

Effective School Board Member Characteristics

Research findings on school board effectiveness can be applied to individual board member characteristics and beliefs. More specifically, studies give us a clue as to the individual characteristics that are seen in stable and more effective school boards. The point of importance is that more stable school boards with less turnover, experience less superintendent turnover, more stable principals and teachers, and higher student performance. While change is sometimes needed to improve a board, frequent turnover and contentious relations among board members are counter-productive. The following table lists the board member characteristic, a brief description, the preferred (stabilizing) disposition, and a practical description.

Board Member Characteristic	Brief Description	Stabilizing Characteristic	Practical Description
1. Understands Role Boundaries	Understands the difference between the role of <i>oversight</i> and <i>micromanagement</i> .	<i>Oversight</i> with knowledgeable critique and advocacy.	If confronted by a parent in the store, the board member can explain school needs, applied interventions, and current success data. Avoids generalities or playing the role of cheerleader or critic.
2. Trustee vs. Delegate	A <i>trustee</i> speaks for themselves and assumes a personal mandate due to their election. A <i>delegate</i> speaks for all stakeholders and maintains constant, open communication with a broad constituency.	<i>Trustee</i> With the ability to shift to Delegate in times of chaos	The board member seeks out input from multiple and varied stakeholders and seeks open dialogue. However, when conflict arises, the board member has the wisdom to maintain order by discouraging contentious communication tactics.
3. Interest- vs. Position-Driven	A <i>position</i> is often polarizing and identifies "friends" and "enemies". An <i>interest</i> is often hidden and needs to be discovered. Often one solution can satisfy multiple interests.	<i>Interest-Driven</i>	The board member avoids declaring allegiance to named organizations or ideologies, but seeks to understand multiple and conflicting interests of all constituents and seeks a solution that can satisfy multiple interests.
4. Broad Student Concern	A stated responsibility to insure <i>all students are afforded social justice</i> . Avoids focused justice for single categories of students or needs.	<i>Social justice for all students</i>	The board member avoids focusing only on a narrow agenda of student issues and needs. Board member avoids focusing only on particular student demographic groups and issues.
5. Contextually Minded	The understanding that the local school district, and each school has <i>unique and shifting needs</i> ; often requiring <i>non-standard solutions</i> .	Recognizes <i>Contextual Need</i> Supports <i>Creative, Non-standard Solutions</i>	The board member avoids reacting to national education issues and focuses on identifying local needs. The board member avoids promoting standardized solutions and prefers to design a solution to fit the unique need of each school as supported by data evidence.
6. Understands Visibility & Influence	The board member understands they possess <i>no individual authority</i> . Power rests in the board as a group only.	<i>School board entity influence</i>	The board member avoids communicating directives or interests to individual school district employees. Visits to schools are unobtrusive, informational, and as part of established

			activities (sports, open house, school events).
7. Use of Voice	Does the board member use their voice to tell and sell their position or do they seek to listen, understand interests, and discover resolution and reconciliation ?	Uses voice to listen, resolve, and reconcile	The board member avoids over-talking to promote their own interest. They do not see communication as a competition. They promote civil dialogue with a goal to listen and discover a resolution that serves all interests.
8. Perception of Power	Power Over is using your position to get your own way through threat or reward. Power With is using your position to ensure all voices are heard and collaborative solutions are guaranteed.	Power With	The board member uses their power to ensure that all needs are heard and that solutions meet multiple interests. They would not attempt to push only their own solutions or highlight only their own needs and interests.
9. Preferred Decision-making Style	Decision-making can be done individually and quickly or can be done collaboratively with and through others.	Collaborative	The board member seeks to evaluate data to confirm issues and needs, then ensure that proposed solutions and measures fit the stated needs and goals.
10. Motivation for Service	Board members can serve for personal or for altruistic reasons.	Altruistic Service	Board members do not run for reasons of personal ego or prestige, a need for involvement, to correct a personal concern, to replace particular school employees, or as a step to future office. Board members run to serve the community, to fulfill a democratic responsibility, and to serve all students and all needs.

Research Support

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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.

Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



<u>Roles/Responsibilities</u>	<u>School Board</u>	<u>Superintendent</u>
1. General	Governs the District	Advises the Board – Manages the District
2. Policy	Adopts	Suggests and Implements
3. Board Meetings	In charge of	Serves as resource
4. Budget/Finance/Audits	Adopts and monitors	Prepares, administers, monitors, details
5. Instruction/Curriculum	Establishes criteria, approves, and monitors	Recommends, oversees staffs' efforts
6. Personnel	Establishes criteria, approves, or rejects	Interviews, recommends, hires, evaluates, promotes, trains
7. Community Relations	Creates a positive image for district	Creates a positive image for district, directs communications
8. Labor Relations	Provides guidelines, ratifies contracts	Monitors process within guidelines
9. Student Services	Adopts policies for care and control	Recommends, implements, directs
10. Facilities/Food Service /Transportation	Develops policy on use of	Implements policy, writes procedures, makes recommendations

Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



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 is responsible for implementing board policies and directives.
2. Recommends a comprehensive planning process for 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.

Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



2 - POLICY

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Clarifies for the superintendent the intent of the Board and actions necessary for implementation of Board policy.
2. Reviews and evaluates Board policies on an ongoing basis.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Acts as advisor to the Board on areas needing policy development or revision.
2. Drafts written policy and provides the Board with necessary data and information for policy adoption.
3. Maintains a current, up-to-date manual of adopted policies.
4. Develops rules and procedures necessary to implement the Board's policies.
5. Identifies policy areas that the Board should revise, rewrite, or repeal as needs of the district or laws and rules change.

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Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



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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Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



4 - BUDGET/FINANCE

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes priorities for the financial management of the district.
2. Approves the decision to ask the voters to pass a supplemental levy.
3. Provides the superintendent with the Board's priorities in the development of the budget.
4. Explores with the district auditor the internal controls of the district.
5. Reviews the budget on a monthly basis and makes adjustments as needed.
6. Reviews and approves the monthly bills.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Prepares a detailed budget based on the Board's priorities and parameters.
2. Presents a budget to the board and/or budget committee for consideration and approval.
3. Makes a Recommendation to the Board about the need for and the amount of a supplemental levy.
4. Administers the budget assuring that the expenditures of district funds are within the legal requirements of the budget.
5. Acts as a resource to the board within the framework of the district audits.

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Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



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 from professional staff 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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6 - PERSONNEL

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Employs certificated and classified staff members based on the recommendation of the superintendent.
2. Promotes good working relations with staff through the district's chain of command.
3. Adopts policy on evaluation of personnel.
4. Receives and acts on personnel recommendations from the superintendent.
5. Conducts an annual evaluation of the superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Recommends to the Board the employment or dismissal of all certificated and classified staff.
2. Responsible for the supervision of all employees of the district.
3. Establishes job descriptions for all positions.
4. Serves as the Board's liaison with staff.
5. Fosters good working relationships with staff members.
6. Develops a systematic plan for evaluating the performance of all district personnel.
7. Delegates authority to staff members, as appropriate.
8. Conducts evaluations of administrators under his/her supervision.

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7 - COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Represents public education serving as a liaison between the school district and the community.
2. Maintains an awareness of community values, concerns, and interests.
3. Actively participates in programs that build good community relations.
4. Appoints advisory committees when necessary and outlines their responsibilities.
5. Appoints the district's spokesperson(s) to deal with the news media.
6. 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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8 - LABOR RELATIONS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes guidelines and criteria for the salary and benefit discussions process for certified personnel.
2. Reviews offers submitted by the Union and makes counter offers.
3. Ratifies the final Master Agreement

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Provides factual data to the Board about the implications of salary and benefit increases and staffing considerations.
2. Assists with negotiations by sitting at the negotiating table.
3. Provide the Board with all offers being presented by the Union.
4. Administers contracts the Master Agreements as appropriate.

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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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Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents



10 - FACILITIES, TRANSPORTATION, and FOOD SERVICES

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Adopts policies governing use of public buildings, grounds, and equipment.
2. Prioritizes construction and/or building renovation needs of the district.
3. Approves the decision to ask the voters for a Bond and/or Levy for facility needs.
4. Adopts policies to provide for student transportation needs.
5. Adopts policies to provide for food services.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Provides for the upkeep of facilities and maintenance of equipment.
2. Prioritizes long-range plans for preventive maintenance of buildings, grounds, and equipment.
3. Makes a recommendation to the Board about the need for, and the amount of a Bond and/or Levy for facility needs.
4. Recommends and supervises the public use of buildings, facilities, and equipment.
5. Supervises the transportation of the district, assigning staff as appropriate.
6. Supervises the food services program, assigning staff as appropriate.

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