

# NEW MEMBER HANDBOOK

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A guide to boardsmanship



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## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you for your service as a member of your local board of education. When you became a school board member, you made a tremendous commitment to North Carolina's children and our public schools. We commend you and want you to know that NCSBA is here to help you fulfill your responsibilities as a member of your local board of education.

NCSBA represents the interests of local boards of education in North Carolina. In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever that we sustain our unified voice on behalf of our children. This orientation handbook has been prepared as a resource to assist you during your tenure.

We encourage you to take advantage of your membership by using our services and by participating in NCSBA events and activities. Contact a member of the NCSBA staff with any questions you might have so that we may help you be a more effective school board member.



*Leanne E. Winner*

Leanne E. Winner  
NCSBA Executive Director

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## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER SELF-TEST

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Use the following self-test to gauge your current level of knowledge about the work ahead of you. Compare your responses with those on the answer key that follows. How did you do?

Use these results to help guide you through this handbook and help prepare you for questions you might ask of your fellow board members.

# NEW BOARD MEMBER SELF-TEST

1. List as many functions of a school board as you can.
  
2. Define board policy:
  
3. What is the difference between the policy-making function of a school board and the administrative function of the superintendent?
  
4. What steps might a board take to develop and adopt a policy?
  
5. What is generally considered the single, most important decision a school board makes?
  
6. True or False? Board members should inform the public in advance as to how they will vote on issues to be brought before the board.
  
7. True or False? If a board member is asked how and why he or she voted on an issue, he or she should only explain board action and not personal reasons.
  
8. The following is a recommended process for decision-making. It has been jumbled out of order. Please put the statements in order by placing the number 1 in the space for the first step and continue through the sequence until all five steps have been numbered.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ List all possible ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS you could take.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Clearly state the DECISION to be made.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ List the ALTERNATIVES in priority order.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Consider the DESIRABILITY of the results of each action.
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Gather all pertinent INFORMATION.

9. Draw a diagram that shows the channel of communication a parent should follow if he has a complaint or a compliment about his or her child's school.
10. When a board member is contacted by community members about concerns, outside of a regular scheduled meeting, which of the following should be followed: (Select one answer)
- a. Tell them to call the superintendent, who will direct them to the appropriate source.
  - b. Listen to the concern, refer them to the appropriate source, and call the superintendent to notify him or her about the conversation.
  - c. Listen to the concern, explain that you can do nothing as a board member until it is placed on the agenda, but you will have the appropriate staff person call them.
  - d. Listen to the concern, explain that you can do nothing as a board member until it is placed on the agenda, and refer the person through the proper channel of communication.
11. What is the school board's responsibility in the area of curriculum development and evaluation?
12. Briefly describe how a school budget is developed.
13. True or False? The board should act only upon the recommendation of the superintendent in the hiring and non-hiring of all employees.
14. If you did not understand, or were unaware of a specified law that affected public schools, you should: (Select one answer)
- a. Call or visit the school board's attorney.
  - b. Call or email the NCSBA.
  - c. Ask your superintendent.

# ANSWER KEY TO NEW BOARD MEMBER SELF-TEST

## 1. LIST AS MANY FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD AS YOU CAN.

- To develop policy.
- To develop a school budget.
- To approve or reject hiring recommendations of the superintendent.
- To keep the public informed.
- To evaluate the superintendent.
- To follow state statutes and the rules and regulations of the State School Board.
- To hire and retain a superintendent.

## 2. DEFINE BOARD POLICY:

A school board policy is a statement of the division's philosophy and goals. The statement should include the policy is for (what), its purpose in being adopted (why), whom it will affect (how much). In other words, policy is the written expression of the board's desires for the division's children. Policies are guidelines and courses of action that tell is wanted, why, and how much. Administrative rules, set by the superintendent, include the mechanics and details of how, by whom, where, and when.

## 3. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE POLICY-MAKING FUNCTION OF THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT?

The board is a policy-making body. Its policies set out the goals and objectives for the school division. The superintendent's responsibility is to see that these goals and objectives are implemented effectively.

If you ever wonder, as a board member, whether you are stepping into an administrative area, ask yourself, "Am I establishing a goal or am I doing something to carry one out?" The former is the board's responsibility; the latter is that of the superintendent.

## 4. WHAT STEPS MIGHT A BOARD TAKE TO DEVELOP AND ADOPT A POLICY?

- a. Define the issue
- b. Gather necessary information
- c. Get recommendations from the superintendent
- d. Discuss and debate
- e. Draft policy
- f. Hold first meeting
- g. Make revisions desired

- h. Hold second meeting
- i. Adopt policy
- j. Disseminate to public and all affected parties

5. WHAT IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION A SCHOOL BOARD MAKES?

Hiring the superintendent

6. TRUE OR FALSE? BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD INFORM THE PUBLIC IN ADVANCE AS TO HOW THEY WILL VOTE ON ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE BOARD.

False. A board member should always be open for input, from administrators and community members on issues coming to the board. Making up one's mind in advance on an issue effectively shuts out any information, ideas, or recommendations coming from those or other sources. Telling the community you have your mind made up would only make them believe you don't listen to them.

7. IF A BOARD MEMBER IS ASKED HOW AND WHY HE OR SHE VOTED ON AN ISSUE, HE OR SHE SHOULD ONLY EXPLAIN BOARD ACTION AND NOT PERSONAL REASONS.

False. Having made a decision and voted, the board member certainly owes the public reasons for coming to the conclusion made. As a representative of the public, he or she should be willing to explain his or her views. It is suggested to make your views known at the meeting prior to the official vote. If on the losing side of a vote, the member should acknowledge that and state their opinion but also state that they will follow the will of the board.

8. THE FOLLOWING IS A RECOMMENDED PROCESS FOR DECISION-MAKING. IT HAS BEEN JUMBLED OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE PUT THE STEPS IN ORDER BY PLACING THE NUMBER 1 IN THE SPACE FOR THE FIRST STEP AND CONTINUE THROUGH THE SEQUENCE UNTIL ALL FIVE STEPS HAVE BEEN NUMBERED.

- a.   3   List all possible ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS you could take.
- b.   1   Clearly state the DECISION to be made.
- c.   5   List the ALTERNATIVES in priority order.
- d.   4   Consider the DESIRABILITY of the results of each action.
- e.   2   Gather all pertinent INFORMATION.

9. DRAW A DIAGRAM THAT SHOWS TO WHOM A PARENT SHOULD GO IF HE OR SHE HAS A COMPLAINT OR COMPLIMENT ABOUT HIS OR HER CHILD'S SCHOOL: I.E., A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION.

Parent > Teacher > Principal > Superintendent > School Board

10. WHEN A BOARD MEMBER IS CONTACTED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS ABOUT CONCERNS OUTSIDE A REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE FOLLOWED: (Select one answer)

Answer D. You can see, by referring back to the channels-of-communication in Question 10, that the school board is the last step. By inserting yourself into a situation prior to your proper



step in the channels, you may cause problems for staff at whose level the problem should have and most probably would have been solved. In a case where the person calling is very angry, or the situation is serious, however, Answer B is a good idea. Also, make sure you understand your board norms and protocols on how to handle these situations.

11. WHAT IS A SCHOOL BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AREA OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION?

The responsibilities of a school board in the area of curriculum are to approve what is to be taught, to make sure that what is supposed to be taught is being learned, and to ensure that the resources needed for learning are available and being used efficiently. The school board causes good curriculum development and evaluation to occur through board policy. The Superintendent is the one who brings these recommendations to the board for review.

12. BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW A SCHOOL BUDGET IS DEVELOPED.

One common method: Teaching staff, secretaries, and custodians send their recommendations covering their needs to their building principal. The principal meets with the superintendent and the finance assistant to pass on those recommendations, along with his/her own. The superintendent and the finance director make adjustments in the principal's recommendations, based on their educational judgment and monies available. The superintendent brings the information to the school board, which makes a decision on the final budget based on the recommendations received, supporting material and monies available. The budget is then presented to the local appropriating body (city council/ board of supervisors).

13. THE SCHOOL BOARD SHOULD ACT ONLY UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IN HIRING AND NON-REHIRING OF ALL EMPLOYEES.

True. The superintendent is the professional trained to evaluate needs and personnel. His/her personnel recommendations should always precede actions by the board and should not be overruled without strong and substantive reasons.

14. IF YOU DID NOT UNDERSTAND, OR WERE UNAWARE OF A SPECIFIC LAW THAT AFFECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS, YOU SHOULD: (Select one answer)

Answer C. In the vast majority of cases, the superintendent will be able to answer your questions. Where he or she cannot, he or she will contact the board attorney for the answers. An alternative for both the superintendent and the board is to call the office of the NCSBA.

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**WHAT EVERY NEW SCHOOL  
BOARD MEMBER NEEDS TO KNOW  
ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL SYSTEM**

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Use the following pages to collect information as you get to know your district and your board. Take notes on these pages to use as a reference throughout your work as a school board member.

# What Every Board Member Needs to Know

– About the District –

**Need to Know:**

- 
1. Name of school district: \_\_\_\_\_
  2. School district address: \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Main district phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Superintendent:	Phone:	Cell:	E-mail:
_____	_____	_____	_____

5. Superintendent's Secretary / Clerk:	Phone:	Cell:	E-mail:
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

6. Other board members:	Hm Phone:	Work phone:	E-mail:
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

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7. Communities served by the district: \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Number of employees in district: Professional \_\_\_\_\_ Classified \_\_\_\_\_

9. What educational groups are in place? \_\_\_\_\_ President \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ President \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ President \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ President \_\_\_\_\_

**Need to Know:**

10. Number of students enrolled: Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-school \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary school \_\_\_\_\_ Middle school \_\_\_\_\_

High school \_\_\_\_\_ Alternative school \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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11. STUDENT POPULATION:

Ethnic Groups by Percentage: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary languages spoken at home other than English: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of English Language Learners: \_\_\_\_\_ Special education: \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch: \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Number of square miles the district covers: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Home to school transportation: District operated? \_\_\_\_\_ Contracted to? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Number of schools: Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-schools \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary schools \_\_\_\_\_ Middle schools \_\_\_\_\_

High schools \_\_\_\_\_ Alternative schools \_\_\_\_\_ Charter schools \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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15. District Office Departments: Title & Name of Department Head: Phone Number:

District Office Departments:	Title & Name of Department Head:	Phone Number:





# What Every Board Member Needs to Know

– About Governance Team Operations –

**Need to Know:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Board meeting dates and times: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Board Officers: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair:	
Vice-Chair:	
Secretary:	
Board Clerk:	
Other:	

3. Order of items on the board meeting agenda:

1.	6.	11.
2.	7.	12.
3.	8.	13.
4.	9.	14.
5.	10.	15.

4. The purpose of the Public Comment section of the board meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. The purpose of the Board Comment section of the board meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. GOVERNANCE NORMS – How we behave toward members of the governance team and others:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

**Need to Know:**

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7. GOVERNANCE PROTOCOLS – How we do business:

How the board meeting agenda is developed, reviewed and by whom:	
Placing items on the board meeting agenda:	
Obtaining additional information about board meeting agenda items before the meeting:	
Obtaining answers to questions about board meeting agenda items before the meeting:	
Alerting the board chair of the desire to speak on a particular agenda item:	
Introducing new ideas for the board's consideration:	
Responding to staff or community complaints or concerns at board meetings:	
Communications between and among the board, board members and the superintendent:	
Communications between the board and other staff:	
Responding to community or staff complaints or concerns outside of board meetings:	
How, when and whom to notify about visiting school sites or participating in district activities:	
Individual board member requests for information from staff:	



**Need to Know:**

GOVERNANCE PROTOCOLS – continued:

Board member participation on district committees and in district activities:	
When and how the board conducts a self-evaluation:	
When and how the board evaluates the superintendent:	

8. GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS:

- District Policies
- District Budget Development Calendar
- District Setting Direction Documents
- Governance Handbook
- Annual Governance Calendar

9. BOARD MEMBER BENEFITS:

Stipend:	
Attending conferences / educational meetings / community events:	
Making reservations for conferences / workshops / district business trips:	
Travel Expenses and Reimbursements:	



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## ORIENTING TO SCHOOL BOARD WORK

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If you are new to board service, this will be a useful resource in learning about boardsmanship. If you are an experienced board member, it will be a good refresher or provide an opportunity to seek answers to questions. In addition, your superintendent and experienced board members can acquaint you with your district's unique strengths, challenges, programs, and issues. The following questions can stimulate your board's thinking about school board service and your role as a board member.

These discussion questions can serve as a basis for learning during your first year on the board and a good review for the whole board at any time.

### ✦ Questions for Your Board

1. What trends seem to be in existence, and what does that mean for your board? What changes are anticipated in the next two, five, or 10 years?
2. What is the most important thing your district is trying to improve? What is the organization's highest priority? How are we defining success, and what can the board do to help achieve it?
3. How does your board go about setting goals and objectives for the district?
4. Does your district provide for and encourage the orientation and development of board members? What opportunities exist for board members to grow their skills and knowledge?
5. What is the board's role in setting student achievement expectations? How does the board monitor progress toward these expectations?
6. When was the last time your board reviewed its policies? What is the schedule for policy reviews?
7. What are the ground rules in your district for determining what is 'board business' and what is 'staff work'?
8. What is the structure of your organization's administrative leadership? How does your board interact with members of the leadership team?
9. What process does your board use to evaluate the superintendent?
10. How are programs and services evaluated?
11. How is the agenda for each board meeting set?

12. How does your board ensure compliance with North Carolina’s Open Meetings Law when it addresses matters in closed sessions? What types of information can legally be discussed in closed sessions?
13. What is your district’s process for budget preparation? What financial indicators are routinely reported to the board to ensure the organization is on the right track?
14. In what ways does your board communicate with the public? Employees? The media?
15. How does your board respond to complaints from citizens? What should you do when a citizen complains to you about a school-related matter? Does your board have a policy? What guidance does it give?
16. How does your board respond to personnel issues?
17. Does your board engage in regular self-evaluation?

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## ABOUT NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL BOARDS

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The responsibilities of a board member require a wide variety of skills, knowledge, and abilities. Becoming a board member is the beginning of a learning process that will continue throughout your term. Some of the skills you’ll learn through experience, others from fellow board members and the administration, and still others through workshops and seminars sponsored at the state and national levels. Being an effective board member requires a good understanding of the authority and responsibilities attached to school board service. This section highlights some of those major areas.

### ✦ **About Local Boards of Education**

Public education is a state function; however, the state legislature cannot attend to day-to-day school operations. The General Assembly carries out its duty to support a general and uniform system of free public schools by appropriating money and, in part, delegating decision-making authority to North Carolina’s 115 school administrative units, each of which is governed by its own board of education.

North Carolina has 100 county boards of education and 15 that govern city school systems, as well as several other specialty school systems, including the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation and the Department of Defense Schools serving military dependents.

The General Statutes confer corporate status on the local board of education, which means the board has a legal existence separate from its members. A local board of education is an entity that can sue and be sued, purchase and condemn property, and receive money and goods in its corporate name.

Although individual board members may express independent views, the board must act as a unit. As a general rule, no single member, committee, or group of board members may act on behalf of the board except by decision of the majority, meeting in an official session called and conducted according to the provisions of the statutes that created the board and govern its operation.

In granting corporate status, G.S. 115C-40 also provides that, except for powers specifically given to the NC State Board of Education, other authorized agency, or school official, the local board has authority over all public school matters in its administrative unit.

## ✦ Duties of the Board

Creating an exhaustive, detailed list of a local board of education's duties would be an overwhelming task! The following information is intended as an overview of a local board's essential functions.

As a member of a local board of education in North Carolina, there are several overarching points to keep in mind when considering board duties:

1. The North Carolina Constitution explicitly guarantees the right to a free public education. Article I, Section 15 states, "The people have a right to the privilege of education, and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right." The constitution also requires the General Assembly to "provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of free public schools . . . wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all students."
2. Despite the constitutional language regarding equal opportunities, not all North Carolina children enjoy the same educational opportunities as others due to varying circumstances. The state provides funds in a way intended to meet the necessary operating expenses for the Basic Education Program. However, the North Carolina Constitution also permits the General Assembly to assign to local governments "such responsibility for the financial support of the free public schools as it may deem appropriate" and guarantees local governments the right to supplement the basic level of state support. Because some counties are more able or willing than others to use local tax money to supplement state funds, disparities exist among the resources available to school units.
3. In 1997, in *Leandro v. State of North Carolina*, the North Carolina Supreme Court held that the state constitutional language guarantees students the opportunity to receive a sound basic education, which is one that provides students with "at least:
  - 1) sufficient ability to read, write, and speak the English language and a sufficient knowledge of fundamental mathematics and physical science to enable the student to function in a complex and rapidly changing society;
  - 2) sufficient fundamental knowledge of geography, history, and basic economic and political systems to enable the student to make informed choices with regard to issues that affect the student personally or affect the student's community, state, and nation;
  - 3) sufficient academic and vocational skills to enable the student to successfully engage in post-secondary education or vocational training; and
  - 4) sufficient academic and vocational skills to enable the student to compete on an equal basis with others in further formal education or gainful employment in contemporary society." *Leandro*, 346 N.C. 336, 347 (1997).
4. In 2015 the General Assembly passed legislation that explicitly states:

"It shall be the duty of local boards of education to provide students with the opportunity to receive a sound basic education and *to make all policy decisions with that objective in mind*,

*including employment decisions, budget development, and other administrative actions ...”*  
N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-47(1) (emphasis added).

In general, a board’s primary duties include:

1. Providing every child with the opportunity to receive a “sound basic education” during a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months;
2. Setting educational policy within the limits of its authority and overseeing the implementation of its policies and the state’s educational program;
3. Making decisions about the superintendent’s personnel recommendations;
4. Managing the financial affairs of the unit; and
5. Providing adequate school facilities.

The operation of the public schools is governed by Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes, in addition to various other state statutes addressing specific topics, such as open meetings and public records. Chapter 115C includes a general grant of authority to local boards, which states:

“All powers and duties conferred and imposed by law respecting public schools, which are not expressly conferred and imposed upon some other official, are conferred and imposed upon local boards of education. Said boards of education shall have general control and supervision of all matters pertaining to the public schools in their respective administrative units and they shall enforce the school law in their respective units.” N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-36.

The General Statutes also include more specific grants of authority in various areas.

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## OPEN MEETINGS

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Official meetings of public bodies are required to be open to the public.

An official meeting is either an in-person gathering or the “simultaneous communication” of a majority of the public body “for the purpose of conducting hearings, participating in deliberations, or voting upon or otherwise transacting the public business ...” N.C. Gen. Stat. §143-318.10(d).

Local boards of education are public bodies, as are board committees, school improvement teams, and local advisory councils. A meeting solely of professional staff does not constitute a meeting of a public body.

Public bodies are required to post notice of their meetings in advance, with the amount of notice required determined by the type of meeting.

## ★ Closed Meetings

Local boards of education and other public bodies are permitted to go into closed session, which members of the public are not allowed to attend, for the following specific reasons:

1. to prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential information or the premature disclosure of an honorary degree, scholarship, prize, or similar award;
2. to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the board in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the board
3. to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the board;
4. to prevent the disclosure of the board's position in (1) the negotiation of contracts for the acquisition of real property or (2) the material terms of employment contracts;
5. to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual employed or considered for employment with the school system;
6. to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against any individual employee;
7. to plan, conduct, or hear reports concerning investigations of alleged criminal misconduct;
8. to formulate plans relating to emergency responses to incidents of school violence or to formulate and adopt the school safety components of school improvement plans by the board or a school improvement team; and
9. to discuss and take action regarding plans to protect public safety as it relates to existing or potential terrorist activity and to receive briefings by staff members, legal counsel, or law enforcement or emergency service officials concerning actions taken or to be taken to respond to such activity.

NC Gen. Stat. 143-318.11

Public bodies are required to maintain minutes of both their open and closed sessions, although the latter may be withheld from the public as long as releasing them would frustrate the purpose of the closed session. For example, closed session minutes that disclose confidential personnel information can never be released, as personnel information remains confidential even after an employee leaves the school system.

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## PUBLIC RECORDS

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Local boards of education are required to comply with the state's public records law. Public records are records made or received in connection with the transaction of public business. They may be in any form, including documents, electronic records, film, or audio recordings.

Generally speaking, electronic mail and messages exchanged with members of the public, school system administrators, and other board members are public records that must be disclosed upon

request. This rule applies whether the message is sent to a public email address provided by the school system or a private channel, such as a Gmail address or Facebook message.

There are some exceptions, based on the information contained in a message. Personnel or student information is generally not subject to public disclosure. For example, you may be provided employee performance evaluations or student suspension documents in advance of a board hearing. Those documents would not be subject to disclosure.

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## PERSONNEL, FINANCE, AND JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS

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### ✦ Oversight of Personnel

The board of education plays an essential role in staffing the school system. First and foremost, it is the board's statutory obligation to elect a superintendent, who is entitled to a written contract. The superintendent's contract may be extended or renewed in accordance with the law.

The superintendent is the chief administrative officer for the school system. He or she is responsible for implementing the board's policies and educational vision, while ensuring that the school system complies with numerous federal and state mandates. The board of education is empowered to prescribe specific duties for the superintendent.

The local board's oversight of personnel also encompasses:

1. Maintaining the confidentiality of personnel information;
2. The employment of all other employees, **based on the superintendent's recommendations;**
3. Determining the length of employment contracts for each individual teacher, based on the superintendent's recommendation;
4. Holding hearings to determine whether an employee has stated a valid grievance;
5. Holding hearings to determine whether to uphold the superintendent's recommendation that an employee be disciplined or dismissed; and
6. Determining whether to uphold the superintendent's recommendation that an employee's contract should not be renewed at the end of a school year.

Note that there is a difference between *dismissing* an employee and *non-renewing* an employee's contract. There are extensive procedures in place governing the severing of employment of (1) a teacher with career status or (2) a teacher during the term of an employment contract. Such teachers are entitled to a hearing at which they may be represented by counsel, present their own witnesses and other evidence, and question the administration's witnesses.



By contrast, if the superintendent merely recommends that a teacher's employment contract not be renewed for the following year, there are few procedural protections for the teacher. The board may grant the teacher a hearing upon request.

The board does not have a legal obligation to approve the superintendent's recommendations as to hiring, discipline, non-renewal, or dismissal. The North Carolina Supreme Court has explicitly held that a board is entitled to reject the superintendent's recommendations, because "[u]ltimate responsibility for [teachers'] employment ... rests with the board." *Taylor v. Crisp*, 286 N.C. 488 (1975).

On the other hand, the board should not just "rubber-stamp" the superintendent's recommendations. The North Carolina Court of Appeals has held that even in non-renewal cases, in which teachers have significantly fewer procedural protections than in dismissals, the local board has "the responsibility ... to ascertain the rational basis for the [superintendent's] recommendation before acting upon it." *Abell v. Nash Co. Bd. of Educ.*, 71 N.C. App. 48 (1984).

Finally, employment decisions **cannot** be made on any prohibited basis, such as for personal, political, or discriminatory reasons. There must be a rational basis for a local board's decision, evidenced in either the documents the local board considered in making a decision or, when a hearing is held, the record of the hearing.

## ✦ Financial Management

School systems are funded by a combination of federal, state, and local funds, in addition to grants and gifts. While the federal and state funds are distributed based on various formulas, the amount of local funds that will be made available to each school system is determined by the board of county commissioners. State law requires the following steps in the development of the school system's budget:

1. The superintendent prepares a budget for submission to the board, subject to certain limitations imposed by state law;
2. The superintendent submits the proposed budget to the board no later than May 1;
3. On the same day the budget is submitted to the board, the superintendent also files a copy, available for public inspection, in his or her office;
4. The board considers the budget, making any changes it deems advisable, and submits the entire budget to the board of county commissioners no later than May 15 (or later, at the county commissioners' discretion);
5. The board of county commissioners is required to determine the amount of local funding that will be made available to the board of education no later than July 1 (or later, if agreeable to the board of education); and
6. After the board of county commissioners makes its appropriations, the board of education adopts a budget resolution.

The superintendent may seek to amend the budget resolution during the school year.

In addition to approving a proposed budget and passing a budget resolution, the board of education is also responsible for recovering any funds that might be owed to the school system and setting the tuition rates for students who are not entitled to attend the schools. Local boards of education also act as stewards of funds generated by bond referenda and can reallocate such funds from one construction project to another, under certain circumstances.

### ✦ **Judicial Functions**

In both student and employee matters, the local board of education often sits as a quasi-judicial body. Local board members may be called upon to decide, among other things:

1. Whether the superintendent's recommendation that a student be expelled or suspended from school for 10 days or more should be upheld;
2. Whether the superintendent's recommendation that an employee be suspended without pay for disciplinary reasons should be upheld;
3. Whether the superintendent's recommendation that an employee be dismissed from employment should be upheld; or
4. Whether a student or employee has stated a valid grievance.

Board members are expected to be unbiased and impartial in making decisions in these matters and should rely on the information shared at the hearing or administrative proceeding convened to determine these issues.

This need for impartiality is one reason that board members are encouraged to refer complaints about particular students or employees to the superintendent and other senior administrators rather than attempt to resolve such issues with the involved parties. Consider a board member who becomes personally involved in attempting to resolve an employee matter, for example. If the board is asked to determine whether the employee in question should be disciplined or even dismissed, it may be difficult for the board member who has personal knowledge to set aside that knowledge and make decisions solely based on the information presented in the hearing.

This need for impartiality is also the reason that the superintendent may be circumspect in sharing information about an employee about whom allegations of misconduct have been made. It is important that board members make decisions based on information that has been substantiated and shared with all board members in a hearing, rather than initial allegations that may or may not be accurate.

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## POLICY DEVELOPMENT

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Forming and adopting policies is the primary method through which the school board leads in the operation of a school system.

Through policy, the board creates a framework within which the superintendent and staff can discharge their duties with positive direction. Policies make clear to the administration what and how much the board wants to see happen, as well as why.

The board should not only adopt policies, but also exercise appropriate oversight as the administration implements the policies. Board members should ask themselves whether policies are being implemented and if they are achieving the desired results.

The process for drafting, considering, adopting, reviewing, and revising board policy is not set by law. Each board can determine its own process for policy development. Generally speaking, the superintendent is expected to alert board members if he or she believes there is a need for a new board policy or to revise an existing one. Local boards of education often require that new or revised policies be considered in no less than two meetings, to provide the opportunity for public feedback and to give board members time to consider that feedback.

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## CODE OF ETHICS

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State law requires that members of local governing boards, including boards of education, receive a minimum of two hours of ethics education. The training must cover laws and principles that govern conflicts of interest and ethical standards of conduct at the local government level and must be completed within 12 months of each election or appointment. N.C. Gen. Stat. 160A-87.

State law also requires the governing board to adopt a resolution or policy containing a code of ethics to guide the actions of board members while performing their official duties as a member of that governing board. The resolution or policy should address at least the following:

1. The need to obey all applicable laws regarding official actions taken as a board member;
2. The need to uphold the integrity and independence of the board member's office;
3. The need to avoid impropriety in the exercise of the board member's official duties;
4. The need to faithfully perform the duties of the office; and
5. The need to conduct the affairs of the governing board in an open and public manner, including complying with all applicable laws governing open meetings and public records.

N.C. Gen. Stat. 160A-86.

The clerk (board assistant) to the governing board is responsible for maintaining a record verifying receipt of the ethics education by each board member.

NCSBA provides training that satisfies the ethics training requirement. In addition, through the Association's policy service, school boards have access to tools and information to guide the board in developing a code of ethics policy. Nevertheless, as a board member or potential board member, you should be able to embrace the concepts included in your board's code of ethics. NCSBA's sample Code of Ethics embraces the following commitments:

1. attend all regularly scheduled board meetings insofar as possible and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings;
2. endeavor to make policy decisions while always keeping in mind the objective of providing students the opportunity to receive a sound basic education and only after full discussion at publicly held board meetings;
3. render all decisions based on the available facts and independent judgment and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups;
4. model civility and integrity to students, employees, and all elements of the community by encouraging the free expression of opinion by all board members; engaging in respectful dialogue with fellow board members on matters being considered by the board; and complying with all board policies that set expectations for conduct, regardless of whether the policies expressly require compliance by board members;
5. respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law and refrain from unauthorized disclosure of matters discussed in closed session;
6. work with other board members to establish effective board policies and to delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent;
7. communicate to other board members and the superintendent expressions of public reaction to board policies and school programs;
8. learn about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by the state and national school boards associations;
9. comply with North Carolina General Statute 115C-50 by earning the required 12 hours of training every two years;
10. comply with G.S. 160A-87 by earning two hours of ethics education within 12 months of election or appointment to the board;
11. support the employment of those persons best qualified to serve as school employees and avoid allowing personal relationships and biases to influence decision making;
12. refrain from investigating or attempting to resolve complaints received personally, but instead direct the complainant to follow the board's complaint or grievance process to resolve concerns;

13. avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest and refrain from using the board member's position on the board for personal or partisan gain;
14. as stated in board policy 2121, Board Member Conflict of Interest, refrain from participating in, deliberating on, voting on, or attempting to influence any person with respect to any matter pertaining to the employment with the board of the board member's spouse, including but not limited to hiring, transfer, promotion, demotion, suspension, discipline, performance evaluation, or review or investigation of a complaint of any kind;
15. take no private action that will compromise the board or administration; and
16. remember always that a board member's first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the public schools.

Through the association's Master Board training module, Clarifying Board Operations, the board has the opportunity to discuss these concepts as a governance team.

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## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL BOARDS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

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"What is the role of the board and what is the role of the superintendent in the operation of the school district?" This is a question often asked and misunderstood by board members and superintendents. The longstanding statement that the board sets policy and the superintendent administers that policy would seem to indicate a clear dividing line between the respective roles. That distinction, however, is not always clear nor is it one upon which everyone involved agrees.

Board members are usually "doers"; they operate businesses, they run homes, they buy supplies. "Doers" often find it hard to look at the big picture and make decisions so that other people can "do" the job. Many times, they are tempted to get in and "do" the job themselves. Conflicts arise when the board and the superintendent have not defined their specific roles within the district. Because the needs of a district vary and leadership and management styles vary, the real need in each district is for the board and superintendent to decide the scope of work for each and establish proper policies and procedures that will lead to the performance of those duties.

As board members make decisions and find themselves involved in the business of the district, they should ask themselves: "Am I providing leadership to the superintendent and staff, and establishing policy for the district or have I stepped into the role of administrator?"

Superintendents should ask themselves: "Am I providing leadership to the board, in pointing out areas where policy is needed, or am I veering into administrative matters? Worse yet, am I forcing the board to make administrative decisions?"

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## ✦ ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY AREAS

Keeping roles clear and communication open is the key to good board and superintendent relationships. The table below is a summary for the responsibilities of the board and superintendent.

Role and Responsibility Area	School Board	Superintendent
<b>1. Future Planning and Growth</b>	Approves and monitors progress	Executes and identifies needs
<b>2. Policy</b>	Adopts Policies	Recommends, creates procedures, and implements
<b>3. Meetings</b>	In charge of	Serves as a resource
<b>4. Budget/Finance</b>	Adopts and monitors	Prepares, administers, monitors, details
<b>5. Student Achievement</b>	Establishes criteria, approves, and monitors	Recommends, oversees staffs' efforts
<b>6. Personnel</b>	Establishes criteria, approves, or rejects	Interviews, recommends, hires, directs, evaluates, promotes, trains
<b>7. Community Relations</b>	Creates a positive image for district	Creates a positive image for district, directs communications

## 1 – FUTURE PLANNING AND GROWTH

### SCHOOL BOARD

1. Approves a planning process to include stakeholders in developing a strategic plan.
2. Approves goals for student achievement.
3. Monitors progress on strategic plan.
4. Participates in educational conferences, workshops, training, and professional organizations.
5. Requires professional leadership from the superintendent.

### SUPERINTENDENT

1. Recommends goals for student achievement.
2. Provides educational leadership to the board, staff, students, and community.
3. Identifies needs of the district and reports them to the board.
4. Keeps the board aware of statewide and national educational developments and changes.
5. Continually upgrades their professional knowledge and qualifications through membership and participation in professional associations, conferences, and workshops.

## 2 – POLICY

### SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes policies for the governance of the school district.
2. Clarifies for the superintendent the intent of the board regarding board policy.
3. Reviews, evaluates, and adopts board policies on an ongoing basis.
4. Authorizes the superintendent with those powers and duties in accordance with board policy and state and federal laws.

### SUPERINTENDENT

1. As the chief executive officer of the board, the superintendent is responsible for implementing board policies and directives.
2. Acts as advisor to the board on areas needing policy development or revision.
3. Drafts written policy and provides the board with necessary data and information for policy adoption.
4. Maintains a current, up-to-date manual of adopted policies.
5. Develops rules and procedures necessary to implement the board's policies.
6. Identifies policy areas that the board should revise, rewrite, or repeal as needs of the district or laws and rules change.
7. Coordinates and manages the operation of the schools.



### 3 – MEETINGS

#### SCHOOL BOARD

1. All duties delegated to the board are performed at a public board meeting.
2. The board refrains from misuse of the executive session provisions as defined in Open Meeting Law.
3. The board establishes the operational guidelines or practices for meetings (norms and protocols).
4. The board chair, in consultation with the superintendent, develops the meeting agenda.
5. The board identifies, for the superintendent, the information needed for decision making.
6. Board members receive their agenda materials in adequate time for study before scheduled board meetings.
7. Sets policy or protocols for public input or comment.

#### SUPERINTENDENT

1. Serves as an advisor to the board during meetings.
2. Assures compliance with all legal requirements relative to the posting of notices and maintenance of meeting records.
3. Identifies areas of business which the board should address at meetings.
4. Prior to meetings, provides board members with sufficient information for decision making.
5. Implements board decisions and instructions developed at meetings.
6. Assures that board meetings, including executive sessions, meet the requirements of the law.

### 4 – BUDGET/FINANCE

#### SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes priorities for the financial management of the district.
2. Provides the superintendent with the board's priorities in the development of the budget.
3. Explores with the district auditor the internal controls of the district.
4. Reviews the budget on a monthly basis and makes adjustments as needed.
5. Reviews and approves the monthly bills.
6. Prioritizes construction and/or building renovation needs of the district.

#### SUPERINTENDENT

1. Prepares a detailed budget based on the board's priorities and parameters.
2. Presents a budget to the board and/or budget committee for consideration and approval.
3. Administers the budget assuring that the expenditures of district funds are within the legal requirements of the budget.
4. Acts as a resource to the board within the framework of the district audits.

## 5 – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

### SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes educational philosophy, goals, and objectives for the instructional program of the district.
2. Adopts policies for provision of student services including admission, attendance, activities, rights & responsibilities, discipline, and welfare.
3. Adopts and/or revises standards and instructional programs as necessary or as recommended by the superintendent.
4. Regularly reviews student achievement data.
5. Reports to the community the status of education in the district.
6. Identifies and adopts graduation requirements.
7. Approves curricular materials.
8. Periodically requests reports from professional staff related to assessments and instructional programs.

### SUPERINTENDENT

1. Provides leadership to the board and staff in the ongoing development, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of the instructional program.
2. Recommends and implements policies and rules to maintain adequate services and control of students.
3. Recommends appropriate graduation standards and methods to measure student attainment.
4. Present data regularly to board concerning student achievement and progress towards academic goals.
5. Assigns staff to instructional areas and informs the board.
6. Recommends and implements policy on selection of curricular materials.
7. Provides for the direction and supervision of student activities.
8. Regularly schedules presentations and reports by staff on various segments of assessments and instructional programs as requested by the board.

## 6 – PERSONNEL

### SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes job description of superintendent.
2. Supervises and conducts annual evaluation of superintendent.
3. Employs certified and classified staff members based on the recommendation of the superintendent.
4. Promotes good working relations with staff through the district's chain of command.
5. Adopts policy on evaluation of personnel.
6. Receives and acts on personnel recommendations from the superintendent.

### SUPERINTENDENT

1. Recommends to the board the employment or dismissal of all certificated and classified staff.
2. Establishes job descriptions for all positions.
3. Responsible for the supervision and management of all employees of the district.
4. Serves as the board's liaison with staff.
5. Fosters good working relationships with staff members.
6. Develops a systematic plan for evaluating the performance of all district personnel based on policy.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Delegates authority to staff members, as appropriate.</li> <li>8. Conducts evaluations of staff under their supervision.</li> </ol>
<b>7 – COMMUNITY RELATIONS</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SCHOOL BOARD</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Represents public education serving as a liaison between the school district and the community.</li> <li>2. Maintains an awareness of community values, concerns, and interests.</li> <li>3. Actively participates in programs that build good community relations.</li> <li>4. Appoints advisory committees when necessary and outlines their responsibilities.</li> <li>5. Appoints the board’s spokesperson(s) to deal with the news media.</li> <li>6. Channels complaints or grievances through the established channels (chain of command).</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUPERINTENDENT</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Informs and clarifies school programs and activities to the community.</li> <li>2. Serves as the board's liaison with appointed advisory committees.</li> <li>3. Establishes a working relationship with the news media.</li> <li>4. Makes recommendations to the board for resolution of complaints that cannot be resolved at the administrative level.</li> <li>5. Indicates the district’s spokesperson to deal with the news media.</li> </ol>

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## TRAITS OF EFFECTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

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Effective board members have a number of traits in common, yet it is important to realize that these characteristics are not acquired instantly.

Knowledge, skills, and experience are not enough. Board members must be open to learning new information and gaining new knowledge and insights. An effective board member understands the importance of representing and serving all of the district's students. Board work is not always easy; board members must possess courage and a conviction toward public education and the democratic process. Serving on a board takes a commitment to making important decisions and fulfilling responsibilities in all areas of board work.

In addition, an effective board member must have time and energy to devote to the work of the board, the ability to accept the will of the majority, respect for education as a profession and the ability to communicate well with others.

Another way to identify the effective board member is to observe the way in which board responsibilities are carried out. An effective board member makes every attempt to attend all board meetings and prepares for the meetings in advance by reading and analyzing the agenda and supporting information. Effective board members resist springing surprises at board meetings, abide by board policies and rules, and wait to make personal decisions until all the evidence is in and board discussion is over.

An effective board member strives to foster unity and harmony among the board and differentiates between problems that require board action and those which should be solved by administration. This board member supports the superintendent's or chief administrator's authority, shares responsibility for board decisions, accepts and evaluates criticism and advice objectively, avoids personality conflicts and strives to improve personal boardsmanship qualities.

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## TEAMWORK COUNTS

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Effective board members understand their role as a member of the governance team; the team that includes the board, the superintendent/ chief administrator, the board secretary, and others. Working together as a team means no one person is responsible—everyone is responsible—for the success of the governance team. Effective teams share essential elements:

- Common Goals: Members of a successful team share and understand common goals. The boards that get the most done are those that know they have a mission to accomplish together. They have discussed and agreed on a common understanding of why the board exists and the function it serves. Moreover, they share a common vision of the future they want for the district. While individuals on the board may not always agree on the best path to get to that future, their shared vision and mission help draw them together and aid decision making.
- A Game Plan: Good teams are organized and know how they will deal with specific situations. Clear, specific strategies and tools make up a board’s game plan. Your game plan might include specific goals for the year, adequate data and information upon which to base decisions, focused meeting agendas, policies, committee assignments, timelines for board responsibilities and other tools.
- Clearly Defined Roles: Every team member has an important role to play. Any good team knows the strengths of each member and takes advantage of those strengths. Some people are good at expressing themselves; others are good at organizing and conducting meetings; others might have a keen understanding of a complicated area such as school finance. And yet, the whole board has a shared responsibility in each of these areas. A board that is split into factions and focused on each other’s weaknesses can fall into the trap of needing to win personal victories over important issues. Take some time to identify your board’s strengths and agree on roles, relationships, and responsibilities. Some boards like to put this in writing. They make a list of what the roles of the board will be and agree on how they will operate well together.
- Regular Board Self-Assessment: Effective teams assess how well they’re doing and analyze what works and what doesn’t for their team. That’s why sports teams often watch post-game videos—to evaluate how they can improve for the next game. How can your board know how well it’s functioning? The board can use a variety of options to review team performance; everything from a quick reflection at the end of a board meeting to a more formal self-assessment process conducted at the end of the year. Your board might use one of NCSBA’s self- assessment tools, and/or work with an NCSBA facilitator on the board self-assessment process.
- Trust and Confidence: High performing teams have high levels of trust among their members. Here are a few ideas to promote trust and confidence on your board team:
  - Practice honest, open communication. Be tactful and non-threatening when disagreeing. Study how body language and phrasing can inhibit or promote teamwork.
  - Avoid surprising each other, especially during board meetings. Send questions to your superintendent before the meeting so they can be answered during the meeting in front of community members in attendance.

- Support each other! For example, in conversations, mention the contributions of others and be sure to thank them for their efforts.
- Find ways to work together on common educational goals. Committee work and discussion groups can build unity on a board.
- Take advantage of board development activities so your team can learn together and work from a shared understanding.

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## WHEN THE BOARD TEAM IS DIVIDED

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As a board team, your goal in decision making should be a compromise that is reasonably satisfactory to the entire board. Teamwork does not necessarily mean unanimous votes. There may be times when board members have strong minority opinions concerning the board's position on an important issue. Having differing views and votes is healthy and essential to good decisions. However, if opposing views keep your board from acting as a team and supporting decisions once they have been made, they can be damaging to your effectiveness.

A divided board occurs when votes almost always split along factional lines, regardless of the issue. Here are some tips for rebuilding a divided board:

- Define your mission and vision as a board through planning, retreats or other processes. Help members see their part in reaching the vision.
- Select a board chair who can lead the group toward unity and cohesion.
- Ask board members from neighboring districts to sit in on your meetings and later relate their perceptions of your board's stumbling blocks.
- In difficult cases, consider getting an impartial third party (such as a mediator) to help your board work out conflicts or differences.

Few situations are more damaging to the board or the organization than to have individual board members publicly working against an action of the board. Once a vote has been taken, dissenting board members should support the democratic process by supporting the majority decision.

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## KEEPING STUDENTS FIRST

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Most board members say they ran for the board to make a difference for the students of their community. They want to make a contribution to help students learn more and be better prepared

for success. They understand ensuring the academic success of students is a fundamental function of public education and have a desire to put students first.

Today, that basic value of putting students first means boards must be tightly focused on improving results for each and every student. The Iowa Association of School Boards conducted research, providing insights into the most important roles of the school board in improving student learning. That research, called the Iowa Lighthouse Research, indicates school boards have five important roles in leading for improved student achievement.

### ✦ Key Roles of the Board

- Set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and a focus on strengthening instruction.
- Support conditions for success through board actions and decisions.
- Hold the system accountable to reach student learning goals.
- Build the collective commitment of community and staff to achieve the student learning goals.
- Learn together as a whole team to influence the student learning goals.

### ✦ Setting and Communicating High Expectations

Commitment to high expectations is a foundation for improving student learning. Studies of districts that have made significant gains in student achievement are consistent in identifying that district leaders made a firm commitment to overcome the status quo, to seek equity and excellence, and worked actively to build commitment to that vision, even in the face of barriers. The board-superintendent team sets the tone in committing to high expectations for all students. It's powerful when your board expresses a consistent belief that more is possible and when you communicate those expectations throughout the school district and community.

The board puts its commitment into action by:

- Consistently communicating high expectations. The board ensures that high expectations are explicit in district statements of vision, mission, and beliefs and in standards, benchmarks, and curriculum. These expectations are evident in board members, administrators and staff who show by their words and, most importantly their action, their belief that all students can learn, and their faculty can teach, a challenging curriculum.
- Establishing or approving goals and indicators of progress. The board sets the expectation for priority goals to be based on:
  - Engagement of administrative and staff leadership in the goal setting process.
  - Use of data and information to identify the greatest student learning need(s).
  - A focus on improving instruction and student learning in the areas of greatest need.
  - Identifying a narrow number of specific, measurable student learning goals and indicators of progress.

- Establishing a plan for the ongoing staff evaluation of progress toward the student learning goals and a process to make adjustments as needed.
- A plan for regularly reporting progress to staff, board and community.
- Focusing on improving instruction. Because research is clear that quality instruction has the greatest impact on student learning, the school board ensures that the focus of the district is on improving classroom instruction as the key strategy for improving student learning.

### ✦ **Supporting Conditions for Successful Teaching and Learning**

The board has a duty to match expectations for improvement with the supports needed to produce results. The board creates the conditions for success by:

1. Showing commitment in board actions and decisions to allocate resources, ensuring that all parts of the system are aligned around the learning needs of students.
2. Providing supports for quality, research-based professional development that provides teachers time to collaborate with other teachers to improve their instructional skills.
3. Supporting and connecting with districtwide leaders at the board table to build broad-based commitment and focus throughout the system.
4. Staying the course, allowing time for improvement efforts to work and addressing roadblocks along the way.

### ✦ **Holding the System Accountable for Student Learning Goals**

1. Using data extensively to make decisions at the board table and ensuring that quality data is used throughout the system as a planning and decision-making tool.
2. Understanding and agreeing to clear indicators as evidence of progress and success.
3. Monitoring progress regularly, holding regular, solution-oriented, supportive conversations at the board table with staff leadership on progress and on areas that need to improve.

### ✦ **Building Collective Commitment to Achieve Goals**

The school board plays an essential role in creating commitment and desire to see improved results. That collective will to improve must be built within the staff and throughout the community. The board fulfills that role by:

1. Creating widespread awareness and urgency of the need to improve, and the moral purpose of improvement to meet the needs of students and society.
2. Instilling hope that it's possible to change, that schools and districts are capable of putting in place research-based practices that produce improved results for students.
3. Connecting with the community, sharing challenges and successes, providing information and data and engaging families, churches, businesses, civic and social organizations and government in frank discussions and ongoing efforts to encourage each facet of the community to fulfill its responsibility.



## ✦ Learning Together as a Whole Board-Superintendent Team

If these board roles in improving student achievement sound important to you, you're right! You've been elected to one of the most important jobs in education: school governance. Learning together as a board- superintendent team, coupled with deep conversations about implications of that learning for your district, is critical to building a shared focus strong enough to achieve long-term improvement efforts. The job of learning for a board is not to earn a degree in education. The board's learning is around your role in the context of school improvement. It's also about gaining big picture understanding and background, networking with other boards and learning from their successes and experiences.

To fulfill this important role, effective school boards:

- Establish board learning time, commit agenda time around school improvement efforts and learn together in the context of the district's goals and improvement initiatives.
- Engage in deep conversations about the implications of their learning to build a shared focus through shared information and discussion.
- Build a trusting and supportive relationship with the superintendent, in which both the board and superintendent develop a willingness to lead and nurture the leadership roles of each other.
- Lead through thoughtful policy development, based on shared learning, to build momentum for change and to embed expectations for improvement in the culture of the system.

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## ADVOCACY BEGINS AT HOME

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**Communicating your challenges and successes to state policymakers is a key role and responsibility during your time on your school board.**

As a board member, you have tremendous credibility with legislators – they often mention how important it is for them to hear from school board members on education issues. Additionally, you speak as another elected public policymaker, from their district, and charged with doing what is right for local constituents.

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## CONNECTING WITH LEGISLATORS

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One of the best ways to make connections with legislators is to invite them to schools and other district events. This helps create a bond with the board and the community.

Close connections are best made in the district. Work on building a personal, friendly relationship. Legislators are more likely to respond to a friend than a stranger. Think of yourself as a valuable education resource and partner helping the legislator to be knowledgeable and effective.

As you advocate on behalf of your school district:

### ✦ **Focus on Your Legislators**

Knowing your legislators and their staff members is the first step to having your voice heard. The beginning of the school year is a great time to invite legislators to a board meeting or to visit a school. Establishing a connection with your legislator early is a primary step in the process of providing information and getting to know each other before the legislative session begins.

- Know your legislator's party, committee assignments, priorities, and history.
- Know where their children and grandchildren go to school.
- Find out whether your legislators have been a teacher, board member, or have family members in education.
- Find out why they ran for office and what they hope to accomplish.
- Ask whether they prefer to be contacted by phone, email, or text.
- Ask them to describe their goals and vision for North Carolina education.
- Contact NCSBA for questions to help you determine if candidates or legislators support public education.

### ✦ **Be a Source of Reliable and Credible Information**

- Give your legislators your home, work, and cell numbers and your email address so they can reach you at any time. You want legislators to consider your input before a vote or committee hearing.
- Be willing to share your insight and experience as a board member on issues legislators will have to vote on.
- Be ready to provide accurate, persuasive information on how legislation will affect your district and its policies. Use data as well as real-life and community examples of those effects. Work with your superintendent to develop the information you need.
- Build coalitions locally to meet with your legislators together – there is strength in numbers.

### ✦ **Make Your Legislators Experts on Your District**

- Provide information on your district at every opportunity.
- Always leave information in writing – political experts still say that a handwritten letter is the best way to communicate with legislators. Even if a legislator prefers receiving email, it's still good to follow up with a handwritten thank you or more information.

- Send lawmakers copies of your annual progress report to show how your district is working to improve student achievement and be accountable to your community.
- Share good news and accomplishments, especially if they were made possible by past legislation.
- Send news clippings or links from your local newspaper or other publications frequently and particularly when the legislature is in session.
- Invite legislators to your schools, staff development training, board meetings, or PTA meetings.
- Give legislators stories from your community they can use to make their points in floor debates.

### ✦ **Timing Is Everything**

- Attend meetings and forums that your legislators hold in their communities.
- Pick a good time to get your point across.
- Obtain a legislative calendar showing when legislators are in their home district or at the capitol. Calendars show when lawmakers should be in committee, in full session, or in the office.
- Use post-vote connections to thank legislators and advocate other issues.

### ✦ **Follow Your Legislators' Actions**

- Ask legislators how they will vote on an issue. Let your legislator know that you need their support or no vote on education issues.
- If a legislator is not supportive, don't take it personally. You don't know what's going on behind the scenes. Remain respectful because there will always be another issue.
- If a legislator was supportive, thank him or her for that support.
- Direct the greatest amount of your time on the undecided majority party members and then the minority party members.
- If a lawmaker strongly opposes your bill, be respectful and move on.

### ✦ **All Politics Are Local**

- Recruit local advocates who care about public education to help you explain your students' needs to your legislators. Talk to chamber of commerce members, service organization partners, church friends, farmers, retired board members, school staff members, and parents – anyone who needs your district to provide the best possible education to your students.
- Encourage citizens to advocate on behalf of your district. Feel free to forward CASB action and legislative alert emails.

# SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER LOBBYING PLAN

My *Senator* is: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Information:

My *Representative* is: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Information:

1. What are you doing now that you can build on to increase your lobbying effort?
2. What can you do to help build a trusting relationship with the legislator(s)?
3. Where is the best place and when will be the best time for you to schedule an initial meeting with the legislator(s)?
4. Which of your fellow school board members have relationships with your district's delegation?
5. What is your main message?
6. What story best illustrates your message?
7. After your initial meeting, what steps will you take to become a reliable and trustworthy resource for your legislator(s)?
8. How will you gather testimony to present to the legislator(s)?
9. What can you do to make visiting a classroom a priority for the legislator(s)?
10. What additional steps will you take to maintain a relationship with the legislator(s) throughout his/her tenure?

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## DEMANDS ON YOUR TIME

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Board members admit that the most surprising discoveries about board service are the amount of time it takes to be an effective board member and the variety of concerns with which the board deals. Often, the abrupt change from citizen to board member status catches newly elected board members off guard. They are suddenly bombarded with concerns and complaints from friends, acquaintances, and people they've never met before. They can no longer go out in the community without being approached by one or more citizens sharing school district concerns. And even when you tell them that your authority to act is limited to board meetings, they'll see you as a 24/7 board member.

The board member and his/her family and possibly business will inevitably be affected by this investment of time and talent in the schools. If you learn to manage the demands of public service on your private life, board service can be rewarding and enjoyable. Most boards meet once or twice a month with a typical meeting lasting between two and four hours; emergencies may prompt additional special meetings. Board members may also have to attend committee meetings that require even further preparation and time. The board member's involvement in community affairs and attendance at school programs and events accounts for even more dedicated time.

Many newly elected board members are also surprised by the huge amount of board-related paperwork they must read and the multitude of new information they must learn in a very short time. It's not uncommon to hear board members state that it takes them several hours prior to a board meeting to review their board packet thoroughly and to get all their questions answered.

Without question, there is a huge time commitment required to serve on a board of education. However, experienced board members often find tremendous satisfaction from their public service. Still, anyone running for the school board should be well aware that they will be dedicating many hours to fulfilling the responsibilities of their new position.

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## COMMIT TO YOUR OWN LEARNING

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The learning curve of boardsmanship is steep! To make the most of your time on the board, commit early to your own learning and development as a board member. Encourage your fellow board members to help you by engaging in discussions around any of the questions you've encountered.

Whether you are a newly elected board member just learning the ropes or an experienced board member facing a new challenge, remember that you are not alone. NCSBA is your membership association. Call us at (919) 841-4040

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## EDUCATIONAL ACRONYMS

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<b>ADM</b>	Average Daily Membership
<b>AP</b>	Advanced Placement
<b>AYP</b>	Adequate Yearly Progress
<b>CEDARS</b>	[NC] Common Education Data Analysis & Reporting System.
<b>CTE</b>	Career and Technical Education
<b>EDDIE</b>	Educational Directory & Demographical Information Exchange
<b>ELL</b>	English Language Learner
<b>EOC/G</b>	End-of-Course, Grade
<b>ESEA</b>	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>EVAAS</b>	Education Value Added Assessment System. SAS® EVAAS™ for K-12
<b>FRL</b>	Free and Reduced Priced Lunch
<b>IDEA</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
<b>IEP</b>	Individualized Education Program
<b>IIS</b>	Instructional Improvement System
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Agency
<b>LEP</b>	Limited English Proficient
<b>LMS</b>	Learning Management System
<b>NCCLAS</b>	North Carolina Checklist of Academic Standards
<b>NCDPI</b>	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
<b>NCEES</b>	North Carolina Educator Evaluation System
<b>OLE</b>	Online Learning Exchange
<b>PBIS</b>	Positive Behavior Intervention and Support
<b>PD</b>	Professional Development
<b>PEP</b>	Personalized Education Plan
<b>PLC</b>	Professional Learning Communities
<b>RESA</b>	Regional Education Service Alliance
<b>SAT</b>	Scholastic Assessment Test
<b>SBE</b>	State Board of Education
<b>SCOS or SCS</b>	(North Carolina) Standard Course of Study
<b>SEA</b>	State Education Agency
<b>SIP</b>	School Improvement Plan
<b>SIS</b>	Student Information System
<b>SLC</b>	[North Carolina] Student Learning Conditions [Survey]
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>TIMS</b>	Transportation Information Management System
<b>Title I</b>	the largest federal education funding program for schools
<b>Title IX</b>	bans sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funds, whether it is in academics or athletics
<b>TWC</b>	[North Carolina] Teacher Working Conditions [Survey]
<b>USED</b>	United States Education Department

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## ABOUT NCSBA

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The North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA) is the professional organization that represents all 115 local boards of education in North Carolina and the board of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. We are a member-driven association that supports the school governance team—school board members, superintendents, senior administrative staff, and board assistants—in its complex leadership role. We help develop, communicate, and advocate for North Carolina school districts.

NCSBA, like many organizations, has a history of growth. The association was formed in 1937 as a statewide school board conference to consider best practices and unify policies. As a result of that meeting, board members adopted a legislative agenda that was presented to the 1941 North Carolina General Assembly. Every item on the legislative agenda was adopted by that Legislature! As public education has become more complex and the role of the local board of education more important, school board members and school system administrators have looked to NCSBA for leadership and services.

### ✦ **Dr. Guy B. Phillips, Part-Time NCSBA Executive Secretary, 1937-1966**

Dr. Guy B. Phillips, dean of the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, organized the first gathering of school board members in the state. The association was housed in Peabody Hall on the UNC campus from 1937 until 1971. Phillips served as part-time executive secretary of NCSBA from 1937 until 1966. The limited organizational program of NCSBA was operated out of a drawer in Phillips' desk.

### ✦ **Dr. Raleigh Dingman, NCSBA Executive Secretary, 1966-1980**

In 1966, NCSBA's board of directors decided that a full-time executive secretary was necessary to facilitate the association's growth. The board began a search that resulted in the employment of Raleigh Dingman. He moved the association from a desk drawer to an office in Peabody Hall. In 1971, following a financial and program review, the NCSBA offices were moved to Raleigh to position the association to represent school boards more effectively before the General Assembly and the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE). During this period, a new organization was formed — the North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA), which shared office space with NCSBA.

### ✦ **Dr. Gene Causby, NCSBA Executive Director, 1980-1993**

In 1980, following Raleigh Dingman's death, Gene Causby was named executive director. At the time, the association had only three staff members. The team worked hand in glove to assist school boards in policy making and training board members. During that time, school district dues and registration

fees were the association's only income. Through Causby's efforts, the services provided by the association increased. NCSBA's presence in the General Assembly increased during this time as well. In 1982, in response to the worldwide insurance crisis, the association's board of directors established the North Carolina School Boards Insurance Trust, now known as the North Carolina School Boards Trust (NCSBT). Causby retired from the association in 1994.

#### ✦ **Dr. Edwin Dunlap, Jr., Executive Director, 1994-2021**

Dr. Ed Dunlap became executive director of NCSBA, having been on staff since 1980. At that time, there were nine employees. The association continued to effectively represent school boards at the General Assembly and provided various training services. NCSBA's office located at 7208 Falls of Neuse Road officially became its headquarters on March 3, 2000. Dr. Dunlap retired in 2021 after 41 years with the association. The headquarters building was named after him upon retirement.

#### ✦ **Leanne E. Winner, Executive Director, 2021-Present**

The board of directors named Leanne Winner as the first female executive director in October 2020. Winner started with the association in 1997 as the director of governmental relations. The association continues to refine its services to meet the unique needs of North Carolina's school board members.

In 2021, the association became a founding member of the Consortium of State School Boards Associations (COSSBA), a non-partisan, national alliance dedicated to sharing resources and information to support, promote and strengthen state school boards associations as they serve their local school districts and board members. The new organization's governance philosophy aligns more closely with that of NCSBA.

NCSBA has come a long way from a desk drawer in Peabody Hall to our office in Raleigh and is a strong, healthy, and respected organization. The association is a major player in the General Assembly and continues to collaborate with various organizations on public education.

### **VISION**

NCSBA is an essential resource for school leaders as we work to provide an opportunity for a sound basic education for our students.

### **MISSION**

NCSBA provides community, advocacy, leadership opportunities, and services that enable school boards to govern at the highest level.



## **GOALS**

1. Expand member engagement and connectedness.
2. Elevate members' knowledge of the advantages of NCSBA membership.
3. Enhance advocacy efforts.
4. Enrich the culture and climate at NCSBA.

## **HEADQUARTERS**

7208 Falls of Neuse Road, Suite 301

Raleigh, NC 27615

919-841-4040 | [www.ncsba.org](http://www.ncsba.org)

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## NCSBA STAFF

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Executive Director

**Christina Davoile**

Executive Assistant/Communications Specialist

### BOARD DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

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**Amber Horton**

Assistant Director

**Angela Hunter**

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Assistant Director

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