PASCACK VALLEY BOE Retreat

Pascack Valley Regional High School District

HILLSDALE • MONTVALE • RIVER VALE • WOODCLIFF LAKE

September 19, 2026

www.njsba.org | njsba | njsba | njschoolboards | njsba | Linked

© 2026 New Jersey School Boards Association, 413 W. State St., Trenton, NJ 08618. All rights reserved.
No part of this document may be reproduced in any way or by any means without permission in writing from NJSBA.

Ice Breaker!



*


GETTING
TO
KNOW
YOU

Getting to Know You

- Please pair off with **the person you know the <u>least</u>**
- Each person will spend time finding out:
  - 3 unique qualities **or** experiences of the person they are interviewing
  - 3 strengths they feel they bring to the board
  - the reason they ran for the board (your "WHY")
  - what they hope to achieve while on the board

7 minutes per person for this activity (15 mins. total)

<u>Report out to the larger group. Identify commonalities.</u>

*

Effective Boardmanship Creates an Effective Board!











www.njsba.org | njsba | njsba | njschoolboards | njsba | LinkedIn

© 2026 New Jersey School Boards Association, 413 W. State St., Trenton, NJ 08618. All rights reserved.
No part of this document may be reproduced in any way or by any means without permission in writing from NJSBA.


"THE PRICE OF GREATNESS IS RESPONSIBILITY."
- WINSTON CHURCHILL


RESPONSIBILITY
starts with me.

*

Effective Board Members make Effective Boards!
As individual Board Members . . .

- Put students' needs first!
- Focus on student achievement and continuing growth
- Ensure your decisions are based on the needs of your students, not party affiliation or political ideology
- Remember – you represent ALL of the students in your district
- Be a great role model – for your students, staff, parents and community

As individual board members . . .

- Be aware of your body language*
- Be attentive to the motions and discussion
- Rephrase what the person has stated if you do not understand
- Avoid cell phone or electronic devices during the mtg.
- Look, act and be interested
- Apologize when appropriate
- What happens in Exec Session STAYS in Exec Session*

*

As individual board members . . .

- Understand your roles & responsibilities
- Conduct yourself with respect and civility
- Actively listen to others with an open mind
- Actively listen during Public Comment – shows respect
- Imagine the other person's point of view
- Be inclusive rather than exclusive
- Be aware of your own implicit biases. We all have them.
- Take advantage of P.D. as an individual*

*

As individual board members . . .

- If someone comes to you with an issue – use the Chain-of-Command/Resolution:
  - Listen and acknowledge the best way to assist them is to …
  - Refer them to the lowest level in the chain-of-command/resolution
  - Communicate with the Superintendent the issue and that you have referred them to the chain-of-command
- Realize that none of us knows everything
- Ask questions when appropriate
- You can disagree without attacking the individual
- Avoid criticizing or embarrassing someone in public

*

As individual board members . . .

- Communicate with the Committee Chair and/or Administrative Liaison if unable to attend a Committee Mtg.
- Come prepared for committee meetings having reviewed the agenda and attachments beforehand
- Communicate with the Board President and/or BA if you will be late or unable to attend a board meeting
- Come prepared to board meetings having asked questions beforehand*

Being prepared makes everyone look good!

*

As individual board members . . .

- Work to build consensus
- Realize the importance of the board's decision-making
- Realize that you may be in the "minority opinion" from time to time.
- When a majority of the board votes to support "A" it's time to stop lobbying for "B"
- When a decision has been made, respect the boards' decision and support it

*



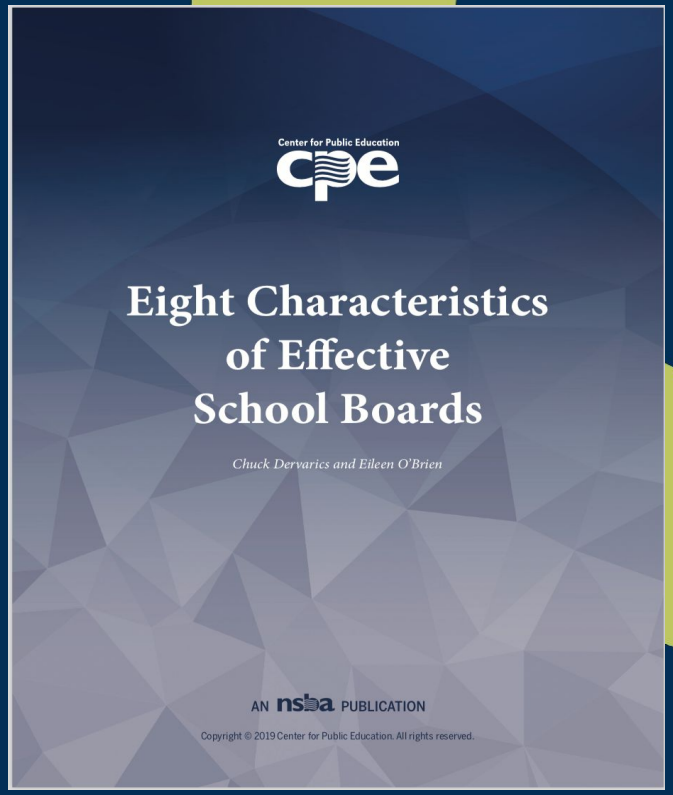
From the Board to the Superintendent

OR

From the Superintendent to the Board!

*

What the Research Shows



www.njsba.org | njsba | njsba | njschoolboards | njsba | LinkedIn

© 2026 New Jersey School Boards Association, 413 W. State St., Trenton, NJ 08618. All rights reserved.
No part of this document may be reproduced in any way or by any means without permission in writing from NJSBA.

AGENDA

8 Characteristics of Effective School Boards

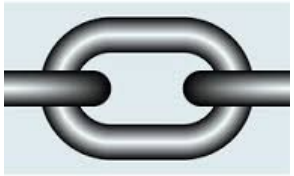
- ✔ **Share research findings on school boards and their impact on student achievement.**
- ✔ **Provide some guiding questions for reflection on your board's practices.**



*

Research Studies Show

Board of Education



Student Achievement

School boards in high-achieving districts exhibit approaches and characteristics that are markedly different from boards in low-achieving districts.

*

What do you Think?

What kinds of things do you think school boards do to influence student achievement?



8 Characteristics – Vision & Beliefs

1. Effective school boards commit to a **vision of high expectations** for student achievement and **quality instruction** and define clear goals toward that vision.

2. Effective boards have strong **shared beliefs and values** about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.

*

Pascack Valley Regional High School

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District strives to provide our students with innovative instruction, a versatile framework, and educational resources to develop the skills and obtain the knowledge they will need to pursue their passions and advance toward their future goals.

*

Boards in the Studies:

- Feel **internal, urgent desire** to improve.
- Adopted **vision statements** committed to success for all students. Used statements frequently in public and staff presentations.
- Refused to make **excuses** for poor performance or blame external factors.
- Believed that the **staff was capable** of improving results and would need to **change instructional classroom practices.**

*

Boards in the Studies:

Goals			
Change in achievement required fundamental changes in instructional practices so **goals focus on improved achievement and instruction**	Detailed knowledge of relationship of goals to curriculum, instruction, & assessment.	Remained top priorities. No detractors for attention or resources.	Expected to see results quickly as a result of improvement efforts.



*

Where is your Board?

Our board has established a written vision that commits to student achievement as the top priority of the school board, staff, and community.

1	2	3	4	5
Beginning to achieve	Partially achieved	Mostly achieved	Fully achieved	Don't know

*

Where is your Board?

Our vision is clearly articulated and known to all stakeholders in the community.

1	2	3	4	5
Beginning to achieve	Partially achieved	Mostly achieved	Fully achieved	Don't know

*

Questions for the Board

- How do we know that the district's vision and mission reflect the student achievement expectations and needs of the community?
- How do we foster and guide community dialogue about the vision for our students and schools?

8 Characteristics – Accountability & Data

- Effective school boards are **accountability** driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on **policies** to improve student achievement.
- Effective boards are **data savvy**; they embrace and **monitor data**, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive **continuous improvement.**

Boards in the Studies:

Could clearly describe current levels of student performance

Could describe in detail the types of data used



Regularly monitored data and discussed at meetings

Used data to diagnose problems and take corrective action.

Boards in the Studies:

- Held themselves and superintendent accountable for student performance progress
- Took policy role seriously; developed policies supporting instructional reforms.
- Focused on decisions that supported improved achievement rather than day-to-day operations.

*

Which Statement Best Applies?

A. Frequently monitoring achievement and progress toward district goals.

B. Hearing annual progress reports on achievement.

1	2	3	4	5
We are mostly like A	We are somewhat like A	Both apply	We are somewhat like B	We are mostly like B

*

Questions for a Board

- What role do student achievement results play in evaluation of the superintendent?
- How does the Board evaluate itself in terms of student achievement?
- What are the system's rewards and consequences for success and failure?

8 Characteristics – Align resources

6. Effective boards **align** and sustain resources, such as **professional development**, to meet district goals.



*

Boards in the Studies:

- Take responsibility for the core business of education: instruction
- Committed to **sustaining** reform over the long haul. Change takes time.
- Support extensive, research-based **professional development** for teachers as a way to implement needed changes in instruction.

Boards in the Studies:

- **Allocated resources** to priorities, including teacher professional development, even in tight budget times.
- **Limited improvement initiatives** to those that could be adequately supported – and said no to initiatives that would distract from improvement efforts.

Where is your Board?

Our board allocates resources to a limited
set of specific priorities for improving student achievement
that give everyone
in the district clear focus.

1	2	3	4	5
Beginning to achieve	Partially achieved	Mostly achieved	Fully achieved	Don't know

*

Where is your Board?

Our staff training is designed exclusively to support our student achievement priorities.

1	2	3	4	5
Beginning to achieve	Partially achieved	Mostly achieved	Fully achieved	Don't know

*

8 Characteristics – Collaboration & Communication

4. Effective school boards have a **collaborative** relationship with **staff** and the **community** and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

7. Effective school boards lead as a **united team** with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong **collaboration** and mutual trust.

*

Boards in the Studies:

- Speak with “one voice” about improvements.
- Sought a superintendent who shares their vision for improvement.
- Connected with district staff leadership.
- Build public will for the vision of success and the sense of urgency and responsibility for improvement.



Questions for your Board

- How can we build on what our teachers already do to create partnerships in the community that enrich the instructional program?
- What alliances and collaborations would most advance student achievement goals and objectives in our district?
- Do we engage in legislative issues?

*

8 Characteristics – Team

8. Effective school boards take part in team development and training to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts.



*

Question for your Board

How often does your board engage in whole-board development, with the entire board participating in training together?

1	2	3	4	5
Once per month	Quarterly	Twice per year	Once per year	Don't do it
NSBA	National	Survey	Results	2010
4%	13.3%	20.7%	38.7%	23.3%

80% of boards in survey have whole-board learning experiences twice a year or more.

*

8 Characteristics Reflection Questions

Reflect on your board / superintendent team.



Strengths

- Pick 2-3 traits that are strengths
- Share evidence



Focus Areas

- Pick 1-2 traits to focus on in future
- Share why



Danger Signs

- Pick 1-2 danger signs to be diligent about and avoid

NSBA

A special thank you to National School Boards Association for their assistance in the development of the content of this program.



www.nsba.org



Make the commitment to work together to move your district forward to positively impact student achievement.

*

Thank you
for all you do
for your students,
staff, and commun





