



# Northwest Arctic Borough School District

October 28, 2025

Provided by the Association of Alaska School Boards  
Katie Oliver, Associate Executive Director

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## **Our Agreements**

*Adapted from the First Alaskans Institute*

- In every chair, a leader.
- Speak to be Understood, Listen to Understand.
- We are responsible for our experience.
- Take care of yourself; take care of each other.
- Value our time together.

## **Today's Topics**

- The Big Picture: What is Good Governance
- Board Roles and Responsibilities
- Exploring your Board Bylaws
- Board & Superintendent Relationship
- Tips for Effective Meetings

## **Northwest Arctic Borough School District**

*Atautchikun Iñuunialiptigun (Through Our Way of Life Together as One)*

### **Mission:**

To provide a learning environment that inspires and challenges students and employees to excel.

### **Vision:**

To graduate all students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a successful future.

### **Core Values:**

Respect | Perseverance | Learning | Hard Work | Ability to Adapt |  
Resilience | Cooperation | Belief in yourself | Accountability

# Eight Characteristics of An Effective School Board

1. Effective school boards **commit to a vision** of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.
2. Effective school boards have **strong shared beliefs and values** about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.
3. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time **focused on policies** to improve student achievement.
4. Effective school boards **align and sustain resources** to meet district goals.
5. Effective boards are data savvy; they **embrace and monitor data**, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.
6. Effective school boards have a **collaborative relationship** with the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.
7. Effective school boards lead as a **united team with the superintendent**, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
8. Effective school boards take part in **team development and training** to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts.

Dervarics, Chuck & O'Brien, Eileen. [\*Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards\*](#). Center for Public Education, National School Boards Association, 2019.

# School Board Standards (BB 9020, E 9020)

*The School Board believes that it should hold itself to high standards of the Iñupiat Iḷitqusiāt, performance, accountability and conduct in order to meet the public trust that has been bestowed by the public election of each member.*

## Vision

*The Board creates a shared vision to enhance student achievement.*

- Encourage community involvement in strategic planning, especially the development of a vision and mission statement.
- Make decisions based on your mission statement and strategic plan focus areas.
- Share your vision with the community.
- Read vision and mission statement at each Board meeting.

## Structure

*The Board provides a structure that supports the vision.*

- Follow District strategic plan.
- Establish goals and priorities for the District.
- Review and evaluate policies.
- Request reports about the curriculum.
- Link the budget to Student Achievement.
- Support staff recruitment.
- Maintain facilities.
- Assist Advisory School Boards.

## Accountability

*The Board measures district performance toward accomplishing the vision and reports the results to the public.*

- Annually conduct:
  - Superintendent evaluation
  - Board self-evaluation
- Ensure staff evaluations are performed.
- Request the evaluation of programs.
- Review the results of student assessments.
- Request timely financial reports and audits.

## Advocacy

*The Board champions the vision.*

- Recognize staff achievements.
- Recognize student achievements.
- Promote parent involvement.
- Develop business partnerships.
- Be a student advocate.
- Participate in grassroots lobbying.
- Meet with parents and community members.

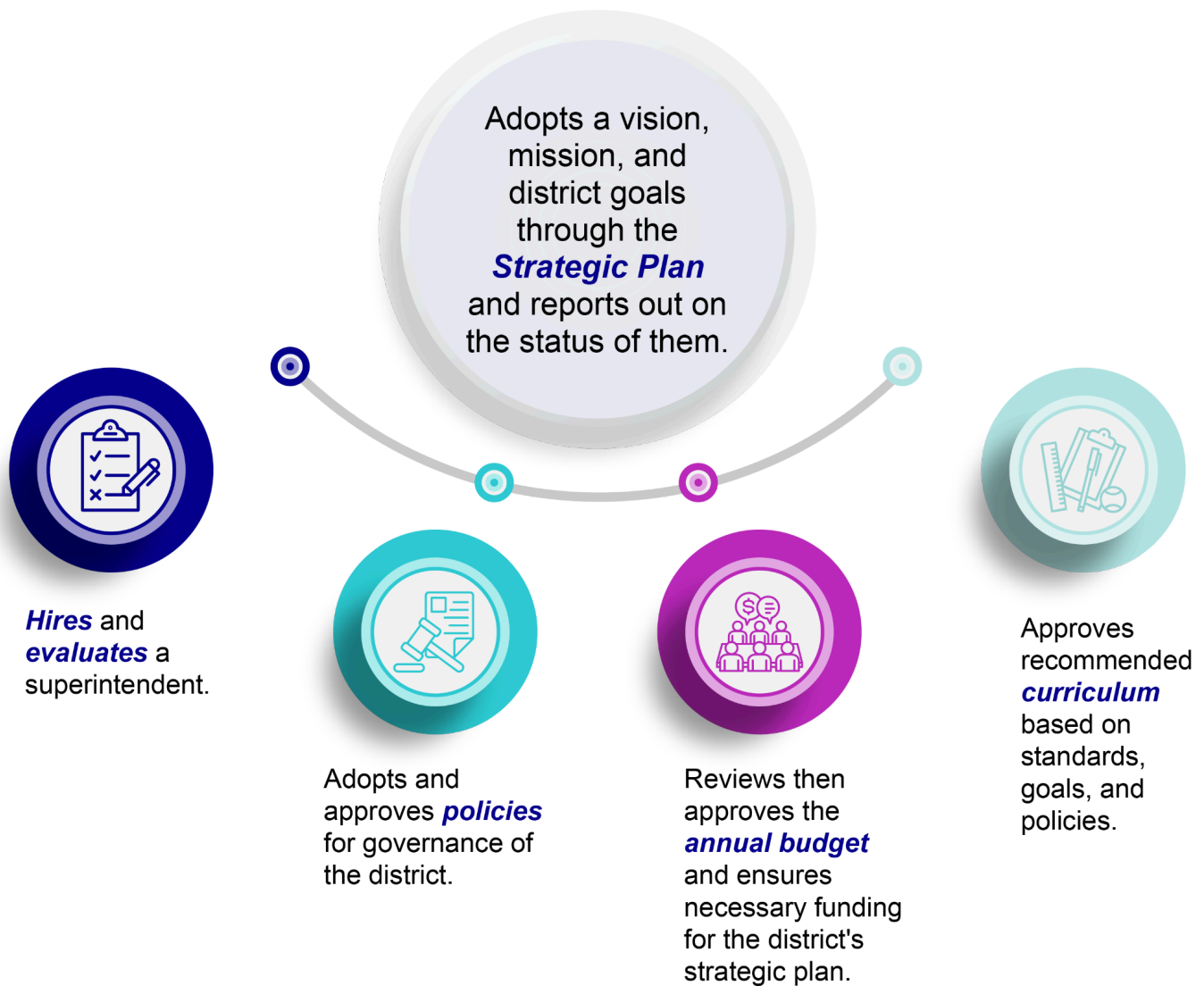
## Conduct-Ethics

*The Board conducts its business of the district in a fair, respectful and responsible manner.*

- Understand your role in the District.
- Respect the roles of others.
- Provide a New Board Member orientation.
- Use meetings effectively.
- Follow State law and District policies.
- Conduct business in an ethical manner.
- Work toward developing a healthy leadership team.

# Key Roles of the School Board

## Community Liaison

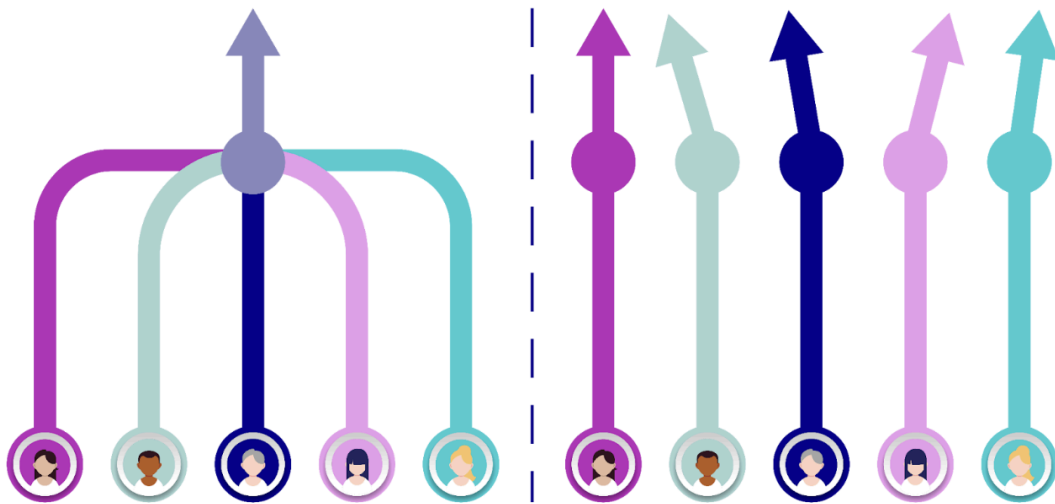


# What Makes a Productive School Board?

**A. Unified leadership with common vision and goals.**

OR

**B. Collection of individuals each with their own vision and priorities.**



“Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision”

—*Eight Characteristics of Effective School Board, Center for Public Education*

# The Governance Game: How our Board Works

This exploration of Board Bylaws is designed to help strengthen your shared understanding of how the School Board operates.

Board bylaws describe the structure and expectations that keep our governance work transparent, ethical, and effective. They outline how we communicate with one another, how meetings are conducted, and how decisions are made.

[NWABSD Online Policy Manual](#)

## Questions & Scenarios

#	Question/Scenario	Response + <i>why is this important?</i>	Bylaws Hint
1.	How many board members make a quorum, and what happens if that number is lost at a meeting?		BB 9323
2.	Who is responsible for preparing the meeting agendas?		BB 9322
3.	<b>Scenario:</b> A community member approaches a Board member with a complaint about the school. The member listens respectfully, and then redirects the person to the Principal/Site Administrator. → <i>What do our bylaws say?</i>		BB 9012
4.	What are the expectations for Board members when visiting schools in their official capacity?		BB 9200

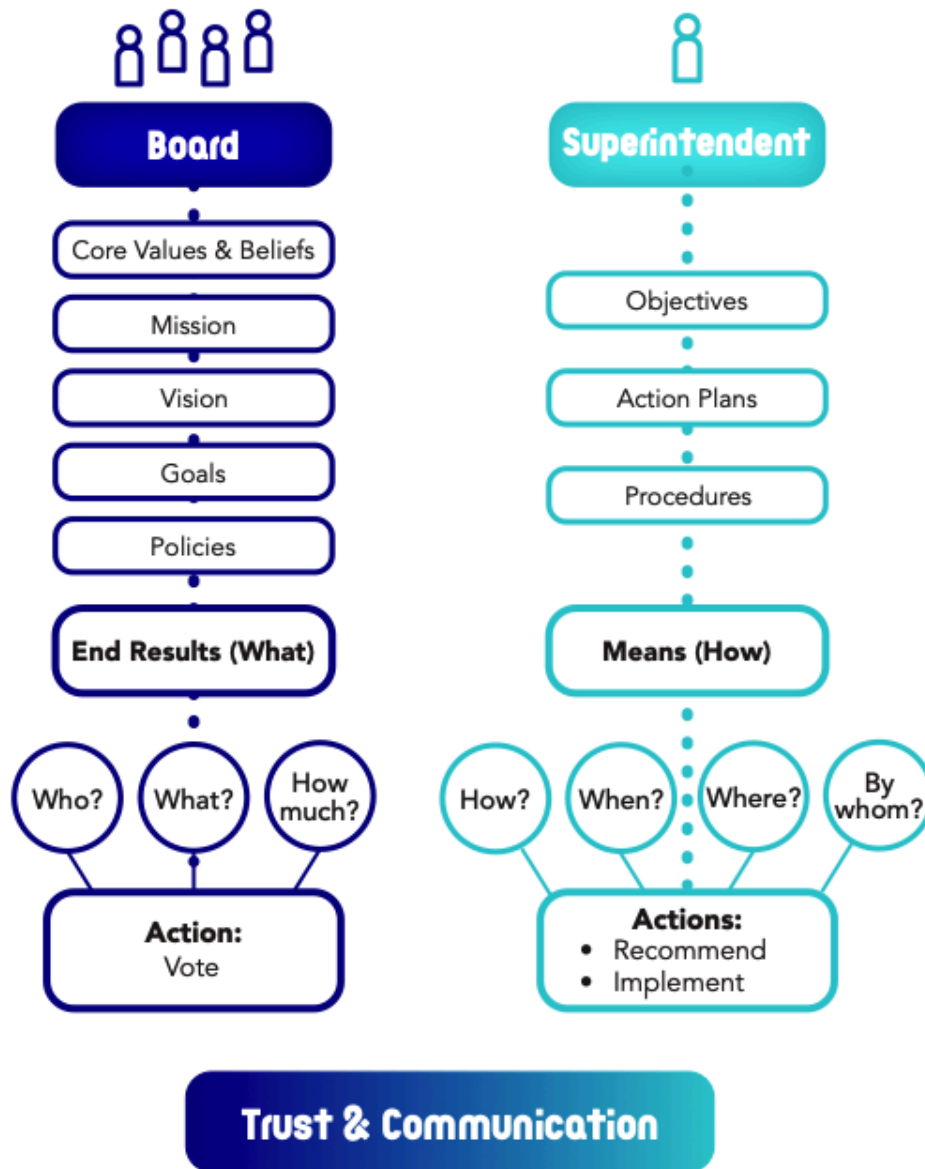
5.	How much notice must be given for a regular meeting and for a special meeting?		BB 9320
6.	<b>Scenario:</b> After a difficult vote, a Board member posts on Facebook opposing and criticizing the majority decision of the Board. → <i>What do our bylaws say?</i>		BB 9010 & BB 9012
7.	What are the duties of the Board President during meetings?		BB 9121
8.	What should a Board member do if they or an immediate family member have a financial interest on an agenda item?		BB 9270
9.	<b>Scenario:</b> During a vote, a board member abstains but doesn't say why. → <i>What do our Bylaws say?</i>		BB 9323
10.	How should a Board member communicate if they are going to miss an upcoming meeting or worksession?		BB 9200



11.	Who is responsible for making committee appointments?		BB 9121
12.	<b>Scenario:</b> During public comment at a meeting, a speaker starts criticizing and making accusations against a district employee by name. → <i>What do our Bylaws say?</i>		BB 9323
13.	What is the board culture and expectations around participating in board professional development?		BB 9240
14.	What should a Board member do if they want detailed data or a special report prepared by staff?		BB 9012
15.	<b>Scenario:</b> During an action item discussion at a meeting Board members disagree with one another, but listen and speak respectfully to each other and the Superintendent, and keep on focus on what's best for students.		E 9020

# Leading Together for Student Success: The Board & Superintendent

## Board/Superintendent Roles



*“Effective boards lead as a united team, with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.”*

*—Eight Characteristics of Effective School Board, Center for Public Education*

## **What the Board should expect from the Superintendent:**

1. Treat board members fairly and equitably; use consistent style and methods while working with the board.
2. Generate dependable information; distribute all information to all board members.
3. Be accessible to board members on a reasonable schedule.
4. Give honest, thoughtful, and well-reasoned opinions and reactions to issues.
5. Present policy options for consideration by the board.
6. Foster collaboration within the board to achieve District Goals.
7. Use direct communication skills that show your commitment to working with your board.
8. Listen carefully to the views and opinions of board members.
9. Work toward trust with all board members.
10. No surprises; keep the board informed of major operational issues.
11. Avoid public criticism of the board or board members.
12. Be cordial to all members of the board.
13. Be open to new and innovative ideas; bring new ideas to the board.
14. Be politically sensitive to statements and reactions.
15. Be visible in the community and pursue a strong community relations agenda.
16. Discuss and clearly define the expectations of board members and the leadership team.
17. Exhibit a genuine interest and make decisions based on student welfare and outcomes.
18. Help the board grow into a cohesive group.
19. Support and encourage board members to participate in professional development opportunities.
20. Create structures to report and update on the progress of the district strategic plan, initiatives and school improvement.

## **What the Superintendent should expect from the Board:**

1. Be open to new ideas.
2. Be advocates in the community; engage with families and community members about the district.
3. Be well prepared for meetings; read materials that are provided beforehand.
4. Request information on issues before board meetings.
5. Allow the superintendent to do the job for which they were hired.
6. Avoid surprises; provide information on community concerns; report rumors in a timely manner.
7. Operate as a team.
8. Be concerned with education for all students in the district.
9. Help others understand and use the district's process for resolving complaints.
10. Invest time in developing understanding for Board roles and responsibilities and the work of the Board.
11. Publicly support the superintendent and the board, especially after a decision.
12. Leave the superintendent out of the politics of the board.
13. Base decisions on verified information and a full understanding of the facts.
14. Address concerns about the superintendent directly and respectfully; avoid talking behind their back.
15. Do not go around the superintendent; do not try to be an administrator.
16. Work to develop a basic understanding of parliamentary procedures and school law.
17. Promote unity within the board.
18. Contribute facts and information to policy-making.
19. Do not ask the superintendent to mediate between and among board members.
20. Call the superintendent first on issues.

# Tips for Effective Meetings

1. Know your Meetings (BB 9320)
  - a. Regular Meetings
  - b. Special Meetings
  - c. Emergency Special Meetings
  - d. Worksession
2. The Agenda is your Map
  - a. Connect agenda items to district goals and/or Board policy.
  - b. Use of Consent Agenda can expedite items that are routine in nature and/or have been discussed previously
3. Welcome and define public comment
4. Understand the Role of the Chair
  - a. Serves as the spokesperson for the board
  - b. Calls meeting to order & establishes quorum
  - c. Recognizes others to speak
  - d. Ensures equity among all board members
5. Use Parliamentary Procedures (Robert's Rules of Order)
6. Meeting Minutes
  - a. AASB recommends use of Action Minutes - a record of the actions taken by the board, not a record of what is said aloud.



# Thank you!

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