



Washington State School
Directors' Association

Leading with Purpose:

A Guide for Effective School Board Members



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Introduction

Welcome to your role as a school director in Washington State! This position carries not only great responsibility but also the unique opportunity to work as a school board team to make a profound impact on the lives of students, the success of schools, and the overall well-being of your community. **As a School Director, you are at the heart of shaping the future of public education in your district. Your role ensures that every student, regardless of their background, receives a high-quality education that prepares them for success in school and life.**

School boards are tasked with establishing policies, approving budgets, and overseeing the work of the superintendent to ensure that every decision made puts students first. Your Board's actions directly influence the quality of education, the resources available to schools, and the support that staff and students receive.

The choices you make will resonate throughout the community, shaping not just the day-to-day operations of the district but also influencing the lives of students and families. **Your leadership requires thoughtful decision-making, a focus on long-term student success, and a commitment to fairness and inclusion.**

Throughout your service, you will collaborate with other board members, district staff, the superintendent, and community constituents. Working together, you will make decisions that define the educational experiences of students both now and in the future.

Together, let's embark on this transformative journey to create lasting change in our schools and communities.

Purpose of the Guide

This guide is designed to serve as a comprehensive resource for school directors throughout their journey, offering clear guidance, practical tools, and key insights. To guide your efforts effectively, this guide aligns with two critical frameworks essential for school board governance in Washington State: **framework for school board leadership** and the **Washington School Board Standards**. Together, these frameworks provide a solid foundation for your work as a School Director.



Framework for School Board Leadership:

This framework offers a roadmap for school directors, helping you excel in three key areas of responsibility — **visionary leadership, effective governance, and strategic advocacy**. It will guide you through the core responsibilities you face, from setting long-term goals and approving budgets to overseeing the superintendent and engaging with the community.



The Washington School Board Standards:

These standards emphasize best practices in governance. They focus on ensuring **high expectations for student learning**, creating **conditions for student and staff success**, maintaining **accountability**, and actively **engaging with the community**. By following these standards, you can be confident that your leadership will align with best practices for governance and support the success of your district.

The guide is not just theoretical—it is a practical tool.

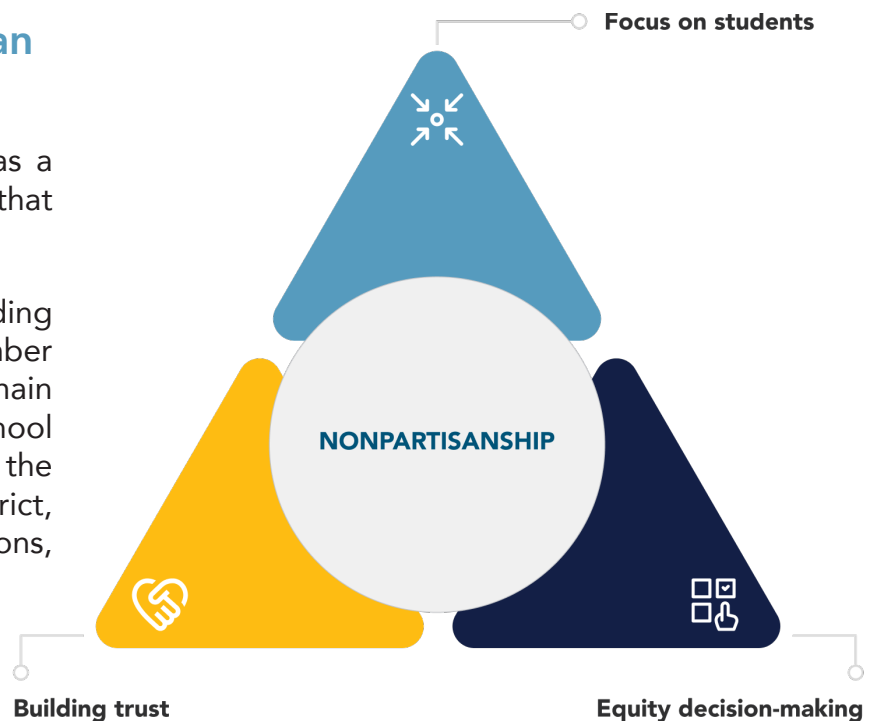


You'll find step-by-step instructions, examples, and case studies that will help you apply these frameworks to real-world challenges. From understanding legal obligations to building strong community partnerships, this guide equips you to handle the diverse responsibilities that come with being a School Director.

A Note About the Nonpartisan Nature of the Role

As a school director, you are working as a member of a five- or seven-person team that is responsible for shared governance.

One of the most important principles guiding your role as a school director and member of this team is the expectation to remain **nonpartisan**. Every decision your school board makes must be driven by what is in the best interest of the students and the district, not by personal beliefs, political affiliations, or outside influences.



01

**Maintaining Focus on Students:**

While you may have personal views or political opinions, it is crucial to leave those aside when performing your duties. As a school director, your role is to ensure equitable access to education and to advocate for the resources and policies that will help all students succeed.

02

**Fairness in Decision-Making:**

A nonpartisan approach is essential for promoting fairness. Your decisions should address the diverse needs of the entire student body, ensuring that no student is overlooked. Listening to a wide range of community voices helps to inform balanced and inclusive decisions.

03

**Building Trust with the Community:**

Acting in a nonpartisan manner fosters trust between the school board and the community. When the community knows that the board is focused solely on student success and educational outcomes, it builds credibility and confidence in the board's leadership.

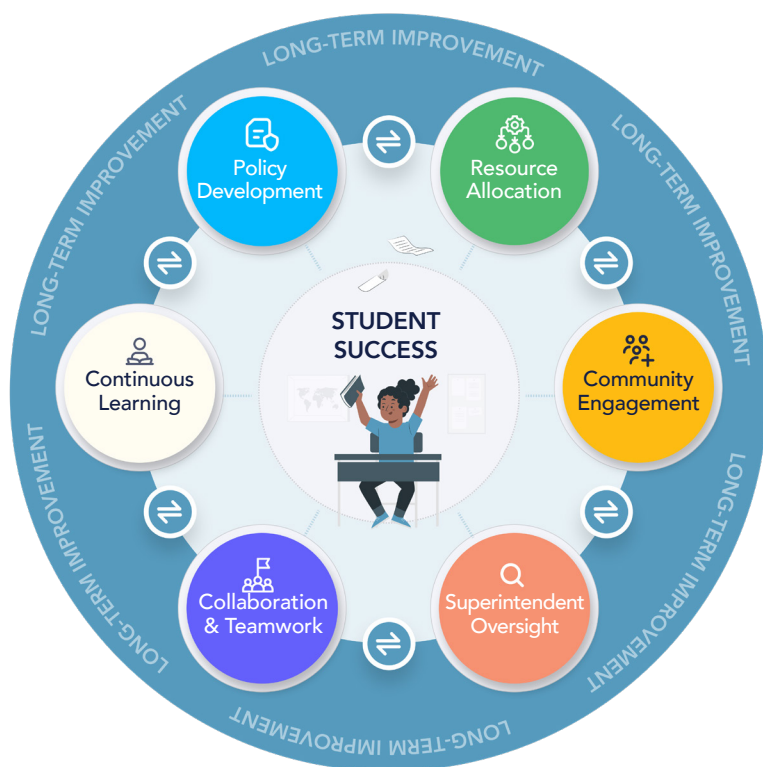
In practice, being nonpartisan doesn't mean avoiding difficult decisions. Rather, leadership decisions in a school district are so complex that the best decisions involve input from multiple parties. Some decisions may not please everyone, but when they are made with the goal of improving educational outcomes for all students, they can garner respect and support from the broader community. Staying committed to this approach helps ensure that your district provides every student with the opportunity to succeed.

The Role of a School Director

As a school director, your primary responsibility is to work collaboratively as a school board to ensure that all decisions put students first.

This means:

-  Focusing on improving learning outcomes,
-  Helping students achieve their full potential,
-  Making sure that every student, no matter where they come from, has an equal chance to succeed.



Every policy, budget decision, and action your school board takes should reflect this commitment to **inclusion** and **fairness**. For example, you might consider how decisions impact students from low-income families, students with disabilities, or underserved communities to ensure everyone has access to a quality education.

In addition, adopting a **systems thinking** approach as part of your decision-making process ensures that the interconnectedness of various elements within the district, such as policies, resource allocation, and community engagement, all align to support student success. This holistic perspective is essential for fostering long-term improvement.

Building **authentic, reciprocal relationships** with the community is also key to effective student-centered governance. Engaging with **parents, students, and other community** members ensures that their concerns and needs are reflected in your decisions. Listening and maintaining respectful communication helps build trust and makes your work as a board member more impactful. **Transparency** and **accountability** in communication further strengthen community trust, ensuring that the district remains responsive to its constituents.

Duties and Responsibilities

Your role as a school director involves working as a school board team to oversee the **big picture** of the school district. You are not involved in daily operations, but you help guide the district through these key responsibilities:



Strategic Vision for the District

The school board is responsible for establishing a clear and ambitious strategic vision that guides the district's direction. This includes setting long-term goals for student success, equity, and overall educational improvement. By collaborating with the superintendent, fellow board members, and community stakeholders, the board ensures that the strategic vision aligns with the district's mission and values. A well-defined strategic vision provides a cohesive framework for decision-making, helping the district focus on continuous progress and ensuring that all policies and initiatives are aimed at achieving the best outcomes for students and staff.



Policy Development

The school board creates and approves policies that shape the district's operations. This includes setting goals for academic achievement and ensuring the district's priorities are aligned with student success. Clear, well-structured policies provide a framework for daily decisions and long-term planning and help ensure that the district remains focused on improving outcomes for all students.



Financial Oversight

The school board reviews and approves the district's budget. Your job is to ensure that funds are allocated fairly and used to support student learning, school safety, and staff needs. Effective budgeting is about aligning financial resources with the district's goals and making sure that investments in programs and initiatives directly benefit students.



Hiring and Evaluating the Superintendent

The superintendent manages the district's day-to-day operations, but as a school board, you hold them accountable for meeting district goals. You also work with other board members to evaluate the superintendent's performance. Providing feedback and setting clear expectations helps maintain a high standard of leadership across the district.



Community Engagement

As a board member, you represent the community. You should actively listen to parents, students, and community members, and share input and feedback with the superintendent and other relevant parties, noting that daily operations are outside of your roles and responsibilities. The input from the community helps your school board team make informed decisions that reflect the needs of the district. Open forums, surveys, and regular communication channels help facilitate meaningful engagement with the community.



Collaboration with the Superintendent and Positive, Adaptive Leadership with Staff

Working well with other board members and district staff is essential. Collaboration, effective communication, and respect for differing viewpoints are crucial to building consensus and making the best decisions for the district. Research has found that a board that works together collaboratively sets a strong foundation for the entire district's success.¹

Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

As a school director you have sworn to uphold the constitutions of the US and Washington. Therefore, you must follow all laws, whether you personally agree with them or not.

Being a school director means following specific laws and adhering to ethical standards. Here's what you need to know:



Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA)

This law requires that most of your meetings are open to the public, meaning community members have the right to attend and observe the decision-making process. This promotes transparency and builds trust.



Public Records Act

You need to be aware that emails, documents, and other records related to your role as a board member may be requested by the public. It's important to keep clear records and understand that your work is subject to public scrutiny.



Ethical Standards

As a school director, you must always act in a way that benefits the students and the district. Avoid conflicts of interest, and ensure that personal or political agendas do not influence your work. Your actions should uphold the principles of integrity, fairness, and transparency, ensuring that your decisions are based solely on what will best support the educational outcomes for students.

There are many other laws that are relevant when conducting board duties. For instance, laws around [bargaining with unions](#), [due process laws for employees](#), and [privacy of students](#). Violating the laws can put the entire district at legal risk.

Part of acting ethically also involves continuous learning. As education policies and best practices evolve, you should take part in [workshops, trainings, and other learning opportunities](#). Staying informed will help you make better decisions for your district and students. Engaging in data-driven decision-making also ensures that your actions are informed by evidence and aligned with the district's goals.

¹ "Seeing the Light." Hilary LaMonte & Mary Delagardelle. American School Board Journal, August (2009)

Boundaries for Your Role as a School Director

There are clear boundaries for your role as a school director. Understanding these limits helps you focus on your key responsibilities and avoids overstepping into areas that are outside your authority:



Avoid day-to-day operations

You are not responsible for running the schools. For example, you should not be involved in decisions about hiring individual teachers, disciplining students, or deciding how a specific classroom should be managed. These operational tasks belong to the superintendent and school principals.



Do not micromanage the superintendent or staff

Your role is to guide and evaluate the superintendent, not to oversee their every move. Trust the superintendent and school staff to handle the daily management of the district. Focus instead on setting clear, student-centered expectations and evaluating their performance based on outcomes.



Avoid getting involved in personal conflicts

You should not use your position to push personal or political interests. Individual board directors do not have any legal authority. Rather, it is the board as a whole that is empowered to make decisions. So, always make decisions as a school board team based on what's best for the district as a whole.



Avoid direct involvement in staff matters

It's important to maintain the proper chain of command. Let the superintendent and school principals handle staffing decisions and employee performance.

The Role of a School Director:

DO



Put students first



Establish and communicate a clear vision

DON'T



Push personal or political agendas



Make decisions without a long-term plan



Use systems thinking



Build positive relationships



Develop and approve policies



Approve budgets



Oversee the superintendent



Engage the community



Collaborate with other board members



Follow legal and ethical standards



Continue learning



Get involved in daily operations



Build relationships based on control



Overstep into staff matters



Micromanage daily district expenses



Micromanage the superintendent



Neglect transparency



Dismiss differing viewpoints



Put your district at risk legally



Assume you know it all

Becoming an Effective School Director



As a school director, your role is to help the district's vision, policies, and governance in a way that best serves students and the community. Two key reference frameworks have been developed to help you navigate these responsibilities and ensure you are performing your duties effectively: the [framework for school board leadership](#) and the [Washington School Board Standards](#). These frameworks provide a roadmap for success, guiding you through the essential functions of governance and leadership.

By understanding and applying these frameworks, you'll have the tools and structure needed to make well-informed decisions, lead confidently, and foster a positive impact in your district. Together, these frameworks create a foundation for continuous improvement and excellence in school governance.

Framework for School Board Leadership

The **framework for school board leadership** is designed to help school directors excel in their roles by focusing on three core areas of responsibility: **visionary leadership**, **effective governance**, and **strategic advocacy**. These areas are essential for ensuring that the district remains student-focused, well-governed, and actively engaged with the community.



Visionary Leadership

Encourages school directors to work with fellow board members and the superintendent to create a shared vision that prioritizes student success. This includes setting clear goals for the district, creating systems to monitor progress, developing policies that promote inclusion and fairness, and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education.



Effective Governance

Focuses on the board's role in managing the district's policies, overseeing financial decisions, and ensuring that the superintendent implements the board's goals. It emphasizes transparency, accountability, and making decisions that are always in the best interest of the students.



Strategic Advocacy

Focuses on using your role as a school directors to champion public education. This involves engaging with the community, advocating for policies and funding that support the district at the local, state, and sometimes federal level, and building strong relationships with local, state, and federal policymakers. This also involves fostering strategic partnerships with community businesses, philanthropic groups, and nonprofits to support student success.

While each of these functions outlines distinct responsibilities, the **commitments, principles, and mindsets** serve as pass-through lines, guiding your approach and behavior across all aspects of leadership. These elements influence how you perform your duties and ensure that your actions reflect the district's mission and values.



Commitments

These are the core values, such as equity and integrity, that guide your leadership. They ensure that every decision you make is centered on fairness and student success.



Principles

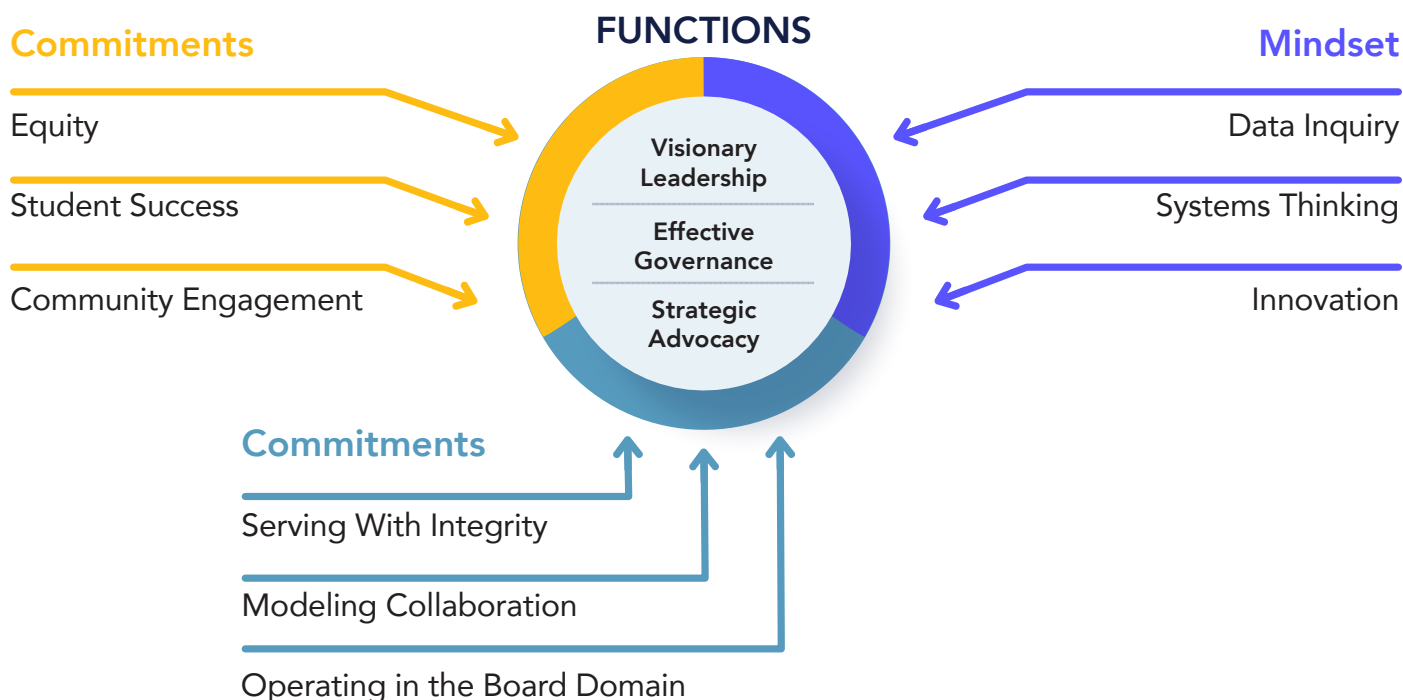
These are the ethical guidelines and collaborative practices that shape how you interact with others. Principles like transparency, inclusivity, and accountability help build trust and ensure effective governance.



Mindsets

These refer to the attitudes and approaches you bring to decision-making. Whether it's adopting a forward-thinking or data-driven mindset, these attitudes ensure that you are focused on long-term success and continuous improvement.

Together, the **commitments, principles, and mindsets** serve as guiding forces that connect all aspects of the **framework for school board leadership**, ensuring that your leadership is thoughtful, values-driven, and strategically aligned with the district's mission. They provide consistency in how you handle **visionary leadership, effective governance, and strategic advocacy**, ensuring that every action you take supports the district's long-term goals for student success.



Washington School Board Standards

The **Washington School Board Standards** provide a set of benchmarks for how school directors should perform their duties to ensure effective governance and student success. These standards are aligned with the core functions of the **framework for school board leadership** and serve as a foundation for strong board leadership. While the framework for school board leadership outlines core areas of responsibility, the standards provide specific benchmarks for evaluating your governance efforts.

The standards focus on five main areas:

STANDARD 1:

Responsible School District Governance



School directors are expected to govern responsibly by setting clear policies, maintaining ethical standards, and ensuring that the board operates transparently.

STANDARD 2:

Communication of and Commitment to High Expectations for Student Learning



School directors should always prioritize high expectations for student achievement, making sure that the district's policies and goals are focused on equitable educational opportunities for all students.

STANDARD 3:

Creating Conditions District-wide for Student and Staff Success



Directors must create the right conditions for both students and staff to succeed by supporting initiatives that promote a safe, inclusive, and well-resourced learning environment.

STANDARD 4:

Holding the District Accountable for Student Learning



School directors are responsible for holding the district accountable for improving student outcomes. This includes regularly reviewing data, evaluating the superintendent's performance, and making adjustments when necessary.

STANDARD 5:**Engagement of the Community in Education**

School directors should actively engage with the community to ensure that district decisions reflect the needs and values of the people they serve. This involves transparent communication, involving constituents in decision-making, and advocating for public education.

These standards align closely with the framework for school board leadership, ensuring that your governance practices are focused on leadership, advocacy, and accountability.

Creating a Framework for Excellence

By utilizing the **framework for school board leadership** and the **Washington School Board Standards**, you can develop a **framework for excellence** that guides your approach to leadership and governance. These two tools will help you stay focused on your core responsibilities while ensuring that your actions align with best practices and the district's goals.

To create a framework for success, consider the following steps:

01**Set Clear Goals**

Use the visionary leadership function to set ambitious but achievable goals for your district, ensuring they align with improving student outcomes.

**02****Implement Strong Governance Practices**

Focus on transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making to ensure that your governance promotes trust and positive outcomes.

**04****Continuously Improve**

Use data and feedback to assess the district's progress regularly and adjust your strategies to ensure ongoing improvement.

**03****Advocate for Students**

Engage with policymakers, the community, and other constituents to advocate for the resources and policies to help your district thrive.

By following these steps and relying on the guidance provided by the **framework for school board leadership** and the **Washington School Board Standards**, you will be well-equipped to lead your district toward success.

Core Functions of a School Director

Visionary Leadership

Overview of Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership is about setting a clear and ambitious direction for student success in your district. As a school director, one of your most important roles is to **help develop a vision that focuses on high expectations for all students and clearly communicates those goals to the community**. This involves collaborating with board members, the superintendent, educators, and the community to establish shared priorities and strategies that guide the district’s work. Visionary leadership ensures that everyone is aligned toward improving student outcomes and creating an environment where both students and staff can thrive.

Setting a long-term vision for the district will help you create a roadmap that guides decisions related to policies, resource allocation, and strategic initiatives. This process requires balancing the immediate needs of the district with the long-term goal of preparing students for success in school and beyond. To lead effectively, it’s essential to be forward-thinking, flexible, and open to innovation while always focusing on what’s best for the students.

Board standards in support of Visionary Leadership

STANDARD 2:

Communication of and commitment to high expectations for student learning

This standard highlights the importance of **establishing and promoting high expectations for student achievement**. As a school director, it’s your responsibility to ensure that the district sets ambitious goals and creates strategies to achieve them.

There are two key components that can help you demonstrate and track your communicate and commit to high expectations for student learning

Goals and plans:

Setting clear, measurable goals for student learning is the first step in creating a vision for success. These goals should reflect high expectations for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. For example, you might set goals related to improving graduation rates, closing achievement gaps, or increasing access to advanced coursework.

Once the goals are established, the next step is to develop actionable plans that outline how the district will meet these expectations. Plans may include new programs, investments in professional development for staff, or policies that promote equity in learning.

CONTINUE

STANDARD 2:

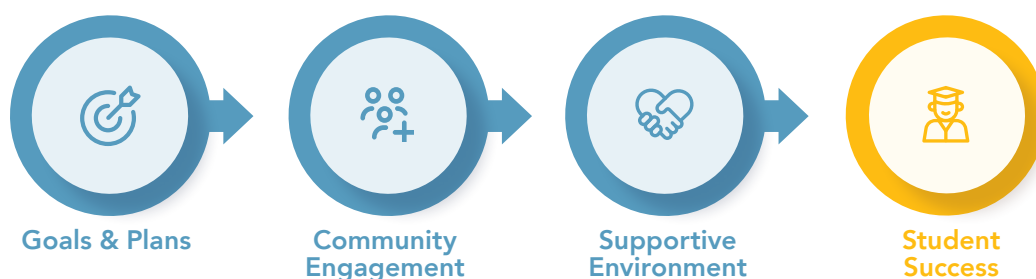
Communication of and commitment to high expectations for student learning

Remember: The process of setting up goals and plans for the district should be done in partnership with the Superintendent - as the instructional expert/leader of the district - and should be a comprehensive process.

Learn more about setting clear and measurable goals and plans [here](#).

Community engagement:

Engaging the community is a critical part of creating and maintaining a shared vision for learning. Community members, including parents, students, and local leaders, should be involved in shaping the district's vision. This can be done through public forums, surveys, or focus groups, where diverse voices are heard and considered.



By involving the community, you ensure that the district's goals reflect the values and needs of the people it serves. Maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the community also helps build trust and keeps everyone committed to the district's vision.

Learn more about how to effectively engage with your community to ensure a shared vision for learning [here](#).

STANDARD 3:

Creating conditions district-wide for student and staff success

Visionary leadership also involves creating an environment where both students and staff can succeed. This means supporting the development of policies and practices that promote safety, inclusivity, and equity across the district.

Creating a supportive environment:

It's essential to foster a district-wide culture that supports the well-being and success of both students and staff. This includes:

- Creating safe learning environments
- Promoting mental health resources, and
- Ensuring that every student has access to the tools they need to succeed.

CONTINUE

STANDARD 3:

Creating conditions district-wide for student and staff success



For staff, this might involve offering ongoing professional development and creating a positive working environment where educators feel valued and supported.

A supportive environment is one where students feel safe to take risks in their learning and where teachers have the resources to innovate in the classroom.

Defining indicators of success:

Successful visionary leadership is reflected in tangible outcomes. Some indicators of success may include:



Higher graduation rates



Improved test scores



Reduced disciplinary issues



Increased satisfaction among students, staff, and parents

These outcomes show that the district is moving toward its long-term goals and that the vision for student success is being realized.

Policies that promote equity are often key indicators of a supportive environment. For example, an effective equity policy might ensure that all students have access to high-quality learning materials and opportunities, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location.



Practical Tools and Additional Resources for Visionary Leadership

To support school directors in visionary leadership, this section provides practical tools, strategies, and resources for fostering a supportive culture, developing effective policies, and engaging the community. These tools help school directors ensure that everyone is working toward shared goals for student success.

Reflective Questions for Policy Development

When developing policies, these reflective questions can help ensure alignment with the district's long-term goals and values:



Effectiveness Measurement:

How will the policy be evaluated for effectiveness? What benchmarks will indicate success?



Alignment with Vision:

Does this policy align with the district's long-term goals and commitment to student success?



Equity and Fairness:

Does this policy promote equity and fairness for all students, regardless of background?



Find a detailed handout on developing reflective questions for policy development [here](#).

Reflective Questions for Community Engagement

Engaging the community in creating a shared vision is essential to visionary leadership. Use these questions to guide community engagement efforts and foster inclusivity:



Inclusivity:

How can we engage all constituents, including underrepresented groups, in developing our district's vision?



Communication Strategies:

What approaches can ensure that community members understand and support the district's goals and initiatives?



Find a detailed handout on developing reflective questions for community engagement [here](#).

Recommendations for Building Consensus as a Board to Drive District Objectives

Building consensus within the board ensures alignment with the district's vision and helps drive effective decision-making:



Collaborative Decision-Making:

Encourage open discussions and respect diverse viewpoints to create consensus on key objectives.



Shared Responsibility:

Foster a team-based approach to policy decisions, where each board member feels ownership of the district's goals.



Focus on the Vision:

Keep discussions centered on long-term student success to maintain focus and drive alignment within the board.



Find a detailed handout on tips for building consensus as a board to drive district objectives [here](#).

Effectively Communicating the Vision to the Community

Communicating the board's vision effectively to the community is key for building collective support:



Create Clear Messaging:

Develop a cohesive message about the district's vision, priorities, and progress.



Use Multiple Engagement Channels:

Reach a broad audience through social media, newsletters, and community forums to foster involvement.



Maintain Transparency:

Regularly report on the alignment between district actions and the established vision, building trust and accountability with the community.



Find a detailed handout on effectively communicating the vision to the community [here](#).

Tips for Fostering Supportive Cultures

Creating a positive and inclusive culture is foundational to visionary leadership and requires intentional actions from the school board. As caretakers of the district's culture, board members must model trust, respect, and collaboration in their interactions with each other, the superintendent, and district staff. The culture of the district often reflects the behaviors and attitudes of its leadership, so maintaining professionalism and mutual respect is crucial.



Set the Tone for Respect and Trust:

Foster a culture of trust by showing respect for the expertise of the superintendent and staff, and by treating fellow board members with civility, even in the face of disagreements. The board should implement and adhere to civility policies and board operating protocol policies to establish clear expectations for behavior.



Invest in Professional Development:

Board members should engage in professional development to better understand their role in shaping the district's culture. Equipping educators with the skills to address the diverse needs of students enhances the overall inclusivity of the district. An important way to accomplish this is through providing ongoing training for staff focused on diversity, equity, and inclusive practices.



Conduct Regular Surveys:

Collect feedback from students, parents, and staff to assess the school climate and identify areas for improvement. Ensure that the surveys include questions about the board's own performance and impact on the district culture. This self-reflective approach demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability.



Establish Well-Being Guidelines:

Implement clear policies that support the mental health and well-being of both students and staff. Providing access to resources and setting expectations for a safe and supportive environment is essential for fostering a thriving district culture.



Learn more about how to foster supportive cultures [here](#).

Apply to Leadership WSSDA



Ready to take your leadership to the next level?

Consider applying to Leadership WSSDA to deepen your understanding and effectiveness in your role. Additionally, explore our [Online Board Self-Assessment](#) tool to evaluate your board's performance and identify areas for growth. This resource provides a comprehensive framework to help your board reflect, improve, and work cohesively toward achieving district goals.



Learn more and apply today at [Leadership WSSDA](#).

Glossary of Terms for Visionary Leadership

01. Accountability Mechanisms:

Structures and processes that ensure the district remains responsible for achieving its stated goals. Accountability mechanisms may include self-assessment, superintendent evaluations, and regular progress reporting to the community.

02. Achievement Gaps:

Disparities in academic performance between different groups of students, typically observed between students of varying socioeconomic status, races, or ethnicities. Visionary Leadership addresses achievement gaps by setting goals and policies that promote equity and support underperforming groups.

03. Benchmarks:

Specific targets or milestones that serve as indicators of progress toward achieving long-term goals. Benchmarks are often used to evaluate student performance, program effectiveness, or policy outcomes, allowing leaders to make adjustments as needed.

04. Climate Surveys:

Surveys conducted to gauge the school environment, including student and staff satisfaction, inclusivity, and well-being. Climate surveys help district leaders identify areas for improvement and foster a supportive, positive culture.

05. Community Constituents:

Individuals and groups who have an interest in the success and direction of the school district. Community constituents include parents, students, teachers, local businesses, and organizations. Effective visionary leadership involves engaging these constituents in creating a shared vision.

07. Continuous Improvement:

A systematic approach to making ongoing adjustments and enhancements to policies, practices, and programs to achieve better outcomes over time. Continuous improvement is essential for adapting to changing needs and ensuring that the district’s vision remains relevant and effective.

09. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):

Practices focused on ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background, are valued and supported. DEI principles are central to creating inclusive environments and are reflected in policies, professional development, and resources.

11. Equity Policy:

A policy designed to ensure all students, regardless of their background, have access to high-quality educational opportunities. An equity policy addresses disparities in educational outcomes by promoting fair resource distribution, inclusive practices, and targeted support for historically marginalized student groups.

13. Inclusivity:

The practice of creating an environment where all students and staff feel respected, valued, and supported. Inclusivity involves implementing policies and practices that embrace diversity and actively work to eliminate discrimination or barriers that prevent full participation.

06. Constituent Engagement:

The process of involving community members, parents, students, and other interested parties in the decision-making process. Stakeholder engagement is crucial for building a shared vision and fostering a sense of collective responsibility for student outcomes.

08. Data-Driven Decision-Making:

The practice of using quantitative and qualitative data to inform policies, assess progress, and guide improvements. In visionary leadership, data-driven decision-making is essential for tracking outcomes, identifying trends, and ensuring that goals align with measurable indicators of success.

10. Equity:

A principle of fairness in education, ensuring that every student has access to the resources, opportunities, and support they need to succeed, even if it requires different levels of assistance. Unlike equality, which provides the same resources to everyone, equity recognizes and addresses individual needs.

12. Feedback Loops:

Mechanisms for gathering input from constituents, monitoring progress, and making adjustments based on real-time information. Feedback loops allow school directors to stay responsive to community needs and align ongoing initiatives with the district’s vision.

14. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):

A framework that provides different levels of support based on student needs, integrating academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions. MTSS helps ensure that students receive appropriate resources to succeed, regardless of their starting points or challenges.

15. Performance Indicators:

Quantitative metrics used to measure progress toward strategic goals. Performance indicators in the education context may include graduation rates, attendance rates, standardized test scores, and other indicators of student success and district performance.

17. Reflective Practice:

The process of continuously evaluating and assessing one’s actions, decisions, and strategies to foster improvement. Reflective practice is a key component of visionary leadership, allowing leaders to refine their approach based on feedback, data, and evolving needs.

19. School Climate:

The overall atmosphere and sense of inclusivity, safety, and support within the school environment. Positive school climate is foundational to effective teaching, learning, and community engagement.

21. Strategic Plan:

A comprehensive roadmap that outlines how the district intends to achieve its vision over time. The strategic plan includes specific goals, actionable steps, timelines, and resource allocations that align with the district’s long-term objectives for student success.

23. Systems Thinking:

An approach to problem-solving that considers the interconnectedness of various district elements, such as policies, resources, and community engagement. Systems thinking in visionary leadership ensures that decisions consider the broader impact on the entire district ecosystem.

16. Professional Development Plans:

Structured, ongoing plans designed to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of educators and staff. Professional development plans typically include workshops, courses, and other learning opportunities that support teachers in delivering high-quality instruction and adapting to diverse student needs.

18. Reflective Questions:

Guiding questions that encourage critical thinking and evaluation of decisions, policies, or strategies. Reflective questions in policy development or community engagement help ensure that actions align with the district’s long-term vision and promote equity.

20. SMART Goals:

An acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals. SMART Goals help school directors create clear, actionable, and trackable objectives that align with the district’s vision and strategic priorities.

22. Student-Centered Governance:

A governance approach focused on making decisions and policies that prioritize student needs and outcomes. Student-centered governance requires that all actions taken by the board, including budget decisions and policy development, are aimed at enhancing the educational experience and success of students.

24. Vision Statement:

A clear and concise declaration of the district’s long-term goals and aspirations, typically focused on student achievement, equity, and community well-being. The vision statement serves as a guiding star, helping to align decisions and actions with overarching district priorities.

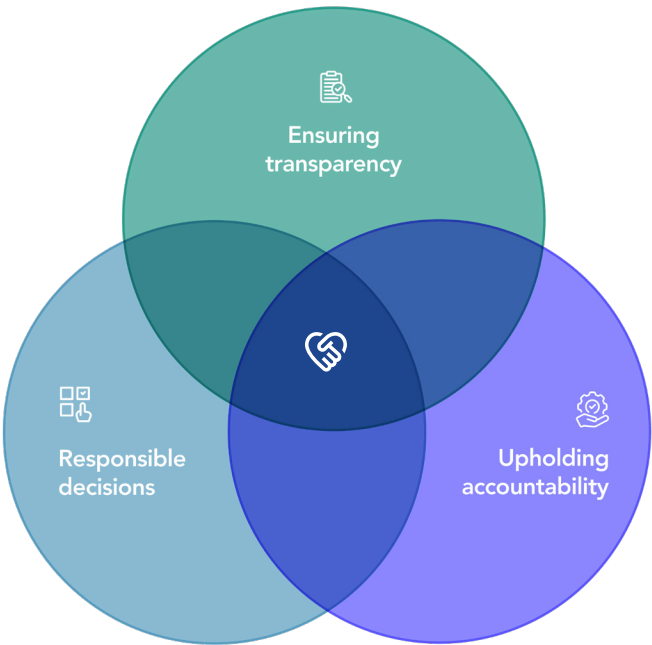
Effective Governance

Overview of Effective Governance

Effective governance is about understanding and executing the board’s role in making responsible decisions, upholding accountability, and ensuring transparency in district operations.

As a school director, you are responsible for:

-  Manage the district's policies
-  Oversee financial decisions
-  Ensure that the superintendent effectively implements the board’s vision



You are responsible for setting the district’s long-term direction while **maintaining fairness, respect, and responsibility in governance**. By upholding these principles, you help ensure that all actions taken by the board align with the best interests of students and the community.

Effective governance also means **regularly assessing whether the district’s goals are being met, ensuring that financial resources are used efficiently, and evaluating the performance of the superintendent and district leadership**. Clear governance helps **build trust with the community** and ensures that the **district operates with integrity**.

Board Standards in support of Effective Governance

STANDARD 1:

Responsible
School District
Governance

This standard emphasizes the **importance of conducting board and district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner**. The board must work collaboratively and uphold high ethical standards to create a positive environment that benefits students, staff, and the community.

Governance Practices:

Responsible governance means conducting business openly and fairly. This includes:

-  Adhering to ethical guidelines
-  Following established policies
-  Ensuring all board activities are transparent

CONTINUE

STANDARD 1:

Responsible
School District
Governance

The board should always be mindful of the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), which requires that meetings be accessible to the public to promote transparency and accountability. For more information and training on OPMA, consider utilizing resources such as the [Open Government Training](#) provided by the Office of the Attorney General or WSSDA's [OPMA publication](#) to ensure compliance and best practices in open governance.

Examples of Responsible Governance:

Regularly reviewing and updating policies to reflect current educational standards and community needs.



Ensuring that decisions are based on data and best practices, rather than personal or political interests.



Maintaining clear communication between the board, superintendent, and community constituents.



Learn more about responsible governance [here](#).

Strategic Planning:

Strategic planning involves setting long-term goals that align with student success, fiscal responsibility, and community needs. For example, the board might set goals related to closing achievement gaps or improving graduation rates while ensuring the district's financial health remains strong.

We have created a simplified handout to help you navigate the basics of strategic planning. You can access it [here](#).

Accountability Mechanisms:

To ensure responsible governance, mechanisms for self-assessment and performance evaluations are essential. This involves conducting regular evaluations of the superintendent and reviewing district performance data to ensure progress toward the district's goals.

Learn more about accountability mechanisms to ensure responsible governance [here](#).



STANDARD 3 :

Creating Conditions
District-Wide for
Student and Staff
Success

Effective governance involves creating a district-wide culture that supports student and staff success. School directors are responsible for developing policies that promote inclusivity, equity, and safety across all schools. Ensuring these policies align with the district's goals and are regularly reviewed is critical for fostering a supportive environment.

Governance for a Supportive Environment:

Establish policies that promote safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments. For example, an equity policy ensures all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Supporting professional development plans for staff fosters a growth-oriented environment and improves education quality.



Learn more about how governance can help you create a supportive environment for learning [here](#).

Indicators of Governance Success:

Effective governance requires understanding and using performance Indicators to measure district progress toward goals such as student achievement, reduced absenteeism, or increased staff retention. However, interpreting these indicators thoughtfully is crucial. School directors should develop skills in reading data critically—understanding how sample sizes and selection impact results, distinguishing between correlation and causation, and being aware of potential data biases or skewing.

Stay tuned for upcoming OnBoard training sessions that will provide in-depth guidance on data literacy and effective data use in governance.

**STANDARD 4:**

Holding the District
Accountable for
Student Learning

One of the board's most important responsibilities is to hold the district accountable for improving student outcomes. This involves regularly reviewing data and assessing whether the district is meeting its goals.

Continuous Improvement:

Regular reviews of student performance data ensure progress toward achievement goals. Discussions with the superintendent identify areas for improvement and help refine strategies.

Evaluation Practices:

Evaluating the superintendent's performance ensures accountability. This should include a standardized process based on clear goals and district outcomes.



Learn more about accountability mechanisms to ensure governance success [here](#).



Effective Governance Through a Collaborative Board-Superintendent Team

Effective governance requires collaboration between the School Board and the superintendent. This team approach is essential for setting the district's vision, implementing policies, and ensuring the district operates efficiently.

Understanding the concept of the Governance Team

The governance team consists of the school board and superintendent, who work together to ensure effective district functioning.

The governance team operates across three interconnected levels—strategic, tactical, and operational—to ensure cohesive and effective district leadership. At the strategic level, the school board sets the district's overarching vision by establishing long-term goals, policies, and priorities that guide decision-making and resource allocation. The board's focus on strategy helps create a clear direction for the district, shaping the goals that prioritize student success, equity, and community engagement. By taking a broad view of district needs, the board anchors its work in principles that will support sustained growth and improvement.

At the tactical level, the superintendent serves as the bridge between the board's vision and the district's day-to-day operations. The superintendent translates these strategic goals into actionable plans, ensuring that policies are implemented effectively and that district activities align with the board's objectives. Operational tasks are carried out by district staff, who handle the daily execution of the superintendent's plans. Teachers, administrators, and support staff bring these plans to life by directly supporting students, managing resources, and maintaining the district's essential services. Through this coordinated effort across all levels, the governance team creates a system where strategic decisions flow seamlessly into daily operations, driving district-wide success and supporting the board's long-term vision.



TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES



SUPERINTENDENT

Responsibilities:

- Manages district operations
- Implements board policies
- Serves as an advisor to the board



SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Responsibilities:

- Set policies
- Approve budgets
- Evaluate the superintendent



BOARD PRESIDENT

Responsibilities:

- Leads the board
- Manages meetings
- Acts as a liaison with the superintendent.



VICE PRESIDENT

Responsibilities:

- Supports the president
- Maintains a productive board environment.



LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE

Responsibilities:

- Advocates for the district at local, state and federal levels
- Informs the board of legislative issues.

SKILLS FOR COLLABORATION



Active Listening

Understand diverse perspectives before making decisions.



Open Communication

Ensure transparency and build trust with regular information sharing.



Consensus-Building

Work toward unified decisions that reflect the board's collective input.



Shared Responsibility

Distribute workload and leverage each member's strengths.



Trust-Building

Develop mutual trust through consistent communication and a shared commitment to the district's vision.

By fostering a collaborative board-superintendent relationship, you can effectively address challenges and meet the district's goals. Shared responsibilities, open communication, and consensus-building are essential to the governance team's success, benefiting both the district and its students.

Practical Tools and Additional Resources For Effective Governance

Self Assessment Questions

When conducting self-assessments, these questions can help the board evaluate its progress in meeting strategic goals and ensuring resources are aligned with district priorities:



Meeting Strategic Goals:

Are we effectively meeting our district's long-term goals for improving student achievement? What specific data or indicators reflect our progress?



Resource Allocation:

Are we using district resources efficiently to support student learning and success? How can we improve resource distribution to better align with student needs?



Impact on Student Success:

How are our governance decisions contributing to measurable improvements in student outcomes? What adjustments can we make to enhance our effectiveness?



Find a detailed handout on conducting self-assessments for effective governance [here](#).

Effective Meeting Checklist

When preparing for and conducting meetings, a detailed checklist can help ensure that discussions are productive and aligned with the district's priorities:



Agenda Alignment:

Does the meeting agenda reflect our board's strategic priorities and goals?
Are we focusing on the most pressing issues that impact student success?



Productive Discussions:

Are we fostering open, respectful, and solution-oriented discussions?
Are all board members given the opportunity to contribute their perspectives?



Decision-Making:

Are we using data and evidence to inform our decisions? Are we clear on the next steps and action items following each discussion?



Find a detailed effective meeting checklist for school board governance [here](#).

Processes for Communicating with the Community

Clear and consistent communication channels help keep all constituents informed about the district's progress, challenges, and initiatives.



Regular Updates:

Are we providing timely updates on key decisions, progress toward goals, and district challenges through newsletters, meetings, or digital platforms?



Two-Way Communication:

Do our communication processes allow for stakeholder input and feedback? Are we creating opportunities for meaningful engagement through surveys, forums, and open meetings?



Transparency:

Are we ensuring that our communications are transparent, providing clear information on both successes and areas where improvement is needed?



Find a detailed handout on effective processes for communicating with the community [here](#).

Consensus-Building

Building consensus within the board is critical to ensure alignment with the district's vision and to facilitate effective decision-making. Here are some key strategies:



Collaborative Decision-Making:

Encourage open discussions and respect for diverse viewpoints to create agreement on important objectives.



Shared Responsibility:

Promote a team-based approach to policy decisions, making sure each board member feels a sense of ownership and accountability for the district's goals.



Focus on the Vision:

Keep discussions centered on long-term student success, ensuring that the board remains aligned and purpose-driven.

These strategies are explored in greater detail in the earlier section titled [Recommendations for Building Consensus as a Board to Drive District Objectives](#). Refer to that section and the accompanying handout for a comprehensive guide on implementing these practices effectively.

Effective Financial Oversight

Effective financial oversight is essential for ensuring the district's financial stability and aligning resources with educational goals.



Financial Stability:

Are we regularly reviewing budgets and financial reports to ensure that district funds are being managed responsibly? Are we making informed decisions that prioritize both short-term needs and long-term sustainability?



Learning Opportunities:

Have we participated in OnBoard financial learning experiences to deepen our understanding of budgeting, resource allocation, and fiscal responsibility? Are we using this knowledge to make better-informed financial decisions?



Budget Alignment:

Are district expenditures aligned with strategic goals, such as improving student outcomes and supporting staff? Are we ensuring that resources are used efficiently to support the district's mission?



Find a detailed handout on effective financial oversight and available financial learning experiences [here](#).

Policy Development Checklist

Using a comprehensive checklist for policy development ensures that every policy aligns with the district's strategic goals, promotes fairness and inclusivity, and adheres to legal requirements. Below are key questions to guide the policy development process:

01 Alignment with District Goals:

Does the policy directly support the district's strategic priorities, such as improving student achievement, fostering staff development, or enhancing community engagement?

02 Promotion of Fairness and Inclusivity:

Does this policy promote equitable access to resources and opportunities for all students, addressing potential disparities across the district?

03 Policy Legal Compliance:

Does the policy comply with all relevant state and federal laws, as well as district regulations? Have legal counsel or relevant experts reviewed it to ensure compliance?

04 Review WSSDA Model Policies:

If your district subscribes to WSSDA’s Policy Services, have you reviewed the corresponding WSSDA model policy for best practices and guidance? If your district does not currently subscribe, consider subscribing to access comprehensive model policies and policy support. Learn more about WSSDA's Policy Services [here](#).

05 Clear Implementation Strategies:

Does the policy have a detailed plan for implementation, including roles, timelines, and accountability measures?

 Find a detailed policy development checklist [here](#).

Sample Questions for Governance Discussions

These sample questions can guide board discussions to ensure policies are comprehensive, inclusive, and aligned with district priorities.



Support for a Safe and Inclusive Environment:

- How does this policy contribute to creating a safe, inclusive environment for students and staff?
- Does it address the needs of all students, including those from marginalized groups?



Resources for Professional Development:

- Are there adequate resources allocated for professional development to help staff effectively implement this policy?
- How will ongoing training support the success of this initiative?



Measurable Impact:

- How will the success of this policy be measured?
- What performance indicators will we track to ensure it achieves the desired outcomes?

The Basics of School Law

[This guide](#) introduces school directors to legal topics they may encounter in their board service. The legal topics covered range from employer/employee issues to student rights. Understanding school law helps members fulfill their role on the board.

Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

Reviews basic conflict of interest issues, with emphasis on structuring district policies and board practices to comply with state law when board members or superintendents have an ongoing personal financial interest in their district’s operations.

 Download it [here](#).

Open Public Meetings

Focuses on provisions of Washington’s Open Public Meetings Act, and addresses other legal requirements and nonlegal issues surrounding effective and responsible public meetings.

 Download it [here](#).

Glossary of Terms for Effective Governance:

01. Benchmarks:

Specific targets or milestones used to measure progress toward long-term goals. Benchmarks are often set for key areas such as student achievement or staff development and serve as indicators of success.

03. Continuous Improvement:

An ongoing process in which the district regularly assesses its performance and implements changes to improve outcomes, particularly in student achievement and school operations.

05. Data-Driven Decision-Making:

The practice of using data, such as student performance metrics and financial reports, to inform decisions. This approach ensures that policies and strategies are evidence-based and focused on measurable outcomes.

07. Ethical Decision-Making:

The process of making decisions that adhere to established ethical standards and prioritize fairness, transparency, and the best interests of students.

02. Conflict of Interest:

A situation in which a board member’s personal, financial, or other interests could interfere with their ability to make unbiased decisions in the best interest of the district. Board members are required to disclose any conflicts and, when necessary, recuse themselves from relevant decisions.

04. Consensus-Building:

A collaborative decision-making process in which board members work together to reach agreement on policies and actions. Consensus-Building emphasizes respect for diverse viewpoints and shared responsibility for district outcomes.

06. Equity Policy:

A policy designed to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to the same high-quality educational opportunities. It addresses disparities in educational outcomes and resource allocation, aiming to promote fairness and inclusivity.

08. Fiscal Responsibility:

The board’s obligation to manage district resources effectively and sustainably, ensuring that financial decisions support student achievement and align with district goals. Fiscal responsibility also includes maintaining transparency in budgeting and expenditures.

09. Governance Practices:

The policies and procedures that guide the board’s operations and decision-making processes to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in district leadership.

11. Performance Evaluation:

The process of assessing the effectiveness of individuals or programs within the district. For example, evaluating the superintendent’s performance or assessing the success of a specific educational program based on predefined criteria.

13. Policy Adherence:

The practice of following the board’s established policies when making decisions, ensuring consistency and accountability in governance.

15. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

Collaborative groups of educators who work together to share best practices, analyze student performance data, and develop strategies to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

17. Safe School Environment:

A learning environment where students feel physically and emotionally safe, free from violence, bullying, or harassment, and where safety policies are consistently enforced.

19. Self-Assessment:

An internal evaluation conducted by the board to assess its own effectiveness in governance, decision-making, and fulfilling its responsibilities. Self-assessments help boards identify areas for improvement and maintain accountability.

10. Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA):

A law that ensures public access to board meetings, promoting transparency and accountability by requiring that meetings be open to the public, except for specific legal exemptions (e.g., personnel issues or litigation).

12. Performance Indicators:

Quantitative metrics used to measure the success of a district in key areas such as student achievement, attendance rates, graduation rates, staff performance, and other indicators of progress. Performance indicators provide a clear way to assess the district’s effectiveness and alignment with its goals.

14. Professional Development Plans:

Structured plans that provide ongoing learning and training opportunities for educators and staff, aimed at improving instructional quality, leadership capacity, and support for student success.

16. Progress Monitoring:

A systematic process for tracking the progress of students, staff, or programs toward established goals, typically using data and regular assessments to adjust strategies as needed.

18. School Climate:

The overall atmosphere of the school, including the quality of relationships between students, staff, and the community, as well as the safety, inclusivity, and supportiveness of the learning environment.

20. Stakeholder Engagement:

Involvement of key groups such as parents, students, staff, and community members in the decision-making process. Engaging constituents ensures that board decisions reflect the needs and values of the community.

21. Staff Retention:

The ability of a district to retain its teaching and administrative staff over time. High staff retention is often a sign of a supportive and effective work environment, while low retention may indicate problems with staff satisfaction or district leadership.

23. Student Support Services:

Programs and resources provided to assist students in overcoming academic, behavioral, or emotional challenges, helping them achieve success in school. Examples include counseling, tutoring, and special education services.

25. Transparency:

The principle of openly sharing information with the public, including decisions made by the board, financial reports, and progress toward district goals. Transparency builds trust and accountability between the district and the community.

22. Strategic Planning:

A process through which the board sets long-term goals, defines priorities, and outlines the necessary steps to achieve the district's vision for student success. Strategic planning typically involves aligning resources, policies, and community input.

24. Superintendent Evaluation:

A formal review process used by the board to assess the superintendent's performance in managing the district, implementing board policies, and achieving district goals. This evaluation often includes feedback from constituents and is based on specific performance criteria.

Strategic Advocacy


Overview of Strategic Advocacy

Strategic advocacy refers to the proactive role that School Directors play in advocating for public education at all levels—local, state, and federal. This involves representing the interests of your district, engaging with community members, and working with policymakers to ensure that the needs of students and schools are met. Strategic advocacy is more than addressing immediate issues; it aligns advocacy efforts with the district's long-term goals and vision for student success, a concept we define as **vision-aligned advocacy**.

Vision-aligned advocacy means that every advocacy action should support your school district's overarching vision. Whether it's securing funding, influencing educational policies, or creating partnerships, your advocacy should always align with the district's mission to provide equitable and high-quality education to all students.

Advocating for your school district is important all year long, not just during the legislative session. Building strong relationships with lawmakers takes time and continuous effort. By staying in touch with them throughout the year, you keep education issues at the forefront of their minds. Year-round advocacy ensures that when important decisions are made, your district's needs are considered.



Staying informed about current issues and being ready to act when opportunities arise makes you a more effective advocate. It's easier to influence decisions when you have established a presence and a voice that lawmakers recognize and respect. To stay informed, utilize resources such as [WSSDA's updates, newsletters, and legislative tracking tools](#). Engage with other educational organizations and subscribe to relevant news outlets to keep apprised of developments.

Through strategic and vision-aligned advocacy, school directors can have a lasting impact, shaping policies and decisions that benefit both the district and the broader community.

Board Standards in support of Strategic Advocacy

STANDARD 5:

Engagement of the Community in Education

Effective advocacy starts with building strong relationships within your community. Standard 5 of the Washington School Board Standards highlights the importance of engaging the community in education, as it is key to understanding and addressing the needs of students and families. To be an effective advocate, you must be in tune with what your community values and needs.

Building Relationships:

- School Directors are encouraged to work closely with families, teachers, community members, and local organizations to create a shared commitment to student success. Collaborating with the community allows the board to gather diverse perspectives and insights that help inform decisions.
- By fostering these relationships, you help build trust and ensure that the district is responsive to the community's educational priorities. In return, the community becomes more supportive of the district's goals and advocacy efforts. Inviting legislators to visit schools and attend events helps strengthen these relationships and keeps education on their radar.

Transparency and Accessibility:

- Advocacy is more effective when it is based on transparency and open communication. School directors should ensure that the public has **accessible channels to provide input** on educational issues. This means holding open meetings, encouraging community participation, and making information about board decisions easily available.

CONTINUE

STANDARD 5:

Engagement of
the Community in
Education

The more transparent and accessible the board is, the more likely the community is to trust and support its advocacy efforts. Regular communication about the district's needs and progress builds a foundation for collaborative advocacy. The **Legislative Session** is a crucial time for sharing updates with the community about advocacy efforts, and keeping them informed builds support for the district's positions.

Advocacy Actions:

Advocacy involves working at different levels—local, state, and federal—to influence decisions that affect the district. Effective strategies for **legislative advocacy** include:

**Building relationships with policymakers:**

Establish connections with local legislators and education officials. Regular communication ensures they understand the needs of your district.

**Advocating for funding and policy changes:**

Use data and real-life stories from your district to support requests for adequate school funding, policy adjustments, or new educational initiatives. Share these stories year-round, particularly during the interim between legislative sessions, as this is a critical time to engage with legislators.

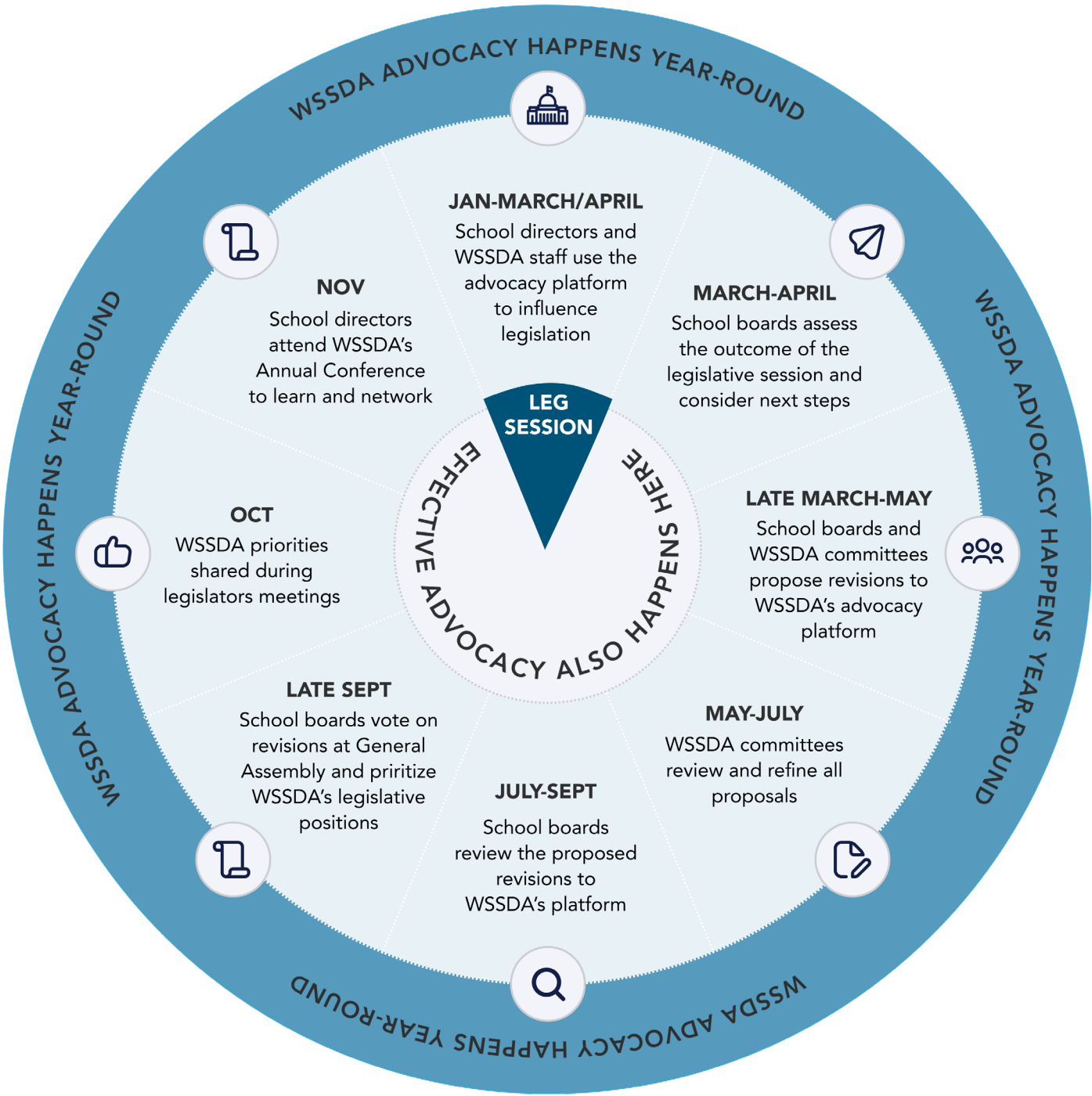
**Engaging with constituents:**

Collaborate with community groups, local businesses, parents, family members, and educational organizations to present a united front when advocating for the district.

**Practical Tools and Additional Resources**

WSSDA provides a variety of practical tools and resources designed to help school directors engage effectively in advocacy, streamline their efforts, and maximize their impact.

Year-Round Advocacy Calendar



WSSDA offers a **year-round advocacy calendar**, which outlines key activities and engagement opportunities throughout the legislative cycle. From tracking legislation to engaging with legislators during the interim, this calendar helps you stay on top of advocacy actions at the right times.

Ultimately, **effective advocacy occurs year-round and prioritizes relationship-building.**

NOV	Pre-Session 01	 Research and Preparation Review WSSDA's legislative positions and priorities. Familiarize yourself with the legislative calendar and key dates.	 Contact Legislators Schedule introductory meetings or calls with your local legislators to discuss upcoming session priorities.	 Community Engagement Gather input from your school board and community on key issues and priorities.
DEC				
JAN	Early Session 02	 Bill Monitoring Start tracking bills that affect education and your district's priorities. Utilize WSSDA's Bill Watch List for updates.	 Committee Hearings Attend or monitor key committee hearings. Prepare to provide testimony if necessary.	 Legislative Updates Provide regular updates to your school board on legislative developments and potential impacts.
FEB				
MAR	Mid-Session 03	 Advocacy Push Intensify your advocacy efforts as bills move through committees. Contact legislators to support or oppose key legislation.	 Attend Events Participate in WSSDA's Legislative Conference and Day on the Hill.	 Community Reports Share progress and updates with your community to keep them informed and engaged.
APR				
MAY	Late Session 04	 Final Advocacy Efforts Focus on the final push for key bills. Continue to engage with legislators and provide any last-minute testimony or support.	 Session Recap Once the session ends, provide a comprehensive update to your school board and community on the outcomes of the session and how it impacts your district.	
JUN				
JUL	Post-Session 05	 Reflect and Plan Review the successes and challenges of the past session. Start planning for the next session.	 Continuous Engagement Maintain relationships with legislators and continue to engage with your community on ongoing advocacy efforts.	 Thank Legislators Say thank you to your legislators for any accomplishments of the session in support of K-12.
OCT				

Washington Public School Funding FAQs

The Washington school funding system is complex, and many previous attempts to explain it are lengthy and time-consuming to read. WSSDA designed this resource to answer some of the most common questions in a simple, accessible, and easy-to-navigate way. Inside this 32-page booklet, you'll find answers to 36 frequently asked questions. The booklet also has colorful, explanatory graphics that you can use as stand-alone resources for distribution



Download it [here](#).

Parliamentary Procedure

This guide introduces board members to the basics of parliamentary procedure found in Robert's Rules. It also addresses topics that school boards will most commonly encounter during their meetings.



Download it [here](#).

Establishing Legislative Priorities

This handout provides a guide for school boards to engage in WSSDA's legislative process. It outlines steps for reviewing existing platforms, submitting proposals, and participating in the General Assembly. Boards are encouraged to align legislative priorities with local needs, using data and input from students, staff, and the community. The guide also emphasizes collaboration with neighboring districts and active communication with legislators to support key priorities.



Access it [here](#).

Public Speaking and Presentation Skills Guide for Legislative Representatives

Public speaking and presentation skills are crucial for effectively communicating your district's needs and priorities. This guide offers key strategies to help you articulate your message with confidence and clarity.



You can access the guide [here](#).

Legislative Representative (Leg Rep) Toolkit

WSSDA's Legislative Representative Toolkit offers step-by-step guidance on how to engage in legislative advocacy. This includes templates for writing letters to legislators, organizing advocacy campaigns, and understanding the legislative process.



The toolkit and other advocacy resources are available [here](#).

Conflict Resolution Techniques

As a legislative representative, handling conflicts and difficult conversations is an integral part of your role. Navigating these situations effectively requires patience, skill, and the right techniques.



This guide provides practical strategies to help you manage conflicts with confidence and grace. Learn more [here](#).

Handling Political and Partisan Issues Constructively

School directors and legislative representatives play a crucial role in advocating for their school districts. However, political and partisan issues can often complicate these efforts.

[This guide](#) offers strategies and tools to help you navigate these challenges constructively, ensuring that your focus remains on the best interests of your students and schools.

Advocacy Learning and Engagement Opportunities

WSSDA offers ongoing [training and learning opportunities](#) for School Directors who want to deepen their understanding of advocacy. These include webinars, annual conferences, and workshops where you can learn from experts, network with other directors, and develop skills in strategic advocacy.

Glossary of Terms for Strategic Advocacy:

01. Appropriation:

The allocation of specific funds by a legislative body for a particular purpose. In the context of education, appropriations are often discussed in relation to funding school programs, building projects, or specific initiatives.

03. Community Engagement:

A strategy for involving local constituents such as parents, students, and community members in the decision-making processes of the school district. Effective community engagement ensures that district goals align with the values and needs of the broader community.

05. Funding Formula:

The method used to calculate how much financial support a school district receives from state or federal governments. The funding formula typically takes into account factors like student enrollment, local property values, and specific educational needs.

02. Bond:

A form of long-term financing used by school districts to fund major capital projects, such as building new schools or renovating existing ones. Bonds must be repaid over time, often through property tax levies approved by voters.

04. Equity Policy:

A policy aimed at providing fair and equitable access to education for all students, regardless of background. This type of policy addresses disparities in resources, opportunities, and outcomes to support underrepresented or disadvantaged student groups.

06. Levy:

A local property tax imposed by a school district to raise additional funds for operational or capital expenses. Levies are typically approved by local voters and can be used to supplement state and federal education funding.

07. Legislative Advocacy:

The process of influencing public policy and legislation to align with the needs and goals of the school district. This includes working with lawmakers, testifying on bills, and participating in the development of education-related policies.

09. Legislative Session:

A period during which a legislative body, such as the state legislature, is convened to debate and pass laws. School boards often participate by advocating for education funding or policy changes during these sessions.

11. Policy Proposal:

A formal suggestion for a new policy or modification of an existing policy, typically submitted to decision-making bodies like school boards or legislative assemblies for review and approval.

13. Public Records Act:

A state law requiring that public records, including documents and communications related to school district activities, are accessible to the public. This law ensures transparency and accountability in governance.

14. School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP):

A state program that helps districts with the construction and renovation of school facilities. SCAP funds are typically awarded based on district need and capacity, providing resources for large-scale building projects.

08. Legislative Representative:

A designated member of the school board responsible for leading the district's legislative advocacy efforts. The legislative representative serves as the liaison between the school district and lawmakers, ensuring that the district's priorities are communicated to local, state, and federal legislators. This role involves tracking legislative developments, organizing advocacy efforts, and reporting back to the board on legislative activities and opportunities for engagement.

10. Local Effort Assistance (LEA):

A state funding program that provides additional resources to districts with lower property values to ensure equitable education funding across all districts. LEA funding helps districts with limited property tax revenue meet educational needs.

12. Prototypical Funding Model:

The prototypical school funding model in Washington State is a system that determines how much money schools get based on student enrollment and specific categories. The funding model came from translating past district funding practices. It is mainly funded through state allocations based on enrollment numbers and staff position categories.

14. Regionalization Factor:

A method used in Washington to adjust school funding based on the cost of living in different areas. Higher-cost regions may receive additional funds to ensure equitable compensation for staff and resources across districts.

15. Stakeholder:

Any individual or group with an interest in the outcomes of the school district. Stakeholders may include parents, students, teachers, staff, local business leaders, and elected officials.

16. Strategic Advocacy:

The focused and deliberate efforts by school boards to influence public policy, secure resources, and shape legislation that aligns with the district’s goals and needs. Strategic advocacy involves long-term planning, building relationships with policymakers, and mobilizing community support to ensure that the district's interests are well-represented at local, state, and federal levels.

17. Transparency:

The practice of openly sharing information about school board decisions, policies, and financial activities with the community. Transparency helps build trust between the district and its constituents and promotes accountability.

18. Vision-Aligned Advocacy:

Advocacy actions that are directly connected to the district's overarching vision and long-term goals for student achievement and success. Vision-aligned advocacy ensures that all efforts to influence policy, secure funding, or shape educational initiatives are consistent with the district's mission, values, and strategic priorities for the future.

Commitments, Principles, and Mindsets of a Successful School Director

A successful school director operates within a framework of commitments, principles, and mindsets that guide their actions and decisions. These elements are essential to achieving the board's three core functions: **visionary leadership**, **effective governance**, and **strategic advocacy**. They serve as "through-lines" that should influence every aspect of board service.

Commitments

EQUITY:



A commitment to addressing existing inequalities by ensuring that all students receive the resources and support they need to succeed, recognizing that some students may require more or different resources to have equitable access to quality education.

Behaviors:

- Prioritizing policies and practices that address disparities in student achievement, resource allocation, and access to opportunities.
- Regularly asking, "Who is benefiting from this decision and who is left out?"

Related resources:

- ↓ Engage in WSSDA's [Educational Equity Trainings](#)

STUDENT SUCCESS



A commitment to ensuring that all students can reach their highest potential through quality instruction, resources, and support systems.

Behaviors:

- Advocating for high expectations and creating conditions where students thrive.
- Regularly reviewing and analyzing data on student outcomes to identify disparities and opportunities for improvement.
- Adjusting policies and practices to address barriers to success, such as gaps in mental health access, disparities in opportunity, and issues revealed through climate surveys and attendance data.
- Engaging in equity training, such as [Discovering Educational Disparities](#), to better understand and address unequal outcomes.
- Practicing thoughtful questioning when presented with student performance data to ensure comprehensive analysis beyond surface-level measures.

**STUDENT
SUCCESS (CONT.)****Related resources:****Equity Training:**

[Discovering Educational Disparities](#) offered by WSSDA, which helps uncover and address educational inequities.

**Data Access:**

The OSPI website provides comprehensive data on student performance, attendance, and other key indicators. Visit [OSPI Data & Reporting](#) to access relevant information.

**Data Review Considerations:**

Be mindful of your district staff's workload, especially during busy times of the school year, when requesting additional data. Familiarize yourself with existing resources available through OSPI to ease the process.

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT:**

A commitment to actively involving community members, parents, and constituents in shaping the educational environment.

Behaviors:

Regularly communicating with the community, holding public forums, and seeking input on major decisions.



Invite opportunities for celebrating in the district's and community's accomplishments.

Related resources:**[Board Standard 5:](#)**

Engagement of the Community in Education

Principles**SERVING WITH
INTEGRITY**

Adhering to high ethical standards, making decisions that are honest and in the best interest of the district.

Behaviors:

Transparency in decision-making, avoiding conflicts of interest, and always acting in the public's best interest.



Upholding the board's role as a steward of public trust.



Modeling integrity during public meetings in communicating with other board members, the superintendent and the community.

MODELING COLLABORATION



Demonstrating teamwork, respect, and collaboration with fellow board members, the superintendent, and other constituents.

Behaviors:

- Actively listening, building consensus, and working towards unified decisions that reflect collective goals.
- Supporting an inclusive and positive board culture.

OPERATING IN THE BOARD DOMAIN



Understanding and respecting the distinct roles of the school board versus the operational roles of district staff and the superintendent.

Behaviors:

- Focusing on policy, governance, and oversight, not day-to-day management.
- Supporting the superintendent in their operational leadership and evaluating their performance based on outcomes, not micromanagement.

Mindsets

DATA INQUIRY



A mindset that values the use of data to drive decisions and evaluate outcomes.

Behaviors:

- Asking questions that require evidence-based answers, regularly reviewing district data, and using insights to make informed policy decisions.
- Using data to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement.

SYSTEMS THINKING



A mindset that recognizes the interconnection of all parts of the district and how changes in one area can impact another.

Behaviors:

- Approaching issues holistically, considering how decisions in one domain (e.g., budget, policy) will affect the overall system, including student outcomes, staff, and community relations.

INNOVATION



A mindset focused on continuous improvement through small, incremental changes based on data and feedback.

Behaviors:

- ➔ Regularly reviewing and refining policies and practices based on performance data and stakeholder input. Encouraging a culture of iterative learning and development within the district.

The table below shows how each commitment, principle, and mindset intersects with and influences the key functions of a school board, ensuring a well-rounded approach to governance.

Commitments, Principles, Mindsets	Visionary Leadership	Effective Governance	Strategic Advocacy
Commitments			
EQUITY 	Setting a vision that identifies and reduces gaps in both opportunities and achievement and promotes equitable access to education for all students.	Ensuring policies allocate resources equitably to serve all students.	Advocating for equitable funding and policies that address disparities within and across schools.
STUDENT SUCCESS 	Creating goals that focus on improving student opportunities and outcomes and providing a quality education for every student.	Developing policies that support student achievement, such as curriculum or professional development initiatives.	Advocating for funding and policy changes that improve academic opportunities and student success.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 	Engaging constituents, including parents and local leaders, in shaping the district's vision and goals.	Creating processes for public input in policy decisions and regularly communicating progress.	Engaging with community members to build support for district advocacy efforts at local, state, and federal levels.
Principle			
SERVING WITH INTEGRITY 	Maintaining honesty and transparency while setting high standards for student success.	Making fair and unbiased decisions, prioritizing the needs of students and staff over personal or political interests.	Advocating in an ethical manner that prioritizes the overall needs of the district and the community.

Commitments, Principles, Mindsets	Visionary Leadership	Effective Governance	Strategic Advocacy
Principle			
MODELING COLLABORATION 	Working collaboratively with board members and the superintendent to create a unified vision for the district.	Collaborating with staff and other board members to ensure policies are implemented consistently and effectively.	Building coalitions with other districts and constituents to advocate for shared goals.
OPERATING IN THE BOARD DOMAIN 	Focusing on governance and vision-setting while allowing the superintendent to manage operational tasks.	Establishing governance structures and policies without micromanaging the day-to-day operations of the district.	Advocating for resources and policy changes while respecting the operational roles of district leaders.
Mindset			
DATA INQUIRY 	Using data to establish goals, measure progress, and adjust the district's vision based on student opportunity and performance.	Regularly reviewing opportunity and performance data to ensure policies are effective and aligned with district goals.	Advocating in an ethical manner that prioritizes the overall needs of the district and the community.
SYSTEMS THINKING 	Taking a holistic view of how various district elements (curriculum, budget, etc.) work together to support the vision.	Considering how policies in one area, such as finance, impact other areas, such as staffing or student services.	Considering how state or federal policies will impact the district's overall functioning and student success.
INNOVATION 	Continuously reviewing and refining the district's vision and goals based on feedback and measurable outcomes.	Iteratively improving governance policies and practices based on performance reviews and data analysis.	Adapting advocacy strategies based on the results of previous efforts and changing legislative priorities.

These commitments, principles, and mindsets are essential to every decision a school board makes. They guide how directors approach their responsibilities, whether they are focusing on **visionary leadership**, **effective governance**, or **strategic advocacy**. By embodying these elements, school directors can foster a governance culture that supports student success and builds community trust.

WSSDA 101

At **Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA)**, we empower Washington's School Directors to champion student success.

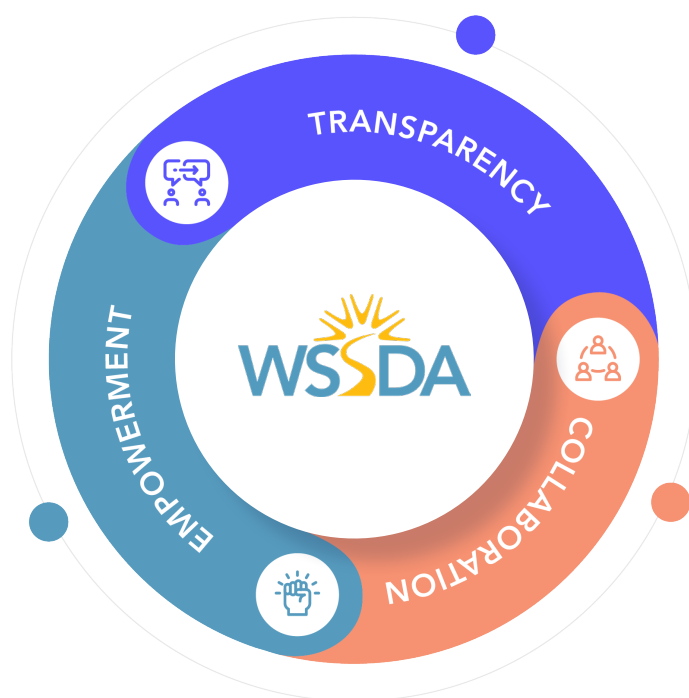
Established in 1922, WSSDA was founded to connect school directors, harnessing their collective experience and expertise to ensure a high-quality public education system.

In the ever-evolving landscape of public education governance, navigating the complexities of leadership can be daunting. With 1,477 elected school board members striving to serve their students and local communities, clarity and support are essential. At WSSDA, we understand the challenges you face and are here to support you every step of the way.

Our purpose is simple: **to empower Washington's school board leaders for student success.** We offer an array of support, events, and resources for leadership development, legislative advocacy, and policy and legal compliance. Through responsive assistance and a wealth of resources, we ensure that school directors and board-superintendent teams have the tools and knowledge necessary to lead with confidence and competence.

With a focus on **transparency, collaboration, and empowerment**, WSSDA fosters a community of dedicated leaders united in their commitment to educational excellence. Together, we can navigate the complexities of governance, drive positive change in our districts, and ultimately, create brighter futures for all Washington students.

For Washington's 1,477 elected school board members who seek clarity, support, and empowerment in their roles, WSSDA is the trusted partner on their journey to educational leadership excellence.



Our Mission

Our mission is to provide leadership, advocacy, and training that enhance school board governance and help improve educational outcomes for all students. As a school director, you are a vital part of Washington's public education system, and WSSDA is here to ensure that you have the knowledge, resources, and tools necessary to succeed in your role.

WSSDA is committed to empowering school directors through professional development, policy services, and legislative advocacy. We serve as a resource hub for school boards, offering expert advice on governance, legal matters, and the best practices that lead to student success. Through our extensive range of services, WSSDA supports your ability to make informed decisions and provides a platform for collaboration with other board members across the state.

Professional Development

One of the core services WSSDA provides is **professional development**. Our training programs, workshops, and conferences are designed to help you grow as a leader and develop the skills needed to navigate the complexities of school governance. All of these offerings are aligned with the **framework for school board leadership**.

Throughout the year, WSSDA offers in-person and virtual workshops on essential topics like:



Financial topics, such as vision aligned budgeting, state finance and district budgets, and



Equity-related topics, such as belonging, educational disparities and federal discrimination.

These sessions are tailored to meet the needs of both new and experienced school directors, ensuring that you have the tools to handle real-world challenges. Our **Annual Conference** is a flagship event that brings together school directors from across the state to engage in deep learning, share experiences, and connect with experts in the field of education.

In addition to workshops and conferences, WSSDA also provides on-demand training through webinars and online resources. This allows you to access key topics related to your role.

WSSDA also offers [customized board workshops](#), tailored specifically to the needs and goals of your school board. These workshops can be designed around a wide range of topics, such as strategic planning, board-superintendent relations, or effective governance practices. Facilitated by experienced consultants, customized workshops provide an opportunity for your board to work together on targeted areas, foster team cohesion, and develop strategies that align with your district's vision and challenges. Whether you need a focused session during a retreat or an in-depth training experience, WSSDA's customized workshops are here to support your board's continuous growth and effectiveness.

Resources and Tools

WSSDA offers a wide range of **resources and tools** to support your work as a school director. These services are designed to help you manage the various aspects of governance, from policy development to legal guidance. Here are some of the key resources you can take advantage of:



Policy Development Tools

WSSDA provides policy templates and guides to help you draft, revise, and implement policies that align with both state laws and your district's specific needs. Our policy team is available to support you in creating clear and effective policies that promote student success.



Legal Resources

Navigating the legal responsibilities of a school director can be challenging. WSSDA offers resources to help you understand your legal obligations, including guidance on the Open Public Meetings Act, public records laws, and board ethics. Our legal team is here to provide clarification and advice when needed.



Advocacy Support

WSSDA advocates for public education at the state and federal levels. We provide tools and resources to help school directors engage in effective advocacy, whether you are working to influence legislation or seeking additional funding for your district. Our advocacy team works year-round to represent the interests of Washington's schools, ensuring that your voice is heard by your community and policymakers.

These resources are designed to make your role more manageable and more effective, equipping you with the knowledge and support you need to make well-informed decisions for your district.

Networking and Collaboration

Being a school director can sometimes feel isolating, but WSSDA ensures you are part of a larger community of school leaders. We offer numerous **opportunities for networking** and collaboration with other school directors through our events, committees, and online forums.

At WSSDA events like the **Annual Conference** or **Regional Meetings**, you'll have the chance to connect with peers from across the state, share ideas, and learn from each other's experiences. These events provide a collaborative environment where you can build relationships, discuss common challenges, and explore innovative solutions that can be applied to your district.

In addition to in-person events, WSSDA offers [networks](#) where school directors can ask questions, share resources, and seek advice. [Our committees](#) also provide a platform for collaboration on specific topics, such as legislative advocacy or school funding, allowing you to contribute to statewide initiatives while learning from others facing similar challenges.

To help you stay informed and engaged, visit [WSSDA's Trainings & Events calendar](#) regularly.

Conclusion



As a school director, you play a pivotal role as a member of the school board team, collectively responsible for shaping the future of public education in your district. *Leading with Purpose: A Guide for Effective School Board Members* serves as an essential resource, equipping you with the knowledge, tools, and frameworks needed to collaborate effectively with fellow board members, the superintendent, and your community. Through your commitment to visionary leadership, ethical governance, and strategic advocacy, you help ensure that the board's decisions reflect the best interests of every student and support their success.

By embracing the guidance in this guide, you and your board can foster a culture of continuous improvement, transparency, and accountability. The work you do as part of the school board team has a lasting impact on the students, staff, and families you serve, and your dedication to equitable and effective governance is key to ensuring that all students thrive.

We encourage you, as a school director and valuable member of your board, to engage deeply with the guide and the framework for school board leadership. Leverage the resources and tools provided to strengthen your collaborative efforts with fellow directors, refine your governance practices, and advocate for policies that benefit your district. Together, as a unified school board team, strive to fulfill the promise of public education in Washington State by continuously improving and championing the success of every student.

Appendices



[Open Public Meetings Act \(OPMA\) Guide](#)

Understanding the Open Public Meetings Act is crucial for ensuring that board meetings are conducted in a transparent and accessible manner. This guide provides detailed information on compliance with OPMA requirements.



[Student Board Representative Resource Guide](#)

This resource guide offers comprehensive information on supporting student representatives on your school board. It includes best practices, roles and responsibilities, and ways to amplify student voice in governance.



[More Information on Student Board Representatives](#)

Explore additional information about incorporating student representatives on school boards, including guidance on selection, engagement, and ensuring meaningful participation.

