



Information for Prospective Members of the Burnsville-Eagan Savage Board of Education

Thank you for your interest in running for the Board of Education of Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191 (District 191). This document is designed to answer some common questions and ensure prospective candidates understand more about the role.

Additional information from The MN School Board Association:

<http://www.mnmsba.org/BecomingASchoolBoardMember>

Meetings

The following is a list of the meetings that occur during the year. A Board member's attendance at any meeting or event for which they are assigned is critical and respectful, as resources have gone into the preparing and planning of the meeting. By Minnesota Open Meeting law, all meetings below are open to the public, except for a Closed Meeting.

Regular

The Board meets twice a month on Thursdays every month, except for one meeting in November and December and no meetings in July. These meetings are recorded and broadcast live. Robert's Rules of Order on parliamentary procedures are used as the structural foundation of the meetings, and the meetings are run by the Board Chair. Regular meetings usually last 2-3 hours, but sometimes can run as long as 5-6 hours.

Committees

Every Board member is assigned to one or more primary Board Committee, such as Policy or Negotiations. Those meetings occur monthly, except for Negotiations which has a variable meeting schedule depending on the year. Additionally, each Board member is assigned to one or more outside committees, such as Chamber of Commerce or Foundation 191. These additional meetings generally occur monthly and typically last 1 hour.

Listening Sessions

Board members take turns covering the 30-minute Listening Session that occurs prior to the Regular Board meeting. Two board members attend each session and fulfill this role approximately every six weeks. Board members are expected to listen and observe at these meetings; they should only engage the audience for clarification and acknowledgement (coming and speaking at these can be intimidating for some people, so it is important that we are receptive and welcoming). The Superintendent (or representative) will also be in attendance to document the event, provide clarification and note

takeaway actions, and is then responsible for submitting a high level summary report in the consent agenda at the next regular Board meeting.

Superintendent

Every Board member meets 1-on-1 monthly with the Superintendent to discuss any issues or learn about upcoming initiatives. Scheduling of these meetings is the responsibility of the Board member and Superintendent.

Workshops

Workshops/work sessions are held immediately following regular Board meetings and are recorded, broadcast live, and posted online for public viewing. Occasionally workshops may be held on a separate day than a Board meeting depending on the expected length of discussion. These meetings generally last 2-4 hours.

Retreats

Retreats are scheduled by the Board Chair independently from regular Board meetings. The typical schedule for retreats is on a quarterly basis, although retreats may also be scheduled more frequently, as needed. The purpose of retreats is board development, planning and/or a specific topic. These meetings generally last 4-8 hours.

Closed Meetings

Per Minnesota statute, closed meetings may be called by the Board Chair for limited and specific purposes: labor negotiations strategy; employee evaluations or discipline; limited attorney-client privilege; student expulsion hearings; discussions of security issues; and land sale and/or acquisitions.

Meeting Materials and Prep

Board members receive meeting materials the week before the scheduled meeting and are expected to read and familiarize themselves with the material prior to the meeting, as well as prepare questions for staff and for general discussion.

Attending Events

Board members are expected to attend official district events such as State of the District, State of the City, One91 Community of Excellence Awards Ceremony and graduations, including for the BEST Transition program, Burnsville Alternative High School, and Burnsville High School. In addition, Board members are encouraged to attend other events at schools such as Read-A-Thons, Honor Society inductions, AVID events, and other celebrations.

Communications from the Public and Social Media

You will receive emails, phone calls and mail in your role as a Board of Education member. These communications will usually be in advocacy of something and/or critical of some decision the Board has taken. These communications are often harsh and will be directed at you even if you were not on the Board when the issue at hand was decided. Your personal perspective won't matter to the people who are communicating to you. You are now one of seven on the Board of Education and therefore represent the leadership and decision-making that happens in the district. Regardless of who you were and what you did before you were on the Board, as far as the public is concerned, and in keeping with our code of

conduct, you are now responsible for past decisions, as well as future ones. Being on the board means you take on this responsibility of leading the district, and it can be difficult at times.

Similarly, there will be social media posts that are critical of the Board, and perhaps even of individual members, and they can be harsh. Often the communications and social media posts are based on incomplete or inaccurate information, and it can be tempting to defend decisions or correct information. It is critical that Board members forward these items to the Superintendent and Board Chair who will work with the Communications Department to address them. For those of us on social media platforms, understand that your Board member "hat" never comes off. We can try, but people will always put it back on for you, or will filter your posts through the Board lens. It may be helpful to create Board-specific accounts (completely open to the public) and a private account (in which there can be no discussion of Board or district matters).

Your personal cell phone/texts and district email become part of the public record and are therefore subject to collection through the Freedom of Information Act as they relate to school district business.

Governance vs. Management

This Board of Education is a governance board, which means it has overall fiscal and fiduciary responsibility for the district. We ask questions, we ask the Superintendent to check into issues we might hear about, we work to ensure the district's money is spent in a responsible way, we set policy, and we make decisions that allow the district to move forward. As our ex officio Board member and sole employee, we work with and through the superintendent, not around, above, or below him/her.

We are not a management board, which means we do not weigh in on personnel decisions, we do not decide what lunches are served, how to stop a bullying problem, or make local decisions on curriculum. We hire a superintendent whose job it is to provide a great staff to oversee the details of running the district. Parents and community members are much more effective when they communicate directly with their building administration to ask for changes, instead of communicating with us in the intention of implementing change. Board members regularly refer parents and community members to speak with the appropriate staff member(s) for further discussion.

While the public should not be bringing their individual concerns to us with the assumption of direct action, it is our job to listen to and understand peoples' concerns and ideas and work with the superintendent to address those concerns and implement great ideas.

Those of us with children in our schools and activities are obligated to rise above individual and/or family-based concerns while at the board table. When you have concerns that you witness as a result of being a parent, share these with the superintendent (and chair if you wish). These topics are 1-on-1 conversations, not Board-level considerations.

We represent the entire District 191 community, including all stakeholders. We must be respectful of the past, present, and future in our decision making. As a Board and as individual members, it is our responsibility to remember that we are expected to be nonpartisan in our representation and that we put the entire district and the students first in all of our considerations and actions.

Confidentiality

In the course of our work together, this Board is exposed to a variety of private data, including staff, student, and family information, and this data must remain confidential even from our immediate family.

Training and Support

The Director role on the Board of Education is both challenging and rewarding. The excitement and joy of formal celebrations and everyday activities of our students learning is an incomparable feeling. Formal training is provided from the Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA), and experienced District 191 Board members provide onboarding training and ongoing support and training. We are all here because we believe in the District and in the work we do for our students and we work hard to make the best decisions possible as a team.

If you have any questions about this information or have additional questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to any currently serving board members whose contact information can be found [here](#).