

Regional School District #17

Board of Education



School Board Member

Handbook

December 2023

This handbook summarizes various policies, protocols, and practices of the Board of Education to aid its members and the general public in understanding the operating principles of the Board. This is not intended to replace the full complement of RSD 17 School Policies and By-Laws but rather to highlight commonly referenced materials.

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Introduction

This handbook is a convenient guide to the operations of the Regional School District (RSD) 17 Board of Education (BoE). It is a summary of certain information, policies, and practices helpful in understanding the operating practices of the BoE. Source documents should be consulted for definitive information.

This Handbook will be posted on the Board's website and will be available at the Central Office of Regional School District 17.

Executive Summary

The Regional School District 17 Board of Education is an eleven-member, non-partisan Board. There are six members from Haddam and five members from Killingworth. The members of the Board of Education are local residents charged by Connecticut law to oversee the school district. They are elected by district citizens and are volunteers who serve without pay for a four-year term. The Election of Board members is such that approximately half the Board is elected/re-elected every two years.

Reference: *CGS 10-46, Town Charters of Haddam and Killingworth*

Regional School District 17 Vision

Our learners are at the center of our community and are encouraged to discover their unique strengths to become the best versions of themselves. Their education ignites passion and develops them to be compassionate critical thinkers, prepared to contribute to improving our world.

Adopted by the Regional School District 17 Board of Education May 2022

This vision is based on the fundamental belief that when our learners are at the center of our community, we can always find common ground. When we support their unique strengths and encourage them to be the best versions of themselves, we can do the same. Our learners grow exponentially when they discover their own passion and curiosities and, as a result, become more self-possessed and aware, and more empowered to influence the world around them. If they can combine compassion with critical thinking, they can face any problem or dilemma, no matter how difficult, with courage and with grace. Our world needs leaders of this nature so that we can recenter our lives around our founding values while learning from our mistakes and being informed about our progress. When our students are at the center of our community, each and every one of us has an opportunity to make a difference in a student's life every day... no matter what role we play.

Regional School District 17 Vision of the Graduate

Our Vision of the Graduate focuses on developing our learners to be critical thinkers and collaborators, who are caring and compassionate with the skills and mindset to solve real-world challenges. Students grow and contribute through academic exploration and feedback, perseverance and resilience, and open-mindedness to others' perspectives.

Regional School District 17 Vision of the Graduate



Vision of the Graduate - Skills

Contribute Productively includes the ability to:

- Take control of one's learning by planning and organizing oneself to complete tasks
- Demonstrate independence and initiative in doing one's best work
- Collaborate positively on a team project or shared endeavor
- Seek leadership or take a supportive role within a group in a manner that works best for oneself, others, and the outcome
- Think creatively and flexibly to design and develop innovative solutions, strategies, and outcomes

Think Critically includes the ability to:

- Inquire and formulate questions to gather information and expand upon ideas
- Research and distill information from reliable resources representative of multiple perspectives
- Evaluate information for credibility, bias, and point of view
- Analyze and interpret information and data to generate solutions to problems
- Reflect upon the accuracy or viability of solutions or conclusions

Communicate Effectively includes the ability to:

- Organize thoughts to articulate and justify one's position or perspective with clarity
- Construct, refine, and present arguments supported by evidence
- Actively listen to understand and interpret the ideas and reasoning of others
- Use a variety of verbal, written, or visual methods appropriate for the message and audience

Vision of the Graduate - Dispositions

Maintain a Growth Mindset involves believing in oneself, having an open-mind, and demonstrating perseverance and resilience. Examples of demonstrating a Growth Mindset include:

- Apply sustained effort to understand concepts, acquire skills, and achieve to one's greatest potential
- Reflect upon feedback or mistakes as opportunities to adapt and improve upon learning
- Show determination to accomplish one's goals
- Explore ideas to expand thinking
- Encourage a growth mindset in others

Demonstrate Respect, Empathy and Kindness involves caring for and showing compassion for oneself and others. Examples include:

- Seek to understand one another's experiences, circumstances, and perspectives
- Embrace diversity and recognize the value of all persons by promoting equity and inclusivity
- Maintain self-respect and advocate for oneself and others
- Be kind and act to enhance the climate of our schools and community

Display Character, Courage, and Integrity involves having confidence in oneself to make sound decisions. Examples include:

- Do the right thing, even when no one is looking
- Take the initiative to provide or seek help for oneself or others
- Stand up for oneself or others when faced with unkind, disrespectful, or discriminatory behavior
- Actively engage in discourse that addresses difficult topics or situations to improve conditions for all

Adopted by the Regional School District 17 Board of Education , February 2021

Regional School District 17 Core Values

Our values inform our behavior. They shape how we think and react, inform our decisions and judgements, and provide guidance regarding organizational expectations for how we get things done and conduct ourselves in the process.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IS A RIGHT

All students have a right to an equitable education to develop a passion and direction for their future.

EVERY STUDENT HAS POTENTIAL

Students excel when they discover their strengths and persist through challenges to learn and grow.

QUALITY TEACHING IS ESSENTIAL TO LEARNING

Innovative and effective teaching promotes mastery of knowledge and skills.

STUDENT SUCCESS IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

A strong and trusting partnership among students, families, and staff improves academic achievement and social development.

ALIGNMENT AND TEAMWORK ARE POWERFUL

We can accomplish anything when we collaborate toward common goals and a higher organizational purpose.

CRITICAL THINKERS MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

An intellectually-disciplined culture of collaborators leads to meaningful discourse, viable decisions, and understanding.

SCHOOL IS A SAFE PLACE

Students thrive in schools that foster a safe and respectful climate.

SUSTAINABILITY SECURES OUR FUTURE

We are committed to using our resources efficiently through effective strategies and systems.

Adopted by the Regional School District 17 Board of Education May 2022

Regional School District 17 Strategic Plan Priorities

Student Learning and Well-Being

To fulfill our Vision of the Graduate, we inspire each student to grow academically, socially, and emotionally through evidence-based practices.

Educator & Leadership Development and Capacity

Create and support a workforce that is inspired and engaged to fulfill the District's Vision, demonstrate the values, and implement the Strategic Plan.

Operational Efficiency

Manage effective use of resources in a manner that is sustainable, promotes excellence, and supports student learning.

Enhance District Infrastructure

Ensure that instructional facilities are safe and support a modern learning environment.

Strategic Plan Objective 2.1: Ensure effective governance through a high-functioning Board of Education

Desired outcome: The district strategic plan is understood, implemented, and achieved on time, in budget, and to metric standards. Policies are regularly reviewed, compliant, monitored, and support the strategic plan and the District's Vision and values. The Board establishes a strong communications structure to inform and engage (two-way) stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals. The Board creates accountability around long-term budget projections that provide the community and future boards with a long-term forecast of financial needs for planning purposes. An active, effective Board has a continuous improvement plan to improve effectiveness and governance.

- Conduct annual planning session with Superintendent/Asst. Superintendent in summer prior to the school year to:
 - Align or adjust goals, priorities, and strategies and monitor strategic indicators.
 - Ensure Board awareness of student learning needs and a systematic way to address those needs (CIP/DIP)
- Create a standardized process for regular reporting on strategic plan goals and objectives and monitoring of strategic plan metrics, and evaluate for changes where necessary.

- Update policies and bylaws, annually and sometimes as needed, via Shipman protocols due to legislative (state and federal), administrative, and/or Board requests
- Review student achievement, HR, operations, and capital-related policies for SP alignment
- Collaborate with the Superintendent to communicate the school district's strategic plan and aligned budget and listen and incorporate community perspectives, where appropriate, into Board action. Key areas include:
 - Progress toward strategic plan
 - Financial matters and budget referendum,
 - Educational goals and changes
 - Long-term facility, technology, and annual maintenance plan
 - Negotiations with bargaining units
- Outline and adhere to communication protocols for public and parental contact to the Board.
- Improve or create new municipal, business, and community partnerships to advance the strategic plan
- Create Board expectations with clear roles and responsibilities
- Create effective Board onboarding and annual professional development plan which includes:
 - New member orientation includes transition of documented history and knowledge on bargaining, policies, etc.
 - Annual workshop with ongoing professional development
- Improve Board meeting and subcommittee effectiveness of meetings by aligning agendas and goals to the strategic plan.
- Create Board member self-evaluation process tied to Board goals and annual professional development to improve board efficiency and governance
- Create accountability around long-term budget planning that provides the community with a long-term of financial needs and future boards with budget benchmarks:
 - Long-range capital plan
 - Long-range technology plan
 - Long-range educational plan
 - Efficiency opportunities
 - Enrollment projections
 - Community economic growth projections/grand list

Board Functions: What Does a School Board Do?

Boards of Education have several functions:

- Develops, approve, and oversee the implementation of the District's Strategic Plan that:
 - enhances academic achievement and wellness, and attracts and retains staff talent that can fulfill the strategic plan and live the values, and ensures sustainability, and provides for physical school building maintenance.

The Strategic Plan identifies and supports objectives that can be regularly measured and adjusted. It is the guide for District and Board Improvement efforts by providing structure, monitoring progress toward achieving goals, aligning leadership and improvement efforts.

- Develops, implements, and monitors the district's policies. These policies serve as the roadmap for school district operations. They give direction to the administration and staff and become the foundation of accountability.
- Selects, retains, and evaluates the Superintendent of Schools, who serves as the district's chief executive officer and implements board policy.
- Adopts a sound curriculum for all educational programs
- Develop sound financial plans consistent with school needs and community resources. Review, approve, and monitor the implementation of an annual operating budget and a capital plan.
- Serve as the impartial hearing panel on such issues as termination, expulsion, and grievance.
- Responsible for the proper care, maintenance, and operations of school buildings.
- Build public support and understanding of public education. This means communicating and interpreting the school district's vision and strategic plan to the public, listening to the community, and when appropriate, incorporating citizens' views into the plans and/or discussions of the Board.

Board Authority and Accountability

The Board of Education is accountable for ensuring that Regional School District 17 residents have access to a free, quality education in accordance with Federal and Connecticut State law. Connecticut law imbues the Board with specific and often broad authority over the administration of district schools. For example, the Board of Education exercises control over school buildings and property, employs and supervises the Superintendent, adopts a budget, and approves textbooks. A lengthier and more specific listing of the Board's authority can be found in Chapter 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

While the Board has broad authority over the RSD 17 schools, much of this authority is delegated to the Superintendent and other district employees. The Board of Education functions not as management responsible for the administration of the school district, but as a board of directors accountable for establishing a vision for the District, and monitoring district progress in reaching that vision.

Reference: *CGS 10-220, Board By-Laws 9010*

Superintendent's Authority and Responsibilities

The Superintendent, pursuant to state law, is the CEO of Regional School District #17. They are responsible for leading and managing the school district, hiring and supervising personnel, developing and administering the budget and advising the Board on educational developments, board policies, and applicable laws. The Superintendent regularly communicates to the Board the status of student learning and the district's progress in meeting its stated goals.

The Superintendent attends all meetings of the Board, works closely with the Board in developing goals and strategies, and is responsible for the implementation of these strategies.

Reference: *CGS 10-157*

Board Structure

Board Officers

The Board of Education has four officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The term of office is two years. Biannual election of officers occurs at the Board meeting in December. Officers are elected by a majority vote of the Board. The Board Chair may serve no more than two consecutive terms.

Reference: Board By-Laws 9120

The Board Chair presides at all meetings and serves as the Board spokesperson. They are responsible for appointing Board members to subcommittees, and signs documents, contracts and checks on behalf of the Board. The Board Chair works closely with the Superintendent to plan meeting agendas and can call special meetings of the Board when necessary.

Reference: Board By-Laws 9121

The Vice-Chair serves as Chair in the absence of the Chair. The Vice-Chair works closely with the Chair and assists that office as needed.

Reference: Board By-Laws 9122

The Secretary is responsible for documenting the minutes of the Board. The Board Administrator drafts minutes at regular Board meetings. The Secretary confirms the accuracy of these minutes, which are then posted within 48 hours. The Secretary signs the Board minutes following Board approval. The Secretary may also be responsible for other official Board correspondence.

Reference: Board By-Laws 9123

The Treasurer will sign any notes or obligations of the district in accordance with Section 10-46 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The treasurer, a key member (and typically the Chair) of the BoE Finance Subcommittee, collaborates with the Superintendent and Director of Fiscal Operations to oversee the district's finances.

Reference: *Board By-Laws 9126*

Board Sub-Committees

Due to limited time during regular Board meetings, the board utilizes subcommittees to dedicate more time, expertise, and focus on individual issues. The Board's committee structure and goals are aligned with the Board's goals.

The Board of Education has six standing committees. These committees are Communications, Curriculum, Facilities, Finance, Personnel & Evaluation, and Policy. The Board also relies on special committees appointed by the Board Chair for those tasks that require a committee of the Board and do not fall within the parameters of the standing committees.

The Board Chair selects Board members to serve on the various Committees. The Chair also selects the Subcommittee chairs. Each Sub-Committee Chair is responsible for the meeting schedule, agenda, and minutes. The meeting schedule should be set for the entire calendar year no later than January 31st. Special Meetings may be held as needed. The process of issuance of meeting notices, agendas, and minutes is governed by the FOIA.

A Board Liaison is a member of the Board who represents the Board to key stakeholder groups. The Liaison attends regularly scheduled meetings of that group.

The Subcommittee Chairs and the Board Liaisons report pertinent information to the full Board.

Reference: *BOE By-Laws 9130*

Communications Subcommittee

This subcommittee deals with communicating Board of Education information to the community.

Curriculum Subcommittee

This subcommittee is responsible for reviewing the District curricula and supervising any changes suggested by the Superintendent, administrators, and/or teachers. Subcommittee members may also be included in other district or community activities involving the Regional School District 17 curriculum, such as activities or programs to enhance the curriculum.

Facilities Subcommittee

This subcommittee works closely with the district Director of Operations. Long-term capital planning, maintenance and improvement projects, and the purchase of items for district buildings and property are supervised by this subcommittee.

Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee monitors and makes recommendations on the monthly district finance activities, including fund balances, budget transfers, insurance considerations, the annual audit, and annual budget guidelines and priorities. It recommends to the Board approval of the allocation of general operating and capital funds.

Personnel and Evaluation Subcommittee

This subcommittee is responsible for the evaluation of the Superintendent, contract negotiations, Administrators, Teachers, Support Staff, Nurses, and Custodians. In addition, provides oversight of agreements with non-affiliated personnel and all other human resource-related functions and issues.

Policy Subcommittee

The Policy Subcommittee oversees the policies of the school system. The policies encompass numerous areas: Vision and Strategic Objectives, Community Relations, Administration, Business & Non-Instructional Operations, Personnel-Certified & Non-Certified, Students, Instruction, New Construction, and By-laws of the Board.

Board Liaisons

BoE liaisons attend the meetings of the groups below and report updates to the full Board during regular meetings.

Haddam-Killingworth Youth and Family Services

This Board member attends HKYFS Board and/or HK Coalition meetings to share information related to supporting youth and families and promoting positive youth development in the Haddam-Killingworth community.

LEARN

This Board member becomes a member of the Board of Directors of LEARN, our regional education service center (RESC).

HK Recreation Authority

This Board member serves as a Board Representative to the HK Parks and Recreation Commission which plans the development of municipal recreation facilities for the children, youth, and adults of the town.

Haddam Board of Selectmen

This Board member reports a summary of Board of Education work at monthly Board of Selectmen meetings.

Killingworth Board of Selectmen

This Board member reports a summary of Board of Education work at monthly Board of Selectmen meetings.

Board Function

Freedom of Information Act

Please note: This is a high-level overview of key aspects of the FOIA.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides the public access to the workings and meetings of public agencies, including boards of education, subject to narrow exceptions that are strictly construed. In addition, the law provides that the public shall have access to records that are developed and/or maintained by public agencies. Committee meetings of the Board must also comply with the FOIA.

Whenever the BoE holds a “meeting,” the posting, access, and other requirements under the FOIA are triggered. The basic rule is that there is a “meeting” of the BoE any time a quorum (6 of 11 members) of the BoE convenes to discuss or act upon a matter over which the BoE has responsibility. A “meeting” also occurs whenever there is a hearing or other proceeding of the BoE, whether or not the quorum requirement is met. In addition, when the BoE has delegated authority to a smaller number of members, their actions are likely to be considered a proceeding of the BoE subject to the FOIA.

Meeting Requirements

There are most commonly two types of “meetings” under the FOIA that Boards most typically hold (*regular* and *special*), and each has unique posting requirements. A *regular meeting* is one that has been included in the listing of regular meetings filed with the BoE clerk no later than January 31 of each year. The agenda for this type of meeting must be filed at least 24 hours before the meeting convenes, and the posting must be available to the public. Generally, no business other than that listed on the posted agenda may be conducted at the meeting of the BoE, unless an item is added to the agenda by a two-thirds vote during a regular meeting.

Any meeting of the BoE which is not included on the list of regular meetings is a *special meeting*. Requirements for posting a special meeting are similar to those for a regular meeting: notice of the meeting, including the time and place, as well as the business to be conducted, must be filed at least 24 hours before the meeting convenes. For special meetings of the BoE, the

meeting must also be posted on the district website at least 24 hours before the meeting. Items cannot be added to the agenda of a special meeting.

The minutes of BoE meetings must be available to the public within seven days of the session (not including weekends and holidays when BoE offices are closed). Votes of the Board must be reduced to writing and available within forty-eight hours. The FOIA requires that minutes must contain the recording of votes and the names of those members in attendance. These requirements apply to meetings of Board subcommittees as well.

In order to appropriately apprise the public of the Board's work, Board minutes should contain the date, the time, and the location of the meeting. Also included should be the members in attendance, a brief description of any business transacted by the Board, along with any Board action, the recording of Board member votes, and a description of any executive session held, and the names of all individuals present for each executive session.

Members of the public may attend BoE meetings, except for that/those portion(s) properly designated as *executive session*. The BoE must indicate the reason for the executive session which identifies which of the five statutory reasons allowable (personnel matters, pending claims and litigation, security devices and real estate, confidential documents (such as student records or attorney-client privilege), collective bargaining issues, or other negotiations. Meetings to discuss labor negotiations where the Board acts as a hiring committee for a key position, and caucuses of the same political party are not subject to the requirements of FOIA.

The following are NOT meetings, and, per FOIA, the Board does not need to enter executive session; Personnel search committee for executive level candidates; Chance or social meeting neither planned nor intended for the purpose of discussing board business; Discussions of strategy or negotiations for collective bargaining; Caucus of board members of a single political party; Administrative or staff meeting of a single-member public agency; Communication limited to notice of board meeting or its agenda; Quorum of the board who are present at any event which has been noticed and conducted as a meeting of another agency.

Source: Attorney Tom Mooney (Shipman and Goodwin) *Practical Guide to Connecticut School Law (9th edition)*

Reference: *CGS 1-200 et seq*
Board By-Laws 9130

Confidentiality

Information and discussion in Board executive sessions is confidential and cannot be shared with the public. Information, discussion, and actions taken by Board members at disciplinary, expulsion, and termination hearings are highly confidential. Much of the work of the Personnel and Evaluation sub-committee is also confidential. Disclosure of such information may violate one or more state or federal laws.

Robert's Rules of Order

The Board conducts its meetings utilizing *Robert's Rules of Order*, except when these rules are in conflict with Board policy or Connecticut law. The Board Chair serves as the Board parliamentarian unless another board member is chosen as parliamentarian by a majority of the Board.

Reference: *BOE By-Law 9325(a)*

Meeting Agendas

The Superintendent, in conjunction with the Board Chair, develops an agenda for each Board meeting. Meeting agendas, along with necessary documents and material, are distributed to Board members prior to the meeting. Board agendas and related documents are designed to facilitate discussion and voting.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda includes all voting items which are not expected to require Board discussion or debate. Consent Agenda items typically consist of donations to schools, classrooms, or programs, items that are a "first read," or other general items. A vote to approve the Consent Agenda by the Board shall approve all items listed on the Consent Agenda. If a Board member wishes to discuss an item, they shall request that the item be set aside/taken off the Consent Agenda, and it will be discussed and voted on separately.

Reference: *BOE By-Law 9323(a)*

Board Votes

The Board of Education is a collective body and, as such, can act only via a vote by its members. Board votes must be taken in public at a properly noticed meeting of the Board and recorded in writing. Pursuant to Robert's Rules, in order to be brought to a vote, a motion must be made by one board member and seconded by another. Members may vote in favor or against a motion or abstain from voting. Unless otherwise specified by Board policy, a majority of board members voting in favor of a particular motion is sufficient for approval.

Meeting Norms

It is the expectation that the Board of Education is a professional organization whose members model appropriate behavior for the school district. Members should be prepared and arrive on time. Board meetings will be conducted via understood and established procedures as set forth in Board policy and by-laws.

If a Board member is unable to attend a Board or subcommittee meeting, they should inform the Board Chair in advance.

In order to ensure that meetings of the Board are as effective and useful as possible, members will avoid surprises by articulating specific concerns in advance. The Board believes that informed, respectful discussion and debate are the best means of arriving at good decisions for the school district. Accordingly, Board members will listen attentively, consider all points of view, support their positions with facts when possible, be prepared to answer questions from other Board members, focus on the issue at hand, avoid negative and personal comments, and be prepared to compromise, understanding that the goal of debate among Board members is not to prevail but to arrive at the best possible decision for the school district.

At the beginning of some meetings and placed on the agenda as "public comment," members of the public have the opportunity to address Board members. There is an acceptable decorum expected from public comment, and any violations of this are managed by the Board Chair. This is not a time for debate or discussion but instead a listening period for Board members. Any response will come from the Board Chair or the Superintendent. More complete and detailed responses may be furnished after the Superintendent and the Chair have had the opportunity to consider and/or research the remarks.

Board Hearings

On occasion, Board members may be asked to serve as part of an impartial hearing board for such hearings as student expulsion, school accommodation, and teacher termination. For legal reasons, it is important that Board members not “pre-judge” the issue prior to the hearing. Therefore, members should not be exposed to the details of the matter outside of the hearing.

Relationship with the Superintendent

Search, Selection, and Appointment of Superintendent

The Board of Education is responsible for the appointment of the Superintendent. When conducting a search for a Superintendent, the Board may vote itself as the personnel search committee. The Personnel Search Committee may meet without public notice or a requirement to allow the public to attend.

The search for and selection of a Superintendent of Schools should be thoughtful and informed, made with a clear understanding of the needs of the school district and the corresponding characteristics of an ideal Superintendent, as well as an awareness of the availability of potential candidates. Although each search process is unique, generally, the Board would be well advised to consult with the public and other informed individuals, both in and outside the district, when conducting a Superintendent search.

Superintendent Evaluation

The Board is responsible for evaluating the Superintendent’s performance, as well as making decisions concerning their contract of employment, such as compensation and contract extension. Following the conclusion of the school year, the Board shall conduct an evaluation of the Superintendent’s performance, utilizing a process and standards of performance that have been agreed upon in advance with the Superintendent of Schools.

Board Role in the Hiring Process

The Board does not have a primary role in the hiring process except for the Superintendent. It is Board policy to authorize the Superintendent to hire teachers and other personnel without direct involvement on the part of the Board members.

When hiring school administrators, the Board does have a more direct role. A Board member(s) selected by the Board Chair can participate in the interview process. Then, the full Board interviews the recommended finalist for the administrative position and votes to approve or not approve the recommendation.

Board Policies

The Board develops and maintains policies that govern the school district and the Board and serve as guidelines for the effective and efficient operation of a school district committed to providing an exceptional educational experience for each student. Board policies are developed according to requirements set forth in Connecticut Statutes, State Department of Education recommendations, and the Board's by-laws, policies, and vision statement. In order to ensure that Board policies are current and in compliance with statutory requirements, the Board may utilize attorneys or other consultants. While the Board may be advised concerning its policies by the Superintendent, its attorney, or other consultants, the adoption of new policies or the revision or repeal of existing policies is the sole responsibility of the Board.

Board Attorney

The attorney for Regional School District 17 shall be the legal advisor for the Board and its officers regarding questions related to their official duties. The Board may appoint, either full-time or on a retainer basis, a law firm to serve as its legal counsel. The primary function of the attorney is to provide legal representation to the Board and the Superintendent.

The Board attorney shall:

1. Advise the Board with respect to all legal matters relating to Regional School District 17, including, but not limited to, interpretation of the Connecticut General Statutes and all other statutes, rules, and regulations affecting the District.
2. Be easily accessible to the Board or Superintendent (or at the discretion of the Superintendent to his or her administrative staff) with respect to legal matters related to the day-to-day operation of the District.
3. Review and represent the District in the preparation of any and all contracts which the District may be obliged to execute, other than purchase orders issued for the purchase of goods, equipment and services.
4. Give a written opinion on all legal questions referred to them by the Superintendent or Board Chairperson.
5. Attend Board of Education meetings, conferences and other meetings as requested by the Board, the Superintendent or Board committees.
6. Upon request, review the legality of rules, regulations and bylaws to be adopted by the Board.

The Board and Superintendent shall conduct an annual review of the performance of the Board attorney. At least every five years, or sooner if requested by the Board, District 17 will solicit responses to a Request for Proposals for District legal services.

Reference: Board By-Laws, 9351

Budget Process

By statute, the annual budget generation, review and approval process involves the following 8 steps:

1. The Superintendent works with the District Administration team to draft an initial budget.
2. This initial "Superintendent's budget" is reviewed and edited by the Board.
3. After any adjustments are made as recommended by the Board, the resultant budget is approved by the Board.

4. This "proposed budget" is made available for public review, and public comment meetings are held.
5. The Board may update the budget, considering recommendations from town officials and residents.
6. The Board approves the final budget.
7. An Annual Budget Meeting is held on the first Monday in May to call the final budget to a town vote.
8. A referendum vote is held in each town the following day.

Reference: *CGS 10-51*

Board Member Function, Authority and Expectations

Board Member Authority

The Board and its individual members are not involved in the day-to-day operation of the schools.

Individual Board members have no authority except when they are meeting as a Board of Education. The Board of Education is a collective body, and by statute can only act when a quorum is assembled in a legally constituted meeting. Outside of an official meeting, or unless otherwise designated by the Board, an individual Board member is an ordinary citizen with no more authority than any other citizen. The statements or actions of individual Board members do not bind the Board of Education, except when that statement or action has been authorized by an official act of the Board. Board members should not act nor speak in a manner that suggests they are speaking or acting on behalf of the Board of Education or the District when they have not been so authorized to do so by the Board.

Reference: *Board By-Laws 9000, 9005, 9010*

Board Member Expectations

Board members are expected to attend all regular and special meetings of the Regional District 17 Board, including meetings of their assigned subcommittees. While it is inevitable that, on occasion, an individual member will have a personal or professional conflict that prevents them from attending a meeting, ideally, this is a rare and unavoidable circumstance.

Members of the Board of Education serve on behalf of the communities and children of Regional School District 17. It is expected that Board members will make this service a priority. The Board of Education functions best when all eleven members devote the time, energy, preparation, and seriousness of purpose necessary to accomplish exceptional work that is called for by public service.

Board members are expected to respect the confidentiality necessary for executive sessions of the Board, for special hearings of the Board, and for contract negotiations process and other Board communications and information.

Board Member Qualifications

Individuals must be registered voters in Haddam or Killingworth in order to serve on the Board of Education. Employees of RSD 17 may not serve on the Board.

It is expected that Board of Education members will share a commitment to providing an exceptional educational experience for each student, a willingness to work and study to become well-versed in public education and RSD 17 schools, and a sincere desire to be part of a high-functioning governing body that takes the responsibilities of public service seriously.

A newly elected Board member must be sworn in by his or her respective Town Clerk before serving on the Board.

Resignation of Board Members

Board members who wish to resign from the Board of Education must submit a letter of resignation to the town clerk, with a copy to the Board Chair. A member's resignation is not effective until it is filed with the town clerk.

Reference: *Board By-Laws 9222*

Filling a Vacancy on the Board

If a vacancy occurs on the RSD 17 Board of Education, the vacancy is filled by the respective town, in accordance with Section 10-46 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The new member will serve out the term of the resigning Board member.

Reference: *Town Charters of Haddam and Killingworth*

Discipline of Board Members

Although the Board of Education cannot remove individuals from service as Board members, it does have the authority and ability to discipline individual members. Board members who violate the rules, regulations, or policies of the Board, interfere with the orderly and efficient operation of the Board, or act in ways that are contrary to the best interests of the District can be subject to a vote of censure by the Board. A censure vote is an expression of disapproval concerning an individual member by the Board.

Board Officers can be removed from their office by a majority vote of the Board.

Reference: *Board By-Laws 9222, 9272*

Board Member Orientation

Orientation opportunities are provided for newly elected members. As part of the orientation, candidates will be provided a package of materials, including the Board member handbook and other appropriate materials.

Indemnification of Board Members

Connecticut law provides that the school district must indemnify and hold school employees, volunteers, and board members harmless from any claim, demand or judgment from negligence in the performance of their duties and responsibilities. This protection includes legal fees, expenses, and other costs. Indemnification is not allowed where the member's actions are found to be wanton, reckless, or malicious. Generally, this will not apply if the member is acting reasonably and in good faith.

Reference: *CGS 10-235*

Reference Information

Board of Education Email

The District provides a district email account for all Board members. All email correspondence pertaining to Board business, regardless of account used (including personal email accounts), is subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Regional School District Website

Board information can be found on the district website at www.rsd17.org.

Regional School District 17 Facebook Page

The Regional School District 17 Facebook page can be accessed through the Facebook site <http://www.facebook.com/groups/rsd17boe>. Photographs and articles on the site are subject to approval by the Superintendent or designee.

Glossary of Terms

The following are terms commonly used when discussing various aspects of the RSD 17 school district and may provide a reference for you.

Adjusted Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita (AENGLC, etc.)

The Adjusted Equalized Net Grand List (AENGL) of each town is divided by the population of that town to obtain a measure of property/income wealth per person. This is the definition currently used to compare a town's ability to finance educational costs.

Average Daily Membership (ADM)

Average Daily Membership is the average number of students in a school district. In October, a count is made of the number of students in a school district and used to determine the cost share for Haddam and Killingworth. From this measure, students are counted in their town of residence (the town that pays for their education).

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Building on the best of existing state standards, the Common Core State Standards provide clear and consistent learning goals to help prepare students for college, career, and life. The standards clearly demonstrate what students are expected to learn at each grade level so that every parent and teacher can understand and support their learning.

District Reference Groups (DRGs)

A district reference group (DRG) is a classification of each school system in a state into a group of 'like' school systems. Seven data indicators are used to classify similar districts into a DRG: three indicators of socioeconomic status, three indicators of need, and enrollment. There are nine classification groups, starting with the most affluent to the most in need. Regional School District 17 is in Group C.

Education Cost Sharing (ECS)

Education Cost Sharing is the grant program of state aid that was created as a result of a Public Act of 1988. The new grant program (ECS) replaced both the Guaranteed Tax Base (GTB) and the Education Enhancement Aid (EEA) grant programs (which provided a formula for the distribution of funds for minimum salary aid, salary aid, and teacher-pupil ratio aid). The new legislation also revised the Minimum Expenditure Requirement (MER) program by setting a new definition of eligible expenditures, regular program expenditures, and by eliminating alternate MERs.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

This federal law passed in 1993 allows employees who meet the eligibility requirements to access unpaid leave for specified purposes. The leave can extend up to twelve weeks in a twelve-month period, and the employer is obligated to maintain health insurance benefits during the leave period.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

A federal statute that requires districts to keep student educational records confidential and not reveal such information without the prior written consent of the parent or student aged 18 or older.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

State law that requires districts to make copies of public records for the benefit of the public and to have records available for public inspection, subject to certain exceptions listed in the law.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An IEP is a written statement for a child with disabilities that is developed and implemented in accordance with P.L. 94-142 regulations. The program is developed by a placement team consisting of a certified employee who is qualified to supervise special education, the child's teacher (regular and special education), one or both parents, the child, if appropriate, and other individuals at the discretion of the parent or the school. A program is developed taking into account the child's current level of educational performance, and including short-term and annual goals.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

A federal law addressing the needs of children with disabilities and protecting their right to a free and appropriate public education.

Municipal Employees' Relation Act (MERA)

The Connecticut collective bargaining statute that governs negotiations between a board of education and its non-certified staff.

Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR)

The statutory requirement replacing MER (Minimum Expenditure Requirement repealed in 2007). MBR ensures that a portion of a municipality's education grant increase is directed to education. In the absence of special exceptions, the amount of a town's budget for public education cannot be decreased from the previous year.

Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)

A proactive and preventative framework that integrates data and instruction to maximize student achievement and support students social, emotional, and behavioral needs from a strengths-based perspective.

Planning Placement Team (PPT)

The body that develops an IEP (individualized Educational Program) for a disabled student. The body consists of the parents, a certified district employee qualified to supervise special education, the child's teachers (regular and special education), and other individuals at the discretion of the parent or school.

Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs)

A regional educational service center is a public educational authority formed within a regional state planning area by four or more boards of education for the purpose

of cooperative action to furnish programs and services to the member boards of education.

Reduction-in-Force (RIF)

The process whereby employment is terminated because of a need to reduce the staff rather than because of any performance inadequacies of the employee.

Robert's Rules of Order

A book embodying parliamentary rules, first published in 1876 by Major Henry Robert and revised since then. These rules are not law and thus are not binding upon meetings of a board of education. If the book is used for guidance, care should be taken because most of the book deals with meetings of assemblies or conventions, and only a portion of the book deals with board meetings.

Section 504

A federal statute providing that no otherwise qualified disabled individual in the United States shall, solely by reason of her/his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Smarter Balanced Assessment

The Smarter Balanced Assessment is the name of the collective assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts/literacy (ELA/literacy) and mathematics for grades 3-8 and 11.

Talented and Gifted (TAG) aka "LEAP" in RSD17

A program designed for students who demonstrate high-performance ability or capability and who would benefit from differentiated or accelerated education. TAG programs are those special instructional programs, supportive services, unique educational materials, learning settings, and other services that differentiate, supplement, and support the regular educational program in meeting the needs of gifted students.

Title IX

Federal statute designed to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Acronyms

ADM	Average Daily Membership
AENGLC	Adjusted Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita
CABE	Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
CAPSS	Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
CAS	Connecticut Association of Schools
CEA	Connecticut Education Association
CHRO	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities
CIAC	Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference
CIP	Continuous Improvement Plan
CCSS	Common Core of State Standards
DRG	District Reference Group
ECS	Education Cost Sharing
EL	English Language Learners
ENGL	Equalized Net Grand List
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FMLA	Family and Medical Leave Act
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FOIC	Freedom of Information Commission
HC-HK	Healthy Communities-Healthy Kids (under HKYFS)
GED	General Educational Diploma
HKEA	Haddam-Killingworth Education Association
HKYFS	Haddam-Killingworth Youth and Family Services
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
MBR	Minimum Budget requirement
MER	Minimum Expenditure Requirement
MERA	Municipal Employee Relations Act
NCEP	Net Current Expenditures per Pupil
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
NSBA	National School Board Association
OCR	Office of Civil Rights
PPT	Planning and Placement Team
RESC	Regional Educational Service Center
RSD	Regional School District
SBAC	Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
SDE	State Department of Education
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports
TAG	Talented and Gifted program for students
TEAM	Teacher Education and Mentoring Program
TNA	Teacher Negotiations Act
TRB	Teacher Retirement Board

Helpful Reference Sites and Information Sources

www.rsd17.org
www.facebook.com/HKSchools

Regional School District 17 Website
Haddam-Killingworth Facebook page

www.cabe.org
www.nsba.org
www.sde.ct.gov
www.cga.ct.gov/
www.learn.k12.ct.us

CT Association of Boards of Education
National School Boards Association
State Department of Education
Connecticut General Assembly
LEARN

Acknowledgements

RSD 17 Board of Education Communications Subcommittee

Shawna Goldfarb - Chair
Jennifer Favalora
Lisa Connelly

RSD 17 Board of Education Policy Subcommittee

Dr. Nelson Rivera - Chair
Dr. Kathy Zandi
Dr. Joel D'Angelo
Lisa Connelly
Corey Roberts

Berlin Board of Education

Berlin Board of Education Member Handbook, adopted October 2011

Fairfield Board of Education

Fairfield Board of Education Handbook, approved June 26, 2012

Becoming a Better Board Member

National Association of School Boards, Third Edition, 2006

CABE's Board Meeting Guide

(The Freedom of Information Act and Parliamentary Procedures)
Patrice McCarthy and Kelly B. Moyher
CABE, December 2013

A Practical Guide to Board of Education Meetings

CABE, 2017

The Collective Bargaining Handbook

Kelly Moyher
CABE, August 2012

Connecticut Glossary of School Board Terms

CABE, reprinted January 2013

Parliamentary Motions

CABE, laminated pocket guide, 1991

A Practical Guide to Connecticut School Law

Thomas B. Mooney, Shipman & Goodwin, 9th Edition, 2018

Robert's Rules of Order

12th Printing, 1984

Roles and Responsibilities of Board of Education Membership

CABE, revised July 2012