Northwest Arctic Borough School District

Roles & Responsibilities
School Board Orientation

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

Provided by the Association of Alaska School Boards

Katie Oliver, Associate Executive Director

School Board Training

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

School board members in attendance earn five (5) Boardsmanship Points, which are applied toward their Boardsmanship level in AASB's Carl Rose Boardsmanship Award Program.

Our Agreements

- In every chair, a leader.
- We are responsible for our experience.
- Take care of yourself; take care of each other.
- Value our time together.

Our Time Together

- Setting the Groundwork
- School Board Roles & Responsibilities
- School Board Norms
- Goal Setting
    - Quick Review - Board Improvement Goals (August 2026)
    - Strategic Planning Next Steps
- Closing

Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards

1. Commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction, and define clear goals toward that vision.

2. Have strong shared beliefs about what is possible for students and their ability to learn.

3. Spend less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to support student achievement.

4. Have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and communicate to inform and engage.

5. Embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.

6. Align and sustain financial resources to meet district goals.

7. Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.

8. Take part in team development and board training to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts.



Key Roles of the School Board

Community Liaison

Adopts a vision, mission, and district goals through the ***Strategic Plan*** and reports out on the status of them.



Hires and ***evaluates*** a superintendent.



Adopts and approves ***policies*** for governance of the district.



Reviews then approves the ***annual budget*** and ensures necessary funding for the district's strategic plan.



Approves recommended ***curriculum*** based on standards, goals, and policies.

Roles & Responsibilities

For School Board Members & Superintendents

In your small groups, read through your chapters. Consider and discuss the following questions as they apply to your chapters:

1. What stands out? Which responsibilities seem particularly important, and why?

2. How are we doing? Where is our board carrying out these responsibilities effectively?

3. Does anything seem unclear? What questions do we have about how these responsibilities look in practice?

Chapter	**Notes**
Superintendent - Board Relationship	

Chapter	Notes
Meetings	
Policy	
Budget & Finance	

Chapter	Notes
Curriculum & Instructional Materials	
Personnel	
Community Engagement	

Chapter	Notes
Planning & Growth	

School Board Norms

School board norms are collaboratively developed and mutually agreed upon expectations that provide commitments and guidance to board members. The Board's norms supplement its policies and bylaws. The creation of board norms helps to cultivate interpersonal development and appropriate board decorum, as well as communicate board accountability to the public.

Governance Norms

The Board agrees to:

- ☐ Engage in decision-making with a "Students First" mindset and keep student achievement as the main focus of board decision-making.
- ☐ Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each in our respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
- ☐ Base decisions on facts, data, policy, and strategic goals.
- ☐ Remain focused on our work as a board and not micromanage the superintendent in the day-to-day operations of the district.
- ☐ Engage with others respectfully through attentive listening and civil deliberations.
- ☐ Respect differences of opinion and diverse perspectives.
- ☐ Be accountable for self-behavior as well as the impact of our actions on the board/district.
- ☐ Strive to create and maintain a board culture that promotes respect, understanding, collaboration, and standards of professional conduct at all times.
- ☐ Respect the different roles and responsibilities within the school system, and maintain a focus on policy and governance.
- ☐ Engage in responsible, intentional, and continuous relationship-building with board members, the superintendent, and district stakeholders.
- ☐ Model continuous learning in our roles as members of the governance team.

Communication Norms

The board of education agrees to:

- ☐ Support and follow the chain of command and promote public understanding of the chain of command.
- ☐ Build trusting relationships by engaging in courteous, open and honest dialogue.

- ☐ Demonstrate respect to all individuals and groups reporting to the board, attending meetings, and in our daily interactions.
- ☐ Engage in compromise and consensus building until we reach a decision as a collective board and support the majority decision in subsequent words and actions.
- ☐ Adhere to the “No Surprises” rules, and ensure that all district-related communications are shared with the board and superintendent.
- ☐ Ongoing, transparent communication with community stakeholders while maintaining confidentiality regarding sensitive matters, including items discussed in executive sessions.
- ☐ Make requests for information only when necessary and applicable to the work of the board.
- ☐ Ensure that all board members are included on all information distributions.
- ☐ Use social media as a tool to promote positive and important news about the school district.
- ☐ Avoid engaging on controversial topics on social media.
- ☐ Be positive and mindful of how our actions on social media reflect on the whole board.
- ☐ Share information from social media that may further an awareness of community concerns or controversy to the superintendent and board president.
- ☐ Refrain from communications that attack or question the actions or motives of the board or individual board members.

Board Meeting Norms

The board of education agrees to:

- ☐ Arrive at meetings on-time, prepared, and ready to do the work of the district.
- ☐ Provide advance notice to the board president and district clerk when attendance at a meeting is not possible.
- ☐ Transparently conduct the business of the district.
- ☐ Respectfully and intently listen to but not engage with those sharing public comments at meetings.

- ☐ The board president will respond to any and all official and public inquiries directed to the Board, and provide official statements on behalf of the board.
- ☐ Be aware of non-verbal communication and the message it sends to the public.
- ☐ Stay focused on the agenda and avoid sidebar conversations.
- ☐ Ensure that cell phones or other communication devices are not in use at the board table.
- ☐ Be respectful of each others' time by being concise in our comments, adhering to reasonable time constraints, and avoiding the repetition of comments already made by other board members.

Board Priorities for Year Ahead

From your Board Self-Assessment of August 27, 2026

1. Strengthen Board Communication to the Public
    a. Improve communication with the public about the Board's work and priorities.
    b. Explore additional communication support and tools (such as contract with someone to focus on communication).
    c. Strengthen student voice and engagement with student governments.

2. Support New Board Member Onboarding
    a. Provide a strong orientation for new board members.
    b. Use opportunities such as the Annual Conference.

3. Strengthen Ongoing Board Development & Engagement
    a. Explore professional development opportunities that fit within the Board's available budget.
    b. Stay informed about statewide and national education issues.
    c. Increase Board understanding of student achievement in foundational areas including math, science, and language arts.
    d. Maintain active board participation and learning beyond regular meetings.

4. Recognize & Celebrate Staff Accomplishments
    a. Regularly recognize staff achievements at the district and statewide levels.

5. Continue to Strengthen Student Voice
    a. Create meaningful opportunities for students and student governments to share perspectives and present to the Board.



Thank you!

Katie Oliver
kolivr@aasb.org

Association of Alaska School Boards
1111 W. 9th Street, Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 463-1660
aasb@aasb.org