

School Boards - RESPONSIBILITIES DUTIES DECISION-MAKING AND LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD POWERS

DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, DECISION-MAKING, AND LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD POWERS

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SELECTION AND EDUCATION OF MEMBERS

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Local school boards have been an integral feature of the U.S. public education system for nearly 100 years, and they are widely regarded as the principal democratic body capable of representing citizens in local education decisions. The formal institutional roles assigned to school boards, and the designated position board members play as representatives of the community, would lead one to believe that the school board has a decisive role in public education policy and school system administration. In the minds of many lay citizens, school boards have considerable influence over educational decisions and provide a key social and political connection to the schooling process.

Although research has affirmed the important role that local school boards played in implementing educational reforms such as student testing and graduation requirements, some critics have contended the traditional leadership and policymaking roles of local school boards have been compromised by bureaucratic intransigence, a tendency to micromanage school system operations, and divisiveness caused by special interest groups. While one researcher has suggested that lay control of schools is a myth, others have argued that the school board is essential to ensure the quality of public education services at the local level.

Legal Basis for Local School Board Powers

The U.S. Constitution contains no mention of education. With the federal government limited to those powers either expressly stated or implied in the Constitution, the federal role in public education is secondary to that of the states. Power over public education is as essential an attribute of state sovereignty as that of the power to tax or to provide for the general welfare of the state's citizens. The state legislative mandate to provide for a system of public schools is found in the state constitution, usually in language requiring a "general," "uniform," "thorough," or "efficient" system of public schools.

Even though power officially resides with the states, concerns about efficiency and local involvement are addressed through the delegation of authority from the legislative branch to the local school board. Although the powers and duties of the local board vary by state jurisdiction, all fifty states except Hawaii have a two-tiered governance structure and provide for local school districts governed by an elected or appointed board. States also govern through state boards of education, administer through state departments of education, and typically provide for an elected or appointed chief state school officer.

Sources of authority that influence the duties and responsibilities of the local school board include state and federal constitutions, legislative enactments, rules and regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education and the state board of education, and legal interpretations by judges, attorneys general, and administrative agencies. A school board functions locally, within the confines of the state's delegation of power and the geographical boundaries of the district, but is a legal agency of the state and thus derives its power from the state's constitution, laws, and judicial decisions. By state legislative enactment, school boards are delegated power and authority to develop policies, rules, and regulations to control the operation of the schools, including system organization, school site location, school finance, equipment purchase, staffing, attendance, curriculum, extracurricular activities, and other functions essential to the day-to-day operation of schools within the district's boundaries. Boards may also be authorized by the state legislature to levy taxes, invest resources, initiate eminent domain proceedings, acquire land, and assume bonded indebtedness.

School boards are corporate bodies created for the purpose of implementing state legislative policy concerning public schools and locally administering the state's system of public education. Board members are state officers who act under color of state law when conducting the official business of the state. The exercise of the local board's authority must be predicated upon an express or implied delegation of authority from the legislature and must meet a test of reasonableness that avoids a judicial presumption of arbitrary or capricious action. Because the authority of the local board lies in its status as a corporate body created by the state legislature, an actual meeting of the board is an essential prerequisite to official action. Individual board members are not vested with powers outside their role as a member of the local school board, although the board is often vested with power to ratify the actions of its members, agents, or employees if the ratification vote occurs in an official board meeting and is documented in the official minutes of the board.

State and Federal Reform Efforts

The states and the federal government increased their visibility in public education policy from the 1950s into the twenty-first century. The federal role in education was spurred with implementation of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Federal antidiscrimination policy became a crosscutting social issue for public schools and school districts with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Federal entitlements to special education were initiated with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Whether in the form of categorical aid designed to meet targeted educational needs or in the form of block grants permitting states discretion in the allocation of funds, federal largess has been influential in shaping educational policy and shifting the locus of control over public schools.

At the same time that the state role in public education expanded to accommodate federal funding initiatives, demands for reform of public school finance systems were being heard in state and federal courts. The Texas school finance system survived a constitutional challenge in the 1973 case of *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, but judges in state courts showed less deference to the state legislature's authority to construct a school finance scheme and a concomitant willingness to interpret state constitutional provisions as a mandate providing for a system of public education. State courts in Kentucky, New Jersey, and Texas have been among those adopting an active role in the reform of school finance. With the possibility of litigation mounting in each state, the momentum for finance reform led state legislatures to embrace changes that centralized education governance and restricted the authority and influence of local school boards.

In 1954, prior to the decision in *Rodriguez*, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down racial segregation in the Kansas public school system in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The *Brown* decision was followed by a series of cases compelling local school district boards to desegregate public schools under consent decrees that were overseen by court-appointed special masters. As the Supreme Court expanded the desegregation mandate to address the pattern and practice of segregation in school districts throughout the United States, local school districts found their influence diminished and their actions scrutinized by federal courts intent on addressing a history of international segregative practices in America's public schools.

With the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a dramatic escalation of national concern about public education led state and federal policymakers to advocate for quality and to require rigorous testing, higher graduation requirements, and more demanding academic standards. In a policy environment in which demands for scarce public resources were outstripping the revenue generated by the state's system of taxation, concern for state level accountability and efficient use of resources was magnified. The education reform movement considerably strengthened the power of the states in relation to the historic discretionary power that had been exercised by local school boards. Policies previously left to the discretion of local school boards were increasingly prescribed by the state.

Local school boards have been characterized as the largest losers in the reform efforts of the 1980s and 1990s. State legislatures have generated educational policies and regulations directed

to academic standards, professional certification and preparation, and curriculum development. Bypassing local school boards in the haste to reform public education, additional legislation has emphasized choice as well as quality, and encouraged the development of charter schools with limited regulatory ties to the local school system, school-based management, vouchers, tax credits, and home-schooling options.

Duties and Responsibilities

In most states, it is the local board that is charged with the responsibility to establish and maintain a basic organizational structure for the local school system, develop curriculum, meet federal and state mandates for public schools, appoint a superintendent and key members of the central office staff, adopt an annual budget, and create a climate that promotes educational excellence. Consequently, school boards initiate educational policies at the local level and have a responsibility for implementing a variety of state and federal policies. These boards provide important administrative oversight relative to the educational policies and programs they institute; play a central role in establishing systems and processes to ensure the school system's fiscal, programmatic, and outcome accountability; and undertake broad human resource functions that include making crucial decisions regarding the district's top-level leadership and key staff. Finally, school boards provide leadership for the local school system, adopting a unifying vision and mission, soliciting and balancing the participation and input of members of the community, and advocating on behalf of the educational needs of children at the local, state, and national levels.

Local school boards function as legislative, executive, and quasi-judicial agencies. They must develop, implement, and assess policy; institute sound employee relations; conduct open meetings; recognize and conform to the legal mandates imposed by state and federal laws; and govern within the limits of a delegation of state authority. Additionally, the board has an obligation to assess its successes and failures; inform the public of all deliberations and decisions; promote accountability; avoid abuse of power; enhance public understanding of its mission; conform to standards of ethical behavior; provide a framework for setting goals; and develop strategic plans for the accomplishment of those goals.

From the myriad tasks that have been delegated to school boards, or which have accrued over their history, three overlapping and often contradictory responsibilities can be distinguished. First, the board is a policymaking entity for the local school district. Second, the board is an administrative agency that must provide oversight for the operation of the local school system and is ultimately accountable for the system's operation. Third, the board is a democratically elected body that provides school system leadership and represents the interests of the community on public education issues.

Policymaking. The first responsibility of the local school board is to make policy for the sound operation of the school district. State statute law typically requires that the local school board approve the district's budget; develop long- and short-term goals; establish educational objectives, performance indicators, and pupil assessment systems; and approve curricular frameworks and standards for student achievement. In a rational planning model, board policies begin with the articulation of a shared vision and mission for the school district, followed by the establishment

of key goals and strategic objectives. Comparing current outcomes with desired outcomes and analyzing gaps between current outcomes and desired outcomes should then lead to the development and implementation of strategic plans for the accomplishment of key objectives. In reality, school boards often make policy under conditions in which competing demands and legal imperatives make systematic and rational planning difficult. As a result, board policies cover a vast array of school operations, and the policies may appear ambiguous or contradictory when viewed by those who are charged with the responsibility to implement the policy in practice.

The policy environment in which local school boards operate is complicated by a number of factors. Legal mandates based on state and federal legislation, judicial decisions, and negotiated union contracts may impose substantial constraints on the local board's policymaking authority. Board members may have conflicting and irreconcilable views on the appropriate means to achieve key objectives. Educators may insist that the board defer to the professional expertise of administrators and teachers on matters of educational policy. The degree of board turnover may affect policymaking capabilities because of a loss of institutional or collective memory essential to recall the purpose and intent of previous policies. In addition, the policymaking environment often involves urgent and immediate policy decisions inflamed by public controversy, influenced by local interest groups, and complicated by insufficient time to analyze the policy in light of system objectives.

Administration. Another major role of the school board is that of administrative agency. While local boards are discouraged from becoming involved in the day-to-day operation and administration of schools, demands for public accountability dictate some level of involvement in the administration of the school system. Public accountability requires that the board must, at a minimum, provide oversight, adopt standards, and assess progress toward the accomplishment of key district objectives. To some extent, the board's administrative functions require knowledge of the operational procedures and organizational structures instituted to accomplish board policies. This knowledge cannot be achieved without some degree of administrative oversight.

A regular criticism of local boards is the tendency of board members to confuse monitoring of key outcomes and executive performance with prescribing how to manage the components of the system. A study conducted in West Virginia found that school boards spent 3 percent of their time on policy development and as much as 54 percent of their time on administrative matters. A study of fifty-five randomly selected school boards indicated that financial and personnel issues were among the most frequent areas of decision-making, displacing deliberations on educational policy by a significant margin.

It is axiomatic that school boards should focus on policymaking and eschew micromanagement of the school system. One national report—*Facing the Challenge: The Report of the Twentieth Century Task Force on School Governance*—has proposed that school boards emphasize their role as policy boards instead of collective management committees, with the aim of establishing policies to enhance student academic progress. As a practical matter, many local boards assume time-consuming duties that are primarily administrative. For example, many local boards act as hearing agencies for employee and student grievances. This quasi-judicial role conflicts with the policymaking priorities of the board. It has been recommended that school districts delegate the

responsibility to hear complaints and appeals from individual students or employees to administrative law judges or other qualified third parties.

The local school board's responsibility for district personnel is another illustration of the practical difficulty in separating policymaking and administrative functions. In an organization that is labor intensive and commits a substantial portion of its annual operating budget to salaries and benefits for its teachers, administrators, and support staff, the board's administrative responsibility for personnel is unavoidable. State law typically requires that school boards select a superintendent, adopt and implement personnel policies for staff, appraise school and employee performance, ratify individual and collective employee contract agreements, and serve as the final administrative agency in dismissal proceedings. Issues such as recruitment, selection, and retention of teachers; setting compensation levels; and developing contract provisions are recurring agenda items for local school boards.

Leadership. The local school board has a vital role in providing leadership for district schools, serving as a forum for citizen input relevant to public education, and inculcating the beliefs, behaviors, and symbolic representations that define the organizational culture of the school system. In this role, the board's responsibilities include adopting a unifying vision and mission, soliciting and balancing the participation and input of members of the community, and advocating on behalf of the educational needs of children at the local, state, and national levels. Consistent with this leadership responsibility, the local school board should emphasize the standard of continuous improvement for its own operations as well as that of the school system as a whole and undertake to evaluate its performance and improve upon that performance.

As a democratically elected body intended to represent the interests of the community on public education issues, the local school board is a symbol of local control of public education. By providing an accessible forum for discussion of education issues that affect local communities, school boards maintain a key component of their viability. Founded on the belief that citizens should play a dominant role in determining how children in a community are educated, local school boards have been described as a historic linchpin of American educational governance. In a diverse society with a multiplicity of cultures, the board has become the body in which all constituencies find expression, a role seen as crucial to sustaining participatory and representative government.

Though the local school board must provide leadership for the school system, the complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty clouding the environment for public education in the United States makes assuming this role difficult. Education policy-makers at the federal and state level; competing interest groups with substantial influence in the political process; and a multitude of stakeholders, including business organizations, parents' groups, taxpayers, labor organizations, and special-interest groups, complicate the policymaking process. As laypeople with limited experience, board members may hold outdated beliefs about best practices or be focused on a single issue that subsumes the broader responsibility for visionary leadership. Because elected school boards are especially sensitive to public criticism, board members may adopt a posture of reacting to these groups rather than taking a proactive role, resulting in crisis management and a tendency to consider issues on an ad hoc basis rather than in the context of defined goals and objectives.

Decision-Making

A host of contemporary concerns present challenges to the local school board's pivotal role in the governance structure in American public education. These challenges include declining public confidence in public schools; limited financial and operational support; changing demographics; perceived drops in student achievement and performance; persistent student attrition or dropouts; reports of crime and violence in the school setting; and adversarial relationships with employee groups. At the same time that major challenges confront local boards, centralization of educational policymaking at the state level, initiated by the educational finance reforms of the second half of the twentieth century, when coupled with a heightened federal role in public education, has changed the locus of control over public schools and diminished local board powers.

Given the variety of policy considerations for school boards, the decision-making process of the board will vary depending upon the issues addressed, the parties involved, and the organizational interests, operational procedures, time constraints, and personal values of the decision makers. School boards are political organizations with members elected to serve a broad constituency. Decision-making in this environment is a highly political process in which coalition building, bargaining, competition, and adaptation are common. As with most organizations, it cannot be assumed that school board members are unified actors, and studies of school board decision-making show that individual role interests and social roles often serve as analytical constructs to explain decision-making processes. Local boards typically consist of members who possess divergent individual agendas and a limited set of mutually shared values or beliefs. Nevertheless, existing school board policies, extant procedures, and regularized customs and practices create and then enforce a unifying culture within the school board that is designed to maintain the status quo and has a relatively conservative perspective.

Board meetings follow the policies and procedures traditionally created to manage operations and are often characterized as ritualistic, systematic, and programmed. Although local boards are authorized by state law to adopt their own procedures, they are bound by law to follow those procedures once adopted. For example, procedural rules for establishing a quorum in order to take official action must be followed. A record of minutes of board meetings must be maintained in order that the board documents its deliberations and actions. Notice of meetings must conform to state sunshine laws, and business must be conducted in public, open meetings unless an exception to state law permits an executive session authorizing the board to deliberate in private.

The work of board members is seldom self-selected and is more likely to be defined for them by the superintendent, other professional educators, community leaders, interest groups, or state and federal actors. Despite the importance of policymaking, board members report that day-to-day responsibilities consume most of their time and complain that they seldom have time for reflection, brainstorming, and long-term planning. Despite concerns for educational equity and quality, boards more often address matters of financial accountability, which tends to enforce a role as steward of the public purse and a perspective of fiscal conservatism.

Models of decision-making emphasize inventing, developing, and analyzing possible solutions before selecting a particular course of action. Selecting a possible course of action is informed by

the judgment of the decision maker, the analyses of the alternatives on a logical or systematic basis, and the political bargaining process. A major criticism of decision-making in the context of local school boards is that adequate alternative solutions are not always considered in the decision-making process prior to drafting policies. Educational policymaking is distinctive because of its lack of regular formal procedures for generating alternative proposals to those advanced by professional educators or school officials. School board members are often constrained by limits imposed by existing law and policy and become dependent on school district professionals and administrators for proposals and information. Some authorities contend that school boards perform the function of legitimating the policies of the school system in the larger community rather than representing the various segments of that community to the school system.

See also: [EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP](#); [National SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION](#); [SCHOOL BOARD RELATIONS](#); [SCHOOL FACILITIES](#).

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Local control of public education, grounded in the federal constitution, is exercised through local school boards. Although they enjoy some autonomy, local school boards are the product of state legislatures with enumerated powers. The federal government, state legislature, and state boards of education also make policy decisions affecting local schools.

In 2000 about 95,000 school board members adopted policies for some 15,000 public school districts. Due to consolidations and other restructuring, the number of school districts has dramatically declined from 1940, when there were 117,000. The state of Hawaii has only one board of education for the entire state. From 1999 to 2000 public school districts educated about 47 million students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 with about 3 million teachers, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Elected Versus Appointed Members

Most states prefer to elect school board members: Citizens in school districts elect more than 94 percent of their school board members. Several states both elect and appoint members. There is an increasing trend to appoint and not elect superintendents.

The typical school board member is a college-educated homeowner, who lives in a suburb or small town, and serves a school system enrolling between 1,000 and 5,000 students. Many districts are larger or smaller and reflect a greater diversity in membership. In western states, school boards have a higher percentage of Hispanics than do boards in other parts of the country.

In southern states, 16 percent of school board members are African American, the highest percentage in the country, according to the National School Boards Association.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Selection Processes

Advocates of electing school board members argue that elected boards are more responsive to the public will. In addition, electing members increases public interest in the schools as it ensures that people have a direct voice in the selection of the school system's governing body. Elected school board members have greater independence and freedom to act in the best interests of the school system than do appointed board members. An elected board is in a better position to work closely and effectively with its superintendent and professional staff than an appointed board.

The proponents of appointing board members assert that the appointive method provides opportunity for greater selectivity in choosing board members, thus assuring capable board members with proper motives. Appointment of board members helps ensure harmonious working relationships between the school board and the local government. Appointing board members ensures board stability and continuity of service are better secured by the appointive method. The elective method encourages candidates for board office to develop issues for their public appeal or to make charges against incumbent board members or professional staff in order to secure votes, while appointed board members generate less community controversy. In order to depoliticize the process and to be proactive in candidate selection, some school districts work through a citizen advisory or caucus process in order to identify and seek out qualified school board candidates.

There is no definitive literature on whether elected or appointed school boards are more effective in improving student achievement. Furthermore, governance and organizational changes do not appear to improve classroom instruction.

Geographic Selection

Most school board members are elected from single-member districts; however, some school board members are elected at large. It has been argued that single-member districts tend to create a more parochial school board member; however, at large elections a single-member district can generate legal challenges in states covered by the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Several lawsuits alleging minority dilution in the establishment of single member or at large elected board districts have been decided (*Reno v. Bossier Parish School Board* (1997), *Perez v. Pasadena Independent School District* (5th Cir. 1999), and *Valdespino v. Alamo Heights Independent School District* (5th Cir. 1999).

Term and Turnover of Office

Most school board members serve terms of three to six years. Most boards have three to nine members; however, some are larger to accommodate large populations or to reflect interests of multiple constituencies. Although in most cases, term limits do not apply to board service, in the 1990s some advocates called for term limits for school board members, arguing that some school board members use their offices for political gain and promotion.

The national tenure for school board members is declining. According to a study by the National School Boards Association, the average term of a board member has dropped from five and a half years in 1982 to five years in 1992. School board members choose not to seek another term because of changing interests, frustrations with the job, and the demands of mounting an election campaign.

State Takeovers

In the 1990s rising national concerns about the quality of public education led states to adopt laws providing for the takeover of school districts or, in some cases, individual schools. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, twenty-four states have enacted policies that allow them to take over a school district due to academic problems within the school district. These state policies provide for application of progressive sanctions on a school district, with the ultimate sanction being a takeover. State policies may also permit a takeover for reasons other than academic problems: these include fiscal mismanagement, inept administration, corrupt governance, and crumbling infrastructure within the school district. Through state law, policy, or court action, the state designates an entity to manage the school district for a certain amount of time.

The consequences for school board members vary. For example, state officials can relieve school board members and other high level administrators of their duties and appoint others to manage the school district in their place. Or, school board members and high level administrators might remain in place as an advisory group. In certain large cities, the mayor has governance authority. In cities such as Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit, mayors, enabled by state legislation, have taken over the school systems and assumed the governance of them. Mayors either appoint the school board members or the superintendent or appoint the chief executive officer of the system.

The proponents of state takeovers argue that takeovers are a necessary extension of a state's constitutional responsibilities: They provide a good opportunity for state and local decision makers to combine resources and knowledge to improve children's learning and allow a competent executive staff to guide an uninterrupted and effective implementation of school improvement efforts. State takeovers also serve as a catalyst for creating the right environment for the community to address a school district's problems and allow for more radical, necessary changes in low-performing school districts. Finally, takeovers place school boards on notice that personal agendas, nepotism, and public bickering have severe consequences. Typically the new leadership uses achievement data collected from school districts and schools to bolster accountability efforts.

Opponents of this approach assert that state takeovers represent a thinly veiled attempt to reduce local control over schools and increase state authority over school districts. Takeovers imply that the problem lies with the community and it is up to the state to provide the solution; Thus, there is a false assumption that states have the ability to effectively run school districts. States may place poorly prepared state-selected officials in charge, who will not be able to produce meaningful change in the classroom, and will use narrow learning measures (i.e., standardized test scores) as the primary justification for takeover decisions. State takeovers often focus on

cleaning up petty corruption and incompetent administration, and do not go to the root of the social problems that face disadvantaged students in urban school districts. Takeovers can foster negative connotations and impressions that hinder the self-esteem of school board members, administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Finally, takeovers encourage confrontation between state and local officials that slows the overhaul of management practices, drains resources from educational reforms, and reinforces community resentments.

Continuing Education of Board Members

The educational background of school board members varies widely; some members have high school degrees or diplomas and others have doctorates. Formal education by itself does not adequately prepare school board members for their specific functions. Accordingly, many argue that school board training and education should be mandatory for all school board members.

In the 1970s board members attended a national convention, but relatively few attended systematic and targeted programs of continuing education. By 2001, however, more half of the states required mandatory training for school board members. Typically, the school board member must participate in some recognized form of continuing education for a specified number of hours per year. In a study conducted by Marilyn Grady and Bernita Krumm in 1996, it was determined that of forty-three states in the study, ten states had mandatory training for school board members and thirty-two had voluntary training. In some states, if members do not attend training they could lose their seat on the school board. Often they are compensated for attendance at these required continuing education programs. The programs are provided by state school boards association or other recognized school board agencies such as the National School Boards Association or the Council of Urban Boards of Education.

Orientation

As part of school board training, new school board members need orientation. New board members join a board of existing members who are continuing their service and who have developed a culture and context for their decision-making process. It is important that new school board members understand substantive information on school programs and operations. Without pre-service or orientation programs, it will take at least two years of school board service before board members gain the background and confidence to perform effectively and confidently.

Content of Education

The key topics offered in state training included education law, finance, and board-superintendent relations. Other topics included negotiations, curriculum management, labor relations, policy development, roles and responsibilities, leadership, legislation, community relations, strategic planning, and special education.

A significant new dimension to school board training is acquainting the school board members with research-based information. The data available to educators to support and assess educational programs is extensive. Many school board members are not accustomed to

consulting research materials to inform their decisions. Solid information can also form the foundation for alternative solutions and provide the basis for choosing the best option.

In 2000 the National School Boards Association urged school boards to concentrate on raising student achievement by focusing on eight key areas: vision; standards; assessment; accountability; alignment; climate; collaborative relationships; and continuous improvement. This position undergirds the need for adequate school board training on issues of student expectations, achievement, testing, assessment, and accountability. A school board member also needs to be able to respond to questions from the press regarding achievement measures and the school board's assessment of its progress toward meeting its district's measurable goals.

One of the key challenges for school board education is not only to define its objectives and mission, but also to stay focused on these key issues. Even though many school boards attempt to concentrate on student performance and achievement, in some circumstances, boards might devote a minimum amount of their time to these critical issues. To forestall this, there must be a change in governance structure, culture, and agenda of boards so that they will remain focused on student achievement and performance.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the role of local boards of education received scrutiny. Although most observers acknowledge that school boards have an important role in maintaining involvement of local citizens and in governing local schools, some confusion regarding the specific functions of boards persists.

In response to the changing demands on school boards, a National School Boards Association task force identified four core decision-making functions that are fundamental to a school system's accountability:

1. The establishment of a long-term vision for the school system.
2. The establishment and maintenance of a basic organizational structure for the school system, including employment of a superintendent, adoption of an annual budget, adoption of governance policies, and creation of a climate that promotes excellence.
3. The establishment of systems and processes to ensure accountability to the community, including fiscal accountability, accountability for programs and student outcomes, staff accountability, and collective bargaining.
4. Advocacy on behalf of children in public education at the community, state, and national levels.

Training Activities

According to one study, the most common type of activities for training were annual conventions, orientations for new members, regional meetings, board president training sessions, and some summer and winter conferences. Other activities include the reading of appropriate literature, discussions of important issues, visiting schools, and board self-evaluations.

In order to encourage continuing education and training, state associations utilized awards for board members who completed extensive training. The more hours earned in a continuing

education, the higher the award to the board member. Further, state school board associations select a "school board of the year" composed of members from the state who have demonstrated leadership including commitment to continuing education.

Superintendents play an important role in training of school board members. They can supply members with position papers, provide members with options and best practice research, conduct special briefing sessions on key issues, and model continuing improvement in the area of professional development.

School board education requires balancing issues of structure such as board–superintendent relations and education law with issues of student achievement and accountability that are part of the national agenda in the early twenty-first century.

See also: [EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP](#); [NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION](#); [SCHOOL BOARD RELATIONS](#); [SUPERINTENDENT OF LARGE-CITY SCHOOL SYSTEMS](#); [SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS](#).

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Additional Topics

[School Boards - Selection And Education Of Members](#)

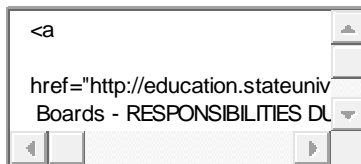
Local control of public education, grounded in the federal constitution, is exercised through local school boards. Although they enjoy some autonomy, local school boards are the product of state legislatures with enumerated powers. The federal government, state legislature, and state boards of education also make policy decisions affecting local schools. In 2000 about 95,000 school board members a...

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