

UNDERSTANDING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION



NORTH PLAINFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION

“PROUD SCHOOLS FOR A PROUD COMMUNITY”

MISSION STATEMENT

The North Plainfield School District is committed to developing and maintaining a world class learning environment by providing a relevant, integrated and progressive curriculum that will foster continued intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth in all students in order to prepare them to succeed in our dynamic, diverse, and technological society while also developing in them an appreciation for the humanistic and aesthetic aspects of life.



ROLE OF THE BOARD

The general mandatory powers and duties of the Board are defined in Title 18A of New Jersey statutes. Other sections of the statutes state or imply that a local Board of education has full power to operate the local public schools as it deems fit in compliance with state and federal mandates and pertinent laws of the municipality. The Board functions only when in session.

The Board of education sees these as its required functions:

A. Policy oversight

The Board is responsible for the development of policy and for the employment of a superintendent who shall carry out its policies through the development and implementation of regulations. The Board is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and their implementation. This includes setting and evaluating goals in educational and financial areas.

B. Educational planning

The Board is responsible for requiring and acquiring reliable information from responsible sources that will enable it and the staff to work toward the continuing improvement of the educational program.

C. Provision of financial resources

The Board has major responsibilities for the adoption of a budget that will provide the wherewithal--in terms of buildings, staff, materials, and equipment--to enable the school system to carry out its functions.

D. Interpretation

The Board is responsible for providing adequate and direct means for keeping the local community informed about the school and for keeping itself and the school staff informed about the wishes of the public. All planning, which is and which is not related to the budget, needs to be interpreted to the public if citizens are to support the school program.

The Board believes that, by diligently exercising these functions, it will be able to provide the best educational opportunities possible for our children within the financial limitations set by the community.

The Board shall exercise its powers thorough the legislation of bylaws and policies for the organization and operation of the school district.

The Board shall be responsible for the operation of the school but shall delegate the administration to the Superintendent and the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary.

The Board may hear appeals in complaints and in grievance and disciplinary actions as defined in these policies and in the law.

Role of the Board Member

It is understood that the members of the Board have authority only when acting as a Board legally in session. The Board shall not be bound in any way by any action or statement on the part of any individual Board member except when such statement or action is in pursuance of specific instructions from the Board.

Members of the Board shall adhere to the code of ethics for Board members in Bylaw 0142.

No Board member, by virtue of his/her office, shall exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools or as an individual, command, direct or otherwise influence the services of any school employee.

Board members visiting the schools for any reason shall observe district regulations for all visitors.

Release of Information

Board member's access to public, personnel, and pupil records shall be governed by law and the provisions of Board policy.

Confidential information to which a Board member becomes privy as a result of his or her office shall be used only for the purpose of assisting in the discharge of his/her official responsibilities. No Board member shall reveal information contained in a confidential record or received during a duly convened private session of the Board except when that information has been released to the public by the Board.

Public Expression

Board members are entitled to express themselves publicly on any matter, including issues involving the Board and the school district. Individual Board members, however, do not have the authority to express the position of the Board except as expressly designated in accordance with Bylaw 0146. A Board member shall not represent his or her personal opinion as the position of the Board and shall include a statement to that effect in all formal expressions in which his or her Board affiliation is likely to be recognized, such as letters to government officials or newspapers, speeches to organizations, etc., that "the opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Board".

The Board of Education functions under the highest standards of ethics and professionalism as defined by the:

New Jersey Board Member Code of Ethics

I will uphold and enforce all laws, state Board rules and regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes should be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures.

I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools which meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability race, creed, sex or social standing.

I will confine my Board action to policymaking, planning, and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the Board has consulted those who will be affected by them.

I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow Board members, to see that they are well run.

I will recognize that authority rests with the Board of Education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action which may compromise the Board.

I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends.

I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individual or the schools. But in all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow Board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its schools.

I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the chief administrative officer.

I will support and protect school personnel in proper performance of their duties.

I will refer all complaints to the chief administrative officer and will act on such complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

Board Meetings

A Guide to Public Participation

Regular meetings of the Board of Education are held the first and/or third Wednesdays of each month at 7:30 PM, with the exception of the months of July and August, and are held at the High School. There may be some occasions that require special meetings or a change in the date or location due to special circumstances. Notification of meetings is advertised in the local newspapers, radio stations, cable television companies, and notices are posted at Borough Hall, the public library, on the District's Website, and at the Board of Education Administrative Offices at the Watchung School.

Meetings of the Board are conducted for the purpose of carrying out the business of the school district and, therefore, are not public meetings, but meetings held in public. The Board recognizes the value to school governance of public comment and allows members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest. In accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, known as the "Sunshine Law," there are certain items that the Board of Education may discuss in private. This session is known as Executive Session and will be announced, and motioned to approve, at each meeting.

There are two places in the regular public meeting agenda that permit comments from the public. Upon being recognized by the chairperson of the meeting a person must state his/her name and address and briefly make a comment or statement. Each person will be allowed up to three minutes to speak and may not be recognized again until all of those who wish to speak do so. The chairperson, at his/her discretion, may recognize the public at other times during the meeting. The Board will not permit unnecessary and/or undesirable identification of district students or personnel at public meetings. The Board may attempt to answer questions or respond to comments that evening, but is not obligated to do so. There may be times when topics will need some research and investigation. In such cases, the topic may be placed on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled meeting for discussion if warranted or the designated administrative staff will respond directly to the individual requesting information.



The Sunshine Law

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(a), commonly known as the "Sunshine Law" all meetings must be open to the public at all times except for those meetings at which certain exempted matters are discussed. Such items include;

1. A matter which, by express provision of Federal law or State statute or rule of court, shall be rendered confidential.
2. Any matter in which the release of information would impair a right to receive funds from the US Government.
3. Any material the disclosure of which constitutes an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy.
4. Any collective bargaining agreement or the terms and conditions which are proposed for inclusion in any collective bargaining agreement.
5. Any matter involving the purchase, lease or acquisition of real property with public funds.
6. Any tactics and techniques utilized in protecting the safety and property of the public provided that their disclosure could impair such protection.
7. Any pending or anticipated litigation or contact negotiation in which the public body is or may become a party.
8. Any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, evaluation, promotion or discipline of a public officer or employee.

Open Public Records Act

Government records shall be readily accessible for inspection, copying, or examination by the citizens of this State, with certain exceptions, for the protection of the public interest, and any limitations on the right of access accorded by P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented, shall be construed in favor of the public's right of access;

All government records shall be subject to public access unless exempt from such access by: P.L.1963, c.73 (C.47:1A-1 et seq.) as amended and supplemented; any other statute; resolution of either or both houses of the Legislature; regulation promulgated under the authority of any statute or Executive Order of the Governor; executive Order of the Governor; Rules of Court; any federal law, federal regulation, or federal order;

A public agency has a responsibility and an obligation to safeguard from public access a citizen's personal information with which it has been entrusted when disclosure thereof would violate the citizen's reasonable expectation of privacy; and nothing contained in P.L. 1963, c.73(C.47:1A-1 et seq.), as amended and supplemented, shall be construed as affecting in any

*** The information contained above is only a summary of the OPRAH law; it is not intended to be a complete analysis of the law and should not be relied upon as such. The information contained herein is not intended to be, nor should it be construed as legal advice for the reader.

way the common law right of access to any record, including but not limited to criminal investigator records of any law enforcement agency.

General Information

The Board of Education is an elected body of seven members whose responsibilities include establishing policies, setting goal adoption and annual budget for the school district. Board members are elected to serve three-year terms at the annual school election held each November and serve without compensation. The Board of Education operates as a committee of the whole, which means that the entire Board considers all administrative recommendations before acting on them. There are several standing committees of the Board as well as special ad-hoc committees that are created by the president to serve specific purposes. Committees may not take any official action on behalf of the Board. For information about becoming a Board member, contact the Office of the Board Secretary/School Business Administrator at 908-769-6050, or in writing to 33 Mountain Avenue, North Plainfield, NJ 07060, or email to the Board of Education (addresses below).

Voicing Concerns and Resolving Issues

In accordance with Board Bylaw #0164 the following procedures are to be followed regarding either voicing concerns or attempting to resolve an issue.

1. **School Level** - Procedures for dealing with concerns and issues on this level start first with the teacher or staff involved. The next level if not resolved is to the building Principal for further review and consultation. If still not resolved to both parties satisfaction the next level for review and discussion will be the Superintendent of School or designee.
2. **District Level Curricular** - Procedures for dealing with concerns and issues related to curriculum and or activities should first be directed to the building principal who will contact the supervisor for that particular subject or activity area. Discussions with these individuals would focus on district wide concerns.
3. **District Level Facilities** - Procedures for dealing with concerns and issues related to the safety and or facilities in the district should first be addressed with the Director of Facilities and Grounds. If this is not satisfied the next level would be to bring the issue to the attention of the Superintendent.

In all three cases, if the concerns and or issues are not resolved to the party's satisfaction they may be forwarded in writing to the attention of the President of the Board of Education for final discussion and review. Additionally email can be sent to the district. Using your browser, go to www.nplainfield.org, and click "Contact," then "Contact Us". Or by emailing directly to northplainfieldschools@nplainfield.org.

CONTACT US

Members of the community who are unable to attend the Board meeting, but who would like to communicate with the Board may do so by sending a letter to:

**Board Secretary
North Plainfield School District
33 Mountain Avenue
North Plainfield, NJ 07060**

Or

E-mail:

northplainfieldschools@nplainfield.org

Website: www.nplainfield.org

Directory

Administrative Offices – 33 Mountain Avenue

Superintendent of Schools 908-769-6060

Assistant Superintendent 908-769-6059

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary 908-769-6050

High School – 34 Wilson Avenue 908-769-6000

Middle School – 34 Wilson Avenue 908-769-6065

East End School – 170 Oneida Avenue 908-769-6070

Somerset School - 303 Somerset Street 908-769-6080

Stony Brook School – 269 Grove Street 908-769-6063

West End School - 447 Greenbrook Road 908-769-6083

Alterative School – 20 Harrison Avenue 908-769-6100

Harrison School (Bridge Program) – 12 Harrison Avenue 908-769-6041