

# School Board Standards

## **Introduction**

Effective school boards are critical to the success of our public 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 standards were adopted by the VSBA Board at its August Meeting.

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 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.

## **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.

### **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**

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 district

## **Accountability**

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 policies
- State and federal laws as related to public education

## **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 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 & Ethics**

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