

**Transcript
Operational Board Video
August 2025**

The following is a transcript of the [NSSEO Operational Board Video](#) and [slides](#) that will be shared with member district boards in August 2025.

Slide One:

Thank you for taking the time from your busy board agendas to view this video and the important information shared regarding the governance structure at NSSEO. This is Dr. Meg Schnoor, superintendent of NSSEO and as you know, we are a special education collaborative serving your district and seven other area districts, enabling the provision of special education services for the most complex of educational needs.

Slide Two: In fall of 2024, NSSEO along with all member districts and a variety of other NSSEO shareholders met to develop a strategic plan to guide the cooperative in meeting the needs of member districts for the next five years. Four key priorities emerged, Governance, Finance and Facilities, Instruction and Programs, and Highly Qualified staff. This evening I am presenting about the governance priority. For the more than fifty years NSSEO has served districts, the governance structure has been that of a single tiered board-the NSSEO Governing board which is made up of one elected board member from each of the member district boards, coming together monthly to govern the work of the cooperative. During the original strategic plan meetings as well as the action plan meetings in January of 2025, the shareholders agreed that there needs to be another layer of governance added to the structure. This layer of governance would be composed of the superintendent from each of the member districts and the NSSEO superintendent, meeting in alignment with the Open Meetings act to collaboratively make the decisions of how to best provide for students with special needs in all member districts. These decisions would be made in alignment with the budget established annually by the elected governing board members.

Making the change to a two tiered board requires a change in the NSSEO Articles of Agreement which were already overdue to be reviewed and revised. A copy of a draft of the new NSSEO Articles of Agreement is included in your board packets.

Slide Three:

Naturally the question -why do we need to change?-has arisen in discussions.

1. NSSEO exists to meet the needs of member districts, and member districts want to share in the decisions that are made on behalf of all of their students-including those attending NSSEO programs.

Another question has been-’the superintendents already meet monthly in an advisory capacity with the superintendent and administration of NSSEO-isn’t that sufficient?

2. While the implementation of the NSSEO Superintendent Council has increased the dialogue between superintendents and NSEO it does not hold decision-making power. An Operating Board would have the formal authority to make operational decisions—on matters such as E-learning policy, program design, staffing models, and transportation services—giving districts a direct role in shaping outcomes that impact students and budgets. Unlike advisory groups, an Operating Board would meet publicly under the Open Meetings Act (OMA). This creates a legally accountable structure where all deliberations and decisions are transparent, documented, and accessible to the public. This helps build broader trust— which was a key concern raised in the strategic planning process.

Slide Three: An Operational Board will also help NSSEO reduce sharing of misinformation and backchannel ‘problem solving’ The Operating Board removes the ambiguity. Instead of conversations happening offline or in silos, key issues would be addressed through a structured, visible process. This helps eliminate conjecture and fosters mutual accountability. The question of ‘how was this decision made’ will no longer be an issue.

Additionally-The operational board with superintendent representation from all member districts in a formal capacity, ensures that decisions reflect the diversity of needs across our entire cooperative—not just those with the loudest voices or most urgent needs. It helps us function as a cooperative with shared priorities, not just a service provider.

Ultimately, this is about building confidence in how NSSEO serves students and stewards the significant financial contributions from member districts. The Operating Board will provide a platform for member districts to shape strategy, monitor value, and affirm that NSSEO is delivering on our mission.

Slide Four: The Superintendent Advisory Group is critical—and will continue to be. But an Operating Board offers a public, empowered, and equitable forum for collective leadership. My goal, as superintendent of NSSEO, is that by the end of the year, every member district not only understands how decisions are made, but sees clear evidence that NSSEO is more than a value-added partner—we’re a shared investment in a better future for students with exceptional needs.

The addition of the operational board does not in any way diminish the importance of our Governing Board. The Governing Board will continue to set the budget within which the Operational Board functions, as well as hire and evaluate the NSSEO Superintendent. But their role extends beyond that—we need our governing board to continue to bring the needs of NSSEO back to district boards so that resources can continue to be allocated to meeting the needs of all students. We also need our governing board members to ensure that our students continue to have a place and a voice in our community and that their needs are considered BEYOND school, from community events, to employment opportunities and the generation of supplemental resources to provide for their needs.

We have a cautionary tale that has taken shape this summer in that a neighboring special education cooperative will no longer be in existence next year. We want to strengthen the collaboration between member districts and NSSEO to ensure that we can continue to provide services for students in their home community-the time to move forward is now.

As board members of eight different school boards, I am recommending that you review the draft article, ask questions and ratify them so that the NSSEO Governing Board can vote to implement the revised NSSEO Articles of Organization, we can move forward in a highly transparent and effective manner This will allow us to implement all priorities of the NSSEO strategic plan, and provide for your students with the most complex special needs.