

Standing Board Committee Best Practices

Background

During its meeting on August 29, 2017, the Finance Oversight and Review Committee (FORC) reviewed and discussed its official charge, and identified several changes it would like to make to the document. The policy work team reviewed and discussed these changes during its meetings on September 21, 2017 and October 11, 2017, and decided that the ones related to the committee's focus and best practices could help enhance the structure, functionality and overall effectiveness of all of the board's standing committees. With this in mind, the team is recommending that the board update its Responsibilities, Procedures and Protocols document to include information about board committee protocols and best practices. The board briefly discussed the idea of creating a policy to address these issues during its meeting on September 26, 2017. However, the policy team believes that since the proposed changes are procedural in nature, it makes more sense to include them in the Responsibilities, Procedures and Protocols document. The plan is to talk about these changes during the board meeting on October 24, 2017 and determine next steps.

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
 - 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 also has proven to be more effective in helping us achieve quorum as required by the Open Meetings Act (OMA).
 - 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 is selected via an application process that is open to district employees, and helps ensure that the committee complies with all OMA requirements.
- Leadership
 - **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 going forward.
 - **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 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.
- **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).
- **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.

- 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.

Committee Charge/Purpose (Role and Responsibilities)

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

- Role
 - 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.
 - 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
 - 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.
 - 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.
- 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.
 - Official minutes will be taken for each meeting and approved by the voting members of the committee at a subsequent meeting. 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.

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