

Governance

The school committee is the governing body charged with setting the educational goals and objectives for the school system, adopting policies that enable the administration to achieve these goals and objectives, adopting a budget to provide necessary resources, hiring and evaluation of the Superintendent, and the ongoing review and evaluation of the school system's performance in fulfilling its mission.

1. The committee's policies are clear and up-to-date.
2. The committee has adopted a mission statement (in the ByLaws edited Summer 2009)
3. The committee regularly evaluates its progress relative to the goals and objectives that have been adopted.
 - Setting of goals was a flawed process
 - Need true subcommittee meetings
 - Not enough time
4. The committee refrains from involvement in the administration of the school system.
5. The committee members take part in educational workshops and conferences to help them make informed decisions.
 - need to improve in this area, add as a goal
 - set calendar for members to sign up
 - need more teambuilding such as the book club idea
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Committee/Superintendent relation

The superintendent is a critical member of the management team, implementing school committee policies and leading the school system in the direction set by the school committee. The relationship between the committee and the superintendent is an area that deserves the utmost attention and care.

1. The committee regularly evaluates the superintendent using a mutually agreed upon process.
2. The types and frequency of communications are agreed upon in advance.
 - Need improved communication among members and with the superintendent
 - Too much variability in communication response
 - Superintendent needs to raise his concerns earlier in the process
3. Committee members contact the superintendent when seeking information.
4. The superintendent and committee treat each other with mutual respect, trust and professionalism.
5. Both committee and superintendent operate on a "no-surprises" model.
 - Members need to distribute information before the meeting so others can assimilate it
 - Agenda creation should be a free flowing discussion which is allowed by open meeting law
 - Any online discussion is not in the spirit of the open meeting law
 - Many topics only the Superintendent and Chairperson know about
 - Need more advance discussion about agenda creation so all members know what is coming up (which is being initiated by the Chairperson)

6. Develops process for channeling complaints to superintendent and respects the chain of command.
 7. Committee will develop a process for clear and timely communication of requests for information from the superintendent.
- Members can get information but it is too ad hoc, should have a process

Operations

Any group, or team, functions best when its norms, rules and dynamics are spelled out, easily understood, and agreed upon. Aside from certain Massachusetts General Laws and Roberts Rules of Order, the school committee generally develops its own ways of doing things. The more that is discussed up front, the smoother the process for making decisions can be.

1. Roles of committee officers are defined in committee policy and understood by all members. (Policy 6402 edited in 2007)
 - Work on policy in this area to clarify or revise role of vice-chair and other members
2. New members receive introductory training and orientation when they join the committee.
3. Procedures and protocols for committee operations are published and understood.
 - Too last minute
 - Poorly constructed agenda
 - Should be better at publishing the procedures
 - One of the best, most accountable, focused and knowledgeable committees ever
 - Not very polite

Member Relations

Group dynamics and teamwork are an extremely important part of the school committee success. Members can have strong opinions on issues yet remain open-minded and willing to work out differences. How committee members treat each other goes a long way in affecting the ultimate success of the committee as a whole and as individuals.

1. Members treat each other with courtesy and respect.
2. All members are encouraged to voice opinions and take positions on issues.
3. Members respect the will of the majority and support decisions once they are made.
4. Members share pertinent information with each other to prevent surprises and promote informed decision-making.
5. Members “do their homework” and come prepared to make decisions.
6. Members understand the role of the individual as part of a whole group.

Strategic Planning and Fiscal Management

The school committee is accountable to the community for the responsible management of the school system's finances. It is also responsible for providing the resources necessary to enable the school system to perform its mission. Solid planning is needed to maximize short term and long term allocation of resources.

1. A long term strategic plan exists and is regularly reviewed.
 - Raise the benchmark and look at quality of followup
2. All constituencies of the school district are involved in the strategic planning process.
3. The budget process is documented and published.
4. Budgets are developed based on needs, from the "bottom-up."
 - Please send ideas for doing this better
 - We do not do zero-based budget, and there are reasons why
 - We have incremental changes to a stable budget
 - Last year never discussed the line item details
5. The committee, as a group, presents and advocates the budget to the community.
 - Want to see more of this
 - Public (esp without school aged children) will understand better
 - Could get better buy in
6. The committee reviews regular reports with budget and financial status for the school system.

Community Relations

The school committee is the chief advocate for students in the community. As such, it needs to strive for a positive relationship between the community and the school system. The perception of the school system's quality impacts nearly all facets of the system, and is an integral component of the school committee success in advocacy.

1. The committee has a public relations plan for the school system.
2. The committee encourages the inclusion of community members in as much decision making as possible.
3. The committee works cooperatively with other branches of municipal government.
 - There are more opportunities here that we haven't taken advantage of
4. The school system regularly reports its own progress and accomplishments.
5. The committee establishes protocol for responding to public.

Conduct of meetings

The quality of school committee meetings affects not only the quality of committee decisions and committee credibility, but also the level of confidence the community has in the committee. School committee decisions can be made only at these meetings, which often provide the public its only window into the school system. The meeting agenda is planned jointly by the committee chairman and the superintendent, and must be adhered to by the committee.

1. Committee members request sufficient information far enough in advance to prepare for meetings.

2. Public input is welcomed, and is done according to an established policy.
 - More public input opportunity than any School Committee or other government body
 - Major progress
 - Further improvement would be interactions during Public Comment and posting meeting info earlier
3. Full and sufficient debate is allowed on motions.
4. Discussion is focused on issues, not personalities.
5. The physical setting is conducive to productive discussion and decision-making.
6. Meetings are frequent enough to prevent overcrowded agendas.
 - Some meetings too long
 - Should add more meetings as needed

Completion of Goals

In January of each year, the School Committee sets goals for themselves. At the end of each year, a thoughtful evaluation of these goals and the progress made on them must be made. These results will then help to guide the setting of next year's goals.

1. The Committee set realistic and measurable goals.
 - Strategic plan will set pace and motivation
 - Good progress and better district goals this year
2. The Committee made consistent progress on their goals throughout the year.
3. The Committee has completed their goals to the extent possible.
 - Can't ever complete
4. The progress made on the Committee's goals has had a positive impact.