



WESTSIDE
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

BOARD OF EDUCATION

A Guide to Board of Education Service

This guide establishes a framework to enhance the professional collaboration between the Board of Education and the Superintendent by clearly defining their respective roles and responsibilities. It is intended to foster effective communication, promote a clear understanding of duties, and cultivate a productive and efficient leadership team.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

MISSION

The mission of the Westside Community School District, as an innovative educational system, is to ensure academic excellence and to serve the unique needs of all learners.

VISION

Westside Community Schools will relentlessly pursue innovative educational ideals and promise to personalize learning for every student. We invite the challenge of developing a community of learners who embrace a broader, richer definition of success.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Westside Community Schools has served the Omaha community since 1947, when residents on the western edge of Omaha sought to improve educational opportunities for their children by pooling resources. Three rural school districts - District 31 (Oakdale area), District 46 (Underwood / Peony Park area) and District 65 (Loveland area) - merged and officially became Douglas County School District 66 on March 30, 1947, with 17 teachers and 344 students.

The district's junior-senior high school opened in 1952 on farmland near 87th and Pacific Street, the same site where Westside High School is today. As the western edge of Omaha continued to grow, so did the district, and the name Westside Community Schools was adopted to reflect its role and identity in the community.

Today, Westside Community Schools encompasses approximately 11.5 square miles and serves 6,100 PreK through 12th grade students. The district remains dedicated to its mission of academic excellence and personalized learning for every student.

OUR SCHOOLS

Westside High School	Prairie Lane Elementary School
WHS – West Campus	Rockbrook Elementary School
Westside Middle School	Sunset Hills Elementary School
Hillside Elementary School	Swanson Elementary School
Loveland Elementary School	Underwood Hills Early Learning Center
Oakdale Elementary School	Westbrook Elementary School
Paddock Road Elementary School	Westgate Elementary School

ABOUT THE BOARD

The Westside Community Schools Board of Education consists of six members who serve the students, families, and community of District 66. Board members are elected at-large by registered voters within the district and are dedicated to governing with integrity, transparency, and a strong focus on student success. The Board collaborates closely with the superintendent to achieve the district’s goals of academic excellence and personalized learning for every student.

SUPERINTENDENT

The superintendent acts as the district's educational leader and is the only district employee directly supervised by the Board of Education. The Board and superintendent work closely together to promote the district's mission, vision, and strategic goals.

INVESTMENT IN FACILITIES

Westside Community Schools has a proud tradition of investing in facilities and resources necessary for students and staff to succeed. Thanks to the generosity and support of district voters, a \$79.9 million bond was passed in 2015 that enabled the district to construct new school buildings for Oakdale Elementary, Sunset Hills Elementary, Swanson Elementary, and Prairie Lane Elementary. Extensive remodeling was completed at Westside Middle School (WMS) and Westside High School (WHS). District-wide safety, security, and infrastructure upgrades were also completed.

A second bond approved by voters in May 2023 launched Phase II of the district's Facilities Master Plan. This \$121 million investment included new buildings for Westgate Elementary, Hillside Elementary, and Loveland Elementary. Additionally, the WMS and WHS cafeterias were renovated and enlarged, and WHS bathrooms and locker rooms were renovated. New storm shelters, gyms, and early childhood areas were constructed at Paddock Road Elementary and Rockbrook Elementary. Repairs and improvements were made at Westbrook Elementary, the District Administration Building, and Underwood Hills Early Childhood Center.

BOND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

To promote fiscal accountability and transparency during each bond phase, the Board of Education created a Bond Oversight Committee (BOC). The BOC includes community members who oversee the progress and spending of the bond program and regularly report to the Board and the public. Meeting dates, agendas, and minutes are posted on the district website.

SECTION 2. BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS

Under state law, the superintendent serves as the educational leader of Westside Community Schools. The superintendent's responsibilities include: guiding and managing the school district; hiring and supervising staff; developing and overseeing the budget; and advising the Board on educational trends, policies, and relevant laws. The superintendent regularly updates the Board on student learning progress and the district's advancements toward its goals.

Effective governance depends on a strong, unified relationship between the Board and the administration. They should operate as a cohesive team, not as separate or competing entities, with a clear understanding of their respective roles and a shared focus. This collaboration is essential for making decisions that ultimately benefit students, staff, and the community by addressing both individual and collective student needs.

THE BOARD SHALL:

- Respect that the superintendent and staff are responsible and accountable for the day-to-day delivery of educational programs and school operations.
- Ensure strong management of the school system by hiring, setting goals with, and evaluating the superintendent.
- Provide policy support to school administrators in performing their duties and delegate authority proportionate to their responsibilities.
- Expect the superintendent to keep the Board sufficiently informed through regular written and verbal communications, including weekly updates and prompt notice of any emerging issues.
- Refer complaints, requests, and concerns from parents, taxpayers and other stakeholders to the superintendent.
- Maintain open and honest communication with the superintendent.
- Hold the superintendent accountable by jointly establishing job performance standards and conducting at least annual comprehensive evaluations based on the job description, contract, and performance standards.

THE SUPERINTENDENT SHALL:

- Promptly inform the board of critical matters, including meeting with them when important initiatives are proposed and updating them on emerging issues.
- Use regular updates to provide relevant information.
- Ensure that administration and staff follow Board policies and procedures.
- Prepare Board meeting agendas in collaboration with the Board president, including a process that allows individual Board members to bring forth agenda items.
- Recommend a budget for Board approval, developed collaboratively with attention to resource allocation needed to meet district goals.

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary responsibility of both the superintendent and the Board of Education is to provide a meaningful, high-quality educational experience for students, focusing on student learning and achievement. The Board will represent the interests of all children in the district and remain aware of this important duty when making decisions for the district.

The Board of Education's core responsibilities include:

- Hiring and evaluating the superintendent;
- Governing through policy;
- Supporting the district's mission, vision, curriculum and goals;
- Representing the district to the greater community;
- Managing district resources in a fiscally responsible manner; and
- Planning for continuous school improvement.

The Board of Education and Superintendent leadership are committed to promoting educational excellence. This is achieved by continually improving learning outcomes for every student through the development and evaluation of broad-based policies. These policies are supported by consistent community dialogue and guided by the district's established mission, vision, and goals.

<https://www.westside66.org/our-district/board-of-education/duties-of-the-board-of-education-board-elections>

BOARD CONDUCT AND GOVERNANCE

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring that the public, staff, and students are informed and that Board members will govern through policy. In accordance with this belief, each Board member commits to the following standards of conduct:

- We will base all decisions on what is in the best interest of all students in the Westside Community Schools district and will be motivated solely by a sincere desire to effectively serve the school district and its students.
- We will listen to each other's opinions and act as a Board.
- We will diligently prepare for and attend Board meetings and follow the guidelines of Robert's Rules as laid out by the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.
- We will communicate openly, honestly, and in a timely manner.
- We will follow the Board-adopted chain of command and communication policy. All inquiries and concerns received by individual Board members will be referred to the superintendent.
- We will collaborate with other Board members to establish effective policies that are regularly updated and aligned with state and federal education laws.
- We will be aware of the different roles that we play as individuals: Board member, patron, and parent, and act accordingly.
- We will consistently uphold all applicable laws, rules, and policies, including, but not limited to, the District policy regarding conflicts of interest.

- We will maintain the confidentiality of information that is legally privileged or whose disclosure could result in harm to the District.
- We will seek recommendations from the superintendent and consult legal counsel when necessary to ensure full and informed consideration of legal issues.

AUTHORITY OF INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Individual Board members have no authority except when meeting as a Board. The Board functions as a collective entity and, by law, can only act when a quorum is present at a legally convened and properly advertised meeting. It is important to note that individual Board members do not have authority to take unilateral action on behalf of the Board unless they have been officially authorized by the Board of Education during a formal Board meeting.

SLATE

President

- Facilitate public meetings
- Respond on behalf of the board to all communications
- Non voting seat on the Westside Foundation Board
- Meet regularly with the superintendent
- Leads the evaluation process
- Joins the annual meeting with a hired outside financial auditor

Vice President

- Proxy, if needed for President at Public meetings
- Succession Planning Committee
- Included in superintendent meetings and evaluation leadership when needed

Treasurer

- Meets with the District Officer of Business and Finance monthly to discuss the budget
- Joins the annual meeting with a hired outside financial auditor
- Works with treasurer-elect

Treasurer-Elect

- Shadow Treasurer role and act as proxy when needed
- Joins the annual meeting with a hired outside financial auditor

Secretary

- Sign all legal documents
- Closed meeting minutes
 - *Public meeting minutes are handled by the Office of the Superintendent.*
- Board representation activities - gather for each meeting, provide to the President, and share with the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent.

Director

- Responsible for an additional school liaison role (3 total schools)
- Liaison to the Director of Facilities

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

As outlined in Policy 1170, there are six sub-committees of the Board. These committees function to gather facts, study issues more deeply, and offer recommendations to the full board. Committees of the Board include:

- 1) American Civics
- 2) Facilities
- 3) Finance
- 4) Legislative
- 5) Policy Review
- 6) Succession Planning.

The superintendent shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and entitled to attend all committee meetings.

Board members also serve in a liaison capacity with all ten elementary buildings, Westside Middle School, Westside High School, West Campus, Underwood Hills Early Learning Center and the District's WE-SIDE Core Committee.

SECTION 3: COMMUNICATIONS

DISTRICT EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Immediately upon election or appointment to the Board of Education, a Board member will be issued a district email account for all Board business. Electronic mail communication concerning school district business is subject to the Nebraska Public Records Law and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as well as appropriate documentation policies.

EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Board members shall utilize their district-issued email account for all official Board and District business and communications. It is the expectation that Board members sign on to the official email regularly. All electronic mail and attachments regarding District business are public records and are subject to the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, Nebraska Public Records Law and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Board members may not use electronic communications in any way that would violate the Open Meetings Act. Using a personal email account for Board business does not exclude the email account from public record requests.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Board members will uphold the Board Code of Ethics (policy 1110), maintain confidentiality, and exhibit a professional and courteous attitude toward students, district employees, families, and the community.

TEXT MESSAGES

The Nebraska Attorney General has determined that all text messages regarding District matters are public records and are subject to the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, Nebraska Public Records Law and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Board members may not use text messages in any way that would violate the Open Meetings Act. Using a personal telephone for District business does not exclude the text from public record requests. Board members are thus advised to limit or avoid using text messages to communicate with other Board members or employees of the District, including the Superintendent, about District matters. Further, any text messages relating to District matters are required to be archived and retained so that they may be produced if a public records request is received. In the event a text message is sent/received related to a District matter, Board members must forward it to their westside66.net account, so that it can be retained in compliance with public records laws.

SECTION 4: POLICIES, EVALUATIONS & RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC

POLICIES

<https://www.westside66.org/our-district/board-of-education/board-policies>

Board policy category number 1000 governs the Board of Education and includes: Legal Basis (for board policies); Functions of the Board; Code of Ethics; Conflicts of Interest; Development of Board Members; Organization and Officers; Committees of the Board; and Attendance at Meetings.

The superintendent and Board of Education will lead and govern the district by supporting the policies that have been adopted through proper Board action. When a policy decision is made by the Board of Education, the superintendent and individual Board members will support the decision both in spirit and in fact. District policies will be consistently applied while recognizing the potential uniqueness of a given situation that creates a need for continuous policy review.

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATIONS

The superintendent of schools is the only school district employee directly supervised by the Board of Education. The Board is responsible for evaluating the superintendent's performance and for making decisions concerning the terms of the employment contract and compensation.

Twice a year (generally in the fall and late spring), the Board shall conduct an evaluation of the superintendent's performance, utilizing a process and standards of performance agreed upon in advance with the superintendent. The Board will set clear and measurable performance goals, including criteria to determine if the goals have been met.

RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC

Subject to the Open Meetings Act, the public has the right to attend and the right to speak at meetings of public bodies. All or any part of a meeting, except for closed sessions, may be videotaped, televised, photographed, broadcast, or recorded by any person in attendance. A public body may make and enforce reasonable rules and regulations regarding the conduct of persons attending or recording its meetings.

<https://www.westside66.org/our-district/board-of-education/nebraska-open-meetings-act>

PUBLIC COMMENT

<https://www.westside66.org/our-district/board-of-education/public-comment-at-board-of-education-meetings>

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