

Adapted from Arkansas School Board Association:

Policies are variously defined as:

- broad guidelines established for effectively operating the school system.
- statements reflecting the principles that guide staff as they carry out their duties.
- principles that chart a course of action for the superintendent and define the limits within which he or she can exercise judgment.
- statements of principle intended to promote progress toward the school district's goals.

Procedures are the methods or steps for carrying out a policy in accordance with its letter and spirit. Procedures are specific rather than general, translating the basic policy into action by designating how, by whom, where, and when certain actions are to be carried out or limited. Procedures may be contained within a policy or developed by administrators to put policy into practice. Because procedures are based on policies, they must be consistent with them.

The board should be sure to examine and approve all procedures to ensure they accurately express the intention of the policies they're based upon.

Regulations stem from state statute or federal law are updated annually.

According to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA), written policy statements help to:

- clarify roles and responsibilities, which promotes positive working relationships among the board, superintendent, and staff, as well as within the staff itself.
- foster more consistent decisions, thus improving understanding and morale.
- save the board time, money, and effort by settling questions that might otherwise repeatedly surface.
- improve public relations, because written policies are reassuring evidence of responsible board action and the reasons behind it.
- reduce pressures on the board and prevent criticism when decisions are based on established policy rather than expediency or pleas for favoritism.
- give the board a sense of direction based upon a solid policy foundation.
- promote continuity of action in the district, which is especially important when board members and administrators change.
- facilitate orderly review of the board's practices. Comparing past board action with present situations, the board can modify or adopt policies to keep abreast of new conditions.
- ensure a better informed board and staff.
- speed the orientation of newcomers.

As policies are considered, differing views surface for contemplation and reconciliation. Without ongoing policy development, some significant differences among members are likely to remain buried until the board encounters an issue that uncovers substantial disagreement. Then the board may find itself sharply divided and forced to thrash through matters in the public arena.