

# Sudbury School Committee Handbook



## **Mission:**

The Sudbury Public Schools strive to enable all students to reach their intellectual and personal potential. The school system, in partnership with families and the community, will work with integrity and respect to realize the shared vision of enabling students to become lifelong learners and effective contributors of society.

## **Vision:**

We are committed to excellence in educating students to be knowledgeable, creative, independent thinkers who are caring collaborative members of the school and wider communities.

**PRIDE - EXCELLENCE - UNITY**

October 3, 2022

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this Handbook is (1) to guide Committee members regarding their responsibilities as elected public officials, (2) to instruct Committee members regarding the work of the School Committee; and (3) to instruct Committee members regarding the procedures and practices of the Committee. All Committee members should familiarize themselves with the content of this Handbook whether they are a new member or an existing member. The Handbook should be reviewed and updated by the Committee periodically or as frequently as the Committee deems appropriate to maintain its applicability.

## **About Sudbury School Committee:**

The School Committee consists of five members who are elected to three-year terms. The Committee is an independent body entrusted by law with broad powers and important duties. Following the enactment of the Educational Reform Act in 1993, which restructured, and in some ways, curtailed the powers of Massachusetts School Committees, the School Committee has the power to:

1. Establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district consistent with the requirements of law and statewide goals and standards established by the Board of Education;
2. Review and approve budgets for public education in the district; and,
3. Select, evaluate annually, and, if necessary, terminate the Superintendent.

It is also the role of the Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and the Superintendent's implementation of them and to serve as the employer for the district for collective bargaining purposes.

The Committee is responsible for engaging with the community to maintain an understanding of the community's needs. In contrast to the Committee, which has budgetary, and policy-making authority, the Superintendent is charged with the day-to-day administration and oversight of Sudbury Public Schools.

The Committee typically holds public meetings two times per month during the academic year and one time each in July and August. Additional meetings may be added to the schedule as needed at the discretion of the Chair and in collaboration with the Administration. Agendas, agenda packets and supporting documents can be found on the Sudbury Public School and Town of Sudbury websites. Regular attendance at all meetings is critical to the function of the Committee and to assure a quorum of members is present to vote and establish consensus. As a courtesy, School Committee members shall inform the Chair as soon as possible if they are going to be absent from a regular meeting or an Executive Session. As a Committee of five members, a quorum is achieved when at least three members are present. The presence of three members at any given time, shall trigger adherence to Open Meeting Law

requirements. As such, unless posted as a formal meeting, no three Committee members may deliberate on School Committee business. Committee members are reminded to be mindful of the requirements of Open Meeting Law as oftentimes Committee members may be present at different town-wide meetings at any given time.

It is important that members understand the work of the administration, staff and educators to best support them in the District. The School Committee authority comes from the group, by majority, not from any one member. It is important that members ask questions and express their opinions on the issues. Once action is taken, by a vote of the Committee, it is expected that all members support the effort and decision made by the majority, regardless of individual positions. Actions taken that contradict the decision of the majority can erode the integrity of the Committee as a whole, and trust with the community.

Committee meetings are governed by Robert's Rules of Order.

There is an opportunity for public comment at each regular school committee meeting. ([Reference Policy BEDH](#))

The School Committee may be contacted at: [school-committee@sudbury.k12.ma.us](mailto:school-committee@sudbury.k12.ma.us) or mail:

Sudbury School Committee  
40 Fairbank Road  
Sudbury, MA 01776

School Committee meetings are streamed live in certain locations on Sudbury TV. Recent school committee meetings may also be viewed online at [www.SudburyTV.org](http://www.SudburyTV.org). Information regarding the School Committee may also be found on the SPS website: <https://www.sudbury.k12.ma.us/>

## Operating Procedures and Protocols:

### A. Member Orientation and Responsibilities:

All members must:

- Complete the required orientation course. Charting the Course is offered through the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). You must complete this sometime within your first year and provide a certificate of completion to the Superintendent's office.
- Complete the required Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law/Ethics training, and submit your completed certificate to the Town Clerk and the Superintendent's office within 30 days of taking office.
- Complete the required [Massachusetts Open Meeting Law Training](#), and submit your completed certificate to the Town Clerk and the Superintendent's office within 30 days of taking office.
- Become familiar with the School Committee policies on the District website.

Upon the election of new members to the School Committee, the Chair of the Committee will conduct the following orientation procedure in collaboration with the Superintendent:

- Assist new members in registering and becoming familiar with professional development offerings of MASC.
- Advise new members of their obligation to maintain the confidentiality of Executive Session
- Contact the appropriate administrators to update the District website regarding new members' contact information and to confirm information
- Organize an opportunity with the Administration for new members to familiarize themselves with Central Office Staff
- Encourage new members to meet with the Superintendent monthly

### B. Responsibilities of the Chair:

In addition to the requirements contained within the District Policy Manual, the role of the Chair will also include the following: (Nothing contained herein will conflict with the responsibilities of the Chair as contained within the District Policy Manual)

- Ensure that Executive Session minutes are taken and approved. The Chair will take Executive Session minutes or shall be responsible for appointing a designee to record Executive Session minutes at each meeting.
- Meet monthly with the Superintendent to plan Agendas. It is recommended that the Chair invite and encourage the Vice-Chair to attend agenda setting meetings.
- Sign payroll warrants
- Contact Legislators to arrange citations for members leaving the Committee.

## C. Annual Agenda Items and Regular Business:

### **Summer Workshop/Retreat:**

It is the practice of the School Committee to conduct an annual retreat in the summer to engage in meaningful professional development, discuss goals, and plan for the year ahead.

The Committee's practice is to discuss its SMART goals for the coming year during the summer retreat. The Committee's goals shall align with the role and responsibility of the Committee as well as the District goals. It is the practice of the Committee to conduct a mid-year check-in on progress of the goals.

### **Superintendent Evaluation:**

One of the major roles of the School Committee is to evaluate the Superintendent. The School Committee utilizes the recommended processes established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The School Committee collaborates with the Superintendent to set Superintendent goals by June, for Committee approval for the upcoming school year. The Superintendent provides a mid-year report on goals typically in January and an annual summative report in May. The Superintendent evaluation is typically completed in June of the current school year.

### **Annual Agenda Topics:**

- Budget
- Capital Planning
- Legislative Forum
- METCO
- Reorganization of School Committee
- School Committee goals
- School Committee protocols
- School Committee Self-Assessment
- Student Achievement
- Superintendent Evaluation
- Tri-District Meeting
- Town Meeting articles

\*Additionally, curriculum and department presentations are brought by the Superintendent under Educational and Operational Matters.

**Additional School Committee actions required by law:**

Outside of its major responsibilities, the Committee must attend to additional legal responsibilities throughout the year.

Application for School Personnel to Administer EpiPens: Prior to each school year, the Committee shall vote to authorize the Chair and the Superintendent to sign the application for the District.

SPS Family Handbook: Prior to each school year, the Committee shall vote on the handbook.

School Choice: By June 1st of every year the Committee must hold a hearing and vote on School Choice (Policy JFBB-1).

Appointment of the Superintendent to other Boards: In September the Committee annually appoints the Superintendent to the Collaboratives.

Budget: Hold an annual budget hearing and vote on the budget in December.

Additional fiduciary responsibilities:

Approval of the receipt and expenditure of grant funds

Budget transfers between cost center

Monthly accounts payable and payroll warrants

From time to time, the School Committee may establish Subcommittees. Subcommittees are established by a majority vote of the Committee. Subcommittees typically consist of two School Committee members, in addition to other individuals as requested by the Committee. Subcommittees adhere to the requirements of Open Meeting Law. Meetings are posted and minutes are taken and maintained for all Subcommittees. The Subcommittee will fill out the [Subcommittee Template form](#) that serves to formalize the role, responsibility and reporting requirements of the Subcommittee.

From time to time, the School Committee may, at the request of the Town, appoint persons to certain roles in the community to represent the interests of Sudbury Public Schools. Such appointments shall be made by a majority of the School Committee. It is the practice of the School Committee to post the appointment position and to allow a two-week open application period for individuals to apply. The School Committee shall consider the applications and vote to appoint someone to the respective role. The appointment application form shall be posted on the District website.

## **Liaison Assignments:**

The School Committee appoints liaisons to various Town and School related Boards or Committees. These appointments typically occur with the reorganization of the Committee in May. These roles serve as a mechanism of information sharing between Boards and Committees. The Committee appoints Liaisons to the following Boards, and Committees.:

- Select Board
- Finance Committee
- Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) Delegate
- Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School Committee
- Sudbury Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)
- Health and Wellness Advisory Committee

## **Budget Process:**

### **Sudbury Public School's Budget:**

Among the School Committee's most significant responsibilities is review and approval of the District's operating budget. The process of building this budget should be transparent and communicated to the School community and the broader Town of Sudbury community. The operating budget aligns with the District Strategic Plan and represents the District goals, mission, vision and values of Sudbury Public Schools.

The Superintendent works with their Administrative Leadership Team throughout the course of the year to assess and determine priorities for the coming year. These priorities are then shared with the School Committee. The School Committee's work with the Budget begins in the Fall and leads to the Superintendent proposed budget presentation in December.

The School Committee discusses the proposed budget during regular meetings, and, if necessary, may conduct additional meetings solely focused on budget for deliberative purposes. Following such deliberations and comprehensive review of the Superintendent's proposed budget, the School Committee conducts a Public Hearing pursuant to Massachusetts Gen Laws Chapter 71, Section 38N. This mandated hearing is an opportunity for the public to comment and provide feedback on the proposed budget. In addition to the posting requirements for this Public Hearing under the applicable statute, it is the customary practice of the School Committee to maximize communication regarding this Public Hearing to the Sudbury School Community as well as the broader Town of Sudbury Community. Upon completion of the Public Hearing process, the School Committee will vote on the proposed budget.

Upon passage of the proposed budget by a majority vote, the Budget formally becomes the School Committee Budget and is then presented to the Finance Committee. The

School Committee Budget is presented at the Annual Town Meeting by the Superintendent. A majority vote at Town Meeting in May is required for approval of the School Committee Budget.

### **Budget Monitoring and financial responsibilities:**

In addition to approval of the District's operating budget, the Committee is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the budget. The School Committee reviews financial reports on a monthly basis. Such reports shall include information regarding year to date expenditures, encumbrances and updated forecasts for the current fiscal year.

The School Committee is also responsible for approving payroll, and authorizing payments to vendors and individuals by reviewing and signing the Payroll and Accounts Payable Warrants produced by the Business and Finance Office. Additionally, WarrantArticles for Annual Town Meeting, or any Special Town Meeting are reviewed and approved by the Committee. Bids for goods and services for the District are also approved or rejected by the Committee.

### **Appendix 1: Open Meeting Law and Executive Session Open Meeting Law:**

The Open Meeting Law (OML) of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is intended to protect the public's right to access the deliberations of its elected representatives and promote transparency in government. The OML requires us to:

- Provide the public with notice of our meetings 48 hours in advance (excluding weekends and legal holidays) except in cases of emergency
- Hold our meetings in a publicly accessible venue
- And create, approve and maintain accurate minutes which include the date, time and location of the meeting, a list of the names of members present and absent, and a summary (not at transcript) of discussions, a list of documents and exhibits used, and a record of all decisions made and actions taken, including a record of all votes.

The OML applies to all meetings and subcommittee meetings excluding executive sessions. Meeting minutes as well as any other documents, emails and correspondence that Committee members send or receive (including texts) in their capacity as an elected public official become public documents and are subject to the Public Records Law of the Commonwealth.

The OML also restricts how and where elected officials can deliberate. With certain exceptions, expressions of opinion on matters within the jurisdiction of the Committee must be open to the public.

The legal definition of "deliberation" is an oral or written communication through any medium (including electronic mail and social media) between or among a quorum of a public body.



More detailed information on OML may be found in the Meeting Law Guide published by the State Attorney General's Office. All school committee members are required to complete an online training annually and file a certificate of completion with the School Committee Secretary. (Include citation to statute).

## **Executive Session:**

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A Section 21 and OML identify ten (10) exceptional situations where a meeting or part of a meeting of a public body may be closed to the public due to the highly sensitive nature of the content. These meetings are confidential. Members are prohibited from discussing the content of these meetings. The following is the list of exceptions:

1. To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.
2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.
3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.
4. To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices.
5. To discuss allegations of criminal misconduct or to discuss the filing of criminal complaints.
6. To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.
7. To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements.
8. To consider or interview applicants for employment or appointment by preliminary screening committee if the chair declares that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants; provided, however, that this clause shall not apply to any meeting, including meetings of a preliminary screening committee, to consider and interview applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening.
9. To confer with a mediator on a litigation matter or other decision.
10. To protect trade secrets in the course of activities conducted by a public body as an energy supplier.

## **Appendix 2: Characteristics of Effective School Boards:**

*Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards: At a Glance.*

[https://www.masc.org/images/events/2015/jtc-15/handouts/11-5\\_1045\\_8-Characteristics-of-Effective-School-Boards\\_Handout.pdf](https://www.masc.org/images/events/2015/jtc-15/handouts/11-5_1045_8-Characteristics-of-Effective-School-Boards_Handout.pdf)

Research indicates that the efficacy of school boards directly impacts student achievement. Schools Boards have been found to be effective in certain circumstances:

1. Committed to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision
2. Strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels
3. Accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement
4. Collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage internal and external stakeholders regarding district goals
5. Data savvy embracing and monitoring data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement
6. Align and sustain resources such as professional development, to meet district goals
7. Lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles with strong collaboration and mutual trust
8. Take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendent, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for improvement efforts