

# ALASKA SCHOOL BOARD HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE  
LEADERSHIP THROUGH  
BOARD STANDARDS

3RD EDITION 2012



To: Board President and Superintendent

From: The Staff of AASB

### **Tips for Using the Alaska School Board Handbook as an Orientation System for New Board Members**

**WHY** – We’ve found that very few school boards in the state have managed to establish a well-organized, comprehensive orientation process for newly elected board members. The need is obvious, but in most districts it seems that more pressing business takes priority and orientation, when it does occur, is in an incomplete manner at best. Almost every experienced board member has at one time or another said, “If I had only known....”

**WHAT** – The Alaska School Board handbook was developed with new board members in mind. It’s been designed to provide some guidance on basic boardsmanship, built on Board Standards, to help new board members access information that will assist them in getting started on the right foot from the very beginning of their service.

**HOW** – It will be even more meaningful if you customize this handbook by adding district-specific information in the form of key policies or other appropriate references to bring this generic information into sharper focus for your particular board members’ needs.

Since expecting board members to become familiar with every district policy is unrealistic, we hope this handbook can be made into a quick reference to policy on the most critical topics new board members should know. At the end of each chapter you’ll find a list of key policies to include that we feel would be particularly relevant to the text we’ve prepared. If your district policy manual utilizes the AASB policy system it should be an easy matter for you to locate and insert the recommended policies. If you have another codification system, it’s likely that you’ll have policies on topics similar to those listed.

At the end of each chapter we’ve also included a suggested list of reference material for inclusion in the form of summarized information on such items as the district’s vision, goals, strategic plan, district profile, organizational chart, negotiated agreements, assessments, testing schedule, school calendar, business partnerships, and annual board calendar. You’ll find the suggested lists to be more complete than this, but undoubtedly you’ll think of some items that we’ve overlooked.

**WHEN** – Obviously the best time to begin orientation for new members is as soon as possible after the election. Even though this orientation system is designed to organize that process, it’s clear that all this material can’t be covered in just one or two short sessions.

Our Board Handbook reviewers suggested that perhaps the board president and vice-president could prioritize and schedule some time with new members to break the orientation process down into more bite-sized pieces. They recommended starting with a review of the sections on Structure and Conduct and Ethics to begin with, to familiarize new members with the essential elements and organization of the district as well as to the major roles and responsibilities and protocols of the school board.

When that ground has been covered sufficiently, then other portions could be scheduled to follow over a reasonable

period of time. It was also suggested that other experienced board members could be assigned as mentors to new members for different topics, to facilitate more board interaction and to speed up relationship-building to enhance board teamwork.

Undoubtedly every board that chooses to use this handbook to assist in their orientation process will develop their own unique approach. However you choose to use it, we hope you will find it a valuable resource that will become an established part of building a consistently effective school board in your district that is truly focused on student achievement!

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— 3RD EDITION 2012 —





Published by the Association of Alaska School Boards  
1111 W 9th St  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

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ISBN: 0-9746668-0-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2003113818

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3rd Edition, September 2012

Printed in the United States.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### — WELCOME —

Congratulations! Your decision to run for the school board was an important step toward some of the most meaningful work you'll ever take on. Your election by your community is an affirmation of their confidence in you. They've entrusted you with the education of those they hold most dear - their children. It's an awesome responsibility.

The years you spend on the school board will be some of the most challenging, frustrating and rewarding years of your life. 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 come to the board table fully prepared for the responsibility of comprehensive planning, multi-million dollar budgets, understanding federal and state statutes and mandates, communications, planning, curriculum design, evaluation systems, political lobbying and labor relations. The list is actually much longer, and at times can seem overwhelming.

### — PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK —

This brings us to the purpose of this handbook. Many of the contributing writers have been school board members or administrators themselves and understand the confusion and frustration that can occur when new board members are faced with the magnitude of the responsibility they've committed to taking on. This handbook is designed to give you a handy reference that breaks down many of your responsibilities into more "bite-sized" pieces. Think of it as a board orientation system.

### — HANDBOOK ORGANIZATION —

We've organized this information around the AASB Board Standards Framework, which clearly identifies the four major functions of a school board:

#### VISION

The board creates a shared vision to enhance student achievement.

#### STRUCTURE

The board provides a structure that supports the vision.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

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

#### ADVOCACY THE BOARD CHAMPIONS THE VISION.

Another critical heading in the Board Standards Framework is Conduct and Ethics. Although not technically a "function" of the board, the manner in which the board conducts its business is essential to its overall effectiveness and level of public trust, so you will find specific information relating to Conduct and Ethics that will help you understand how to build and sustain the human dynamic that is so important to good governance.

We hope you find this handbook to be a handy reference throughout your board service. We've tried to supply some basic information about "boardsmanship" to help you understand your responsibilities. We've also packaged it so that you can add relevant information from your own school district for easy reference.

### — TIPS FOR USING —

For a school board using this as an orientation program for new members: In setting up the handbook in binder form for the first time, you may want to refer to the "Key Policies" and "References" that are suggested at the end of each chapter to determine if there are other district-specific items that would be especially useful to a new board member. In scheduling orientation sessions, you may want to acquaint your new board members with the Structure and Conduct and Ethics sections to begin with, to familiarize new members with the essential elements and organization of the district as well as to the major roles and responsibilities and protocols of the school board.

When that ground has been covered sufficiently, then other portions could be scheduled to follow over a reasonable period of time. You may want to consider assigning other experienced board members as mentors to new members for different topics, to facilitate more board interaction and to speed up relationship-building to enhance board teamwork.

For new board members using this handbook on their own: If your board hasn't established a formal orientation program, you may want to ask the superintendent and board secretary



to help you locate the key policies and references suggested at the end of each chapter, so that you can include them in your handbook binder for quick reference. The board president and superintendent will be your best mentors on a regular basis. Beyond that, you may wish to ask the superintendent to suggest key staff members that you can access to ask questions of, such as the business manager, personnel director or curriculum specialist, to help round out your self-orientation. As mentioned above, we'd recommend that you start your study with the sections on Structure and Conduct and Ethics, then address the other chapters as time and interest allow.

Please remember that the Association of Alaska School Boards is your organization and we stand ready to answer your questions and lend assistance whenever you need it. More information about our services and how to contact us can be found under Tab 9 in this handbook.

Your effectiveness as a school board member will translate into success for the students in your school district. We wish you well!

## DEFINITIONS

**SCHOOL BOARD** - A school board is a democratically elected body that represents public ownership of schools through governance while serving as a bridge between public values and professional expertise.

**Purpose of School Boards** - School boards provide local leadership, governance, democratically elected body that and accountability for public education represents public ownership of schools by ensuring that schools reflect through governance while community expectations and needs, serving as a bridge between public values make the best use of available resources, and professional expertise. and advocate for the needs of children.

Developed by the AASB Board Standards Committee, 1998.

## 2. ORGANIZATION OF ALASKA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Most people who run for the school board do so first because they are concerned about the children and schools in their own community. It doesn't take long, however, before board members begin to realize that there is a lot of history and many outside influences that will impact the decisions they make about those schools.

Developing a broader understanding of Alaskan education in general equips school boards to make even better decisions. The most effective school board members are those who understand their schools and their role in the context of "the big picture."

### HISTORICALLY

**Early Schools** - While education historically occurred in Alaska through the oral and cultural traditions of the Alaskan Native people, the first formal schools in Alaska were established in the 1780's by the Russians who came for the fur trade. After the U.S. purchased Alaska in 1867 education was neglected until schools started to be established by missions and the Alaska Commercial Company in the 1870's.

**Government Schools** - The first U.S. Government Schools were established after the passage of the "Organic Act" in 1884. Initially, a dual system of education for white students and Native students was developed. In 1900 Congress approved an act allowing civil government in Alaska and towns were allowed to incorporate and create their own school systems for white students, while Native education continued under federal authority. In 1917 the new Territorial Legislature assumed responsibility for creating a unified school system for white students, but most Native students were still schooled separately under the authority of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Many Native students were sent to boarding schools outside Alaska.

**State System** - With the advent of statehood in 1959, the new Alaska State Constitution assumed the responsibility to "establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State..." and a centralized Alaska State Operated School System (S.O.S.) was created for the unincorporated area of the state. In-state regional boarding schools were established in the 1960's for rural high school students. However, many BIA schools continued to operate until the 1970's.

**Molly Hootch** - In 1972 a class action suit was filed against the state to challenge the practice of forcing Native children to attend high school away from home. The resulting settlement was known as the "Molly Hootch Consent Decree" and state voters approved a school construction bond that provided for high schools in all of the state's rural areas.

**REAA's** - In 1975 the Legislature disbanded S.O.S. and created 21 Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAA's) within the state's Unorganized Borough - the single largest creation of school districts and school boards in United States history. For the first time residents of rural Alaska were able to assume full responsibility for governing their own schools.

### TODAY

**Governance** - All school districts in Alaska, whether in incorporated areas or REAA's in the Unorganized Borough, are governed by locally elected school boards. School boards in both types of districts have essentially the same kind of responsibilities and authority. Additionally, REAA's are required by law to establish advisory school boards in each community that is served by a school.

**Authority of the School Board** - All school boards operate under the authority and constraints of the U. S. Constitution, and federal and state statutes and regulations. Their ability to make decisions for their districts are impacted by the contents of those documents, as well as court decisions and local collective bargaining agreements with employees. School boards are authorized to create their own set of governing statements within parameters of higher law, and these are generally compiled in the school district policy manual. (See "Governing Alaska's Schools" diagram, p.10)

- AS 14.08.101 -Powers: Regional School Boards
- AS 14.14.090 -Duties of School Boards (City and Borough)
- AS 14.14.100 -Bylaws and Administrative Rules

**Authority of Individual Board Members** - Because a school board is a governmental body, it can take action only by a decision by the majority made at a public meeting. The individual board member has no authority other than to cast a vote at such a meeting. A board member who attempts, without authorization, to speak for the board, to correct members of the staff, or to make other individual decisions is

acting outside his or her official capacity.

*Number and Type of Districts* - At the present time there are a total of 53 school districts in Alaska. They represent two kinds of school districts: 34 in incorporated areas (cities and boroughs) and 19 REAAs. (See Map of Alaska's School Districts, p.9)

*Size* - Student populations in various districts range in size from 20 to 50,000. Corresponding budgets range from about \$693,000 to \$649,000 million. Some districts are compact and consist of a single site, while others have multiple communities dispersed over vast geographic areas.

*Funding for Programs and Facilities* - Unlike many other states, the majority of funding for school operations in Alaska comes from the state government. Nearly one-third of the state's total operating budget goes to support public education and is distributed through a complex and sometimes controversial funding formula adopted by the Legislature. Federal funds for impact aid and special title programs also account for a large share of school funding in Alaska.

The main difference in the two types of school districts is that REAAs receive 100% of their basic school funding from the state, since communities in the Unorganized Borough essentially have neither a tax base nor a means for collecting taxes. School districts in incorporated areas are required to contribute to their schools, either through local taxes or in-kind contributions. They also have the ability to raise funds beyond "basic need," within established limits.

Another notable difference between the two types of districts lies in how facilities construction is funded. Incorporated areas have the ability to bond at the local level if the electorate approves, with the state reimbursing the local government for a percentage defined by the legislature. REAAs are totally dependent on the Legislature for 100 percent of school construction funds.

## ● ● ● ● ● CHALLENGES

Trying to provide a quality education in Alaska presents some unique challenges for school boards. The cost of education continues to exceed the available funding. Distances, geographic isolation and small school sizes make it difficult to replicate the kind of education program available in larger

schools. There are on-going tensions between residents and legislators of both rural and urban Alaska regarding needs and equitable allocation of resources, and these tensions ultimately impact the work of school boards. Meeting the accountability mandates from both the state and the federal government provides additional pressures as school boards strive to maintain local control over decisions regarding student achievement.

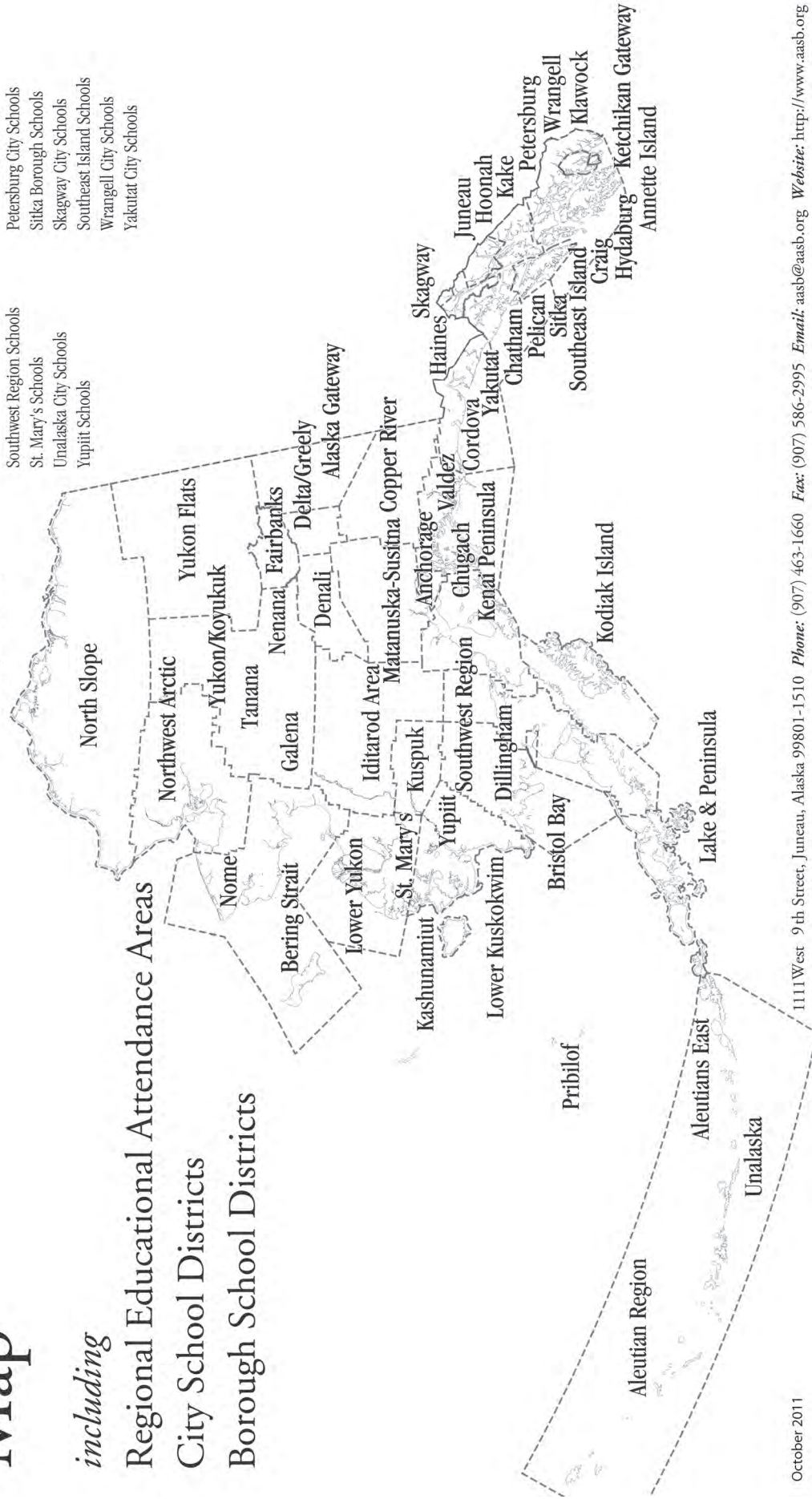
AASB has been a unifying force that has helped school boards continue to speak for the needs of all of Alaska's children with one voice. Our programs and services are designed to address the differences between different kinds and sizes of districts, yet provide for information and sharing on issues of common interest.

# Alaska School District Map

*including*

Regional Educational Attendance Areas  
City School Districts  
Borough School Districts

NORTHWEST	SOUTHCENTRAL	INTERIOR	SOUTHWEST	SOUTHEAST
Bering Strait Schools	Anchorage Schools	Alaska Gateway Schools	Aleutian Region Schools	Annette Island Schools
Nome City Schools	Chugach Schools	Copper River Schools	Aleutians East Borough Schools	Chatham Schools
North Slope Borough Schools	Cordova City Schools	Delta/Greely Schools	Bristol Bay Borough Schools	Craig City Schools
Northwest Arctic Borough Schools	Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools	Denali Borough Schools	Dillingham City Schools	Haines Borough Schools
	Mat-Su Borough Schools	Fairbanks North Star Borough Schools	Kashunamit Schools	Hoonah City Schools
	Valdez City Schools	Galena City Schools	Kodiak Island Borough Schools	Hydaburg City Schools
		Iditarod Area Schools	Kuspuk Schools	Juneau Borough Schools
		Nenana City Schools	Lake & Peninsula Borough Schools	Kake City Schools
		Tanana Schools	Lower Kuskokwim Schools	Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools
		Yukon/Koyukuk Schools	Lower Yukon Schools	Klawock City Schools
			Pribilof Schools	Pelican City Schools
			Southwest Region Schools	Petersburg City Schools
			St. Mary's Schools	Sitka Borough Schools
			Unalaska City Schools	Skagway City Schools
			Yupit Schools	Southeast Island Schools
				Wrangell City Schools
				Yakutat City Schools

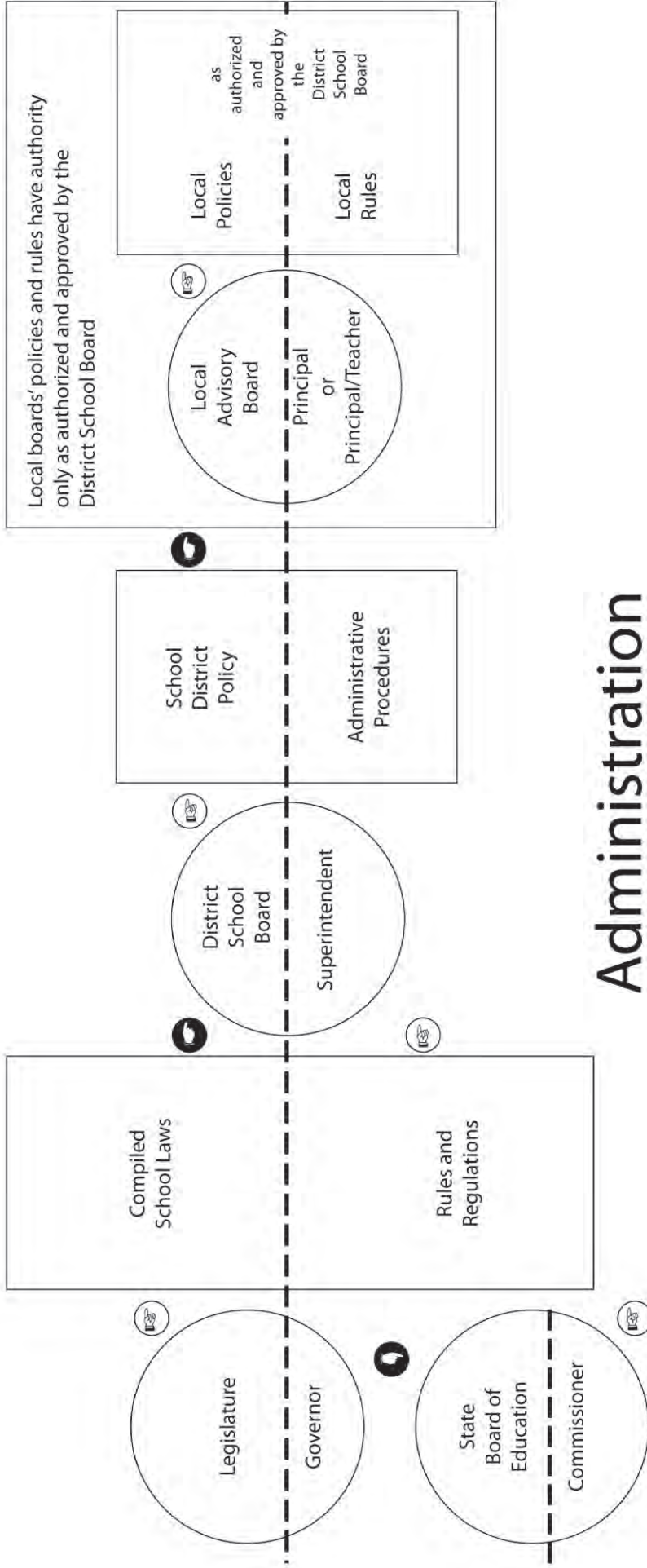


# Policy

State

District

Local



# Administration



1111 West 9th Street  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Phone: (907) 463-1660  
Fax: (907) 586-2995

**Legend:**

Directions of legal authority  
(Example: Legislature has authority over districts which have authority over advisory boards.)

Decision written into law

**Other Factors Affecting Board Decisions:**

Negotiated Agreements with employees

Courts also make decisions that affect schools and school law. For example, they rule on constitutionality and legislative intent of laws.

### 3. CREATING A SHARED VISION

#### BOARD FUNCTION:

The board creates a shared vision to enhance student achievement.

#### STANDARD 1.1

Board develops a dynamic shared vision for education that reflects needs and community priorities.

#### STANDARD 1.2

Board keeps the district and community focused on educating students.

#### STANDARD 1.3

Board demonstrates its strong commitment to the shared vision by using it to guide decision making.

#### DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION

Several ideas worth examining are expressed in Standard 1.1, ideas that we as locally elected board members passionately believe in.

A dynamic vision is powerful and active. Nothing frustrates newly elected board members more than their inability to make immediate, meaningful changes to the educational system. However, it is more important to establish a shared vision rather than ramming something through without proper input. This vision should address the short-term needs of students but also look to the future and be flexible enough to meet challenges that cannot be anticipated. Who knows what the students of the 21st century will need to know? The board's shared vision should be prepared to move in directions that our children need to prepare them for adulthood.

A shared vision. The implication is that we as individual board members do not operate in a vacuum. Life is full of compromises and none of us are able to effect all the changes we would like. But, the changes we can accomplish should be a group effort with input from all concerned with the outcome, including students, parents, staff and community. A board member too far in front or too far behind is an ineffective board member. A good board member is usually a consensus builder. This is so important in vision building. This vision should belong to the entire board and community as a collective vision so that everyone can "catch" that vision and share it with others at a moment's notice. That collective vision will

not have everything in it that each board member wanted and it will also have something in it that not all wanted, but instead will be a composite of everyone's ideas.

A vision that reflects student needs and community priorities. Local control is an issue that is "near and dear" to all our hearts. The board vision for one district will be different from another district's vision. Each community has high expectations and standards, but how each arrives there may be very different. Why, for example, will one district consolidate while another chooses not to? Because each community, represented by their board, has varying visions. Create a vision that puts student needs first and reflects the priorities that are important in your community.

#### FOCUS ON EDUCATING STUDENTS

We need to remind ourselves daily what our job is-to educate students. And we need to remind our communities daily what our job is-to educate students. If we really believe that the hope of the future lies in the young people of our nation, state and communities, then our vision must reflect that belief. We cannot be sidetracked into issues that are not about education. Many would have the schools being all things to all people. We do not have the resources to accomplish all things. The way to send that message is to have a vision that focuses students, board members and the entire community on the task at hand-educating students.

Making it a conscious practice to refer back to the board's vision regularly helps the board stay focused on priorities, rather than allowing it to be sidetracked by the multitude of smaller issues that are often more like brushfires.

#### THE VISION GUIDES DECISION MAKING

Are boards committed to the vision guiding its decisions? If so, the vision should belong to us all, not just one person or group of persons. And once the board agrees on that vision, then it should resolve to be committed. Each board is a team brought together from different walks of life for a common good-the education of our children. Each board member needs to believe in the vision and

demonstrate commitment to the vision.

The vision as a guide to decision making. What a powerful tool for school boards in their governance role! We in the Association of Alaska School Boards frequently ask ourselves the question, “Is it good for kids?” as we deliberate on issues. This “vision making” process is a common sense approach to answering that question on a local level. Each board’s visions will reflect what is good for the kids of the district. Families, elders, and citizens will cooperatively develop the vision to best meet our children’s needs. Then we can resoundingly answer, “Yes,” when we make decisions and are asked, “Is it good for kids?” Each budget decision, each curriculum review, each board election, each staff hire, each superintendent evaluation can be aligned to the district vision.

Vision setting is all about direction setting. The direction boards want to go in is to enhance student achievement. All boards are encouraged to adopt local board standards and to formalize the vision. It’s the right thing to do.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Identify a process for gathering input from stakeholders - parents, students, staff, community advocates, businesses, government agencies and higher education - in order to identify their core beliefs and common values that will be the basis for a draft vision statement. Strategic planning is a commonly used process that starts with identifying a shared vision.
- Formally adopt the vision for the district.
- Communicate the vision frequently and consistently to the entire community through a system of planned communication.
- Develop long-range, strategic plans for the district that are based on the vision.
- Regularly refer to the vision when making decisions about policy and district operations.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Has our board adopted a vision statement that was developed with stakeholders? Does it make student achievement a top priority of the school board, staff and community?
- How is the vision communicated to the community?
- Is there a long range or strategic plan in place to support the vision?
- Does the board regularly refer to the vision when setting district policy?
- Do we use the vision as a guide when making resource, budget and other operating decisions?
- Do we periodically review the vision statement with stakeholders to make sure it continues to reflect community beliefs and values?

## KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

**BP 6010** Goals And Objectives: Student Achievement

## REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- District’s vision statement (with date of adoption), mission statement, and list of core beliefs and values.
- Information about where the vision statement is posted (i.e. in schools, on district publications, etc.).
- Summary outline of the district’s strategic plan (vision, mission, major strategies, goals, etc.).
- Timetable for vision/strategic plan review and update.

## 4. PROVIDING STRUCTURE

### BOARD FUNCTION:

The board provides a structure that supports the vision.

#### STANDARD 2.1

Board establishes a management system that results in effective decision making processes and enables all people to help the district achieve its vision and make the best use of its resources.

#### STANDARD 2.2

Board ensures that long and short term plans are developed and annually revised through a process involving extensive participation, information gathering, research, and reflection.

#### STANDARD 2.3

Board sets high instructional standards based on the best available information about the knowledge and skills students will need in the future.

#### STANDARD 2.4

Board acts to ensure vision and structure comply with legal requirements.

#### STANDARD 2.5

Board encourages and supports innovative approaches to teaching, learning and the continuous renewal of education.

### MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Each person who chooses to run for a seat on their local board is expected by the electorate to be a leader. The citizens of your community trust the board to be a body that creates and abides by policies that will provide the best public school system for their children. The public abhors chaos and expects boards to conduct district business in an organized, professional manner that expedites the job of educating children with the least fanfare possible. After all, public schools are not about school board members, they are about children.

Policies are the rules by which a school board governs and a district operates. Policies help students, district employees, parents and others know what to expect of the district and what is expected of them. Implementation and enforcement of policies ensure a district's fair, uniform treatment of everyone.

Policies also provide continuity over time. Board members and superintendents may leave the district, but ongoing board policies will provide an institutional memory and framework for consistent governance of the district. A set of comprehensive, up-to-date policies will help a board when it is faced with difficult issues. By developing and adopting policies before an issue demands action, a board can ensure it has adequate time to consider an issue fully with input from staff and community and, if necessary, obtain the appropriate legal advice to ensure the policy is legally sound.

The board's policies should be friendly. Policy should reflect the manner in which the community desires district business to be conducted and gives administration clear, broad direction as they make day-to-day decisions. Board policy is the "heart and soul" of any local district, yet too often the policy manual is not opened until a problem arises. Board Standards demand that board members become familiar with their policy and regularly review each section to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to the business of student achievement. Board members are also responsible for ensuring that the superintendent regularly reviews all district documents, including administrative procedures and student handbooks, for compliance with board policy. We are policy makers and our policy is how we provide structure to the local district.

Policy manuals should be readily available to students, staff, parents and community members. Too often, policy manuals are found to be out of date, having sat unopened in school offices and libraries. Many districts are moving their print version of the manual to their website to ensure that policies are not only accessible, but that everyone is using the same version of the manual. AASB has an online policy service that can help boards ensure everyone in the district uses the same policy when making decisions and following procedures.

Having an annual calendar can help a school board pay attention to their major responsibilities and provide structure to their meetings. Developing a calendar can help identify routine items a board deals with every year. New board members, and new superintendents, will appreciate knowing when items such as the budget, contracts, audit review, retreats, policy updates, goal setting and self-assessment are scheduled.



## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Adopt policies that support your vision, provide structure, and hold everyone accountable.
- Establish a policy committee that includes all district stakeholders.
- Review policies on a regular basis.
- Update policies annually for legal compliance.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Do our policies describe what we want our district to achieve?
- Are our policies up-to-date?
- What is the schedule for policy review?

## BUDGET/FINANCE

In these times of financial constraint the effective use of resources becomes even more critical. If boards provide a structure and allow the community to evaluate the board on how well it actually performs, then the budget process will likely become less painful. Most citizens are supportive of education and willing to pay whatever it costs as long as they have assurance that the money is being spent wisely. Well-planned structure, widely communicated to the public, is the best vehicle for instilling confidence in the locally elected school board and building that support for public education.

The budget represents a dollars-and-cents statement of the community's educational hopes and aspirations for its children, and serves as a planning and accountability tool.

Think of the school budget as consisting of three parts: an educational plan; an expenditure plan to carry out the educational plan; and a financial plan to show from where the funds will come.

The board's role includes adopting the goals, determining the general parameters of the budget, developing and communicating a philosophy of budgeting that should

be applied throughout the school district, reviewing and evaluating staff proposals for the budget and adopting the budget itself.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Adopt a budget that supports the vision.
- Use data to link instructional needs to instructional resources.
- Provide transparency with district financial district reports.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Which comes first, our priorities or the budget?
- Is the budget easy to understand?
- What is our budget cycle and calendar?
- Who is involved in developing the budget?
- How does this budget increase student achievement?

## PARTICIPATION IN LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM PLANS

The local board cannot operate in a vacuum or exclude from the decision making process those who elect them, or those who pay for the work that needs to be accomplished.

“Schools need to operate more like a business.” That statement often comes more from lack of knowledge than from fact. We must bring the community with us on this journey. That involves welcoming citizens as planners and decision makers and making them partners instead of adversaries.

We must be action-oriented rather than reaction-oriented. Families entrusting their children must have confidence in the board. One of the best ways to foster

that confidence is to have in place a logical plan that enables a board to utilize its resources in ways that clearly lead toward student achievement. There are many types of plans. Whatever type used must involve the community and allow for their input into the education of their children. This type of strategic, long and short term planning is not inflexible, but safe and dynamic, meeting the needs of students and allowing for unanticipated needs as well.

When the board is thoroughly familiar with long and short term plans and makes reference to them during decision-making, it is bound to be more focused and effective. Undoubtedly issues that don't fit within the plan will arise from time to time that could cause a less focused board to suddenly change course. Your plan can serve as your compass and keep you and your district headed toward "true north." Being steadfast about this will engender confidence from your community when they see that you are serious about accomplishing what your plan is set out to do.

Communities and schools benefit when they work together. The community sees an improvement in the quality of life for its children, and has a sense of ownership and pride in the schools because community members believe they have the ability to influence the board's policy decisions. When the community works on the "inside," it can ensure a certain level of accountability from the school board.

The school board benefits from good relations with the community. Parental and community involvement often have a positive effect on student attitudes and performance. The district may have better success with students who are at risk for poor academic performance or dropping out when the community embraces the school and its programs.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Establish an expectation for planning through policy.
- Require the plan to be implemented and regularly evaluated.
- Ensure community and staff are involved in the process.
- Build public understanding and support for the schools.
- Don't allow "hot-button" issues to derail the plan; be consistent in following what has been laid out until it has been officially revised by stakeholders as part of a regular renewal process.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Does our district have an updated strategic plan?
- Does the board establish annual priorities or goals?
- Is a broad-based group involving the board, community members, students, and staff involved in creating and updating the strategic plan?
- Does the board consider the vision and goals of the strategic plan when making decision?

## INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM

The purpose of creating structure should always be to ensure higher student achievement. That comes about through the setting of high standards. The development of curriculum, measurement of student comprehension of material, disaggregating of test data to identify weak areas, approval of the best qualified staff hiring and the selection of our district's educational leader (the superintendent) are critical functions of school boards. Boards are not professional educators but are governance officials elected to oversee the public school system. Boards are responsible for setting high standards and then providing the resources necessary to achieve them. The other necessity is holding the district's educational leaders accountable for implementing those programs, which achieve standards the board has set. Having an

organizational structure that expects high standards for all students will build a public school system in your community that is supported by all its citizens.

The school board is responsible for establishing and maintaining a course of study. School board members should be aware of state student achievement standards, program offerings, graduation requirements, assessment tools and results, and their own district's curriculum, as well as federal accountability requirements.

Boards can play a major role in determining the success of the educational program by establishing a process for its development and review. Boards can begin this involvement by supporting a process that identifies the educational needs of the district and establishes educational goals to meet those needs. Boards that play an active role in establishing goals for their districts take the lead in directing the education of their students.

To be truly involved in establishing the educational program for the district, a board must be informed of student achievement. The board can compare what was actually learned with what was intended by the educational program to determine whether the educational goals are being met. Districts with no clear approach to developing and evaluating the educational program will be hard pressed to inform the public or the board about student achievement.

## DATA

Boards will be exposed to a wide array of data in their work. It is important for the board to spend time analyzing the data and understanding its relevance in raising student achievement. Some boards find it helpful to schedule times on their annual board calendar to examine student data. It is important for board members to be able to understand the data and how to relay that information to constituents. As budgets are created it is critical to understand the performance of the district through good data analysis so that resources can be allocated to the appropriate needs. Likewise, as boards approve their curriculum an understanding of

data will lead to good questions from the board. The data analysis will show where student achievement gaps exist.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Discuss and establish high instructional standards.
- Use data to evaluate the instructional program.
- Align curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What do we want students to know?
- Are all of our students learning?
- How is the curriculum developed, reviewed and assessed?

## COMPLIANCE WITH LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

We live in a litigious society and any resources used in defending board decisions or district actions are resources that could have been used on furthering student achievement.

One of the best ways for a school board to ensure compliance with legal requirements is by annually making sure the board policies are up-to-date legally and reflect any changes that occur in related federal or state statutes or regulations or court decisions.

Simply having policies in place is not enough however, if the district employees aren't diligent in following those policies. It's essential that administrators and other staff are clear that their decisions must be aligned with policy direction. In cases where there is no policy for guidance, the superintendent should have the authority from the board to seek legal counsel when significant questions arise, to make sure that any course of action taken is sound and in compliance with law. Advice sought prior

to taking action is usually less expensive than advice sought after the fact!

Most boards employ an attorney on an as-needed basis. The attorney is utilized for recommendations on labor negotiations, due process hearings, staff non-retentions, student expulsions, contract disputes and variety of other issues likely to have legal problems. Since this service can be very expensive, boards have protocols in place on how and when contact is made with their attorney. Typically only the board president and the superintendent are authorized to contact the school attorney.

As the board receives financial reports, it is a good idea to keep an eye on legal expenditures. If the budget for this line is unusually high, or expenditures exceed the budget it may indicate the need for the board to update its policies, to make sure that adequate policy guidance (or more staff training in how to follow them) is in place.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Keep board policies up to date legally.
- Ask for assurance that district staff uses policies for guidance in making decisions.
- Review legal expenditures periodically.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How does the board keep its policies up to date?
- Has the district had any significant legal problems in the past year or two?
- What percentage of our budget is set aside for legal costs?

### PERSONNEL

The school board employs the district's teachers, administrators, and support staff. These individuals shape the formal education of children as well as

the environment in which the schools operate. The superintendent recruits, recommends and supervises the district's employees under the guidance of the school board.

School districts negotiate over terms and conditions of employment with employees' representative groups. These terms and conditions of employment are contained in a collective bargaining agreement.

It is the responsibility of the school board to establish an effective district personnel program. The board should develop and adopt policies on many employee relations issues, including how the district will select a chief negotiator for collective bargaining negotiations, and how it will ensure that equal employment opportunity will be provided. The board should review the staff evaluation process on an annual basis.

All districts have professional development opportunities for teaching staff. The board has a responsibility to review those professional development plans to ensure they meet the vision of the district and directly address its goal of enhanced student achievement. Certainly, board members must always remain within their governance role, but board members taking an interest in assuring that teachers are given appropriate staff development sends a powerful message. A message that says we are adamant that our staff is properly trained in enhancing student achievement in our community.

As with the teaching staff, board members must also provide themselves with the training needed to accomplish their work. AASB offers many opportunities through leadership sessions, boardsmanship academies, in district workshops, online training and the annual conference. Always share with your constituency that you are training yourself to be a better board member. This is not a frivolous use of money but rather a wise investment in the person entrusted to ensure that student achievement is always the priority.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Hire and evaluate a superintendent and work together to achieve the vision.
- Establish criteria and policies for staff recruitment, evaluation and retention.
- Support professional development linked to the district vision and strategic plan.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What is the board's role in hiring, supervision, evaluation or firing?
- How does the board receive information about professional development?
- What is the board's role in negotiations?
- Are there things I should be aware of when communicating with staff?
- How should I handle staff concerns or complaints?

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## SUPPORT SERVICES

School districts cannot carry out their mission without support functions. In some districts students can't be educated without first being provided transportation to school. Clean and well-maintained buildings provide a comfortable and safe place for children to learn. Support staff also provides secretarial and logistical services that help teachers and administrators focus their attention on student learning. The list of support services is quite large, since the work of a school system is a complex operation.

It is the school board's responsibility to ensure that school support services occur

in an efficient manner and in support of the educational mission of the district. Because of this, board members should be familiar with the support services required to operate the district.

## STUDENT SERVICES

Services are available in many forms including programs for special needs, as well as other largely federal programs targeted to assist students with unique backgrounds.

District employees or contract workers from other districts or service providers may provide special education services. Often these services are extensive but board members must remember that the services provided are driven by the student's individual education plan (IEP). These plans are guided by federal and state law and mandate that a team of stakeholders participate in their formulation. The parent, regular classroom teacher, special education staff, and a school or district administrator are usually represented in these teams.

Other student services that are available in many schools and districts include federal programs such as Indian Education, Migrant Education, Johnson O'Malley, Title I (ESEA) and the like. In some cases these programs are administered by the district whereas local tribal governments administer others.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Survey students to identify needs.
- Prioritize student services so sound budget decisions can be made.
- Review options to identify the most effective means of providing student services.
- Study grant proposals as they come before the board for approval.
- In the case of programs that interface with the district but are administered by other agencies, request a review of the programs and their intentions.
- Invite the administrative agency controlling a grant that provides services to students to a meeting to learn about the program firsthand.
- Ensure policies are in place for student access.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What percent of the budget goes to student services?
- Which services does our district provide?
- Which student services are contracted out to another service provider?
- How does the district coordinate the various support programs in the best interest of the student?

## KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

- BP 3000** Concepts And Roles: Business And Non-Instructional Operations
- BP 4000** Concepts And Roles: Personnel
- BP 2121** Superintendent Contract
- BP 2122** Superintendent Job Description
- BP 4141** Negotiated Agreement
- BP 5000** Concepts And Roles: Students
- BP 6141** Curriculum Development And Evaluation

## REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Summary of strategic plan / goals
- Student performance standards/state and district
- Budget summary (graph of revenues and expenditures)
- Calendar of district staff in-services with topics
- Organizational chart
- List of key district personnel and contact information
- Superintendent contract
- Superintendent job description
- Negotiated agreements
- Profile of district:
  - Number of school sites
  - Average Daily Membership (number of students in full time equivalency)
  - Pupil-teacher ratio
  - Ethnic make-up of district
  - Poverty levels
  - Standardized test results
- Student statistics (annual change in ADM, transiency rate, attendance rate, dropout rate, graduation rate)
- Number of students receiving special education services
- FTE staff; budget amount, etc.



## 5. ACCOUNTABILITY: MEASURING PERFORMANCE

### BOARD FUNCTION:

The board measures district performance toward accomplishing the Vision and reports the results to the public.

### STANDARD 3.1

Board receives regular reports on student progress and needs based on a variety of assessments to evaluate the quality and equity of the educational program.

### STANDARD 3.2

Board evaluates superintendent and board performance annually and reports the results to the public.

### STANDARD 3.3

Board ensures long and short term plans are evaluated and revised with the needs of the students in mind.

### STANDARD 3.4

Board uses an understandable format to periodically report district performance.

Accountability is about evaluating the shared vision and telling the public how the district is doing in achieving the vision. It is directly related to student achievement!

Accountability is a broad responsibility, but no aspect of accountability is more important than the academic achievement of students and their success beyond their public school experience. Accountability means accepting your fair share of responsibility for outcomes. In public education, all stakeholders share accountability for success. The board should measure district performance based on progress toward accomplishing the district's vision. The results are reported to the public in a clear, understandable format.

Care should be taken to ensure that attention is paid to a variety of district activities that provide data to guide board action. These components are:



### STUDENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

If school boards are about student achievement and if the board's vision for the local district dictates that no other task is more important than student achievement then board members need to educate themselves on district assessments! Many assessments are in the forefront today...

- Norm-reference required CAT6/Terra Nova,
- State benchmark assessments,
- High School Graduation Qualifying Exam,
- College placement exams - SAT and ACT, plus
- Many localized assessments.

Districts administer and facilitate a variety of tests and assessments and are sometimes guilty of scanning lightly over the results. Most board members understand their roles as governance officials but have neither the desire nor qualifications to fully interpret the test results.

However, as governance officials, boards have a responsibility to ensure that the district is administering appropriate assessments needed to properly identify the needs of their students. Boards should know where the weaknesses exist in the school system prior to administering the Alaska High School Qualifying Examination or any other assessment!

Every board should require a comprehensive list of all assessments that are being administered, the students tested, and the purpose of each test. Board work sessions open to the public need to be devoted to understanding the test results.

Today, an additional responsibility is the requirement that test data be disaggregated. Disaggregation simply means that the board is able to see test scores separated by many criteria including ethnicity, economic status, gender, or school location. By seeing this data boards are able to determine where weaknesses exist-not to affix blame, but rather to implement corrective actions to maintain equity for all kids. While disaggregation is sometimes difficult to accomplish in districts with very small student enrollment, boards must provide an equitable education for all students. Disaggregation of data, now required by the federal Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is an important way for districts to ensure that ALL students are receiving the benefit of the board's vision.

Program and curriculum evaluations are important components in the process of ensuring that all children are learning at high levels and meeting the prescribed standard. Districts are instituting defined frameworks to guide development, selection, and adoption of curriculum, programs, and materials. Board members should look for these tools to be sure that recommendations for adoption have been screened using these established frameworks.



School boards must be ready to insist that ineffective programs are altered or discontinued if necessary to increase student achievement. All school districts face financial constraints. Boards simply cannot afford to do “business as usual” when requiring higher standards from students. Each program must be evaluated to determine if it still accomplishes its purpose and if the purpose remains a valid goal.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Obtain a list of all major assessments going on in the district.
- Schedule regular work sessions to review student achievement data.
- Ensure that board decisions are based on this data.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Are our policies in place to support student assessment and program evaluation?
- Are our programs and assessments aligned to district and state standards?
- What assessment reports do we receive? Are the results presented in a manner that promotes understanding?
- Is our assessment program complete and does it utilize multiple measures of student achievement?
- Do our publics - teachers, parents, students, and community - understand what our assessments measure?
- Is there evidence that teachers utilize assessment results to guide instruction? Revise curriculum? Select materials?
- Are the board, school, student, and family receiving assessment results in an understandable and timely manner? How and when does this occur?

### LONG AND SHORT TERM PLANS

Although long and short term plans are identified as an essential part of the structure of the school district, they also carry a critical role in accountability.

Ideally these plans are developed with the participation of the school board, administration and an appropriate group of stakeholders or constituent groups. Simply making plans, however, does not guarantee that change and growth will occur and result in student achievement. Planning should be seen as a cycle of continuous improvement that includes implementation, regular monitoring, annual evaluation and revision if necessary.

Plans, whether long term/strategic plans or short term plans, must be reviewed at least annually to assess whether expected progress is being made and expected outcomes are occurring. This provides an opportunity to renew the plan so that it will have a greater impact on student achievement. The renewal may ultimately influence board decisions on budget, staffing, curriculum or student services. As much as possible the annual review should include a representation of the stakeholders who originally designed it. Once the plan is updated, the board should formally act to accept it, thereby authorizing the superintendent to implement the plan.

Today, more and more districts are engaged not only in a district plan but school-based plans as well. How school-based plans are developed, reported, and approved should be evident. This is particularly important in light of new federal requirements related to Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Alaska’s mandated assessment program required for high school graduation.

Because of the comprehensive nature of planning that is ongoing in most districts, board members should be cognizant of the workload for the staff and community agencies to successfully implement the established vision. Remember that the plan should direct staff to focus on the highest established priorities. This requires discipline on the part of both staff and the board.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Require and schedule an annual review and renewal of significant district plans (i.e. Strategic Plans).
- Take formal action to approve the renewed plans.

#### Questions You Can Ask

- Is the strategic plan updated annually?
- How are the results of the strategic plan presented?

Is the reporting format in clear and quantifiable terms?

- How are the school board and staff held accountable for achieving the goals of the strategic plan?
- Is student achievement part of the superintendent's evaluation?

## SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION

One of the most important functions of the board is the evaluation of its superintendent. An evaluation instrument and process should be mutually established with specific timelines to accomplish the annual evaluation in a timely manner.

The evaluation of the superintendent is a review of his/her performance over the entire previous year. Often board members are unaware of the many actions taken by the superintendent and experience frustration when completing the evaluation. Many boards have found value in requiring the superintendent to complete a self evaluation in preparation for the boards' evaluation.

It is common practice for the superintendent to establish specific goals with board concurrence. These goals, as well as the district's comprehensive plan, become the basis for the evaluation. Often provisions for the evaluation are outlined in the employment contract to help solidify the process.

Care should be exercised by both parties if separation (retirement, voluntary departure, or dismissal) is occurring to better ensure that the completion of specific reports and projects are appropriately outlined in writing and fully addressed either by the outgoing superintendent or the incoming chief school administrator.

Board members should be apprised of the process used in the evaluation of the superintendent and the timeline for accomplishing the evaluation within an established framework.

Care should be exercised by both parties if separation (retirement, voluntary departure, or dismissal) is occurring to better ensure that the completion of specific reports and projects are appropriately outlined in writing and fully addressed either by the outgoing superintendent or the incoming chief school administrator.

A summary of the superintendent's evaluation should be made available to the public following completion of evaluation and any contract negotiations associated with the contract. Typically the summary would highlight accomplishments and any target areas the board and chief school administrator will be focusing on for the next year. In more rural communities, where the press may not readily be available, other established communication channels should be utilized to share that the evaluation has taken place and the results of the evaluation.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Review the evaluation process periodically to ensure it is effective.
- Develop a schedule for evaluating the superintendent.
- Report a summary of results to the public.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What are the timelines for the superintendent evaluation?
- Does the board adhere to the stated timelines?
- Is the superintendent held accountable for the overall direction and well-being of the district?
- Is student achievement part of the superintendent's evaluation?

## BOARD SELF ASSESSMENT

Feedback is essential to self improvement and the growth of a district and an annual self assessment should be the norm for a board focused on excellence. It is appropriate, when the district is securing feedback required by law for all certificated staff, to also ask the public to comment on the performance of the board. This external feedback can then be utilized in affirming perceptions that the board has of its own performance.

Many boards utilize a facilitator to assist them with the process of self assessment to both ensure that the self assessment occurs and that all board members have the opportunity to participate freely in the self assessment. Assessments generally address the board's prescribed goals

as well as targets established through the comprehensive plan. AASB has developed a board self assessment based on board standards that many boards use. The self assessment is available on the AASB website at [www.aasb.org](http://www.aasb.org) or by calling AASB at (907) 463-1660.

Modeling the importance of accountability throughout the system by conducting an annual board self assessment can be a powerful statement for everyone associated with the district. The superintendent should be present at all board evaluation deliberations and asked to contribute as appropriate to the discussion.

Though boards can do a self assessment on their own, many high functioning boards report that bringing in a neutral facilitator to lead the self assessment

discussion is more valuable. AASB staff is available to provide board self assessment facilitations.

A written summary of the board's self assessment and resulting plan for improvement should be presented to the public in a manner consistent with local practice. Lots of energy and thought go into the assessment and sharing with the public establishes a climate of transparency as well as ensuring the public that self improvement is key to long term success.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Review your assessment process periodically to ensure it is effective.
- Add board self assessment to your annual calendar.
- Report a summary of results to the public.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- When does the board self assessment typically occur?
- Does the board develop its own plan of improvement based on self assessment results?
- Is the superintendent involved in the discussions surrounding the board self assessment?

## REPORTS

The board is able to gauge the pulse of the district through the reports and board packets provided on an ongoing basis by the administration. These reports help ensure that planned activities are taking place and the progress is being made toward the district's vision. However, reports can sometimes become overwhelming for the board and cause the superintendent to spend an inordinate amount of time gathering and compiling information at the expense of other critical responsibilities. There should be an ongoing dialogue between the board and superintendent to determine what is "enough" and what is "too much."

Reports can be highly routine in nature such as the monthly financial report or specialized in nature such as a report compiled by a task force appointed by the board. Regardless of the report, the board should read each report thoroughly and be able to present concerns and/or recommendations.

Many reports will fall in the "standing" report category and include:

- Monthly financial reports
- Grant Applications
- Facilities and Construction
- Personnel
- Policy Updates

Other reports will be highly specialized in nature and include:

- Curriculum Adoptions
- Textbook Selection
- Comprehensive Planning Adoption
- Budget Development Status
- Student Academic Performance

Board members should feel comfortable asking questions about any report keeping in mind that many hours of work on the part of district staff and/or community volunteers went into the final report. Board members with a special interest in a particular area may find it beneficial to serve on the committee/task force or request verbal progress reports either privately with the superintendent or as part

of a board meeting agenda.

If it seems that the request of an individual member will take significant staff time, the request should go to the board first to make sure the board concurs that the concern warrants that expenditure of staff time.

Local communities elect boards and empower them with the responsibility for educating their most precious possession—their children. Boards owe them the courtesy of regular reports on how well their responsibilities are being carried out.

Reports will help board members ensure that the vision of the district is being accomplished and therefore should be taken seriously.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Schedule routine reports on the board calendar.
- Determine what kinds of reports need to be made available to the public throughout the year.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Does the board have a clear procedure on requesting reports?
- Are reports presented by staff and the superintendent concise, understandable, and professional in appearance? Do reports reference targeted strategic plan goals or objectives?
- Are timelines established for board receipt of routine reports?
- Do staff and board members adhere to time limits when reports are presented to and discussed by the board?
- Is there a mechanism for individual board members to learn more about a topic of interest or concern?
- How do I know which questions should go to the superintendent and which should go to the board as a whole?

### KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

**BP 3400** Business: Management Of District Assets/Accounts

**BP 3460** Business: Periodic Financial Reports

**BP 4115** Personnel: Evaluation/Supervision BP 0500 Curriculum: Review And Evaluation

**BP 0510** School District Report Card BP 0520 School Accountability/School Improvement BP 6010 Student Achievement

### REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Calendar of major academic assessments including dates tested, grade level
- Targeted date for availability of student results; distribution timeline to board, school, family, and student.
- Reports outlining test performance and Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requirements.
- 6-year curriculum review and adoption cycle.
- Membership on major curriculum, assessment, and instructional material adoption committees.
- Timeline for review and refinement of long term/strategic plans.
- Make-up of long term/strategic plan committee(s).
- Progress reports on targeted strategic plan activities.
- Any documents established to guide the superintendent evaluation.
- Forms and process utilized for the board self-assessment.
- A board calendar with routine reports the board can expect annually.



## 6. ADVOCACY: CHAMPIONS OF THE VISION

### BOARD FUNCTION

The board champions the vision

#### STANDARD 4.1

Board leads in celebrating the achievements of students and accomplishments of others who contribute to education.

#### STANDARD 4.2

Board advocates for children and families and establishes strong relationships with parents and other mentors to help support students.

#### STANDARD 4.3

Board establishes partnerships with individuals, groups, and organizations to promote educational opportunities for all students.

#### STANDARD 4.4

Board promotes school board service as a meaningful way to make long term contributions to the local community and society.

#### STANDARD 4.5

The board is proactive in identifying and addressing issues that affect the education of students.

In 1991 the AASB Board of Directors made an important determination. For the public to better understand what the purpose of school boards actually is, boards must focus more clearly on what is best for children. A child advocacy statement was created and an association goal encouraging child advocacy was developed. Today, AASB is correctly perceived as an organization that advocates for children. The same perceptions are at work in each of your local communities.

### CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT

It seems as if every newspaper, news magazine, talk show, government report,

or task force wants to tell the world what is wrong with public education. Advocating for children means telling

families, communities, politicians, non-educators, and especially children, what is right with education.

Today's public school students are receiving an education unsurpassed in the nation's history. Public schools are teaching more content, raising the achievement standards, and raising our own expectations for all children.

Public schools educate children with special needs—both mental and physical. They welcome children who speak a tremendous diversity of languages. Public schools believe that children of every religion deserve the best we can give. Boards value the diversity found in a multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds and strive to have young people accept and respect these differences. Increasing numbers of high school students take the SAT and ACT exams each year. And, their scores continue to rise every year. Alaska's graduates are being accepted into state colleges, private universities and technical schools and succeeding in their post-secondary studies. Kids are entering the increasingly complex work force and are showing that they are ready to take over for us. Our graduates are becoming husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, and showing a maturity that exceeds that of previous generations. Is public education doing its job? You bet! School boards need to spread that message. Advocacy demands that we celebrate the district's successes, and those successes are the students and those that support the students.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Recognize students who have distinguished themselves during your board meeting.
- Recognize adults who supported the young people who earned the award.
- Recognize school staff and community members who distinguished themselves.
- The board could begin each meeting with a brief report that highlights some of the positive things happening in the district on behalf of kids.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How does this board recognize students for outstanding accomplishments, both academic and extra curricular?

- How does this board recognize staff and community members, businesses, and organizations for their contributions?
- How are the successes of our district communicated to the public?

## ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND OTHERS

It takes a whole village to raise a child. This popular saying may be interpreted by some as usurping the authority and responsibility of parents. Here is another interpretation. A school board's vision of a caring community is one in which every adult in that community is supporting parents, as parents raise their children. In years past, if a student misbehaved it seemed as if every adult that knew about it was ready and willing to help correct the misbehavior! Kids quickly came to understand that a family had expectations and that those expectations were reinforced by other adults as well.

What does this have to do with board advocacy? As board members you are in a unique position to facilitate the participation of every adult in your community to become involved with children. In the book, *Helping Kids Succeed-Alaskan Style*, the chapters on support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, even the constructive use of time, all directly relate to the relationships that adults must build with youth if they are to be successful. Boards need the families of students as partners and vice versa. Ultimately it makes our communities a better place in which to live.

Building communities with strong support for education doesn't just happen. It takes work. AASB believes in promoting the shared responsibility for educating all youth. AASB's Alaska ICE (Initiative for Community Engagement) encourages communities to actively support youth both inside and outside the school house. This is done primarily by promoting the Asset Building Framework. Assets are the positive experiences and qualities that nourish healthy development. By building assets in youth, and encouraging healthy adult relationships with kids, AASB is doing its part to help build healthy, caring communities where kids flourish. (See Asset Framework p. 28 put here once book is laid out)

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Become a champion for increasing the support of children and youth throughout the district. Convene both public and private stakeholders to begin efforts to coordinate a community or district-wide vision for this support.
- Partner with other organizations in creating child-friendly public places, and safe places for teenagers to gather.
- Encourage municipal and village leaders to support and expand community-building initiatives.
- Make sure that the school staff is prioritizing your parent involvement policy.
- Through resolution, policy, training, and resource allocation, make asset development a top priority in the district.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Do we have a policy that encourages parent and community involvement?
- How do our schools involve parents?
- Does our school board actively discuss or promote Asset Building?
- How does the school provide opportunities for students to develop respectful and supportive relationships with one another and with positive adults?

## ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS

Do school boards have all the answers? No. Boards need partners from the community to assist in educating children. They make the school lessons relevant to real life. We see examples of this occurring all over Alaska. Boards need to ensure they are encouraging and recognizing these efforts. Partnerships need not be limited to urban Alaska and "big business," although these are

wonderful opportunities. Many rural boards invite elders into the schools to teach the traditional ways-hunting, fishing, dancing, story telling, beading, sewing, and many other extraordinary and critical skills.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Initiate opportunities to involve stakeholders in meaningful activities with students.
- Work with the staff to identify community resources to provide basic academic and enrichment activities to extend learning opportunities.
- Adopt policy that supports fostering partnerships with business, organizations and agencies.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- Does the board have policies to encourage partnerships?
- What business, organizations or agencies currently partner or collaborate with the school district or individual schools to extend learning opportunities?
- What kinds of opportunities are in currently in place for our kids as a result of these partnerships?
- How does the board ensure that the school communicates regularly with parents about school activities, goals, and expectations?
- Do your schools provide meaningful opportunities for parents to volunteer?

## PROMOTE BOARD SERVICE

Board members make amazing sacrifices to serve the needs of children. Why do they do it? Because they are engaged in a noble cause-leading the education of children.

There isn't another group of elected officials that have such an impact on communities and its families. School boards are entrusted with the most precious possession of each family-their child. Board policies and decisions will affect the entire lives of every student in the district.

If board members create a vision and stay the course, constituents will know that they've elected the correct person for the job and boards will be applauded for their work as advocates for youth.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Inform people of board elections, purpose, and responsibilities.
- Develop a marketing campaign to promote school board service.
- Provide a "basic orientation" to board service candidates after they file to run.
- Refer candidates to the AASB website at [aasb@aasb.org](mailto:aasb@aasb.org)

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What information does the board/district make available to encourage people to run for the school board?
- What information is available to help and learn more about what board service entails?

## POLITICAL ADVOCACY

An active legislature, responding to many worthwhile organizations, requires special attention from school boards so that lawmakers continue to give top priority to public education. School boards must learn the tactics of politics and lobbying if public schools are to remain strong. A strong and united school boards association plays a major role in the legislative arena.

Lobbying is the process whereby information is exchanged and constituent's views are made known to elected officials. The emphasis is on representing a point of view, not necessarily on getting a particular bill passed. Your viewpoint, if well expressed and backed up by facts, may be influencing government policy, causing those involved with the issue to give thought to your arguments and to adjust to them.

Your senator and representative are the most important legislators for you. Get well acquainted with them. Personal visits and written communications with lawmakers and their staff are part of a continuous year-round dialogue.

Some board members feel uncomfortable lobbying, as if there is something wrong with it. The fact is, you are doing the legislator a favor. You are bringing them a sample of



how the local, voting population feels on the issue. School board members are important to the legislators as a source of information and understanding on issues. Put yourself in their shoes. Wouldn't you rather make decisions based on solid, reliable, information and a good understanding of what the majority of your constituency wants?

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Invite your legislators into your schools, and provide them with important information on your district. Get to know your legislators and their aides.
- Stay abreast of proposed legislation that may impact your school district through regular reports from the superintendent.
- Join the AASB Legislative Network to receive weekly legislative bulletins or attend board training on lobbying, the legislative process, and updates on complicated legislation.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What are the critical issues facing the school district this year? Is there proposed legislation to address these issues?
- Are our legislators in the Majority or the Minority? How effective might they be in assisting the district?
- Have we selected a Legislative Liaison to serve on the AASB Legislative Network? Does the board review AASB's weekly Legislative Bulletin?

### REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Calendar of dates where the community and school intersect. (i.e. Dates of parent/ teacher conferences, community open houses, and athletic/ cultural events.)
- List of business partnerships.
- List of names and addresses of significant community leaders who spend time in the school.
- List of the community based committees and the names, addresses, and phone numbers of members.
- List of student and community awards, and update the list as individuals earn these distinctions.

### KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

**BP 1000** Concepts And Roles: Community Relations

**BP 6020** Parent Involvement

*Asset Building***THE SEARCH INSTITUTE'S LIST  
OF 40 ASSETS****EXTERNAL ASSETS:****SUPPORT**

1. Family support - Family life provides lots of love and support
2. Positive family communication - Youth and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and youth is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
3. Other adult resources - Youth receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
4. Caring neighborhood/village - Youth experiences caring neighbors.
5. Caring school climate - School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. Parent involvement in schooling - Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the youth succeed in school.

**EMPOWERMENT**

7. Community values youth - Youth perceives that adults in the community value young people.
8. Youth as resources - Youth are given useful roles in the community.
9. Service to others - Youth serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. Safety - Youth feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood/ village.

**BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS**

11. Family boundaries - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the youth's whereabouts.
12. School boundaries - School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. Neighborhood/village boundaries - Neighbors/ villagers take responsibility for monitoring the youth's behavior.

14. Adult role models - Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. Positive peer interactions - Youth's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. Expectations for growth - Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the youth to do well.

**CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME**

17. Creative activities - Youth spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre, or other arts.
18. Youth programs - Youth spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/ or in community organizations.
19. Religious community - Youth spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. Positive, supervised time at home - Youth is out with friends "with nothing special to do," two or fewer nights per week.

**INTERNAL ASSETS:****COMMITMENT TO LEARNING**

21. Achievement expectation - Youth is motivated to do well in school.
22. School engagement - Youth is actively engaged in learning.
23. Homework - Youth reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. Bonding to school - Youth cares about her or his school.
25. Reading for pleasure - Youth reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

**POSITIVE VALUES**

26. Caring - youth places high value on helping other people.
27. Equality and social justice - youth places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. Integrity - Youth acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. Honesty - Youth “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
30. Responsibility - Youth accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. Healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes - Youth believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

**SOCIAL SKILLS**

32. Planning and decision-making - Youth knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. Interpersonal competence - Youth has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. Cultural competence - Youth has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. Resistance skills - Youth can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. Peaceful conflict resolution - Youth seeks to resolve

conflict nonviolently.

**POSITIVE IDENTITY**

37. Personal power - Youth feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”
38. Self-esteem - Youth reports having a high self-esteem.
39. Sense of purpose - Youth reports that “my life has a purpose.”
40. Positive view of personal future - Youth is optimistic about her or his personal future.

## 7. CONDUCT AND ETHICS

### BOARD FUNCTION:

The board and its individual members conduct district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner.

### STANDARD 5.1

Board and its individual members perform in a manner that reflects service to the community on behalf of students.

### STANDARD 5.2

Board demonstrates commitment to continually improving teamwork, problem solving, and decision making skills through a conscious program of board development.

### STANDARD 5.3

Expenditures for board activities are clearly identified in the budget, related to the district vision and open to public scrutiny.

When the AASB Board Standards Committee met in 1998 to develop standards, the first four standards—vision, structure, accountability and advocacy—were fairly easy to formulate and made sense to everyone. It was “common sense” boardsmanship. But the committee felt that something was missing. As they brainstormed to come up with a model school board, the idea emerged that the most important element for any individual board member as well as the collective board was to possess something they labeled Conduct and Ethics.

As the AASB Board of Directors presented the new Alaska Board Standards to the Legislature and to board members from other states, it left a meaningful impression on each audience. This is the “heart and soul” of Board Standards. How can boards possibly hope to accomplish any of their goals unless they actively and consistently live their personal and board lives with the highest ethical behavior? Many board members have learned the lesson that you don’t stop being board members when the meeting closes! And every eye in the community is on us both in and out of the boardroom.

### REFLECT SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY ON BEHALF OF STUDENTS

The key phrase here is “service to the community.” Board members often use the phrase, “our children

are our community’s future.” If that statement is true, then the highest service to your community is to ensure that your children receive an education that will enable them to take over the reins upon reaching adulthood. School board service is not a stepping-stone to higher political office or a way to advance one’s personal agenda. School board service is not about “me” or any other issue other than the kids in your communities. Board members must conduct themselves in a manner that engenders trust. Individuals may not agree with us but they must believe that what boards are doing is what they believe is best for students with no ulterior motive.

“Reflecting service to the community on behalf of students” requires a deeper understanding than what might be understood at first blush. One of the basic tenets of being a good board member is to remember that even though you might have been elected by a designated area, your job is to help determine what is best for all the students in the district, not just in your election district or your particular community. This requires a concerted effort on the part of every board member to strive for an unusual degree of statesmanship. It often means being prepared to explain a board decision to your constituents when they may not be happy about it, but you will know you’ve done the right thing if it is done in the best interest of all students.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Review adopted Board Standards periodically.
- Annually review the board's Code of Ethics in the district policy manual and re-commit to that code.
- Annually conduct a board-self assessment that includes an examination of how the board conducts itself in carrying out the district's business and results in an identifiable plan for improvement. Survey the community on their opinion in this area on a periodic basis.
- Periodically review the Conflict of Interest statute and board policy.
- Memorize the district's "chain of communications" protocol so you know how to direct complaints appropriately without compromising your objective governance role, which may ultimately require you to be the hearing body to make the final determination on a complaint.
- Become familiar with the legal requirements of the Open Meetings Act and the district policy on the use of e-mail for communications, which places parameters on how board member converse with each other, the staff or the community in the interest of open government.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- When does the board conduct its annual self-assessment?
- How do I appropriately handle public concerns or complaints in a way to help "serve" my community yet observe my role as a board member?

## BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS

One of the most essential elements necessary for an effective school board is the relationship they have with their superintendent. Teamwork is the hallmark of a sound relationship, based on shared goals, mutual trust, open communications and a clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent.

A "textbook" description of appropriate roles suggests that

the board is the policy body and the superintendent is there to administer those policies. In actual practice the distinction is rarely that clear, however, so it is critical that the board and superintendent develop clear expectations of the other and are in full agreement as to how those roles are observed. Formal documents such as district policies and the superintendent's job description help in defining what the board and superintendent are responsible for. Regular board self-assessment and evaluation of the superintendent will help the team continue to examine their respective roles and keep communications open.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Establish protocols for open communication between the board and superintendent that will foster mutual trust and confidence.
- Review the goals of the district, as well as goals set by/for the board and the superintendent. Discuss the role of the board and superintendent in accomplishing those goals.
- During an annual board development work session, schedule some time for discussion of board / superintendent expectations about respective roles and responsibilities in general.
- Review existing communications practices between the board and superintendent to determine if they meet the needs of all involved. (Is there enough or too much? Is information distributed equitably to all team members?)
- Don't damage trust by bringing "surprises" to the board table.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- When does the board and superintendent have a discussion about their respective roles and responsibilities?
- What communications practices are in place that support open communications between individual board members, the board as a whole, and the superintendent?
- Who do I go to when I have questions about district operations or the board agenda?

## THE BOARD PRESIDENT'S ROLE

As the board's designated leader, the president performs the following tasks:

- Plans the agenda with the superintendent, with input from board members
- Opens the meeting
- Runs the meeting according to the rules of order and bylaws established by the board
- Announces the order of business
- Recognizes members who wish to speak
- Rules a motion out of order or puts it to a vote
- Announces the results of each vote
- Enforces all questions of order
- Authenticates by signature all the board's acts, orders and procedures
- Requires speakers to identify themselves
- Rules inappropriate comments out of order
- Enforces time limits
- Adjourns the meeting
- Whenever necessary, help the board stay focused on the district's vision, goals and plan when discussion wanders into unrelated areas; re-direct and re-focus the board's attention on established priorities.

## MEETINGS

A school board carries out its duties and exercises its powers through official action taken at a properly convened meeting. Most boards use Parliamentary Procedure to help focus the discussion and organize the session.

The actions taken at board meetings should support the district's Vision. Planning and preparing for board meetings is a board responsibility.

An executive session is a closed meeting attended only by the board and those invited by the board. Executive sessions may only be called to discuss topics specified by the Open Meetings Law (AS 44.62.310-312) and must

be convened at an open meeting by a majority vote of the board. The motion to convene an executive session must include the general topic to be discussed but doesn't

need to be so specific to indicate the particular issue. (See AS 44.62.310, p.56)

The topics boards may discuss in executive session are:

- Matters, the immediate knowledge of which would clearly have an adverse effect on upon the finances of the districts
- (i.e. deciding which parcel of land to purchase for building a new school or contract negotiations strategy).
- Subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person, provided the person may request a public discussion (i.e. a discipline hearing taken against an employee).
- Matters which by law, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential.
- Matters involving consideration of government records that by law are not subject to public disclosure. (For example, reviewing a teacher's personnel file.)

## MEETING TYPES DEFINED

(All meetings of a school board are subject to the Alaska Open Meetings Act AS 44.62.310-312)

**Regular Meetings:** Regularly scheduled meeting of the board; may be monthly, bi-monthly or weekly, depending on the schedule set by the board. Agenda for regular meetings is set in advance; reasonable public notice is posted with date, time, place and agenda. Open to the public.

**Special Meetings:** Called to discuss specific issues, usually where time is a factor in making decisions. Discussion is confined to items listed on agenda. Public notice must be at least 24 hours and should include date, time, place and agenda. Open to the public.

**Executive Session:** Used sparingly, this allows the board to go behind closed doors for discussion on a specified topic during a regular or special meeting, as long as the topic

under discussion meets criteria set forth in state law. No decisions may be made in executive session; any formal action made as a result of executive session discussion must be made in an open meeting.

**Public Hearings:** Held to gather public input on a particular issue. No deliberation occurs on the part of the board at a public hearing and no action is taken, but the issue under discussion is usually calendared on an agenda of a regular or special meeting for further discussion or action by the board. Reasonable public notice is given.

**Work Sessions:** Held to allow the board to participate in informal discussion on a particular topic as a means of gaining more in-depth knowledge; also is the format most boards use when scheduling in-district school board training. Reasonable public notice should be given. Public may attend but public participation is at the discretion of the board.

**Committee Meetings:** Committees established by the board to work on special issues must be limited to less than a majority of the board in their membership. Committee meetings must be given reasonable public notice.

**Organizational Meeting:** First official meeting of each year, at which the board elects officers.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- 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 occur in executive session.
- Develop the agenda jointly with the superintendent.
- Prepare thoroughly for each meeting by reading all supporting materials and formulating questions in advance.
- Provide adequate opportunity for public

participation.

- Use the meeting to discuss and assess the district's instructional program, goals, and results.
- Include time during meetings to review the district's Structure.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How is our board meeting agenda developed?
- Do we have a calendar for our meetings?
- How much time do we spend on Vision, Advocacy, Accountability, and Structure?
- Is our meeting one held in public, or is it a public meeting? What is the difference?
- How do I appropriately express my own views when they are in opposition to the board?
- What is appropriate and legal when communicating with staff, the public or other board members about school matters both in and out of board meetings?

## COMMITTEES: ASSISTING THE BOARD

A board's decision-making process may rely on the use of committees. These may be standing committees of the board or board committees on special topics that include staff and/or citizens. Occasionally a board will appoint a citizens committee to gather information.

The following are issues to consider when forming committees:

**Members** - Identify critical stakeholders in the issue the committee is working on and strive to provide balanced representation.

**Purpose** - Clearly state the purpose for which the committee is being formed; this will assist in clear communication to committee members who may not necessarily have been privy to the original discussion that resulted in the committee being formed.

**Parameters** - Identifying the parameters of the committee's charge will clarify the expectations of those who appointed the committee. If there are policies that direct a particular

committee's work, include those here. This will prevent the committee from exceeding their charge and meeting with frustration later.

**Tasks** - State the specific tasks that need to be accomplished in order to satisfy the committee's purpose. Where possible, identify who is responsible for seeing each task to completion.

**Timelines** - Identify the timelines for various tasks so that there is a clear expectation by all involved as to when certain things will be done, and how closure to the committee's work will occur.

**Policy** - Identify relevant Board policies and administrative regulations.

**Resources** - Identify staff members, funds or other resources available to help the committee complete its tasks.

## BOARD DEVELOPMENT: CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

It has been said, the most awkward looking animal on our planet, the camel, was undoubtedly designed by committee! The camel has a reputation for being a vile tempered, vicious, spiteful beast that one should never turn their back on. Why then would we ever want to set up school boards on the committee model? The public elects board members, sometimes in the same election, who are conservatives and liberals and everything in between! On boards we have parents and non-parents. Women and men. We comprise every ethnic makeup imaginable. Boards are made up of college graduates, high school graduates and dropouts. None of them are alike, and yet they're supposed to arrive at a common vision. How do boards do that?

Effective boards approach their duties as a team, just as any sports team approaches its goal of winning the game. Board members argue and cajole for position, but at some point they all compromise and reach consensus. No one gets everything they want and all of them have to give up something important.

Within a board who uses this model the only winners are the students. With the different types of members

on each board it is essential that everyone avail himself or herself of every opportunity for board development. Board members owe it to their students to become the best possible board member they can be.

## WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Provide an orientation for new board members immediately upon their election, so they are familiar with the board's role, protocols and district operations, and can become constructive contributing members of the board from the outset of their board term.
- Develop an annual plan for board development that requires every board member to commit to appropriate activities to strengthen personal skills, knowledge and teamwork.
- Report back to the public on board development activities in a way that clearly identifies the value to the school district in fostering student achievement.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- What can I expect as an orientation to board service in general and the district in particular?
- 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?
- What kind of report am I expected to give after attending a board development activity?

## BOARD EXPENDITURES: AN OPEN BOOK

Nothing makes the public perk up more than an inappropriate use of public funds. As discussed under the Budget/Finance section in the chapter on Structure, an open budget process is an important way to assure the public that public dollars are being spent wisely in support of student achievement.

This assurance must extend to how the board spends the dollars it budgets to support its own function. Boards need to be able to explain how the financial resources it



allocates for itself are directly tied to the district's vision. There should be a firm commitment from each board member that funds dedicated to board development will result in increased knowledge and skills that will ultimately benefit their students.

Since the board has an obligation to make sure that the district is in legal compliance at all levels, board members should monitor the expenditures for legal costs, which are typically included in the board section of the budget.

When the defining question "Is it good for kids?" can be answered "Yes!" to expenditures in this budget section, then you will have fulfilled the trust of the citizens in your community.

### WHAT BOARDS CAN DO

- Annually determine the board development opportunities they feel are important to keeping their board prepared to do their job effectively, and build a reasonable and justifiable budget to invest in that endeavor.
- When board members travel out of district or hold an in-district board development workshop, provide a public report at the next board meeting and for the media to highlight knowledge or skills gained that will benefit students.
- Make sure that "Is it good for kids?" is a criteria that is used when budgeting and expending dollars to support the board.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK

- How much of the board's budget is set aside for board development opportunities?
- What other kinds of expenses are included in the board section of the budget?
- Which board development opportunities may I be expected to participate in over the next year and how do I access those?

### KEY POLICIES TO INCLUDE

(Include relevant district policies. Below is a list of suggested policies from the AASB Policy Manual.)

- BP 1312** Public Complaints About The Schools
- BB 9000** Role Of Board And Members
- BB 9010** Public Statements
- BB 9011** Disclosure Of Confidential Information
- BB 9012** Communications To And From The Board
- BB 9270** Conflict Of Interest
- BB 9271** School Board Code Of Ethics
- BB 9321** Executive Session
- BB 9322** Agenda/Meetings
- BB 9323** Meeting Conduct (Protocols)

### REFERENCES TO INCLUDE

(Suggestions for district-specific information that can be included as a reference.)

- Board Standards
- Most recent board plan of improvement (from board self assessment) if any
- Annual Board Calendar
- Superintendent's Contract

# ALASKA OPEN MEETINGS ACT

## AS 44.62.3 IO. GOVERNMENT PUBLIC MEETINGS.

- (a) All meetings of a governmental body of a public entity of the state are open to the public except as otherwise provided by this section or another provision of law. Attendance and participation at meetings by members of the public or by members of a governmental body may be by teleconferencing. Agency materials that are to be considered at the meeting shall be made available at teleconference locations if practicable. Except when voice votes are authorized, the vote shall be conducted in such a manner that the public may know the vote of each person entitled to vote. The vote at a meeting held by teleconference shall be taken by roll call. This section does not apply to any votes required to be taken to organize a governmental body described in this subsection.
- (b) If permitted subjects are to be discussed at a meeting in executive session, the meeting must first be convened as a public meeting and the question of holding an executive session to discuss matters that are listed in (c) of this section shall be determined by a majority vote of the governmental body. The motion to convene in executive session must clearly and with specificity describe the subject of the proposed executive session without defeating the purpose of addressing the subject in private. Subjects may not be considered at the executive session except those mentioned in the motion calling for the executive session unless auxiliary to the main question. Action may not be taken at an executive session, except to give direction to an attorney or labor negotiator regarding the handling of a specific legal matter or pending labor negotiations.
- (c) The following subjects may be considered in an executive session:
- (1) matters, the immediate knowledge of which would clearly have an adverse effect upon the finances of the public entity;
  - (2) subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person, provided the person may request a public discussion;
  - (3) matters which by law, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential;
  - (4) matters involving consideration of government records that by law are not subject to public disclosure.
- (d) This section does not apply to
- (1) a governmental body performing a judicial or quasi-judicial function when holding a meeting solely to make a decision in an adjudicatory proceeding;
  - (2) juries;
  - (3) parole or pardon boards;
  - (4) meetings of a hospital medical staff;
  - (5) meetings of the governmental body or any committee of a hospital when holding a meeting solely to act upon matters of professional qualifications, privileges or discipline;
  - (6) staff meetings or other gatherings of the employees of a public entity, including meetings of an employee group established by policy of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska or held while acting in an advisory capacity to the Board of Regents; or
  - (7) meetings held for the purpose of participating in or attending a gathering of a national, state, or regional organization of which the public entity, governmental body, or member of the governmental body is a member, but only if no action is taken and no business of the governmental body is conducted at the meetings.
- (e) Reasonable public notice shall be given for all meetings required to be open under this section. The notice must include the date, time, and place of the meeting and if, the meeting is by teleconference, the location of any teleconferencing facilities that will be used. Subject to posting notice of a meeting on the Alaska Online Public Notice System as required by AS 44.62.175 (a), the notice may be given using print or broadcast media. The notice shall be posted at the principal office of the public entity or, if the public entity has no principal office, at a place designated by the governmental body. The governmental body shall provide notice in a consistent fashion for all its meetings.
- (f) Action taken contrary to this section is voidable. A lawsuit to void an action taken in violation of this section must be filed in superior court within 180 days after the date of the action. A member of a

governmental body may not be named in an action to enforce this section in the member's personal capacity. A governmental body that violates or is alleged to have violated this section may cure the violation or alleged violation by holding another meeting in compliance with notice and other requirements of this section and conducting a substantial and public reconsideration of the matters considered at the original meeting. If the court finds that an action is void, the governmental body may discuss and act on the matter at another meeting held in compliance with this section. A court may hold that an action taken at a meeting held in violation of this section is void only if the court finds that, considering all of the circumstances, the public interest in compliance with this section outweighs the harm that would be caused to the public interest and to the public entity by voiding the action. In making this determination, the court shall consider at least the following:

- (1) the expense that may be incurred by the public entity, other governmental bodies, and individuals if the action is voided;
- (2) the disruption that may be caused to the affairs of the public entity, other governmental bodies, and individuals if the action is voided;
- (3) the degree to which the public entity, other governmental bodies, and individuals may be exposed to additional litigation if the action is voided;
- (4) the extent to which the governing body, in meetings held in compliance with this section, has previously considered the subject;
- (5) the amount of time that has passed since the action was taken;
- (6) the degree to which the public entity, other governmental bodies, or individuals have come to rely on the action;
- (7) whether and to what extent the governmental body has, before or after the lawsuit was filed to void the action, engaged in or attempted to engage in the public reconsideration of matters originally considered in violation of this section;
- (8) the degree to which violations of this section were wilful, flagrant, or obvious;
- (9) the degree to which the governing body failed to

adhere to the policy under AS 44.62.312 (a).

- (g) Subsection (f) of this section does not apply to a governmental body that has only authority to advise or make recommendations to a public entity and has no authority to establish policies or make decisions for the public entity.
- (h) In this section,
  - (1) "governmental body" means an assembly, council, board, commission, committee, or other similar body of a public entity with the authority to establish policies or make decisions for the public entity or with the authority to advise or make recommendations to the public entity; "governmental body" includes the members of a subcommittee or other subordinate unit of a governmental body if the subordinate unit consists of two or more members;
  - (2) "meeting" means a gathering of members of a governmental body when
    - (i) more than three members or a majority of the members, whichever is less, are present, a matter upon which the governmental body is empowered to act is considered by the members collectively, and the governmental body has the authority to establish policies or make decisions for a public entity; or
    - (ii) the gathering is prearranged for the purpose of considering a matter upon which the governmental body is empowered to act and the governmental body has only authority to advise or make recommendations for a public entity but has no authority to establish policies or make decisions for the public entity;
  - (3) "public entity" means an entity of the state or of a political subdivision of the state including an agency, a board or commission, the University of Alaska, a public authority or corporation, a municipality, a school district, and other governmental units of the state or a political subdivision of the state; it does not include the court system or the legislative branch of state government.

*Addendum***BASIC PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

- Parliamentary procedure is a logical process designed to aid group deliberations in a democratic society.
- If the procedure is cumbersome, it should be changed
- To be most effective, the procedure must make sense
- Parliamentary procedures do not have the force of law
- They do not bind anyone or any group unless formally adopted
- The adopted procedures remain in effect until rescinded permanently or set aside for a particular instance
- Parliamentary procedures may not supersede laws or regulations

**MAIN MOTIONS**

A **main motion** brings business before the board for action:

- It requires a second
- It can be debated
- It may be amended. If amended, the amendment must be considered prior to acting on the original motion
- It must be adopted by majority vote
- It can not conflict with bylaws or policy of the board
- Each motion should deal with only one point
- Each motion must be recorded in the board minutes

**Main Motions Not In Order**

- No main motion is in order which conflicts with national, state, or local law.
- No main motion is in order, which presents substantially the same question as a motion previously, rejected during the same session.
- A main motion that proposes action outside the scope of the organization's object as defined in the bylaws.

**STEPS IN HANDLING A MOTION****1. A member makes the motion**

- A long motion should be written out and passed to the Chairman. It is best to have motions properly worded by the Superintendent/staff.
- A few brief words of introduction or explanation may precede the making of the motion, but the debate should not begin at this point.
- The mover of the motion may request the assistance of the Chairman in getting a precise wording of the motion. This should be done before the Chairman formally places the motion before the board.

**2. Seconding a motion**

- If no member seconds the motion, the motion fails. The Chairman must be sure that all have heard it before proceeding to other business.
- A second merely implies that the motion should come before the meeting and not necessarily that the motion is favored. You are not required or obligated to vote for a motion just because you make or second the motion.
- Some things that do not require a second include:
  - Nominations
  - Call for a division of the assembly
  - Parliamentary inquiry
  - Point of information
  - Point of order

**3. The stating of the question by the Chairman**

- When a motion that is in order has been made and seconded, the Chairman formally places it before the assembly by stating the question.
- The Chairman must state the question unless:
  - It is out of order.
  - The wording is not clear. If the wording is not clear, the Chairman must see that it is put in order before it is stated.
  - Until the Chairman states the questions, the maker has the right to revise it.

- Modifying or withdrawing a motion
- Until the Chairman states the question, the maker has the right to modify the motion or to withdraw it entirely.
- After the Chairman has stated the question, the motion becomes the property of the assembly, and the maker cannot modify or withdraw the motion without the assembly's consent.

#### 4. Debate on the question

- Turn first to the maker of the motion to see if he/she wishes to speak.
- Debate must be confined to the merits of the pending question.
- The Chairman has the same rights as all other members unless your bylaws or rules specify otherwise.
- The speaker should not be interrupted so long as he/she does not violate the rules of the assembly.
- The presiding officer cannot close debate so long as any member who has not exhausted his right to debate desires the floor, except by a CALL FOR THE PREVIOUS QUESTION, which requires a two-thirds vote if someone "calls the question" the Chairman may ask "Is there any objection to calling the question?" If there is unanimous consent, you may close debate. If there is not unanimous consent, you must vote on the CALL FOR THE QUESTION.

#### 5. Putting the Question

- Before calling for the vote the Chairman must repeat the motion pending so that everyone knows what the vote is about.
- The normal method of voting is by voice vote unless the board has agreed to a different type of voting such as a show of hands or a rising vote. DO NOT vary the way you vote according to your opinion of the importance of the motion.
- The Chairman must always call for the negative vote no matter how near unanimous the vote may appear.
- If the voice vote or a rising vote appears to be inconclusive any member of the assembly may call for a "division of the house" so that an accurate count can be taken.

#### 6. Announce the voting result. Action On A Main Motion

##### 1.Refer To Committee:

- Requires a second
- Set deadline for a report back to the board
- Motion is debatable (call for question)
- Requires a majority vote

##### 2.Table A Motion:

- Requires a second
- Can not be debated (do not call for question)
- Requires a majority vote
- No time is set for removing from table. It is only removed after progress is made.

##### 3.To Take From The Table (To Remove):

- Requires a second
- Can not be debated (do not call for question)
- Requires a majority vote
- Can be removed after there has been progress

##### 4. Postpone Motion:

- Requires a second
- Can be debated (call for question)
- Can include future date for considering motion
- Requires a majority vote

##### 5. Motion To Reconsider:

- Mover of motion must have voted with the prevailing side, in other words, the mover must be one who voted with the majority for or against the original motion
- Requires a second
- Can be debated (call for question)
- The motion to reconsider can be made only on the same day the vote to be reconsidered was taken.

- Requires a majority vote

#### **6. Rescind A Motion:**

- The motion to rescind can be applied to any action taken providing that none of the action involved has been carried out in a way it is too late to undo.
- The motion requires (a) a two-thirds vote or (b) a majority vote when notice of the motion has been provided in the call of the meeting
- Mover of the motion to rescind must have voted with the prevailing side
- Can not be done at the same session at which the motion was acted Upon
- Can be debated (call for question)
- Requires a second.

#### **7. Close Debate:**

- Requires a second
- Can not be debated (do not call for question)
- Requires a majority vote
- Applies to any debatable motion

#### **8. Recess & Adjournment**

- A recess is a short intermission within a meeting which does not end the meeting or destroy its continuity.
- An adjournment terminates the meeting.
- Requires a second and requires a majority vote
- Can not be debated



## 8. GLOSSARY

**AASA** The Alaska Association of School Administrators, the state professional organization for school administrators. Also, the American Association of School Administrators.

**AASB** The Association of Alaska School Boards is the state advocacy organization for public school governance in Alaska, which is an affiliate of the National School Boards Association.

**AASG** Association of Alaska School Governments, a student-run organization that provides leadership training and lends a student voice on issues at the local, state and national levels. Sponsored by the Alaska School Activities Association, Inc.

**ADM** Average Daily Membership—a formula used to determine the average number of students enrolled in a school system, usually for determining the amount of money a district will receive from state or federal sources.

**ASAA** Alaska School Activities Association, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization established to direct, develop and support Alaska's high school interscholastic sports, academic and fine arts activities.

**AFT** American Federation of Teachers, the national teacher union affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

**ALASBO** Alaska School Business Officials, a professional association which provides programs and services to promote the highest standards of school business management practices.

**ALASKA ICE** AASB's Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement.

**Advisory School Board** A group chosen to advise on educational issues within a community, which does not have final decision making power.

**Arbitration** A method of settling disputes through recourse to an impartial third party whose decision is usually final and binding on both parties. The term normally refers to collective bargaining. Mediation is the term used when the third party decision is advisory only.

**ASAA** Alaska School Activities Association, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization established to direct, develop and support Alaska's high school interscholastic

sports, academic and fine arts activities.

**Assessment** Processes of appraising or evaluating student work. (See Evaluation, Testing.)

**Assets/Asset Building** Key building blocks in children's lives that help them grow up strong, capable, and caring-successful. Based on research on resiliency done by the Search Institute in Minnesota. Researchers found 40 assets kids need to be successful. The more assets kids have, the more successful they are.

**AYP** Adequate Yearly Progress, a measurement of NCLB used to determine whether schools and groups within schools have met the benchmarks established for student achievement.

**Bargaining Unit** A group of employees that has been recognized by the employer for purposes of collective bargaining.

**Budget** An estimate of proposed expenditures for a given period or purpose; and the proposed means of financing for it. A plan of action in terms of money.

**Capital Expenditures** Money spent for the construction of facilities, major renovation, or items which are required to be inventoried (fixed assets).

**Certificated Employees** A person whose contract requires that he hold a certificate from the state.

**Charter School** Autonomous schools that are given regulatory freedom in exchange for meeting performance standards specified either in contracts or charters. In Alaska, charter schools are public schools run under the auspices of a local school board.

**Chief Executive Officer** (See Superintendent)

**Classified Employees** Include all non-certificated employees, excluding director-level exempt administrators and principals. e.g. Food service workers, maintenance personnel, school secretaries, bus drivers, teacher aides.

**Collective Bargaining** The attempt of employee and employer representatives to reach an agreement on conditions of employment, usually implying the presence of a union, and usually pertaining to wages and working conditions.



**Contract** The general term used for agreement between the teacher and the employer, and a general term used for agreements between teacher and students relating to individualized study.

**Curriculum** A course of study offered by a school or one of its parts. Curriculum is what students should know, be able to do and be committed to (content), how it is taught (instruction), how it is measured (assessment), and how the educational system is organized (context).

**EED** Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

**Evaluation** The process of testing, appraising, and judging achievement, growth, product, and process or changes in these using formal or informal techniques.

**Executive Session** A non-public meeting which under Alaska law may be held only for limited reasons.

**Federal Impact Aid** Money granted to school districts in lieu of property taxes for federally owned property in the district.

**Foundation Formula** A formula set by legislative action that determines the amount of money allocated by the state per student.

**Grievance** A statement of dissatisfaction, usually concerning the interpretation of a collective bargaining agreement.

**Grievance Procedure** A method of dealing with a statement of dissatisfaction which is set out in the collective bargaining agreement, and allows the work place to continue operation without interruption.

**HSGQE** Alaska's High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, mandated by the legislature. Also known as Exit Exam. Passage is required in order for students to receive a diploma.

**IDEA** Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. (See Special Education.)

**IEP** Individual Education Plans developed by professionals and parents to lay out a course of study suitable for the student.

**Impasse** The point in labor negotiations at which either

party determines that no further progress can be made toward reaching an agreement. Technical impasse refers to that point at which agreement is supposed to be reached and is not, but when parties continue to bargain in good faith. In public employment, impasses are often resolved by the intervention of a neutral third party, such as a mediator or fact finder.

**In-service** General term used to include the activities and assistance given to school district staff to help them become more effective teachers.

**Mediation** In the course of collective bargaining, a process by which a third party attempts to assist the negotiators to reach an agreement.

**Multiple Intelligences** Howard Gardner proposes that all humans are endowed with seven forms of intelligence: mathematical/ logical, linguistic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, and kinesthetic. Schools usually emphasize the linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligences.

**NCLB** No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, (see ESEA) providing significant increased accountability and new requirements for states and local schools. Institutes significant reforms in federal education programs and establishes new requirements for districts receiving federal funds.

**NEA** National Education Association, one of two major teacher unions in the United States.

**Negotiated Agreement** The written agreement between two parties, often referring to collective bargaining between employer and employee groups.

**Nontenured** A teacher who has not achieved tenure in employment, e.g., probationary

**NSBA** The National School Boards Association is the national advocacy organization for public school governance.

**Policy** A statement adopted by a board of education or administrative agency outlining principles to be followed with respect to specific matters; usually requires rules or regulations to be adopted or its implementation and is broad enough to provide for administrative decision

regarding the manner in which it is to be implemented, although its implementation in some manner is mandatory.

**Policy Manual** The compiled written policies of a school district, which outlines the principles to be followed in governing the district.

**PTR** Pupil-teacher ratio-The average number of pupils per teacher in a system or school.

**Public Law 874** Federal law that provides funds to school districts.

**QSI** Quality Schools Initiative

**REAA** Regional Education Attendance Area designation given to school districts established in the Unorganized Borough.

**Recall** The procedure by which the qualified electors of a given area may remove from office those officials who have been elected by the voters of the same area such as city, borough or REAA school board members.

**SCCS** School Climate and Connectedness Survey

### Special Education Acronyms

ADA Americans with Disabilities Act

FAPE Free appropriate education

FERPA Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

IDEA Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act or P.L. 94-142)

IEE Independent educational evaluation

IEP Individualized education program

LEA Local education agency (school district)

SESA Special Education Service Agency

SED Severely Emotionally Disturbed

SpEd Special Education

504 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

**Statutes** Laws enacted by the legislative branch upon which educational regulations are based.

**Superintendent** The chief executive officer of a school district who is hired by the school board and manages the district according to law and adopted policy.

**Title I, Title II, etc.** Refers to the various titles of the programs of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

**Title I** Targeted federal assistance in high poverty schools.

**Title II** Teacher quality programs (preparing, training and recruiting programs).

**Title III** Federal funds used to implement language instruction to foster English fluency.

**Title IV** Safe and drug-free schools and communities (includes after-school programs).

**Title V** State and local innovative programs (charter schools, focus on minorities, etc.)

**Title VI** Local flex demonstrations, rural education initiative (funds for rural schools).

**Title VII** Special programs for Native Americans.

**Title VIII** Federal impact aid for districts affected by military bases, Indian reservations and other non-taxable federal land.

**Title IX** Consolidation planning and administration, waivers, school prayer, equitable access to school facilities.

**Title X** McKinney-Vento Act. Monies to ensure education for homeless youth.

**Tenure** The system of school employment in which the teacher or other employee, having served a certain probationary period, retains his position indefinitely and is protected by statute or by rule of the school board.

## Testing Terms

**Achievement Tests** Achievement tests are designed to measure the things that a student knows and can do. Most of the tests that students take in school are achievement tests.

**Alternative and authentic assessments** Tasks which measure student learning by requiring him/her to demonstrate application of what has been learned through a real life situation. For example, testing writing by asking a student to write a composition or have students use math skills to determine take home pay after taxes. These assessments are important because they enable students to show that they can use the skills they have been taught.

**Criterion-referenced tests** Criterion-referenced tests are designed to compare a student's performance with clearly defined curricular objectives, skill levels, standards, or areas of knowledge (rather than with scores of a sample of other students).

**Disaggregated data** Data broken out for specific groups within the total student population, such as by race, gender, number of college prep courses taken, family income level.

**High stakes test** A test that has significant consequences for a student, school or school district. The SAT and the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam are high stakes tests for students.

**Longitudinal testing** Examining the performance of a single student or a group of students by considering their test scores over time. For example, comparing a student's first grade and second grade test scores.

**Norm-referenced tests** Norm-referenced achievement tests measure basic concepts and skills commonly taught in schools throughout the country. These tests are not designed to measure a specific school district's curriculum, but rather the knowledge generally taught at a particular grade level. Results from norm-referenced tests provide information that compares students' achievement with that of a representative national group or "sample." Student test results are presented in the form of a comparison score. E.g. 75th percentile means that student scores at or above the score of 75% of his peers.

**Quartile** Scores of a test divided into quarters according to the highest one-fourth of the scores, the next highest one-fourth, and the like. Student performance is often discussed in terms of the number or percent of students falling below each quartile or scoring in each quarter.

**Scoring rubric or scoring guide.** The set of criteria used in the evaluation of a student product or performance along with rules for assigning points to each criterion. The rules correspond with carefully described levels of performance for each criterion. Scoring rubrics could be used for student products, such as a piece of art, or student performances, such as a speech or a piano concert.

**Standardized tests** "Standardized" means that the test is always given and scored the same way. Typically, the same questions are asked and uniform directions are given for each test. Specific time limits are set and student performance may be compared with all the other students taking the same test, or with a set of predetermined standards or criteria. Tests that are used for important decisions or to compare the performance of one student or school to another are usually standardized.

**USDOE** United States Department of Education

## 9. CONTACT INFORMATION

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