

SCHOOL DISTRICT 197

SCHOOL BOARD



ROLES, STANDARDS, AND EXPECTATIONS

Updated: May 2026

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Introduction

In response to community interest in serving on the school board, the district has prepared this guide to advise current and prospective school board candidates on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the board. This guide is also meant to inform the community on how the board fulfills its role.

About the School Board

The school board is made up of seven citizens elected at-large by voters in the district every two years during even year elections. Members are elected to four-year overlapping terms. At the end of a four-year term, members may run for re-election to successive terms. Voting takes place at general elections in November and terms begin the first Monday in January or as soon as possible thereafter. If a vacancy occurs in the middle of a term, the school board names an appointee to serve until the next district election. The superintendent is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the school board who facilitates the work of the board and is responsible to the board for providing leadership to the district and carrying out board directives. By choice, the board also invites one to two student board members every year to bring student voice to the board's decisions, but not to vote.

Given the time commitment involved and to assist in making the role more accessible to all community members, each board member receives a yearly stipend from the school district. The stipend is paid in equal installments over the year. The current stipend is \$5,100 (\$5,800 for the chair), and this amount is reviewed annually.

Board Policy Governance

Like many school districts around the nation, our school board relies upon policy governance to help define the role, vision and values of the board and district. It is the board's role—with direction from the community—to set policy, develop clear expectations for results, and to evaluate progress. The district leadership team, led by the superintendent, carries out the district's daily operations in alignment with board policies and expectations. This allows the board to maintain a system-wide focus and supports an appropriate distinction between policy and administration.

Representative Government

The community's voice is most directly heard in their vote for whom they select to represent them. *Every board member represents the whole district.* Board members are responsible for making many decisions on behalf of the community as their elected representatives. There are just a handful of exceptions where the board is allowed/required (by state law) to conduct a community-wide vote. One example from our recent history was when the community was asked to vote on (and approved!) increasing taxes to make significant improvements to our facilities.

BOARD MEMBERS & SUPERINTENDENT



For current contact information and additional information about the school board members and administration, please visit the school district website at isd197.org. Please note that school board members will use only their district-assigned email addresses to conduct board-related business.



Sarah Larsen
Chair
(she/her/hers)



Jon Vaupel
Vice Chair
(he/him/his)



Byron Schwab
Treasurer
(he/him/his)



Tim Aune
Director
he/him/his



Marcus Hill
Director
(he/him/his)



Morgan Steele
Director
(she/her/hers)



Randi Walz
Director
(she/her/hers)



Peter Olson-Skog, Ph.D.
Superintendent
(he/him/his)



Peter Mau, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent
(he/him/his)

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

SCHOOL DISTRICT 197

Nurture. Inspire. Prepare. Together, We Thrive.

School District 197 is committed to caring relationships, equitable practices, and high achievement for all.

GOALS

All students are academically and socially ready for school.

All 3rd graders can read at grade level.

All racial and economic achievement gaps are closed.

All students graduate from high school.

All students are ready for career and college.

WE BELIEVE...

RELATIONSHIPS

- People thrive when they feel connected, trusted, and affirmed.
- Communication and collaboration strengthen school, family, and community relationships.

EQUITY

- Our diversity makes us stronger.
- Seeking to understand each other strengthens the individual and community.
- We are all accountable for removing barriers and creating equitable systems.

ACHIEVEMENT

- High expectations and personalized support are critical for student success.
- Innovative environments promote curiosity, creativity, and courageous action.
- Everyone has the ability to continually grow.

FOCUS AREAS

1

Establish a district-wide system of social-emotional learning and support

2

Build equitable systems and support throughout the district

3

Increase E-12 opportunities for career exploration and preparation

DISTRICT 4-WAY EQUITY TEST



The School District 197 School Board uses the 4-Way Equity Test to guide its decision-making processes.

1

How does this help to provide opportunities for students who have historically been underserved, underrepresented, or disadvantaged by the current system?

2

How does this help to ensure equitable access for all?

3

How does this help to eliminate barriers (structural, process, financial, etc.) based on race and ethnicity, language, immigration status, ability, socioeconomic status, sex, or gender identity and sexual orientation (LGBTQIA+ status)?

4

How does this ensure the same rigorous standards for academic performance exist for all students?

THE ROLES OF THE SCHOOL BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION

As the elected governing body of School District 197, the School Board, among other duties, is responsible for:

Establishing, reviewing, and updating policy based on recommendations from the Superintendent

Hiring and evaluating the Superintendent, the chief administrator and only employee whom the Board supervises

Fielding questions and concerns about items on the Board's agendas and/or the Superintendent

Annually approving budget parameters, and the subsequent annual overall budget established within said parameters

Identifying decisions that require community engagement and directs administration to seek input and/or feedback prior to board action

Advocating for students and the school district with elected officials

Approving policies, as recommended by the superintendent, that guide curriculum selection processes (e.g. Graduation Requirements) that ensure our curriculum meets or exceeds Minnesota State Standards

Setting goals aligned to the strategic framework and monitoring achievement toward their attainment

As the executive team of the School District, the Superintendent and the administrative team is responsible for:

Implementing policy and making recommendations for policy updates and changes

Hiring, supervising, and evaluating all other staff and all operations

Fielding questions and concerns about school/district operations including questions and/or concerns about staff members (other than the Superintendent)

Allocating and managing resources (financial, human, and physical) within the board approved budget and budget parameters. Examples include determining specific class sizes and class offerings within the board's parameters

Leading and implementing staff, parent, and community relations and engagement

Supporting the board's advocacy including, but not limited to, information gathering and issue identification

Reviewing, selecting, and implementing curriculum, including materials, in a manner consistent with board-approved curricular policies

Determining and implementing an action plan to achieve the board's goals. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring continuous improvement through performance management, professional development, and instructional leadership

STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL BOARD LEADERSHIP



Source: MSBA, 2017; and TeamWorks International

School boards are most effective when board members focus on the big picture: making policy, setting goals, and engaging stakeholders, all with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. School boards that focus on administrative issues tend to be low-functioning boards. School District 197 School Board members vote in the district interests while listening to and seeking to understand the diverse individual and group interests on any issue or situation.

The School District 197 School Board strives for excellence in governance, operates in partnership with the Superintendent, supports excellence in management, and partners for excellence in consultation with staff, students, families, and the public.

School District 197, in policy and application, may use terminology that differs somewhat from materials referenced in this document. The District's Intent is to meet the highest standard of school board effectiveness in its application and day-to-day work.

Standard #1: Conduct & Ethics

The school board, as a whole, provides leadership to the community on behalf of the school district by conducting its business in a fair, respectful, legal, and responsible manner. An effective, high-performing school board strives to meet the following benchmarks:

1. Recognize the school board team consists of school board members and the superintendent and evaluates its performance at least annually.
2. Take full responsibility for its activity and behavior at and away from the board table.
3. Encourage its members to express their individual opinions, respect others' opinions, and vote according to their convictions.
4. Speak with one voice after reaching a decision.
5. Spend time on board governance work rather than staff work.
6. Provide for orientation and ongoing training for all school board members.
7. Follow established policies, including the appropriate communication sequence, by directing people with concerns to the appropriate staff.
8. Set an example of respectful and civil leadership.

STANDARDS (continued)

Standard #2: Vision

The school board, with community input, envisions the educational future of the community and then formulates the goals, defines the outcomes, and sets the course for the school district. An effective, high-performing school board strives to meet the following benchmarks:

1. Use clear, focused, attainable, and measurable goals and outcomes to support gains in student achievement.
2. Develop a strategic framework that includes well-crafted school district belief statements, goals, and focus areas that enable the school board to evaluate school district performance.
3. Regularly monitor goals and implementation targets to evaluate progress toward goal achievement and school district success.
4. Ensure that the school district belief statements, mission, goals, focus areas and implementation targets are reflected in school board policies, mirrored in the budget planning and implementation efforts, and supported district-wide.
5. Communicate the strategic plan and the progress to the community.

Standard #3: Structure

To achieve its vision, the school board establishes organizational and physical structures for student and staff success. An effective, high-performing school board strives to meet the following benchmarks:

1. Create organizational and physical structures based on equity in which all students and staff have the resources and support to maximize achievement.
2. Advocate and provide for learning through rigorous curriculum, effective technology, and a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment.
3. Select and employ one person — the Superintendent — as the school district's chief executive officer to lead and manage the school district.
4. Hold the Superintendent accountable for school district performance and compliance with written school board policy.
5. Delegate the authority to the Superintendent to recommend and evaluate all school district staff within the standards established through written school board policies.
6. Accept ultimate responsibility for the care, management, fiscal oversight, and control of the district while understanding that the day-to-day operations will be conducted by the staff.

Standard #4: Accountability

The school board is accountable to the community for regularly monitoring the conditions affecting the school district as a whole. The school board and individual members are also accountable to themselves, students, families, other board members, the Superintendent, and staff. An effective, high-performing school board strives to meet the following benchmarks:

1. Recognize the duty to itself and the community to determine whether the authority delegated to the superintendent is being used as intended.
2. Evaluate the Superintendent's performance at least annually.
3. Use student achievement data and other indicators when available as the basis for assessing progress toward school district goals and compliance with school board policies and state and federal laws.
4. Recognize the distinction between "monitoring data" (data used by the school board to address accountability) and "management data" (data used by the staff for operations).

STANDARDS (continued)

Standard #5: Advocacy & Communication

The school board advances its vision at the local, regional, state, and national levels. An effective, high-performing school board strives to meet the following benchmarks:

1. Focus on community-wide concerns and values that best support equity and student achievement rather than being influenced by special interests.
2. Develop communication strategies to build trust between the school board and the Superintendent, staff, students, and community.
3. Use a public relations strategy that supports the flow of information in/out of the district.
4. Engage and build relationships with both public and private stakeholders.
5. Advocate on local, state, and national levels.

In general, board members are expected to follow a code of ethics that will guide their decision-making as it relates to School District 197. MN Statute 123B.09 as well as the district's Code of Ethics Policy 209 states the following expectations, functions, and legal obligations for board members.

EXPECTATIONS OF A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

Source: School District 197 Policy 209, Code of Ethics

School Board Meetings

- Attend all school board meetings, including work sessions, committee meetings, and board professional development sessions.
- Come to the meetings prepared for discussion of the agenda items.
- Whenever possible (and as soon as possible), email the superintendent and chair with questions or concerns that arise when reviewing the lead materials, along with any errors noticed. This will allow the administration to prepare and address the questions in their presentations, along with correcting any errors in advance of the meeting.
- Vote one's conscience after informed discussion unless abstaining because of a conflict of interest.
- Refrain from using mobile devices, Smart phones, tablets and laptops to communicate with others or be distracted from focusing on the business of the school district while in board session.

Working Professionally and Respectfully

- Respect the rights of others to have and express opinions (including, but not limited to, other school board members, administration, staff, students, and community members).
- Be primarily motivated by a desire to provide the best possible education for the students of the school district.
- Be informed about the proper duties and functions of a school board member, including school liaison and other responsibilities that occur outside of school board meetings.
- Support the decision of the board, even if a board member's own position concerning the issue was different.
- Recognize the integrity of school board predecessors and associates and appreciate their work.
- Make no disparaging remarks, in or out of school board meetings, about other members of the school board, the superintendent, or their opinions.
- Recognize and respect the decisions of the board and do not undermine board decisions when interacting with the media or other public sharing of personal opinions.
- Meet and communicate with the superintendent and other board colleagues as required. For example, board members will meet with the superintendent one-on-one on a regular basis.

Focusing on Governance

1. Focus on education policy.
2. Remember that the board's responsibility is to set policy – not to implement policy.
3. Act as a trustee of public education and do one's best to protect, conserve, and advance its progress.
4. Recognize that a board member's responsibility, exercised through the actions of the school board as a whole, is to see that the schools are properly run – not to run them individually.
5. Recognize that authority rests with the school board in legal session – not with the individual members of the school board except as authorized by law.
6. Work through the Superintendent – not over or around the Superintendent.
7. Delegate the implementation of school board decisions to the Superintendent.

Legal Obligations

1. Comply with all federal, state and local laws relating to work as a school board member.
2. Comply with all school district policies as adopted by the school board.
3. Abide by all rules and regulations as promulgated by the Minnesota Department of Education and other state and federal agencies with jurisdiction over school districts.
4. Recognize that school district business may be legally transacted only in an open meeting of the school board.
5. Avoid conflicts of interest and refrain from using a school board position for personal gain.
6. Take no private action that will compromise the school board or administration.
7. Guard the confidentiality of information that is protected under applicable law.

SCHOOL BOARD SELF GOVERNANCE & MEMBER ACCOUNTABILITY



The School Board and each of its members must be committed to faithful compliance with the provisions of the Board's policies. Failure to deal with violations of its policies risks the loss of public confidence in the Board's ability to govern effectively. In the event of a board member's violation of policy, or other forms of misconduct, the Board shall address the issue by using the following steps:

1. Conversation in a private setting between the offending member and the School Board Chair or other individual members; such conversation will be reported to the other members of the Board.
2. Discussion in a public meeting between the offending member and the full School Board.
3. Public censure, by simple majority vote, of the offending member of the School Board, as well as removal from committees and leadership positions, to which the member has been appointed or elected.
4. Removal from the school board for proper cause by a concurrent vote of at least four members. The board member to be removed will be duly notified of the time and place of the meeting for which the vote is to be taken, and for the reasons for the proposed removal. The board member will be given an opportunity to be heard in defense against the removal (MN 123.B.09; Subd. 9).

Most board member issues and situations are intended to fall into Category 1. Categories 2, 3, and 4 are intended for extreme and/or repeated instances of violations where Category 1 has not resulted in a change in member behaviors.

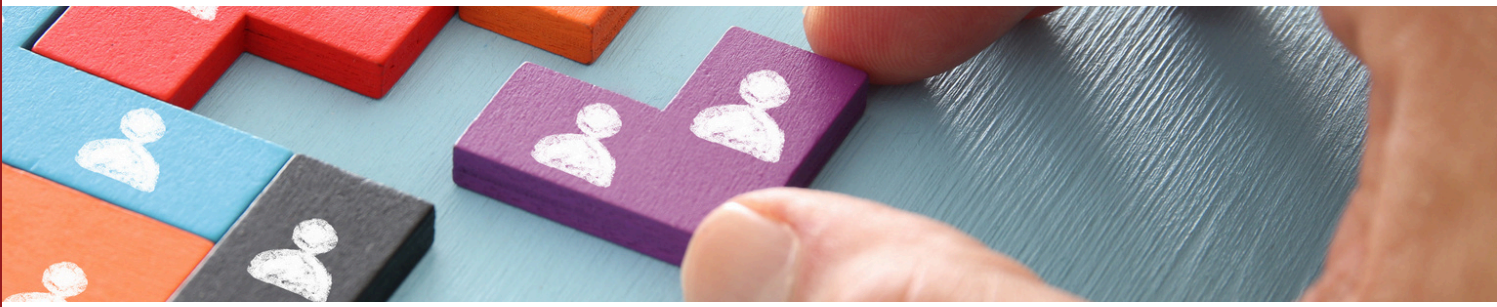
CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE BOARDS



Source: MSBA; Center for Public Education, 2019

- Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.
- Effective school boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.
- Effective school boards are accountable-driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.
- Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.
- Effective boards are data-savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.
- Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.
- Effective school boards lead as a united team with the Superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
- Effective school boards participate in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values, and commitments for their improvement efforts.

WHO REPORTS TO THE SCHOOL BOARD



The Superintendent is the only position who reports to the school board.

Role of Superintendent

The Superintendent reports directly to the board and holds all executive and administrative authority and responsibility for the effective operation of the school district, excluding those areas of control that are required by statute to be exercised directly by the board. The Superintendent acts as the district leader with the support of the district's administrators, who make up the district leadership team. The Superintendent may delegate specific powers or duties to assistants and subordinates while maintaining final responsibility for any actions taken. The Superintendent is also responsible for evaluating their leadership team.

In working with the Superintendent and staff, board members will:

1. Hold the Superintendent responsible for the administration of the school district.
2. Give the Superintendent authority commensurate with their responsibilities.
3. Assure that the school district will be administered by the best professional personnel available.
4. Consider the recommendation of the Superintendent in hiring all employees.
5. Only take action after considering the recommendation of the Superintendent and after the Superintendent has furnished adequate information supporting the recommendation.
6. Insist the Superintendent keep the school board adequately informed at all times.
7. Offer the Superintendent counsel and advice.
8. Recognize the status of the Superintendent as the chief executive officer and a non-voting, ex-officio member of the school board.
9. Refer all complaints to the proper administrative officer or insist that they be presented in writing to the whole school board for proper referral according to the communication sequence.
10. Present any personal criticisms of employees to the Superintendent.
11. Provide support for the Superintendent and employees of the school district so they may perform their proper functions on a professional level.
12. Refrain from publicly expressing individual negative judgments about the Superintendent's performance. (Any such judgments of the Superintendent will be made only by the full board, meeting in closed session.)

HOW THE SCHOOL BOARD ADDRESSES QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Situation/Example	Sound Governance: How a High-Functioning School Board Responds
<p>General Guidance to School Board Members When Receiving Concerns</p>	<p>The board member should identify the person contacting them and ensure they have the person's contact information. Seek to understand the situation or interest but, generally, do not agree or commit to resolve it personally as that is not the role of individual board members. Here are some general expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board member should not agree to confidentiality or commit to limit options of notification. • The board member should be available for contact in the future if redirecting the person to the appropriate staff person or administrator does not address the concern. • Be alert to patterns of like concerns and notify the Superintendent's office of that possibility. • If the concern raises governance or public relations questions, contact the Board Chair in addition to the Superintendent's office. • Avoid forming and communicating opinions about a decision before the school board has discussed it in a board meeting.
<p>What should a board member do if they receive concerns from a staff member, student, or parent/caregiver?</p>	<p>Follow the <i>General Guidance to School Board Members When Receiving Concerns</i>. Encourage the concerned student, staff member or parent to contact the staff member in the school or district best prepared to address their concern or question. For example:</p> <p>If contacted by a staff member, redirect them to a supervisor, and notify the Superintendent's office. <i>Caution: Do not, as board members, get involved in employment and contractual issues.</i></p> <p>If contacted by a student, redirect the student to the principal and notify the Superintendent's office. <i>Caution: Follow district procedures if a safety concern is raised.</i></p> <p>If contacted by a parent/caregiver, redirect the parent/caregiver to the teacher, principal, or administrator as appropriate and notify the Superintendent's office. <i>Caution: Do not attempt to work with a parent who is working on behalf of an organized group rather than on behalf of their own student. Confidentiality and safety procedures must be followed.</i></p>

HOW THE SCHOOL BOARD ADDRESSES QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS (continued)

Situation/Example	Sound Governance: How a High-Functioning School Board Responds
<p>What should a board member do if they receive concerns via email?</p>	<p>It is important for the board member to send an acknowledgment email to the person who emailed them, thanking the person for reaching out and letting them know that their concern has been forwarded to the Superintendent's office. If the entire board has been copied on the message, the Chair will take the lead in responding (though individual board members can choose to respond as well).</p> <p>Follow the General Guidance to School Board Members When Receiving Concerns. After the board member responds to the email's author and forwards their concern to the Superintendent's office, additional engagement or seeking to understand the issue is not necessary.</p> <p>Do not cc: or bcc: to any individual or group, nor "reply all."</p>
<p>What should a board member do when information about them, the school board, or the school district is incorrectly referenced in a social media post?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a school board member, it is not generally advised to engage in social media debates and criticisms. • Contact the Chair and the Superintendent directly to make them aware of the issue so that the appropriate district staff person can quickly provide factual information on the social media platform, if warranted, or so that legal counsel may be contacted if there is a concern regarding confidentiality or safety. • Ideally, the school district will have staff and community advocates who will participate in social media groups on a regular basis to communicate district information and monitor news and activity that pertains to the school district.
<p>What should a board member do if they disagree with a report or presentation to the board?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit questions and concerns to the Superintendent's office as Board protocol describes. • The board member should reflect on what is driving their concern or disagreement. • If the disagreement is in the details, the board member should request a meeting with the Superintendent to discuss. • The board member should not surprise administrators or board colleagues in work sessions and business meetings as it will not aid in promoting accuracy and partnership.

ELECTION & ROLE OF BOARD OFFICERS

Source: School District 197 Policy 202

Election of Officers

The School Board meets annually on the second Monday in January, or as soon after as practical, and elects a chair, a vice chair/clerk, a treasurer, and other officers as determined by the school board. The previously appointed chair continues to serve as the chair until a new chair has been selected. In the event the chair either chooses not to run again or was not re-elected, the following board members, in order from first to last, would serve as chair until the new chair is elected:

- Vice-Chair/Clerk
- Treasurer
- A member selected by the chair prior to the end of his/her term

The new chair officiates the selection of vice chair/clerk and treasurer.

1. Unless removed by the board from their position as an officer, the chair, vice chair/clerk, and treasurer will hold office for one year and until their successors are elected and qualify.
2. The board may delegate duties of clerk and treasurer to a School District 197 staff member.

Officers' Roles

Chair

The Chair provides leadership to the Board, ensures the faithful execution of the Board's processes, exercises responsibilities with integrity, reflecting the spirit and intent of the Board's policies, and serves as the Board's official spokesperson. The Chair has the following specific authority and duties:

1. Monitor Board actions to assure that they are consistent with the Board's own rules and policies and with other obligations imposed by agencies whose authority supersedes the board's authority.
 - a. Conduct and monitor Board meeting deliberations to assure that Board discussion and attention are focused on Board issues, as defined in Board policy.
 - b. Assure that Board meeting discussions are productive, efficient, orderly, and open.
 - c. Conduct Board meetings using the authority as described in Robert's Rules of Order.
2. Represent the Board as its official spokesperson about issues decided by the Board and other matters related to official board business.
 - a. The chair is not authorized to exercise any power as an individual to supervise or direct the Superintendent or any employee of the district.
3. The Chair may delegate authority, when appropriate, to other Board members but the Chair remains accountable for members' use of that delegated authority.
4. Execute all documents authorized by the Board, except as otherwise provided by law.
5. Countersign all orders upon the treasurer for claims allowed by the board, represent the district in all actions and perform all the duties usually incumbent on such officers. In case of absence, inability, or refusal of the clerk to draw orders for the payment of money authorized by a vote of the majority of the board to be paid, the orders may be drawn by the chair, and paid by the treasurer. A statement of the orders drawn, with a copy of such orders, shall be delivered to the clerk by the treasurer, or the office of the clerk may be declared vacant by the chair and treasurer and filled by appointment.
6. Appoint members of all Board committees and liaisons.
7. On behalf of the Board, and in concert with the Superintendent, develop proposed Board meeting agendas.

ELECTION & ROLE OF BOARD OFFICERS

Vice Chair/Clerk

1. Serves in the absence of the Chair.
2. Assists Chair as requested in the execution of Chair responsibilities.
3. Compile and facilitate the Board's summative evaluation of the Superintendent.
4. Signs all orders upon the treasurer for the payment of money for bills allowed by the school board for salaries of officers and for teachers' wages and all claims, to be countersigned by the chair.
5. Other duties of the Vice-Chair/Clerk defined in Minn. Stat. § 123B.14 are assigned to the Director of Finance as described in Subd. 1.

Treasurer

1. Annually reviews the Superintendent's contract to ascertain status on compensation and benefits.
2. Reviews individual Board members and Board expenses against Board Governance policies.
3. Makes all reports which may be called for by the school board and performs all duties a treasurer usually performs.
4. Other duties of the Treasurer defined in Minn. Stat. § 123B.14 are assigned to the Director of Finance as described in Subd. 1.

MEETINGS & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Membership on the school board requires attendance at a variety of meetings held every month. All school board meetings must be open to the public so the public has the opportunity to see and hear all discussion, testimony, and votes. Visit www.isd197.org for a complete and up-to-date list of meetings and agendas. Meetings may be subject to change due to circumstances (e.g., weather, health, or safety). Beyond the opportunities listed below, members of the public can interact with the board through email, phone or in-person. Contact information is listed the School Board page of the district website.

Regular Meetings

The school board holds regular meetings at 6 p.m. on the second Monday of each month. Meetings are held at the City of Mendota Heights Council Chambers (1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights). Meetings may be attended in-person, viewed live on local cable television, live streamed online via a link on the school board page of the school district website, or viewed from a recorded version of the meeting posted on the district website within 48 hours of the meeting.

Work Session Meetings

The school board holds work session meetings, which are the second meetings of each month, to study and discuss issues in more depth. Work sessions are usually held at 5 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month at the District Office Training Room, 1897 Delaware Ave., Mendota Heights. Members of the public may observe the meeting in person.

Listening Sessions

Listening sessions are an informal opportunity for parents, students, and community members to talk with school board representatives and administration about school issues, thoughts, and concerns. Listening sessions usually precede the monthly Regular meeting on the second Monday of the month from 5:00-5:45 p.m. at the City of Mendota Heights Conference Room (1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights).

Public Comments

Public comments are an opportunity for community members to address the full board. Public comments are usually held at the start of the second board meeting of the month (generally the school board Work Session) at the District Office Training Room, 1897 Delaware Ave., Mendota Heights. They are held on the fourth Monday of the month. They typically allow three minutes per speaker, 10 minutes per topic, and as a general rule, no more than three speakers per topic. Members of the public may also submit a written statement to the Superintendent's Executive Assistant no later than 3 p.m. on the day of the board meeting and any statements received will be read aloud at the meeting for the entire board. See the school board agenda posted on the school board page of the school district website for the Public Comments allotted time slot.

Public Input Sessions

On occasion, the school board may host a public input meeting. Public input meetings are devoted to specific topics of interest as identified by the school board, administration, or community. During public input meetings, the school board or administration typically makes a factual presentation, sometimes including a recommendation, followed by a structured question/answer/commentary input or feedback process.

WHAT HAPPENS AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS



School Board meetings are the way in which the school board conducts its governance function and takes official action on behalf of the school district. In most schools districts, there are generally two kinds of standing school board meetings:

- An official business meeting, called a Regular Meeting in School District 197.
- An informal work or study session, called a Work Session in School District 197.

Regular Meetings*

Regular Meetings are the most formal and business-oriented meetings of the school district. These meetings focus on the business actions required of the school board by law or policy. They typically include a set agenda, including a Consent Agenda, and items that require board action within its governance role, such as policy changes, district budget approval, and other designated school board functions. They are meetings of the school board to conduct official business and, while they are open to the public, they are not meetings of the public where members of the public participate in discussion with the school board. Regular Meetings also include reports and presentations by the administration.

In order to ensure that the Regular Meetings are run as efficiently as possible, some agenda items are included on a Consent Agenda. The Consent Agenda consists of routine items of administrative business that require approval, confirmation, or ratification by the board. These items may include the hiring of employees and approval of contracts and financial agreements that are not anticipated to require discussion by the board. School Board members may request that a Consent Agenda item be pulled for additional information, discussion or a separate action, though this is a rare occurrence.

Work Session Meetings*

Work Session Meetings are typically less formal than Business Meetings and are more limited in the number of agenda items included in order to allow more in-depth review of topics and information related to future decisions, or items that may affect the school district. These meetings often include the presentation of information by the administration and discussion among the Board members and administration. The use of Work Sessions to explore topics and information more deeply allows the school board to hold more efficient Business Meetings, having explored and discussed an issue more fully prior to official action.

**Official actions (including the use of consent agendas) occur at both Regular and Work Session Meetings.*

SITE LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS



Philosophy: It is important for School Board members to be visible throughout the District, as well as knowledgeable about the schools they serve. In service of this goal, site liaison assignments are made annually that pair school board members with specific all district education sites. Board members are encouraged to attend the parent/teacher organization meetings for each of their liaison sites, along with other site celebrations and events for the assigned sites.

When board members are initially assigned to a site:

- Board members are encouraged to meet with the principal and the superintendent for a school orientation and to establish a relationship.
- They will be added to the family communication channels for the schools to which they are assigned.

When Board members would like to (or are invited to) visit sites during the school day, they should:

- Request a visit with the school principal and copy the Superintendent in the request email. If the principal is the person who invited the board member, make sure to inform the superintendent of their plans.
- Be mindful of the demanding schedules of school staff, especially the principal, and be specific in requesting a time frame that does not exceed 60 minutes.
- Wear the district-issued badge at all times and engage in conversation with staff and students when appropriate (not mid-instruction).
- Keep questions towards staff and students positive - board members are not there to seek out problems or solve problems.
- Should someone bring problems to the board member, listen and thank them for sharing and let them know that their concern will be passed along to the appropriate person for follow up OR suggest that they connect with the teacher/principal/superintendent themselves.
- If the board member sees something excellent (instruction, activities, performance), please email the principal and Superintendent.
- Should the board member have any concerns, direct them to the Superintendent. Remember, the board member's role is not to look for concerns or address them with staff or students.

The board member does not need to email principals to let them know they're attending school or community events outside the school day.

SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS



Philosophy: School District 197 believes that stakeholder and subject matter expert input is critical to effective decision-making. Accordingly, the school district facilitates a wide variety of advisory groups and committees. However, it is not feasible (given time constraints) nor appropriate (given Open Meeting Law and their governance role) for the whole board to participate in the various district advisory groups and committees. By assigning a liaison, the liaison can hear the various committees' feedback and input directly and share it with the board when it relates to a board meeting topic.

In their role as a committee liaison, in keeping with their governance role, board members should:

- Attend as many meetings as they can.
- Engage responsibly, being cognizant of the power dynamics and staying within their governance role.
- Provide information regarding related board decisions and discussions (past, present, and future) when important to the conversation.

Current board member assignments to district committees include (not an exhaustive list):

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee
- Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC)
- District Labor Management Committee
- Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC)
- Equity Advisory
- Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee (GTAC)
- Meet and Confer
- PAN
- Planning Committee
- Results Committee
- School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC)
- Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
- TriDistrict Community Education Advisory Council (CEAC)

In addition, school board members represent School District 197 in metro and state education organizations in which the School District has membership. Current external organizations to which board members are assigned include (not necessarily exhaustive):

- Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD)
- Intermediate School District 917 (ISD 917)*
- Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)**
- Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL)

*ISD 917 is a collaborative school district that provides special education, career, and technical education, and alternative education for students in its nine-member school districts, including School District 197. A school board member from each ISD 917 member school district is assigned to serve as a school board member for ISD 917 and receives a stipend from 917 for the additional school board assignment.

**All Board Members are assigned to the MSBA.

BECOMING A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

School District 197 Board of Education members are elected officials. Elections are held in November of even-numbered years. To avoid having all seven seats up for election simultaneously, the seats are scheduled for election on an alternating basis, with four spots open one year and the remaining three being available two years later. The process then repeats itself.

Eligibility Requirements *(Source: Minnesota School Boards Association)*

To run for a School Board seat, they must be:

- At least 21 years old
- Eligible voter
- A district resident for at least 30 days prior to election/appointment
- Not a convicted sex offender

Term of Office

Board members are elected to four-year terms commencing on January 1 of the year following the November election and ending on December 31, four years later. A member who has been appointed to fill the unfinished term of a member will need to run for election depending on when they were appointed. There is no limit on the number of consecutive terms a member can serve.

Filling Vacancies *(Source: MN Statute 123B.09)*

A vacancy on the Board shall occur when a member dies, resigns, or ceases to be a resident of Independent School District #197. In addition, if a member of the Board of Education is unable to serve on the Board and attend its meetings for ninety (90) days or more because of illness or prolonged absence from the District, the Board may, at any regular or special meeting thereof, through resolution, declare a vacancy to exist. All vacancies will be filled according to Minnesota Statutes.

The term of a member elected during a special election shall not exceed the term of the member they are replacing. Nor can the term of a Board of education member be lengthened by the member's resignation and subsequent selection by the Board.

Minnesota Statute states that once the Board approves an appointment, the appointed board member cannot be seated until 30-days after the appointment.

REFERENCES

- Eligibility Requirements for School Board Member, Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), School District 197 200 Series Policies
- Standards for School Board Leadership, Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) Governance and Management, TeamWorks International
- Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) School Board Workshop Series

Last Updated: May 2026

This handbook will be reviewed annually at the School Board Organizational meeting.