

Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



"What is the role of the Board and what is the role of the superintendent in the operation of the school district?" This is a question often asked and misunderstood by Board members and superintendents.

The age-old statement that the Board sets policy and the superintendent administers that policy would seem to indicate a clear dividing line between the respective roles. That distinction, however, is not always so clear nor is it one upon which everyone involved agrees.

Board members are usually "doers": they operate businesses, they run homes, they buy supplies. "Doers" often find it hard to look at the big picture and make decisions that cause other people to "do" the job. Many times they are tempted to get in and "do" the job themselves. Conflicts arise when the Board and the superintendent have not defined their specific roles within the district.

Because the needs of a district vary, and leadership and management styles vary, the real need in each district is for the board and superintendent to decide what each is to do and establish proper policies and procedures that will lead to the performance of those duties.

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

Superintendents should ask themselves: "Am I providing leadership to the board, in pointing out areas where policy is needed, or am I usurping the Board's responsibility by establishing policy? Worse yet, am I forcing the board to make administrative decisions because I don't want to take the responsibility?"

Keeping roles clear and communication open is the key to good Board and superintendent relationships.

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1 - GENERAL AREAS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes rules and policies for the governance of the school district.
2. Approves a planning process to include stakeholders in developing a strategic plan for student achievement.
3. Invests the superintendent with those powers and duties in accordance with board policy and state and federal laws.
4. Requires professional leadership from the superintendent.
5. Participates in educational conferences, workshops, training, and professional organizations.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. As the chief executive officer of the Board, the superintendent implements board policies and directives.
2. Recommends a comprehensive planning process for improving student achievement.
3. Coordinates the operation of the schools, supervision of the instructional programs, and management of district personnel.
4. Provides educational leadership to the Board, staff, students, and community.
5. Identifies needs of the district and reports them to the Board.
6. Keeps the Board aware of statewide and national educational developments and changes.
7. Continually upgrades his/her professional knowledge and qualifications through membership and participation in professional associations, conferences, and workshops.

Individual districts may want to make changes to the above roles and responsibilities according to the differences and needs of the district.

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3 - MEETINGS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. All duties imposed upon the Board are performed at a public board meeting.
2. The Board refrains from misuse of the executive session provisions as defined in the Public Meeting Law.
3. The Board establishes, through policy, the operational guidelines or practices for meetings.
4. The Board chair, in consultation with the superintendent, develops the meeting agenda.
5. The Board identifies, for the superintendent, the information needed for decision making.
6. Board members receive their agenda materials in adequate time for study before scheduled Board meetings.

SUPERINTENDENT

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

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5 - INSTRUCTION

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes educational philosophy, goals, and objectives for the instructional program of the district.
2. Adopts and/or changes standards and instructional programs as necessary or as recommended by the superintendent.
3. Regularly reviews student achievement data.
4. Reports to the community the status of education in the district.
5. Identifies and adopts graduation requirements.
6. Periodically requests reports relative to assessments and instructional programs.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Provides leadership to the Board and staff in the continuous development, implementation, and evaluation of the instructional program.
2. Recommends appropriate graduation standards and methods to measure their attainment.
3. Assigns staff to instructional areas and informs the Board.
4. Regularly schedules presentations and reports by staff on various segments of assessments and instructional programs as requested by the Board.
5. Recommends and implements policy on selection of instructional materials and equipment.

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7 - COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Represents and advocates for public education.
2. Serves as a liaison between the school district and the community.
3. Maintains an awareness of community values, concerns, and interests.
4. Actively participates in programs that build good community relations.
5. Appoints advisory committees when necessary and outlines their responsibilities.
6. Appoints the district's spokesperson(s) to deal with the news media.
7. Channels complaints or grievances through the established channels.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Informs and interprets school programs and activities to the community.
2. Serves as the Board's liaison with appointed advisory committees.
3. Establishes a working relationship with the news media.
4. Makes recommendations to the Board for resolution of complaints that cannot be resolved at the administrative level.

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9 - STUDENT SERVICES

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Adopts policies for provision of student services including admission, attendance, activities, rights and responsibilities, discipline, and welfare.
2. Adopts policies necessary to assure the safety and health needs of students.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Recommends and implements policies and rules to maintain adequate services and control of students.
2. Develops and implements procedures to deal with health and safety emergencies.
3. Provides for the direction and supervision of student activities.

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