



New Jersey School Boards Association

Best Practices for Effective Committees



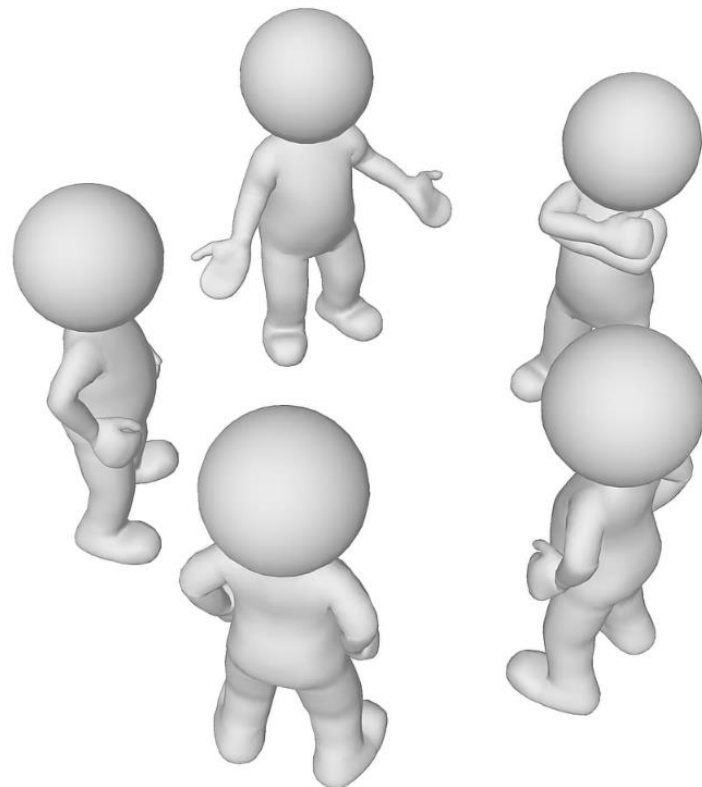
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Why Have Committees?

- Committees are formed to enable in-depth discussion on a set of related issues.
- They allow the board to explore, ideate, and drill-down in a way that would be too time consuming at a regular board meeting.





Types of Committees

Standing Committees

Committees approved annually to assist the Board in its work. Less than a quorum of the Board.



Temporary committees appointed by the Board for a specific purpose and time.



Committee meeting open to the full Board. Advertised as a public meeting with public comment.



Established in Policy/Bylaws

- Your committee format is designated in your bylaws.
- Typically describes how they are formed, staffed, their scope, and role in relation to the whole board.
- Regulations provide greater detail on responsibilities, resources, and procedures.

CRITICAL POLICY REFERENCE MANUAL

FILE CODE: 9130

☐ Monitored

☐ Mandated

☒ Other Reasons

Sample Bylaw

NOTE: THIS IS THE FIRST OF TWO SAMPLES.

COMMITTEES

In order to use the time, effort and expertise of the members of the board effectively, the board shall operate under a committee system.

Standing Comm

The board may find necessary following rules w

- A. The commit
- B. The commit
- C. The commit
- D. The commit
- E. The board p
- F. All standing meeting. Th

Special Committ

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NJSBA POLICY SERVICES

FILE CODE: 9130

Sample Discretionary Regulation*

**Sample discretionary policies compiled and distributed by NJSBA are not model district policies or suggested best practices and should not be adopted without district revisions and consultation with your board attorney. (Based on a Sample from Mainland Regional High School.)*

STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

The standing committees of the board shall be: education, finance and facilities, negotiations, personnel, and policy. The standing committees of the board exist to perform the following general functions, within their given area of responsibility:

- A. Gather and assess information;
- B. Investigate, study and prepare recommendations for board review and action;
- C. Monitor compliance with board policies and regulations and ensure that administrative regulations are in compliance with and in furtherance of board policies, regulations and directives;
- D. Standing committees do not have authority to take binding action on the board's behalf nor to expend funds unless specifically authorized to do so by action of the board;
- E. Standing committees contain less than an effective majority of the board;

The board may create additional standing committees should the need arise.

General Committee Responsibilities

Committee responsibilities shall include:

- A. Conducting periodic reviews and updates;
- B. Making appropriate reports to the whole board concerning these reviews and updates;
- C. Recommending any changes to existing bylaws, policies, regulations and other procedures;
- D. Research and draft new policies and procedures for board review;



Standing Committees

Based on
Mountain
Lakes
Bylaw
0155 &
Committee
Info on
Website

	STANDING COMMITTEES
Formed/ Dissolved by:	Formed by action of Board. Dissolved at year-end and reconstituted at the reorg. May be dissolved at any time by board action.
Members:	Members & Chair appointed by board president. President & superintendent ex-officio members of all committees
Functions	Empowered by Board to investigate issues, research alternatives, and recommend courses of actions for full Board consideration
Reporting	Chairperson submits written report to BA for inclusion in board packet. Verbal report at public meeting. Spokesperson for committee.
Standing Committees	Facilities Personnel Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Special Education Finance Policy



Consider Committee Regulations

List each committee separately and address:

- What is its unique purpose/charge
- What are the primary duties and responsibilities?
- How will the effectiveness of the committee be evaluated?

Sample Listing of Duties in Regulation

1. FACILITIES

- a. Ensures that school facilities and grounds are maintained to provide for a safe and healthy environment; monitors school maintenance, repair and general housekeeping;
- b. Reviews proposals for major expenditures on equipment and facilities, both as to their repair, upgrade and maintenance, as well as the acquisition of new equipment or the construction/development of new facilities and makes appropriate recommendations to the board concerning same.
- c. Monitors district inventory programs to ensure accountability of all items of nonexpendable equipment and property owned by the district, and makes recommendations to the board for the adoption/implementation of inventory control procedures;
- d. Makes recommendations to the board concerning the conduct of external inventories of assets;
- e. Reviews all requests for use of school facilities by outside organizations and individuals to ensure compliance with board policies and regulations concerning their use, Monitors the use of school facilities by outside organizations and individuals.



Consider Committee Regulations

List each committee separately and address:

- What is its unique purpose/charge
- What are the primary duties and responsibilities?
- How will the effectiveness of the committee be evaluated?

Samples from Mountain Lakes Descriptions

The role of the **Facilities Committee** is to maintain and improve the physical environment in which students work and play so they may function at optimal level. The committee reviews and monitors the facilities improvement plan and reviews contracts as appropriate.

The **Finance Committee** is responsible for providing oversight of the current year's budget and for helping set the parameters for the development of the next school year budget. The Finance Committee reviews appropriate contracts and discusses projects to meet the district's goals. The Finance Committee works closely with the School Business Administrator.



Ad Hoc Committees

Ad hoc committees are appointed by the Board for a specific purpose and time. Typically the Board would agree on a charge for the committee and a timeline for the committee to report back to the Board.

Common examples of when a Board would utilize an ad hoc committee:

- Superintendent Search
- Negotiations
- Referendum
- School Security
- Shared Services
- Strategic Planning



Committee of the Whole vs. Standing Committees

Committee of the Whole

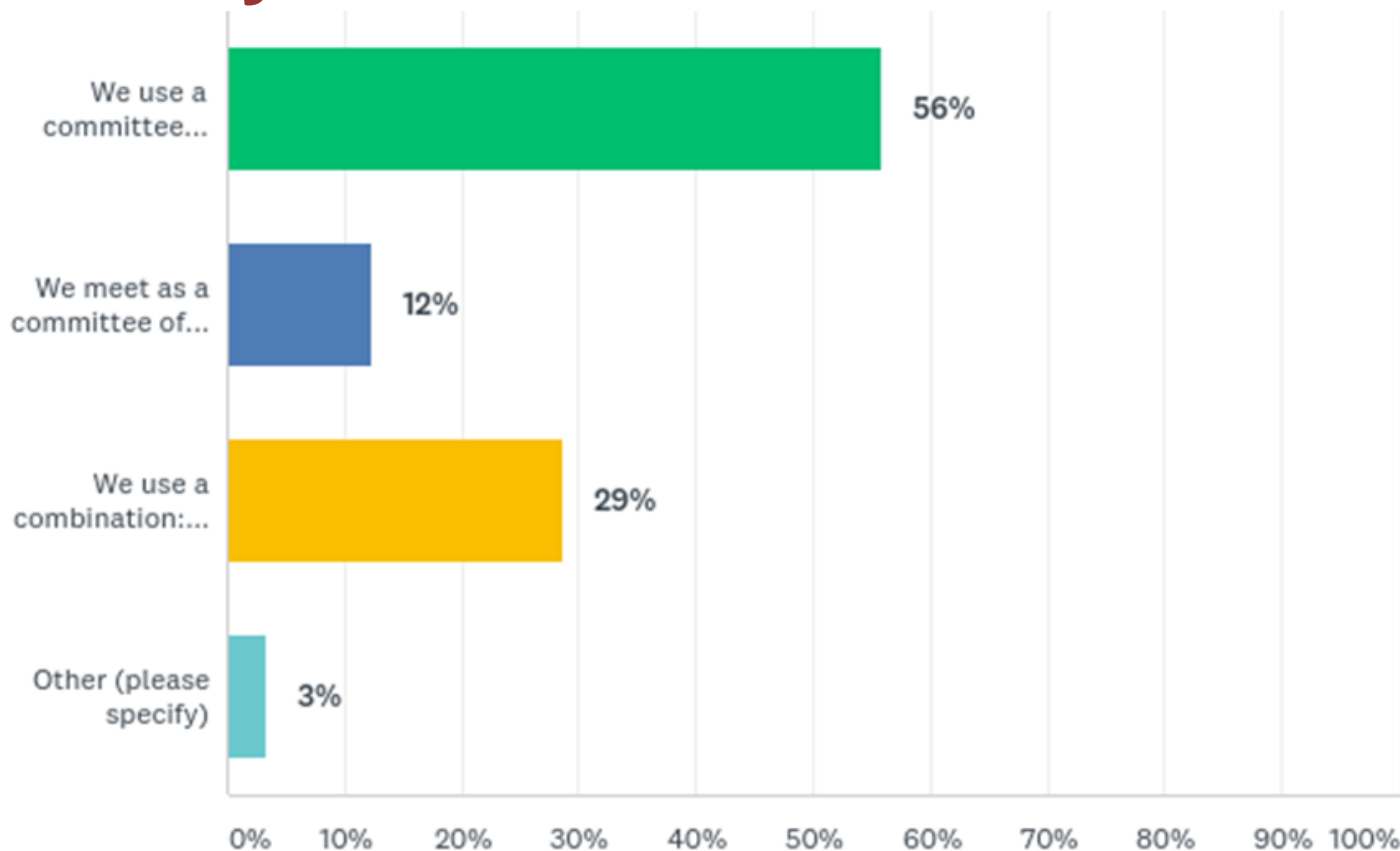
- Common understanding of issues by all members
- Everyone gets same information at same time
- Increased transparency
- Opportunity for increased stakeholder input
- Work is focused on the needs of the full Board.

Standing Committee

- Thorough research and consideration of information
- More time at regular meetings for other Board business
- Build ownerships and accountability among the members
- Builds a more cohesive board-administrative working relationship.



Which governance structure does your school board use?

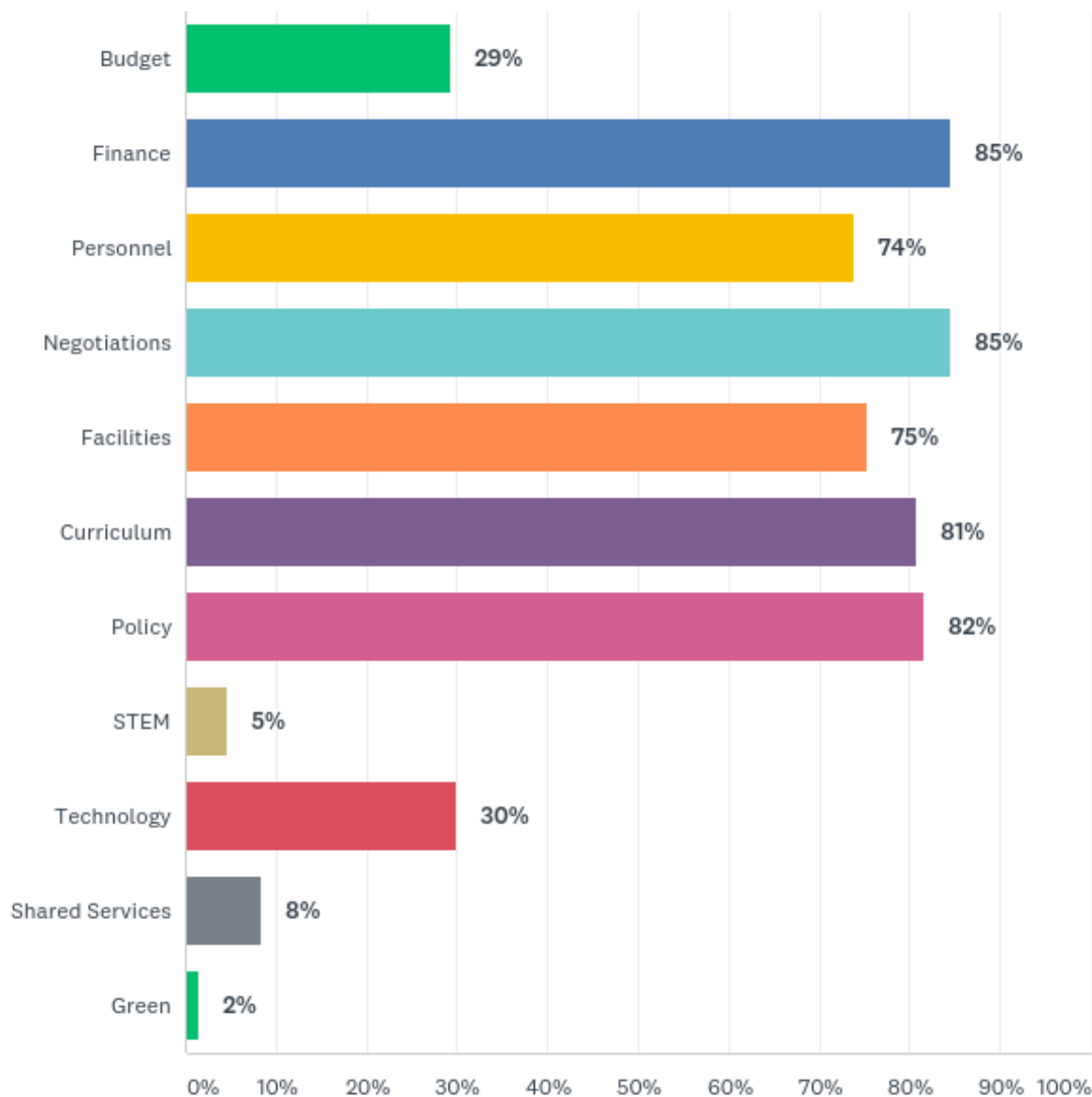


NJSBA Survey – 149 responses

*School Board Notes, March 2015



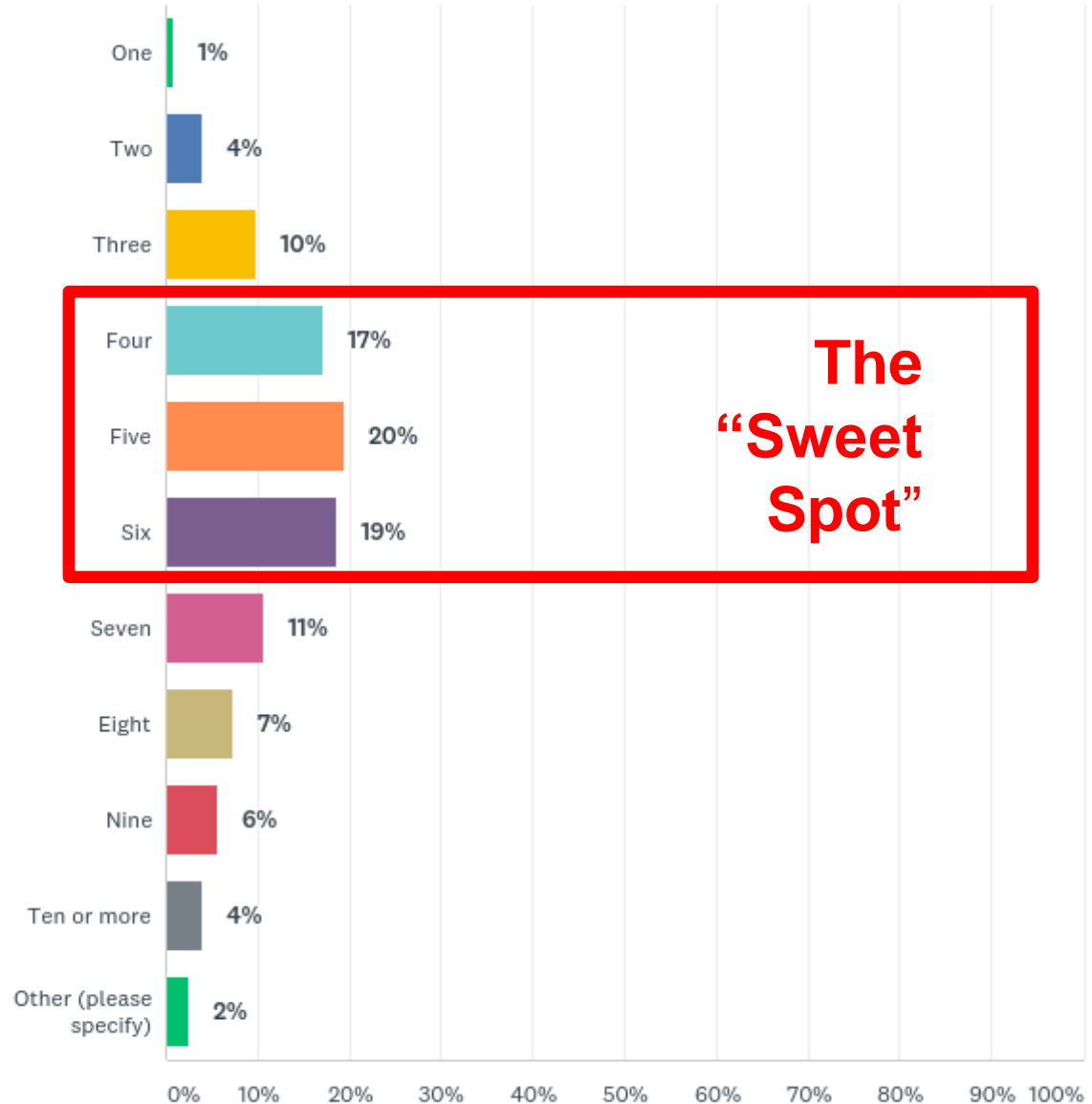
Which committees does your board use?



*School Board Notes, March 2015



How many committees does your board use?



*School Board Notes, March 2015



Committee Gaining Popularity

Governance Committee

A governance committee responsible for:

- Superintendent's evaluation
- Board self-evaluation
- New member orientation
- Board professional development
- Annual board calendar
- Board leadership development
- Board goals
- Board bylaws





Work of Board Delegated to Committee on Board's Behalf

Issues requested by board majority, issues that will appear on Board agenda, ongoing work of the board, work to support goals & strategic direction, issues that require board oversight or planning



Committee Considerations

Research / recommendations / alternatives; fit mission, goals, long-range plan, budget, timelines



Committee Outcomes

Report / information / clarification / alternatives / recommendation / back-up sent prior to meeting



Recommendations/Information for Full Board Consideration

Report out at meeting / questions asked and clarified / recommendations discussed



Board Members Have Information Needed to Make Informed Decisions

Considers committee recommendations and make informed decision in best interest of all students



Group Discussion

What does an
ideal,
effective
committee
meeting
look like?





Board Committees Are Effective When They...

- Meet a clearly defined need
 - Are established in an appropriate manner
 - Operate under clearly defined bylaws
 - Lessen the total work of the board members
 - Explore issues related to board goals and objectives in depth
 - Have a clearly defined reporting process
- Develop and investigate, as requested by the full board, either options or recommendations
 - Meet in a timely fashion
 - Have an effective chairperson
 - Include appropriate administrators and staff
 - Provide for minority opinions



Committee Meeting Agenda

- The committee agenda should be a cooperative effort between the chair and the administrative liaison and/or the CSA.
- Boards should use the creation of an agenda strategically, to help advance the mission and goals of the district.
- Agenda items can come from:
 - ongoing work of the Board
 - district work that requires board approval, oversight or planning
 - direction from board majority





Role Of The Committee Leaders

Coordinate the work of the committee

1. Work with the administrative liaison in establishing the agenda and calendar (if not set by policy or the board calendar).
2. Distribute agenda prior to the meeting to the committee members and rest of Board.
3. Lead discussion on aligning the committee's focus to DISTRICT GOALS - and how the goals assigned to committee will be handled.
4. Work with the administrative liaison or board secretary to arrange meetings.
5. Organize the work of the group -- divide responsibilities, assign recorder, distribute minutes, do necessary follow-up.
6. Facilitate group process/chair meetings.



Role Of The Committee Leaders (cont.)

B

**Communicate
between the
committee /
the board /
CSA**

1. Arrange for committee report form to be completed each meeting and ensure distribution of meeting notices and committee report.
2. Communicate & anticipate any problems or concerns to the board president and CSA.
3. Arrange (through the CSA) for other administrators to work with the committee (resources, presentations, ideas).
4. Set dates for completing tasks and reports.
5. Serve as resource to members not on the committee to address questions or to introduce new items for consideration.



Guidelines for Committee Members

- **Committee members can help make committee meetings more effective by:**
 - Reviewing the agenda prior to the meeting
 - Arrive on time and prepared
 - Contact the committee chair prior to the meeting with any questions you have after reviewing the agenda
 - Let chair know if you cannot attend.
 - Stick to the agenda during the meeting
 - Refrain from side-bar conversations
 - Ask questions at the proper time
 - Make comments that are on-point
 - Engage in active listening
 - Request additional information if needed

EFFICIENT





Reporting on Committee Work

- Committee chair or designee should generate a detailed report of committee findings and/or recommendations after a meeting.
- Distributed to entire board as soon as feasible.
- Report out highlights at Board meeting.

BOARD OF EDUCATION BOARD COMMITTEE REPORT

The Board Secretary should receive this report one day after the meeting was held, for distribution to the entire board.

Committee: _____ Chairperson: _____

Date of Meeting: _____ Time: _____ / _____
Start End

Board Member in Attendance: _____

Administrators in Attendance: _____

Others: _____

Business Discussed:

Pending Business:

Recommendations:

Contact Person for additional information: _____
Name Telephone

Next Meeting: _____
Date Time Place

Possible Topic: _____

Signature of Preparer _____ Date _____



Committee Analysis Grid

	We Need Help!	OK	A Real Strength!
1. The Board's expectations for each committee are clearly expressed in the committee's charge or bylaw.			
2. The work of the committees is directly aligned with district goals.			
3. The committee meeting is organized around an agenda that supports the Board's work and not its own interests.			
4. Committee members have a copy of the committee agenda prior to the meeting.			
5. The appropriate balance between what is the work of the committee and what belongs to the administration is maintained			
6. Having all board members/committee members pull their own weight –actively engaged in committee work.			
7. The role of the committee chair is defined and accepted by everyone.			
8. The committee's work is appropriately confidential until it is legitimately material for open session.			
9. The committee gathers and analyzes information effectively and provides the Board with the information it needs to make informed decisions.			
10. Committees report back to the full Board in a defined manner that is informative and timely.			



Best Practices Summary

A Well-run Committee Meeting

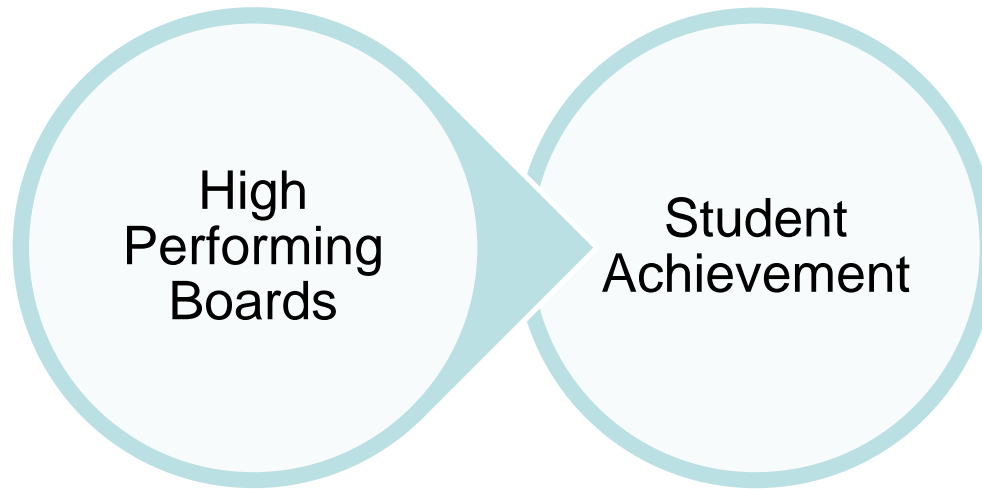
- Starts and ends on time
- Follows an agenda
- Maintains focused discussions
- Is led by an effective chairperson
- Members are thoughtfully appointed
- Provides administrative liaison and materials

Accountability to Board

- Sends committee agenda to all Board members.
- Reporting mechanism so all members have a thorough understanding of recommendations prior to voting.
- Focuses on furthering the work of the Board
- Examines its effectiveness



Board Goals



What do we need to focus on this year to continually improve our Governance work?

All tasks to complete the goal must be within the Board's purview.



Last Year's Board Goals

- 1. Development of a sustainable comprehensive budget that supports the District's goals/priorities, short and long-term facility needs, and strengthens the district's financial position.**
- 2. The Board will continue to support the administrative team in the management of the remaining referendum work.**
- 3. Explore and plan for a districtwide 3-5 year strategic planning process that includes multiple stakeholders.**
- 4. Support, celebrate and recognize the contributions and accomplishments of District staff.**
- 5. Strengthen the Board's governance capacity through training, exploration of best practices and an understanding of national, state and local issues/trends affecting the district.**