

BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As the Oil City Area School District works on behalf of its students and community, this guide aims to assist by maintaining a general understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Board Members and the Superintendent by, between and among the same.

BOARD MEMBER ROLES/AUTHORITY

1. The Board itself is primarily a policy-setting body and delegates the administration of schools to the Superintendent. In addition, the Board provides oversight and ultimately represents the desires/expectations of the district's stakeholders through, but not limited to, identified committees, public participation at meetings, and the citizen's advisory committee.
2. The Board annually sets goals for the district, taking into account administrative recommendations and the expectations of the stakeholders. The District goals will become the basis of the goals for the Superintendent and his/her administrative team. The Board will provide both verbal and written notification of these goals to the Superintendent and, in consultation with the Superintendent, shall identify the timeline for their implementation.
3. The Board of Education is granted the legal and regulatory authority to establish policy for the school district and to provide oversight for the education of our children, in addition to those powers set forth in the Public School Code of 1949, as amended. Board members have authority only when acting as members of the Board at a duly convened open meeting. In most cases, a majority vote of the Board is required for action. A Board member does not have the power to individually authorize action.
4. The Board strives to reach decisions through the consensus process rather than simply by majority vote, whenever possible.
5. Board decisions are binding on all Board members and members will support, not undermine, all decisions reached by the Board.
6. The Board is responsible for the evaluation of the performance of the Superintendent at least annually.
7. The Board annually evaluates itself, reviews its protocols, and holds itself to standards of best practice.

SUPERINTENDENT'S ROLE/AUTHORITY

1. The Superintendent serves as the chief executive officer, is charged with implementing the policies of the Board, and is responsible for administration of OCASD.
2. The Superintendent shall suggest policies deemed necessary for the effective functioning of the OCASD and implement regulations, rules and procedures to support established policies.

3. The Superintendent shall have the authority to organize, reorganize and arrange the administrative and supervisory staff-- including, without limitation but in accordance with applicable law/regulation/collective bargaining agreements, instruction and business affairs, which, in his/her judgment, best serve OCASD, subject to the approval of the Board of School Directors.
4. The responsibility for the placement and transfer of personnel and the discipline thereof, shall be vested in the Superintendent of Schools.
5. Hiring, termination and tenure shall be subject to the approval of the Board of School Directors.
6. It is the Superintendent's primary responsibility to provide visionary and aspirational leadership that enables the District to continually improve the educational experiences of students and achieve the goals which have been established.
7. The Superintendent is a visible presence in the schools to underscore that the most important interactions that occur are in the classrooms.
8. The Superintendent provides the Board, both regular and timely reports, information, analysis and sound professional advice it needs to formulate policy and monitor operations of the District.
9. The Superintendent creates and sustains a climate of collegiality among members of the staff and parent body.

ROLE OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT

The Board President:

1. Has no greater authority than any other Board member.
2. Serves as a liaison between the Board and the Superintendent.
3. Is responsible for sharing information pertaining to Board work with all Board members on a timely basis and is the primary conduit of information flow from the Board to the Superintendent.
4. Works with the Superintendent and Board Vice-President to set meeting agendas.
5. Presides over meetings using parliamentary procedure. S/He encourages open discussion and deliberation, and guides the Board to reach decisions.
6. Is the primary spokesperson for the Board with the media.

7. S/He may call a special meeting at any time and shall call a special meeting whenever so requested, in writing, by any three members of the Board of School Directors. Should he fail or refuse to do so, a special meeting may be called at any time by a majority of the legally qualified and acting members of the board.

ROLE OF THE BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT

The Vice-President:

1. Is available to stand in for the president whenever s/he is not available.
2. Acts as mentor to incoming board members.
3. Is available as a sounding board for the president.

BOARD MEETINGS

1. Responsibility for setting the agenda is shared by the Superintendent, the Board President and the Vice-President. Board members, through the President, can recommend items for the agenda/discussion.
2. Calls to the Superintendent or Board President to suggest items prior to the drafting of the agenda will be reflected in the draft.
3. When able, Board members will let the Superintendent and Board President know in advance about items not in the draft which they intend to raise at the Board meeting, and the Superintendent will do the same, thus ensuring that all participants will be prepared for the applicable discussions.
4. Discussions in the executive session must remain completely confidential.
5. Email should not be used for confidential matters, to conduct Board business or to deliberate matters which may come before the Board.
6. Items for the executive session must be consistent with the Open Meetings Law and the public must be informed of the reason for the executive session.

MEETING DYNAMICS

1. In both public meetings and executive sessions, each Board member has a right to be heard once on an issue prior to others having a second chance. Members agree to listen to one another and not interrupt.
2. Motions should be used to focus discussion on action items, and any member may “call the question” to test whether the Board is ready to vote.
3. The Board President is authorized to focus discussion toward closure.
4. Board members should address the Board as a whole with their comments, rather than addressing the public.
5. Public participation in board meetings is governed by Board Policy 903

INFORMATION – SHARING

1. Information necessary for the Board’s work will be shared consistently across the Board and with the Superintendent, in part to maintain a practice of “no surprises,” particularly in public meetings and to assist the Board to reach consensus when appropriate.
2. The Superintendent’s periodic memos and information packet will be the primary source material utilized in public meetings.
3. Email will be used for breaking news of a non-confidential nature; phone communication will be used for important confidential matters.
4. Keep email brief and to the point, with sensitivity to overall volume, recognizing that on the day of a Board meeting, it usually is too difficult to respond to questions.
5. Board members may use email to gain clarification but not for expressing opinions as this may violate the Open Meetings Law when a majority of the Board is included in the email communication.
6. Expect that confidential news as well as “new news” relative to previously agreed actions will come through the Superintendent’s memo, executive session or, in an emergency, through telephone contact.
7. Information requests to the administration should come to the Board President in order to maintain a reasonable balance of volume, content and tone. If the administration deems the information requests overly burdensome in the time requested, the Superintendent will discuss

with the Board President and the member making the request, possible alternatives to address the member's information request. The following options may be used to meet the request:

- An optional information meeting will be scheduled prior to the commencement of the Board meeting at which time the Superintendent will provide the information verbally.
- The Superintendent will discuss with the Board President and the member possible alternatives to address the member's information request.
- The item will be placed on a future Board of Education agenda for discussion.

Intra-Board communication – by telephone, email or in person – is essential, but should be consistent with the Open Meetings Law in terms of public and executive session deliberation and decision-making.

PARENTAL AND STAFF ISSUES

1. Board members should, when and where possible, direct parents and staff who call with complaints to work up through the chain-of-command, talking to the teacher, the principal and/or the Superintendent, before further involving Board members.
2. Board members should refer other more substantive criticisms, complaints or suggestions to the Board President and to the Superintendent. The Board President will assure circulation to the full Board. The Superintendent does or causes to be done the investigating and problem solving, with staff assistance as necessary-- in accordance with defined Board policy and procedure.
3. Individual board members should not attempt to investigate or problem solve.
4. It is expected that the Superintendent shall provide regular/timely written notification and updates to the whole of the Board concerning parental/staff issues and, absent confidentiality concerns, with public (including staff) advice/representation in accordance with Board Policy
5. The Board will strive to discourage anonymous complaints.

MEDIA CONTACT

1. All official statements of Board positions, as well as responses to media inquiries, come from the Board President and/or the Superintendent.

RELATIONSHIP TO STAFF

1. In general, contact with faculty, including visits to the schools, occurs through the Superintendent when Board members are wearing their "Board hat." When contacting staff as a parent, it is reassuring to say, "I am calling as a parent."
2. An individual Board member has no authority to direct personnel.

ONGOING EDUCATION/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS

1. Board members are committed to staying current on educational issues, including legislative issues affecting the public schools, via various Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) services and information provided by the Superintendent and his/her staff, and by our district solicitor.