

# PREPARING TO SERVE

**Serving Public Education**



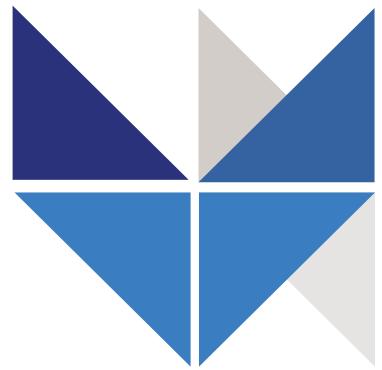
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# Preparing to Serve

## NASB MISSION STATEMENT

**//** The Nebraska Association of School Boards provides programs, services, and advocacy to strengthen public education for all Nebraskans. **//**

Congratulations! The decision to file to serve on your local school board or to fill a board vacancy is an important step toward one of the most meaningful volunteer roles you may ever experience. Election by your community or appointment to the board is an affirmation of confidence in you. You are now entrusted with the education of those parents and community hold most dear - their children.

The time you serve on the school board may challenge you, and yet you will realize rewards far beyond anything you might have imagined. It will also be a time for personal growth as you are called upon to learn or expand your knowledge and skills. Very few school board members arrive at the board table fully prepared for the responsibility or understanding of the importance of comprehensive planning, federal and state statutes, mandates, internal and external communications, evaluation of the superintendent, advocacy, labor relations, etc.

Effective governance leadership contributes to the overall success of the school district. The board's role and responsibilities when aligned to the NASB Board Governance Standards aid in fostering and sustaining a collaborative working relationship with the superintendent. The successful board and administrative leadership team is defined as a connected group of individuals working collaboratively with purpose, a mutual understanding of roles and a shared goal of improving educational opportunities for all students.

This guide is designed to provide basic information for individuals interested in serving on a school board. The rewards of board service can be an enormously fulfilling experience; however, achievement of success is derived when boards plan for success, work collaboratively as a leadership team, and unite during times of challenge.

**"Alone we can do so little together we can do so much."**  
- Helen Keller





# Welcome!

As a school board member, you are of great value to the students, your peers, your board, and your community. As an elected official, you are also a community leader. As a leader, you are charged with gathering input from your community on issues related to your students' learning environment, academic achievement, and success.

It is critical Nebraska communities remain viable, and that starts with you. Great leaders at the local level have the power to hold everyone accountable. While making the best decisions for education, you are building a strong school and community. The Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) provides programs and support to engage your community's stakeholders as the school board works to establish a district vision and district goals. This input from the entire community, including those with no direct tie to the school, has allowed boards to expand their thinking. This expanded view reflects the community's values for students, while also bridging the gap to bring multifaceted community support for needed growth and improvement. As a board member, you are responsible for modeling informed decision-making to ensure students receive a quality education. By engaging community stakeholders in purposeful discussion, the board fosters a positive working relationship with stakeholders while cultivating a positive school-community climate.

While at its core NASB is a resource for board training and an advocate on behalf of public education, the value of your district's membership in NASB is far reaching. As a board member, you have access to staff with experience in school law, policy, governance leadership, insurance, advocacy, communications, superintendent evaluation, board self-assessment, community engagement and alignment, strategic planning, online survey services, superintendent searches, negotiations data, etc. It is safe to say most districts would have a difficult time accessing or retaining such extensive expertise on their own. It is also difficult to calculate the impact of NASB's assistance to its members in terms of improved efficiency and avoidance of the hardship that results from uninformed decision-making.

As critical as the support services are to our members, it is only part of the story. NASB works collaboratively with many educational and governmental partners representing the interests of school boards and the development of policy. We continually aspire to grow and improve our programs and services to ensure cost-savings to our members and to support your goal to provide a quality education for all students.

We value you as a school board member, an advocate for public education, and a leader in your community and Nebraska. Thank you for serving your community as a school board member. People like you who dedicate your time and leadership make a difference in the life of a child. We hope you value your relationship with NASB, and I look forward to working with you to continually improve public education for all Nebraskans.

For information about NASB and board service, visit [www.NASBonline.org](http://www.NASBonline.org) and feel free to contact us at 800-422-4572. We are here for you, so when you need assistance, think of NASB first!

Sincerely,  
John Spatz  
NASB Executive Director





# Considering Board Service

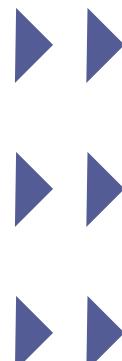
Are you a suitable candidate for the board? The unique qualities of a governing school board reflect the collective makeup of the individuals who serve. The ability to function as one member of a governing board is not determined by sex, occupation, race, income, or social standing. The effective board candidate is; however, characterized as one with the:

- Ability to work as a member of a team, with an open mind and a willingness to engage in purposeful discussion and to arrive at a group consensus
- Commitment to dedicate the time required to become informed and to review the board packet in preparation to participate in discussion during the board meeting
- Desire to serve students and the community
- Belief in the value of public education
- Respect for the needs and feelings of others
- Recognize the school district is commonly one of the largest employers/businesses in the community and the board is responsible to ensure the district employs a highly skilled educational leader who is the superintendent
- Possess a genuine interest in the value of community involvement



If you are considering board candidacy as a result of a disagreement or ongoing dispute with a district employee may not be the best approach. Community members will often contact a school board member with their concerns, suggestions, and questions. This may be the appropriate choice if a district-wide policy is involved; however, most matters should be referred to the building administrator and/or superintendent as opposed to a board member. The individual board member does not have authority to resolve patron/parent issues.

It is always best to begin with the individual directly related to the issue. If the matter cannot be resolved at the lowest possible level, then one may follow the chain of command thereafter. For example, if the matter is related to a classroom teacher, begin with the teacher. If the issue is not resolved, refer to policy and look for the Chain of Command and/or Communication. In the teacher scenario, the next individual would be the building principal, if necessary, the principal's supervisor and in most Nebraska schools the final individual the patron will engage is the superintendent. If the matter pertains to a coach, begin with the coach, if necessary, then follow the order provided: athletic/activities director, principal, and superintendent. When a parent/patron follows policy, the board is only engaged if a complaint is filed per district policy. It is worth noting that if the issue is a personnel related matter, the board may not be involved in the review of the complaint. (See the Chain of Command on Page 4.)





# The Board Candidate

What do you need to know as you consider candidacy for the board? It is beneficial to grow your knowledge and basic understanding of the board's role and responsibilities. Begin with the review of board policy. Familiarize yourself with the section titled Board of Education.

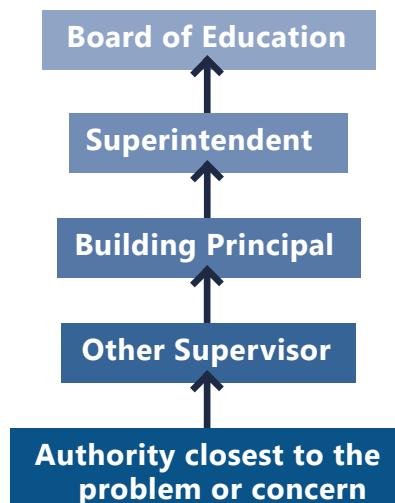
Key policies:

- Board Policies [i.e., Code of Conduct/Ethics]
- Board Handbook, if available
- District vision and goals for growth and improved student learning
- District organizational chart
- Current budget
- Past board meeting agendas and minutes located on the district website
- Nebraska Department of Education Rule 10

NASB advocates for board candidates to begin preparing for this important endeavor by attending regular board meetings. To learn more about the district; speak with current board members, set aside time to meet with the superintendent to better understand the district and the dynamics of the educational issues the district is facing.

## Chain of Command

- Board Member is contacted by a patron of the district.**
- Board Member listens with courtesy and sincerity.**
- Board Member instructs the patron to follow the Chain of Communication starting with the authority closest to the problem or concern.**
- Board Member contacts superintendent to turn the matter over to superintendent and/or the administrators to handle.**





# Nebraska Association of School Boards

Since 1918, NASB has been committed to serving school boards across the state. Our mission to enhance public education for the students of Nebraska is assembled upon the beliefs that:

- Every public school board will govern effectively and with integrity.
- Every public school board member will understand the importance and emphasize increased student learning.
- Every public school board will practice good stewardship of resources.

The Nebraska Association of School Boards is a non-profit organization that provides programs, services, and advocacy. We provide consultation, board development training, as well as district support service programs for over 260 member school districts and educational service units across Nebraska. The programs are managed by a professional staff, and governance oversight is carried out by the Board of Directors consisting of local school board members from across the state. NASB is committed to the following goals on behalf of its member boards:

- Enhancing the ability and authority of local boards of education to represent the citizens of their school district;
- Working for increased public awareness and financial support of the public schools;
- Providing development, training, and consulting opportunities for school board members to assist them in meeting their responsibilities for policy making, and efficient management of the school district;
- Representing the interests of public education and the viewpoints of local boards of education, to those who impact public education; and,
- Providing member boards with the specialized information needed to operate the public schools in an efficient and effective manner.



NASB HAS 3 OF 12 SEATS  
ON THE BOARD

INTERLOCAL  
ORGANIZATIONS

FOR PROFIT  
C-CORPORATIONS



Educators  
Health  
Alliance



CJUMP NJUMP  
CITY & COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM  
NEBRAKA JUNIOR SUPERINTENDENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



SPARQ DATA  
SOLUTIONS

envise

## OTHER ORGANIZATIONS NASB IS RESPONSIBLE FOR



NEBRASKA  
COUNCIL OF  
SCHOOL ATTORNEYS





# NASB Programs and Services

To fulfill the Association's mission, NASB offers a broad range of services to members including:

## **Advocacy & Government Relations**

- Advocate NASB positions at the Capitol and beyond
- Promote the role of school board member
- Support local control and the policy making body
- Work with school board members in advocacy development
- Connect policymakers through meetings, conference calls, etc.
- Share narratives related to school boards
- Share legislative initiatives and progress with board members
- Work with the NASB Legislation Committee to filter and engage in legislative matters



**NASB Board Leadership Department** provides a broad scope of services and programs to support the governance roles and responsibilities of the District Leadership Team. The board and superintendent may consider:

**Board Retreats/Work Sessions** – we advocate for the board and superintendent to participate in an annual board retreat to review the role and responsibilities, goal planning, transition of superintendent leadership support, NASB Annual Board Calendar, board meeting protocols, and more. Board Leadership team members facilitate the retreat following an agenda that is aligned to the vision of the board and superintendent.

**Board Leadership Resources** – as a member of the Association, the Board Leadership Department provides a variety of resources to support the board-superintendent leadership team. Leadership resources are available through workshops, conferences, website, or email.

**Community Engagement** – engaging stakeholders in purposeful discussion can be a powerful component in shaping the future of the school district and community. Fostering a positive working relationship with external stakeholders cultivates a progressive school-community climate.

**Community Alignment** – designed to effectively gather a range of perspectives on the most pressing issues facing the school district and community and then aligning how the district contributes to the collective development of the community.

**Strategic Planning** – a thorough process for creating a strategic, collaborative vision that includes the development of strategies and objectives aligned with the district's mission and beliefs. This process includes the collection of high-quality data through stakeholder engagement to gain perspective, ideas, and suggestions for growing education in the district. A comprehensive plan is then developed with a clear path forward for district success. Once the plan is adopted by the board, district administrators implement the plan utilizing the NASB accountability for continuous improvement, and monitoring for progress and success of the plan.



# NASB Programs and Services (continued)



**Board Leadership Learning Opportunities** – Commit to learning and growing in your role and responsibilities as a board member. To make the most of your time, participate in the learning opportunities provided through NASB. Each year the NASB staff offer an array of opportunities to build your skills and knowledge, including but not limited to: New Board Member Workshop, President Retreat, Leadership Workshop, Board Candidate Workshop, Legislative Issues Conference, Leaders and Law Conference, Area Membership Meetings and State Conference, just to name a few. A commitment to developing your own skills is a model for the students and staff in your district.

**Online Assessment Surveys** – through the NASB Online Survey System, the Board Leadership staff will administer online surveys for board self-assessment, superintendent evaluation, climate-culture well-being survey, bond referendum, consolidation initiatives, and custom surveys.

**Superintendent Evaluation** – It is the responsibility of the school board to evaluate the performance of the superintendent. Fair application of the superintendent evaluation process is best achieved through collaboration and agreement by the board and superintendent about what, how, and when the evaluation process is completed. The Association provides sample Superintendent Evaluation tools to aid the board in this critical function. All board members must participate and provide purposeful feedback regarding the superintendent's educational leadership of the school district.

**Board Self-Assessment** – The board that operates effectively will periodically engage in some form of assessment. Conducting a self-assessment is an opportunity for the board to evaluate how well it is functioning as a body. Completing a self-assessment enables the leadership team to determine what needs to be improved to function more effectively going forward. It is important that expectations and standards on how to improve the team's practices and behaviors are clearly articulated during this process. The Association provides sample board self-assessment tools to support this best practice process.

**District Training Opportunities** – professional development provided by a member of the Board Leadership team who is a trained facilitator in poverty, relationship building, emotional well-being health for board members, administration and staff which impacts our schools and student success.

## Initiatives and Subsidiary Programs

- Nebraska Public Leadership Foundation [NPLF]
- Nebraska Administrative Education Professionals [NAEP]





# NASB Programs and Services (continued)

## OTHER NASB PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**NASB Board Awards of Achievement** -board members are awarded for their participation in NASB Services and Programs, and attendance at NASB workshops and events, through the NASB Awards of Achievement Program.



**ALICAP** [All-Lines Insurance Interlocal Cooperative Aggregate Pool] and Loss Control Program – a members only risk management program NASB offers school boards to obtain quality workers' compensation and property/casualty insurance coverage at competitive rates.

**Educational Leadership Search Services** – is a process carefully designed to provide the board accountability and control when conducting a search for the superintendent or ESU Administrator.

**EHA Health Insurance** – EHA Wellness is a voluntary health improvement program provided by the Educators Health Alliance (EHA).

**Gallup Strength Finders** – offers StrengthsFinder assessment and Gallup Certified Strengths coaching for facilitated training with board members, staff, and administrators.



**NJUMP & CJUMP Natural Gas Purchasing** – NASB sponsors two joint energy purchasing consortiums created for public agencies to purchase natural gas and related services.

**Policy Service** – provides update, review, or customization of policies to be consistent with district views, purpose, and aligned to current state and federal laws and regulations.



**SPARQ Meetings** - a digital board meeting platform.

**SPARQ Negotiations** – software designed to support successful negotiations.

**SPARQ Online Publishing** – tools to host board policies and handbooks.

**Unemployment Insurance Program** – NASB partners with Equifax to provide Association members with the Unemployment Insurance program.

**Workshops and Conferences** – initiating and developing relationships with our members is vital to providing quality learning opportunities. We work with districts to better understand their challenges and how NASB can assist through learning events.



# Board Member = Community Leader

The community member who is elected to serve the board of education commonly possess some sense of the importance and significant responsibility they inherit to ensure the district provides quality instruction and learning opportunities to meet the needs of all students in a safe and effective learning environment. There is no greater honor for a person of high purpose than to be elected by the community to serve the Board of Education to represent the public and all students. However, it is an honor that must be earned through constant effort and a strong commitment to serving public education.



School board members in Nebraska serve without pay and are prohibited by law from having a significant financial interest in any business transacted by the school district. The term of office for most school board members is four years.

**"THE HEART OF A VOLUNTEER IS NOT MEASURED IN SIZE, BUT BY THE DEPTH OF THE COMMITMENT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS."**

## Board Code of Conduct

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring the public, staff, and students that school board members will govern through policy. In accordance with this belief and by adoption of this policy, each board member commits to following the Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics.

*Board members' actions, verbal and nonverbal, reflect the attitude and the beliefs of the school district. Therefore, board members must conduct themselves professionally and in a manner fitting to the responsibility of duty.*

In addition to the following, board members should be familiar with and abide by their district's Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics.

### **As a Board Member, I will:**

- Recognize that my authority rests not with individual members of the board, but within a legal session of the board; respecting and abiding by the majority decision of the board.
- Consistently uphold all applicable local, state, and federal laws, rules, and policies.
- Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, insofar as possible, and diligently prepare for meetings by reviewing in advance the material provided.
- Remain informed of local, state, and national educational developments of significance, remaining current on needs and requirements pertaining to educational issues through individual study and participation in board development opportunities.
- Consider the needs of the entire community and vote in the best interest of students, staff, and the educational program.
- Encourage individual board member free expression of ideas, listen without judgement, engage in thoughtful deliberation, and maintain open communication between all stakeholders.





# Board Code of Conduct (continued)

- Complete the Conflict of Interest form, and not use the school district or any part of the school district program for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends or supporters.
- Abide by the Open Meetings Law and only enter closed session of the board if the situation requires it, and I will consider "secret" sessions of board members in violation of the law.
- Recognize that promising in advance of a meeting how I will vote on any item prohibits open discussion and inhibits transparency.
- Retain independent judgement and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.
- Respect the confidentiality of privileged information, as prescribed by law.
- Prioritize policymaking, budget, goal setting, school district strategic planning process and evaluation, and the effects on increasing student learning and achievement, ensuring efficient use of education resources.
- Act only as a member of the board and do not assume any individual authority when the board is not in session and take no private action that will compromise the board or administration.
- Request recommendations from the superintendent and consider legal counsel advice for the board when required for full and informed board consideration of issues requiring legal expertise.
- Acknowledge that the superintendent of schools and his or her staff are responsible and accountable for the delivery of the educational programs and the conduct of school operations.
- Adhere to and encourage others to follow the Chain of Command regarding complaints, requests, and concerns related to the school district.
- Ensure strong management of the school system by hiring and evaluating the superintendent, collaborating toward a common vision and goals for the district.
- Hold the superintendent accountable by jointly creating job performance standards and at least annually performing a comprehensive evaluation based on the job description, contract, and superintendent goals.
- Provide policy support for school administrators in the performance of their duties and delegate authority commensurate with those responsibilities.
- Perform a liaison communications role by respecting the needs of both the community and the school by engaging stakeholders in the strategic planning process.
- Recognize the board president (or designee) will speak as the official voice of the board. A single board member will not represent the board without the consent of the board, and board members making personal statements (in any format, including speeches, articles, social media posts, etc.) should clearly state these statements are their opinion and not the position of the board.
- Acknowledge the different roles that we play as individuals (board member, patron, parent, etc.).

# Role and Responsibilities of the Board

The school board acts on behalf of the school district and has authority over school matters within the territory of the school district. All powers of the board lie in its action as a group. Individual board members exercise authority only as they vote at a legal meeting of the board.

The board is empowered to make policy for its own governance, employees, students, and for school district facilities. The board is also empowered to enforce its policies. The board may be required to conduct hearings and rule on disputes confronting the school district. As the governing board, the required responsibilities include legislative, executive, and evaluative.

Of the three, the major duty is the board's executive role. The main function is the selection of the superintendent to operate the school district on the board's behalf. The board delegates to the superintendent authority to carry out board policy, to formulate and carry out rules and regulations and to handle the administrative details in a consistent manner aligned to board policy.

These are challenging times for public education, and even more challenging is the work of local school board members. The board of education is the leader on the front lines of public education. The board is responsible to ensure students have access to quality instruction and curriculum to learn and achieve at the highest level possible. Board members' primary agenda is raising student achievement and involving the community in the attainment of that goal. A board's framework must be based on the premise that excellence in the classroom begins with excellence in the boardroom. The board fulfills the commitment to education through:

## VISION

## STANDARDS

## ASSESSMENT

## ACCOUNTABILITY

## ALIGNMENT

## CLIMATE AND CULTURE

## COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

# Role and Responsibilities of the Board

**VISION** - The board engages the community when defining the future of the district and then formulates the goals, defines the outcomes, and sets the course for growth and improved student achievement. Vision is not about what we are, but what we want to be. For the school board, it is about where we are going and what kind of school system we are trying to create now and for the future. Closely related to vision is mission. An effective school district's mission statement also captures and reflects the core values and beliefs that guide the district and its members in pursuit of the vision and goals.

**STANDARDS** - A major component of a school district's approach is meeting achievement standards and the school improvement goals. In order to ensure the district is performing in accordance with expectations, the board-superintendent must establish specific and clearly delineated goals for improvement. The vision, goals, and direction of the district should also align in realistic ways to the expectations of the community.

**ASSESSMENT** - Promoting outstanding student performance based on clearly delineated data is central to the key work of the board. The next step is to assess student learning and achievement. School boards utilize data in order to make decisions, not only about how well they are doing, but also about what may be needed in order to ensure the district goals are met.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** - Increasingly, school districts are held accountable for how students perform. Accountability is not only a growing expectation from community members, but at the state level as well.

**ALIGNMENT** - Alignment is a key component of the school district and board leadership. A critical role of the board is to establish goals and priorities focused on improving student achievement. The board is responsible to provide appropriate professional development and support for the classroom instruction to ensure improved student achievement. Therefore, the next critical step is to align the district resources to the achievement of the district vision and goals.

**CLIMATE AND CULTURE** - Climate is an essential aspect of a school district's culture. Climate is a by-product of culture and is dependent on it. Leading-edge school districts are very conscious of climate because of its powerful effect on behavior. Effective school boards give priority attention to climate as well because it factors importantly in what students and teachers can accomplish. Climate also is a critical determinant of how parents and others in the community view the school district.

**COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS** - The development of collaborative relationships is vital and an important dimension of a school district. We know that when individuals work together effectively, the product of their efforts will be superior to the efforts of any single individual. Relationships are not merely important, they are critical. The quality of relationships within the school district will largely determine how well the district performs.

**CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT** - The board causes the continuous assessment of all conditions affecting education and ensures that schools are accountable for results in student learning. Boards monitor student achievement, make program corrections as necessary, keep the public informed of the status of educational programs and progress, and ensure that all functions of the schoolwork together well for the good of education.



# The Board Member

A board member's role and responsibilities are challenging given authority is official when the board is conducting an advertised meeting in the public. Each board member has an obligation to approach the governance role with an effective mindset, to carry out his or her part of preparation and participation, and to take responsibility for the group. Cohesive leadership is realized when the board collectively:

**Prepare to participate responsibly** – arrive at the board table prepared to work, remember that it is important to listen, agree, and disagree as your values dictate, and accept that once the board vote is final, the decision is official. This does not mean that a board member must compromise his or her values; however, it is important that each board member supports the legitimacy of the choice even though they may not have supported the decision with a vote in favor. Once the board has made a decision, each board member must acknowledge, without reservation, the superintendent's responsibility to carry out the board's decision.



**Understand the authority of a board member** – a board member only has authority when the majority of the board is conducting business in an advertised meeting of the board.

**Acknowledge the board represents the community, not a single constituency** – the board serves in trust for the entire community. Individual board members may have represented a constituency when seeking election to the board; however, once seated a board member represents all patrons.

**Accountability of the board** – remain mindful of the students the board represents. The behavior of the board reflects the school district. The board shares the responsibility of holding each other accountable for behavior unbecoming of the board and/or the school district.

**Sustain a continuous focus on the mission, vision, and goals of the district** – maintain a focus on the vision and goals by placing student learning and achievement at the center of each decision of the board.

**Ensure resources are aligned to needs.** As daunting and formidable as the big decisions are, this is part of the responsibilities of the board. Therefore, it is important to understand the district's core values and beliefs to ensure the budget and alignment of resources support the educational programs and learning opportunities the district aspires to provide students.

# The Superintendent

The board employs a superintendent of schools to serve as the educational leader of the district. The board delegates to the superintendent the authority to implement board policy and to execute decisions made by the board concerning the internal operations of the school district, unless specifically stated otherwise.

The superintendent is responsible for the implementation and execution of board policy and the observance of board policy by employees and students. The superintendent is responsible for overall supervision and discipline of employees and the education program. When executing the duties, the superintendent must consider the financial well-being of the school district and the needs of the students. The superintendent is empowered by the board and held accountable to the job description, contract, goals, and evaluation instrument.



# Board Governance

The encompassing responsibility for education rests with the State of Nebraska. The state delegates, and holds accountable, the local board of education. School boards are granted latitude in governing the school district; however, districts are subject to state and federal rules and regulations.

Key responsibilities of the school board:

- Employ a superintendent
- Hold the superintendent responsible for managing the school district in accordance with state law, rules and regulations, and the board adopted policies
- Plan, adopt, and oversight of the school district budget
- Identify and adopt educational goals for the school district
- Engage the community in the discussion, support, and design of goals to provide a quality education in a safe learning environment for all students
- Support students and staff through measures to ensure positive well-being and climate-culture

As a public body, the board is required to conduct business in public. The board may only take action by majority vote during a public meeting. The purpose of a school board meeting is to transact the legal business of the school district through discussion and voting among the members. The board must also provide time at meetings for the public to be heard.

**Experienced board members from across the state were asked to identify the most difficult lesson or fact they had to learn about board service. This is what they shared:**

- The great amount of time it takes to be an effective board member
- The mismatch between initial assumptions and the actual roles, responsibilities, and relationships of the board and administration in operating the school district
- Recognizing the difference between setting policy (the board's job) and administering the schools (the superintendent's job)
- Change comes slowly
- The abrupt change from "citizen" status to "board member"
- Learning to publicly acknowledge that you have no power and authority as an individual board member; that only the board can set policies and decisions for the school district
- That you must represent all the students. Decisions must be made in the interest of the school district and not made solely for special groups or interests
- Learning how to respond to the complaints and concerns of patrons and parents
- Effective boardsmanship means being able to hold the minority viewpoint when voting on a given issue; then openly supporting the majority vote in your community
- A board member must think deeply and sometimes accept a reality that is contrary to his/her own beliefs
- As a board member you cannot solve everyone's problems by yourself!

# NASB Board Governance Standards

The purpose of the NASB Board Governance Standards:

- Defines effective best practice and governance of the board
- Outlines the proper role and responsibilities of the governance team
- Provides a mechanism for evaluating the leadership governance of the board
- Informs district and community stakeholders of the role of the board and the importance of working with district leadership to grow and improve education for all students

The value of the NASB Board Governance Standards benefit the board by:

- Affirming the board's commitment to the mission, vision, and goals of the school district
- Ensuring the governance team sustains a focus on the support of improving and growing learning for all students
- Modeling and support a positive and focused climate/culture of the board and school district
- Building trust and foster a better understanding of the responsibility of the board and what it means to govern effectively
- Emphasizing the willingness of board members accountability to each other and the district and community stakeholders
- Equipping district and community stakeholders with a meaningful basis for assessing the effectiveness of the governing board
- Aligning to the board self-assessment to support the evaluation of the board's effectiveness
- Helping to build and sustain a positive governance culture when new members are elected or appointed to serve on the board
- Educating aspiring board candidates and voters about the important role and authority of the board

To promote student growth and achievement, an effective school board will adopt and adhere to board leadership and governance standards.

## **I. MISSION, VISION, and GOALS**

## **II. POLICY GOVERNANCE**

## **III. STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

## **IV. ACCOUNTABILITY and STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

## **V. ADVOCACY**

## **VI. DISTRICT RESOURCES**

## **VII. BOARD OPERATIONS**

## **VIII. BOARD – SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS**

## **IX. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

# NASB Board Governance Standards

As you consider board service, consider the significance of the following standards of governance. Consider the success of the board and school district through this quick assessment.

## I. MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

The board annually reviews the district's vision and mission statements, annually adopting board and district goals to support the mission.

The board will:

- Adopt goals and/or a strategic plan to support the mission and vision, provide structure, and hold everyone accountable

Questions to consider:

- The board adopted a mission and vision statement developed with stakeholders?
- Student achievement is a top priority of the school board, staff, and community?
- The mission and vision statements are communicated to the community?
- Long-term goals or a strategic plan is in place to support the mission and vision of the district?
- The board regularly refers to the mission and vision when setting district policy?
- The mission and vision are used as a guide when making resource, budget, and other operating decisions?
- The board periodically reviews the mission and vision statement with stakeholders to ensure it continues to reflect community beliefs and values?

## II. POLICY GOVERNANCE

The board continuously reviews, revises, and develops policies and procedures to ensure accountability focused on growth and student achievement.

The board will:

- Adopt policies that support the mission and vision, provide structure, and hold everyone accountable.
- Establish a policy committee and review schedule.
- Review policies on a regular basis to ensure the policy manual is up to date.
- Update policies annually to ensure legal compliance.

Questions to consider:

- Policy is accessible to the public via the school district website?
- The board reviews policy at every regular board meeting?
- Policy is aligned to all district handbooks?
- How frequently does the board complete the review of the full board policy manual?

# NASB Board Governance Standards

## III. STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The board establishes effective communications with internal and external stakeholders to promote the district's image, and to build and sustain long-term partnerships that serve education.

The board will:

- Engage stakeholders prior to setting goals to support improvement and growth of the school district.
- Engage with community leaders to ensure the school district strategic plan is aligned to the community initiatives and goals.
- Advocate for the engagement of parents and patrons' input on matters that are of interest to the community.

Questions to consider:

- The board gathers input from stakeholders [i.e., parents, students, staff, community advocates, businesses, government agencies and higher education]?
- The district communicates the vision frequently and consistently to stakeholders?
- The board references the vision to support decision related to policy and district operations?

## IV. ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The board continuously monitors the progress of district goals utilizing data to support growth and promote shared accountability for maximizing student achievement.

The board will:

- Ensure the district has adopted high instructional standards.
- Engage in the review of data to evaluate the instructional program.
- Adopt a curriculum review cycle and ensure district curriculum is aligned to the state standards.

Questions to consider:

- How well equipped are graduates who are embarking upon a career out of high school and those that are pursuing a post-secondary education?
- Are all students provided with the opportunity to achieve their personal best?

## V. ADVOCACY

The board advocates for children, public education, learning, and equity to support improved student achievement for all students.

The board will:

- Engage with NASB Advocacy Program and attend Legislative Issues Conference to learn about proposed legislative initiatives and bills to better understand the direct impact to the school district.

# NASB Board Governance Standards

## V. ADVOCACY (continued)

- Engage the community in understanding legislation and ask patrons to join the board in opposing or advocating for the passage of legislation that will have a positive impact on the district.
- Monitor the work of the legislature through the NASB website, updates received through social media, the NASB website, and news.

Questions to consider:

- What is my role and how do I advocate for the best interest of the school district?
- Where do I find information regarding Legislative Bills that may impact public schools?
- What can NASB do to support the board in sharing our district story when advocating for or against legislation at the state level?

## VI. DISTRICT RESOURCES

The board aligns and manages district resources in a responsible manner to meet goals and to promote growth of student achievement.

The board will:

- Adopt a budget that supports the vision and is aligned to the needs and priorities of the district.
- Use data to support instructional needs to meet the needs of students.
- Review the district financial reports monthly along with historical trend data.
- Participate in NASB Budget and Finance Workshops to grow personal knowledge related to the school district budget process and the board's role/responsibilities.

Questions to consider:

- Which comes first, our priorities or the budget?
- What is the budget cycle and calendar?
- Who is involved in developing the budget?
- How does the budget increase student achievement?
- How does the board engage the public in the discussion of budget accountability?

## VII. BOARD OPERATIONS

The board ensures meetings are effective, efficient, and orderly focused on policy and proper board governance and conduct.

The board will:

- Utilize the NASB Annual Board Calendar when designing monthly board meeting agendas to ensure the board Schedule routine reports on the board calendar.
- Follow the Board Code of Conduct and adopted protocol and procedures for an orderly meeting



# NASB Board Governance Standards

## **VII. BOARD OPERATIONS (continued)**

Questions to consider:

- The board adopts meeting protocols and procedures to support orderly meetings held in public?
- The board provides reasonable advanced notice of all meetings in which a quorum of the board attends?
- The board monitors proper compliance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Law and public records?
- The board meeting agenda is available to the public, is reasonably descriptive, and attachments are available to the public?
- Board meeting minutes are available within 10 days and/or by the next scheduled meeting of the board?



## **VIII. BOARD – SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS**

The board and superintendent establish and sustain a professional and collaborative working relationship to support and advocate for growth and student achievement.

The board will:

- Share feedback you may receive from stakeholders with the superintendent in a timely fashion.
- Establish a positive working relationship with the superintendent.
- Communicate knowing that you may each have to agree to disagree when making decisions in the best interest of students.
- Share questions you may have prior to the board meeting to allow the superintendent to be prepared to respond with accurate information for all board members.

Questions to consider:

- When do we evaluate the superintendent?
- What does an effective evaluation process include?
- Does the superintendent communicate regularly with the Board?

## **IX. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The board and superintendent participate in continuous and appropriate training and professional development to build shared knowledge and values.

The board will:

- Participate in NASB learning opportunities to support the growth of knowledge and understanding of board governance and responsibilities.

Questions to consider:

- Where do I find a list of workshops and conferences for school board members?
- How do I register for workshops and conferences?
- Will the district cover the cost of the registration fees for workshops and conferences?





# Commit to Your Own Learning

The learning curve of a newly elected board member can be overwhelming. To make the most of your candidacy, do not wait for the election in November or to take the oath in January. Begin learning now, commit to your growth and development. Ask questions and engage in discussion with current board members and the superintendent.

Learning together is a great activity for all boards and NASB offers a wide range of workshops and the annual education conference in November as well as local board retreats in district that support board members and the superintendent. Look for the Candidate Workshop following the Primary Election and New Board Member Workshops, held across the state and at multiple sites, immediately following the General Election. Each November the Association co-hosts the annual State Education Conference. This conference provides a track for new board members and a mentor program to introduce newly elected board members to the role of board service. The many resources we offer benefit your ability to build your skills and knowledge, ranging from this manual to a New Board Member Workshop to a comprehensive list of other opportunities to support you in your role as a board member. Your commitment to developing your knowledge and understanding of board governance and responsibilities will be a model for the students and staff in your district.

**"AN EFFECTIVE BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM IS FUNDAMENTAL  
TO THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT." ~NASB**



## Where to Find Help

Whether you are a newly elected board member embarking on this most important endeavor or an experienced board member facing a new challenge, remember that you are not alone. NASB is your network for support, guidance, and information. Visit [www.NASBonline.org](http://www.NASBonline.org), call us at 800-422-4572, or email.

John Spatz, NASB Executive Director - [jspatz@NASBonline.org](mailto:jspatz@NASBonline.org)

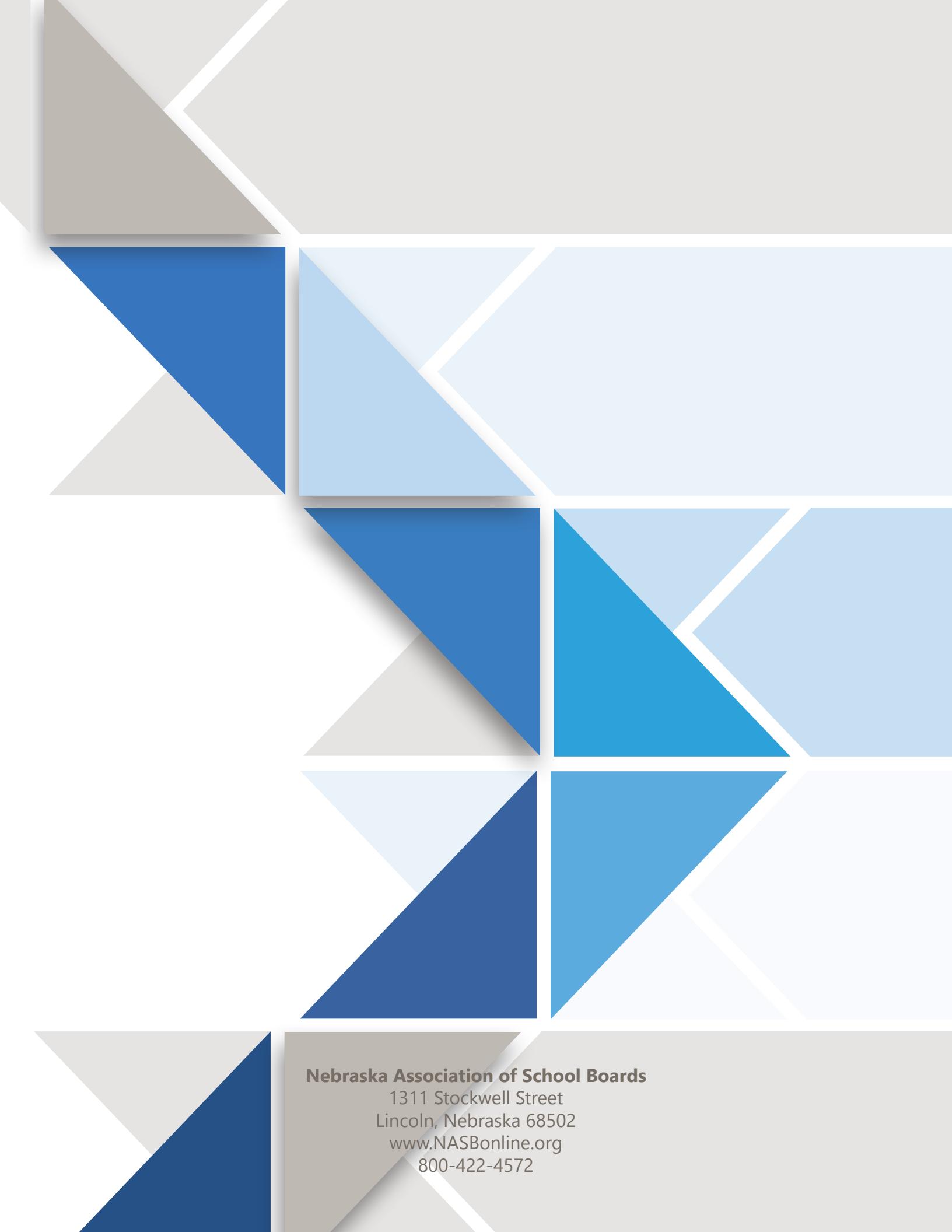
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**We look forward to working alongside you as you  
embark upon this most important endeavor!**





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