitment to the Code by signing this document signifying agreement to uphold the principles of the Code, both, in letter and spirit.

Many school boards post a copy of the signed Code in the front entrance of the school(s). This public display of school leadership team commitment sends a powerful message and sets the tone for how the business of education will be conducted in the community.

As citizens of the United States, board members have certain Constitutional rights, including freedom of speech that cannot be taken away, whether or not you choose to sign this document. The only sections of this Code that require legal compliance are the “*conflict of interest*” and “*act only as a member of the board.*” All other sections represent effective practice.

BOARD GOVERNANCE

- Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, insofar as possible, and review advance materials about the issues to be considered on each agenda.
- In consultation with the community, principal, staff, and superintendent, set the vision for the school(s).
- Maintain confidentiality of information and discussion conducted in executive session.
- Review essential facts, consider others’ ideas, and then present personal opinions during board deliberations but, once the board vote has been taken, support board decisions regardless of individuals positions.
- Act only as a member of the board and do not assume any individual authority when the board is not in session, unless otherwise directed by the board.
- Rely on school policies, that are continually updated and aligned with Vermont and federal education laws, and guidance from the superintendent, when making board decisions.
- Request recommendations from the superintendent and seek legal counsel, when required, for full and informed board consideration of issues requiring legal expertise.
- Expect an equitable amount of board meeting time be spent both learning about educational programs and conducting the business of the board.
- Maintain a priority board focus on increasing student achievement and ensuring efficient use of education resources.

BOARD-ADMINISTRATION RELATIONS

- Recognize that a board member's responsibility is to see that schools are well run, but not to run them.
- Provide policy support for school administrators in the performance of their duties and delegate authority commensurate with those responsibilities.
- Expect the superintendent to keep the board adequately informed through regular written and oral reports.
- Refer complaints, requests, and concerns to the superintendent or other appropriate staff members.
- Avoid making commitments that may compromise the decision making ability of the board or administrators.
- Maintain open and candid communication with the superintendent.
- Hold the superintendent accountable by jointly creating job performance standards and at least annually perform a comprehensive evaluation process based on the job description, contract, and identified performance standards.

BOARD MEMBER RELATIONS

- Retain independent judgment and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.
- Voice opinions respectfully and maintain good relations with other board members, administrators, school staff, and members of the public.

PERSONNEL RELATIONS

- Seek to employ the most qualified school staff and insist on regular, impartial employee evaluations.
- Hire no superintendent, principal or teacher already under contract with another school district unless assurance is first secured from the proper authority that the person can be released from his or her contract.
- Individual board members shall not give directives to any school administrator or employee, publicly or privately.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- Perform a liaison communications role by interpreting the attitudes, wishes, and needs of both the community and the school.
- Consider the needs of the entire community and vote for what seems best for students.
- Encourage collaboration between the school and community.
- Request that periodic surveys be conducted with the community to assess the quality of education services and use the data to establish and monitor goals.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- Do not use board membership for political, personal, or financial advancement.
- Do not solicit or receive directly or indirectly any gift or compensation in return for making a recommendation or casting a vote.
- Do not receive anything of value, by contract or otherwise, from the school district or supervisory union you serve unless it is received:
 - as a result of a contract accepted after a public bid.
 - in public recognition of service or achievement.
 - as a board stipend reimbursement or expense allowed by law for official duties performed as a member of such board.
- Agree to recuse and remove oneself from board deliberation and votes when necessary to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest.

BOARD PREPARATION AND TRAINING

- Be informed about educational issues through individual study and by participating in board development opportunities such as those sponsored by the Vermont and National School Boards Associations, the Vermont Department of Education, and other education organizations.
- Support new school board members by sharing your experience and knowledge.
- Ensure that adequate board orientation and team building opportunities are available for board members and administrators.
- Associate with board members from other school districts to discuss school problems and collaborate on school improvement initiatives.

I agree to abide by the principles outlined in the School Board Code of Conduct and will do everything in my power to work as a productive member of the leadership team.

Board Member

Board Member

Board Member

Board Member

Board Member

Date

School Board Chair: A Key Leadership Role

by Laura Soares, Randolph Elementary School Board Chair & VSBA President, 2001-2003

The selection of the chair of the board is an important one and should not be made without thoughtful discussion by all members of the board. The position of chair should not be automatically rotated among members or routinely go to the most senior member; instead, it should be given to the person who has the best capacity to fulfill this leadership role. Before determining who is the most qualified board member to serve as board chair, first consider the responsibilities that go with the position.

Build a Team

An effective board needs to work together, focused on the common purpose of providing a high quality education to all children at a reasonable cost. The chair can encourage the board to work as a team, but only if he/she makes the necessary effort. For example: take time to get to know each member of the board, what their interests are, why they serve on the board, and what they do outside of the board room. Welcome new board members and ensure they receive an orientation to their role on the board. Ensure all members, veteran and new, understand they are an integral part of the board. Be aware of board dynamics; don't allow personal differences or personal agendas to dominate a board meeting.

Ensure the Board Sets Annual Goals

An effective board knows where it is headed. Each year the board should take time to reflect on what it has accomplished and what should be on the agenda in the coming year, and the chair should make sure that certain basics are included. For example, board goals need to be in step with the district strategic and action plans. The board should consider what policies need to be reviewed, revised, or created during the year to ensure policies are current and support the district vision. The chair should consider issues about which the board needs advance information in order to make informed decisions, and he/she must allocate adequate time for deliberation of key issues on the agenda. Finally, the chair must not lose sight of the board's role in keeping the community informed and engaged in their public schools.

Build Board Agendas

The chair needs to collaborate with the administration to build effective agendas for each meeting. The agenda needs to include a manageable number of issues, so that each item can be given necessary consideration and so that meetings can be kept to a reasonable length. The agenda should not contain any items for action that the board has not had a chance to consider. The chair needs to anticipate what information the board may want before making a decision. Knowing what questions could arise allows the administration time to prepare information to be distributed in advance.

Run Effective Board Meetings

The chair needs to know parliamentary procedure and ensure the board upholds the law during all public meetings. The chair needs to know what items are appropriate for executive session, as well as which must be handled in open session. The chair needs to ensure that the public feels welcome at meetings, while taking care that meetings stay focused on the agenda and remain productive. This sometimes calls for redirection of the board, the administration, or the public. Without dominating the discussion, the chair must ensure all viewpoints have an opportunity to be expressed, that the discussion is open and fair, but that the board moves from discussion to action. A chair must also know when an issue should be tabled so that more information can be gathered or so that people can have time to reflect.

Follow Up

The chair should keep track of items that come to the attention of the board and must consider a series of questions each raises. What are the next steps? Whose responsibility is it to carry out those steps? Will the board need regular updates on progress? Will this issue come before the board again? When? I keep a yearly calendar with me at every board meeting, and I make notes about such issues. When the board says it wants an update in three months, I jot that down and ensure that the item makes it onto the appropriate agenda.

Work with the Community

The chair of the board is often the first to receive phone calls from the public. It may be a parent with a complaint, a community member with a question about taxes, or the reporter from the local paper. The chair needs to be familiar with the board policy on handling complaints and other communication with members of the public. As is true for all board members, he/she must never act alone. Chairs may speak on behalf of the board, but should do so only after receiving authorization from the board. The chair is usually the presenter of information at public meetings, including Town Meeting, and needs to be able to speak effectively in front of a group. The chair should be seen within the community as an advocate for public education and for the local district.

Act as a Liaison

The chair needs to keep the board informed. Often times information is provided to board chairs with the assumption that the chair will pass this information on to other board members. This will only happen if the chair makes a concerted effort to do so. Information coming from the Department of Education, from VSBA, and even from your own supervisory union board and central office needs to be shared with local board members. We have recently set aside a shelf designated for board materials in the room where the board meets; this allows all board members access to the information. The chair of the board is not alone in carrying out these responsibilities, but is part of a leadership team that includes the superintendent and principal. Very few people step into the position of chair with all of the skills needed to take on this important role. Don't worry; with support from the administration, a commitment to do your best, and some time and experience, most people will soon find they enjoy the challenges and rewards associated with the position of board chair.

(VSBA provides print and DVD resources to help board chairs learn this important role.)

What the Law Says About the Role of Board Chair and Clerk

The following information has been excerpted from the Vermont Education Statutes Annotated and identifies all the roles designated by law for local, union and supervisory union school board chairs and clerks. Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Procedure authorizes the vice chair of a board to fulfill the duties of the board chair in his/her absence.



BOARD CHAIR

Title 16:

§264. Majority vote of school directors

(b) A supervisory union may establish an executive committee consisting of the chair and no fewer than two additional directors.

§554. School board meetings; Open Meeting Law & Robert's Rules

(b) A school board meeting shall be conducted in accordance with the Vermont open meeting law. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of school board meetings. (see Robert's Rules for Small Boards – less than 12 members present

- meetings can be less formal
- motions don't need to be seconded
- chair can speak, make motions and vote)

§561. Certification of election of school board members, oath, chairman, clerk

At the meeting next following the election of a school board member, the school board shall elect one of their number chairman and one other of their number clerk.

§563. Powers of school boards

(8) Shall establish and maintain an adequate system of financial disbursement ... It shall be lawful for a school board to submit to its treasurer a certified copy of those portions of the board minutes, properly signed by the clerk and chairman, or a majority of the board ...

§706p Warnings of union district meetings

(a) Union district meetings shall be warned by the clerk, or in the case of his disability, by the directors, by posting a notice, signed by the chairman of the board ...

BOARD CLERK

Title 16:

§243. Appointment; renewal; dismissal of a principal

(d) Dismissal. The clerk of the board shall advise the principal and the superintendent of the time and place of hearing by written notice at least five days before the ... hearing.

§312. Right to attend meetings of public agencies

(2) Minutes of all public meetings shall be matters of public record, shall be kept by the clerk or secretary of the public body, and shall be available for inspection by any person and ... upon request after five days from the date of any meeting.

§472. Meetings; warnings

(b) Meetings shall be warned by the clerk or..., specifying the time, place and business of the meeting, in two public places in the district, at least seven days before the time therein specified, and warnings shall be recorded before being posted.

§474. Records

The clerk shall keep a record of the votes and proceedings of the school district meetings...A clerk who neglects to perform this duty shall forfeit \$20.00 to the district, ...

§561. Certification of election of school board members, oath, chairman, clerk

At the meeting next following the election of a school board member, the school board shall elect one of their number chairman and one other of their number clerk.

§562. Powers of electorate

(3) May elect a school district clerk at the annual meeting who shall keep a true record of all proceedings at each district meeting, certify its records.....

§563. Powers of school boards

(8)... It shall be lawful for a school board to submit to its treasurer a certified copy of those portions of the board minutes, properly signed by the clerk and chairman...

§706e. Election of directors

.....Nominations for the office of union school director representing any district shall be made by filing with the clerk of that school district proposed as a member of the union...

§706j. Union School organization meeting - business to be transacted

(1) A temporary presiding officer and clerk from among the qualified voters shall be elected;

(3) A moderator, a clerk, a treasurer, and three auditors shall be elected.....

(b) The officers and directors as elected shall be sworn in before entering upon the duties of their offices, and a record made by the clerk.

§706k. Election of district officers

The clerk of the union district shall, within ten days after the election or appointment of any officer or director give notice of the results to the secretary of state.

§706l. Vacancies on union school board

(b) When a vacancy occurs on the board of directors, the clerk shall immediately notify the local school board from that town.

§706p. Warnings of union district meetings

(a) Union district meetings shall be warned by the clerk,...

§706q. Powers, duties and liabilities of union district officers; bonds

(a) The powers, duties and liabilities of the (union)...clerk shall be like those of a...clerk of a town school district.

(c)...The annual report shall be filed with the clerk of the union district,

§706u. Check list for union district meetings

The clerks of the respective towns within the union school district shall furnish to the clerk of the union district, ... authenticated copies of the check list of legal voters....

§706v. Record of union school district proceedings

A clerk who neglects to perform this duty shall forfeit \$20.00 to the district....

§706w. Polling places, transportation and counting of ballots

Bond issues shall be supervised by the union district clerk or his/her designee.

§711e. Budget votes by Australian ballot

(d) If the union school district has voted to commingle its ballots the union school district clerk shall supervise the boards of civil authority to count the commingled ballots.

(e) If the union school district has voted not to commingle its ballots, the municipal clerksshall transmit to the union school district clerk the results of the vote.

Students on School Boards

“How To” Guide

More school boards each year are interested in involving students in board deliberation. It is important for the board to understand the impact leadership decisions have on the student-body. One of the best ways to stay in touch with student needs is to include a student(s) on the school board and allow them to participate in discussion

Follow these steps to maximize the benefit of student participation on your board.

Steps:

1. Establish criteria for student service on the board, such as:
 - a. Attend majority of board meetings;
 - b. Will not participate in executive sessions;
 - c. Board chair allow student(s) to express opinions on par with other board members;
 - d. Hold student(s) to same level of conduct and behavior as adult board members.

2. Create a process through which a student is selected annually.
 - a. Set up annual selection system, possibly with voting by students and/or staff
 - b. During the first year, elect an older student representative (one-year term) and younger alternate (two-year term)

3. Create a communication system
 - a. Principal(s) work with student rep to set up a routine communication system in the school(s).
 - i. Periodic communication using intercom/written announcements
 - b. Encourage student reps to check with fellow students and report what is going well, concerns, and other general feedback to the board

4. Agenda management
 - a. Place agenda items early in the meeting that would be most suited to student participation
 - b. Save executive session items for the end of the meeting
 - c. Allow student(s) to leave board meetings early for homework and other important school activities

5. Adult-Student Relations
 - a. Treat each other with respect
 - b. Listen to other' point of view

Vermont Open Meeting Law

(Title 1, Vermont Statutes Annotated, Chapter 5)

- All school board meetings, and meetings of school board subcommittees, must be open to the public, and must give reasonable opportunity for public participation.
- A meeting is defined as a quorum of the members of a school board gathered for the purpose of discussing the business of the board or for the purpose of taking action.



Type of Meeting	Notice to Board Members	Notice to Public & Media	Agenda	Minutes
<u>Regular:</u> Time & place stated in board policy or bylaw.	No legal requirement	No legal requirement but must be provided to media and concerned persons upon request. (Good practice is to publish time & place of each meeting in local paper and on public access TV.)	Available to media and concerned persons upon request.	Available within 5 days of meeting indicating: 1.Members present 2.Other active participants 3.Motions made & their disposition 4.Results of votes, with record of each member's vote if roll call requested by board
<u>Special:</u> Not fixed by policy or bylaws, called for a specific purpose	Written or oral notice 24 hrs in advance unless waived	Publicly announced (give to news media) at least 24 hours prior to meeting; posted in municipal clerk's office and 2 other locations in town.	Same as regular meeting. (Can only discuss items posted on warned agenda)	Same as regular meeting.
<u>Emergency:</u> To respond to unforeseen occurrence or condition requiring immediate attention.	No legal requirement.	Public notice of meeting given as soon as possible before the meeting.	Same as regular meeting. (Can only discuss items posted on warned agenda)	Same as regular meeting.

Executive Session

Executive sessions are portions of meetings not open to the public. Executive sessions may be conducted only for specific purposes described in 1V.S.A. 313, and only following specific procedures. Executive sessions are attended by board members and at the board’s discretion, staff, legal counsel and persons who are subjects of the discussion or whose information is needed.”

There is no specific statutory requirement that executive session deliberations remain confidential. However, breach of trust between board members and administrators, violation of the agreed upon School Board Code, and potential litigation, particularly associated with the sharing of student records and privileged employee information, compel board members to honor the spirit of executive session law.

Requirements to Enter Executive Session	Permissible Subjects for Discussion (See 1 V.S.A. § 313 for complete list of executive session topics)	Minutes	Action Allowed
1. Motion indicating nature of business to be discussed in executive session. 2. Majority vote of board members present.	(1) Contracts, labor relations agreements with employees, arbitration, mediation, grievances, civil actions, or prosecutions by the state, where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the state, municipality, other public body, or person involved at a substantial disadvantage; (2) The negotiating or securing of real estate purchase options; (3) The appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee; (4) A disciplinary or dismissal action against a public officer or employee; but nothing in this subsection shall be construed to impair the right of such officer or employee to a public hearing if formal charges are brought; (5) A clear and imminent peril to the public safety; (6) Discussion or consideration of records or documents excepted from the access to public records provisions of section 317(b) of this title. Discussion or consideration of the excepted record or document shall not itself permit an extension of the executive session to the general subject to which the record or document pertains; (7) The academic records or suspension or discipline of students;	None required while in executive session. If taken, minutes are not made public.	No formal or binding action allowed except relating to securing real estate options. Board must vote to return to the open meeting before any decision can be made regarding the confidential deliberation.

Robert's Rules of Order Motions Chart

Based on Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised (10th Edition)

State law requires that “A school board meeting shall be conducted in accordance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law and Robert’s Rules of Order.” Use the Robert’s Rules chart below when the board is running a meeting or conducting a formal public hearing. The chart will help the board chair and members maintain an effective deliberation and decision making process. Boards with fewer than 12 members may choose to operate less formally using the Robert’s Rules for Small Boards system outlined on the next page.

§	YOU WANT:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT	2 ND	DEBATE	AMEND	VOTE
21	Close meeting	Move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
20	Take break	Move to recess for...	No	Yes	No	No	None
19	Register complaint	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None
18	Make follow agenda	Call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
17	Lay aside temporarily	Move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
16	Close debate	Move the question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
15	Limit or extend debates	Move that debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
14	Postpone to a certain time	Move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
13	Refer to committee	Move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
12	Modify wording of motion	Move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
11	Kill main motion	Move the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
10	Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	Move that (or “to”)...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

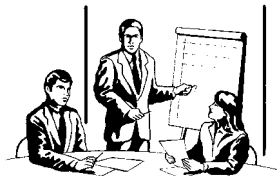
Robert's Rules: Procedures for Small Boards

In a board meeting where there are not more than a dozen board members present, some of the formality that is necessary in a large assembly could hinder board business. The rules governing such meetings are different from the rules that apply to other assemblies in the following respects:

- Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated.
- Motions need not be seconded.
- There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate generally need not be entertained.
- Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
- When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion being introduced. Unless agreed to by general consent, all proposed actions of a board must be approved by a vote under the same rules as in other assemblies.
- The chair can speak in discussion without rising or leaving the chair; and, subject to rule or custom within the particular board (which should be uniformly followed regardless of how many members are present), the chair usually can make motions and usually votes on all questions.

A Note of Caution

If your board elects to operate more informally, it is important that board members agree on this during the annual board reorganization or at a board goal setting work session. The board chair will need to clearly communicate to members that silence during a vote constitutes support for the decision at hand. The board chair should also direct the clerk to record the vote as unanimous in the meeting minutes unless the board members are polled individually. Board member polling can only be initiated by a board member/ not a member of the public or superintendent.





Regular board meetings are convened in a public setting; however, they are not meetings of the public.

The public can and should have a voice in board considerations, but no person or group has the right to obstruct board deliberations. Boards should adopt a policy that allows citizens an opportunity to speak within established time constraints before board action is taken. Many boards have a time on the agenda when visitors may speak on a particular item or present petitions.

Persons who wish to have a specific issue addressed by the school should first be guided through the established protocol. This generally means seeking a decision or resolution from district employees. Only after all other avenues of recourse are exhausted does the issue rise to the board level for possible action.

Unless there is a time sensitive issue that is presented to the board by a visitor, it is good practice for the board to table new issues and ask the superintendent to gather background information before the board decides to address the issue on a future agenda.

Persons addressing the board should be asked to state their names. Many board policies give the chair the prerogative to limit time permitted to any individual or group speaking on an issue. This delegation of power to the chair helps avoid excessive repetition of a certain point of view or causing board meetings to last too long.

No school board or professional staff will ever be able to please everyone in the district. There will always be some complaints and criticism. Some will be justified; some will be based on lack of information. In either case, criticism cannot be settled by being ignored. A policy and an acceptable procedure for handling complaints and criticisms should be adopted by the board.

Complaints and criticism on which action is requested should always be directed through the superintendent to (if necessary) the board. An individual board member has no legal authority to take action on behalf of the school district, and has an obligation to refrain from promising to do so. Rather than conduct one's own investigation of a complaint, a board member should refer the matter to the superintendent. It is important to follow policy and established protocols for processing complaints.

SAMPLE Board Meeting Agenda

Anytown School District

Date of Meeting

Time of Meeting

AGENDA:

- | | |
|---|------|
| I. Call to Order | 7:00 |
| II. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation | 7:05 |
| III. Consent Agenda: <i>(Accept/Adopt)</i> | 7:10 |
| Minutes (edits previously completed online) | |
| Finance Committee Report | |
| Public Relations Committee Report | |
| Principal's (Written) Report | |
| Superintendent's (Written) Report | |
| IV. Student/Teacher Presentation & Recognition | 7:15 |
| V. General Public Comments <i>(Listen & Defer Action to Future Mtg.)</i> | 7:30 |
| VI. Ongoing Business <i>(Deliberation & Possible Action)</i> | 7:50 |
| VII. New Business <i>(Receive Information & Possible Action)</i> | 8:10 |
| VIII. Anticipated Executive Session <i>(Discussion & Possible Action)</i> | 8:40 |
| - 1 V.S.A., sect. 313(3) - Employee dismissal | |
| IX. Action on Personnel Contract <i>(Action if Warranted)</i> | 9:05 |
| X. Board Goal Monitoring <i>(Update Indicators of Progress)</i> | 9:15 |
| XI. Future agenda items <i>(Discussion)</i> | 9:25 |
| XII. Adjournment <i>(Action)</i> | 9:30 |

The Consent Agenda

Much of what a board is required to do by state and federal authorities are really matters that should be delegated to the superintendent. If the decision does not require board judgment, the board should not be making it. Such items can be put on a consent agenda. Background information on these items is sent ahead in the board packet to ensure compliance with board policy. The items are then accepted without discussion by the board unless the board as a whole agrees to take them off the consent agenda because there is a concern the item is not in compliance with board policy.

What types of items may appear on the consent agenda?

1. Hiring of all staff other than the superintendent
2. Approvals of purchases, fuel bids etc.
3. Contracts with agencies
4. Reports that are provided to the board for information purposes but not for decision making
5. Required policies that are in fact written for the board and/or contain procedures and do not require a board discussion on values.

To move consent agenda items, the board chair should call for a motion to accept all items contained in the consent agenda. Once seconded, and the vote to accept is complete, the chair then moves on to the next agenda item.

This expedited process opens up more time for the board to deliberate on more important issues.

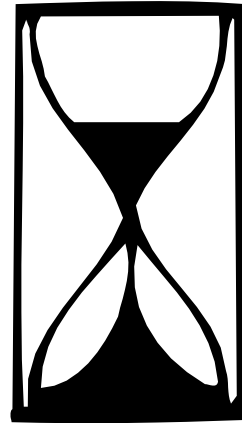
A Minute On Minutes

Your board's minutes are an important channel of communication from the board to school personnel and the public. They also are the only legal record of board meetings.

Minutes should be written immediately after a board or sub-committee meeting. The board secretary or clerk should read them carefully and sign the official copy, which will be included in the school district's records after approval at the next board meeting. Copies of the minutes should be sent to all board members as soon as they are prepared, but not later than the distribution of the next meeting's agenda. Some districts send the unapproved minutes to the press and other community leaders immediately following a meeting, and all districts are required by law to make minutes available to interested citizens, upon request, within 5 business days following the meeting.

Board minutes must include the following:

- Name of your school district, city, or town.
- Place and time of the meeting.
- Board members, staff members, and other active participants present.
- Approval of the minutes from the preceding board or sub committee meeting(s).
- The nature of the meeting (regular, special, or emergency).
- A record of all motions, proposals and resolutions made, and the disposition of each, together with the names of the members making and seconding motions.
- A record of the members voting yea and nay, except for unanimous & voice votes.



The kind of minutes that will be the easiest to read and to glean information from will be those that summarize the meeting and record important matters in an easily discernable way. Use headings, underlining and bold notations to create an easy-to-read format.

(Minutes need to be permanently stored and may not be discarded).

If members of the board want to correct or supplement draft minutes, they should suggest corrections at the next duly warned board meeting. When all board members have email accounts, it saves time if board members email suggested meeting minute edits to the board clerk/secretary in advance of board adoption. This process will eliminate using valuable board meeting time to wordsmith prior meeting minutes!

A set of detailed minutes can help your board understand the history of board decisions. They are invaluable resources for staff members who want to understand why a previous board made the decisions it did. Minutes generally include summaries of significant remarks made by board members and others. However, too much detail can lead to unnecessary debates over the "accuracy" of minutes. When in doubt as to detail, it is often best to delete the source of contention from the minutes.

Source: Becoming A Better Board Member - National School Boards Association

It is good practice to post board and sub-committee agenda and adopted board meeting minutes on the school district website.

Board Member Electronic Communications Standards

School board members should follow the same standards when communicating electronically as are required under Vermont's Open Meeting Law for conducting regular school business. Just as a majority of the board members may not meet to deliberate on school issues without notifying the public, a quorum of the board may not deliberate or make decisions using electronic systems.

Though, there is little case law that provides definitive procedures, the following suggestions should guide school board actions.

What Board Members Can Do Electronically

- ✓ Send individual email to another board member or administrator to share information. The electronic dialogue may not involve the majority of board members in simultaneous communication and, thus, violate the open meeting law quorum standard.
- ✓ Receive board packet information in advance of each meeting.
- ✓ Solicit opinions and feedback from citizens on school related issues.
- ✓ Conduct a legal meeting via e-mail or Internet chat if the board follows the open meeting law requirements (e.g. legally warn that an electronic board meeting will be conducted and indicate how community members may observe and participate in the electronic meeting.)

School Board Members Should Not:

- ✓ Share confidential information via email.
- ✓ Use electronic communications to make school district decisions, as doing so prevents community members and administrators from being able to observe board deliberations and participate in the meeting.
- ✓ Convene a quorum of board members simultaneously on-line to host discussions or vote on issues unless Open Meeting Law requirements have been followed.

In most cases, email is considered a public record subject to disclosure under the Vermont Access to Public Records Act (1 V.S.A. § 315-319). Email is also very traceable, given that it is stored within the Internet service provider's system where, email archives can be requested by interested parties, members of the press, or through a court subpoena.

Good advice to follow is to never communicate anything using email that you would not share in an open meeting.

Local School Board Law

Vermont law assigns powers to Vermont school boards. Each school board is responsible for providing leadership in the major areas listed below.

- Determine education policies of the school district
- Oversee the sound administration of schools
- Management of school property
- Maintain buildings and grounds
- May furnish instruction for post-secondary pupils and early education
- Relocate or discontinue use of school
- Maintain adequate financial system
- Report on condition and needs of school prior to annual meeting
- Proper accounting and reporting
- Prepare and distribute annual budget
- Employ and dismiss professionals and staff
- Oversee preparation of reports to the commissioner
- Provide all books, materials, supplies, and equipment
- Exercise all powers as municipality (warn meetings, executive session, receive funds...)
- Execute contracts
- Employ accountant to audit records at least once every three years
- Allow high school students to receive diplomas in less than 4 years
- Establish policies to avoid appearance of board member conflict of interest
- Engage in short-term borrowing
- Apply for and accept grants
- May, at the expense of the district, present materials designed to inform, educate, and explain to the electorate the board's position on the matter.
- Adopt a policy to integrate home study students into its schools
- If secondary school board, award a high school diploma to any Vermont resident who served in World War II, the Korean War, or Vietnam War.
- Carry out the duties of a local education agency for the purposes of determining pupil performance and for failure to meet standards
- Annually, inform students and parents about rights to opt out of federal requirements to provide contact information to military recruiters and colleges
- Annually, inform students and parents about school choice options
- Inform parents of students with life-threatening allergies and illnesses about state and federal laws designed to provide support for the disability
- May make school facilities available for specific public purposes
- May enter into joint agreements and contracts with other school boards to provide joint programs, services, facilities, and staff

In addition to the above, school boards are assigned many other duties by state statutes. When in doubt about board authority, consult with your superintendent and see Title 16 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated.

Supervisory Union Board Law

§ 261a. Duties of supervisory union board.

The board of each supervisory union shall:

- (1) set policy to coordinate curriculum plans ...
- (2) ...assist each school in the supervisory union to follow its respective curriculum plan ...;
- (3) if students ...(who) receive their education outside the supervisory union, periodically review the compatibility of the supervisory union's curriculum plans with those other schools;
- (4) ... establish a plan for receiving and disbursing federal and state funds ...
- (5) provide for the establishment of a written policy on professional development of teachers ...;
- (6) provide or, if agreed upon by unanimous vote at a supervisory union meeting, coordinate provision of the following educational services...:
 - (A) special education;
 - (B) compensatory and remedial services; and
 - (C) other services as directed by the state board and local boards;
- (7) employ a person or persons qualified to manage the supervisory union accounts;
- (8) at the option of the supervisory union, provide the following services for the benefit of member districts according to joint agreements...:
 - (A) centralized purchasing;
 - (B) construction management;
 - (C) budgeting, accounting and other financial management;
 - (D) teacher negotiations;
 - (E) transportation; and
 - (F) other appropriate services;
- (9) require that the superintendent be responsible to the commissioner and state board for reporting on all financial transactions...:
- (10) Annually, submit to town auditor a summary of inancial operations
- (11) Adopt a budget

Indicators of An Effective Board

An Effective Board:

1. Addresses most of its time and energy to education and educational outcomes.
2. Believes that advocacy for the educational interests of children and youth is its primary responsibility.
3. Concentrates on goals and uses strategic planning to accomplish its purpose.
4. Works to ensure an adequate flow of resources and achieves equity in their distribution.
5. Harnesses the strengths in diversity, integrates special needs and interests into the goals of the system, and fosters both assertiveness and cooperation.
6. Deals openly and straightforwardly with controversy.
7. Leads the community in matters of public education, seeking and responding to many forms of participation by the community.
8. Exercises continuing oversight of education programs and their management, draws information for this purpose from many sources and knows enough to ask the right questions.
9. In consultation with its superintendent, works out and periodically reaffirms, the separate areas of administrative and policy responsibilities and how these separations will be maintained.
10. If it uses committees, determines the mission and agenda of each, ensuring coherence and coordination of policy and oversight functions.
11. Establishes systems to govern its own policy making and oversight responsibilities, including explicit budget provisions to support those activities.
12. Invests in its own development, using diverse approaches that address the needs of individual board members and the board as a whole.
13. Establishes procedures for selecting and evaluating the superintendent and for evaluating itself.
14. Collaborates with other boards, through its statewide school boards association and other appropriate groups, to influence state policy and the way state leadership meets the needs of local schools.
15. Understands the role of the media and its influence on public perceptions, develops procedures with the school administration for media contact and avoids manipulating attention for personal gain.

Source: Schools Boards: Strengthening Grass Roots Leadership

Meeting Effectiveness

How successful was your last school board meeting? One way to find out is to ask board members and administrators to complete the brief survey below at the end of a randomly selected meeting. The leadership team will find it valuable to periodically discuss the length and productivity of board meetings. Spending 10 minutes on meeting reflection can pay rich dividends down the road!

Meeting Effectiveness Scale						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Awful			Average			Very Effective

*Using this scale, select the number for each item that best represents
YOUR opinion of the meeting.*

	RATING
1. The agenda, based on the board's annual plan, was used and followed.	_____
2. The board made progress toward reaching its goals, as outlined in the annual board plan.	_____
3. Leaders came on time, participated effectively, and stayed to the end.	_____
4. Members had the knowledge and information needed to make effective decisions.	_____
5. All view points were heard and understood prior to making a decision.	_____
6. Disagreements (conflicts) were dealt with effectively and not avoided.	_____
7. Each topic was discussed in relation to its impact on improving student learning	_____
8. The board encouraged community input and shared, with the community its progress in meeting district goals.	_____
9. Decisions were clear, aligned with policies and district goals and recorded in the minutes.	_____
10. Time was spent understanding the potential impact of legislation and the Board's role in positively influencing future legislation.	_____
TOTAL:	_____

Focus On Interests Not Positions

By Susan Edsall

Interests define the problem

1. The basic problem in a negotiation lies not in conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each side's needs, desires, concerns, and fears.
2. Your position is something you have decided upon. Your interests are what caused you to so decide.
3. Reconciling interests rather than compromising between positions works because behind opposed positions lie many more common interests than conflicting ones.

How do you identify interests?

1. A position is likely to be concrete and explicitly; the interests underlying it may well be unexpressed, intangible, and perhaps inconsistent.
2. Ask "Why?"
 - Put yourself in their shoes and for each position they take ask "Why?"
 - The answer must be one the other would articulate, not a pejorative assessment that you make.
3. Ask "Why not?" Think about their choice.
 - What interests of theirs stand in the way?
 - If you are trying to change their minds, the starting point is to figure out where their minds are now.
4. Realize that each side has multiple interests
 - A common error in diagnosing a situation is to assume that each person on the other side has the same interests. This is almost never the case.
5. The most powerful interests are basic human needs. Look for those bedrock concerns which motivate all people:
 - security
 - economic well-being
 - a sense of belonging
 - recognition
 - control over one's life

Focus on Interests Not Positions

By Susan Edsall

To make decisions to which all members are internally committed, members must find a solution that meets everyone's interests.

Interests

- The needs, desires, and concerns that people have in regard to a given problem.

Positions

- Solutions
- The ways that people meet their interests
- People's interests lead them to support a particular solution or position

The Problem

People's positions are often in conflict even when their interests are compatible. For example, a group is trying to solve the problem of when they meet.

	Position	Interest
Jane	"I want to meet every other Monday at 7:30 a.m."	Meeting early in the morning before some important customers would call
John	"We should meet the second day of each month."	Meeting immediately after a relevant biweekly computer report became available.

Each solution is rejected because it doesn't meet the other member's interests. Had each member been aware of the other's interest, either one would have been able to offer a solution that satisfied both.

An Effective Way To Solve Problems

1. Ask each member to list the criteria that must be met for that member to accept a solution.
2. If a member states a position (I want to meet every other Monday at 7:30 a.m.), ask "What interests do you have that lead you to favor that position?"
3. Generate solutions that meet the various interests.

An Effective Way To Listen

When a person is advocating hard for a position, sometimes you can hear the interest behind what they are advocating. You can reduce the anxiety in the discussion if you can identify the interest: "Jane, it sounds like meeting early in the morning is what's important to you, is that right?"

You might not be right in identifying the interest, but listening in this way will help them focus on their interests rather than their position.

Reaching Consensus

By Susan Edsall

The decision making process used by many teams to make full use of available resources is *consensus*. With consensus, each team member should be able to accept the team decision on the basis of *logic* and *reason*. In consensus, all parties to the discussion have the opportunity to state their ideas and opinions and to feel that they have been heard.

Although consensus is commonly used to mean complete or unanimous agreement, its precise meaning is “general agreement.” Consensus is reached when all members of a group are willing to accept a decision, even when a decision may not necessarily be an individual’s first choice. The group has reached consensus when all group members consider the approach workable and in the best interest of the group.

Consensus has been reached when all members of a group can agree on a single solution and say:

- I believe that you understand my point of view
- I believe that I understand your point of view
- Whether or not I prefer this decision, I will support it because it was reached openly and fairly

To determine if the group has reached consensus ask:

- Does everyone accept this decision?
- Is there any opposition to this decision?
- Can everyone live with this decision?

The objective is to bring viewpoints, especially conflicting ones, to the surface so that they can be discussed openly.

Consensus is more about listening than about talking. Group members who have differing viewpoints need to be listened to in order to understand why you might not agree with them. Consensus cannot be reached without understanding and exploring the divergent opinions of all group members.

Guidelines Teams Can Use in Achieving Consensus

By Susan Edsall

- 1. Use a discussion leader to ensure all points of view are heard.**
- 2. Avoid arguing for your own position.**
Present it as lucidly and logically as possible, but listen to the other members' reactions and consider them carefully before you press your point.
- 3. Inquire of others**
See that you understand what they are saying. Ask for information, clarification and explanation.
- 4. Look for points of similarity.**
Most groups have more agreement than they realize.
- 5. Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose.**
When discussion reaches a stalemate, examine the interests behind people's positions. Look for the next alternative for all parties.
- 6. When there are differences, look for good points in both positions.**
See if the two positions (or more) can be combined to take advantage of all. A new position might include ideas of each and might yield totally new ideas.
- 7. Do not change your mind simply to avoid conflict.**
When agreement seems to come too quickly and easily, be suspicious. Explore the reasons and be sure everyone accepts the solution for basically similar or complementary reasons. Yield only to positions that have objective and logically sound foundations.
- 8. Differences of opinion are natural and expected.**
Seek them out and try to involve everyone in the decision process. Disagreements can help the group's decision because with a range of information and opinions, there is a greater chance that the group will hit upon more adequate solutions.

Ethical Decision-Making

By Susan Edsall

- When the board makes decisions it needs to be clear about what it expect and why
- Point of discussion, not to answer quickly, but to answer the accountability question- we are accountable to someone for something.
- Interest is for clarity, not for harmony. Here are the dilemmas
- As a result of these dilemmas, what do we value? Is that value an outcome or a worry? Is it already accounted for in policy? If not, what policy might need to be modified to speak to this value?
- Board decides who presents to them and is it directly related to what questions the board is asking as outlined in their annual agenda planning
- Choices among competing stakeholder value are not between a good thing and a bad thing- it is between two good things
- First discuss what issues are at play and then what does the board think about the issues- having the right questions on the table

Tab 9

Glossary

Vermont Education Terms Glossary

Like any other organization, educators use lots of jargon when reducing the long names of specific education programs, assessment, and related management practices to abbreviations and shortened terms. This Education Terms Glossary will help board members to better understand what specific terms mean without feeling foolish by continually asking for clarification during board meetings.

Accounting Records - Records a district keeps of its actual revenue and expenditures as money is received and spent; these documents may be able to provide more detailed information on specific items than is published in the district's financial report.

Ad Hoc - Established for a particular purpose without reference to wider or permanent applications, such as *ad hoc* committee or *ad hoc* policy.

Act 117 - Act passed by legislature in 2000 designed to strengthen the capacity of the education system to meet the education needs of all Vermont students.

Act 51 – Vermont's drug and alcohol abuse education law.

Act 68 (*Equal Educational Opportunity Act*) – Vermont's education funding law of 1997.

Act 82 - The education cost-containment law that will apply to school districts that, in one year spend above the state average education spending per equalized pupil, and in the subsequent year propose per pupil spending above the maximum inflation amount. Affected districts will be required to gain budget approval through two separate votes of the electorate. The first vote will be for the budget amount that is below the maximum inflation amount, and the second vote will be for any proposed spending above the maximum inflation amount.

Action Plan - Plan outlining a school's goals and objectives for improved student learning and educational strategies and activities to achieve the goals.

ADM (*Average Daily Membership*) - Total number of pupils enrolled in a school district during a reporting period, divided by the number of school days.

Adopted Budget - Budget which has been officially voted on by the school board and ratified by the voters.

Allocation Formula - Mathematical formula used to determine the resources to be received by a particular school or program, based on its anticipated enrollment or other factors.

Annual Board Work Plan – Monthly planning calendar that the board creates to implement board goals; board chair and superintendent uses when developing board meeting agendas and for monitoring progress on goal implementation.

Arbitration - Method of settling employment disputes, grievances, through recourse to an impartial third party, whose decision may be final (binding) or may be a recommendation (advisory).

Assets - Resources which can be used over a number of years, including capital assets (such as school buildings and major equipment), cash, investments, accounts receivable, and inventories. Assets are often listed in the annual financial report and may be paid for by issuing bonds which will be paid back over a number of years.

Assumption Statement - Document prepared by district administrators early in the process of developing a proposed budget; it sets forth key expectations for the coming year, such as number of students to be served, the rate of inflation, and other factors which will govern the development of a detailed financial plan.

AYP (*Adequate Yearly Progress*) – Component of the federal No Child Left Behind Act that requires all schools to demonstrate annual increases in the percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on the statewide assessment.

Barrier-Free - Elimination of architectural barriers in educational facilities to allow disabled persons to enter easily, move about, and use those facilities.

Base Education Payment – A state grant based on the amount of education spending divided by the number of equalized pupils in a school district..

Basis of Accounting - Policy governing when revenues and expenditures are counted in the district's accounting records; possibilities include a cash basis, which lists financial events only when money is actually received or paid out, or an accrual basis, which counts changes when the district knows the events will occur. Vermont now requires school districts to use accrual accounting.

Beginning Balance - Amount of money a district has on hand at the start of a fiscal year, consisting of dollars remaining at the end of the previous fiscal year.

Board Development - Continuous improvement activities designed to inform, provide up-to-date skills, and support for school board members.

Bond - Borrowing device used by many school districts; the buyer of the bond is entitled to receive scheduled payments before district dollars are used for any other purpose, that is, the bond holder receives a lien against district revenues.

Budget Development Calendar - Schedule of steps to be taken by district administrators and the school board in the process of creating the budget for the next fiscal year; this document may identify target dates for receiving proposals from principals and department heads, making executive decisions, meetings to brief the school board on the proposed budget, publication of the proposed budget, public meetings to receive citizen comments, the final school board vote, and any subsequent steps required before the budget can take effect.

BEST (*Building Effective Support for Teaching*) - Regional and state program designed to deliver professional development and related services to assist schools in dealing with students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

Charter Schools - Public schools generally run independently of regular governance structures, often created for a specific focus and exempt from some regulations applying to other public schools. Vermont has no legal provision allowing local school boards to operate a charter school.

Child Abuse Registry - National registry created to track child abuse offenders.

CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) - Ratio between the appraised value of the district's education grand list and its value at 100% of fair market value. This figure is issued by the Vermont Department of Taxes, Property Valuation Division and is the ratio between what the town and state calculates each school district's education grand list to be.

Co-curricular - School sponsored activities or programs for students in addition to required subjects, such as drama, athletics, debate club, ...

Collective Bargaining - Process used by a group of employees and their employers to make offers and counter-offers for the purpose of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement and a written contract incorporating that agreement.

Commissioner Designated Program - Program funded and operated by the Vermont Department of Education, usually serving special needs populations from several sending districts.

Common Core Curriculum - Curriculum developed by many Vermont citizens but not mandated by the state for use in schools. Many districts develop local curriculum using the state framework and standards.

Consolidated Federal Grants - Federal funds and entitlements combined into one grant award for supervisory union/district.

Corporal Punishment - Intentional infliction of physical pain upon the body of a pupil as a disciplinary measure (Vermont law prohibits corporal punishment).

CPI (Consumer Price Index) - Annual percentage increase in cost of goods and services that is often used as an inflation benchmark when considering increase for employee salaries and benefits.

Criterion Referenced Test - Evaluation instrument used to diagnose the level of skills achieved on tasks applicable to a particular classroom or school.

Data Disaggregation – System of comparing the performance of sub-groups of students categorized by poverty, limited English proficiency, ethnicity, and special education.

Data Warehouse – Relational data-base system that the Vermont Department of Education and school districts use to disaggregate assessment results and provide other types of complex information analyses.

DCF (Department of Children and Families)-State agency to which school personnel are mandated to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect; a Department of the Agency of Human Services. (formerly known as SRS)

Depreciation - Reduction in the value of capital assets through wear and tear or obsolescence.

DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) - Developmental reading test given to all Vermont 2nd grade students to assess their reading ability, which research has shown to be an early indicator for future school success.

Due Process - Principle of law guaranteeing a meaningful opportunity to protest and be heard prior to legal action. In special education, this assures parents of disabled children a hearing before placement or reassignment outlined by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Substantive due process guarantees certain rights and privileges that a government cannot take away from its citizens.

EEE (*Early Essential Education*) – Federal program for 3 to 5 year old children who have been identified with a disability.

Education Grant – State funds received by each school district to support basic education costs allocated on the basis of equalized pupils.

Education Spending - Means the amount of the school district budget, including any assessment for a union school, or joint contract school, or technical center payments, made on behalf of the district, and any amount added to pay a deficit.

EEOA – (*Equal Educational Opportunity Act*) – Passed in 1997 as Act 60; became Act 68 in 2004 - All Vermont children will be afforded educational opportunities which are substantially equal although educational programs may vary from district to district.

Encumbrance - Accounting device which marks certain dollars as set aside for a specified purpose; entered when a purchase order or requisition is made.

Ending Balance - Dollars remaining available to the district after all expenditures are made during a fiscal year.

Entitlement - Government program that guarantees and provides services; for example, special education is an entitlement program.

Equalized Grand List – “Fair market value of taxable property” as determined by the Vermont Department of Taxes.

Equalized Students - Weighted formula that recognizes that some students cost more than others to education (i.e. high school students-1.13%, children from low-income families-1.25%, and children using English as a second language-1.20%).

ESS (*Educational Support System*) - Continuum of educational services provided to meet the needs of all students.

EST (*Educational Support Team*) - Staff from a variety of teaching and student support services that advise and implement the ESS.

Expenditure - Spending; the budget’s most detailed sections set forth the district’s *planned* expenditures for the coming fiscal year.

Fact Finding - Step usually following unsuccessful mediation in trying to resolve impasse in collective bargaining; fact finder holds informal hearings with parties in dispute, collects their records and information, and makes written report with advisory recommendations not binding on either party.

FAPE – (*Free and Appropriate Public Education*) Special education requirement outlined in federal IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) legislation.

Financial Report - Annual document published after each fiscal year ends; it sets forth actual expenditures and revenues and is usually subject to outside audit to verify its accuracy.

Fiscal Year - The 12-month period, beginning on July 1st, used by the school district as the basic accounting period for annual budget development and implementation.

Full-time Equivalency (FTE) - Unit used to count the personnel assigned to a school or other administrative unit, consisting either of a full-time employee or two or more part-time employees together working a number of hours equivalent to one full-time employee.

Function - Expenditure category defining a general purpose for which district money is spent, used in organizing a standard line-item budget; examples might include "instruction," "administration," or "support services."

Fund - Accounting device used to track revenue dollars which can only be used for specified purposes and to record the expenditures which meet those restrictions.

Gifted & Talented Education - Program for students identified by professionally qualified observers as having a demonstrated ability or potential for achievement that is outstanding in comparison to their peers.

GEs and GLEs – (*Grade Expectations & Grade Level Expectations*) - Grade Expectations (GEs) have been developed for students to achieve in all grades, K-12 in Vermont. New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont education systems share a set of common standards, used with the NECAP assessment process, called Grade Level Expectations (GLEs). Common GLEs have been established and are assessed in grades 3-8 and grade 10 in the above states.

Governance – in the context of the relationship between school district voters, school boards, school administrators, and the legislative and executive branches of state government, means the assignment of roles and responsibilities to each of those entities, and the organizational structures created to allow each entity to carry out its responsibilities.

Grievance - Complaint by an employee that a provision of the collective bargaining agreement has been violated.

HQT (*Highly Qualified Teacher*) – Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) requires that all public school teachers of core academic subjects meet the "highly qualified teacher" (HQT) requirements of the Act

Homestead – Act 68 term for dwelling and surrounding parcel of land that is owned or rented as a principal residence.

Homestead Tax Reduction (Act 68 feature) – Income sensitivity system of reducing property taxes for Vermont families under a specific household income and whose primary home is in Vermont. Homestead includes a dwelling and no more than two acres of land.

Housesite income - Modified adjusted gross income received in a calendar year by all individuals living in the residence.

Inclusion - Term used to identify delivery of special education services within existing classroom as opposed to students receiving services through a resource room, pull-out model. Vermont schools tend to provide more inclusion than other states.

IPDP (*Individual Professional Development Plan*) – Teacher’s professional development plan created for and reviewed by each school’s Local Standards Board. Plan must address specific school and community criteria and be implemented before each teacher is relicensed every 7 years.

IDEA (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*) - Current name for the federal special education legislation (the original 1976 law was called Public Law 94-142) that affirms the right of all individuals with disabilities to be provided with a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

IEP (*Individual Education Plan*) - Component of IDEA that requires a written plan of instruction for each child receiving special services, giving a statement of the child's present levels of educational performance, annual goals, short term objectives, specific services needed by the child, dates when these services will begin and be in effect, and related information. The plan is developed by a team, which includes the parents, educators and administrators.

In-Service Education - General term used to describe the program to deliver the professional development to employees while on the job.

Job Description - Written statement of the various responsibilities, duties, and other essential factors concerned in a job; usually based on a job analysis including employee requirements and training in order to qualify for the job.

License – Every teacher and administrator must be licensed or licensable before a school board can offer them a contract. A superintendent can lose his/her license for failure to comply.

LEP (*Limited English Proficiency*) –Program, partially paid for by federal and state funds, that provides instruction for students whose primary language is not English.

LEA (*Local Education Agency*) – Entity that receives and distributes funds and is responsible for education accountability. Depending on the program or funding source, the LEA could be either the local school district or the supervisory union.

Line-Item Budget - Standard format for presenting financial plans now in use in most public school districts; provides figures on a district-wide basis, including an estimated beginning balance, expected revenue listed by source, planned expenditures listed by function and object, and resulting ending balance.

Local Share Property Tax - Tax assessed on real property used as a homestead.

Long Term Membership - The mean average of the district's average daily membership, excluding full-time equivalent enrollment of state-placed students, plus full-time equivalent enrollment of state-placed students for the two year period. Reduces spikes in enrollment trends.

Mainstreaming - Integrating students with special needs in regular classrooms.

Mediation - First step in trying to resolve impasse in collective bargaining; a mediator is a neutral third-party who communicates with employee union and employer to attempt

to reach an agreeable settlement. A mediator is not empowered to force a settlement.

MIA – The Maximum Inflation Amount, or “MIA” is the dollar amount over the previous year’s state average per pupil spending that a school district, subject to the two-vote requirement of Act 82, may increase its spending per pupil before being required to divide its budget and seek a second vote on the amount of proposed spending that exceeds the MIA. The MIA will be determined each year by the state, and will be a product of an inflationary index plus one point, multiplied by the prior year’s statewide average spending per equalized pupil.

Multi-Year Plan - Individual plan for students with learning disabilities that lead to completion of basic graduation requirements.

Multiple Intelligences - Learning style research that many schools are using to develop curricula, behavior management systems and teacher instruction, that is based on the premise that students learn in a variety of ways.

NSBA (*National School Boards Association*) - VSBA is an affiliate of the NSBA and receives, through membership services, a great deal of information, support, technical assistance and congressional advocacy.

NECAP (*New England Common Assessment Plan*)– Statewide assessment system, replacing the New Standards Reference Exam (NSRE), that assesses all students in grades 3-8 and one year in high school.

Object - Expenditure category defining a type of specific thing the district will purchase; examples might include “personnel salaries” or “materials and supplies.”

Paraprofessional - Non-certified individual who assists teachers in the classroom; also known as teacher aide or classroom aide. Under NCLBA, must meet specified “Highly Qualified” standards.

Policy - Statement adopted by a school board or an administrative agency outlining principles to be followed with respect to specific matters; usually requires rules or regulations to be formulated for its implementation, and is broad enough to provide for administrative decisions regarding the manner in which it shall be implemented, although its implementation in some matters is mandatory.

Policy Governance® - Created by Dr. John Carver, is a model of governance designed to empower boards of directors to fulfill their obligation of accountability for the organizations they govern. The model enables the board to focus on the larger issues, to delegate with clarity, to control management’s job without meddling, to rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization; to truly lead its organization.

Portfolio Assessment - Assessment system that chronicles students’ best pieces of school work to demonstrate learning mastery.

Pre-School - Theory and method for guiding very young children in a group; generally refers to education demonstrated in nursery schools; emphasis is placed on developing capacities of the individual.

Program Budget - Budget format organized around expenditures on specific services (programs) provided by the school system; an alternative to the usual line-item budget statement which presents expenditures by function and object.

Proposed Budget - Budget recommended to the school board by the superintendent or business manager, based on a process of administrative planning.

Revenue - Dollars the district receives from various sources; revenues plus the beginning balance comprise the money available to the district to pay for all needed expenditures.

Residential Placement - Placement which allows for the provision of needed educational services as well as living arrangements; in special education, a residential placement is considered one of the most restrictive placements but in some cases, a necessity.

S.A.T. (*Scholastic Assessment Test*) - Instrument used to measure ability, administered by the College Entrance Examination Board to students in grades 11 or 12; used as a criterion for college and university admission.

SchoolSpring – Electronic recruitment system company that works in partnership with VSBA to provide expanded educator and administrator employment searches.

School Reports - School districts must report on student performance as a requirement under Act 60. The frequency and general content are specified by law; the format and specific information are local decisions.

Site-based budget - Format presenting the expenditures to be made by individual schools; an alternative to the usual line-item budget statement which presents expenditures by function and object.

Small Schools Grant – State grant given to schools that have a two-year average combined enrollment of fewer than 100 students.

Special Education - Provision of facilities, instruction, supervision and other educational services, to ensure a free appropriate public education for children with disabilities.

Standardized Test - Evaluation instrument given under similar, controlled circumstances to students from many schools and states.

State Education Tax Rate - Adopted annually by the legislature, and used to calculate school and municipal tax rates..

State Placed Students - Students who are in state custody and enrolled by the Agency of Human Services in local schools.

Statewide Property Tax - Tax assessed in the fiscal year on resident, non-resident and business property to support public education.

Strategic Planning - Process based on the dynamic theory that plans for the future must be developed considering all conditions and factors that may impact on the school district; uses the school's mission, long-range goals, and implementation strategies governing human and material resources needed to achieve the mission.

STW (*School-To-Work*) - Applied learning program designed to create business and education partnerships, intended to prepare students with the academic rigor and workforce skills necessary to successfully get and keep jobs.

Supervisory Union - In Vermont, the combination of several school districts into an administrative unit; the public schools in each supervisory union are under the general supervision of a superintendent of schools selected by members of the school boards in each district.

System of Accounts - Statement of what is included under each category in the district budget and other financial documents; in effect, a dictionary defining how the district classifies its funds, revenue source headings, function headings, and object headings.

Technical Assistance – When the commissioner determines that a school is not meeting the quality standards or that the school is making insufficient progress in improving student performance

Telecommunications - Worldwide electronic infrastructure systems created to enhance students' and teachers' ability to communicate and to rapidly access vast stores of information.

Title I - Federal funds targeted to schools, based on poverty level, to support continuous academic improvement, especially in special target populations such as low-income, limited English-proficient, homeless and migrant students.

Title II - (Eisenhower Professional Development Act) - Federal funds targeted to support intensive, sustained professional development to all members of the instructional staff and to improve teaching skills of teachers in math, science and all other “core subject areas.”

Title IV - (Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act) - Federal funds to support programs to meet state and national goals by involving parents and coordinate related federal, state and community efforts and resource toward the prevention of violence in and around schools and by strengthening programs that prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Title VI (Innovative Education Program Strategies Act) *formerly known as Chapter 2* - Federal funds targeted for the use of technology, library and instructional resources, education reform projects, programs for gifted and talented, school reform activities, school improvement programs for at-risk students, and to combat illiteracy.

Title IX – Federal program that requires equity of school program offerings for males and females. Each district must also identify an equity coordinator to investigate compliance issues.

TCO (*Total Cost of Operation*) – Budgeting strategy that integrates maintenance and training/professional development with purchasing costs of fixed assets so that school leaders can more effectively plan for long-term funding needs.

Union School - School operated jointly by two or more school districts; a union school district has "all the rights and responsibilities which a town district has in providing education for its youth."

Vermont Education Statutes Annotated - Annually updated compilation of education laws from the Vermont Legislature that refer to school operation published by the VSBA and offered to interested parties for purchase.

VIT (*Vermont Interactive Television*) - Network of interactive television sites often used for board development.

Vermont Model Policies Manual - Set of model policies created and maintained by the VSBA and available to all Vermont member school districts at www.vtvsba.org.

Warning - Provides advance notification of all public meetings and is required for board meetings to be posted in three prominent places.

WIB (*Workforce Investment Board*) - Created by the Vermont Human Resource Investment Council to bring all education and training providers and resources together to more effectively network and deliver services.

Worker's Compensation - Payments made to an employee by the employer for an injury, not necessarily arising out of the duties related to employment, but occurring during working hours.