



New Hampshire School Boards Association
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Four Key Roles For School Boards

Vision:

A vision for a school district should give people another way to see their schools – clearly showing the district not only as it is, but also as it might become.

School board members have a central role in defining the district's vision. The process of creating a vision involves choices – not only about where the district is headed, but also about how it will get there.

Specific responsibilities for school board members include:

- Keeping students as the focus of the work of schools.
- Adopting a shared vision based on community beliefs to guide local education.
- Demonstrating a strong commitment to the shared vision and mission by using them to guide decision making and communicating them to others.

Structure:

To achieve its vision, a board must establish a structure and create an environment that will ensure for all students the opportunity to attain their maximum potential. Vision alone is not enough – the board must also put in place an organizational framework that can allow the district to achieve its vision.

School boards are responsible for providing a planning, policy and management structure that can move the district toward its vision. It begins by employing a superintendent, adopting missions and goals in harmony with its vision through strategic planning process, developing and approving policies, formulating budgets, and setting high instructional standards for students and staff. The board must also encourage an environment in the school system that encourages innovation and supports staff members in a process of continuous renewal of education.

Specific responsibilities for school board members includes:

- Employing a superintendent and establishing a district management system that enables all people to contribute meaningfully to achieve the district's vision.
- Establishing district processes to use information and make effective decisions.
- Ensuring that long and short term plans are developed and annually revised through a process involving extensive participation, information gathering, research and reflection.
- Making decisions that support student learning and school renewal when reviewing and adopting policies and allocating resources.
- Setting high instructional standards based on the best available information of the knowledge and skills students will need in the future.
- Encouraging an environment conducive to innovative approaches to teaching and learning and supportive of continuous renewal of education.

Accountability:

Effective boards engage in continuous assessment of all the conditions affecting education. These should include:

- Monitoring student achievement
- Using student achievement data and all other available information as a basis for making program corrections and modifications as needed
- Keeping the public informed on the status of the district's programs and student progress
- Ensuring that all functions of schools as institutions of teaching and learning fit together harmoniously
- Providing appropriate staff and board training opportunities
- Encouraging curricular and assessment innovation

A comprehensive accountability system can improve the effectiveness of schools by keeping the primary focus on student achievement.

Specific responsibilities for school boards includes:

- Receiving regular reports on student progress and needs based on a variety of assessments in order to evaluate the quality and equity of education in the district.
- Evaluating both superintendent and board performance
- Evaluating progress toward the achievement of district long and short term goals and ensuring that policies and allocation of resources effectively support district vision.
- Reporting district progress to community and parents on a regular basis.

Advocacy:

School boards ought to serve as the leading advocate on behalf of students and their schools in the community. Both individually and collectively, school board members need to speak out on issues that can advance the community's vision for its schools. They must keep the vision visible and vital for the community and for other organizations that serve the needs of children.

The advocacy role is becoming increasingly important for school board members. Informing citizens about the school's accomplishments, problems, and needs is an essential part of school board leadership. Through their actions, board members represent the community and help foster understanding and support for the schools.

Specific responsibilities for school board members include:

- Seeking others who can help expand educational opportunities to meet the needs of the whole child.
- Advocating for children and families and establishing strong relationships with parents and other mentors to help support students.
- Promoting the schools' instructional and other programs.
- Leading in celebrating the achievements of students and others in education
- Promoting school board service as a meaningful way to make long-term contributions to society