

# *Serving* on your local School Board



A foundation for success

From the Washington State School Directors' Association



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Washington State School Directors' Association







## Foreword

# Serving on Your Local School Board

*A foundation for success*

Governing our public schools is one of the most important responsibilities a citizen can undertake. School board members work on behalf of all the families in their community, with fellow board members and with other community partners, to ensure that each student has equal and ample opportunities to reach his or her greatest potential.

Before going further, let's clarify some terminology. School board members in Washington state are officially called school directors, as defined in statute (RCW 28A.315.343) and make up the governing body—the school board—in each school district.

Being a school director can be demanding, frustrating, and requires those who serve to struggle with complex issues and difficult choices. However, local school board service is also rewarding, as you watch students achieve and graduate from your schools with promising futures. By contributing your time and talents, you are helping create a positive future for children.

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) is your association. We applaud your decision to devote your time and talents to meet this challenge, and stand ready and willing to serve you. This guide provides the basics for successful local school board governance and outlines the roles and responsibilities of school boards.

- **Part 1** traces the history of education governance in the United States, presents key federal and state legislation impacting public education, and provides an overview of Washington state's education system.
- **Part 2** describes the key roles and responsibilities of school boards within the framework of the Washington State School Board Standards.
- **Part 3** provides more detail about areas that help you understand a few important legal requirements in these key areas: the superintendent's responsibilities, school board meetings, collective bargaining and school finance.
- **Part 4** provides examples of challenging issues boards sometimes face, and exercises for your reflection.

This guide is one of many excellent resources on boardsmanship available from WSSDA. Please visit [www.wssda.org](http://www.wssda.org) to access other valuable resources.





## Part 1

# History of local school district governance

Public education—and the system of democratically elected school boards—goes back to early American colonial history. The Massachusetts Bay Colony established compulsory schools for the young as early as 1647. By 1683, towns and selectmen were required to jointly maintain schools, and local taxes were mandated to support those schools.

The first permanent school committee to oversee the governance of schools was appointed in Boston in 1721. The colonial practice of local control of schools continued after independence, and was extended as new territories were acquired, ultimately being formalized in most state constitutions.

In 1826 Massachusetts took the final step in the evolution of a district school board by ordering each town in the state to elect a separate school committee to have “the general charge and superintendence of all the public schools” in town. This law marks the final transfer of educational functions from the selectmen to the new body, created specifically for administering public education in the towns.

Massachusetts enacted legislation in 1891 that vested each district with financial and administrative authority over its schools. This practice spread throughout the states and was a prototype for today’s governance by local boards.

Consolidation of school districts throughout the 1900s brought their numbers from approximately 128,000 to about 14,000 districts today.

## Changes to board roles resulting from state and federal education reforms

Several key decisions during the second half of the 20th century expanded the role of federal and state governments in education, and diminished local control of school boards and districts. Here are some key decisions and government actions that increases federal and state roles.

- The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court decision brought the federal government’s involvement into local education to oversee desegregation. The *Brown* decision was followed by a series of cases requiring local school district boards to desegregate public schools.
- The Soviet Union’s launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 generated great concern about the adequacy of American students’ academic achievement. As

a result, the federal government passed the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which gave the government greater control through special programs and targeted funds to improve education.

- In the 1960s and 1970s, federally- and state-funded programs, such as special and migrant education, increased as a result of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
- Antidiscrimination policy became a crosscutting social issue for public schools and districts with passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Federal entitlements to special education were initiated with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (IDEA).

## **Standards-based education reform legislation—federal and state commitments to improve student learning**

*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, issued in April 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, marked a new beginning for achievement testing and standards-based education reform. Education reform was put into law with the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) introduced the first federal law focused on the needs of all students, not just the disadvantaged and children at risk of school failure. The IASA amendments required all states to have:

- Content and performance standards;
- Assessments aligned with those standards at certain grade levels; and
- An accountability system to identify schools that were not helping all students perform as expected on those assessments.

In 2002, Congress amended ESEA and reauthorized it as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which changes ESEA in dramatic ways. NCLB increased the power of assessment in education and brought clarity to the use and importance of achievement testing of students in kindergarten through high school.

Under NCLB, states adopted standards and aligned their assessments with these standards. They must also conduct annual testing in reading and math for students in grades 3 to 8 and testing in those subjects at least once between grades 10 and 12.

A key element of NCLB requires states, districts and schools to demonstrate "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) in raising student achievement levels. Special focus is placed on four target groups: ethnic/racial minorities, poverty-based students, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. If AYP targets are not met, schools and districts are subject to increasing consequences.

NCLB also requires regular reporting of test results to parents and the public, “fully qualified” teachers in every classroom, and greater choice for students who want to transfer from schools that are not meeting standards.

## Washington state education reform

Washington state’s current education reform began when the Legislature adopted the Education Reform Act of 1993. In education circles, this act is often referred to by its original bill number, HB 1209. The intent of this law is “to provide opportunities for students to become responsible citizens, contribute to their own economic well-being and to their families and communities, and enjoy productive and satisfying lives.”

The four goals of the Act are:

- All students read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;
- All students know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness;
- All students think analytically, logically and creatively, and integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems; and
- All students understand the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions directly affect career and educational opportunities.

The Education Reform Act approaches these goals with a three-part strategy: set high standards, measure progress through assessments, and hold students and schools accountable for the results.

**Setting high standards:** Working under the Education Reform Act, educators, parents, business leaders, community members and others developed “Essential Academic Learning Requirements” (EALRs) in the following areas: reading, writing, communication, mathematics, science, health and fitness, social studies, the arts, and educational technology. The requirements contain clear and challenging academic standards that spell out what students are expected to know and be able to do as they advance through school. These standards help schools and communities ensure that students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to live and work in the 21st century.

The state also implemented grade level expectations (GLEs), providing details about what students should know and be able to do at each grade level from kindergarten through grade 10.

**Measure progress through assessments:** A fundamental component of Washington’s education reform law is assessment—determining whether students are mastering the standards and whether schools and school districts across the state are making progress in raising achievement levels for every student.

*“With NCLB, a new era of accountability, local control, parental involvement, and funding what works have become the cornerstones of our education system. NCLB requires that if children aren’t learning, the districts find out why, and if schools aren’t performing, options must be available and help provided.”*

(Jorgenson, M. and Hoffman, J., History of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pearson Education)



To measure progress and meet state and federal testing requirements, the state implemented an assessment known first known as the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Beginning in the 2009-10 school year, the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) was replaced by two new tests: the grades 3-8 Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). Washington uses the MSP and the HSPE to test its students. The HSPE is used as the state's high school exit exam. In spring 2011, the state began using end-of-course (EOC) exams in math. Students are required to pass a state assessment in reading and writing as one graduation requirement for a high school diploma. Students are given multiple opportunities, if necessary, to pass the tests. Alternatives are available for students who have tried the exam at least twice. Students must also meet local requirements for high school graduation (for example, completion of required coursework).

**Hold schools and districts accountable for improvement:** The third component of Washington's education reform effort is accountability—ensuring that schools and school districts are making progress toward meeting state and federal requirements for improving student learning.

Under No Child Left Behind, the state reports on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of students in schools and districts, based on state testing results. NCLB requires annual assessments in reading and math for students in grades 3 through 8 and high school. Students must be tested annually in science in an elementary school grade, a middle school grade and a high school (10-12) grade. This requirement is fulfilled in Washington by testing students in grades 5, 8 and high school.

## **Local governance within a statewide education system**

Washington state's public school system is shaped by federal law, the state constitution, state law, administrative rules adopted by the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education, and by court decisions. Our public school system consists of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the State Board of Education (SBE) and WSSDA at the state level, educational service districts (ESDs) at the regional level, and school districts at the local level. Together these entities establish and carry out state education policy within the public schools.

Each of Washington's 295 local school districts has its own elected board. Every local school district is part of our statewide system. School districts are "subdivisions" of the state; as such, each school district board of directors derives its authority from state law.

Under state law, school boards have broad discretionary powers to adopt policies that "promote the education and daily physical activity" of K-12 students, and "the effective, efficient or safe management and operation of the school district."

Responsibility for funding public schools falls squarely on the state Legislature. Article IX, Section 1 of the Washington State Constitution states:

*"It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex."*

The Legislature establishes requirements and allocates funding, which is disbursed by the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Education-related laws often require additional rules for implementation, which are written by OSPI, SBE and other agencies. Locally elected school boards, however, are ultimately responsible for allocating resources and ensuring state requirements are met.

## Progress made, challenges ahead

Washington state is making progress in its mission to improve student learning, but there is still much to be done. The state's academic standards now guide most classroom activities and curriculum decisions, and schools are focusing their goals and policies on the primary mission of raising student academic achievement. While overall test scores have increased, significant gaps exist for African-American, Hispanic and Native American students and students from low income families.

The Washington State School Directors' Association published a comprehensive report called *Closing the Achievement Gap: A Policy Action Guide for Washington State's School Directors*. Underscoring the governance and policymaking role of school boards, this guide contains more than 40 suggestions for school district policies and procedures to close the gap.

WSSDA also published *Data Dashboards for School Directors*, which shows school boards how they can distill and interpret essential information about student academic performance and use data to effectively target policies and resources that improve student learning. (These publications are available at no cost on the WSSDA website at [wssda.org/publications](http://wssda.org/publications).)

The guiding belief in education reform is that each and every student can meet high academic standards when they have the right opportunities, resources and support systems. As Washington strives to raise student achievement, school directors have a vital role in ensuring these elements are in place and that every child receives a quality education.

## Q & A

### What gives a school board the authority to act?

School boards were created by the Legislature to formulate policies for the operation of school districts. School boards are agents of the state, charged with governance functions delegated to them by the Legislature. School boards have three types of power: (1) that which is enumerated by the Legislature; (2) that which is implied to carry out what the Legislature authorizes; and (3) that which improves public school programs or improves the administration of school districts.

*"It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex."*

Article IX, Section 1 of  
the Washington State  
Constitution

### **When was Washington state's public school system established?**

The "common school system" of the state of Washington dates from the passage in 1854 of the Basic Common School Law of Washington Territory by the first territorial Legislature. This law was enacted in response to a stirring address to the Legislature by Governor Isaac I. Stevens, first territorial governor, urging that special attention be given to public education. It provided for the formation of school districts by action of county superintendents, created the offices of school directors and county superintendents and prescribed the duties of these officers. It also authorized levying a school district tax by vote of the electors, and created the Permanent School Fund.

### **What is the role of Washington's State Board of Education?**

The State Board of Education is one of the oldest institutions in Washington state government. It has operated continuously since 1877, when it was created by the Legislature of the Territory of Washington.

Under revised laws, the State Board of Education (SBE) is a policy body comprised of:

- Seven gubernatorial appointees
- Five members elected by school board members
  - Two from Eastern Washington
  - Three from Western Washington
- One member elected from private schools
- Two student members
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction

The SBE elects its own chair to two year terms, with a limit of two terms. All members of the SBE, except for the students, are voting members.

The State Board of Education's powers and duties are prescribed by law and relate primarily to the establishment of rules, standards, and guidelines in areas such as school construction, approval of school district minimum basic education requirements, school accreditation, minimum high school graduation requirements, and approval of private schools.



## Part 2

# Responsibilities of school boards

School boards are the link between public schools and the communities they serve. As publicly elected officials and members of their local communities, school directors are uniquely positioned to:

- Create a community-wide, shared vision and set goals for improving student achievement
- Create the conditions and direct the resources for accelerating improvement
- Hold the system accountable to high and equitable achievement for each and every student
- Communicate needs and progress of students to the community
- Build public will to improve outcomes for all students and succeed in reaching the district's student achievement goals

In 2010, the Washington State School Directors' Association adopted standards for school boards. The Washington School Board Standards serve as a guide to help boards understand and apply principles of good governance, and the Individual School Director Standards describe necessary skills and conduct of individual board members. These standards provide clarity about the roles and responsibilities of school boards and individual behaviors needed to be an effective school director. They emphasize the central role and responsibility of school boards—continuous improvement in student achievement. Although school boards have varying governance structures and each district and community is unique, WSSDA encourages all school boards to put the standards into practice in a way that is appropriate for their district.

The Washington School Board Standards in Part 2 of this manual provide the framework for discussion about school board responsibilities. As you read this section, notice the overlap in responsibilities from one standard to another, most significantly with the board-superintendent governance team. Standard 1 talks about the importance of a strong board-superintendent team and evaluation as one strategy to strengthen the relationship. Standard 3 addresses hiring and evaluating the superintendent as a task that cannot be delegated, and Standard 4 includes superintendent evaluation as a vehicle for accountability. This overlap exemplifies how complex the school business is, and how important a strong governance partnership is to all aspects of a successful, smoothly operating district.



The Individual School Director Standards are presented at the end of this section.

#### **WSSDA Board Self –Assessment: Washington School Board Standards**

The development of standards for school boards spurred the creation of a system of supporting self-assessment. This provides a measure of the best practices being implemented by your school board. The assessment items ask “to what extent does the board” and requires board directors to assign a level ranging from “Never” to “Always.” There are examples of self-assessment items at the end of every section describing the standards and the board responsibilities supporting the standard. Self-assessment is a strong monitoring tool to empower boards to set goals and to continually improve their governance.

For more information visit [wssda.org](http://wssda.org).

### **Standard 1: Provide responsible school district governance by:**

- a. Conducting board and district business in a fair, respectful and responsible manner.
- b. Ensuring the board is accountable and open to the public, including seeking divergent perspectives in its decision making process.
- c. Respecting and advocating mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the superintendent.
- d. Adopting policies based on well-researched practices that emphasize a belief that all students can achieve at high levels and that support continuous improvement of student achievement.
- e. Promoting healthy relationships by communicating supportively, inspiring, motivating and empowering others, and exercising influence in a positive manner.
- f. Working as an effective and collaborative team.

#### **STANDARD 1 BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES**

Standard 1 addresses the roles and responsibilities of the school board in conducting board business, including board meetings and adopting policies that govern the district. In addition, this standard addresses the important foundation of all board work supporting the continuous improvement of student learning. Working together as a governance team in a cooperative manner with the superintendent and ensuring open and effective communication are also key elements of Standard 1.

## Managing the board's internal operations

The board is responsible for establishing procedures for its operation, electing board officers, and periodically reviewing and assessing board processes and performance. The board is responsible for working effectively with the superintendent, as well as with city, county, and other government and non-government officials and agencies (and authorizing the administration to do the same). The board is also responsible for retaining an attorney for the district, and coordinating litigation decisions when issues arise.

## Polymaking

One of the board's major functions is establishing policy. The board develops and adopts policy governing all facets of school operations—including employment of staff, administration of student services, educational programs, instructional materials, school facilities and equipment, finance and support services. A board delegates the implementation of policies to the superintendent. The board evaluates the execution and effect of policy through observations, special studies, and periodic reports by administrators.

## Understanding and respecting governance and management roles

At the highest level, the different roles of board and superintendent are fairly clear. The board decides *what* is done; the superintendent decides *how* it is done. The board sets the course; the superintendent carries it out. In actual practice, it is a more complex process. The board sets direction and goals, then the superintendent (with his or her management team) develops recommended policies, budgets and plans which they, as professional educators, believe will achieve the board's goals. The board decides which policies, budget and plans to adopt, but in the process they carefully consider the superintendent's recommendations, and must be able to provide a rationale for their decisions. The administrators then implement the policies, budget and plans adopted by the board, and report back on progress. The board reviews progress, adjusts the course as necessary, and the cycle continues.

(See part 4 for a deeper look at legal responsibilities of the superintendent.)

### Standard 1: WSSDA Board Self-Assessment Examples

To what extent does the board:

- Base its decisions on what is best for students?
- Provide the superintendent with a clear statement of its expectations for his/her performance which is used in the superintendent's evaluation?
- Conduct periodic reviews to identify and adopt policies needed or to revise and update existing ones?

☐ Don't know ☐ Never ☐ Some of the time ☐ Most of the time ☐ Always

For more information go to [wssda.org](http://wssda.org).

## *Building and maintaining a successful partnership*

Open, cordial personal relationships characterize a successful school district's board-superintendent partnership. A genuine, mutual respect for the contributions each party makes to district governance creates a team approach to problem solving, decision making and achieving goals. Here's what makes that happen:

- **Frequent two-way communication.** The superintendent provides timely oral and written communications of pending or emergency items. Board members reciprocate, immediately informing the superintendent of citizens' concerns.
- **Support, not surprises.** Board members make decisions on complex issues only after they have had an opportunity to discuss them at board meetings and review the superintendent's recommendations for action with accompanying rationale. The superintendent obtains board input on substantive personnel decisions. Once a decision is made, both parties support it.
- **Joint celebration of significant, positive achievements.** Student, staff or board accomplishments are topics at board meetings. Official board action, such as awarding certificates, lends special acknowledgment to service or activities. Informal receptions held before or after the meeting can celebrate the occasion.
- **Mutual appreciation.** A partnership is most effective if the two parties care enough about each other to say "thank you" in meaningful ways. Perhaps the most overlooked motivator of governance team development is the superintendent evaluation process, which provides opportunity for recognition of success.
- **Rigorous evaluation.** Evaluation is a tool for informed change, a method for promoting the goals, values and progress of the district, and a vehicle for accountability. (See additional references to superintendent evaluation in Standards 3 and 4.) A board self-assessment helps boards spot weaknesses, establish goals and measures of progress, and make improvement. The superintendent evaluation is conducted based on clear expectations and criteria.
- **Professional growth.** Board attendance at WSSDA meetings and other sessions and workshops are budgeted annually. Research shows that learning together as a board team can improve decision making.

## **Standard 2: Set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations by:**

- a. Articulating the conviction that all students can learn and the belief that student learning can improve regardless of existing circumstances or resources.
- b. Leading the development, articulation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by schools and community.
- c. Adopting a collaboratively developed district plan focused on learning and achievement outcomes for all students.
- d. Ensuring non-negotiable goals for student achievement are established and aligned to the district's plan.

### **STANDARD 2 BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES**

The focus of Standard 2 is on the board's role for improving student achievement. This requires strong and effective leadership at the helm of every school district, with school directors working at the strategic level and administrators working at the operational level. Together, school directors and superintendents work as a governance team to ensure continuous improvement of student achievement.

#### **Setting the vision for student learning**

In partnership with the community and staff, school boards set the vision for student learning and articulate the beliefs about students and learning that serve as the foundation for the district goals and direction for school improvement. School board governance reflects this vision, the beliefs and the goals, and in turn, impacts multiple factors that contribute to student learning, including conditions in the learning environment that affect teaching and learning.

#### **Establishing goals**

Boards are in the unique position as elected officials to work with the community and district staff to set improving student achievement as the central focus of the district and to define improving achievement in their districts and communities. From a shared vision, the board's role expands to establishing strategic goals and indicators for success. This board role lays the foundation for other board actions. Armed with strategic goals and indicators, effective boards continually monitor whether the vision and goals are, in fact, driving every aspect of the district's programs. The most successful and rewarding vision and goal-setting processes are those that include the broadest representation of community members, staff, parents and students.



### **Standard 2: WSSDA Board Self-Assessment Examples**

To what extent does the board:

- Articulate high expectations for all students?
- Use the vision to drive planning, decision-making and evaluation of district operations and progress?
- In collaboration with staff and the community, formulate and maintain a current plan with goals and objectives?

☐ Don't know   ☐ Never   ☐ Some of the time   ☐ Most of the time   ☐ Always

### **Standard 3: Create conditions district-wide for student and staff success by:**

- a. Providing for the safety and security of all students and staff.
- b. Employing and supporting quality teachers, administrators and other staff and providing for their professional development.
- c. Providing for learning essentials, including rigorous curriculum, technology and high quality facilities.
- d. Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for an efficient and effective learning environment.
- e. Adopting and monitoring an annual budget that allocates resources based on the district's vision, goals and priorities for student learning.

### **STANDARD 3 BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES**

Creating conditions for success means that the school board, through its policies and actions, provides the essential resources and learning environments that support students and staff. This includes resources for quality professional development for staff, quality learning environments that ensure safety and security, curriculum, and technology that supports the district's student learning priorities. The board is responsible for ensuring all parts of the system, including the budget, are aligned with the learning needs of students (curriculum, instruction, assessment, goals, actions, resource allocation, etc.).

#### **Hiring and evaluating the chief executive**

A board is responsible for recruiting, hiring and evaluating the performance of the district superintendent. This task cannot be delegated. Unless otherwise specified in state statutes or board policy, a board exercises supervision through its chief administrator and does not deal directly with other staff members.

(See added references to superintendent evaluation in Standards 1 and 4.)

## **Allocating resources**

Boards establish budget priorities and allocate resources to support student learning at its highest level. Boards make critical choices about the use of resources consistent with the district's strategic plan and target those dollars where they have the greatest impact. Boards monitor district and school budgets assuring that resources are used in support of reaching student achievement goals.

(See Part 4 for a deeper look at school finance.)

## **Approving the budget and other financial needs**

In consultation with the superintendent, the board is responsible for approval and adoption of an annual budget that provides the financial basis for the staff, buildings, furnishings, materials, transportation and equipment needed to carry out educational programs. Related responsibilities include approving budget extensions, authorizing the administration to make necessary expenditures, and adopting policies for purchase, distribution and disposal of supplies, property and equipment. The board authorizes levy amounts, makes decisions on the sale of bonds and the investment of bond proceeds, and authorizes the administration to invest and borrow funds within the limitations of state law.

(See Part 4 for a deeper look at school finance.)

## **Providing for school facilities**

The board is responsible for identifying school facility needs and communicating those needs to the community, placing capital measures before the voters, purchasing, disposing of or leasing school property, and approving building plans that support and enhance educational programs. Upon the recommendation of the superintendent, a board employs architects, hires building contractors, and contracts for operational and maintenance services.

## **Setting instructional policy**

Working closely with the superintendent, a board sets general goals and adopts policies for instructional programs. The goals and policies must be within the scope of the state learning goals and in accordance with state law and regulations put forward by the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. A board has the power to accept, modify or reject its administration's recommendations on the scope and nature of educational offerings.

## **Determining policies for student services and discipline**

Although the board does not deal directly with students to solve problems, it does set policies which govern the actions of administrators and other school staff regarding student services and student discipline. A board can accept, modify or reject policies recommended by the superintendent regarding school admissions, placement, promotion, attendance, expulsion, suspension, graduation, conduct, discipline, safety, health services, food services and transportation services. All policies are viewed in light of their effect on each



and every student's equal access to educational opportunities in accordance with state and federal requirements.

### **Staffing and personnel appraisal**

In most districts, the board delegates the tasks of recruiting, recommending for hire, evaluating, promoting and disciplining staff (in accordance with board policy) to the superintendent. The board is responsible, within the framework of state law and often of collective bargaining, for establishing policy governing salaries and salary schedules, terms and conditions of employment, fringe benefits, leave, and in-service training. The board works with the superintendent to establish the district's position in negotiation with unions and ratifies all collective bargaining contracts.

(See Part 4 for a deeper look at collective bargaining.)

### **Standard 3: WSSDA Board Self-Assessment Examples**

To what extent:

- Does the budget adequately address concern for safety and security issues?
- Does the board have a curriculum adoption cycle and a process for selecting curriculum that includes involvement of the community and parents in curriculum selection?
- Does the board support a process for internal and/or external evaluation of district operations?

☐ Don't know   ☐ Never   ☐ Some of the time   ☐ Most of the time   ☐ Always

### **Standard 4: Hold school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations by:**

- a. Committing to continuous improvement in student achievement at each school and throughout the district.
- b. Evaluating the superintendent on clear and focused expectations.
- c. Measuring student academic progress and needs based on valid and reliable assessments.

## **STANDARD 4 BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES**

The focus of Standard 4 is monitoring school district progress for the continuous improvement of student learning and communicating that progress to the community. To meet the responsibilities of Standard 4, the school board monitors district activities to ensure that annual yearly progress is made and achievement gaps are closing. The board evaluates the superintendent on agreed upon expectations including progress toward established learning goals.

### **Student assessment**

Student assessment is important because it ensures that all public school students receive a quality education by providing improvement data to boards and school personnel. In Washington State elementary and middle school students are assessed annually using the Measurement of Student Progress (MSP). These assessments determine student progress toward meeting the state standards. High school students demonstrate their proficiency in basic skills through a series of End of Course Exams. Students must also pass the High School Proficiency Exam to graduate from high school.

To ensure continuous improvement, boards may approve the use of other measures of student performance. These tests include classroom-based assessments based upon the state's learning standards and guide day to day instruction. Two widely used assessment systems are the Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS) from the Northwest Evaluation Association and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) from the University of Oregon.

### **Accountability through district improvement**

Local school districts and school boards are accountable for how well students perform according to state and federal policy. The school board has a key role in meeting these expectations through the district improvement plan and the continual process of monitoring progress towards goals. This process requires district leaders, staff, parents and other stakeholders to collaborate to improve teaching and learning across the district. The following are the essential elements of the improvement process:

- Conduct needs assessments which identify gaps in student, instructional, leader, and systems performance.
- Examine policies, procedures, and practices, which have the greatest impact on teaching and learning at the school, classroom, and student level.
- Revise/refocus improvement plans and align resources around a narrow and targeted focus on student learning.
- Monitor progress toward identified goals, making adjustments based on data and current research.





## Characteristics of effective communication

1. Assume that everyone is capable of adding value to the dialogue.
2. Develop and provide opportunities that include all segments of the community in giving input to the work of the board and the district. This may require the development of a community engagement plan and the allocation of resources to ensure that all segments of the community are involved and have a voice. Examples of these resources could include transportation, childcare, engaging at local sites such as a senior center and translation services.
3. Identify and recognize a diverse range of interests and perspectives on issues.
4. Ensure transparency—keep the process open and accountable, so anyone can enter the process at a given time, be informed about what has taken place and contribute to the ongoing dialogue.
5. Share information, including decisions, community-wide.
6. Develop a system where board members share or rotate roles to build and maintain a community memory supporting sustainability and continuity.

## Superintendent evaluation

The importance of the superintendent's evaluation is evident throughout the standards. In Standard 4, the clear and focused expectations of the evaluation include accountability toward improved student achievement. It provides an excellent opportunity to share strategic goals with the community and the district's progress in meeting them.

### Standard 4: WSSDA Board Self-Assessment Examples

To what extent does the board:

- Establish and follow a schedule for the timely review of the district plan?
- Expect and model the effective use of data in monitoring student achievement and district performance?
- Establish a policy and a process for routine evaluation of the superintendent?

☐ Don't know ☐ Never ☐ Some of the time  
☐ Most of the time ☐ Always

For more information visit [wssda.org](http://wssda.org).

## Standard 5: Engage the local community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools by:

- a. Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- b. Ensuring school board and district transparency through a process that is open and accountable.
- c. Ensuring district information and decisions are communicated communitywide.
- d. Soliciting input from staff and a wide spectrum of the community so that a diverse range of interests and perspectives on issues is considered.

## STANDARD 5 BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Standard 5 addresses the importance of the board maintaining ongoing communication with school staff, parents, students, opinion leaders, legislators and other members of the community. The board must ensure there are adequate and direct means for keeping the local citizenry informed and for keeping itself informed about the desires of the public. All formal means of district communication (surveys, newsletters and the like) should be established in board policy and delegated to the administration. Think of your school board meeting as a key communication event, as well.

### Community-wide communication

Community engagement is an on-going process of two-way communication between a school district and the community it serves. It is an ongoing, collaborative process during which the school district works with the public to build understanding, gain guidance and actively involve them in the education of the children in its community. A single meeting or series of meetings does not constitute community engagement although this is the most visible communication pathway. It is not about shaping public opinion but eliciting input and engaging in ongoing dialogue to answer the question: "What must this community be like in order for all children to succeed?"

School boards should view community engagement as a strategic, proactive opportunity to strengthen their districts. Careful planning and resource allocation to support engagement maximizes the opportunity to involve more stakeholders, understand their needs, concerns and expectations. It is another strategy to focus our efforts in best supporting children, their education, the school system and the community.

### Board meetings as key communication events

Your school board meeting can be a dry, let's-get-it-done-and-leave exercise, or it can be a focus of community interest and information. Here are ways your meetings can be interesting, informative and a source of recognition for students and staff:

- Let people know when and where you hold your meetings.
- Use your knowledge of the community to be alert for agenda items that may interest others and invite them to attend. Consider sending agendas to schools, parent organization leaders and local libraries.
- Get to meetings early and mingle with people in the audience. Introduce yourself to people you don't know. Ask if they are interested in a particular issue or agenda item.
- Be sure there are agendas and an outline of your public comment procedure available for the public.



- Begin the meeting with good news about students, staff members or the educational program.
- Make it easy for people to hear you by using a microphone and speaking clearly and distinctly. Ask people addressing you to do the same.
- Place a question/suggestion box at the entrance to the meeting room as well as in other community locations.
- Have a “Welcome to Our Board Meeting” brochure available.
- If you have appointed committees to provide recommendations, ask committee chairs to present overviews of their findings. You’ll get better media coverage and have a chance to publicly recognize the committee’s work.
- Invite your legislators to report on legislative issues that affect your district. Invite union representatives, parents and community leaders to meetings.
- If it appears a meeting will last longer than 1-1/2 hours, consider an informal coffee break, so you can chat with guests.
- Encourage community organizations to send representatives to your meetings.
- Widely disseminate information about items under discussion.
- Provide detail on the purpose of an executive session. (Final action on matters discussed in executive session, in most situations, must be taken in a meeting open to the public.

(See Part 4 for a deeper look at school board meetings.)

#### **Standard 5: WSSDA Board Self-Assessment Examples**

To what extent does the board:

- Exhibit cultural, racial and ethnic understanding and sensitivity?
- Ensure that its policies are easily accessible to staff and community?
- Communicate district performance to the public in clear and understandable ways?

☐ Don’t know ☐ Never ☐ Some of the time ☐ Most of the time ☐ Always

For more information go to **wssda.org**.

## Q & A

### **What is the “governance team”?**

The school board’s job is governance—setting direction and goals for the school district. The superintendent, in an effective partnership with the board, is part of the team. The superintendent and her or his staff are the educational leaders and many establish teams referred to as leadership teams.

### **What is the relationship between the board and the superintendent? Who makes the final decision?**

The superintendent is the person authorized by the board to carry out the will of the board and transform board policy into action. The board provides guidance to the superintendent and approves, disapproves or modifies his or her recommendations.

(See Part 4 for a deeper look at superintendent responsibilities required by law.)

### **How are school report cards put together and what kind of information do they provide?**

Reports on individual schools are part of the annual district report cards, also known as local report cards. Each school district must prepare and disseminate annual local report cards that include information on how students in the district and in each school performed on state assessments. The report cards show student performance on three levels: basic, proficient and advanced. Achievement data is disaggregated, or broken out, by student subgroups according to race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status. Report cards also show which schools have been identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring (defined in Q & A below: “What if a school does not improve?”).

### **What is “adequate yearly progress?” How does measuring it help to improve schools?**

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was re-authorized in January 2002. It is best known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and one of its requirements is that states measure adequate yearly progress (AYP) on a year-to-year basis. Each state established a baseline from which yearly assessments of progress and incremental goal-setting are set with the expectation that all students (100%) are academically proficient by 2014. For AYP, two areas assessed in Washington state are reading and mathematics. An additional indicator of student performance is also considered. At the high school level it is increasing graduation rates. At the middle and elementary levels it is reducing unexcused absences.

While consideration is taken for the total student population, there are four subgroups that must make adequate progress yearly. These groups include special education, limited English proficient, economically disadvantaged and minority students. If the number of students in a subgroup is too small this group may not be considered for AYP determination. All schools and districts receive AYP determinations which are published yearly. They are also available at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website.



**What is meant by non-negotiable goals for student achievement referenced in Standard 2 d?**

Non-negotiable goals are solid, firm, unwavering targets that ensure the highest level of student achievement, with no excuses accepted for not meeting them. High goals demonstrate a serious commitment by the board that each and every student will achieve at high levels.

**How does a board make sure that its policies are followed?**

The board sets the policies they believe will best create a framework in which students can achieve. The board should ask for periodic reports on programs and activities to ensure that its adopted policies are followed.

**Who decides how district money is spent?**

The school board establishes goals and priorities that provide a framework for the budget. The superintendent works with other staff members to draft a budget that meets board objectives, follows laws and regulations, and stays within available district financial resources. The board approves the budget after a public hearing, and the superintendent is responsible for operating within its limits and for seeking board approval of expenditures. State law requires that the superintendent present a budget status report at each regular monthly meeting of the board.

(See Part 4 for a deeper look into school finance.)

## *Personal standards for effective board members*

These five standards address professional behaviors needed to fulfill the obligations of being an effective and responsible school director. They lay out a set of principles board members can use to guide their relationships with each other, the community, staff, and students.

### **Standard 1: Values and ethical behavior**

A sound code of conduct for school board members begins with a genuine commitment to striving for high-quality public education that supports the full development of all children.

To be effective, an individual school director:

- a. Places students' needs first.
- b. Demonstrates commitment to equity and high standards of achievement for each student.
- c. Commits to treating each individual with dignity and respect.
- d. Models high ethical standards.
- e. Advocates for public education.

### **Standard 2: Leadership**

Leadership starts with the basics: attending all meetings, understanding how they are run, doing your homework, and devoting sufficient time, thought and study to proposed actions. How far you go in developing your leadership skills is up to you.

To be effective, an individual school director:

- a. Contributes to thoughtful governance discussions and decisions by being well informed, open minded and deliberative.
- b. Understands that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individual directors.
- c. Is able to articulate and model appropriate school director roles and responsibilities.
- d. Actively participates in school director duties and responsibilities.
- e. Demonstrates group membership and leadership skills, working within the board structure.
- f. Respects the board's role in policy making and supports all adopted board policies.

**Note:** Authority rests with the board as a whole rather than with individual board members. This can be particularly confusing for newly elected board members (as well as the public). Remember, even though you've been elected, you have no authority to tell anyone in the school district what to do. All legal authority **ONLY** resides with the board as a whole.

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### **Standard 3: Communication**

Encouraging ideas and opinions from students, parents, staff and citizens of the district and striving to incorporate their views into your deliberations and decisions is critical to effective governance.

To be effective, an individual school director:

- a. Builds and maintains positive connections with the community and staff
- b. Communicates accurately and honestly, with awareness of the impact of his/her words and actions
- c. Listens carefully and with an open mind
- d. Maintains civility and treats all people with respect
- e. Maintains confidentiality of appropriate matters
- f. Refers and guides people with concerns to appropriate staff
- g. Welcomes parent, student and community input

### **Standard 4: Professional development**

As a school board member, you are calling on everyone in the system—from students to teachers to administrators—to be constantly learning and developing their skills. And you can be sure they are watching to see if you are doing the same. This is where you get to “walk the talk” of leadership.

To be effective, an individual school director:

- a. Commits the time and energy necessary to be informed and competent.
- b. Keeps abreast of current issues, research, applicable laws, regulations, and policies that affect public education
- c. Participates in professional development, individually and with the board/superintendent team

### **Standard 5: Accountability**

Of course, you know you should not use your office for personal or partisan gain, or for the benefit of your family, friends, church or special interest group. Consider how you can hold yourself to the same high standards of accountability and responsibility you expect in others.

To be effective, an individual school director:

- a. Is accountable to the community
- b. Takes personal responsibility for his/her own words and actions
- c. Respects and abides by board decisions
- d. Meets expectations for transparency, including disclosing potential conflicts of interest and refraining from discussing or voting on those issues
- e. Complies with board policies/procedures and the law

As comprehensive as they are, these standards cannot cover everything. There is always more to learn about working with people, such as how to practice the art of compromise, the importance of speaking your mind thoughtfully and tactfully, even though yours may not be a popular position, and the need, always, to keep your sense of humor.

The most important advice we can give? Listen. Being a good listener is the skill you need most, as you navigate the complex role of governing your local schools.

### *Listening: A survival skill for school directors*

The single greatest ticket to success is listening—to your fellow board members, your superintendent, and the public. Developing the following skills will help you be calm in stressful situations, build strong relationships, and work with others to produce better decisions:

- Establish rapport. Help the speaker feel at ease with welcoming words, nods, and a smile.
- Concentrate on the speaker. Look directly at the speaker and focus on his or her message, even if you think you already know what it is. Avoid interruptions or distractions.
- Control your emotions. Reserve judgment and make sure you know the full story before you respond.
- Take notes. As every student knows, writing down what you hear helps you listen and learn.
- Question sincerely. Good listeners use questions to clarify points, explore ideas, and enhance understanding. Don't use questions as a way to make your own points.
- Listen "between the lines." What the speaker really means is more important than the words they use. Listen closely for unstated emotions and underlying concerns.
- Verify understanding. Repeat back what you've heard in your own words, and ask if you understood correctly.





## Part 3

# A deeper look: Legal requirements in key areas

While we are not able to cover every legal aspect of school board governance in this short document, the information in this section gives you a deeper look at important areas to get you started. These include district superintendent responsibilities, school board meetings, employee relations and school finance.

## Superintendent's duties

In addition to duties prescribed by the district school board, a superintendent has duties required by statute (RCW 28A.400.030). They are:

- Attend all meetings of the board of directors and ensure that minutes of the meetings are kept.
- Keep records and reports in a form as required by the district board of directors, laws, rules, or regulations of higher administrative agencies. These records and reports must be turned over to a successor.
- Keep accurate and detailed accounts of all receipts and expenditures of school money.
- At each school board meeting, the superintendent must present his record book of board proceedings for public inspection and make a statement of the financial condition of the district. The record book must always be open for public inspection.
- Give notice of all annual or special elections required by law; also give notice of the regular and special meetings of the board of directors.
- Sign all orders for warrants ordered to be issued by the board of directors.
- Carry out all orders of the board of directors made at any regular or special meeting.

## School board meetings

By law, your school board must hold a regular meeting at least once each month. In addition, the board is required give public notice regarding the time, day(s) and place of regular meetings; the place of special meetings, unless otherwise indicated in the meeting notice; and a provision for holding meetings on the next regular business day if the regular meeting falls on a holiday.





School board meetings should be held within the school district. If a regular meeting is to be held in a different location, it must be treated as a special meeting and notice of the change of location must be given. Any meeting where a quorum of board directors is present and where action may happen is subject to the Open Public Meeting Act (OPMA). Action extends to receipt of deliberation, discussions, consideration and reviews. Staff retreats, study sessions, committees with two or more board members assigned and advisory bodies conducting research are all subject to OPMA and comply with the special meetings notice rules.

Written notice of a special meeting must be given to each member of the board and to each local newspaper and radio or television station that has a written request for notice on file with the district. This notice must be delivered personally or by mail at least 24 hours before the time specified for the meeting.

Any member of the board may file a written waiver of notice prior to or at the time a special meeting is convened. If a board member attends the special meeting without official notice, the notice requirements are waived. These requirements may be waived by any board member.

**EXCEPTION:** A special meeting may be called without notice to consider and act in "an emergency involving injury or damage to persons or property or the likelihood of such injury or damage, when time requirements of such notice would make notice impractical and increase likelihood of such injury or damage" (RCW 42.30.080). The courts have interpreted this exception very narrowly, holding that a special meeting without notice should be avoided unless a genuine emergency exists.

Regular meetings are those held at the same time and place and on the same day(s) each month as set by board policy. (Example: first and third Monday of each month, 7 p.m., at the district office.) Regular meetings require no notice other than the board policy, and the board may consider any official business and take action on any matter.

Any other meeting, including work sessions or retreats, is a special meeting. Special meetings require 24-hour written notice to each member of the board and to any news media that has filed a request to receive notices. The notice must contain the time and place of the meeting and the business to be conducted. Final action is taken only on matters specified in the notice. Any action taken at a meeting for which proper notice was not given is null and void.

## Recording the meeting proceedings

School board meeting minutes are required to be recorded promptly. Minutes need to include notice when the board held an executive session by noting the general purpose of the executive session. The minutes should not reflect details of the executive session. Board minutes, once approved, become the official record of board action and are open to public inspection and copying. Accurate recording of board action is important because the minutes can become evidence in legal proceedings.

## School board meetings: Establishing a quorum

A quorum is a majority of all members of the board. A quorum is necessary to hold a board meeting. Usually, to take any action, only a majority of those present must concur. A majority of the entire board is required to appoint a director to fill a vacancy on the board and a majority of the board should authorize all expenditures. A majority of the board in first-class districts is required to choose a superintendent and elect board officers.

If the board forms any committee, which acts on behalf of the board, conducts hearings, or takes testimony or public comment, all meetings of that committee are subject to the same notice requirements as special board meetings.

A majority of the board may travel together or gather for purposes other than a regular or special meeting as long as they do not discuss any district business or take any action on official matters. This allows board members to travel together to the WSSDA Annual Conference, regional meetings, or other such gatherings.

## Executive sessions

The Open Public Meetings Act (Chapter 42.30 RCW) was passed to ensure that the business of the public takes place in public. However, a closed or “executive” session may be held during a regular or special meeting to discuss certain subjects. These include:

1. Matters affecting national security.
2. Consideration of the purchase or sale of real estate when public knowledge of the discussion would cause a likelihood of an increased or decreased price.
3. Review of negotiations on the performance of publicly bid contracts when public knowledge of the discussion would cause a likelihood of increased costs.
4. Evaluation of complaints or charges brought against a public officer or employee. However, the officer or employee may request a public hearing or a meeting open to the public.



5. Evaluation of the qualifications of a candidate for employment or review of the performance of an employee.
6. Evaluation of the qualifications of a candidate for appointment to elective office. However, any interview of such a candidate shall be in a meeting open to the public.
7. Conferring with legal counsel representing the board regarding actual or potential litigation involving the school district when public knowledge of the discussion could result in adverse legal or financial consequence to the district.

Before the executive session begins, the president or chair must publicly announce the general purpose of the executive session and the time when the session is expected to conclude. For instance, "The board will now go into executive session to discuss pending litigation and will reconvene in open session in 45 minutes." The announcements and minutes should not be any more detailed about the executive session. Final action on matters discussed in executive session, in most situations, must be taken in a meeting open to the public.

**NOTE:** Two other situations in which the board may meet without notice and without public attendance are addressed in the Open Public Meetings Act: 1) any quasi-judicial matter heard by the board, such as an appeal of a student transfer request or student disciplinary action, and 2) a meeting for planning or adopting the district's strategy or position for collective bargaining, professional negotiations, grievance or mediation proceedings, or reviewing proposals while negotiations are in progress.

## Employee relations

Understanding the factors involved in employee relations is an important responsibility. Although board members seldom participate directly in bargaining, they are closely connected. Knowledge of the process as well as the issues is essential to good decision making.

Since 1972, when Washington experienced its first strike by public school teachers, scores of school districts throughout the state have experienced some form of employee dispute. In 1991 many districts experienced the state's first multi-local, mid-contract strike. During the 1999 legislative session, districts experienced one-day walkouts held to protest salary levels. Some districts had similar experiences in 2001, and again in 2003, as teachers and others protested the Legislature's approach to implementing voter-approved initiatives related to teacher salaries and enhanced local funding for schools.

In 1975, a law commonly known as the Educational Employee's Collective Bargaining Act was enacted. Another chapter of law created the state Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) and established specific dispute settlement procedures. A separate law authorizes bargaining with non-certificated (classified) employees. They also are under PERC jurisdiction.

Boards are advised to consider all elements involved in collective bargaining. There are legal requirements and complicating factors which may preclude simple solutions. These include:

- The requirement to engage in meaningful “good faith” bargaining with employees
- The obligation to recognize the association or union as the official representative of all employees in a given group
- Recognition of the fact that the law mandates a written agreement if the employee group requests one
- The obligation to adhere to requirements, restrictions and guidelines in laws and regulations
- The possibility that ill-considered words or actions by an individual board member can be an “unfair labor practice,” leading to liability for the district
- Legislatively adopted salary equalization and limitation requirements

In summary, school board members who take a realistic, informed approach that provides for effective employee relations year-round (not only during bargaining) are in a better position to maintain a continuous, stable and productive instructional program that meets the needs of students.

## **School finance**

State law requires that school boards adopt an annual school district budget and provide oversight of that budget. In addition, boards are required to:

- Approve any budget extensions
- Authorize and set levy amounts
- Make decisions on the sale of bonds and investment proceeds
- Authorize the investment and borrowing of funds
- Approve and adopt an insurance program for the district
- Adopt policies regarding purchase and disposal of supplies and property

Providing clear expectations for the superintendent is essential. The board role is to define ending fund balance expectations and provide clear guidelines for budget development aligned with board goals and the district vision. These guidelines and expectations, with continual year-round monitoring of the budget, ensure no surprises and allow for sufficient time to make budget adjustments. Additionally, the budget development and adoption process encourages community engagement and allows for public comment throughout the process, along with a legally required public hearing before adoption.

*Washington's constitution states: "It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex."*

*The court interpreted this to mean that the state legislature must define and amply provide for a 'basic program of education' that is distinguished from other education services, and to fund this basic education with a regular and dependable source.*

## Sources of funding

**State revenue:** Washington's constitution states: "It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste or sex." The court interpreted this to mean that the state legislature must define and amply provide for a "basic program of education" that is distinguished from other education services, and to fund this basic education with a regular and dependable source.

Approximately 70 percent of a district's budget is dependent on the state, so it is important to understand that a significant part of this funding is protected from cuts. Revenue from the state is separated into two categories: Basic Education (BEA) and Non-Basic Education (non-BEA). BEA is approximately 80% of the state revenue to districts, and non-BEA accounts for 20%. BEA funding is constitutionally protected from being cut or reduced.

The core of Basic Education is "general apportionment," a set amount per student that accounts for the majority of a district's budget, currently over \$5,000 per student. Other protected programs within BEA are special education, transportation, bilingual education, and LAP (Learning Assistance Program). The more significant non-BEA programs that are not protected are I-728, I-732, Levy Equalization (LEA), Education Reform, K-4 Enhancement, and numerous smaller programs such as the Highly Capable program. During times of economic hardship it is these non-BEA programs that shoulder the brunt of cuts, since they are not protected.

**Local revenue:** In 1978 Washington courts found that districts may use local levies to fund enrichment programs outside the definition of basic education and that this does not reduce the state's obligation to fund basic education. In effort to take responsibility for fully funding basic education, the Legislature placed a "levy lid" on districts which capped the amount a district may raise to supplement their budget. In 1978 the levy lid was set at 10% of a district's total budget. The percentage has steadily increased and in 2011, it was 24%. As the years progressed and the state did not fully fund basic education, they have "allowed districts to generate revenue at the local level to compensate for the gap."

Local levies are raised on a millage rate, a set rate per \$1000 of property value based on the assessed value in the local community. A vast discrepancy exists across the state in assessed values, and therefore, a vast discrepancy in levy rates citizens pay also exists. The extremes vary from less than \$1/1000 of assessed value to well over \$6/1000. In an effort to ease some this discrepancy, the state has helped property-poor districts by providing LEA funds. A continual balancing act occurs of allowing districts that are able, to increase the amount of local levies they collect, while being equitable to the property poor districts that are not able to raise additional funds.

**Federal revenue:** Federal revenue typically does not account for a large portion of a district's budget and generally comes the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), serving students with special needs or, Title I (serving disadvantaged students), and other federal grants.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is currently the vehicle through which Title I funds are distributed to the states. Multiple smaller grants are also distributed through NCLB. While a state's participation in these programs is voluntary, abiding by the law is not optional and therefore these federal revenues are often not completely voluntary. Adherence to all the mandates associated with this law remains an overriding concern to many districts. Compliance with IDEA is not optional while compliance with Title I mandates are, as long as a district assures non-discrimination.

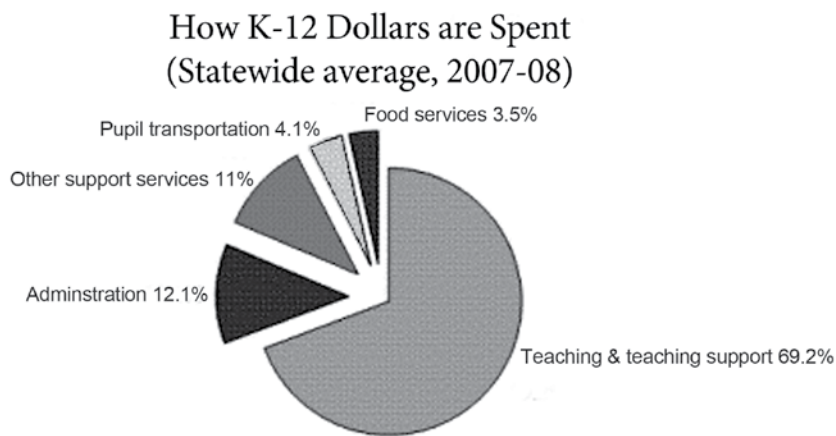
## Q & A

### What is a school district budget?

A district budget represents a plan for receiving and spending money. It tells the school board, its employees and the public how much the school district can spend during the year and for what purposes. The budget provides information necessary to determine the amount of school taxes that must be levied on real property, and how much the district expects to receive from state and federal governments. The budget also satisfies a minimum level of financial and program information for local, state and federal governments and meets requirements imposed by state law.

### How is the school district budget spent?

In recent years, schools in Washington have become increasingly efficient. Currently, 70 percent of funding goes directly to the classroom—to teachers and teacher support. Only 12.2 percent of overall funding supports administration.



Source: A Citizen's Guide to Washington State K-12 Finance 2009

### How can schools reduce costs?

Schools can realize small savings by cutting back on supplies, postponing improvements or maintenance, lowering utility expenses, cutting staff by attrition, combining duties, eliminating extra-curricular activities, or by reducing other services available to students or the community. However, to make significant or

*Note: It is important to remember that the laws and regulations making up the framework of school district operations are extremely complex and change frequently. Therefore, when a particular legal concern affects your district, you are urged to consult with an attorney. Your county's prosecutor serves your district. Each local board has the authority to engage private counsel. The Washington State School Directors' Association is able to provide some assistance on many questions that have legal implications. WSSDA does not act as legal counsel for school districts or directors, but can provide the roster of the Washington Council of School Attorneys (See Appendix 1 for a listing of other laws that pertain to school boards.)*



broad cost reductions, a school board must look to its major expenses—people and buildings. Only by eliminating jobs or closing buildings can a school board make significant budget cuts. If the board opts to eliminate teaching jobs or close buildings, curriculum and class sizes could be severely impacted. Unless enrollment is declining, these cuts will severely strain the system. Student performance could be compromised if curriculum cuts are deep or long lasting. That's why comprehensive population projections and strategic planning are useful.

#### **How is federal aid to schools determined?**

Most federal funds are distributed to states in the form of "block grants." The amount each state receives is based on student population and need. Block grants are re-distributed to school districts in accordance with criteria that school districts must apply and qualify for. Other federal funds are distributed to the states to help them provide education for handicapped children, economically disadvantaged children, and other special purposes. Most of these funds are re-distributed to school districts that have special need or otherwise qualify.



## Part 4

# Learning into action: Hot topics and scenarios

The following three hot topics identify challenging issues boards may face, some serious considerations for addressing such situations and some possible outcomes.

The scenarios give you an opportunity to apply some of the new knowledge you have gained. These are actual situations boards grapple with at some point. Give some thought to each situation and decide what approach you might take before you peek at the written response.

### *The most difficult thing to learn ...*

Experienced board members from across the nation were asked to identify the most difficult lesson they had to learn about board service. Here's what they said most often:

- Determining your function on the board and how to accomplish it effectively.
- That no matter what you think you know about board service when you first come on board, you still have a lot to learn.
- Learning to acknowledge publicly that you have no power and authority as an individual board member and that only the board as a whole can make policies and decisions for the school district.
- Recognizing the difference between policy-setting (the board's job) and administration of the schools (the superintendent's job).
- That you must think deeply and sometimes accept board decisions that are contrary to your beliefs.
- That you must represent each and every student. Your decisions must be made in the interest of the total school system and not made solely for special groups or interests.
- Learning how to respond appropriately to complaints and concerns of citizens, school administrators and other staff.
- That change comes slowly.
- That you can't solve everyone's problems by yourself.
- That boardsmanship means being able to hold a minority viewpoint when voting on an issue, and still openly support the majority vote in your community.

## *Hot topics*

### **Religious issues**

School directors face personal, political and legal dilemmas surrounding religious issues in public schools. Board members have an obligation to approve policy for their community, regardless of their personal beliefs. Public schools need an atmosphere that values everyone and demonstrates respect for individuals' traditions and convictions. They must do this within an area of the law that is complex and sometimes uncertain.

Many issues facing school boards today can be very divisive. While some students assert their right to be free from religious indoctrination, others insist they are exercising their own right to religious freedom by advancing their religion at school. Curriculum choices are analyzed for religious or anti-religious content, and may contain both, depending upon the reader's perspective. School board members need a balanced framework for analyzing these controversies in a fair and consistent manner.

The dilemma is not about banning religion from public schools. The challenge is to properly address the role of religion in the curriculum and schools. Some constituents want to treat schools as an institution for promoting the majority's religious views, while others refrain from any religious reference. Values are to be taught in public schools, but values based directly on religious faith should neither be advanced nor belittled.

This challenge is at the heart of the constitutional framework that addresses religious freedom. Government, which includes public schools, is prohibited from establishing or advancing religion. The U.S. Constitution reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The Washington State Constitution expands on these premises. Sectarian control or influence in public schools is prohibited, and freedom of religious worship is protected. Government assures the rights of students and staff to practice their religion as they see fit, but their activity cannot include the use of public funds and government/public school sponsored events.

When school directors face decisions related to religion, the Lemon Test can provide an appropriate framework to analyze these issues. The U.S. Supreme Court established the Lemon Test as criteria for evaluating proposed policies. They must meet all three elements:

- There must be a secular purpose to the proposed policy or program
- The proposed policy must neither promote nor disparage religion
- The policy or program must avoid entangling schools with religious institutions

People of good will can disagree about the application of the Lemon Test to a given program, but it provides a good framework for school boards to analyze decisions involving religious issues.

## **Textbook adoption**

Boards play a key role in the adoption of instructional materials and this role requires working closely with district staff and the community. The adoption of curriculum is an issue that illustrates the board's challenge of carrying out the appropriate policy role and objectively addressing emotional issues that involve the entire community.

The decisions about which textbooks are used in classrooms throughout a district provide a good example of the way school directors must work with the professional staff in the district, each in their proper roles, to arrive at educationally sound choices. While the school board has the ultimate authority and responsibility to select the instructional materials used in the schools, it is legally required to delegate the task of reviewing and recommending textbook choices to a district instructional materials committee.

Members of the committee are appointed by the superintendent and must represent the district's professional staff, including the curriculum development committee. School districts have the choice of including parents on the committee, but a majority of the committee must be district professionals.

The committee reviews all textbooks and other materials that are proposed for use as primary instructional materials for courses offered in the district. The review is consistent with the district's goals and principles regarding instructional materials. If a text or other material is recommended for adoption, the recommendation is forwarded to the board for final action.

The instructional materials committee also responds to community complaints about instructional materials. If a member of the public objects to the use of an instructional material, either in a particular grade or throughout the district, he or she can petition the committee to reconsider its recommendation of the text. The committee will hold a public hearing, including those who wish the text to be removed or limited and the teachers who are using the challenged materials. Its decisions may be appealed to the board of directors.

Board members need to understand and fulfill their appropriate role in the adoption of instructional materials and in responding to challenges to materials. Concerns about instructional materials are often deeply held and can result in intense conflict in a district—conflict that the board feels most directly. It is important, however, to let the system work.

If a board member takes an active role in a controversy over a text before the instructional materials committee has acted, that board member may have compromised his or her objectivity if the matter is appealed to the board.



In those cases, the board member should not participate in the board's hearing of the appeal, and may have seriously damaged the necessary trust between the staff and the board.

## **Harassment and bullying**

In 2002, Washington state passed a law prohibiting harassment, intimidation and bullying in public schools. In recent years, legislators amended the law to strengthen the protections for students in the school environment. 2010 revisions focused on a greater awareness and reporting of bullying, harassment and intimidation in the school environment. This legislation states that "despite widespread adoption of anti-harassment policies by school districts, harassment of students continues and has not declined since the law was enacted."

A WSSDA workgroup agreed to create a "road map" for students, parents and administrators to follow in the event that an incident occurred. One objective was to ensure that districts responded appropriately to acts of persistent harassment, intimidation and bullying.

Districts are encouraged to provide students with strategies to prevent these incidents. The type of training made available to students is at the discretion of each school district. Possibilities include providing information in the student handbook, presentations at community open house events and disseminating information during student assemblies.

To maintain the integrity of the reporting process, the policy prohibits retaliation and false allegations. The goal is to allow victims or targets to report incidents without fear of the chilling effect that retaliation can cause. It is equally important to protect members of the school community from false allegations.

The law requires each district to designate one person as the primary contact regarding the anti-harassment policy. Specific responsibilities for the primary contact are provided in the law. Those duties include receiving copies of complaints, ensuring implementation of the policy and procedure and serving as the primary contact for the district when responding to OSPI or the Office of Equal Opportunity.

In response to the Legislative directive for dissemination of information, WSSDA has developed a model policy and procedure. The procedure requires these steps:

- Each school must post information on harassment, intimidation and bullying; the district website must contain information on how to report harassment, intimidation and bullying, including the name of an administrator or the compliance officer that should be contacted.
- The district must have copies of the policy and procedure available in languages that families can understand.
- The contents of the policy and procedure must be summarized in the student handbook.
- Annually, students must be informed on recognizing and preventing bullying and on how to access an Incident Reporting Form.
- Staff must receive annual training on the district's policy and procedure.

## Scenarios

### Scenario #1: Test scores

Your superintendent calls to alert you that scores on state-mandated achievement tests for the seventh-grade students have been received. The results are not good. Not only has the district average dropped in almost all subject areas tested, your scores are the lowest of all school districts in your county. The superintendent tells you that she wants you to be aware of the situation before you read about it in tonight's newspaper. You ask about the reasons for this drop in the scores and why no one was able to predict this. The superintendent says this needs to be researched, but she thinks it is a combination of many factors, including an increase in non-English-speaking students, a change in the type of standardized test used, changes in the district curriculum which were not aligned with the test, and failure of the board to approve enough funds to support certain inservice programs needed by the staff. You are stunned. You hang up the telephone. It rings again. It is the local newspaper reporter. The reporter asks you several questions in rapid succession.

1. What is your immediate personal reaction to this situation?
2. What should you say?

*(See a possible response, page 45)*

### Scenario #2: Levy failure

Your levy fails for the first time in 15 years. Information gets back to the superintendent and the board through various sources indicating that the community is upset with the schools. Some of the reasons are specific, some are rather obscure, and most appear to be based on rumor and misunderstanding. For example, there is a feeling that the district's budget reserve is too great. People are upset about district plans to close a 60-year-old elementary school that has been determined to be out of compliance with seismic (earthquake) requirements. In addition, it is rumored that the levy failure was encouraged by employees who are unhappy with the administration.

As a board you need to decide what to do now. You do have a cash reserve which would help you make it through next year. However, if you relied on the cash reserve to operate a program next year at this year's expenditure level, the reserve would soon be reduced to the point where cash flow would be a serious problem. In addition, you wonder if not running a levy this year would set a precedent for the community to think you could get along without one in subsequent years. Some people think that running a second levy for a reduced amount would work. You feel that the community could react negatively to this



and may conclude that you had asked for an inappropriately large levy the first time. If you could really live with less, why did you ask for so much?

What do you think the district should do?

- A. Run the levy again at the same amount. The revenue is necessary for a quality education and you can convince the community of that fact.
- B. Run a reduced levy amount, conceding that the community feels supportive but frugal.
- C. Establish an ad hoc committee to examine district programs and community concerns and make a recommendation to the board about whether or not to run another levy.
- D. Get by without the levy, relying somewhat on cash reserves.

*(See a possible response, page 45)*

### **Scenario #3: Expectations exceed dollars**

During a board work study session, the director of finance for the school district briefs the board on the district's budget. He tells the board that the district is facing a dilemma. The Legislature apparently is not going to fully fund salary increases for all school district employees; however, the school district collective bargaining agreements call for all employees to receive salary increases. It looks as if the school district will have to use its financial resources to make up the discrepancy between the salary dollars provided by the Legislature and the amount needed to fund salary increases for all employees.

At the same time, the public recently passed an initiative to provide additional funds to reduce class sizes and stimulate program innovation in the classroom to improve student learning. The budget director expresses his concern that the legal need for the district to supplement the salary increases may require the use of some of those funds that might otherwise be used for the reduction of class sizes and the program innovation. A board member who is running for re-election to the school board expresses concern about the potential public perception that the funds from the initiative, intended to improve student learning, are being spent to supplement employee salaries. Another board member quickly counters by saying "we've got to be fair to our employees." Another member quips, "This is a no-win situation."

What should you do?

- A. Use money—from whatever source—for salary increases. They are required by your own district.
- B. Use money from the initiative only for its intended purposes, not for salary increases.
- C. Attempt to renegotiate the collective bargaining agreements. The union should understand.
- D. Sue the state Legislature for not meeting its constitutional mandate to provide salary increases for all employees.

*(See a possible response, page 45)*

#### **Scenario #4: Executive session**

In an executive session, the superintendent informs you that the middle school principal has placed a school counselor on probation and that you may hear about this, as the counselor is popular with students and well known in the community. There are apparently serious concerns about the performance of this counselor and the quality of service she is providing to the students. The superintendent does not say much more. The next evening your eye catches a headline in your local paper: "School Counselor's Abilities Questioned."

With dismay you read a summary of an interview, during which a reporter questioned one of your fellow board members about the matter. Much of what is reported was said during the executive session. This board member is upset because the board is allowing the superintendent and principal to take this action against a "trusted and loyal employee who has lived in the community and served the schools for years." The paper quotes the board member as saying, "I don't know why these people allow such actions when it is so clear that this will have a detrimental effect on our children's education. This has gone beyond the point where keeping confidences is either reasonable or right. The public supports these schools and the public deserves to know what is happening."

What should you do?

- A. Call the newspaper to explain why the issue has been kept quiet.
- B. Call the superintendent to get all the details of the matter. Once it's in the open you need to know more facts.
- C. Contact other board members and request that sanctions be taken against this board member.
- D. Ask the board chair to arrange a one-on-one private meeting with the board member where it can be explained why matters discussed in executive session, particularly personnel matters, need to remain confidential.

*(See a possible response, page 46)*

#### **Scenario #5 Cyberbullying**

As a newly elected school board member, you are energized by your elected position and enjoy all the people wanting to connect with you. In the past two weeks your friends list on Facebook has grown from 131 to 474. One of your new friends is a high school teacher in your district. After accepting the connection, you click on her page to say hello. As you begin to type, you realize there are disparaging things written on her page about her principal and the superintendent. Reading further, you are wondering what you just got yourself into. Clicking on her friends list reveals this teacher is friends with several current and former students and also connected with the principal. You wonder if the administration or your fellow board members know about these comments.

What do you do?

*(continued)*

- A. Unfriend the teacher immediately and refrain from accepting invitations from any staff.
- B. Do not post any comments, but gather as much information as possible. It appears there may be serious implications, and you need to learn everything you can.
- C. Raise your concerns at the next board meeting, relaying the information you discovered, and discuss openly with your fellow board members.
- D. Inform your board chair and superintendent of what you saw. Ask if there is a district policy about social networking, and learn how that addresses this issue.

*(See a possible response, page 46)*

## *Responses to scenarios*

### **Response to Scenario #1 (Test scores)**

Board members need to develop an expertise in talking with the press about difficult issues in ways that communicate effectively to the public without damaging the district. Individual board members need to be clear about representing themselves, not the board, unless they are the designated contact person for the board. The superintendent's off-the-cuff response to a board member may not be appropriate to share with the press. It is important to avoid finger-pointing, even if the board member being interviewed supported the inservice programs. A board member can communicate concern and a commitment to address the issue without obligating the board or creating unrealistic expectations.

### **Response to Scenario #2 (Levy failure)**

It is entirely possible that any of the above responses right for your community. Only your board can decide that. And the only way you can judge the best response is by being actively involved with your community, so that your decision is not based upon rumor and anecdote. Many districts, either before or after having difficulty with a ballot issue, establish an ad hoc committee to examine district programs and community concerns and make a recommendation to the board on whether or not to run another bond or levy issue, and if so, for how much. The value of the committee's work falls into two areas. First, it can explore all the alternatives and program ramifications of each. Usually such a committee works closely with the central office administrators to develop the data to make knowledgeable recommendations. This work can save the board much time, and the committee can be more thorough. Second, the committee can explore community concerns and give the board an assessment of the electoral climate. Concern needs to be highlighted with answer "A" because school district resources may not be used to campaign or try to convince the electorate regarding district ballot measures.

### **Response to Scenario #3 (Expectations exceed dollars)**

There is no "correct" answer. The situation is similar to many that school board members face. The school board is confronted with the public's expectation that the additional funds provided by the passage of the initiative will be used to reduce class sizes and stimulate program innovation in the classroom to improve student learning. But, the school district has contracts that it must honor. In this case, the collective bargaining agreement requires that all employees shall receive a salary increase. Although the board members may differ on the way they will approach the dilemma, they must come to a consensus on the public position that the board will take on the situation.

At a minimum, the school board's public position must: (1) detail the issues involved; (2) state the board's position on how it will resolve the dilemma; and (3) call for the Legislature to fully fund salary increases so that this situation is not repeated in the future.

#### **Response to Scenario #4 (Executive session)**

Answer D is preferred. The talkative board member needs to understand the grievous damage that can be done to the district's position by breaching the executive session. Meeting with the board member in private provides an opportunity to explain to the board member that he or she has done nothing to help the counselor by publicizing the problem and has made any reasonable resolution of the issue extremely difficult. Sanctioning the board member (C) really is not an option. An employee who leaks information could be fired, but the board has little recourse against one of its own. Seeking "all of the details" from the superintendent (B) may disqualify you from helping to resolve the case if the board ends up hearing an appeal by the employee. And keeping the issue alive in the news media by calling the paper (A) will only further invade the counselor's privacy and make it even more difficult to resolve the issue.

#### **Response to Scenario #5 (Cyberbullying)**

Social networking is expanding exponentially, and so are lawsuits relating to its use. Board members must be prudent and discerning about social networking and a policy is likely already in place. If not, it is strongly advised to implement such a policy. A more stringent policy, or even some procedures for the board about the use of social networking is advised. Since you have already taken the step, it is highly recommended that you follow option D. Have a private conversation with the superintendent and, depending on the seriousness of the information you have uncovered, seek legal advice from the district's attorney. Do not investigate on your own (B) and do not raise your concerns at an open board meeting (C), since this is a potential personnel issue. You may not want to blatantly "unfriend" the teacher at this point (A), however, it would be advisable not to befriend others until you inquire about the social networking policy and/or accepted procedure for board communication.

# Appendices

1. School boards and the law
2. Alphabet soup of education acronyms
3. State and local education resources
4. WSSDA: The school directors' own organization







## Appendix 1

# School boards and the law

Most state statutes and regulations pertinent to school districts and directors can be found in the *Common School Manual*, published annually by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. These resources, plus federal legal requirements, are available on the WSSDA School Law and Policy online subscription service. It is not likely or necessary that school board members have a comprehensive understanding of school law, but basic knowledge of important legal principles and restrictions enables board members to know when to ask about legal ramifications and how to ask questions that will assure consideration of legal issues.

### **There are four major sources of legal regulation that affect school board actions:**

1. Statutory law
  - Federal laws enacted by Congress (United States Code, USC)
  - State laws adopted by the Legislature (Revised Code of Washington, RCW)
2. Court decisions
3. Administrative regulations
  - State Board of Education (Title 180 WAC, Washington Administrative Code)
  - Superintendent of Public Instruction (Title 392 WAC)
  - Other state agencies
  - Federal agencies (Code of Federal Regulations, CFR)
4. Local government ordinances, including school district policies

The following are a few of the statutes and related regulations most commonly encountered by school board members.

### **Statutes related to directors and board operations**

- Open Public Meetings Act (Ch. 42.30 RCW)
- Code of Ethics for Municipal Officers (conflict of interest statute, Ch. 42.23 RCW)
- Campaign and Candidate Financial Disclosure (Ch. 42.17 RCW)
- General school district provisions (including internal and external boundaries, election of board members and general authority) (Chs. 28A.315, 320, 330, and 343 RCW)
- Director Reimbursement and Compensation (RCW 28A.343.400 and 28A.315.540)

*Laws and agency rules quick  
reference link:*

**[www.leg.wa.gov/  
LawsAndAgencyRules](http://www.leg.wa.gov/LawsAndAgencyRules)**

### **Statutes affecting programs**

- Basic Education Act (Ch. 28A.150 RCW)
- Education Reform (Ch. 28A.655 RCW)
- Special Education
  1. State law and regulation (Ch. 28A.155 RCW and Ch. 392-172 WAC)
  2. Federal laws:
    - a. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (20 USC §§ 1400-1435, 2004)
    - b. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (§ 504)
- Transitional Bilingual Instruction (Ch. 28A.180 RCW)
- Compulsory Course Work (Ch. 28A.230 RCW)
- Courses of Study and Equivalencies (Ch. 180-50 WAC)
- State High School Graduation Requirements (Ch. 180-51 WAC)
- Personnel statutes
  1. General School District Employment (Ch. 28A.400 RCW)
  2. Certificated Employees (Ch. 28A.405 RCW)
    - a. Evaluation Procedure
    - b. Continuing Contract Rights
    - c. Provisional Status of New Teachers
  3. Collective bargaining statutes
    - a. Teachers (Ch. 41.59 RCW)
    - b. Classified Employees (Ch. 41.56 RCW)
    - c. Public Employment Labor Relations Act (Ch. 41.58 RCW and Title 391 WAC)

### **Statutes related to finance**

- School District Budgets (Ch. 28A.505 RCW)
- Apportionment of State Funding (Ch. 28A.510 RCW)
- Levy Lid (Ch. 84.52 RCW)
- Salary Lid (Ch. 28A.400.220 RCW )
- School Construction (Ch. 28A.525 RCW and Chs. 180-24 through 33 WAC)
- School District Property (Ch. 28A.335 RCW)



## Appendix 2

# Alphabet soup of education acronyms

Acronyms tend to create some of the “educationese” that often keeps the general public from understanding educators. It is important to understand these abbreviations, but avoid using them in ways that confuse others.

**AAA:** American Arbitration Association; national association for dispute resolution

**AASA:** American Association of School Administrators; national organization for school administrators

**ACT:** American College Test; standard test given high school seniors for college entrance

**AESD:** Association of Educational Service Districts; state organization of educational service district board members

**AFT:** American Federation of Teachers; national teacher union

**AG:** Attorney General

**AGO:** Attorney General's Opinion

**AP:** Advanced Placement; a program of rigorous college-level courses offered in high school

**ASBO:** Association of School Business Officials; national organization for school business managers

**ASCD:** Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; national organization

**AWSP:** Association of Washington School Principals

**AYP:** Adequate Yearly Progress; an individual state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards, required under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

**BEA:** Basic Education Act; 1977 state law defining basic education for purpose of school funding

**CAA:** Certificate of Academic Achievement; earned by passing specified state assessments; starting with the class of 2013, a requirement for graduation

**CBA:** Classroom Based Assessments

**CCSSO:** Council of Chief State School Officers; national organization for heads of state departments of education

**CSCF:** Common School Construction Fund

**CIA:** Certificate of Individual Achievement; an alternative to the Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) for students with severe learning disabilities

**CTE:** Career and Technical Education

**DNR:** Department of Natural Resources; state agency responsible for school trust lands

**DOE:** (United States) Department of Education

**DSHS:** Department of Social and Health Services; state agency responsible for public health, public assistance, vocational rehabilitation and institutions

**EALRs:** Essential Academic Learning Requirements

**ECS:** Education Commission of the States; partnership of states for mutual assistance in education issues

**ED:** U.S. Department of Education; federal agency (cabinet level)

**EEOC:** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; federal regulatory body, especially deals with employment discrimination claims

**EERA:** Educational Employee Relations Act; state teachers collective bargaining statute

**ECA:** End-of-Course Assessments

**ELL:** English Language Learner

**ERIC:** Education Resources Information Center; computerized system to develop, store and retrieve information in all fields and levels of education

**ERNN:** Employee Relations and Negotiations Network; provides member school districts with services related to bargaining and employee relations

**ERS:** Educational Research Service; a nonprofit agency that offers current research and management information to subscribers

**ESD:** Educational Service District; area service organizations for local school districts, of which there are nine in Washington state

**ESEA:** Elementary and Secondary Education Act; federal law that provides funds to local school districts for specified programs (ESEA is currently reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act)

**ESL:** English as a Second Language; programs utilizing the pupil's first language to better understand standard English and the curriculum

**ETS:** Educational Testing Service; nationwide organization that administers various kinds of educational and psychological tests

**FICA:** Federal Insurance Contributions Act; federal program financing social security

**FRN:** Federal Relations Network; an organization of school board members from each congressional district sponsored by NSBA for advocacy at the federal level

**FTE:** Full Time Equivalent; describes number of students or staff members

**GED:** General Education Development; high school equivalency testing program and the diploma equivalent

**GLE:** Grade Level Expectation

**GPA:** Grade Point Average

**HB (SHB, EHB, ESHB):** House Bill (Substitute House Bill, Engrossed House Bill, Engrossed Substitute House Bill); abbreviation preceding bill originating in the State House of Representatives

**HECB:** Higher Education Coordinating Board

**HRC:** Human Rights Commission

**HSPE:** High School Proficiency Exam

**IDEA:** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; federal law

**IB:** International Baccalaureate; a program of rigorous high school curricula centered on international standards

**IEP:** Individualized Educational Program; developed for each special education student

**IASA:** Improving America's School Act

**ITBS:** Iowa Test of Basic Skills; multiple-choice, norm-referenced test of math, reading and language skills; no longer used in Washington as a state assessment

**LAP:** Learning Assistance Program; state program, provides funding for the poor and academically disadvantaged

**LEA:** Local Education Agency; a federal term which usually refers to a local school district; or Local Effort Assistance, i.e. levy equalization

**LEAP:** Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program; serves as the Legislature's independent source of information and technology with respect to budgets and revenue

**LFA:** Learning First Alliance; a partnership of major education organizations

**MSP:** Measurements of Student Progress

**NABE:** National Association of Bilingual Education



**NACBE:** National Advisory Council on Bilingual Education

**NAEP:** National Assessment of Educational Progress; known as “The Nation’s Report Card,” provides continuing uniform assessments of students nationwide

**NAESP:** National Association of Elementary School Principals

**NASBE:** National Association of State Boards of Education

**NASSP:** National Association of Secondary School Principals

**NCLB:** No Child Left Behind Act; federal law establishing assessment and accountability requirements for the nation’s public schools (see ESEA)

**NEA:** National Education Association; national teacher union

**NREA:** National Rural Education Association; national organization for rural educators, board members, PTA, etc.

**NSBA:** National School Boards Association

**NSF:** National Science Foundation

**NSPRA:** National School Public Relations Association; national organization for school communications specialists

**NWREL:** Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

**OCR:** Office of Civil Rights in the federal Department of Education; addresses student discrimination claims

**OFM:** Office of Financial Management; state agency dealing with budget matters

**OPMA:** Open Public Meetings Act

**OSHA:** Occupational Safety and Health Administration; federal agency

**PEAB:** Professional Education Advisory Board; boards of active professionals that advise each education professional preparation program at colleges and universities in the state

**PDC:** Public Disclosure Commission; state agency responsible for financial reporting of public officials

**PERC:** Public Employment Relations Commission; state agency responsible for dealing with labor relations for public employees

**PERS:** Public Employees’ Retirement System; retirement program for state and local government employees in Washington

**PESB:** Professional Educator Standards Board

**PFL:** Partnership for Learning

**PL:** Public Law; abbreviation precedes numerical designation for federal laws

**PRA:** Public Records Act; state law establishing requirements for disclosure of records by public agencies

**PSE:** Public School Employees of Washington; classified school employees union

**PTA:** Parent Teacher Association

**RCW:** Revised Code of Washington; all state statutes (Title 28A RCW is the education code.)

**SAT:** Scholastic Assessment Test; administered usually during grades 11 and 12; used for university admission

**SB (SSB, ESB, ESSB):** Senate Bill (Substitute Senate Bill, Engrossed Senate Bill, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill); abbreviation preceding bill originating in State Senate

**SBCTC:** State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

**SBE:** State Board of Education; partly elected by local school directors, develops state policy and provides system oversight for public schools

**SEA:** State Educational Agency; a federal designation, which in Washington state is the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SERS:** School Employees' Retirement System; retirement plan for school employees

**SIRS:** School Information and Research Service; state organization providing research results to local districts

**SPI (OSPI):** Superintendent of Public Instruction (Office of); Washington state's department of education

**TRI:** Time, Responsibility and Incentive; upon which supplemental teacher compensation may be based

**TRS:** Teachers' Retirement System; retirement program for educational employees in Washington

**WA-ACTE:** Washington Association for Career and Technical Education

**WABE:** Washington Association of Bilingual Education

**WAC:** Washington Administrative Code; state rules and regulations supporting state statutes

**WAEOP:** Washington Association of Educational Office Personnel

**WAAS:** Washington Alternate Assessment System; an alternate to the WASL for students with severe learning disabilities

**WASA:** Washington Association of School Administrators; state organization for superintendents and other school administrators

**WASBO:** Washington Association of School Business Officials

**WASL:** Washington Assessment of Student Learning; used to measure student progress in meeting state learning standards

**WLPT-II:** Washington Language Proficiency Test II

**WCSA:** Washington Council of School Attorneys

**WEA:** Washington Education Association; state teachers' union

**WedNet:** Washington Education Network; the K-20 computer backbone in the state, part of many school district website and e-mail addresses

**WIAA:** Washington Interscholastic Activities Association; regulates interscholastic activities

**WISHA:** Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act; state statute

**WSFT:** Washington State Federation of Teachers; state teachers' union

**WSIPC:** Washington School Information Processing Cooperative

**WSIPP:** Washington State Institute for Public Policy; a legislative agency, carries out nonpartisan research

**WSPRA:** Washington School Public Relations Association; state organization for school communications specialists

**WSSDA:** Washington State School Directors' Association; state organization for school board members

**WTECB:** Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board



## Appendix 3

# State and local education resources

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the array of national, state and local organizations and agencies that offer information about education. In many instances, however, the help you need is just around the corner, or a phone call or mouse click away. Here are some suggestions:

### **Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA)**

WSSDA is the school directors' own organization. Its mission is to directly support school board members in their efforts to promote student learning and achievement.

WSSDA  
221 College Street NE  
Olympia, WA 98516-5313  
360.493.9231 or 800.562.8927  
E-mail: [mail@wssda.org](mailto:mail@wssda.org)  
Website: [wssda.org](http://wssda.org)

### **Local superintendent**

He or she can provide a variety of information on local district operations, including finance, educational programs, building maintenance, students, test results, district policies and procedures, minutes of previous board meetings, and answers to other specific questions.

### **Local school board members**

Past and present board members, especially the chair or president, are a valuable information resource. Check with them about specific procedures of board operation and practices, issues confronting the district, opinions and views regarding district programs, and planning for the future of the district.

### **Local associations/teachers and classified staff**

Ask them what their membership have to say about the district and its goals, needs, problems and attributes.

### **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)**

Old Capitol Building  
P. O. Box 47200  
Olympia, WA 98504-7200  
360.725.6000  
Website: [www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us)

**Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)**

825 Fifth Avenue SE  
Olympia, WA 98501  
360.943.5717  
Website: [www.wasa-oly.org](http://www.wasa-oly.org)

**Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)**

1021 Eighth Avenue SE  
Olympia, WA 98501-1500  
360.357.7951  
Website: [www.awsp.org](http://www.awsp.org)

**State Board of Education**

600 Washington Street SE  
Room 253  
Olympia, WA 98504-7206  
360.725.6025  
Website: [www.sbe.wa.gov](http://www.sbe.wa.gov)

**Educational Service District (ESD) for your region**

There are nine ESDs that deliver a variety of services that vary by region.

- Northeast ESD 101 (Adams County except Othello; Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Whitman Counties)
- ESD 105 (Kittitas and Yakima Counties; Royal and Wahluke School Districts in Grant County; Bickleton and Goldendale School Districts in Klickitat County)
- ESD 112 (Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum Counties; parts of Klickitat and Pacific Counties)
- ESD 113 (Grays Harbor, Lewis and Thurston Counties; most of Mason and Pacific Counties)
- Olympic ESD 114 (Kitsap County except Bainbridge Island; North Mason School District; Jefferson and Clallam Counties)
- Puget Sound ESD (King and Pierce Counties; Bainbridge Island School District in Kitsap County)
- ESD 123 (Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, Franklin and Benton Counties; Othello School District in Adams County)
- North Central ESD (Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan Counties)
- Northwest ESD 189 (Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom Counties)



## Appendix 4

# WSSDA: The school directors' own organization

The Washington State School Directors' Association provides leadership, advocacy and services to support public school directors' efforts to improve student learning.

WSSDA's core mission is focused on promoting student learning by ensuring that school board members have the knowledge, tools and services they need to effectively govern their districts and champion public education. To that end, WSSDA is:

- A leader in promoting effective governance by school directors through professional development and leadership programs, policy briefings, strategic planning services, and legal research;
- A respected, trusted advocate for public education and student achievement at the local, state and federal levels; and
- A comprehensive network through which school board members learn from each other, keep abreast of policy and legal developments in education, and share successful practices and innovative ideas.

Established by state law, the Washington State School Directors' Association is comprised of all 1,477 school board members from the state's 295 public school districts. WSSDA is authorized by the Washington State Legislature to be self-governed through officers elected from school boards around the state.

Under this structure, WSSDA is the school directors' own organization. Its services, programs and policies are determined by the members themselves.

Membership involvement in the association is one of the keys to its success. School board members have numerous opportunities to help set direction for WSSDA and to influence efforts to improve education statewide. Official positions of WSSDA, as well as the annual legislative program, are the result of grassroots membership input. Through the medium of an effective association, the school boards of Washington state have helped influence important school legislation. Board members prepare for their responsibilities through WSSDA conferences, seminars, workshops and materials. Directors are kept abreast of new developments and, together with their colleagues, help chart the future course of the schools.



Many local districts utilize the association's specialized services, particularly in the areas of board training and professional development, strategic planning, and policy development. Boards find that it is more feasible and economical to utilize the expertise of professionals under part-time contracts with WSSDA than it would be to employ administrators with comparable knowledge and ability.

This publication is but one example of the many ways in which WSSDA serves the interests of its members and of public school students throughout the state.

For additional information, visit the WSSDA website, e-mail, or call the WSSDA office to speak directly with staff.



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Washington State  
School Directors' Association

*The Washington State School Directors' Association  
provides leadership, advocacy and services  
to support public school directors' efforts  
to improve student learning.*

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