

Board Leadership Ad Hoc Committee Leadership Recommendations

Board Leadership Ad Hoc Committee

Committee Members: Erica Allenburg, Dan Arom, Jen Huwe, Leny Wallen-Friedman, Regina Neville, Stacie Stanley

Date: November 18, 2024

Background: The board leadership ad hoc committee was created to gather information and propose norms and developmental opportunities to guide and inform board members of the skills and experience required to take on key responsibilities, such as chairing committees and serving the board in leadership roles.

Summary: This document contains recommendations from the board leadership ad hoc committee about board leadership development. The recommendations in this document should be considered draft recommendations to serve as a resource for full board review, discussion and final recommendations

Board Leadership in General:

Building successful board leadership starts by defining the overarching attributes of successful board membership and a well functioning board.

Board members are responsible for the well-being of the entire district, not specific constituents or stakeholders. This is a macro-level position. The board will review detailed resources to inform the decision-making process, which need to consider the advancement of the district's mission for the success of all students and the health of the district as a whole. Specific personal skills include: Community-focus, open-mindedness, commitment to education, communication skills, strategic thinking, fiscal responsibility, high integrity, discretion, confidentiality, resilience and commitment to equity.

To that end, attributes for being a successful school board member include, but aren't limited to: ability to think at a broad/high level, using the perspective of the strategic plan to guide work, community-building, reflective decision-making, fiscal responsibility, confidentiality, equity, and ethical governance. It is also important that board members consider serving two-terms (if elected) for the stability of the board and to acknowledge the long learning curve of the position, but this should not serve to dissuade or discourage qualified candidates from considering running for the position. Currently elected board members should ensure they are maximizing their leadership capabilities.

Recommended experiences for new board members:

- MSBA training is essential. All four phases are important. The school board is encouraged to support and facilitate this training for all board members.
- A more detailed overview of school finance within the context of Edina.
- A paced training/curriculum that delves into the decision-making process and discusses what information the board needs (or should require) when approving a particular action.
- Collaborative training with the district cabinet led by the Superintendent are critical to understanding the process by which the school district and board functions.
- Broad background and understanding of the EPS Early Childhood, elementary, middle and high school levels will provide an overview for how the mission of the district is

carried out at each stage of the PRE-K through 12 experience.

Recommendations for building capacity in existing board members/building leadership continuity:

- Annual or bi-annual retreats to build trust and capacity as a board.
- Each board member should have the opportunity to serve in multiple leadership positions. Ideally, leadership positions rotate as feasible to provide a well-rounded background for each person serving on the board. Better decisions are made with a greater breadth of experience.
- All board members attend all four phases of MSBA training.

Board Chair Leadership:

Key attributes of being a successful board chair:

Demonstrated knowledge and application of governance and policy, commitment to collaboration, organizational skills, diplomacy and conflict resolution skills, discretion and confidentiality, integrity and accountability, adaptability, strategic thinking, meeting management skills, ability to build trust with board members and superintendent, decision-maker, discernment.

Responsibilities of the board chair:

The Board Chair works in collaboration with the board and superintendent to guide the process and strategy for realizing the vision of the district. They work to ensure that information is gathered and presented in a timely manner. The Chair must have an understanding of current board members to support their development and service on the board. The Chair's responsibility includes making sure that administration provides whatever information is reasonably necessary for the board to make decisions.

Honoring the Open Meeting process is important with vigilance to prevent "triangulated" communication (community members or staff connect one-on-one with individual board members to influence a decision).

Recommended experiences and training to be Chair:

- Deep knowledge of board policy
- Experience with each core board committee, with a minimum of policy and finance committee required as these are two key responsibility areas for school board members, and a committee leadership role.
- Recognized meeting facilitation skills
- Deep knowledge of open meeting law and any other laws and policies that govern board work
- Participation in all key district activities to which the board is invited (within reason) is critical to building an understanding of the breadth of the students and staff represented.
- Ideally, incoming Chair should attend meetings with the Superintendent and Chair for at least six months prior to becoming Chair.
- Completion of MSBA workshop for board officers
- Ideally, the Board Chair should have served a minimum of two years on the Board, with one year spent shadowing the current Board Chair.
- Ideally, the Board Chair should serve no more than four consecutive years as Chair.

Processes/procedures for being Board Chair:

- For any leadership role, a board member interested should reach out to the Chair prior to the December leadership discussion (work session). Likewise, the Board Chair should reach out to board members to see who is interested in leadership roles.

Board Vice-Chair Leadership:

Recommended definition of Board Vice Chair role:

The Vice Chair role should be utilized as a training ground for succession as the Board Chair.

The Vice Chair should strategically share the workload of the Chair.

- The Vice Chair needs to be prepped and ready to step in for meetings.
 - Suggestion: Create a meeting outline
- This does not preclude other board members from ascending to the role of chair.

Key attributes of being a successful Board Vice Chair:

These are no different than those recommended to be board chair, with the acknowledgement the vice chair needs room to grow and learn parts of the Chair role.

- Interest in ascending into the Chair role.
- Interest in serving more than one term on the board.

Recommended experiences and training to be Vice Chair:

- Has spent time on at least two board committees with one of them being policy and held a committee leadership role.
- Has been on the board at least one year.
- Completion of MSBA workshop for board officers.

Processes/procedures for being Vice Chair:

- For any leadership role, a board member interested should reach out to the Chair prior to the December leadership discussion (work session). Likewise, the Board Chair should reach out to board members to see who is interested in leadership roles.

Board Treasurer Leadership:

Recommended definition of Treasurer role:

The Treasurer should be the Chair of the Finance Committee and will assist with leading the committee. Under the direction of the Superintendent, the Director of Finance should lead the committee in partnership with the Treasurer. The Treasurer should conduct a monthly review of general expenditures that are approved by the board. The Treasurer should be aware of financial issues that the district may face and make sure adequate information is provided to the board to address those issues. Ensure the district finances are managed responsibly with integrity in support of the district's mission.

Key attributes of being a successful Treasurer/Chair of Finance:

Understanding of financial statements, budgets, projections, and school finance. Analytical, strategic, attention to detail, understanding of financial risk management, commitment to fiscal responsibility, understanding of funding and revenue source, collaborative.

The Treasurer does not manage the district's finances, but is responsible for representing the community in making financial recommendations and decisions.

The Treasurer ensures that the impact of financial decisions is understood and accounted for in the decision-making process. It is important to identify individuals and groups impacted by financial decisions and work to ensure that they are represented in the decision-making process.

The Treasurer can serve as a liaison for the board during contract negotiations. They do not need to be the sole board representative, nor is it implied that they automatically join discussions between union leadership and district management. The Treasurer needs to be able to communicate financial concepts clearly to other board members.

Willingness to spend time doing things such as reviewing the check registry, contracts and bills.

Recommended experiences and training to be Treasurer/Chair of Finance:

- MSBA officers' workshop, MSBA Finance workshop, prior finance committee member.
- Ideal for a treasurer to be working or have a background in accounting or business management.
- Understanding of the legislative process that determines education funding, background about the funding formula and levies, and an awareness of each group represented in a budget.
- Be on the board a minimum of a year.
- Receive training on education finance in the state of Minnesota.
- Training on site level finances.

Processes/procedures for being Treasurer:

- For any leadership role, a board member interested should reach out to the Chair prior to the December leadership discussion (work session). Likewise, the Board Chair should reach out to board members to see who is interested in leadership roles.

Board Clerk Leadership:

Recommended definition of Clerk role:

The key role for Clerk is to represent the board with signatures of all board documents and many legal documents. The person serving in this position needs a clear understanding of District Policy for an informed signature. Manage documentation accurately, ensure transparent board operations, and uphold procedural integrity.

The Clerk may be requested to manage the board's sunshine committee.

Key attributes of being a successful Clerk:

Attention to detail, communication and transparency, discretion and confidentiality, knowledge of governance procedures, willingness to learn, understand role, focus on district as a whole.

Recommended experiences and training to be Clerk:

- One year on the board
- Participation on a committee
- Completion of MSBA's officers' workshop
- Also important to have a deep understanding of specific board policies: 104 - Complaints; 107 - Public Relations and School Communications; 113 - Data Requests;

205 - Open Meetings and Closed Meetings; 206 - Public Hearings and Public Participation in School Board Meetings, Data Privacy.

Processes/procedures for being Clerk:

- For any leadership role, a board member interested should reach out to the Chair prior to the December leadership discussion (work session). Likewise, the Board Chair should reach out to board members to see who is interested in leadership roles.

Committee Chair Roles:

Recommended experiences and training to be a committee chair:

- One year on the board.
- Membership on committee before attaining a leadership role.
- Ability and interest to work with the administrator in charge.
- Organizational skills.
- For Teaching and Learning: Familiarity with graduation requirements and how that impacts curriculum decisions for Grades K-12. Understanding of the State's role in determining curriculum and how Edina Public Schools defines an "Edina Diploma". This committee represents the mission of the district in the education of all students to help them reach their full potential.
- For Policy: Organizational skills, commitment to the mission of EPS and how it is carried out in policy. A fundamental understanding of Policy 110 - Decision Making Process. Policy is best when it is proactive, and aligned with State Statutes. It is weak when it is reactionary.