

Standing Board Committee Best Practices

Background

Below are the practices and protocols that support both the structure and function of the standing committees for the District 97 Board of Education. These practices and protocols were reviewed by the board during its meetings on November 14, 2017 and February 13, 2018, and approved by the board during its meeting on February 27, 2018.

Overview

Three of the major elements of standing board committees are:

- Structure (size, composition and leadership)
- Membership (appointment, re-appointment and service expectations)
- Charge/purpose (role and responsibilities)

Below is additional information about each of these elements.

Committee Structure (Size, Composition and Leadership)

For the past 10 years, standing board committees, which total four as of 2017, have been supporting the work of the District 97 Board of Education. Below is what we consider to be best practice in terms of size, composition and leadership based on our knowledge and observation of these committees during the past decade.

- Size and Composition
 - o Voting Members
 - **Seven Community Members** – After experimenting with the number of community members on our committees, we discovered that having a total of seven provides the best balance in terms of cohesion and diversity of opinions and backgrounds. It has also proven to be more effective in helping us achieve quorum as required by the Open Meetings Act (OMA).
 - o Non-Voting Members
 - **Two Board Members** – Having two members assigned to a committee provides greater continuity and aids our efforts to have board representation at each meeting.
 - **Superintendent** – The superintendent is an ex-officio member of every standing board committee.
 - **One Cabinet Level Administrator** – This person is determined/assigned by the superintendent.
 - **Committee Secretary** – This person helps ensure that the committee complies with all OMA requirements. This person is also responsible for preparing meeting agendas, recording/typing up official minutes, maintaining attendance, reserving and setting up space for meetings and other committee-related events and activities, maintaining committee web pages, and any other support needed to help ensure the efficiency, effectiveness and overall success of the committee. The superintendent

or designee will determine the process by which this role will be filled.

- **Leadership**
 - o **Chair** – If a committee is new, the chair will be selected by the board and will serve a one-year term. After that term is complete, the committee will select the chair on an annual basis going forward.
 - o **Co-Chair** – FORC brought forth a recommendation to add a co-chair to its committee. The policy review team recommends adding a co-chair to every standing board committee. We believe doing so would provide each committee with an additional layer of leadership that would be particularly helpful if the chair is unable to fulfill his/her responsibilities for any reason (absent, resigns from the position, reaches the end of his/her term, etc.). If a committee is new, the co-chair will be selected by the board and will serve a one-year term. After that term is complete, the committee will select the co-chair on an annual basis going forward.

Committee Membership (Appointment, Re-Appointment and Service Expectations)

Based on past practice and feedback from committee members, below are what we consider to be the best practices for selecting, maintaining and managing membership on the standing board committees.

- **Staggered two-year terms** – The terms of four committee members expire in even years and the terms of the other three members expire in odd years. This helps maintain a certain level of consistency/continuity on the committee.
- **Limit of four terms (eight years total)** – There have been a few occasions where someone has served on a committee for a total of eight years. Since so much of the board's work involves long-term planning, we believe allowing people to serve this length of time will help keep the work of the committee on track and aligned with the efforts of the board. Similar to the staggered terms, this will also help maintain a certain level of consistency/continuity on the committee. With that said, we believe it is important to put a limit on the total number of terms so other people have a chance to serve.
- **Terms run from August 1 to July 31** – This gives members who are finishing their terms time to complete any work tied to the previous school year, while also allowing any new members to be in place at the start of the next school year.
- **Posting term information online** – As we do with board members, we recommend that term information (i.e., start/appointment and expiration) for committee members be posted on the district website.
- **Service requirements** – A person is subject to immediate removal from membership on a committee if he/she violates the committee charge, board policy or OMA. This would include failure not only to take the online OMA training required by the state, but also provide the board with proof of completion. We also recommend adding attendance requirements to every charge that would include a provision about dismissal from continued service on the committee if a person

misses three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings or half of the regularly scheduled meetings during the committee year (August 1 to July 31). The committee secretary will track/monitor the adherence to/compliance with the service requirements, and will notify the board when violations have been committed. The board will review the information provided by the committee secretary, and take the necessary/appropriate action in accordance with its policies and the practices and protocols outlined in this document.

- **Recruitment and appointment** – The process for recruiting and appointing members should be standard across all committees. If a member's term expires and he/she elects not to seek re-appointment, then the recruitment process to fill that vacancy will begin in April, with the goal of selecting and approving the candidate for appointment by the end of the school year. Should a member be unable to continue to perform his/her duties for any reason (e.g., resigns from the committee, moves out of the community, dismissal from the committee, incapacitation, death, etc.), the process for recruiting and appointing a replacement will begin as soon as possible.
- **Re-appointment** – Similar to recruitment and appointment, the process for re-appointing members should be standard across all committees. Members with expiring terms must let the committee chair know by the end of March if they wish to continue serving on the committee. While re-appointment is typical, it is not automatic and will be determined by factors such as attendance and overall contributions to the committee.

Below are the steps that will be utilized for completing the appointment process.

- The district will use a variety of resources (e.g., email, website, media, community partners, etc.) to communicate the call for committee members. People who want to apply for openings on a committee will have approximately two to three weeks to submit their interest in writing along with a current resume or CV.
- After all of the applications have been received, the board liaisons to the committee and the committee chair and co-chair will conduct a paper screening of the applicants (i.e., review all of the information/materials provided in response to the call) and select the individuals who will participate in the next phase of the process.
- After the paper screening has been completed, some combination of the board liaisons and committee chair and co-chair will form a team that will interview the remaining candidates. If the candidate pool is relatively small (i.e., four people or less), one team consisting of a board liaison and the chair or co-chair will conduct the interviews. However, if there are more than four candidates, it is recommended, but not required, that the liaisons, chair and co-chair form two interview teams to help divide the work and make the process more manageable. It is also recommended, but not required, that the interviews be conducted either in person or via a video conferencing system such as

FaceTime or Skype. If the interviews are conducted in person, it is recommended that they take place in a venue or setting that accommodates the needs of the candidates (e.g., kid-friendly, accessible, etc.). If interviews cannot be conducted in person or via a video conferencing system, use of a phone is acceptable.

- When the interview process has been completed, one of the board liaisons and the chair will present the committee's recommendations for membership to the board president and the administrative representative who serves on the committee. If the board president and the administrative representative agree with the recommendations, the board liaison or chair will contact the candidates to confirm that they are still interested in serving on the committee. If they are still interested, the candidates will move to the appointment phase, which the board will vote on during the open session of its next meeting. If the candidates are no longer interested, the board president and the administrative representative do not agree with the recommendations or the board does not approve the appointments, the board liaison and chair will select alternative candidates. The selection of alternative candidates may require re-issuing the call for members. The process will continue until the board approves the appointments. Once that occurs, the district will send a written communication to everyone who answered the call for members to thank them for applying and let them know the results of the process.

Below are the steps that will be utilized for completing the re-appointment process.

- In late February or early March, the board liaisons to the committees or their designee will contact committee members whose terms are expiring to remind them about the deadline and process for re-appointment.
- Members with expiring terms must send the committee chair and co-chair a written communication by the end of March letting them know if they want to continue serving on the committee.
- *Those members who want to continue serving on the committee will have their request for re-appointment reviewed by the board liaisons and the committee chair and co-chair. Decisions regarding re-appointment will be based on factors such as an individual's attendance at meetings and overall contributions to the committee.
- *After completing their review, the board liaisons and the committee chair and co-chair will decide if they are going to recommend members for re-appointment. If they support re-appointment, they will present their recommendations to the board president and the administrative representative who serves on the committee. If the board president and the administrative representative agree with the recommendations, the board will vote on the re-appointments during the open session of its next meeting. If the board liaisons and the committee chair and co-chair do not support re-appointment, the board president and administrative representative do not agree with the

recommendations or the board does not approve the appointments, a board liaison and/or the committee chair or co-chair will let the members who submitted the request know about the decision. The committee will then undertake the appointment process to fill the vacancies.

*To avoid a conflict of interest, the board liaisons, with help from the administrative representative when necessary, will oversee the process related to the re-appointment of the individuals who serve as chair and co-chair of the committee.

Committee Charge/Purpose (Role and Responsibilities)

Below are suggested best practices related to the role and responsibilities of standing board committees.

- Role
 - o The board determines and directs the work of all standing board committees. This is carried out primarily via the board representatives who serve as liaisons to the committees.
 - o Board committees are advisory in nature. Their authority is limited to providing the board with recommendations related to the work that is determined by the board and/or is spelled out in the committee charge.
- Responsibilities
 - o Calendar/work plans
 - Each committee will develop, approve and implement an operational work plan on an annual basis that includes the meeting schedule and major goals for the year. This plan will align with the charge of the committee and the goals and vision of the district.
 - Each committee will review and update its calendar of recurring meetings and topics on an annual basis in order to provide consistency and continuity for its members. This is particularly important given that the people serving on the committee will eventually change.
 - Each committee will present the board with an annual report of its activities and future plans during the open session of a regularly scheduled board meeting.
 - o Agenda creation for committee meetings
 - The committee chair and board representatives who serve as liaisons to the committee will develop the agendas for committee meetings. The superintendent and cabinet level administrator assigned to the committee will assist with this activity when necessary/applicable. This assistance will include, but not be limited to, submitting their recommended agenda items to the committee chair and board liaisons for their consideration.

- As part of the agenda-setting process, the committee chair and board liaisons will determine the timeline and method by which each meeting agenda will be shared with committee members.
- All meeting agendas will be posted in accordance with the requirements set forth by OMA.
- Supplemental and supporting documentation
 - Per OMA, most documents presented to the committee are considered public record and will be made available on the website.
 - As part of the agenda-setting process, the committee chair and board liaisons, with input from the administration when necessary/applicable, will determine the timeline and method by which any supplemental and supporting documentation for a meeting will be shared with committee members.
 - Official minutes will be taken for each meeting and approved by the voting members of the committee at a subsequent meeting. The committee secretary will send a draft of the meeting minutes to the board secretary. The board secretary will then circulate the draft minutes to the Board of Education members in a timely fashion in order to keep them apprised of the work being done by the board committees. Approved minutes will also be made available on the website.
 - The names of committee members, the starting date of their service and the expiration date of their current term will be published on the website.