

School District of Hortonville

Title: New Board Member
Leadership

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Page 1 of 7

POLICY STATEMENT:

It is the policy of the School District of Hortonville to help new Board members become effective education leaders for the District as quickly as possible. This policy defines the leadership role and summarizes the ingredients of success for a school board member.

RATIONALE:

Upon election, all Board of Education members become officers of the State, bearing the responsibility to carry out the duties delegated by the State. As elected officials of the community, they represent various perspectives of their constituencies. And, as individuals, they bring to the Board their individual philosophies, knowledge, skills and personal judgment. Aligning individual perspectives with community interests that also are in accordance with laws and regulations becomes a difficult task for the Board as a whole and for individual Board members. It is critical that Board members learn to work collectively to make well thought-out, comprehensive decisions that will guide their district.

SCOPE:

Board of Education members

RESPONSIBILITY:

Compliance with this policy shall be the responsibility of the Board of Education President.

IMPLEMENTATION:

I. The Leadership Role - Ingredients of Success

School Board members must lead their community in developing full consensus regarding the uniqueness of the community and its basic values, in identifying the specific mission and objectives appropriate to community needs and aspirations and in implementing bold strategies to guarantee the success of all students.

As a new Board member struggles to fulfill this obligation, he/she may be stymied by a sense of frustration and a feeling of no real accomplishment. The following is a set of qualities that make up a successful Board member. It is offered to help new members approach each issue as a dynamic, committed leader and to aid in maintaining balance as one struggles to accomplish goals.

A successful Board member must be a visionary to articulate what school is all about. The visionary encourages creativity, thinks about what he or she wants the school to be like in the future and is receptive to change.

President Willard Griesbach Date _____

Clerk Anna Lane Date _____

A successful Board member must also maintain a sense of responsibility to the community and the electorate. To be accountable, one must be a tactician who can turn vision into plans. This is accomplished through goal setting. Being accountable doesn't end with planning; however, it requires fiscal responsibility--particularly in these days of high cost and tax concerns. Meeting the students' needs--the most important responsibility as a Board member--may require one to make an unpopular monetary commitment.

A successful Board member is open-minded. Just as the education bureaucracy must become more flexible, so must individual Board members. To be open-minded requires a positive attitude when approaching each issue, each person and each special interest group. Learning to be a good listener and avoiding preconceived notions are key ingredients of being open-minded. If one can be objective and receptive as a decision maker, one will be the leader the Board needs.

A successful Board member understands that the Board operates collectively, not individually. Collective action requires compromise, which means that once you have argued your case before the Board one must be supportive of the will of the majority. A key tenet of democracy is the right of the minority to be heard and the right of the majority to prevail. Each Board member must help maintain the delicate balance between individual desires and the good of the entire Board--and therefore, the quality of education.

While it is vital not to sabotage a decision that didn't go one's way, neither should one always make deals just to keep peace. It is important to take risks by sharing one's personal feelings so that others can see sincerity and commitment on an issue, but one should not mistake aggressiveness and confrontation for assertiveness and controversy. Issues are most easily resolved by boards that understand compromise and flexibility.

A successful Board of Education is made up of people who are diplomats with self-discipline and commitment. The individual Board members help develop a group identity, while the group focuses its attention on student outcomes, aligns its goals and commits itself to lead the community into the next century.

Keeping in mind the qualities of a successful leader, and one is likely to find the experience on the Board of Education rewarding and satisfying. Although it is imperative that one takes his/her job seriously, one may find the experience a disaster if a person takes oneself too seriously. Board of Education members succeed and survive when they are enthusiastic, optimistic and inspirational leaders with a good sense of humor.

II. Roles and Responsibilities as a Board of Education Member

While many important tasks and decisions in every school district are delegated to the District Administrator and the District staff, the Board is ultimately responsible for all District concerns. Some of these it cannot delegate; others it must delegate to the school administration.

The State statutes will define the legal powers and responsibilities of school board in the State. The State Board of Education must assign additional powers to local boards. The powers and duties of school boards are defined somewhat differently in each state. Some statutes are very general, while others are specific. Some outline only what a board "shall" do (mandatory duties), while others include what a board "may" do (discretionary duties). As an individual Board member, one has no legal powers. One can exercise powers as a Board member only through Board action.

Responsibilities Defined

Basically, the responsibilities of all school boards fall into the following categories:

Policy Making: A Board's major function is to develop and adopt District policy governing many facets of school operations, including employment of staff personnel, administration of pupil services, educational programs, instructional material, school facilities, equipment, finance and support services. A Board can adopt policy upon the recommendation of the District Administrator, but the final decisions on policy cannot be delegated. A Board delegates the implementation of policies to the District Administrator. It evaluates the execution and effect of policy through observations, special oversight studies, and periodic reports by administrative officers.

Designating The Chief Executive: A Board is responsible for recruiting, hiring and evaluating the performance of the District Administrator who will carry out its policy. This task cannot be delegated. Unless otherwise specified in state statutes or board policy, a Board exercises daily supervision and control primarily through its chief administrator and does not deal directly with individual staff members employed to assist the District Administrator in implementing Board directives.

Planning, Goal Setting and Appraisal

This vital leadership role of a Board cannot be delegated. Each Board must establish the current and long-range educational plans and programs for its district. It is responsible for obtaining from the administration and other sources reliable information on which to make the best possible decisions about the scope and nature of all school programs. The Board is ultimately responsible for appraisal of the results of these programs, a task which is frequently delegated to the administration.

Financial Resources: In consultation with the District Administrator, a Board is responsible for approval and adoption of an annual budget that will provide the financial basis for the buildings, furnishings, staff, materials and equipment needed to carry out educational programs. In most states, other financial responsibilities included:

- Authorizing the administration to make the necessary expenditures budgeted and appropriated by the Board.
- Making decisions on the time, size and sale of bonds and the investment of bond proceeds.
- Adopting policies for the purchase, disposal and distribution of supplies, property and equipment.
- Approving and adopting an insurance program for the District.
- Authorizing the administration to invest and borrow funds within the limitations of state law.

Staffing and Appraisal: In most districts, the Board delegates the tasks of recruiting, hiring, evaluating, promoting and disciplining staff (in accordance with Board policy) to the District Administrator. The Board is responsible for establishing policy governing salaries and salary schedules, terms and conditions of employment, fringe benefits, leave and in-service training. The Board must ratify all collective bargaining contracts.

School Facilities: A Board is responsible for determining school housing needs; communicating those needs to the community; purchasing, disposing of, or leasing school sites; and for approving building plans that will support and enhance educational programs. Upon the recommendation of the District Administrator, the Board will employ architects, hire building contractors and contract for operational and maintenance services.

Student: Although the Board does not deal directly with students and solve student-related problems, it does set policies which guide the actions of administration and other school staff. The Board can accept, modify or reject policies recommended by the District Administrator regarding school admissions, placement, promotion, attendance, expulsion, suspension, graduation, conduct discipline, safety, health services, food services and transportation services. All policies must be viewed in light of their effect on all students' equal access to educational opportunities in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

Public Relations: To be an effective Board member, one will want to maintain ongoing personal communication with school staff, students and members of the community. The Board must see to it that there are adequate and direct means for keeping the local citizenry informed and for keeping itself informed about the wishes of the public. All formal means of District communication (surveys, newsletters and the like) should be established in Board policy and delegated to the administration.

Adjudication and Investigation: From time to time, a Board may have to hear appeals from school staff members or students on issues which involve Board policy implementation. It may also conduct legislative oversight hearings and investigations on Board policy implementation issues and school system operations.

General: Other Board activities include:

- Establishing procedures for the operation of the Board.
- Electing Board officers.
- Approving the annual school calendar.
- Hiring Board staff assistants.
- Determining who will be on the District Negotiating Committee and employing a chief negotiator for collective bargaining.
- Establishing attendance zones for the school district.
- Retaining an attorney or law firm for the school district.
- Setting strategy and coordinating litigation decisions when the school district is involved in a lawsuit.
- Establishing and maintaining effective Board-District Administrator relations.
- Periodically reviewing and evaluating Board operations and performance.
- Working with (as well as authorizing the administration to work with) city, county and other government and non-government officials and agencies.

III. Ethics for Effective Board Members

Ethics. Effectiveness. These are two different things, but they go hand-in-hand. One's ethics form the basis for the code by which one conduct oneself. If actions are guided by a sound, ethical code of conduct, chances are good that person will be effective as a Board member. He/she will be capable of producing results.

Begin with commitment:

A sound code of conduct for Board of Education members begins with a genuine commitment to striving for high quality public education that supports the full development of all children, and the present and future welfare of their local community and country. A Board member must be committed to doing this, and must be continued to working effectively with others to do this.

Don't forget the work ethic:

Saying one is committed to serving public education and the District's percentage of the nation's school children isn't enough. A Board member must do something about his/her commitment. A Board member must work for what he/she believes in. This means:

- Doing your homework before Board meetings.

- Keeping abreast of current educational issues within the school system, throughout the state and across the nation.
- Making every attempt to attend all Board meetings.
- Becoming well versed in parliamentary procedure.
- Learning how to get and present facts, not merely interpretations of them.
- Devoting sufficient time, thought and study to proposed actions.
- Considering alternative solutions to problems.
- Encouraging ideas and opinions from students, staff and citizens of the District and endeavoring to incorporate their views in one's deliberations and decisions.
- Working with the rest of the Board to establish effective Board policies by which the District Administrator can administer the schools.
- Establishing fair and equitable terms and conditions of employment and evaluation for all school employees.
- Selecting sound instructional strategies and materials and submitting them to regular and impartial evaluations.

Adopt These Principles

No code, of course, is complete without the more orthodox ethics such as honesty, trust, fairness and integrity. Not using the office for personal or partisan gain, or for the benefit of family, friends, church or special interest groups is another standard which should be part of the operating code.

Recognizing the limits of one's authority as a Board member is vital. As one Board member said: "You must remember at all times that individual Board members have no authority apart from the official actions of the Board, and you should conduct your relationships with school staff, local citizenry and all media on the basis of this fact. Making promises to citizens that you don't have the authority to make is unethical."

The following are some standards that experienced Board members agree are key elements of effective Board service:

- Base your decisions on the available facts and independent judgment, and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.
- Take no private action that will compromise the school system, the Board or the administration and avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest.
- Support and protect the civil and human rights of all members of the school community.
- Respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged.
- Keep an open mind so that new concepts can be accepted and evaluated.
- Listen objectively to constructive criticism.
- Know the difference between personal influence and factual persuasion.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Learn and practice the art of compromise.
- Don't avoid confrontation merely to improve chances for re-election.
- Share the responsibility for all Board decisions, regardless of how members voted.
- Strive for teamwork.
- Do not undermine the authority of the District Administrator or intrude into the spheres of responsibility that properly belong to the school administration.

IV. Indicators of Board of Education Effectiveness

An effective Board provides leadership for public education and is an advocate for the educational needs and interests of children and youth.

An effective Board works to influence policies of state and local governmental bodies and other organizations whose decisions affect children and youth.

An effective Board seeks and responds to many forms of parent and community participation in the School District.

An effective Board has a comprehensive program for communications with its various constituencies, including policies and procedures for working with the media.

An effective Board encourages and respects diversity, deals openly and straightforwardly with controversy within the Board and the community and follows democratic decision-making processes.

An effective Board uses strategic planning to set educational goals and determine the means of accomplishing them.

An effective Board works to ensure an adequate flow of resources and achieves equity in their distribution.

An effective Board establishes and follows policy to govern its own policy-making responsibilities.

An effective Board exercises continuing policy oversight of education programs and their management, drawing information for this purpose from many sources and knowing enough to ask the right questions.

An effective Board establishes and implements procedures for selecting and evaluating the District Administrator.

An effective Board recognizes the dilemma of distinguishing policy from administration and periodically clarifies these separate areas of responsibility in consultation with the District Administration.

An effective Board promotes constructive relations with its employees and works to create conditions that enhance productivity.

An effective Board establishes clear expectations for the conduct of its members.

An effective Board establishes and follows policies and procedures to manage its own operations.

An effective Board has procedures for self-assessment and invests in its own development, using diverse approaches that address the needs of the Board as a whole, as well as those of individual Board members.

V. In Recognition of Service as A Board Member

Education, experience and effort are vital to one's effectiveness as a Board of Education member. Service on the Board of Education requires dedication to continuing education, and in recognition of these Board members who put forth extra time and effort to strengthen their boardmanship abilities, in 1988 the WASB initiated the Board Member Development Program.

Specifically, the program is designed to: a) encourage Board members to participate in developing activities which help them gain the knowledge and skills necessary to provide

educational leadership in their communities and b) enable Board members to receive awards and recognition as they strive for professionalism.

Board members are awarded points for participation in state and national school board association sponsored activities. Such activities include: attending conventions, workshops, seminars and inservice sessions; serving on association committees; serving as a non-paid presenter at convention or workshop; serving as a delegate to the convention; or election as an association director. A specific number of points are assigned each activity, ranging from five points to 30 points.

The Board Members Development Program runs on an annual basis, September 1 through August 31, and points are culmulative from year to year. Each school board member is responsible for maintaining a record of his/her participation in WASB and NSBA activities and, when an award level has been reached, for submitting the completed Board Development Report Form prior to the August 31 deadline.

A Board Development Report Form is mailed to each WASB member yearly, or can be obtained by calling the WASB's Madison office at 608/257-2622. The WASB maintains records of attendance for verification purposes, and awards are presented at each region's annual fall meeting.

ASSOCIATED INFORMATION: