

Roles & Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents

"What is the role of the board and what is the role of the superintendent in the operation of the school corporation?" Board members and superintendents often ask this question and misunderstand it.

The longstanding statement that the board sets policy and the superintendent administers that policy indicates a clear dividing line between the respective roles. That distinction, however, is not always clear, nor is it one upon which everyone involved agrees.

Board members are usually "doers"; they operate businesses, run homes, and buy supplies. "Doers often find it hard to look at the big picture and make decisions so that other people can "do" the job. Many times, they are tempted to get in and "do" the job themselves. Conflicts arise when the board and the superintendent have not defined their specific roles.

Because corporations' needs vary, and leadership and management styles vary, the real need in each corporation is for the board and superintendent to define the scope of work and establish proper policies and procedures that will lead to the performance of those duties.

As board members make decisions and become involved in the corporation's business, they should ask themselves: "Am I providing leadership to the superintendent and staff and establishing policy for the corporation, *or have I stepped into the role of administrator?*"

Superintendents should ask themselves: "*Am I providing leadership to the board in pointing out areas where policy is needed, or am I veering into administrative matters? Worse yet, am I forcing the board to make administrative decisions?*"

Eight Role and Responsibility Areas

The highest functioning leadership teams share a common understanding of the difference between governance and administration. These delineations seem apparent and easily understood on paper, but real-world applications can become muddy and confused. *Keeping roles clear and communication open is the key to good board and superintendent relationships.*

The following are examples of the accepted Roles and Responsibilities of School Board Members and Superintendents in eight areas:

1. Future Planning and Growth
2. Policy
3. Meetings
4. Budget/Finance
5. Student Achievement
6. Personnel
7. Community Relations
8. Contract and Negotiations

1 – FUTURE PLANNING AND GROWTH

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Approves a planning process to include stakeholders in developing a Strategic Plan.
2. Approves Continuous Improvement Plan for student achievement.
3. Monitors progress on Strategic and Continuous Improvement Plan.
4. Participates in educational conferences, workshops, training, and professional organizations.
5. Requires professional leadership from the superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Implements the strategic plan with the administrative team.
2. Recommends a comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan for student achievement and outcomes.
3. Provides educational leadership to the board, staff, students, and community.
4. Identifies the needs of the corporation and reports them to the board.
5. Keeps the board aware of statewide and national educational developments and changes.
6. Continually upgrades their professional knowledge and qualifications through membership and participation in professional associations, conferences, and workshops.

2 – POLICY

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes rules and policies for the governance of the school corporation.
2. Clarifies for the superintendent the intent of the board regarding board policy.
3. Reviews, evaluates, and adopts board policies on an ongoing basis.
4. Authorizes the superintendent with those powers and duties in accordance with board policy and state and federal laws.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. As the chief executive officer of the board, the superintendent is responsible for implementing board policies and directives.
2. Acts as advisor to the board on areas needing policy development or revision.
3. Presents policy drafts and provides the board with necessary data and information for policy adoption.
4. Maintains a current, up-to-date manual of adopted policies.
5. Develops rules and procedures necessary to implement the board's policies.
6. Identifies policy areas that the board should revise, rewrite, or repeal as needs of the corporation or laws and rules change.
7. Coordinates and manages the operation of the schools.

3 – MEETINGS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. All duties delegated to the board are performed at a public board meeting.

2. The board refrains from misuse of the executive session provisions as defined in Open Door Law.
3. The board establishes the operational guidelines or practices for meetings (norms and protocols).
4. The board president and the superintendent develop the meeting agenda.
5. The board identifies, for the superintendent, the information needed for decision-making.
6. Board members receive and adequately study their agenda materials in advance of the scheduled board meetings.
7. Sets policy or protocols for public comment at meetings.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Serves as an advisor to the board during meetings.
2. Assures compliance with all legal requirements relative to posting notices and maintaining meeting records.
3. Identifies areas of business that the board should address at meetings.
4. Prior to meetings, provides board members with sufficient information for decision-making.
5. Implements board decisions and instructions developed at meetings.
6. Assures that board meetings, including executive sessions, meet the requirements of the law.

4 – BUDGET/FINANCE

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes priorities for the financial management of the corporation.
2. Provides the superintendent with the board's priorities in the development of the budget.
3. Explores with the superintendent the internal controls of the corporation.
4. Reviews the budget monthly and makes adjustments as needed.
5. Reviews and approves the monthly bills.
6. Approves the decision to ask voters to pass a referendum.
7. Approves the decision to ask voters for a bond and/or referendum for facility needs.
8. Prioritizes construction and/or building renovation needs of the corporation.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Prepares a detailed budget based on the board's priorities and parameters.
2. Presents a budget to the board for consideration and approval.
3. Administers the budget assuring that the expenditures of corporation funds are within the legal requirements of the budget.
4. Acts as a resource to the board within the framework of the corporation audits.
5. Makes a recommendation to the board about the need for and the amount of a referendum.
6. Makes a recommendation to the board about the need for, and the amount of a bond and/or referendum for facility needs.

5 – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes educational philosophy, goals, and objectives for the instructional program of the corporation.
2. Monitors progress toward improved student outcome goals.
3. Adopts policies for provision of student services including admission, attendance, activities, rights & responsibilities, discipline, and welfare.
4. Adopts and/or revises standards and instructional programs as recommended by the superintendent.
5. Ensures regular reports to the community on the status of education in the corporation.
6. Identifies and adopts graduation requirements in accordance with state standards.
7. Approves curricular materials.
8. Periodically requests reports from professional staff related to assessments and instructional programs.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Provides leadership to the board and staff in the ongoing development, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of the instructional program.
2. Recommends and implements policies and rules to maintain adequate services and control of students.
3. Recommends appropriate graduation standards and methods to measure student attainment.
4. Present data regularly to board concerning student achievement and progress towards academic goals.
5. Assigns staff to instructional areas and informs the board.
6. Recommends and implements policy on the selection of curricular materials.
7. Provides for the direction and supervision of student activities.
8. Schedules staff presentations and reports on various segments of assessments and instructional programs regularly, as requested by the board.

6 – PERSONNEL

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes job description of superintendent.
2. Supervises and conducts annual evaluation of superintendent.
3. Employs certificated and classified staff members based on the recommendation of the superintendent.
4. Promotes good working relations with staff through the corporation's chain of command.
5. Adopts policy on evaluation of personnel.
6. Receives and acts on personnel recommendations from the superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Recommends to the board the employment or dismissal of all certificated and classified staff.
2. Maintains job descriptions for all positions.
3. Oversees the administrative team for the supervision and management of all employees of the corporation.

4. Serves as the board's liaison with staff.
5. Fosters good working relationships with staff members.
6. Develops a systematic plan for evaluating the performance of all corporation personnel based on policy.
7. Delegates authority to staff members, as appropriate.
8. Conducts evaluations of administration and staff under their direct supervision.

7 – COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Represents public education serving as a liaison between the school corporation and the community.
2. Maintains an awareness of community values, concerns, and interests.
3. Actively participates in programs that build good community relations.
4. Appoints board committees when necessary and outlines their responsibilities.
5. Appoints the corporation's spokesperson(s) to deal with the news media.
6. Channels complaints or grievances through the established chain of command.

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Informs and clarifies school programs and activities to the community.
2. Serves as the board's liaison with appointed board committees.
3. Establishes a working relationship with the news media.
4. Makes recommendations to the board for resolution of complaints that cannot be resolved at the administrative level.

8 – CONTRACTS AND NEGOTIATIONS

SCHOOL BOARD

1. Establishes guidelines and criteria for the salary and benefit discussions process for certified personnel.
2. Reviews offers submitted by the local education association and makes counter offers.
3. Ratifies the final Contract Agreement

SUPERINTENDENT

1. Provides factual data to the board about the implications of salary and benefit increases and staffing considerations.
2. Assists with negotiations by sitting at the negotiating table.
3. Provides the board with all offers being presented by the local education association.
4. Administers contracts and the Collective Bargaining Agreement as appropriate.

Individual corporations may want to make changes to the above roles and responsibilities according to the differences and needs of the corporation.

- Original source, Idaho School Boards Association, 2022