

B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS

Those who govern and administer the Commonwealth's public schools must share a vision, a clear purpose, and the ability and courage to lead.

Communication is the centerpiece of effective school committee-superintendent relationships and is the foundation that will nurture a climate conducive to growth. When roles are clear and relationships are sound, communities feel a sense of confidence in their school leadership which in turn enhances the education of all students in the community.

Strong collaborative leadership from school committees and superintendents must be a driving force in dealing with the direct and indirect challenges facing our society and our schools. A superintendent must display excellence as an educational leader, be politically sophisticated, aware of and active in legislative developments, possess an extensive knowledge of federal and state laws, and personify effective communication.

A school committee must be responsive to its constituencies in governance, sensitive to the diverse needs of all learners, an advocate for students and learning before the people of the community and, as such, a vigorous ambassador for public education before all citizens.

Procedures, determined locally in each school system, should be reviewed annually to assure compliance with current policy.

Harmonious and productive relationships between school committees and superintendents will flourish if two-way communication is established and maintained. Such teamwork will work to enhance and improve the Commonwealth's schools, enriching the lives of all Massachusetts students.

After reviewing American Association of School Administrators and National School Boards Association documents regarding clear roles and responsibilities for school committees and superintendents, the Center for Public School Leadership has merged educational reform and Massachusetts Department of Education guidelines to create a document reflective of current school governance in Massachusetts. It is our hope that this document will provide a starting point for local discussion of these important issues.

*Prepared in Collaboration with The Center for Public School Leadership:
Massachusetts Association of School Committees
Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
Bridgewater State College*

POLICY

School Committee:

- Establish and periodically review educational goals and policies for the schools in the district, consistent with the requirements of law and the statewide goals and standards established by the Board of Education. This is the primary role of the school committee. Policies should be reflective of the fact that the school committee has oversight of and responsibility for the school system, the direction in which the system must go, and establish criteria to determine if its goals and policies are being met.

Superintendent:

- Develop and inform the committee of administrative procedures required to implement committee policies.
- Present policy options along with specific recommendations to the school committee when circumstances require the committee to adopt new policies or review existing policies.

FINANCE

School Committee:

- Review and approve a budget for education in the district according to a process and timeline developed with the superintendent.
- Work to ensure that necessary funds are appropriated for the district and that a balance is maintained between needs and resources in the distribution of available monies.
- Oversee the operation of the annual school budget.

Superintendent:

- Develop a timeline and recommend to the school committee the system's educational goals and annual school budget
- Oversee the operation of the annual school budget.
- Provide periodic updates to school committee.
- Provide early notice of any potential budget overruns.

STAFFING

School Committee:

- Appoint the superintendent.
- Hire legal counsel.
- Appoint the assistant/associate superintendents, school business administrator, administrator of special education, school physicians and registered nurses (unless employees of the Board of Health), and supervisors of attendance, upon recommendation of the superintendent. Consent to hiring based on the superintendent's recommendation should not be unreasonably withheld.
- Set compensation for the superintendent and overall compensation limits for assistant/associate superintendents, school business administrator, administrator of special education, school physicians and registered nurses, legal counsel, supervisors of attendance, school principals, and other administrators not assigned to particular schools.
- Prescribe additional qualifications for educator positions, beyond basic certification.
- Discipline or terminate the employment of the superintendent, in accordance with state law and the terms of the contract of employment. Terminate employment of legal counsel.

Superintendent:

- Appoint, discipline and discharge administrators, principals, and staff not assigned to particular schools.
- Review and approve principal's hires of all teachers, athletic coaches and other personnel assigned to a particular school, consistent with district personnel policies and budgetary restrictions. Initiate or review and approve discipline or discharge of staff.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

School Committee:

- Act as employer of school employees for collective bargaining purposes.
- Designate a negotiator or negotiating team.
- Receive advice from superintendent about educational consequences of bargaining positions.

Superintendent:

- Serve as a resource in collective bargaining.
- Assure adherence to all collective bargaining agreements.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

School Committee:

- Establish, upon the recommendation of the superintendent, the performance standards for teachers and other employees of the school district.
- Evaluate the performance of the superintendent.
- Conduct self-evaluation of the committee's effectiveness in meeting its stated goals and performing its role in public school governance.

Superintendent:

- Assure the evaluation of personnel and provide training for evaluators in harmony with district policy.
- Develop performance standards for all staff that are in keeping with school committee policy, contractual agreements and educational goals of the district.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

School Committee:

- Adopt a professional development plan for all principals, teachers and other professional staff employed by the district.
- Provide and encourage resources for school committee professional development programs that will enable school leaders to have the knowledge and skills required to provide effective policy leadership for the school system.

Superintendent:

- Implement the professional development plan adopted by the school committee for professional staff.
- Ensure that professional development activities are available to all school department employees.

SCHOOL COUNCILS

School Committee:

- Review and approve an annual school improvement plan for each school in the district.
- Provide and encourage resources for school council professional development programs that will enable council members to have the knowledge and skills required to provide effective educational leadership.

Superintendent:

- Review with principals the role of school councils and relevant activities.

ADVOCACY

School Committee:

- Engage in advocacy on behalf of students and their schools and promote the benefits of a public school system to the community.
- Work closely, when appropriate, with other Governmental agencies and bodies.
- Collaborate with other school committees through state and national school committee associations to let state legislators, members of Congress, and all other appropriate state and federal officials know of local concerns and issues.

Superintendent:

- Engage in advocacy on behalf of students and their schools and promote the benefits of a public school system to the community.
- Collaborate with other administrators through national and state professional associations to inform state legislators, members of Congress, and other appropriate state and federal officials on local concerns and issues.
- Work with local and state officials to garner support for a fair and sound school budget that encompasses jointly developed committee-administration goals and priorities.

CURRICULUM

School Committee:

- Approve major adoption or revision of curriculum and textbooks upon recommendation of the superintendent.

Superintendent:

- Ensure a process for the development and continual refinement of the curriculum.
- Recommend major adoptions of courses or textbooks.

GOVERNANCE

School Committee:

- Establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district, consistent with the requirement of law and the statewide goals and standards established by the Board of Education.
- Delegate to the superintendent the responsibilities for all administrative functions.
- Act only as a body as prescribed by law and not as individual members.

Superintendent:

- Serve as the school committee's chief executive officer and preeminent educational advisor in all efforts of the committee to fulfill its school system governance role.
- Serve as a catalyst for the school system's administrative leadership team.
- Propose and initiate a process for long range and strategic planning that will engage the committee and the community in positioning the school system for success in ensuing years.
- Ensure that the school system provides equal opportunity for all students and staff.

COMMUNICATION

School Committee:

- Support the development and promotion of the vision, mission, goals and strategies of the school system.
- Review prior to all school committee meetings the information provided by the superintendent and when possible communicate any questions or concerns to the superintendent prior to the meeting to provide an opportunity for a response.
- Consult and confer with the superintendent on all matters as they arise that concern the school system, and on which the school committee may take action.
- Maintain open communication between the community and the schools by scheduling public meetings on a regular basis.
- Support the superintendent in all matters that conform to committee policy.

Superintendent:

- Keep all school committee members informed about school operations and programs. Identify and articulate the needs of the school system to the school committee.
- Develop and promote a plan for achieving the mission, vision, goals and strategies of the school system.
- Provide all school committee members with appropriate background information in advance of each committee meeting.
- Develop and implement a continuing plan for working with the news media.
- Be aware of all aspects of Massachusetts education law and share all changes or amendments with the school committee in a timely fashion.
- Share responsibility with the school committee for open communication and honest discourse. Maintain open communication between the community and the schools.