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# PREPARING TO SERVE

Serving Public Education

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# PREPARING TO SERVE

Congratulations! The decision to file to serve on your local school board or to fill a board vacancy is an important step toward one of the most meaningful volunteer roles you may ever experience. Election by your community or appointment to the board is an affirmation of confidence in you. You are now entrusted with the education of whom those parents and community hold most dear, their children.

The time you serve on the school board may challenge you, and yet you will realize rewards. It will also be a time for personal growth as you are called upon to learn or expand your knowledge and skills. Very few school board members arrive at the board table fully prepared for the responsibility or understanding of the importance of comprehensive planning, federal and state statutes, mandates, internal and external communications, evaluation of the superintendent, advocacy, labor relations, etc.

Effective governance leadership contributes to the overall success of the school district. The board's role and responsibilities when aligned to the NASB Standards of Effective Board Governance aid in fostering and sustaining a collaborative working relationship between the board and superintendent. The successful board and administrative leadership team is defined as a connected group of individuals working collaboratively with purpose, a mutual understanding of roles, and the shared goal of improving educational opportunities for all students.

This guide provides information for individuals interested in serving on a school board. The rewards of board service can be an enormously fulfilling experience; however, achievement of success is derived when boards plan for success, work collaboratively as a leadership team, and unite during times of challenge.

## NASB MISSION STATEMENT:

**The Nebraska Association of School Boards provides programs, services, and advocacy to strengthen public education for all Nebraskans.**

# WELCOME!

Welcome to the important work of school board service. By choosing to serve, you have accepted a leadership role that directly impacts students, staff, families, and the future of your community. School board members are entrusted with shaping the vision for education, establishing priorities, and ensuring every decision reflects a commitment to student success and responsible governance.

Effective school board leadership extends beyond board meetings. Board members serve as ambassadors for public education by listening to community voices, engaging stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, and helping build trust between the school district and the community it serves. Strong schools contribute to strong communities, and thoughtful governance plays a vital role in sustaining both.

The purpose of this publication is to support you as you prepare for the responsibilities of board service. Whether you are newly elected or considering service for the first time, this resource is designed to provide foundational knowledge about governance, leadership, board-superintendent relationships, policy, legal responsibilities, and effective decision-making practices.

The Nebraska Association of School Boards is committed to equipping school board members with the tools, training, and support necessary to lead with confidence and integrity. Through professional development, policy services, legal and governance resources, advocacy, strategic planning support, community engagement services, and board leadership development, NASB partners with boards to strengthen public education across Nebraska.

Board service requires time, commitment, collaboration, and a willingness to make informed decisions in the best interest of all students. Your leadership matters. The work of a school board is challenging, but it is also deeply meaningful and rewarding. Every thoughtful conversation, every informed decision, and every effort to improve opportunities for students contribute to the long-term success of the school district and community.

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a leader and advocate for public education. Nebraska's students, schools, and communities are stronger because individuals like you choose to lead.

For more information about NASB and board service, visit [www.NASBOnline.org](http://www.NASBOnline.org) or feel free to contact us at 800.422.4572. We are here to support you, so when you need assistance, think of NASB first!

Sincerely,

John Spatz

NASB Executive Director

# NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Since 1918, NASB has been committed to serving school boards across the state. Our mission to enhance public education for the students of Nebraska is assembled upon the beliefs that:

- Every public school board will govern effectively and with integrity.
- Every public school board member will understand the importance and emphasize increased student learning.
- Every public school board will practice good stewardship of resources.

The Nebraska Association of School Boards is a non-profit organization that provides programs, services, and advocacy. We provide consultation, board development training, as well as district support service programs for over 260 member school districts and educational service units across Nebraska. The programs are managed by a professional staff, and governance oversight is carried out by the Board of Directors consisting of local school board members from across the state. NASB is committed to the following goals on behalf of its member boards:

- Enhancing the ability and authority of local boards of education to represent the citizens of their school district.
- Working for increased public awareness and financial support of the public schools.
- Providing development, training, and consulting opportunities for school board members to assist them in meeting their responsibilities for policy making and efficient management of the school district.
- Representing the interests of public education and the viewpoints of local boards of education to those who impact public education.
- Providing member boards with the specialized information needed to operate the public schools in an efficient and effective manner.

**NASB HAS 3 OF 12 SEATS ON THE BOARD**

**INTERLOCAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**FOR PROFIT C-CORPORATIONS**



**OTHER ORGANIZATIONS NASB IS RESPONSIBLE FOR**



# CONSIDERING BOARD SERVICE

Are you a suitable candidate for the board? The unique qualities of a governing school board reflect the collective makeup of the individuals who serve. The ability to function as one member of a governing board is not determined by occupation, income, or social standing. The effective board candidate is, however, characterized as one with the:

- ability to work as a member of a team, with an open mind and a willingness to engage in purposeful discussion and support board consensus.
- commitment to be informed and to review the board packet in preparation to participate in discussion during the board meeting.
- desire to serve students and the community.
- belief in the value of public education.
- respect for the needs and feelings of others.
- ability to ensure the district employs a highly skilled educational leader as superintendent.
- genuine interest in the value of community involvement.

Considering board candidacy as a result of a disagreement or dispute with the school district may not be the best approach. Community members will often contact a school board member with their concerns, suggestions, and questions. This may be the appropriate choice if a district-wide policy is involved; however, most matters should be referred to the building administrator and/or superintendent as opposed to a board member. The individual board member does not have the authority to resolve patron/parent issues.

It is best to redirect the concerned patron/individual directly related to the issue. If the matter cannot be resolved at the lowest possible level, then one may follow the chain of command thereafter. For example, if the matter is related to a classroom teacher, begin with the teacher. If the issue is not resolved, refer to policy and look for the Chain of Command. In the teacher scenario, the next individual would be the building principal, if necessary, the principal's supervisor and in most Nebraska schools the final individual the patron will engage is the superintendent. If the matter pertains to a coach, begin with the coach, if necessary, then follow the order provided: athletic/activities director, principal, and superintendent. When a parent/patron follows policy, the board is only engaged if a written complaint is filed and the board has the authority to investigate per district policy. It is worth noting that if the issue is a personnel-related matter, the board may not be involved in the review of the complaint. [\(See Chain of Command graphic, page 8.\)](#)

## THE BOARD CANDIDATE

What do you need to know as you consider candidacy for the board? It is beneficial to grow your knowledge and basic understanding of the board's role and responsibilities. Begin with the review of board policy. Familiarize yourself with the section titled Board of Education and Board Bylaws.

Key resources:

- Board Policies [i.e., Code of Conduct/Ethics].
- Board Handbook [if available].
- District vision and goals/Strategic Plan designed to support growth and improved student learning.
- District organizational chart.
- Current budget.
- Past board meeting agendas and minutes located on the district website.
- Nebraska Department of Education Rule 10.

NASB advocates for board candidates to begin preparing for this important endeavor by attending regular board meetings. To learn more about the district, speak with current board members and set aside time to meet with the board president and superintendent to better understand the district and the dynamics of the educational issues the district is facing.

# BOARD OF EDUCATION JOB DESCRIPTION

## POSITION PURPOSE:

The Board of Education provides leadership and governance to ensure the school district delivers high-quality educational programs and services for all students. The board establishes the district's vision, mission, and goals; adopts policies consistent with applicable laws and regulations; allocates resources to support district priorities; and hires and evaluates the superintendent to ensure accountability for district performance.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS:

Must be a registered voter residing within the school district.

## REPORTS TO:

The community and constituents of the school district.

## SUPERVISES:

The Superintendent of Schools.

## GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Board of Education fulfills leadership through effective governance in the following areas:

### Mission, Vision, and Strategic Direction

The board provides leadership in establishing the district's direction and priorities.

Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the district's mission, vision, and goals guide board decision-making.
- Adopting and periodically reviewing the district strategic plan focused on improving student learning.
- Adopting and monitoring the School Improvement Plan, including regular progress updates.
- Engaging stakeholders and community members in the development and revision of the district's mission, vision, and goals.
- Working collaboratively with the superintendent and administration to implement district goals.
- Adopting an annual board work calendar to ensure regular review of strategic goals, policy, student achievement data, financial reports, and required board actions.
- Ensuring board meeting agendas align discussion and action items with district priorities and strategic goals.

### Policy Governance

The board establishes policies that provide direction for district operations.

Responsibilities include:

- Adopting policies consistent with the district's mission, goals, and applicable laws and regulations.
- Utilizing a structured process for policy development, review, and revision.
- Ensuring policies are developed with input from administration and legal counsel when appropriate.
- Ensuring policies are accessible and transparent to the public.

- Adopting policies that establish clear expectations for staff evaluation systems and district operations.
- Ensuring policies promote a safe, respectful, and effective learning environment.
- Ensuring patrons follow the Chain of Command when addressing concerns or questions.

### Stakeholder and Community Engagement

The board works to build trust and strong relationships with the community.

Responsibilities include:

- Collaborating with the superintendent to maintain effective community relations and communication.
- Ensuring transparent communication regarding district programs, policies, challenges, and successes.
- Considering the perspectives and needs of diverse community groups.
- Building productive relationships with local, state, and national officials regarding educational issues.
- Promoting understanding and support for public education and the school district.
- Approving the district's Annual Report to communicate district progress to patrons.

### Accountability and Student Success

The board ensures the district remains focused on improving student learning outcomes.

Responsibilities include:

- Monitoring student achievement data and district performance indicators.
- Holding the superintendent accountable for progress toward established student achievement goals.
- Reviewing and adopting educational programs and curriculum frameworks.
- Adopting policies that ensure regular curriculum review and improvement.
- Supporting professional development and mentoring programs that strengthen staff effectiveness.
- Encouraging a culture of continuous improvement and learning for students, staff, and leadership.
- Supporting efforts that promote equity, inclusion, and access to educational opportunities for all students.

### Advocacy

The board serves as an advocate for students and public education.

Responsibilities include:

- Maintaining awareness of state and federal legislation affecting education.
- Communicating with legislators and policymakers regarding the district's priorities and concerns.
- Establishing an advocacy calendar and district advocacy priorities.
- Working with community partners and stakeholders to support public education initiatives.
- Informing the public when proposed legislation benefits the district and/or may harm district's financial well-being.

### District Resources and Fiscal Oversight

The board ensures responsible stewardship of district resources.

Responsibilities include:

- Collaborating with the superintendent during the budget development process.
- Adopting an annual budget aligned with district priorities and student achievement goals.
- Reviewing financial reports to monitor expenditures and fiscal management.

- Adopting the district's annual audit report.
- Ensuring district financial practices comply with policy and applicable laws.
- Participating in negotiations with recognized employee bargaining groups.
- Supporting long-term planning for district facilities, maintenance, and capital improvements.

### Board Operations and Governance Effectiveness

The board operates in accordance with established governance practices and legal requirements.

Responsibilities include:

- Complying with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.
- Ensuring all required reports are submitted to appropriate state and federal agencies.
- Conducting effective and legally compliant board meetings.
- Conducting an annual Board Self-Assessment and establishing improvement goals.
- Providing orientation and ongoing governance training for board members.
- Ensuring board discussion remains focused on student achievement and district priorities.

### Board-Superintendent Relationship

The board and superintendent function as a leadership team with clearly defined roles.

Responsibilities include:


- Hiring and evaluating the superintendent using clear performance standards and goals.
- Maintaining open, professional communication with the superintendent.
- Providing clear policy direction and expectations for district leadership.
- Supporting the superintendent in implementing board policies and district goals.
- Respecting the superintendent's responsibility for day-to-day operations and personnel management.
- Addressing concerns and issues with the superintendent in a timely and professional manner.
- Ensuring appropriate communication protocols with the media and public.

### Professional Development

The board commits to continuous improvement in governance.

Responsibilities include:

- Participating in board development and governance training opportunities.
- Collaborating with other school boards and educational organizations to strengthen governance practices.
- Supporting opportunities for team building and professional learning between the board and superintendent.

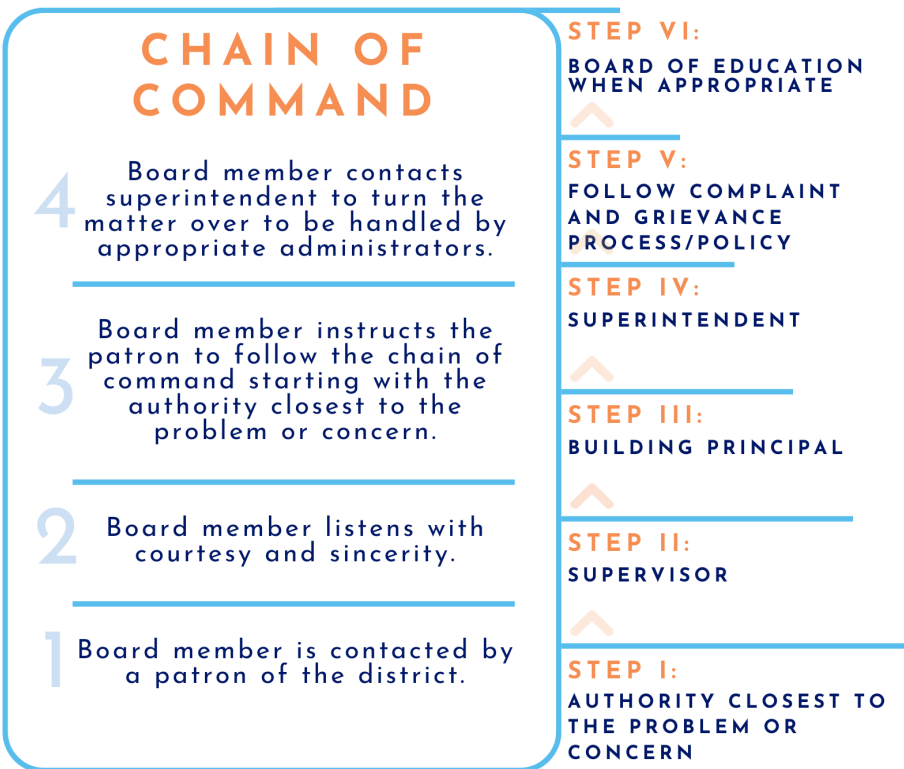


**“Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much.”  
-Helen Keller**

# THE BOARD MEMBER

A board member’s role and responsibilities are challenging given authority is only official when the board is conducting an advertised meeting in the public. Each board member has an obligation to approach the governance role with an effective mindset, to carry out his or her part of preparation and participation, and to take responsibility for the group. Cohesive leadership is realized when the board collectively:

- **PREPARES TO PARTICIPATE RESPONSIBLY:** Arrive at the board table prepared to work, remember that it is important to listen, agree, and disagree as your values dictate, and accept that once the board vote is final, the decision is official. This does not mean that a board member must compromise his or her values; however, it is important that each board member supports the legitimacy of the choice even though they may not have supported the decision with a vote in favor. Once the board has made a decision, each board member must acknowledge, without reservation, the superintendent’s responsibility to carry out the board’s decision.
- **UNDERSTANDS THE AUTHORITY OF A BOARD MEMBER:** A board member only has authority when the majority of the board is conducting business in an advertised meeting of the board.
- **ACKNOWLEDGES THE BOARD REPRESENTS THE COMMUNITY, NOT A SINGLE CONSTITUENCY:** The board serves in trust for the entire community. Individual board members may have represented a constituency when seeking election to the board; however, once seated a board member represents all patrons.
- **HONORS ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE BOARD:** Remain mindful of the students the board represents. The behavior of the board reflects the school district. The board shares the responsibility of holding each other accountable for behavior unbecoming of the board and/or the school district.
- **SUSTAINS A CONTINUOUS FOCUS ON THE MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS OF THE DISTRICT:** Maintain a focus on the vision and goals by placing student learning and success at the center of each decision of the board.
- **ENSURES RESOURCES ARE ALIGNED TO NEEDS:** As daunting and formidable as the big decisions are, this is part of the responsibilities of the board. Therefore, it is important to understand the district’s core values and beliefs to ensure the budget and alignment of resources support the educational programs and learning opportunities the district aspires to provide students.



## BOARD MEMBER = COMMUNITY LEADER

The community member who is elected to serve the board of education commonly possess some sense of the importance and significant responsibility they inherit to ensure the district provides quality instruction and learning opportunities to meet the needs of all students in a safe and effective learning environment. There is no greater honor for a person of high purpose than to be elected by the community to serve the board of education to represent the public and all students. However, it is an honor that must be earned through constant effort and a strong commitment to serving public education.

School board members in Nebraska serve without pay and are prohibited by law from having a significant financial interest in any business transacted by the school district. The term of office for most school board members is four years.

## THE SUPERINTENDENT

The board employs a superintendent of schools to serve as the educational leader of the district. The board delegates to the superintendent the authority to implement board policy and to execute decisions made by the board concerning the internal operations of the school district, unless specifically stated otherwise.

The superintendent is responsible for the implementation and execution of board policy and the observance of board policy by employees and students. The superintendent is responsible for overall supervision and discipline of employees and the education program. When executing the duties, the superintendent must consider the financial well-being of the school district and the needs of the students. The superintendent is empowered by the board and held accountable to the job description, contract, goals, and evaluation instrument.

## BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

The board of education is committed to ensuring to the public, staff, and students school board members will govern through policy. In accordance with this belief and by adoption of this policy, each board member commits to following the Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics.

***Board members' actions, verbal and nonverbal, reflect the attitude and the beliefs of the school district. Therefore, board members must conduct themselves professionally and in a manner fitting to the responsibility of duty.***

In addition to the following, board members should be familiar with and abide by their district's Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics.

As a Board Member, I will:

- Recognize that my authority rests not with individual members of the board, but within a legal session of the board; respecting and abiding by the majority decision of the board.
- Consistently uphold all applicable local, state, and federal laws, rules, and policies.
- Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, insofar as possible, and diligently prepare for meetings by reviewing in advance the material provided.
- Remain informed of local, state, and national educational developments of significance, remaining current on needs and requirements pertaining to educational issues through individual study and participation in board development opportunities.
- Consider the needs of the entire community and vote in the best interest of students, staff, and the educational program.

- Encourage individual board member free expression of ideas, listen without judgement, engage in thoughtful deliberation, and maintain open communication between all stakeholders.
- Complete the Conflict of Interest form, and not use the school district or any part of the school district program for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends or supporters.
- Abide by the Open Meetings Law and only enter closed session of the board if the situation requires it, and I will consider “secret” sessions of board members in violation of the law.
- Recognize that promising in advance of a meeting how I will vote on any item prohibits open discussion and inhibits transparency.
- Retain independent judgement and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.
- Respect the confidentiality of privileged information, as prescribed by law.
- Prioritize policymaking, budget, goal setting, school district strategic planning process and evaluation, and the effects on increasing student learning and success, ensuring efficient use of education resources.
- Act only as a member of the board and do not assume any individual authority when the board is not in session and take no private action that will compromise the board or administration.
- Request recommendations from the superintendent and consider legal counsel advice for the board when required for full and informed board consideration of issues requiring legal expertise.
- Acknowledge that the superintendent of schools and his or her staff are responsible and accountable for the delivery of the educational programs and the conduct of school operations.
- Adhere to and encourage others to follow the Chain of Command regarding complaints, requests, and concerns related to the school district.
- Ensure strong management of the school system by hiring and evaluating the superintendent, collaborating toward a common vision and goals for the district.
- Hold the superintendent accountable by jointly creating job performance standards and at least annually performing a comprehensive evaluation based on the job description, contract, and superintendent goals.
- Provide policy support for school administrators in the performance of their duties and delegate authority commensurate with those responsibilities.
- Perform a liaison communications role by respecting the needs of both the community and the school by engaging stakeholders in the strategic planning process.
- Recognize the board president (or designee) will speak as the official voice of the board. A single board member will not represent the board without the consent of the board, and board members making personal statements (in any format, including speeches, articles, social media posts, etc.) should clearly state these statements are their opinion and not the position of the board.
- Acknowledge the different roles that we play as individuals (board member, patron, parent, etc.).

The school board acts on behalf of the school district and has authority over school matters within the territory of the school district. All powers of the board lie in its action as a group. Individual board members exercise authority only as they vote at a legal meeting of the board.

The board is empowered to make policy for its own governance, employees, students, and for school district facilities. The board is also empowered to enforce its policies. The board may be required to conduct hearings and rule on disputes confronting the school district. As the governing board, the required responsibilities include legislative, executive, and evaluative.

Of the three, the major duty is the board’s executive role. The main function is the selection of the superintendent to operate the school district on the board’s behalf. The board delegates to the superintendent authority to carry out board policy, to formulate and carry out rules and regulations, and to handle the administrative details in a consistent manner aligned to board policy.

The board of education is the leader on the front lines of public education. The board is responsible to ensure students have access to quality instruction and curriculum to learn and succeed at the highest level possible. Board members' primary agenda is raising student success and involving the community in the attainment of that goal. A board's framework must be based on the premise that excellence in the classroom begins with excellence in the boardroom.

## BOARD GOVERNANCE

The encompassing responsibility for education rests with the State of Nebraska. The state delegates, and holds accountable, the local board of education. School boards are granted latitude in governing the school district; however, districts are subject to state and federal rules and regulations.

Key responsibilities of the school board:

- Employ a superintendent.
- Hold the superintendent responsible for managing the school district in accordance with state law, rules and regulations, and the board adopted policies.
- Plan, adopt, and oversight of the school district budget.
- Identify and adopt educational goals for the school district.
- Engage the community in the discussion, support, and design of goals to provide a quality education in a safe learning environment for all students.
- Support students and staff through measures to ensure positive well-being and climate-culture.

As a public body, the board is required to conduct business in public. The board may only take action by majority vote during a public meeting. The purpose of a school board meeting is to transact the legal business of the school district through discussion and voting among the members. The board must also provide time at meetings for the public to be heard.

## NASB STANDARDS OF EFFECTIVE BOARD GOVERNANCE

The purpose of the NASB Standards of Effective Board Governance:

- Define effective best practice and governance of the board.
- Outline the proper role and responsibilities of the governance team.
- Provide a mechanism for evaluating the leadership governance of the board.
- Inform district and community stakeholders of the role of the board and the importance of working with district leadership to grow and improve education for all students.

The value of the NASB Standards of Effective Board Governance benefit the board by:

- Affirming the board's commitment to the mission, vision, and goals of the school district.
- Ensuring the governance team sustains a focus on the support of improving and growing learning for all students.
- Modeling and supporting a positive and focused climate/culture of the board and school district.
- Building trust and fostering a better understanding of the responsibility of the board and what it means to govern effectively.
- Emphasizing the willingness of board members accountability to each other and the district and community stakeholders.
- Equipping district and community stakeholders with a meaningful basis for assessing the effectiveness of the governing board.
- Aligning to the board self-assessment to support the evaluation of the board's effectiveness.

- Helping to build and sustain a positive governance culture when new members are elected or appointed to serve on the board.
- Educating aspiring board candidates and voters about the important role and authority of the board.

As you consider board service, consider the significance of the following standards of governance. Consider the success of the board and school district through this quick assessment.

## I. MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

**The board annually reviews the district's mission, annually adopting board and district goals to support the long-term vision.**

### PURPOSE:

A school board that leads the development of a defined mission and vision creates an environment that enables a graduate to develop a vision for success.

### COMMUNITY LEADER:

To support the district's mission, vision, and goals by promoting understanding and alignment and to ensure the objectives reflect the needs and aspirations of the community, fostering long-term academic success.

### THE BOARD:

- Adopts goals and/or a strategic plan to support the mission and vision, provide structure, and hold everyone accountable.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Does the board adopt a mission and vision statement developed with stakeholders?
- Is student success a top priority of the school board, staff, and community?
- Are the mission and vision statements communicated to the community?
- Does the board-superintendent adopt long-term goals or a strategic plan to support the mission and vision of the district?
- Does the board regularly refer to the mission and vision when setting district policy?
- Are the mission and vision used as a guide when making resource, budget, and other operating decisions?
- Does the board periodically review the mission and vision statement with stakeholders to ensure it continues to reflect community beliefs and values?

## II. POLICY GOVERNANCE

**The board continuously reviews, revises, and develops policies and procedures to ensure accountability focused on growth and student success.**

### PURPOSE:

A school board that adopts policy to align to the district mission/vision establishes and reinforces a student-centered culture of learning.

### COMMUNITY LEADER:

To ensure continuous development and refinement of policies that promote student achievement and help foster a culture of accountability.

## **THE BOARD:**

- Adopts policies that support the mission and vision, provide structure, and hold everyone accountable.
- Utilizes a policy committee and review schedule.
- Reviews policies on a regular basis to ensure the policy manual is up to date.
- Updates policies annually to ensure legal compliance.

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- Does the board review policies at each regular board meeting?
- What process does the board utilize to complete the review of the policy manual?
- How long ago has it been since the board reviewed the entire policy manual?
- Are all district handbooks aligned to district policy?
- Are administrative protocols/guidelines aligned to board policies?
- Are policies updated regularly according to state statute and accessible to the public on the district website?
- How does the board validate through the superintendent that staff utilizes policies for guidance and decision-making.

## **III. STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**The board establishes effective communications with internal and external stakeholders to promote the district's image and to build and sustain long-term partnerships that serve education.**

### **PURPOSE:**

A school board that values stakeholder engagement is continuously responsive to the identified aspirations of the school community reflected in the mission/vision.

### **COMMUNITY LEADER:**

To serve as a bridge between the school board and community, facilitating open and transparent communication with internal and external stakeholders, strengthening partnerships to sustain long-term educational success.

### **THE BOARD WILL:**

- Engage stakeholders prior to setting goals to support improvement and growth of the school district.
- Engage with community leaders to ensure the school district strategic plan is aligned to the community initiatives and goals.
- Advocate for the engagement of parents and patrons' input on matters that are of interest to the community.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- Does the board gather input from stakeholders [i.e., parents, students, staff, community advocates, businesses, government agencies, and higher education]?
- Does the district communicate the vision frequently and consistently to stakeholders?
- Does the board reference the vision to support decisions related to policy and district operations?

## IV. ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS

**The board continuously monitors the progress of district goals, utilizing data to support growth and promote shared accountability for maximizing student success.**

### PURPOSE:

A school board best serves the school community when student success remains at the core of all decisions.

### COMMUNITY LEADER:

To ensure student success remains at the forefront of the district's goals by supporting data-driven decision-making, working closely with the community to maximize opportunities for every student to succeed.

### THE BOARD WILL:

- Engage in a regular review of data to evaluate the instructional program.
- Ensure the district has adopted high instructional standards by adopting an instructional framework and ensuring evaluations are aligned to the framework.
- Adopt a curriculum review cycle to ensure district curriculum is updated, relevant, and aligned to the state standards.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Has the district adopted curriculum in all subjects district wide?
- Does the district have a curriculum review policy to support the review and update of curriculum and to support the dedication of resources to support the needs of students?
- Does the district provide in-service staff time to align the curriculum to the student learning standards and support staff in their growth of knowledge and skills?
- What instructional model has the district adopted to support effective instruction?
- Is the teacher evaluation tool aligned to the instructional model?
- Is the district accredited through Nebraska Framework or COGNIA?
- What are the current school improvement goals adopted by the district?
- When is the next External Visit (year)?
- What data does the district consider when evaluating the success and progress of the district?
- How well-equipped are graduates who are embarking upon a career out of high school and those that are pursuing a post-secondary education?
- Does the district provide all students with the opportunity to achieve their personal best measured through attendance rates, graduations rates, academic assessment data, etc.?

## V. ADVOCACY

**The board advocates for public education and learning to support student success.**

### PURPOSE:

A school board engaged in advocating for students and patrons ensures equitable and efficient investment of resources.

### COMMUNITY LEADER:

To advocate for children, public education, and equality ensuring that all students have access to the resources they need for success. Promote the district's needs to improve outcomes for all students.

## THE BOARD WILL:

- Engage with NASB Advocacy Program and attend Legislative Issues Conference to learn about proposed legislative initiatives and bills to better understand the direct impact to the school district.
- Engage the community in understanding legislation and ask patrons to join the board in opposing or advocating for the passage of legislation that will have a positive impact on the district.
- Monitor the work of the legislature through the NASB website, updates received through social media, and news.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Does the board fulfill the role of advocacy in the best interest of the school district?
- What resources are available to the board that provides information regarding Legislative Bills and the potential impact to the school district?
- What can NASB do to support the board in sharing the district story when advocating for or against legislation at the state level?

## VI. DISTRICT RESOURCES

**The board aligns and manages district resources in a responsible manner to promote growth of student success.**

### PURPOSE:

A school board that remains focused on student success when allocating resources ensures efforts toward learning outcomes and addresses disparities.

### COMMUNITY LEADER:

To support the responsible management of district resources to ensure alignment to student success, guide resource allocation to provide long-term sustainability.

## THE BOARD WILL:

- Adopt a budget that supports the vision and is aligned to the needs and priorities of the district.
- Use data to identify instructional needs to support student success.
- Review the district financial reports monthly along with historical trend data.
- Participate in NASB budget and finance workshops to grow personal knowledge related to the school district budget process and the board's role and responsibilities.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- How does the district prioritize the budget?
- Does the board adopt a budget calendar?
- Who is involved in developing the budget?
- How does the budget align to growth of student success?
- How does the board engage the public in the discussion of budget accountability?

## VII. BOARD OPERATIONS

**The board ensures meetings are effective, efficient, and orderly, focused on policy and proper board governance and conduct.**

### PURPOSE:

A school board meeting focused on strategic goals aligns meeting agendas to policy, ensuring discussions are focused on student outcomes.

### **COMMUNITY LEADER:**

To promote efficient and effective board operations, supporting practices that ensure meetings are focused on governance and policy decisions that directly impact student success.

### **THE BOARD WILL:**

- Utilize the NASB Annual Board Calendar when designing monthly board meeting agendas to ensure the board schedules routine reports and required business.
- Follow the Board Code of Conduct and adopted protocol and procedures for an orderly meeting.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- Does the board follow the Code of Conduct and adopt meeting protocols and procedures to support orderly meetings held in public?
- Does the board provide reasonable advanced notice of all public meetings?
- Does the board monitor proper compliance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Law and public records?
- Is the board meeting agenda available to the public?
- Is the agenda reasonably descriptive and are the attachments available to the public?
- Does the district ensure the board meeting minutes are available within 10 days and/or by the next scheduled meeting of the board?
- Is the district in compliance with the law by posting 6 months' agendas and minutes on the district website for public access?

## **VIII. BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS**

**The board and superintendent establish and sustain a professional and collaborative working relationship to support and advocate for growth and student success.**

### **PURPOSE:**

A school board and superintendent who have a mutual understanding of their distinct roles work together toward a unified vision and positive student outcomes.

### **COMMUNITY LEADER:**

To support a professional, collaborative working relationship between the board and the superintendent to align a mutual vision for student success and growth.

### **THE BOARD WILL:**

- Exhibit respectful conduct toward each other and the superintendent, publicly and privately, even in times of disagreement.
- Make decisions as a group only at properly called meetings; recognize that individual members have no authority.
- Publicly support decisions of the majority even when individual views may be in opposition.
- Observe strict confidentiality on all discussion that occurs in closed session.
- Ensure superintendent evaluation tool and process are set forth in policy, adhering to all state laws and regulations.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- How does the evaluation of the superintendent reflect the mission, vision, and goals of the district?
- How often does the board review the superintendent evaluation process and tool to ensure effectiveness and alignment to the superintendent job description?

- How do I handle staff or community concerns or complaints?
- How often does the board complete a self-assessment and how do they utilize the data to support administration, staff, and student learning?
- Does the district provide orientation for new board members immediately upon their election, so they are familiar with the board's role, protocols, and district operations?

## **IX. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**The board and superintendent participate in continuous and appropriate training and professional development to build shared knowledge and values.**

### **PURPOSE:**

A school board and superintendent who have a common understanding of key issues develop a shared knowledge base that fosters cohesive decision-making and strategic alignment.

### **COMMUNITY LEADER:**

To participate in continuous professional development to strengthen my knowledge and understanding of district priorities, through learning the board will collectively contribute to a culture of growth and continuous improvement to support student success.

### **THE BOARD WILL:**

- Participate in NASB learning opportunities to support the growth of knowledge and understanding of board governance and responsibilities.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- What can I expect as an orientation to board service from NASB and from my local school district?
- How do I access board development opportunities that will allow me to gain knowledge or develop skills that will help me be a more effective board member?
- How does a board member register for NASB workshops and conferences?
- What type of information should I include in a report to the board/public after attending a board development opportunity?
- Does the district have an annual plan for board professional development that requires every board member to commit to appropriate activities to strengthen personal skills, knowledge, and teamwork?

# COMMIT TO YOUR OWN LEARNING

The learning curve of a newly elected board member can be overwhelming. To make the most of your candidacy, do not wait for the election in November or to take the oath in January. Begin learning now, commit to your growth and development. Ask questions and engage in discussion with current board members and the superintendent.

Learning together is a great activity for all boards and NASB offers a wide range of workshops and the annual education conference in November as well as local board retreats in district that support board members and the superintendent. Look for the Candidate Workshop following the Primary Election and New Board Member Workshops, held across the state and at multiple sites, immediately following the General Election. Each November the Association co-hosts the annual State Education Conference. This conference provides a track for new board members and a mentor program to introduce newly elected board members to the role of board service. The many resources we offer benefit your ability to build your skills and knowledge, ranging from this manual to a New Board Member Workshop to a comprehensive list of other opportunities to support you in your role as a board member. Your commitment to developing your knowledge and understanding of board governance and responsibilities will be a model for the students and staff in your district.

## NASB PROGRAMS & SERVICES

To fulfill the Association's mission, NASB offers a broad range of services to members including:

### ADVOCACY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

- Advocate NASB positions at the Capitol and beyond.
- Promote the role of school board member.
- Support local control and the policy-making body.
- Work with school board members in advocacy development.
- Connect policymakers through meetings, conference calls, etc.
- Share narratives related to school boards.
- Share legislative initiatives and progress with board members.
- Work with the NASB Legislation Committee to filter and engage in legislative matters.

### BOARD LEADERSHIP

NASB Board Leadership Department provides a broad scope of services and programs to support the governance roles and responsibilities of the district leadership team. The board and superintendent may consider:

**BOARD RETREATS/WORK SESSIONS:** We advocate for the board and superintendent to participate in an annual board retreat to review the role and responsibilities, goal planning, transition of superintendent leadership support, NASB Annual Board Calendar, board meeting protocols, and more. Board Leadership team members facilitate the retreat following an agenda that is aligned to the vision of the board and superintendent.

**BOARD LEADERSHIP RESOURCES:** As a member of the Association, the Board Leadership Department provides a variety of resources to support the board-superintendent leadership team. Leadership resources are available through workshops, conferences, website, or email.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Engaging stakeholders in purposeful discussion can be a powerful component in shaping the future of the school district and community. Fostering a positive working relationship with external stakeholders cultivates a progressive school-community climate.

**COMMUNITY ALIGNMENT:** Designed to effectively gather a range of perspectives on the most pressing issues facing the school district and community and then aligning how the district contributes to the collective development of the community.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING:** A thorough process for creating a strategic, collaborative vision that includes the development of strategies and objectives aligned with the district's mission and beliefs. This process includes the collection of high-quality data through stakeholder engagement to gain perspective, ideas, and suggestions for growing education in the district. A comprehensive plan is then developed with a clear path forward for district success. Once the plan is adopted by the board, district administrators implement the plan utilizing the NASB accountability for continuous improvement and monitoring for progress and success of the plan.

**BOARD LEADERSHIP LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:** Commit to learning and growing in your role and responsibilities as a board member. To make the most of your time, participate in the learning opportunities provided through NASB. Each year the NASB staff offer an array of opportunities to build your skills and knowledge, including, but not limited to: Board Candidate Workshop, New Board Member Workshop, President Retreat, Leadership Workshop, Legislative Issues Conference, Leaders and Law Conference, Area Membership Meetings, and State Conference, just to name a few. A commitment to developing your own skills is a model for the students and staff in your district.

**ONLINE ASSESSMENT SURVEYS:** Through the NASB Online Survey System, the Board Leadership staff will administer online surveys for board self-assessment, superintendent evaluation, consolidation initiatives, and custom surveys.

**SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION:** It is the responsibility of the school board to evaluate the performance of the superintendent. Fair application of the superintendent evaluation process is best achieved through collaboration and agreement by the board and superintendent about what, how, and when the evaluation process is completed. The Association provides sample Superintendent Evaluation tools to aid the board in this critical function. All board members must participate and provide purposeful feedback regarding the superintendent's educational leadership of the school district.

**BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT:** The board that operates effectively will periodically engage in some form of assessment. Conducting a self-assessment is an opportunity for the board to evaluate how well it is functioning as a body. Completing a self-assessment enables the leadership team to determine what needs to be improved to function more effectively going forward. It is important that expectations and standards on how to improve the team's practices and behaviors are clearly articulated during this process. The Association provides sample board self-assessment tools to support this best practice process.

**STUDENT SUCCESS COLLABORATIVE:** Led by NASB Board Leadership, the Student Success Collaborative is a statewide initiative focused on enhancing student improvement across Nebraska's school districts. Through strong local partnerships and strategic planning, we are dedicated to helping every student succeed.

**COMMUNICATION SUPPORT SERVICE:** Your district has a story to tell, and we can help. Developed to compliment district Strategic Planning and Community Engagement efforts, this service streamlines governance by fostering strong superintendent-board relationships, communicating your district's story, vision, and goals to stakeholders, building trust, and celebrating achievements.

## **OTHER NASB PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**NASB BOARD AWARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT:** Board members are awarded for their participation in NASB Services and Programs, and attendance at NASB workshops and events, through the NASB Awards of Achievement Program.

**ALICAP [ALL-LINES INSURANCE INTERLOCAL COOPERATIVE AGGREGATE POOL] AND LOSS CONTROL PROGRAM:** A members-only risk management program NASB offers school boards to obtain quality workers' compensation and property/casualty insurance coverage at competitive rates.

**EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SEARCH SERVICES:** A process carefully designed to provide the board accountability and control when conducting a search for the superintendent or ESU Administrator.

**EHA HEALTH INSURANCE:** EHA Wellness is a voluntary health improvement program provided by the Educators Health Alliance (EHA).

**GALLUP STRENGTH FINDERS:** StrengthsFinder Assessment and Gallup Certified Strengths coaching for facilitated training with board members, staff, and administrators.

**NJUMP & CJUMP NATURAL GAS PURCHASING:** NASB sponsors two joint energy purchasing consortiums created for public agencies to purchase natural gas and related services.

**POLICY SERVICE:** Update and review of policies to be consistent with district views, purpose, and aligned to current state and federal laws and regulations.

**SPARQ MEETINGS:** A digital board meeting platform.

**SPARQ NEGOTIATIONS:** Software designed to support successful negotiations.

**SPARQ ONLINE PUBLISHING:** Tools to host board policies and handbooks.

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PROGRAM:** NASB partners with Equifax to provide Association members with the Unemployment Insurance program.

**WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES:** Initiating and developing relationships with our members is vital to providing quality learning opportunities. We work with districts to better understand their challenges and how NASB can assist through learning events.

Experienced board members from across the state were asked to identify the most difficult lesson or fact they had to learn about board service. This is what they shared:

- The great amount of time it takes to be an effective board member.
- The mismatch between initial assumptions and the actual roles, responsibilities, and relationships of the board and administration in operating the school district.
- Recognizing the difference between setting policy (the board's job) and administering the schools (the superintendent's job).
- Change comes slowly.
- The abrupt change from "citizen" status to "board member."
- Learning to publicly acknowledge that you have no power and authority as an individual board member; that only the board can set policies and decisions for the school district during an advertised meeting.
- That you must represent all the students. Decisions must be made in the interest of the school district and not made solely for special groups or interests.
- Learning how to respond to the complaints and concerns of patrons and parents.
- Effective boardsmanship means being able to hold the minority viewpoint when voting on a given issue, then openly supporting the majority vote in your community.
- A board member must think deeply and sometimes accept a reality that is contrary to his/her own beliefs.
- As a board member, you cannot solve everyone's problems by yourself!

## WHERE TO FIND HELP

Whether you are a candidate interested in serving on the board, a newly elected board member embarking on this most important endeavor, or an experienced board member facing a new challenge, remember that you are not alone. NASB is your network for support, guidance, and information. Visit [www.NASBOnline.org](http://www.NASBOnline.org), call us at 800-422-4572, or email:

- John Spatz, NASB Executive Director - [jspatz@NASBOnline.org](mailto:jspatz@NASBOnline.org)
- Marcia Herring, Director of Board Leadership - [mherring@NASBOnline.org](mailto:mherring@NASBOnline.org)

We look forward to working alongside you as you embark upon this most important endeavor!



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