



# *Board of Education Manual*



**T**he Mission of the Horseheads Central School Community is to provide a quality education for all within a nurturing environment which promotes excellence, growth, and a sense of civic responsibility.”



# Horseheads Central School District

## **Our Mission**

### **“Quality Education for All”**

The Mission of the Horseheads Central School Community is to provide a quality education for all within a nurturing environment which promotes excellence, growth, and a sense of civic responsibility.

## **Our Vision**

*We, the Horseheads School Community, want a district that:*

- is nurturing and responsive;
- strives for balance in a supportive, safe, encouraging environment;
- recognizes the need for continual improvement in an ever-changing world;
- has a clearly defined focus on learning outcomes, collaboration, and support systems;
- creates an environment within which everyone can thrive and achieve his/her highest potential.

## **Our Beliefs**

*We believe:*

- Everyone can achieve his/her highest potential.
- Trust is essential for growth.
- Learning is cooperative.
- Programs are inclusive.
- Success will be nurtured and expected.
- Learning is performance-based.
- Decisions are data-based.
- Responsibility, respect, and results guide our every effort.

## **Exit Outcomes**

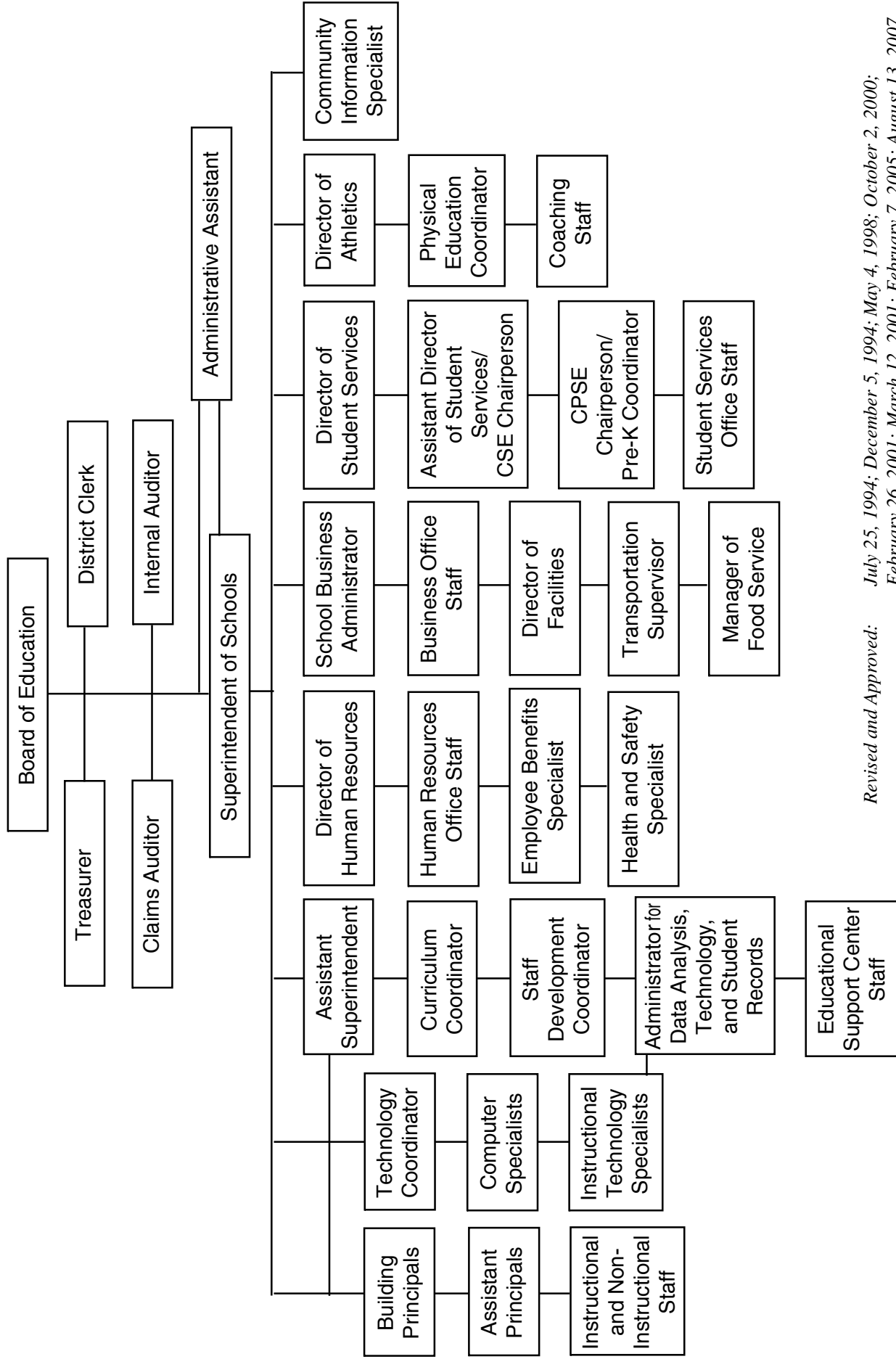
*The Horseheads Central School graduate will be ...*

- a life-long learner
- a caring, productive citizen
- an effective communicator
- a creative problem-solver
- a quality decision-maker
- a healthy, well-rounded person

# Table of Contents

Horseheads Central School District Organizational Chart .....	2
Welcome .....	3
Effective Boards .....	3
Board and Superintendent Communication .....	4
Leadership Self-Assessment .....	4
Leadership Teams .....	6
Teamwork .....	7
Guidelines for Effective Board Membership .....	7
Team Climate Survey .....	8
Dealing with Conflict .....	9
Websites .....	10
Resource:	
Essentials of School Board Service: A Guide to Surviving Your First Year .....	11
©2007, New York State School Boards Association	

# Horseheads Central School District Organizational Chart



Revised and Approved: July 25, 1994; December 5, 1994; May 4, 1998; October 2, 2000;  
 February 26, 2001; March 12, 2001; February 7, 2005; August 13, 2007  
 Horseheads Central School District, Horseheads, New York

## *Welcome to the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education.*

The following pages provide information on school board membership, roles and responsibilities, and helpful hints for serving on the board.

### **What is the Board of Education?**

These are challenging times for public education. School boards are seeking men and women who find excitement and satisfaction in confronting tough challenges and working collegially to overcome them.

The board of education is a uniquely American institution. It keeps the country's public schools flexible and responsive to the needs of their local communities. A member of a board of education in New York State takes on one of the most important responsibilities that can be assigned to any citizen: helping to plan the education of the community's youth.

The board of education is the governing body of the school district. The board is entrusted with the responsibility of developing policies under which the district is managed. The powers and duties of the board are as stated in the Education Law and other applicable New York State law. Complete and final authority on all district educational matters, except as restricted by law, will be vested in the board.

The board is made up of nine district residents elected by the community. Members serve three-year terms and receive no salary for their service.

### **What does a school board member do?**

**As a school board member, you hold positions as:**

- An individual school board member
- A member of the district governance team composed of school board members and the superintendent
- A member of a board made of other members

**The Board focuses on ENDS** - vision, goals, and policy: What? Why? How Well? How Much?

**The Superintendent (as CEO) focuses on MEANS** - objectives, plans, actions, recommendations: How? When? Where? By Whom?

*In other words, the board oversees the education of students and is responsible for school district operations, but does not directly run the district's day-to-day operations.*

### **What are my roles and responsibilities?**

**Your major roles as board member are:**

- **Representative** - of the entire community
- **Steward** - of the district's resources
- **Leader** - of the district
- **Advocate** - for public education

*To represent well, to fulfill public trust, to lead...*

**Your major board responsibilities are:**

- **Set the District's Direction** - drawing upon the community, the board describes a shared vision, and established goals, standards and strategy to transform vision into reality.
- **Ensure Alignment** - of strategy, resources, policies, programs, and processes with district goals.
- **Assess and Account for Progress** - using comprehensive data, thorough deliberation, and open communication.
- **Continuously Improve** - the district, accentuating and reinforcing the positive, and correcting the negative.

## **Effective Boards**

---

### *Basic Responsibilities of the Board of Education:*

- **Determine the Organization's Mission and Purpose**
  - A statement of mission and purposes should articulate the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served. It is the board of education's responsibility to create the mission statement and review it periodically for accuracy and validity. Each individual board member should fully understand and support it.
  - Develop academic standards based on high expectations.
- **Select the Superintendent**
  - Boards must reach consensus on the superintendent's job description and undertake a careful search process to find the most qualified individual for the position.

- **Support the Superintendent and Review His or Her Performance**
  - The board should ensure that the superintendent has the professional support he or she needs to further the goals of the district. The superintendent, in partnership with the entire board, should decide upon a periodic evaluation of the superintendent's performance.
- **Ensure Effective Organizational Planning**
  - Establish policies for the operation of the district.
  - As stewards of the district, boards must actively participate with the staff in an overall planning process and assist in implementing the plan's goals.
- **Ensure Adequate Resources**
  - One of the board's foremost responsibilities is to provide adequate resources for the district to fulfill its mission in partnership with the superintendent.
  - Attract and retain highly qualified staff members.
- **Manage Resources Effectively**
  - The board, in order to remain accountable to the public, must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
- **Determine and Monitor the District's Programs and Services**
  - The board's role in this area is to determine which programs are the most consistent with the district's mission, and to monitor their effectiveness.
- **Enhance the District's Public Image**
  - A district's primary link to the community, including constituents, the public, and the media, is the board. Clearly articulating the district's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public, as well as garnering support from members of the community, are important elements of a comprehensive public relations strategy.
- **Assess Its Own Performance**
  - By evaluating its performance in fulfilling its responsibilities, the board can recognize its achievements and reach consensus on which areas need to be improved.

## **Board and Superintendent Communication**

---

### *Ten tips for effective communication...*

1. Be yourself: The most important thing in effective communication is to be yourself. Avoid technical jargon or fancy pretentious language. It does not impress anyone; in fact, it confuses people and cuts you off from the audience.
2. Be comfortable and confident: Relax and remember that you probably know more about your subject than anyone in the audience.
3. Be honest: If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it. Credibility is crucial. Don't jeopardize it.
4. Be brief: Keep it short and simple. You'll look and sound better if you get right to the point.
5. Be human: Don't be afraid to use humor. It promotes a friendly and confident image.
6. Be personal: Personal stories and anecdotes sometimes help get across an idea or concept. The audience remembers the key points because of your personal insights.
7. Be positive and consistent: Keep your goals in mind and stick to them. Control and focus your material.
8. Be attentive: Concentrate - don't be concerned with any distraction. Listen carefully to any questions asked. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
9. Be energetic. Keep your voice conversational, but imagine that it has a "face" which can show different emotions and expressions.
10. Be committed and sincere: Speak convincingly. Don't be afraid to pause. Every time you open your mouth, look and sound as if you really care.

## **Leadership Self-Assessment**

---

*Take a moment to look at yourself as a leader. Do you have the qualities to make a valuable leader?*

### **Attributes:**

- Do I view problems as opportunities? Am I a priority setter?
- Am I customer-focused?
- Am I a critical and creative thinker? Am I positive towards change?
- Am I committed to innovations that are best for children?

## Skills:

- Do I debate, clarify, and enunciate my values and beliefs? Can I fuel, inspire, and guard the shared vision?
- Can I communicate the strategic plan at all levels?
- Do I recognize the problems inherent to the planning process?
- Do I ask the big picture questions and “what if”?
- Can I support the school staff through the change process?
- Do I encourage dreaming and thinking the unthinkable?
- Can I align budget, planning, policies, and instructional programs with the district goals and vision?
- Do I engage in goal setting?
- Can I develop and implement action plans?
- Do I transfer the strategic planning process to planning?

## Knowledge:

- Do I know board and superintendent roles and responsibilities in planning and implementing plans?
- Do I know the strategic planning process, short and long term planning tools?
- Do I know the board and district vision, beliefs, and mission?
- Do I know the relationship of the budget to district planning?
- Do I know local, state, and national factors that affect education?
- Do I know the best practices and research on improving academic achievement?
- Do I know the process of change and paradigm shifts?
- Do I know the strategies to involve and communicate with the community?

*What trait were you proud to say describes you?*

*Was there any trait you would not consider desirable?*

*What trait are you trying to make more descriptive of you?*

## Tools for improved advocacy

*State your assumptions, and describe the data that led to them:*

- Explain your assumptions
- Make your reasoning explicit
- Give examples of what you propose, even if they are hypothetical or metaphorical
- As you speak, try to picture the other person’s perspectives on what you are saying
- Publicly test your conclusions and assumptions

*What to say:*

- Here’s what I think and here’s how I got there
- I assumed that ...

- I came to this conclusion because ...
- If I enter a classroom this is what I might see ...
- What do you think about what I just said?

## Tools for improved inquiry

*Gently find out what data they are operating from:*

- Use unaggressive language, ask in a way that does not provoke defensiveness.
- Draw out their reasoning. Find out as much as you can about why they are saying what they are saying.
- Check your understanding of what they have said.
- Listen for new understanding that may emerge. Don’t just be thinking about your response.

*What to say:*

- What leads you to conclude that?
- What causes you to say that?
- Instead of “What’s your proof?” say, “Can you help me understand your thinking here?”
- What is the significance of that?
- How does this relate to your other concern?
- Can you describe a typical example?
- Am I correct that you’re saying ....

## Tools for when you are at an impasse

*Embrace the impasses, and tease apart the current thinking:*

- Look for information that will help people move forward.
- Ask what logic or data might change their views.
- Avoid speaking from a different point of view.

*What to say:*

- What do we know for a fact?
- What don’t we know?
- What do we agree upon, and what do we disagree upon?
- What, then would have to happen before you would consider alternatives?

## Individual self-assessment

- Journalkeeping
- Portfolios of selected documents produced in the course of their work
- Performance indicators related to goals and activities of professional plan
- Surveys
- Mentors as “critical friends”

## Leadership behavior

- Establish a clear direction
  - Envision the future
  - Focused attention
  - Articulate values
  - Enlist others

- Communicate, communicate, communicate
  - Provide meaning
  - Utilize all forms
  - “Fire in belly”
- Position the organization
  - Build trust (encourage the heart)
  - Reliability and constancy
  - Plan small wins
  - Recognize contributions
  - Celebrate accomplishments
- Development of self
  - Set the example (walk the talk)
  - Positive self-regard
  - Focus on winning
  - Search for opportunities
  - Experiment and take risks
- Empower followers/members
  - Establish clear buy-in
  - Foster collaboration
  - Develop a supportive environment

### ***The Tasks of Leadership***

- Leaders establish vision and set direction
- Leaders affirm and articulate values
- Leaders have high standards and expectations
- Leaders are accountable
- Leaders motivate
- Leaders achieve unity
- Leaders involve others in decision-making
- Leaders serve as role models

## **Leadership Teams**

### ***Characteristics of a team:***

- There must be an awareness of unity on the part of all its members.
- There must be interpersonal relationship. Members must have a chance to contribute, learn from, and work with others.
- The member must have the ability to act together toward a common goal.

### ***Ten characteristics of well-functioning teams:***

- Purpose: Members proudly share a sense of why the team exists and are invested in accomplishing its mission and goals.
- Priorities: Members know what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when to achieve team goals.
- Roles: Members know their roles in getting tasks done and when to allow a more skillful member to do a certain task.

- Decisions: Authority and decision-making lines are clearly understood.
- Conflict: Conflict is dealt with openly and is considered important to decision-making and personal growth.
- Personal traits: members feel their unique personalities are appreciated and well utilized.
- Norms: Group norms for working together are set and seen as standards for everyone in the groups.
- Effectiveness: Members find team meetings efficient and productive and look forward to this time together.
- Success: Members know clearly when the team has met with success and share in this equally and proudly.
- Training: Opportunities for feedback and updating skills are provided and taken advantage of by team members.

### ***Guidelines for effective team membership:***

- Contribute ideas and solutions
- Recognize and respect differences in others
- Value the ideas and contributions of others
- Listen and share information
- Ask questions and get clarification
- Participate fully and keep your commitments
- Be flexible and respect the partnership created by a team — strive for the “win-win”
- Have fun and care about the team and the outcomes

### ***Characteristics of a high-performance team:***

- Participative leadership - creating an interdependence by empowering, freeing up and serving others.
- Shared responsibility - establishing an environment in which all team members feel responsibility as the manager for the performance team.
- Aligned on purpose - having a sense of common purpose about why the team exists and the function it serves.
- High communication - creating a climate of trust and open, honest communication.
- Future focused - seeing change as an opportunity for growth.
- Focused on task - keeping meetings and interactions focused on results.
- Creative talents - applying individual talents and creativity.
- Rapid response - identifying and acting on opportunities.



## ***Who is part of your team and what does the team do?***

- Management Team (Superintendent and Administration) plus Governance Team (School Board)
- Vision (planning)
  - School Board - creates, reviews and approves
  - Administration - recommends process, develops plan (decides what), and implements plans (decides how)
- Structure (policy)
  - School Board - creates, reviews, adopts
  - Administration - recommends, implements
- Advocacy (communication):
  - School Board - represents public interest, seeks public input
  - Administration - acts in public interest, seeks and provides public information
- Accountability (evaluation)
  - School Board - monitors progress toward goals
  - Administration - implements evaluation of programs

## **Teamwork**

### ***Keep the following in mind:***

- Teamwork improves the working environment.
- Teamwork keeps communication consistent.
- Teamwork relieves stress.
- Teamwork reduces errors.
- Teamwork keeps communication lines open.

### ***Open communications...***

- Creates and maintains a climate of trust and open, honest communication.
- Allows board members to talk openly with one another.
- Promotes the exchange of feedback.
- Provide board members to work through misunderstandings and conflicts.

### ***Commitment to a common purpose and performance goals...***

- Keeps the purpose in the forefront of decision-making and evaluations of board practices.
- Helps one another maintain the focus.

### ***Shared responsibility...***

- Allows board members to feel equally responsible for the performance of the board and its outcome.
- Permits individuals to have primary roles for completing board tasks and remain flexible to do what is necessary to accomplish the board's goals and tasks.

## ***Use of resources and talents...***

- Utilizes the resources and talents of all the group members.
- Makes good use of the board's creative talent by openly sharing skills and knowledge, and encourages learning from one another.

## ***Capacity for self-evaluation...***

- Allows boards to stop and look at how well they are doing and what, if anything, may be hindering their performance and communication.

## ***Participative leadership...***

- Provides opportunities for board members to participate in decision making.
- Allows board members to help set goals and develop strategies for achieving these goals.
- Allows board members to help identify tasks and decide how to approach and evaluate them.

## ***Characteristics of effective team members...***

- Members are supportive to achieve results.
- Members avoid "winning" or looking good at the expense of others.
- Members keep the goal and the mission in mind.
- Members are open to the ideas of others.
- Members share information and ideas.
- Members support the contribution of others.

## **Guidelines for Effective Board Membership**

### ***Contribute ideas and solutions***

The willingness of all board members to draw on their own expertise and experience to contribute ideas and solutions is what makes an effective team. You should feel comfortable enough in the team setting to express yourself, and know that your ideas have value. Creative input from a variety of member perspectives is the basis of effective problem solving. Team norms must encourage contributions, not inhibit them.

### ***Recognize and respect differences in others***

Creative, effective boards bring together individuals with widely divergent skills and backgrounds who must work closely together to execute the tasks assigned to them. This can only be accomplished in an atmosphere of mutual respect and willingness to listen. You won't always agree with the ideas other board members bring to a discussion, but you should always be willing to listen without prejudice and contribute positively to the problem-solving process.

## ***Value the ideas and contributions of others***

A willingness to respect ideas and opinions that differ from your own is the cornerstone of positive and interactive teamwork. Input from every member of the groups should be carefully weighed and evaluated, never disparaged.

## ***Listen and share information***

Really listening to what other board members have to say is one of the most vital skills you can contribute to a productive team atmosphere. You should always be willing to give an attentive ear to the views of other board members and expect them to do the same for you.

## ***Ask questions and get clarification***

If an idea isn't clear to you, it is your responsibility to the board to ask questions until the matter is clarified. The field of education often has a language all their own; asking questions to cut through the jargon will benefit all participants.

## ***Participate fully and keep your commitments***

To fully participate, you have to contribute ideas, challenge conventional ways of doing things, ask questions, and complete the tasks assigned to you in a timely and professional manner. These are your responsibilities. Without the enthusiastic participation of all its members, a group is just a collection of individuals. The unique skills and viewpoints you bring to the board are crucial to the successful completion of tasks.

## **Team Climate Survey**

Take the following team climate survey to see where your board stands as a team.

### ***Purpose:***

*Do members of your board share a sense of why the team exists and are invested in accomplishing the mission?*

In a successful team, members proudly share a sense of why the team exists and are invested in accomplishing its mission and goals.

### ***Priorities:***

*Do members know what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when to achieve team goals?*

In a successful team, members know what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when to achieve team goals.

### ***Roles:***

*Do members know their roles in getting tasks done and when to allow a more skillful member to do a certain task?*

In a successful team, members know their roles in getting tasks done and when to allow more skillful members to do a certain task.

### ***Decisions:***

*Are authority and decision-making lines clearly understood?*

In a successful team, authority and decision-making lines are clearly understood.

### ***Conflict:***

*Is conflict dealt with openly and considered important to decision-making and personal growth?*

In a successful team, conflict is dealt with openly and is considered important to decision-making and personal growth.

### ***Personal Traits:***

*Do board members feel their unique personalities are appreciated and well utilized?*

In a successful team, members feel their unique personalities are appreciated and well utilized.

### ***Norms:***

*Are group norms set for working together and are they seen as standards for everyone in the group?*

In a successful team, group norms for working together are set and seen as standards for everyone in the groups.

### ***Effectiveness:***

*Do members find board meetings efficient and productive and look forward to this time together?*

In a successful team, members find board meetings efficient and productive and look forward to this time together.

### ***Success:***

*Do board members clearly know when the team has met with success and share in this equally and proudly?*

In a successful team, members know clearly when the board has met with success and share in this equally and proudly.

### ***Training:***

*Are opportunities for feedback and updating skills provided and taken advantage of by board members?*

In a successful team, opportunities for feedback and updating skills are provided and taken advantage of by board members.

# Dealing with Conflict

Conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining what they need or want and are seeking their own self-interest. Sometimes the individual is not aware of the need and unconsciously starts to act out. Other times, the individual is very aware of what he or she wants and actively works at achieving the goal.

## ***About conflict:***

- Conflict is inevitable;
- Conflict develops because we are dealing with people's lives, jobs, children, pride, self-concept, ego, and sense of mission or purpose;
- Early indicators of conflict can be recognized;
- There are strategies for resolution that are available and DO work;
- Although inevitable, conflict can be minimized, diverted and/ or resolved.

## ***Beginnings of conflict:***

- Poor communication
- Seeking power
- Dissatisfaction with management style
- Weak leadership
- Lack of openness
- Change in leadership

## ***Conflict indicators:***

- Body language
- Disagreements, regardless of issue
- Withholding bad news
- Surprises
- Strong public statements
- Airing disagreements through media
- Conflicts in value system
- Desire for power
- Increasing lack of respect
- Lack of candor on budget problems or other sensitive issues
- Lack of clear goals
- No discussion of progress, failure relative to goals, failure to evaluate the superintendent fairly, thoroughly, or at all.

## ***Conflict is destructive when it:***

- Takes attention away from other important activities
- Undermines morale or self-concept
- Polarizes people and groups, reducing cooperation
- Increases or sharpens difference
- Leads to irresponsible and harmful behavior, such as fighting, name-calling

## ***Conflict is constructive when it:***

- Results in clarification of important problems and issues
- Results in solutions to problems
- Involves people in resolving issues important to them
- Causes authentic communication
- Helps release emotion, anxiety, and stress
- Builds cooperation among people through learning more about each other;
- joining in resolving the conflict
- Helps individuals develop understanding and skills

## ***Techniques for avoiding and/or resolving board/superintendent conflict:***

- Meet conflict head on
- Set goals
- Plan for and communicate frequently
- Be honest about concerns
- Agree to disagree - understand healthy disagreement would build better decisions
- Get individual ego out of management style
- Let your team create - people will support what they help create
- Discuss differences in values openly
- Continually stress the importance of following policy
- Communicate honestly - avoid playing "gotcha" type games
- Provide more data and information than is needed
- Develop a sound management system

## ***How does a school board cause conflict with a superintendent?***

- Trying to be administrators; overstepping authority
- Making promises as board members individually
- Involving themselves in labor relations or budgetary minutia
- Not doing their "homework" and failing to prepare for meetings
- Not following procedures for handling complaints
- Not keeping executive session information confidential
- Failing to act on sensitive issues
- Failing to be open and honest with the superintendent
- Making decisions based on preconceived notions
- Not supporting the superintendent - lack of loyalty
- Springing surprises at meetings
- Having hidden agendas

## ***How does a superintendent cause conflict with a school board?***

- Not treating board members alike
- Not informing the board members of public concerns
- Not providing adequate financial data or adequate information
- Using poor public management practices
- Making public statements before informing the board
- Failing to be open and honest with the board
- Not providing alternatives in an objective manner
- Not adjusting to the new reality of an involved board
- Not supporting the board - lack of loyalty
- Springing surprises at meetings
- Having hidden agendas

## ***Elements of a strong board/superintendent partnership:***

- Full disclosure
- Frequent two-way communication
- Careful planning
- Informal interaction
- Periodic evaluation
- Mutual support

## ***Courageous decision controversies:***

### **The controversies usually involve:**

- Changes in the way “we’ve always done things”
- Notions of fundamental values
- Determined, articulate advocates for every side
- Inability to compromise
- Rampant rumors
- Threats of retaliation at the polls at the next bond, levy or school board election

## ***Resolving conflict:***

### **Searching for the causes of conflict is essential to be successful in resolving the conflict. Nine possible causes of conflict include:**

- Conflict with self
- Needs or wants are not being met
- Values are being tested
- Perceptions are being questioned
- Assumptions are being made
- Knowledge is minimal
- Expectations are too high/too low
- Personality, race, or gender differences are present

## ***Reaching consensus through collaboration:***

Groups often collaborate closely in order to reach consensus or agreement. The ability to use collaboration requires the recognition of and respect for everyone’s ideas, opinions, and suggestions. Consensus requires that each participant must agree on the point being discussed before it becomes a part of the decision. Not every point will meet with everyone’s complete approval. Unanimity is not the goal. The goal is to have individuals accept a point of view based on logic. When individuals can understand and accept the logic of a differing point of view, you must assume you have reached consensus.

### **Follow these guidelines for reaching consensus:**

- Avoid arguing over individual ranking or position. Present a position as logically as possible.
- Avoid “win-lose” statements. Discard the notion that someone must win.
- Avoid changing of minds only in order to avoid conflict and to achieve harmony.
- Avoid majority voting, averaging, bargaining, or coin-flipping. These do not lead to consensus. Treat differences of opinion as indicative of incomplete sharing of relevant information. Keep asking questions.
- Keep the attitude that holding different views is both natural and healthy to a group.

View initial agreement as suspect. Explore the reasons underlying apparent agreement and make sure that members have willingly agreed.

## **Websites**

The following websites provide information on the district and school board membership.

District website: [www.horseheadsdistrict.com](http://www.horseheadsdistrict.com)

Board of Education information on district website, including board policy manual, agenda, and minutes: [www.horseheadsdistrict.com/board](http://www.horseheadsdistrict.com/board)

GST BOCES: [www.gstboces.org](http://www.gstboces.org)

National School Boards Association: [www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)

New York State School Boards Association: [www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org)

New York State Education Department: [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

# *Essentials of School Board Service*

*A Guide to Surviving Your First Year*



*New York State School Boards Association*

# **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>1. Beginning Your School Board Service.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Can We Talk? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Time for Meetings.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Working with the Board .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5. Building a Relationship with the Superintendent.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. Basics of School Law and Finance.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>7. Doing Your Homework.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>8. Community Connections .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Glossary of Education Terms.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Common Acronyms .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Acronyms of Well-Known Organizations .....</b>	<b>28</b>

## ***Introduction***

***School Board Essentials – A Guide to Surviving Your First Year*** provides new school board members with some of the basics of school board service. It answers questions that new board members commonly ask when they begin school board service. It's written in a question-and-answer format for quick reading, and includes a glossary of common education terms and a list of commonly used acronyms that new board members will find helpful.

***School Board Essentials*** draws on the deep well of knowledge accumulated by the New York State School Boards Association. It includes references to other NYSSBA publications such as *School Law 31st Edition*, *The Sunshine Laws 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, *Disciplining Tenured Teachers and Administrators*, and *Leaving No Child Behind in New York*. It also draws on the expertise of NYSSBA staff.

We hope you'll find ***School Board Essentials*** a helpful reference as you begin your school board service. And we hope you'll rely on the New York State School Boards Association for assistance at any time during your term. We're here at 800-342-3360 or 518-783-0200. We also encourage you to visit our web site at [www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org).

# **1. Beginning Your School Board Service**

## ***1:1. I've been elected. What now?***

Congratulations! You've joined the ranks of 5,100 locally elected officials in New York dedicated to helping your community's students succeed and ultimately become productive citizens. You hold positions as:

1. An individual school board member
2. A member of a board made up of other members
3. A member of the district governance team composed of school board members and the superintendent

As a school board member you are a **representative** of the community. You are a **leader** of the district. You are a **steward** both of your district's children and its tax dollars. You are an **advocate** of public education and an educated public.

## ***1:2. What are some of the powers and duties of the board?***

The New York Education Law defines a school board's general powers and duties. Generally a school board member oversees the district's affairs (students' education), personnel and properties. The board has specific responsibilities to determine curriculum, employ a superintendent, and submit a proposed budget to the district voters for their approval.

## ***1:3. What exactly do school boards do?***

A school board:

- Sets the district's direction
- Ensures alignment of strategies, resources (including the approved budget), policies, programs, and processes with district goals
- Assesses and accounts for progress using comprehensive data, thorough deliberation, and open communication
- Continuously improves the district, accentuating and reinforcing the positive, and correcting the negative

Keep in mind the school board's job is to focus on the ends, while the superintendent focuses on the ways and means to attain the ends. In other words, the board oversees the education of students and is responsible for school district operations, but does not directly run the district's day-to-day operations.



***1:4. Now that I'm a board member, what does my community expect of me?***

As a new board member you will be asked to make decisions on major issues that affect the students and citizens of your community. You will be asked to vote publicly on matters that you may know little about. As with every new job, it takes time to learn the ropes. You need to take that time to learn about your job and the issues at the same time you are performing your job.

Some of the activities you will be expected to do are: attend board meetings, participate on committees, attend school functions, keep yourself informed about issues, pursue developmental opportunities for yourself, and interact with your fellow board members and the superintendent. These activities require a significant amount of time, but it is time extremely well spent when you consider that you are helping to shape the future of the children in your community.

***1:5. I'm overwhelmed. How do I learn my job?***

A great deal of learning takes place on the job, as you prepare for and participate in each month's board meetings. If you haven't done so already, ask for an orientation. The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) also provides training through a variety of leadership development opportunities, such as the New School Board Member Academy, which is designed specifically for newly elected board members. Even if you haven't yet been sworn in, your superintendent can register you as a board member-elect for NYSSBA leadership development training. Make it your goal to stay on top of the issues. Commit to ongoing training now.

Most importantly, don't hesitate to ask questions. Nobody expects you to have all the answers, and most boards and superintendents welcome the opportunity to get you up to speed.

***1:6. How much time can I expect to spend on school board responsibilities?***

The time required to complete your school board responsibilities will most likely vary by time of year. It will depend on how many meetings are scheduled, which committees you serve on and what issues are going on in the district at the time. For example, if the district is going through a building project, hiring a superintendent or conducting negotiations, the time needed for board meetings may be more extensive. On average, however, you can expect to spend about six hours a week on board service (NYSSBA Member Services Survey, 2005).

***1:7. How do the school board's responsibilities differ from the superintendent's?***

The school board is the district's board of directors and is responsible for establishing goals, setting policy and overseeing resources for the school district. The superintendent – the district's chief executive officer – works for the school board and is the person who translates the policy into action. Consistent with the goals established by the school board, the superintendent and staff make the day-to-day decisions that affect the operation of the school district, deploying resources, assigning staff and documenting results.

***1:8. Where, or who, do I go to for information?***

The superintendent is a great source of information, and can usually provide answers to your questions on protocol or procedure, as well as on issues facing the board. Other board members, both current and past, are also good resources, particularly board presidents. NYSSBA also is a good source for information and advice, and has staff specialists ready to answer your questions. Check out NYSSBA's web site ([www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org)) for in-depth information on many school policy, legal and legislative issues.

***1:9. Are school boards required to have officers? What are their duties?***

A school board is required by law to elect a president and may, at its discretion, elect a vice president.

1. The board president sets the tone on how the school board will function. This officer is a ***leader of leaders*** who envisions, plans, organizes, motivates and builds bridges; a ***presider*** who articulates agendas, maintains order and announces results; and a ***communicator*** who listens, and speaks on behalf of the board.
2. The vice president presides at board meetings when the president is not there and assumes the office of president in the event of a vacancy until a new president is elected.

***1:10. How do I translate all the educational jargon and acronyms I hear at each board meeting?***

There are a lot of abbreviations and acronyms for educational terms. This guide includes a glossary of common education terms as well as a list of commonly used acronyms you may encounter throughout your school board services (pages 26 -30). For jargon or acronyms that are not included here, consider asking your superintendent or other board members.

***1:11. What is the board's role when there are problems with an administrator?***

The only employee who answers directly to the school board is the superintendent. Accordingly, if there are concerns about an administrator's performance, the board should raise these concerns with the superintendent in executive session. It is the superintendent who has the responsibility to handle these issues. Take care not to cross the line into micromanaging the relationship with this administrator. It's the superintendent's job to lead and manage the employees in the district.

School boards may also have a review process established that enables board members to provide input to the superintendent regarding the other administrators. The superintendent takes your collective input into account, but it is ultimately the superintendent who completes the final evaluation of the administrator.

If there is a problem with the superintendent, on the other hand, the board needs to address the problem through the review process or through informal feedback via the board president.

## **2. Can We Talk?**

### ***2:1. Is it ok to call the superintendent?***

You need to establish a productive working relationship with your superintendent. To do this, you will have to talk to that individual. If you have questions, it is better to call the superintendent and discuss them before the board meeting rather than surprise him or her at a public meeting. If these questions are concerns or relate to negative feelings from the community, the superintendent will appreciate knowing about these in advance of the board meeting so that he or she can come prepared to address them. It is appropriate to call the superintendent, set up a meeting to discuss questions, or even e-mail him or her for simple questions or requests.

### ***2:2. If I disagree with board members or the superintendent, what is the best way to let them know how I feel?***

Always treat your fellow board members and the superintendent and administrators with respect. Don't be afraid to disagree on an issue, however. In fact, a discussion about an issue that reflects two or more views may result in a better decision than if everyone agreed from the beginning and the first solution was selected. Be certain you debate the issue, not the person. Demeaning comments or angry discussions do not facilitate effective decision making.

### ***2:3. How do I approach my superintendent or board if I have a suggestion for a change?***

If your suggestion needs to be discussed by the entire board and voted on, it should be added to an upcoming board agenda. Contact the superintendent or the board president to discuss your idea and have it either put on the agenda or referred to committee.

### ***2:4. Is it ok to talk to district administrators and staff?***

In addition to the superintendent, you will come in contact with district employees, including administrators, teachers and other staff members. While there's nothing wrong with talking to district staff, keep in mind the chain of command. For example, teachers report to principals; principals report to the superintendent; the superintendent reports to the board. If you have a request for information, you should ask the superintendent unless he or she indicates otherwise.

### ***2:5. Can I talk to board members outside the board meeting?***

Yes, the state's Open Meetings Law generally permits you to converse with your fellow board members outside of board meetings. As with the superintendent, you should try to establish productive relations with each of the other board members. Talking with them in social situations or at school sporting events, for example, will give you an opportunity to learn about them outside of the school board. Be careful, however, that you do not discuss any school board matters if you have a quorum – a simple majority (more than half) of the total number of members on your board. This would constitute a meeting in violation of the state's Open Meetings Law. You should ensure that such informal chats do not substitute for full deliberation in a public meeting.

## **2:6. What can I say – or not say – to parents and friends about school issues?**

School board business that is discussed in executive session or relates to confidential matters (such as an employee personnel issue or student discipline issue) should never be discussed with anyone other than another board member or the superintendent. A good rule of thumb is to discuss only items that have been made public at a school board meeting. Adhering to this rule of thumb will go a long way in maintaining trust with the superintendent and the other board members, and protecting staff and the public.

## **2:7. What information is considered confidential?**

Most employee personnel issues or information contained in student educational records are considered confidential. Also, the information discussed in a *closed* board meeting, more commonly known as an *executive session*, is confidential. A board may call an executive session only on the following subjects:

- Matters that will imperil the public safety if disclosed
- Any matter that may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer
- Information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed
- Discussions involving proposed, pending, or current litigation
- Collective bargaining pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law
- The medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation
- The preparation, grading, or administration of exams
- The proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale, or exchange of securities, but only when their value would be substantially affected by publicity

## **2:8. I have children in school. How can I talk with their teachers now that I'm on the school board?**

This is a tricky area. No matter what you say about “speaking as a parent, not a board member,” it’s difficult for some teachers to separate your role on the school board from your role as a parent. It’s not surprising that some teachers may be somewhat intimidated by your role as a board member. Some married board members have indicated that their spouses frequently take the lead in speaking to their children’s teachers.

Make sure you’re not using your position as a school board member to secure special treatment for your child. Your child should be treated the same as other students and be subject to the same rules and requirements. If there are issues you wish to discuss with a teacher, you should follow the normal procedures for contacting your child’s teacher to discuss them.

Keep in mind you don’t have to relinquish your parental rights now that you’re a school board member. You are always a parent first and a board member second.

### ***2:9. As a board member, can I visit the schools?***

Yes. You have the same right as a parent or member of the community to visit the schools in your district, so long as you follow whatever procedures your district has for visitors. As a board member, you may also visit the schools in an official capacity for purposes such as building inspections or staff interviews, ***but only*** with the board's authorization.

As a school board member, you should use school visits to build good working relations with building principals and staff, to celebrate in the positive accomplishments of the schools, and to show your pride as a member of the board. Look for opportunities to visit when a school is hosting a special event or recognition program for students and staff. In any event, be sure to tell the superintendent and/or principal in advance of your visit.

### ***2:10. How do I respond to a community that questions the school board's decisions?***

It's normal to hear questions about the board's decisions. You will at times find yourself dealing with controversial, complex issues; final decisions may be unpopular. Explain the thought process that went into the decision and why the board arrived at the conclusion it did. Be sure to answer honestly and without emotion. One of your roles as a school board member is to be an advocate for the district. Being asked about board decisions provides an opportunity to promote the positive activities that are occurring in your schools, while at the same time responding to community questions.

### ***2:11. How do I respond to questions from the media?***

Your board has probably already adopted, at least informally, a policy for responding to the media. Particularly on issues of great sensitivity, a single spokesperson – usually the president – may be designated to speak for the board. If the media is waiting to do an interview following a board meeting, then it is appropriate to refer the question to the president or the superintendent.

Individual board members should be free to explain their votes or comments they may have made at a public meeting. If you are contacted by a local reporter and you're not prepared or don't have the relevant information, don't say, "No comment." Instead, tell the reporter you'll get an answer and get back to them. Ask what kind of deadline they have, and then promptly follow through.

In all situations, be honest – ***never lie!*** Talk in plain English, in short, quotable sentences, but stay on message. Answer the question that was asked. Don't feel compelled to offer more information than needed to answer the question. Be friendly and warm. If you are on camera, remember that body language is as important as what you say.

### ***2:12. How should I respond to parental complaints?***

The best way to respond to parental complaints is to be a good listener. This allows you to ask questions to understand the situation better. Be careful, though, that the parent does not interpret your questions or comments as an indication of future board action. Once parents have shared their complaints with you, try to give them guidance on how to get their concerns addressed through proper channels. It's safe to say that most of the complaints you'll hear are administrative in nature and not policy issues. As such, they don't belong on the board's table.

It is not your responsibility to solve each parent's problem. By all means listen to them, but then make sure they know to contact the school staff to have their concerns addressed.

You owe the superintendent and staff the opportunity to respond and to support them if they are properly following board policy.

***2:13. Can I use e-mail to communicate with my board colleagues?***

School board members may use e-mail to communicate with each other only if they are not using it to secretly vote on issues in advance of a meeting or as a means of avoiding open meeting requirements. You should be particularly careful to avoid sequential e-mail communications. While you may e-mail another board member with a question, it is not appropriate to engage in chat-room discussions. Nor is it appropriate for a majority of board members to e-mail one another prior to a board meeting as this will likely affect the board's discussion at the meeting. It would also preclude the community from hearing the board debate important issues. Be forewarned, if you are using a school e-mail address, all e-mails can be requested by the public or media under the Freedom of Information Law.

## **3. Time for Meetings**

### ***3:1. What should I expect at my first board meeting?***

If you have never participated in a board meeting, you may be overwhelmed at first. There are basic rules of parliamentary procedure that should be followed, but each board operates in its own way. There will be a meeting agenda and protocol.

Talk with the superintendent before attending your first meeting to ask basic questions such as:

- Where should I sit?
- How is the agenda set up?
- How long do the meetings usually take?
- When should I speak?

Ask for an orientation if you haven't yet had one. You should also receive your board packet containing the agenda and any supporting information several days before the meeting. Be sure you go through the material carefully and take the time to call the superintendent or board president to ask questions about anything you don't understand.

Remember, this is a meeting of the board of education. Staff and community members are invited to attend and participate. But this is your board's opportunity to conduct business. As such, the board should remain in control of the meeting at all times.

### ***3:2. Where should I sit?***

Many boards have their rooms set up in a consistent configuration for board meetings, with name plates for each person at the table. Some boards have assigned seats that do not change from meeting to meeting. Other boards mix the seats up each time. And others do not have name tags or assigned seats. To feel comfortable prior to attending your first meeting, you might want to contact the board president and ask if there are any "traditions" that you should know about in advance of the meeting, including where you should sit.

### ***3:3. What is considered an acceptable dress code at board meetings?***

Your board decides how formal or informal the meeting should be. A good rule of thumb, though, is to dress appropriately for a business meeting, as board meetings are business meetings. Remember also that the public may attend as well as the media. Your dress should reflect the professional approach that your school board takes in overseeing the operations of the school.

### ***3:4. How does being on TV affect board members?***

Any time you are being filmed or are in the public eye, it is normal to be more self-conscious and nervous. Some, but not all, boards tape their meetings for broadcast on a local cable access station. Naturally, the first time you participate in a taped board meeting you may find that you are less articulate and forget some of what you want to say. After you attend a few taped meetings, though, you should become comfortable and even forget the camera is on. Periodically reviewing a tape to see how the board is presenting itself is a good idea. Board members are often surprised by their unconscious body language that may or may not accurately communicate their feelings.

**3:5. *How professionally does a board meeting need to run? What is considered too lax or too formal?***

All board meetings need to follow some set of “rules of order,” often based on parliamentary procedure. The method that your board selects should be identified in your policies. Some boards elect to follow Robert’s Rules of Order. Other boards may specifically elect to *not* follow Robert’s Rules, but prefer a basic version of parliamentary procedure. Your school board can be as relaxed or as formal as it chooses, as long as a policy is identified in the policies describing the method you will employ, and this method does not violate the Open Meetings Law.

If your board elects to follow Robert’s Rules of Order, school boards must follow New York state law where it differs from Robert’s. For example, under Robert’s, a quorum of the board consists of a majority present or voting. Under state law, a quorum is a majority of the entire board, regardless of vacancies or absences.

**3:6. *How often does my board meet?***

The Education Law requires school boards to meet at least quarterly. Most boards, however, meet once a month. Most boards are required to hold an annual organizational meeting in July to elect and appoint officers for the coming year. Individual board members can also call a special meeting to address a particular item.

**3:7. *What are the legal requirements for school board meetings?***

School boards must meet in compliance with the Open Meetings Law and make public records available consistent with the Freedom of Information Law. Basically, the Open Meetings Law requires that all school board meetings, including most committee meetings, be open to the public. Proper notice must be given to announce regularly scheduled meetings as well as special meetings. Minutes of the meetings must be taken and include specific information required by the Open Meetings Law.

**3:8. *What is the Open Meetings Law?***

The basic intent of the state Open Meetings Law is to strengthen the right of all New York citizens to know what goes on in government by requiring public bodies to conduct nearly all business at open meetings. For more information about the Open Meetings Law, see *The Sunshine Laws, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, published by NYSSBA.

**3:9. *How can a board have good exploratory discussions given the restrictions of the Open Meetings Law?***

The Open Meetings Law does not preclude good exploratory discussions. You may find it awkward to talk about some topics openly, but the board is obligated to conduct all discussions in open session except during the limited and narrow situations that permit executive sessions. All official board votes must be conducted in public at an official meeting of the board.

**3:10. *Can board members meet socially or as a group at training conferences without violating the Open Meetings Law?***

Yes. Social gatherings and conferences, including retreats, are not considered school board meetings, even if a quorum is present, so long as the board members in attendance do not discuss school business or arrive at decisions about an issue.



**3:11. What role does the superintendent play at school board meetings?**

The superintendent is a key person at all school board meetings. The superintendent and president plan the meeting agenda together, but the superintendent makes certain the meeting room is set up as required and all tools that are needed are available, such as a tape recorder, easel, overhead projector, microphone, etc. Each item on the agenda is introduced by the president; however, for discussion or action items, the superintendent or a designee is often asked to explain the issue. The superintendent's opinion or recommendation should be solicited before a vote is taken.

**3:12. How do I get involved in board committees?**

If your board uses committees, the president is responsible for assigning board members to committees. If you have an interest in membership on a particular committee, make certain the president is aware of your interest prior to identifying committee assignments, which is usually done at or shortly after the organizational meeting, which is held in July each year.

**3:13. Who is responsible for setting the agenda?**

The superintendent and board president are responsible for setting the agenda according to most boards' policies. In some districts, the vice president also participates in the pre-agenda meeting. This enables them to be prepared for the board meeting, as well as suggest topics to be covered.

**3:14. How can I get my issues onto the board agenda?**

The best way to get an item onto the board agenda is to contact the superintendent or president prior to the pre-agenda meeting. If you have an issue that comes up after the agenda has been distributed, you may still have an opportunity to have it added to the agenda the night of the meeting, depending on your district's policies. Be careful not to spring any surprises, though. If a decision is not needed immediately, it is better to have the topic added to the agenda for a subsequent meeting, when board members will have sufficient time to become informed and prepared to discuss the topic.

**3:15. Does public comment only pertain to agenda items?**

Although school board meetings must be open to the public, there is no requirement that the public be allowed to speak. This decision is left up to the individual board. If the board decides to allow public comment, as most do, it may set rules that restrict topics and the duration of each presentation. For more information on public comment periods, please see *The Sunshine Laws, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, published by NYSSBA.

**3:16. What if a member of the public complains at a board meeting?**

The grocery store isn't the only place board members will hear complaints. If an individual raises a complaint during a board-established public comment period, it's best to listen to the individual and then say that the board will take the issue under advisement. You can expect the board president to take control of this situation. Your board should refrain from engaging the individual in public debate during the meeting.

### ***3:17. What is a consent agenda?***

A ***consent agenda*** is an item listed on the regular agenda that groups routine items under one agenda heading. Routine items (such as paying bills, approving minutes of the last meeting, approving the agenda, etc.) can thus be approved by a single unified motion and vote of the board. The purpose of the consent agenda is to expedite business and streamline the meeting. There is no discussion of items on a consent agenda. If clarification of an item is necessary, then you should request that the item be removed from the consent agenda and considered by the board as a separate motion.

### ***3:18. Can I ask questions during the board meeting?***

Absolutely! Hopefully, you have taken time to review your materials in your board packet and have asked for any clarifications from the superintendent or board president prior to the meeting. Certainly as the discussion of an item ensues, other questions may occur to you that you have not previously asked.

### ***3:19. How can I ask questions at a board meeting and still adhere to the “no surprises” rule?***

If you want to ask a question that you anticipate being controversial, you should alert the superintendent or president or both ahead of time. They can help you decide if there is a better way to address the issue or get information. If your question is to clarify an issue or if it is prompted by the discussion, then it is appropriate to ask it at the board meeting, as long as you don't broach topics properly discussed in executive session. If you have a question that may require collecting data or information not already in your board packet, it would be wise to let the superintendent know prior to the meeting so that he or she can come prepared to answer your questions.

### ***3:20. How is voting done at a board meeting?***

All votes taken at a school board meeting are a matter of public record and must be recorded in the minutes. Secret ballots are not permitted. In some situations, school boards must use roll call votes (where your name is called and you must state your vote) to take board action. If a roll call vote is not required, the vote must be taken in such a way that a person attending the meeting or reading the minutes can see how each board member voted. This can be done by roll call vote, show of hands or any other method by which each board member's vote is made known to the public.

### ***3:21. Do most school boards vote in a rotating order, consistent order or doesn't it matter?***

The manner in which your meeting is run is determined by your school board. How you vote – in a rotating order or the same order each time – doesn't matter. A rotating order allows for a different member of the board to be the first and last to vote. The Open Meetings Act simply requires that the public must be able to determine how each board member voted.

### ***3:22. When does the board president vote?***

The board president votes each time a vote is called. Some people think that the board president only votes to break a tie as the chair generally does under Robert's Rules of Order. This is not true. The board president is expected to vote as a member of the board, in whatever sequence the board is following. Whether the vote is rotated each time or each member votes in the same sequence, the board president votes in the same way as the other board members.

***3:23. Can a school board member vote by proxy at regular or special board meetings?***

No, it is not permissible for a board member to vote by proxy. The Open Meetings Law requires that a board of education take action on a motion only when that motion is voted on by a majority of the members who sit on the board at a lawfully convened meeting.

***3:24. Can I abstain from a vote?***

Yes. Understand, however, that while an abstention means neither a “yes” or “no” vote, it can have the effect of a “no” vote in that it makes it more difficult for the proponents of a motion to win a needed majority. Our courts have ruled that board members cannot abstain from voting simply because they have philosophical problems with what they are being asked to vote upon, such as teacher tenure.

***3:25. What if I disagree with a board decision?***

If you don’t agree with a decision that the board has made, you may express your position for the record, but it is still your responsibility to support the final decision of the board. Your opportunity to show your disagreement was during discussion and through your vote, which is public record. If you are asked about the decision, you should explain why the board voted the way that it did. It is permissible to say how you voted and why; however, you should not do it in a way that undermines the board’s majority decision. As long as your comments remain factual and do not evaluate the board action, you are showing support for the decision. You should also direct questions to the board’s spokesperson if one has been assigned to that particular issue.

***3:26. Can a board president offer motions?***

Normally the board president calls for the motions on agenda items. The president is a member of the board with the same voting rights, no more and no less. Although it is permissible for the president to offer a motion, it is preferable for other members of the board to offer and second a motion.

## **4. Working with the Board**

### **4.1. Should I ask for a mentor?**

Many boards will have a designated person who mentors the new board member. Serving as mentor may be a defined responsibility for one of the officers, such as the vice president, or it may be a rotating position. A mentor will give the orientation to the new board member prior to his/her first board meeting. She or he will also check in with the new board member periodically during the year to explain key activities, such as the process for evaluating the superintendent or the budgeting process. If you find your board does not have a person designated as mentor, you should suggest it, particularly if you prefer working this way.

### **4.2. When are issues serious enough to bring to the board?**

You are the link between the school district and the community. You should be aware of issues confronting other districts that could become an issue in your district. You must also filter what you bring to the board for consideration to be sure it truly requires board attention. If you are hearing from a number of people in your community about concerns, you might want to check with other board members to see if they are hearing the same concerns. An issue or activity that is counter to board policy should be brought to the attention of the president or the superintendent. When in doubt you should feel free to discuss concerns with the superintendent and the president at any time. They can help decide if the board needs to be proactive about the issue.

### **4.3. Explain the committee structure, function and role.**

School boards operate in various ways. Some boards operate as a **committee of the whole** where all issues or activities are addressed by the entire board together. Members of boards that choose this method of operation generally receive the same information at the same time, and have the authority to deliberate on each issue. Other boards function with a **well-defined committee structure** where board members serve on several committees, and a committee first addresses issues or activities before the issue comes to the full board.

Board members are appointed to **standing committees** by the president and serve for one-year terms. **Ad hoc committees** or **task forces** can also be established to deal with a one-time issue, and their length of term is often less than one year. A task force is a good approach to recruit staff and community members to offer their insights and/or special expertise on a particular issue.

The committee structure works best when the board fully trusts all the board members and is willing to accept the work and recommendation of this smaller subset of the board. This does not mean the full board cannot ask questions and become informed prior to voting on a motion at a board meeting; in fact, all need to become informed in order to vote responsibly. Rehashing the entire work of the committee, though, defeats the committee's purpose. Boards that use a committee structure feel it saves time and allows each board member to delve more deeply into fewer areas. Some boards find they are able to deal with more issues with this approach, and each board meeting is more reasonable in length. Possible standing committees include: policy, finance, curriculum, public information, students and athletics, buildings and grounds, and personnel.

Keep in mind that committees or task forces report to the board, not to the community or media. They should not take on life of their own.

One last point to be aware of is that committees can be subject to the Open Meeting requirements even when there is no quorum. See *The Sunshine Laws, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, published by NYSSBA, for further clarification.

#### ***4:4. How can I survive the politics?***

Don't think of it as surviving politics; instead view it as cultivating relationships. You are now part of the largest body of elected officials in the state. School governance is founded on the belief that a group of very different people representing various constituencies in their district can make better decisions than any one person alone could. That diversity is the board's strength.

With this in mind, it's best to be open-minded about the opinions of your fellow board members. Your goal should not be to convert them to your point of view, but rather to determine the best solution to an issue by working together to try and accommodate all views. You want the students to be the "winners" – not one board member or another.

#### ***4:5. How can I best assimilate into the team?***

You may be joining a board with members who have been together for a number of years. As the "new kid on the block," it will take you time to become part of the team. Talk with your new colleagues. Respect their expertise. Listen and observe. Ask questions. Do your homework. Make recommendations. Time and experience will help you become a contributing member.

#### ***4:6. What should a board do when it is not working well as a team?***

Open communication is critical to the proper functioning of your board. If you feel your board is not functioning well, it may be appropriate to suggest a workshop where the board reviews its ground rules that establish how it will function. If the bylaws are not effective, then consider adding to or clarifying the bylaws. You could consider development of a more specific set of guidelines or a board protocol or code of conduct. You may want to hire a facilitator to assist your board in improving the board's working relations. NYSSBA can help here with a custom improvement program tailored to your board's specific situation.

#### ***4:7. How do school boards make decisions?***

School board members are trustees, responsible for a trust established with the community. When making decisions, board members should seek the advice, where appropriate, of the district's administrators, teachers, employees, community members and experts such as the school district's legal counsel, financial advisor or auditor. With this information, the board can act only during legally called board meetings. Therefore, it is important that board members do their "homework" prior to attending a board meeting so that they can discuss the issue and be prepared to take action at the meeting.

#### ***4:8. What is the most important consideration when making a decision?***

The primary consideration is the tangible impact the decision will have on your district's students. If you understand the facts and relevant data and you keep the needs of *all* students in mind when making decisions, you will undoubtedly make good decisions. Remember, your first responsibility is to every student in your district. Keeping this in mind will greatly assist you in making the right decisions despite pressures that certain constituent groups may exert.

***4:9. What can or can't school board members reveal to each other?***

School board members will learn information that is confidential and should not be discussed outside of a board's closed session with friends and family. This does not limit discussions among school board members at appropriate times in conformity with the Open Meetings Law. Board members should feel they can discuss issues among each other that are before and within the jurisdiction of the board.

***4:10. When I'm in the minority on the board, how can I influence the other board members to consider my point of view?***

You can practice patience, respect the majority, and develop your skills. Genuinely listen to your colleagues. Don't interrupt. Wait to be recognized, then make your point, but don't deliver a monologue. Argue from fact, not emotion. Concisely identify the problem or the potential opportunity. Use facts to make the point that it *is* a districtwide problem or opportunity. State your recommendation and explain how it helps attain a district goal. Finally, be prepared to compromise.

***4:11. Should the board of education set goals for itself each year?***

Yes, it is a good idea for a board to have goals for the effectiveness and efficiency of board operations and evaluate them on a yearly basis. In this way you have a scheduled forum for discussing the proficiency of your board and how to improve it. Of course, the board should also set goals for the district as a whole.

***4:12. Are there term limits for board members?***

No. However, the opportunity to make a change on the board occurs annually during the school board election when community members can choose to run for the board for seats whose terms have expired. A board with both new and seasoned members can provide the best of both worlds: new thinking is introduced while institutional history is maintained.

## **5. Building a Relationship with the Superintendent**

### **5:1. What is the role of the superintendent relative to the school board?**

Consider the superintendent the chief executive officer of the school district who reports to the board of directors – the school board. The superintendent is the only employee who is employed directly by the board. All other administrators, teachers and staff are hired by the superintendent, pending board approval. While the school board is responsible for setting the vision and goals for the district, it is the superintendent who implements the policies to attain the goals the board sets. The school board tells the superintendent what it wants done; the superintendent determines the best way to do it. The superintendent is also the board’s principal advisor – identifying operational needs and recommending policies for board action.

### **5:2. How do I communicate with the superintendent?**

You should feel free to communicate in any way you are comfortable. Usually the superintendent is more than willing to meet with you, discuss issues on the phone, or respond by e-mail. The important thing is not *how* to communicate, but that you *do* communicate with the superintendent, especially when you have questions about agenda items being discussed at your board meeting.

### **5:3. When and how does the board evaluate the superintendent?**

The commissioner’s regulations require the board to evaluate the superintendent annually according to procedures developed by the board in consultation with the superintendent.

The superintendent’s evaluation should be a comprehensive and objective review of his or her performance during the preceding year. Whatever instrument the board chooses to use, the evaluation should be based on a consensus of the board’s assessment of the superintendent’s performance relative to the stated objectives for the position.

The superintendent should be provided with a written copy of the board’s evaluation and should discuss it with the board in executive session.

### **5:4. As a new board member, how should I approach the superintendent about making a change without being overly aggressive?**

You should feel free to contact the superintendent, or the board president, to discuss your idea and have it either put on the agenda or referred to committee.

If you are tactful and ask thoughtful questions about the way the board currently operates and why, you won’t be perceived as pushy. If your suggestion relates to district operations, you should first ask yourself if you are getting too involved in the management of the school district. Even so, if you do it tactfully, the superintendent should not mind discussing how the school district functions and be open to new ideas.

### **5:5. How do I gain the respect of the superintendent and other administrators?**

As with any relationship, you have to earn it. Respect the superintendent and district administrators. They’re the education experts. Seek their advice. Listen to what they have to say. Ask thoughtful questions. Be open, honest and direct. Take time to learn about the school environment and issues that may be unique to your district prior to making suggestions and trying to effect change.

## **6. Basics of School Law and Finance**

### **6:1. What are the laws governing what a school board can and can't do?**

The general powers and duties of school boards are outlined in the state Education Law, which assigns different powers and duties to different types of school districts – common, union free, central, central high school, small city, large city, BOCES, and New York City. Some powers and duties are common to all. *School Law, 31<sup>st</sup> Edition*, published by NYSSBA, contains more details.

### **6:2. How are public schools funded?**

Through a combination of local property taxes (49.6 percent), state aid (42.7 percent) and federal aid (7.7 percent), according to data for the 2005-06 school year from the state comptroller. Those are statewide averages; the mix of funds supporting a particular school district's budget will vary, sometimes widely. Federal funds are based largely on the number of students in a district who are poor or who need special education services. State funds are distributed according to a new system enacted in 2007. It provides a "foundation grant" for each enrolled student that is based on the cost of providing a successful education program in a typical district, minus an expected local contribution based on the community's wealth. The foundation grant incorporates many categories of aid that formerly were separate. The grant is further adjusted for regional cost difference and numbers of students in poverty. Additional state aid is provided outside the formula as partial reimbursement for such expenses as building construction, transportation, and BOCES and special education services. The portion of the local budget not covered by state or federal aid must be funded from property taxes. If you haven't done so already in your board orientation, you should schedule a meeting with your superintendent to get a detailed overview of your district's budget.

### **6:3. What is my role in the collective bargaining process?**

Generally, the school board, with the advice of the superintendent, designates the individuals who will serve on the negotiations team and establishes the goals and parameters for the negotiations team.

### **6:4. What is 3020-a?**

Section 3020-a of the Education Law stipulates the process school boards must follow to remove or otherwise discipline tenured teachers and administrators. For more information, see *Disciplining Tenured Teachers and Administrators* and *School Law, 31<sup>st</sup> Edition*, both published by the New York State School Boards Association.

### **6:5. How can I stay abreast of changing legislation?**

Check NYSSBA's website, [www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org), and click on Advocacy/Legislation on the left side. Look for updates in *On Board*, NYSSBA's newspaper, and *SLN News*, an online newsletter. Or contact NYSSBA's Governmental Relations Department at 800-342-3360.



**6:6. What is a conflict of interest?**

A *conflict of interest* exists when a school board member is in a position to benefit financially from a decision that members may make on behalf of the district. All board members should be aware of certain conflicts of interest so they don't jeopardize the reputation of the board or the district. The state's General Municipal Law defines those situations and relationships that are deemed to be a conflict of interest.

**6:7. Must a school board fill a vacancy when one occurs?**

The Education Law requires union free and central school districts to fill a vacancy. Districts must either call a special meeting in which the taxpayers elect someone or the board appoints someone to fill the remainder of the unexpired term. For more information, see *School Law, 31<sup>st</sup> Edition*, published by the New York State School Boards Association.

**6:8. Are school district purchases subject to competitive bidding?**

Yes. All contracts for public works such as services, labor and construction worth in excess of \$20,000 and purchase contracts (commodities, materials, supplies and equipment), in excess of \$10,000 must be competitively bid.

**6:9. Where would I find guidelines or regulations on discipline issues (e.g., drugs, guns, bomb threats, etc.)?**

The Education Law and commissioner's regulations require school districts and BOCES to adopt and implement a code of conduct to maintain order on school property and at school functions. This code governs the conduct of students, teachers and other school personnel, as well as visitors. The state Education Law and commissioner's regulations, as well as federal law, also specify the type of discipline that may be imposed on students for violating student discipline codes.

For more information on student discipline, see *School Law, 31<sup>st</sup> Edition* (Chapter 20 – Student Discipline).

**6:10. What are the Sunshine Laws?**

The state Open Meetings Law and the Freedom of Information Law (also known as FOIL) are what we commonly refer to as the Sunshine Laws in New York. They have been accepted by both public and private businesses as the model for conducting meetings out in the open for all to see. They ensure that governments, including school boards, are accountable to the public that elects them. For more specific information, see *The Sunshine Laws, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, published by NYSSBA.

**6:11. What is the NCLB?**

NCLB stands for the federal No Child Left Behind Act. It greatly affects the way states, school districts and individual schools are accountable for educating students. It was designed to close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing schools and groups of students with a framework of standards, assessments and accountability. It requires states to establish proficiency levels in English/language arts, math, and, eventually, science. It also requires 100 percent of students to meet or exceed proficiency levels by 2014. NCLB amended the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

For more information, see *Leaving No Child Behind in New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, published by the New York State School Boards Association.

## **7. Doing Your Homework**

### **7:1. Is it important that I know every policy in the district's policy book?**

Policies are the means by which a school board governs the school district; they guide its administration, staff, students, parents and the public, and they ensure accountability, consistency and fairness. While you can't expect to know every policy as you begin your board service, you'll find it helpful to read through the district policy manual at least once. You'll also find that you become familiar with many policies as you go through the year.

### **7:2. How can I build my skills and knowledge to become a better board member?**

First, take advantage of NYSSBA's leadership development opportunities, including the New and Veteran School Board Academies, the Annual Convention, and regional workshops. NYSSBA also offers many courses online. You can find a schedule in NYSSBA's School Board Planner and on the NYSSBA website – [www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org). Local school boards associations also offer events. Second, read *On Board* and other publications on school board service. Third, watch and listen to your colleagues.

### **7:3. Do I pay for these programs or does the district?**

It is legal and appropriate for the district to pay for board members' attendance at conventions, conferences, seminars, and other developmental events that enhance the board's knowledge and ability to do the district's business. Payment must be authorized by a board resolution adopted prior to attendance, or the board may delegate authorization to an executive officer. Because leaders are learners, it is prudent to include funds for board leadership training in the annual budget.

### **7:4. What services does NYSSBA offer?**

NYSSBA provides advocacy, information, leadership development and custom services for member school boards to help students succeed. We advocate at local, state and federal levels – in government and in the courts. We provide information through our award-winning newspaper *On Board*, and other publications, our web site ([www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org)), and expert advice. We offer a wide array of leadership development activities, including our Annual Convention, eight-course School Board Institute (also offered online), New and Veteran School Board Member Academies, and regional workshops and seminars on a variety of topics. We deliver special programs and services, including AdvisorySolutions, Custom Improvement Programs, Custom Policy Manuals and Updates, Policy Plus and School Policy Alert. Visit our web site – [www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org) – for an even larger look at how we can help your school board.

### **7:5. Is board development mandatory?**

All school board members who take their board seats on or after July 1, 2005, are required to receive six hours of training on financial oversight responsibilities. This training may be offered as part of general training on the board's powers, functions, and duties. NYSSBA offers all potentially mandated training as part of its leadership development program.

On a personal and professional level, board development is necessary if you believe that district leaders should constantly acquire, update, and refine their governance knowledge and skills.

**7:6. *How do I manage the volume of reading that I have as a school board member?***

Becoming a school board member is similar to going back to school, in that there are continuing education courses available, and there is “homework” you will have to prepare for board meetings. You’ll have a lot of reading to be fully prepared to discuss and vote on issues.

As every student learns, don’t wait until the last minute to do your homework. If you find you don’t have enough time to review materials prior to your board meetings, ask if it’s possible to get materials earlier. You’ll find as you become more experienced that the material becomes more manageable and easier to absorb.

**7:7. *Where do you get comparative information relative to other schools?***

The State Education Department posts School District Report Cards online at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/reportcard/>. SED also issues annually the Chapter 655 Report, which can be found online at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/655report/home.shtml>. For more information, see NYSSBA’s web site at [www.nyssba.org](http://www.nyssba.org) or call NYSSBA at 800-342-3360.

## **8. Community Connections**

### **8:1. With whom in the community should the board connect?**

Remember that community members are both the district's "owners" and its clients. They pay for the district's products and services and incorporate its graduates. Recall also that "people support what they help create." If the district's stakeholders don't help to create the district's vision, goals, standards, plans, budgets, etc., they may feel no ownership of them.

Although your board may not be able to engage all people and groups in your district, you should identify and engage key *internal* and *external stakeholders*. These individuals and groups can help or hinder the district in achieving its vision and goals. Key internal stakeholders may include students, faculty, staff, administrators, volunteers, PTA/PTO, etc. Key external stakeholders may include parents, taxpayers, unions, public officials, business/civic/social/religious leaders, and representatives of higher education, health, social, and youth services organizations.

### **8:2. How should the board engage the community?**

Engage key stakeholders by inviting and appointing them to participate in standing and ad hoc committees, advisory panels, focus groups, forums, and surveys to describe a vision for the district, set its goals, plan strategically, align resources with goals, and other actions offering them an opportunity to learn about public education and to influence governance decisions.

You can also engage community members by using a variety of means to inform them about the district, and to learn their interests, priorities, and concerns. Print and electronic media, and face-to-face dialogue, all play important roles in this year-round district campaign to inform and to be informed. While accentuating the positive – student successes and district progress – don't neglect the negative. Be the first to let your community know about clouds looming on the horizon, and what you're doing to dispel them. Board members and the superintendent can be effective ambassadors for the district, especially by scheduling dialogues with a cross-section of your community – preferably in their neighborhoods.

Part of your community engagement strategy should also encourage all members of the community to visit their schools. Invite them to extracurricular activities, schedule grandparents' day, offer tours and briefings. In public education, familiarity often breeds support.

All these actions and more should be in your district's public engagement policy.

### ***8:3. How do you bridge a gap between community and board?***

Most gaps result from poor communication. Remember that communication is a team sport: both parties must have the opportunity to speak; both must actively listen. You should review your school board policy on community engagement. If none exists, develop one.

Check whether your policy provides a variety of methods for informing the community about the district. Does it use varied means of communication – print media (such as newsletters and board member or superintendent articles in local newspapers), electronic media (perhaps the district website), and oral delivery (such as board or superintendent talks with community organizations)? Does it provide various means for the public to inform the board and administration about its interests, priorities, and concerns? Such means include opportunities for participation in district committees and advisory panels, focus groups, and polling (such as NYSSBA’s Community Connect). Does the policy seek to involve all elements of the community in district activities – e.g., encouraging volunteers, scheduling tours and briefings, inviting them to extracurricular events and special occasions?

If your district operates separately from the community, gaps will remain. When you bring the community into their schools, and when you bring school information into the community, knowledge and trust will improve as the community senses that “your” schools are “their” schools—and that their schools are in your good hands.

### ***8:4. How can I make sure I represent community sentiment?***

No community is a single, uniform entity. Every community comprises various subgroups, such as parents and senior citizens. So, to represent your community, your first task is to identify the groups and subgroups that together compose your community. It’s helpful to have a demographic and socioeconomic profile of community members served by your district. With it, you can check whether you really are aware of all community members, and whether your data and analysis truly reflect the total community.

Although individual board members may not be able to speak with everyone in your community about all issues, the board as a whole should be able to acquire valid input from a sound cross-section of community members. Varied approaches can be used. One is to include the public in committees, panels, and forums as mentioned above. Some boards find it useful to rotate their meetings among various locations in the community. Also helpful can be a hotline telephone number at which citizens can leave comments and questions. Of course, all board members should make opportunities to converse with people throughout the community about district education. One key to productive conversations is that you listen more than you speak.

***8:5. How does one encourage school board service?***

Promoting school board service as a meaningful way to contribute to your community is an ongoing responsibility of school board members. Your actions, teamwork and enthusiasm for board service will influence people in your community to consider serving on your school board.

Attracting qualified and energetic candidates results from activities taking place year-round, not just at election time. By increasing community participation within the schools, you can identify community members who might be willing to consider school board service. Invite individuals to join ad hoc committees, to volunteer in the classroom, or simply to attend various events at school to strengthen their involvement. In this way, potential candidates can become more aware of the challenges facing your schools and the successes you have enjoyed.

See “Have You Considered Running for the School Board?” a pamphlet produced by NYSSBA, for a quick overview of school board service aimed at potential school board candidates.

***8:6. How can boards increase public participation and support at meetings?***

The first way to encourage public participation at meetings is to review how you treat the public when they come to your board meetings. A pleasant environment, a few social amenities and a regular procedure by which the public can address the board not only contribute to good decision making, but foster good public attitudes about those decisions. The cardinal rule in building support for public education is to invite input and treat the public with respect. District policies and procedures should make people feel that they are a welcome part of the board meeting and resulting decisions.

## ***A Glossary of Education Terms***

***Academic intervention*** – Services required of the school district to provide extra help to students who are not yet meeting the learning standards, as mandated under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

***Accountability*** – The obligation of states, school districts and individuals to ensure that students meet performance standards, and the obligation of school boards to fulfill their stewardship responsibilities.

***Adequate yearly progress*** – The measure each state must establish to determine the progress of all students and students in certain specified accountability groups in each public school, school district and charter school within the state toward attaining proficiency in state assessments, as specified under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

***Appropriation*** – An authorization from the board of education or voters to make expenditures and to incur obligations for specific purposes.

***Assessed valuation*** – The monetary worth of all property in the district as determined by the municipal assessor.

***Assessment*** – Measuring or judging the learning and performance of students, teachers, administrators and the board itself.

***Average daily attendance*** – The aggregate days of attendance during a given reporting period divided by the number of days school is in session during that period.

***Basic Education Data System (BEDS)*** – The State Education Department’s system for collecting basic information on all the state’s elementary and secondary schools.

***Block grants*** – Federal or state funding distributed in a lump sum directly to states or localities to administer and direct programs.

***BOCES*** – Boards of cooperative educational services that are formed by a voluntary cooperative association of school districts in a geographical area that band together to provide services, such as special education and vocational programs, to their component local school districts.

***BOCES aid*** – State funds to reimburse a district for part of the cost of BOCES services.

***Categorical aid*** – State or federal aid which is intended to finance or reimburse a specific category of instructional or supporting program or to aid a particular target group of pupils.

***Charter school*** – An independent and autonomous public school established under the state Charter Schools Act, eligible for funding from both private and public local, state and federal monies.

***Cohort*** – A group of students who share the same statistical or demographic characteristics, such as grade level.

***Commissioner of education*** – The chief executive appointed by the Board of Regents to execute, supervise and enforce laws and policies relating to the state education system.

***Contingency budget*** – The budget adopted by the board of education after a proposed budget is defeated.

***Cooperative service application (Co-Ser)*** – A BOCES request to the commissioner of education for approval to operate a service.

**Core curriculum** – The body of knowledge that all students are expected to learn.

**Criterion-referenced tests** – Tests designed to determine whether students have acquired predefined knowledge or mastered specific skills; measures how well students perform in relation to established criteria, rather than how students compare with each other.

**Data-based decision making** – Analyzing quantitative information from varied sources to make decisions about the school or district.

**Deficit** – The amount by which total expenditures exceed total revenues for the fiscal year.

**Distance learning** – A course taken and/or taught simultaneously in two or more locations using video and computer technology.

**Equalization rate** – The percentage of full value at which taxable real property in a county, city, town or village is assessed as determined by the New York State Board of Real Property Services.

**Executive session** – A portion of the school board meeting that is not open to the public.

**Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)** – A law that gives the public access to government records, as a way to foster increased understanding of and participation in government. The law provides a list of the kinds of records that are exempted.

**Fund balance** – The reserves districts have to protect education programs and avoid property tax spikes when state aid is reduced or unexpected contingencies occur.

**GASB** – Governmental Accounting Standards Board, which sets the accounting rules for all governmental entities, including school districts.

**Individualized education program (IEP)** – A written statement outlining the plan for providing an educational program for a disabled student based on the unique needs of that student.

**Magnet school** – A school that offers enriched curriculum in one or more subject areas; sometimes used as a means of desegregation.

**Norm-referenced tests** – Tests designed to compare student performance to a representative sample of students known as the norm group. Focus is on comparing a student's score to performance of other students at the national, state or local level.

**Performance-based assessment** – Tests which measure students' abilities to perform tasks and solve problems rather than choosing answers from a number of possibilities.

**Schools Under Registration Review (SURR)** – Schools identified by the commissioner of education as being farthest from meeting state benchmarks for measuring student performance.

**Triborough** – An amendment to the Taylor Law, part of the Civil Service Law, that requires the term of an expired collective bargaining agreement to remain in effect until a new one is negotiated.

**Unrestricted (general) aid** – Aid that districts may use for any purpose as determined by local priorities and needs.

**Value-added assessment** – Using test scores to measure the gains made by individual students – as well as their school districts – from year to year, providing a snapshot of student achievement.

**Voucher** – A way to allocate and distribute education money directly to parents to pay for their children's education in a public or private school.

**Wicks Law** – A section of the General Municipal Law that requires school districts to award separate contracts for plumbing, heating/air/ventilation and electrical work.



## **Common Acronyms**

**ADA** – Average Daily Attendance

**ADD/ADHD** – Attention Deficit Disorder/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

**AED** – Automated External Defibrillators

**AGE** – Average Grade Enrollment

**AIS** – Academic Intervention Services

**AP Program** – Advanced Placement Program

**AYP** – Adequate Yearly Progress

**BEDS** – Basic Educational Data System

**BOCES** – Boards of Cooperative Educational Services

**CAR** – Comprehensive Assessment Report

**CDOS** – Career Development and Occupational Studies

**CIMS** – Comprehensive Instructional Management System

**CIPA** – Children’s Internet Protection Act

**CRT** – Criterion-Referenced Test

**CSE** – Committee on Special Education

**CTE** – Career and Technical Education

**DARE** – Drug Abuse Resistance Education

**DINI** – District in Need of Improvement

**ELA** – English Language Arts

**ELL** – English Language Learners

**EPIC** – Effective Parenting Information for Children

**ERSS** – Educationally-Related Support Services

**ESEA** – Elementary and Secondary Education Act

**ESL** – English as a Second Language

**FERPA** – Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

**FTE** – Full-Time Equivalent

**GASB** – Governmental Accounting Standards Board

**GED** – General Education Diploma

**IDA** – Industrial Development Agency

**IDEA** – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

**IEP** – Individualized Education Program

**LEP** – Limited English Proficiency

**LRE** – Law-Related Education; Least Restrictive Environment

**NAEP** – National Assessment of Educational Progress

**NCLB** – No Child Left Behind Act

**NYCRR** – New York Commissioner’s Rules and Regulations

**NYSAA** – New York State Alternate Assessment Program

**NYSAP** – New York State Assessment Program

**NYSTCS** – New York State Teacher Certification Examination Program

**PAC** – Political Action Committee

**PCEN** – Pupils with Compensatory Education Needs

**PEP** – Pupil Evaluation Program Test  
**PET** – Program Evaluation Test  
**PILOT** – Payment In Lieu of Taxes  
**PINS** – Persons In Need of Supervision  
**PLA** – Project Labor Agreement  
**Project SAVE** – Safe Schools Against Violence in Education  
**RCT** – Regents Competency Test  
**SARA** – State Archives & Records Administration  
**SAT** – Standardized Assessment Test  
**SASS** – System of Accountability of Student Success

**SES** – Supplemental Educational Services  
**SINI** – School in Need of Improvement  
**STAR** – School Tax Relief Program  
**STW** – School-to-Work  
**SURR Schools** – Schools Under Registration Review  
**UPK** – Universal Prekindergarten  
**VESID** – Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities  
**YRE** – Year-Round Education

## ***Acronyms of Well-Known Organizations***

**AASA** – American Association of School Administrators

**AFT** – American Federation of Teachers

**ASCD** – Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

**ASBO** – Association of School Business Officials

**CFE** – Campaign for Fiscal Equity

**CASDA** – Capital Area School Development Association

**COPE** – Cooperative Organization for Public Education

**ECB** – Educational Conference Board

**ECS** – Education Commission of the States

**ERIC** – Educational Resources Information Center

**ETS** – Educational Testing Service

**NAESP** – National Association of Elementary School Principals

**NAPT** – National Association for Pupil Transportation

**NASBE** – National Association of State Boards of Education

**NASSP** – National Association of Secondary School Principals

**NCATE** – National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

**NCES** – National Center for Education Statistics

**NBPTS** – National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

**NSBA** – National School Boards Association

**NYCOM** – New York State Conference of Mayors & Other Municipal Officials

**NYLA** – New York Library Association

**NYSASBO** – New York State Association of School Business Officials

**NYSCOSS** – New York State Council of School Superintendents

**NYSED or SED** – New York State Education Department

**NYSGFOA** – New York State Government Finance Officers Association

**NYSMSA** – New York State Middle Schools Association

**NYSPTA** – New York State Parent-Teacher Association

**NYSSBA** – New York State School Boards Association

**NYSUT** – New York State United Teachers

**PERB** – Public Employment Relations Board

**REFIT** – Reform Educational Financing Inequities Today

**SAANYS** – School Administrators Association of New York State

**USDOE** – U.S. Department of Education



## *Horseheads Central School District*

One Raider Lane  
Horseheads, New York 14845  
(607) 739-5601  
[www.horseheadsdistrict.com](http://www.horseheadsdistrict.com)

The Horseheads Central School District offers educational programs without regard to gender, race, color, national origin, or disability. Inquiries regarding this policy may be made to Judy Christiansen, Title IX Coordinator, or Kim Williams, Section 504 Coordinator, Horseheads Central School District, One Raider Lane, Horseheads, NY 14845, (607) 739-5601.