

A Guide to Effective Utah School Boards



Foreword

School board members are elected to represent the community and advocate for all public education students. This guide, produced by the Utah School Boards Association is based on best practice and research, and is designed for Local School Boards to use as a common framework of excellence in planning and carrying out effective school board meetings.

State laws that govern the meetings of public bodies are constantly amended by the legislature and subject to frequent interpretation by the courts. Therefore, for information regarding these laws, please rely on your local attorney or on publications that are frequently updated such as "[Convening Meetings Which Are Open to the Public](#)", updated by **Burbidge, Van Komen, Tanner & Scruggs**.

USBA Mission: Building Better Boards

USBA Vision: The Utah School Boards Association shall provide leadership training, member services, and advocacy for effective school board governance.

Belief Statements:

1. Public education provides opportunities for all children.
2. Public education's success depends on public support.
3. A sustained financial commitment is essential to public education.
4. Locally elected nonpartisan school boards best represent local education needs.
5. Effective local school boards influence student achievement when collaborating with parents, students, and the education community.
6. Multiple land use provides funding for public education.
7. School trust lands must be managed for the benefit of all Utah students in perpetuity.
8. Legislation should support excellence in public education.

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1. Why is it important to hold an effective school board meeting?

Effective school board meetings are crucial for several reasons:

- **Decision Making:** School board meetings are where important decisions are made regarding policies, budget allocations, curriculum changes, personnel matters, and other critical aspects that impact the school and its stakeholders. Effective meetings ensure that decisions are well-informed, transparent, and beneficial to the school community.
- **Accountability and Oversight:** Board meetings provide a platform for overseeing the school's operations, ensuring that policies and procedures are followed, and resources are allocated appropriately. Effective meetings facilitate discussions that hold administrators accountable for their actions and decisions.
- **Community Engagement and Transparency:** These meetings offer opportunities for community members, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to engage with the school board, express concerns, offer suggestions, and gain insight into the decision-making processes. Transparency in meetings fosters trust and confidence in the school's leadership.
- **Strategic Planning and Vision Setting:** School board meetings often involve discussions about the school's long-term goals, vision, and strategic direction. Effective meetings enable meaningful conversations that shape the school's future and ensure alignment with its mission.
- **Efficiency and Productivity:** Well-run meetings with clear agendas and effective facilitation techniques result in productive discussions, efficient use of time, and better outcomes. They help prevent tangential discussions and keep the focus on important matters.
- **Legal and Compliance Requirements:** School boards have legal responsibilities and compliance requirements. Effective meetings ensure that these obligations are met, records are maintained accurately, and necessary procedures are followed, reducing the risk of legal issues.
- **Continuous Improvement:** By evaluating meeting effectiveness and seeking feedback, school boards can continuously improve their processes, communication, and decision-making, leading to better outcomes for the school and its stakeholders.

In summary, effective school board meetings play a vital role in governance, decision-making, accountability, community engagement, and the overall success of the

educational institution. They serve as a platform to address challenges, set goals, and create a positive impact on the school community.

2. How do I hold an effective school board meeting?

To conduct an effective school board meeting, consider the following steps and strategies:

Preparation:

- **Agenda Creation:** Develop a comprehensive agenda outlining the topics to be discussed. Allocate appropriate time for each agenda item.
- **Documentation:** Gather all necessary documents, reports, and presentations related to agenda items. Distribute these materials to board members in advance to allow for thorough review.
- **Venue and Technology:** Ensure the meeting space is set up with necessary technology for presentations, if applicable. If it's a virtual meeting, verify that the chosen platform is functional and accessible to all participants.
- **Time Management:** Establish a realistic timeframe for each agenda item to maintain meeting efficiency.

Communication:

- **Advance Notice:** Notify all board members and stakeholders of the meeting date, time, and agenda well in advance to allow for scheduling and preparation.
- **Expectations:** Clearly communicate meeting expectations, including participation guidelines, roles, and responsibilities.

Facilitation during the Meeting:

- **Punctuality:** Start the meeting on time to respect the schedules of attendees.
- **Introduction:** Begin with a brief introduction, outlining the agenda and any protocols for the meeting.
- **Engage Participants:** Encourage active participation and discussion among board members while ensuring everyone has the opportunity to express their viewpoints.
- **Manage Discussions:** Keep discussions focused on the agenda items. Encourage constructive dialogue and ensure that all perspectives are heard.

- **Decision Making:** Guide the board through decision-making processes, ensuring clarity on actions to be taken and assigning responsibilities as needed.
- **Note-taking:** Designate someone to take accurate meeting minutes, recording key decisions, action items, and assigned tasks.

Maintain Order and Respect:

- **Meeting Etiquette:** Establish and enforce meeting etiquette to ensure respectful communication and interaction among attendees.
- **Conflict Resolution:** If conflicts arise, address them calmly and professionally. Redirect the conversation back to the agenda items and meeting objectives.

Follow-up Actions:

- **Summary of Decisions:** At the meeting's conclusion, summarize key decisions, action points, and responsibilities to ensure clarity and consensus.
- **Assign Tasks:** Clearly assign follow-up tasks to specific individuals, outlining deadlines and expectations.
- **Progress Review:** Regularly review and track the progress of action items in subsequent meetings to ensure accountability.

Evaluation and Improvement:

- **Feedback:** Encourage feedback from board members to assess meeting effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Evaluation:** Periodically evaluate meeting efficiency and effectiveness to make necessary adjustments for future meetings.

Adaptability and flexibility are essential, as unforeseen circumstances or urgent matters might require adjustments to the agenda or meeting dynamics. By implementing these strategies, you can facilitate productive and efficient school board meetings that contribute to the school's success.

3. What behaviors in school board meetings are destructive?

Several behaviors in school board meetings can be destructive and hinder the effectiveness of the meeting and the board's overall functionality. Some of these destructive behaviors include:

- **Disruptive or Disrespectful Conduct:** Interruptions, side conversations, or disrespectful behavior towards other board members, staff, or meeting participants can disrupt the meeting flow and undermine a constructive atmosphere.
- **Personal Attacks or Hostility:** Engaging in personal attacks, confrontational behavior, or using hostile language towards other board members, staff, or stakeholders can create a toxic environment that hampers productive discussions and decision-making.
- **Dominating Discussions:** When a member monopolizes discussions, constantly interrupts others, or refuses to listen to different viewpoints, it can prevent diverse perspectives from being heard and stifle healthy debate.
- **Ignoring Meeting Etiquette:** Disregarding established meeting protocols, such as speaking out of turn, not adhering to time limits, or not following the meeting agenda, can lead to inefficiency and a lack of focus on important agenda items.
- **Lack of Preparation or Engagement:** Board members who consistently come unprepared, fail to review meeting materials beforehand, or show disinterest in participating actively can hinder meaningful discussions and decision-making processes.
- **Micromanaging or Overstepping Boundaries:** Board members who excessively involve themselves in day-to-day operational matters rather than focusing on governance responsibilities can disrupt the administration's ability to manage effectively.
- **Conflict Escalation and Unresolved Disputes:** Allowing conflicts to escalate without resolution or continually revisiting past disputes can create tension and prevent the board from moving forward on important issues.
- **Non-Constructive Criticism without Solutions:** Constantly criticizing without providing constructive solutions or alternatives can hinder progress and create a negative atmosphere within the board and the broader school community.
- **Lack of Respect for Roles and Responsibilities:** Not respecting the roles and responsibilities of other board members, school administrators, or stakeholders can lead to a breakdown in trust and collaboration.
- **Violating Confidentiality:** Sharing sensitive or confidential information discussed in closed sessions or using privileged information inappropriately can erode trust among board members and compromise the integrity of the board.

Addressing and mitigating these destructive behaviors through clear communication, adherence to meeting protocols, promoting a culture of respect and collaboration, and holding members accountable for their conduct are essential for fostering a positive and productive environment during school board meetings.

4. What is the best way to create an agenda for a school board meeting?

The responsibility for shaping the content of board meetings' agendas falls on the board president. Working in consultation with the president, the superintendent is tasked with preparing the agendas. Within these agendas, a section known as the consent agenda is designated for items that typically do not warrant discussion before board action. Any board member has the right to request the removal of an item from the consent agenda for separate consideration.

School board members can submit items to the superintendent or president for potential inclusion on the agenda. If a topic arises during a meeting from a member of the public that isn't on the agenda, the board may discuss it at the discretion of the president, but no final action can be taken (Utah Code [§52-4-202\(6\)\(b\)](#)).

Ahead of each meeting (except in emergency situations), the superintendent must provide each school board member with a copy of the agenda, containing sufficient data and background information.

Regarding the order of business at regular school board meetings, the board president has the authority to determine it. However, with the consent of the majority of present members, the order of business can be altered at any meeting.

Creating an effective agenda for a school board meeting involves careful planning and consideration of key topics that require discussion or decision-making. Here are steps to create a comprehensive agenda:

Identify Priority Topics:

- Review ongoing initiatives, pending decisions, upcoming events, budget updates, policy changes, personnel matters, and any pressing issues relevant to the school's governance.
- Consider input from board members, school administrators, staff, and stakeholders regarding agenda items.

Organize Agenda Items:

- Prioritize agenda items based on urgency, importance, and relevance to the school's mission and objectives.
- Group related topics together to streamline discussions and decision-making.

Time Allocation:

- Estimate the time needed for each agenda item realistically. Allocate more time for complex or critical topics and shorter durations for routine matters.
- Ensure the agenda allows for adequate discussion without overrunning the meeting schedule.

Include Standard Agenda Sections:

- Start with standard items such as approval of previous meeting minutes, reports from school administrators, financial updates, and new business.
- Consider including time for public comment or input if it's a regular part of the board meeting.

Distribute Meeting Materials:

- Gather relevant documents, reports, presentations, or proposals related to each agenda item.
- Distribute these materials to board members in advance, allowing sufficient time for review and preparation.

Consult with Key Stakeholders:

- Reach out to school administrators, staff, parent-teacher organizations, or community representatives to gather input on agenda items that may affect them directly.

Review and Finalize:

- Share the draft agenda with board members for feedback and input. Consider any necessary revisions based on their suggestions.
- Ensure the final agenda is structured logically and clearly outlines the sequence of topics to be discussed.

Communicate the Agenda:

- Circulate the final agenda to all board members and relevant stakeholders well in advance of the meeting date.
- Emphasize the meeting's objectives, expectations, and any specific actions required from attendees.

Flexibility and Adaptability:

- Remain open to adjustments or additions to the agenda if urgent matters arise before the meeting. Include provisions for addressing unforeseen issues during the meeting if necessary.

Review Meeting Effectiveness:

- After the meeting, assess the effectiveness of the agenda by gathering feedback from board members and stakeholders. Use this feedback to improve future agendas and meetings.

Creating an effective agenda involves a balance between addressing essential matters, allowing for meaningful discussions, and respecting the time of all participants. A well-structured agenda sets the tone for productive school board meetings and ensures that crucial matters are addressed efficiently.

4.1 Example Agenda (from [Alpine School District](#))

ORDER OF MEETING PROCEDURE

- Call to Order
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Inspirational Thought or Reflection
- Recognitions
- Community Comments
- Approval of Minutes
- Claims
- Routine Business - May include but is not limited to:
 - Budget Summary
 - Alpine Foundation Board Summary
 - Personnel Hiring and Releases
 - LEA Specific Licenses
 - Student Trip Request
- Action Items
- Discussion/Action Items
- Discussion Items
- Board Member and Superintendent Reports and Information Items
- Adjournment or Roll Call for Closed Session as needed to discuss
 - Personnel,
 - Property,
 - Litigation, and
 - Collective Bargaining

4.2 Consent Agenda

A consent agenda is a practice used in meetings, including school board meetings, to streamline the approval process for routine or non-controversial items. It's a way to

group together various items that are typically considered routine or administrative in nature and that are expected to be approved without any extensive discussion or debate.

In a school board meeting, the consent agenda often includes items such as:

- Meeting minutes from previous meetings.
- Routine financial reports or budgetary items.
- Personnel actions (such as hiring or resignations) for positions that don't require extensive discussion.
- Routine contracts, agreements, or purchases that are within the board's pre-approved limits.
- Other non-controversial matters that the board expects will meet unanimous or near-unanimous approval.

During the meeting, the chair or the board secretary will present the consent agenda to the board members. They'll ask if any member wishes to pull an item from the consent agenda for individual discussion and vote. If no board member requests to pull any items, the entire consent agenda is usually approved with a single vote.

This process helps save time during meetings, allowing the board to focus on more significant or contentious issues while efficiently handling routine matters. However, if any board member feels an item on the consent agenda requires discussion or further consideration, they have the opportunity to request its removal for separate deliberation and vote.

The specific items included in a consent agenda may vary from one school board meeting to another based on the agenda and the needs of the district.

5. Constructing a Calendar

Constructing a school board calendar involves planning and scheduling various meetings, events, and important milestones throughout the academic year. Here's a step-by-step guide on how a school board might construct its calendar:

- **Identify Key Dates and Events:** Begin by identifying significant dates and events such as regular board meetings, special sessions, budget meetings, school holidays, state testing dates, and any other important district-wide events.
- **Consult Stakeholders:** Consider input from various stakeholders including board members, school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. Gather their input on the preferred timing and frequency of meetings or events.
- **Establish a Meeting Schedule:** Determine the regular meeting schedule for the school board. Decide on the frequency of meetings (e.g., monthly, bi-monthly) and the days/times that work best for board members and the community.
- **Allocate Time for Specific Topics:** Allocate specific meeting dates for discussions or decisions on critical topics such as budget approvals, curriculum changes, policy reviews, and community engagement.
- **Consider Seasonal Factors:** Take into account seasonal factors that might impact school operations, such as the start and end of the academic year, breaks (summer, winter, spring), testing periods, and major school events like graduation ceremonies.
- **Budget Planning:** Ensure that the budget planning process aligns with the calendar, allowing sufficient time for budget discussions, public input, and final approvals before the fiscal year begins.
- **Publish and Communicate the Calendar:** Once the calendar is constructed, publish it in a format accessible to the public. This might include posting it on the school district website, distributing it to board members and school staff, and informing the community through newsletters or announcements.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Remain flexible and open to modifications if unforeseen circumstances arise or if changes are needed based on community feedback or emergent issues.
- **Evaluation and Review:** Periodically review the calendar to assess its effectiveness and make adjustments as necessary. Solicit feedback from board members and stakeholders to ensure the calendar meets the needs of the district.

Constructing a school board calendar involves collaboration, strategic planning, and consideration of the diverse needs of the school community. It's important to strike a balance between setting a structured schedule and allowing flexibility to accommodate changes or unforeseen events.

6. Some Legal Requirements

Utah school board meetings must be planned and conducted in compliance with state law. The following is a review of the broad statutory requirements. Many of the issues raised here should already be addressed in local school board policies or covered by the advice of local legal counsel. NOTE: Laws regulating school board meetings are continually changing. Therefore, this book should not be treated as authoritative on matters of law. Rather, any question involving the law should be taken up with your board's attorney.

6.1 The Open Meetings Law

Public policy in Utah requires that meetings of all public bodies, including school board meetings, be conducted openly. The Open and Public Meetings Act requires that, except in an emergency, all meetings be held at times and places convenient to the public and provides for public notice of all meetings.

Utah law also requires that school board meetings be held within the boundaries of the local district, except in the event of a disaster or to conduct a site visit pertaining to the education program (during which no final decisions shall be made). A quorum of the school board must be present to conduct business at any meeting. (A quorum for a seven-member school board is four members. A quorum for a five-member board is three.)

The Open and Public Meetings Act applies to more than official meetings where business is transacted. Board discussions leading up to formal decisions, as well as the voting itself, must be conducted in public. Particular topics may be discussed in closed meetings, but other requirements of the Open and Public Meetings Act apply to these meetings as well.

In general, Utah law recognizes several types of meetings at which business is transacted: regular, special, reconvened, emergency, closed, and rescheduled meetings. All school board meetings, whether open or closed, must satisfy the notice and record-keeping requirements contained in the Open and Public Meetings Act.

6.2 Annual meeting schedule

Most school board business is completed at regular meetings held in accordance with a prearranged schedule. The Open and Public Meetings Act provides that if a board

schedules regular meetings on an annual basis, it must give notice of the time and place of those meetings.

The Open and Public Meetings Act requires a school board, at the beginning of each fiscal or calendar year, to give public notice of the schedule of its regular meetings, including the date, time, and place of those meetings. The calendar of board meetings should be posted at the district administrative office, placed on the district website, provided to a newspaper of general circulation in the district or a local media correspondent, and posted on the Utah Public Notice Website. Boards must also give notice of their meetings to the mayor (or mayor's designee) for each municipality located entirely or partly within the district and to the appropriate county official for any unincorporated areas of the district.

6.3 Individual meetings

In addition to the meetings on the annual schedule, a school board may also schedule special meetings or reschedule a meeting on the annual schedule to another date. Whether a particular meeting is included on the annual schedule or not, the board must give public notice of each individual meeting, at least 24 hours in advance, by posting the date, time, location, and agenda for the meeting at the district office or at the location where the meeting will be held and on the Utah Public Notice Website.

Notice of each meeting must also be given to either one newspaper of general circulation within the district or a local media correspondent and to the mayor (or mayor's designee) for each municipality located entirely or partly within the district and to the appropriate county official for any unincorporated areas of the district. The agenda must be reasonably specific about the topics to be considered, and each topic must be listed under an agenda item.

6.4 Rescheduled meetings

A school board is at liberty to reschedule a regular meeting or to change its regular meeting schedule. However, public notice of any such changes must be given as set forth above.

6.5 Reconvened meetings

A reconvened meeting is a continuation of a regular or special meeting. When the board is not able to complete its work within a reasonable length of time or by an agreed-upon

closing time, or when more information is needed, the board may adjourn the meeting to a specified day and time when the meeting can be continued.

Proper adjournment to a later time may be accomplished by adopting a motion, such as: "I move that this meeting is temporarily adjourned to reconvene on January 17, 2021, at 7:30 p.m., in the Board of Education Office."

A reconvened meeting may be further adjourned any number of times, as long as the final meeting can be traced through the minutes back to a regular or special meeting. Obviously, it would rarely make sense to adjourn a regular meeting to a date beyond the next regular meeting date.

Notice of a reconvened meeting should be given in the same manner as notice of an individual meeting.

6.6 Emergency meetings

If faced with an emergency requiring immediate attention, the school board can call an emergency meeting as long as an attempt to contact all board members is made, a majority agree to hold the meeting and the district provides the best public notice possible of the time and place of the meeting and the topics to be considered.

6.7 Study sessions

Regular meetings are typically devoted to recurring business matters; special meetings often are called for specific issues or study sessions. Some school boards employ a "retreat" concept to emphasize the focus on discussion as opposed to formal action or decision-making.

Such sessions are entirely lawful as long as all statutory requirements are met for such matters as location, notice, agenda, and record keeping. The board should ensure that all meetings, including study sessions or "retreats" are scheduled for times and places convenient to the public.

6.8 Closed meetings

School board business is public business that must be deliberated in meetings open to the public. The Open and Public Meetings Act, however, provides exceptions. By adopting a proper motion, and voice vote, the school board may convene in a closed meeting to discuss certain specific topics listed in the law.

Closing a meeting does not waive any public notice requirements, whether it is a special meeting or part of a regular meeting. Moreover, final actions must be taken in an open meeting; the closed session is limited to discussion.

6.8.1 Authorized Reasons for Closed Meetings:

- Discussion of the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual;
- Strategy sessions to discuss collective bargaining;
- Strategy sessions to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation;
- Strategy sessions to discuss the purchase, exchange, or lease of real property when public discussion of the transaction would disclose the value of the property or prevent the school board from completing the transaction on the best possible terms;
- Strategy sessions to discuss the sale of real estate when:
 - Public discussion of the transaction would disclose the value of the property or prevent the board from completing the transaction on the best possible terms; and
 - The board has previously given notice that the property would be offered for sale; and
 - The terms of the sale are publicly disclosed before the board approves the sale;
- For purposes of procurement when the board is acting as an evaluation committee or as protest officer or when it is necessary for the board to consider trade secret or other nonpublic information as part of a procurement process; or"
- Discussion regarding deployment of security personnel, devices, or systems; or
- Investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal conduct.

6.9 Verbatim recordings

School boards must keep a verbatim audio or audio and video recording of most types of closed meetings, and may also make and keep minutes of the meeting. However, if the meeting deals exclusively with the character, performance, or ability of individuals or the deployment of security personnel and devices, no recording is required. The recordings and minutes are privileged under state law but may be reviewed by a judge in the case of legal proceedings related to the Open and Public Meetings Act.

6.10 Public hearings

Utah school boards may hold hearings. Some hearings are typically held in closed sessions, such as hearings relating to a student expulsion case or employee discipline or termination. Public hearings, on the other hand, include a variety of hearings required by law to allow citizens to voice their concerns and opinions. Examples include budget hearings, boundary-change hearings, and hearings initiated by school boards to obtain public input on key issues.

Public hearings are open meetings conducted by the local board of education to present information and gather public comment. As noted, many such hearings are necessary to satisfy legal requirements in state law or state board of education regulations. Unlike regular public meetings at which the citizenry generally observe members of the board as they conduct business, a hearing is explicitly designed to gather citizen viewpoints.

School boards are advised to consult with legal counsel to determine when they may be required to conduct public hearings. Required hearings include such matters as school district budget adoption; tax levies that require truth-in-taxation hearings; amendment of a tax levy; and proposed school closures or school boundary changes.

6.11 Agendas

The Open and Public Meetings Act requires that an agenda be posted at least 24 hours before each meeting. The school board may, at the discretion of the presiding board member, discuss items not listed on the agenda if members of the public raise such items during a meeting. Final action may not be taken on a matter not on the agenda. In the context of emergency meetings, where the notice of topics given was the best notice practicable, circumstances may permit the school board to take action on items not listed on the agenda.

6.12 Web publishing of notices

The Open and Public Meetings Act encourages school districts to make public notices available by electronic means, especially to reporters. Public notices of meetings must be posted on the Utah Public Notice Website. That website will enable newspapers or media correspondents to subscribe to notices. If a notice has been sent to a qualifying newspaper or media correspondent under such a subscription, the requirement of notice to the media has been satisfied.

6.13 Minutes of meetings

The Open and Public Meetings Act requires the school board to keep an audio or audio and video recording and written minutes of all open meetings, other than site visits or traveling tours, and an audio or audio and video recording of all closed meetings except for closed meetings held only to discuss an individual's character, competence, or health or to discuss security arrangements. The Open and Public Meetings Act requires that minutes include:

- the date, time and place of the meeting; school board members recorded as either present or absent;
- the substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided by the board, which may include a summary of comments made by board members;
- a record, by individual members of each vote taken;
- the name of each person who was recognized by the presiding board member and presented testimony or comments to the board and the substance, in brief, of such testimony or comments;
- the vote of each member present when a vote is taken to hold a closed meeting or portion of a meeting, the reason for the closed meeting, and the location of the closed meeting;
- any other information a board member requests to be included, as long as
- such information is a record of the proceedings of the meeting.

School board minutes also should include a record of all motions, the member making the motion, and the second.

Minutes are listed at "DRAFT" minutes after a meeting until approved at the next meeting of the board. The minutes will then be presented to the school board at the next board meeting for any necessary corrections and approval. Minutes of an open meeting must be posted to the public notice website within three business days after the board has approved them. Minutes of a closed meeting are privileged. All minutes are subject to GRAMA laws.

6.14 Public recordings

The Open and Public Meetings Act provides that any person may record any public school board meeting by film or tape or other means, subject only to "reasonable rules" of the school board. Boards usually make rules to ensure that the recording process does not interfere with the meeting or the rights of other parties. Reasonable requests for special support, such as seating, writing surfaces, lighting, and access to electrical power, should be accommodated.

Public access television stations may record and broadcast local school board meetings. Boards may welcome this as one more way to connect with their communities.

6.15 Use of electronic message transmissions

The use of electronic messages (email, text, etc.) by members of school boards raises several Open and Public Meetings Act questions. Although board members can use electronic messages lawfully for certain purposes, they may not be used to conduct board business, unless the board has adopted a rule authorizing an electronic meeting that makes use of electronic messages as provided by law.

Limiting board member electronic messages to disseminating information and messages that do not involve deliberation, debate, or decision-making will help to avoid Open and Public Meetings Act violations. If so authorized, board member electronic messages could contain the following types of content:

- agenda item suggestions (but not discussion of whether to add the item to the agenda);
- reminders regarding meeting times, dates, and places;
- board meeting agenda or public record information concerning agenda items; or
- individual responses to questions posed by the community, administrators, or school staff.

6.16 Establishing board procedures

[State law](#) governing local school boards requires the board to “adopt rules of order and procedure to govern public meetings of the local school board” and to “make and enforce rules necessary for the control and management of the district’s schools.” It can be assumed that this duty applies to the adoption of rules or policies for the conduct of meetings. Although various laws identified in this book prescribe numerous steps that boards must follow, wide discretion remains in the actual conduct of meetings. For example, a board may, by adopting a policy on electronic meetings, allow its members to attend meetings via telephone conference or by other electronic means, call and speaker phone provided that everyone, including the public, can hear the conversation, and the board complies with all other requirements of the law.

School board members should periodically review and discuss how the board would like to operate, that is, how they have agreed to do business. These agreements should be

included in the board policy manual. While such agreements should ensure compliance with legal requirements, they should also describe procedures desired by the board, including agenda development, the election of officers, establishing priorities and goals, planning, superintendent, business administrator, and board evaluation, and the maintenance of board member relationships.

A school district should make its policies and procedures available to the public. By including board process policies in the policy manual available for public inspection, the board helps all interested parties understand how the board operates.

Many boards post their policy manuals on district websites, which makes board intentions clear to everyone and helps citizens hold board members accountable for their actions. Web-based policies can be quickly updated following board action.

7. How should a school board president plan a school board meeting?

Planning a school board meeting as the president involves several crucial steps to ensure the meeting runs smoothly, covers essential topics, and fosters productive discussions among board members. Here's a guideline on how a school board president might plan a meeting:

- **Set the Agenda:** Collaborate with the superintendent, board members, and relevant stakeholders to create a comprehensive agenda. Include items such as approval of minutes, reports from committees, presentations, discussion topics, action items, and any new business.
- **Distribute the Agenda in Advance:** Work with the Superintendent and staff to share the agenda with board members and key participants well in advance of the meeting. Providing ample time allows members to review materials, gather information, and prepare for discussions.
- **Coordinate Presentations and Reports:** Work with the superintendent and staff to coordinate presentations and reports scheduled for the meeting. Ensure presenters are briefed on the allotted time and key points to cover.
- **Establish Meeting Protocols:** Set clear meeting protocols, including rules for discussions, time limits for agenda items, procedures for public comments, and guidelines for decision-making.

- **Prepare Meeting Materials:** Ensure all necessary materials, such as reports, documents, presentations, and supporting data, are assembled and made available to board members prior to the meeting.
- **Review Legal and Procedural Requirements:** Familiarize yourself with legal requirements, bylaws, and parliamentary procedures governing the board meeting. Ensure compliance with Open Meeting laws and other relevant regulations.
- **Facilitate Pre-Meeting Discussions:** Engage in discussions with the superintendent, committee chairs, and board members before the meeting to address any concerns, clarify agenda items, and gather input.
- **Manage Meeting Logistics:** Arrange the logistics for the meeting, including the meeting room setup, audio-visual equipment, seating arrangements, and any other necessary arrangements.
- **Start and Facilitate the Meeting:** As the meeting begins, call the meeting to order, follow the agenda, facilitate discussions, manage time, and maintain order throughout the proceedings.
- **Encourage Participation and Collaboration:** Encourage active participation from all board members, ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard while maintaining a respectful and constructive atmosphere.
- **Guide Decision-Making Process:** Guide the board through the decision-making process, ensuring that discussions are focused, relevant information is considered, and decisions are made effectively.
- **Conclude the Meeting Professionally:** Summarize key decisions, action items, and next steps at the end of the meeting. Set deadlines for follow-up actions and adjourn the meeting in an orderly manner.
- **Seek Feedback:** After the meeting, gather feedback from board members and stakeholders to assess the meeting's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

A well-planned and effectively conducted school board meeting can contribute significantly to the governance and success of the school district. Communication, preparation, and adherence to established procedures are key responsibilities of the school board president in planning and leading such meetings.

7.1 School Board Meeting Security

Security measures for a school board meeting are essential to ensure the safety of attendees, maintain order, and prevent potential disruptions. Here are some effective security measures that can be implemented:

Security Staff Presence:

- Ensure the presence of trained security personnel or law enforcement officers to respond to any security concerns swiftly.

Emergency Response Plan:

- Develop and communicate an emergency response plan that outlines procedures for different scenarios, such as disruptions, protests, medical emergencies, or security threats.

Crowd Management:

- Arrange seating to ensure clear aisles and walkways for easy movement and to prevent overcrowding.
- Clearly communicate meeting rules and expectations to attendees to maintain order and minimize disruptions.

Communication and Coordination:

- Establish clear communication channels among security personnel, staff, and law enforcement to facilitate prompt responses to any security incidents or concerns.

Regular Security Assessments and Updates:

- Conduct regular security assessments of meeting venues and procedures, making necessary updates and improvements based on identified vulnerabilities or changing security needs.

Implementing comprehensive security measures for school board meetings helps create a safe and secure environment for all attendees and contributes to the smooth conduct of meetings.

7.2. How to make a school board meeting interesting

Making a school board meeting interesting involves various strategies to engage participants, promote meaningful discussions, and ensure the meeting serves its purpose effectively. Here are some ways to make a school board meeting more engaging and productive:

- **Interactive Agenda Design:** Structure the agenda to include interactive components, such as engaging presentations, discussions on relevant and pressing issues, and opportunities for collaborative problem-solving.
- **Incorporate Varied Presentation Styles:** Encourage presenters to use diverse presentation styles, such as visuals, videos, infographics, or interactive tools, to convey information effectively and keep the audience engaged.

- **Highlight Student Achievements:** Dedicate a portion of the meeting to showcase student achievements, performances, or presentations, providing a direct connection to the school community's successes and talents.
- **Public Participation and Involvement:** Allocate time for public comments, allowing community members, parents, and students to share their perspectives, concerns, or ideas with the board.
- **Thematic Discussions or Workshops:** Introduce themed discussions or workshops on pertinent topics that affect the school community, encouraging collaborative brainstorming and problem-solving among board members and stakeholders.
- **Utilize Breakout Sessions or Small Group Discussions:** Divide board members into smaller groups to discuss specific agenda items or topics in more detail. This can foster more in-depth conversations and diverse perspectives.
- **Engage in Interactive Decision-Making:** Implement interactive decision-making methods, such as consensus-building exercises or polling, to involve board members actively in the decision-making process.
- **Time Management and Efficiency:** Strive to keep the meeting focused and efficient by managing time effectively, avoiding unnecessary delays, and ensuring discussions remain on track.
- **Guest Speakers or Panel Discussions:** Invite guest speakers or organize panel discussions with experts, educators, or community leaders to offer insights or expertise on relevant educational issues.
- **Celebrate Milestones or Achievements:** Acknowledge and celebrate important milestones, successes, or accomplishments within the school district or among board members.
- **Educational Workshops or Training Sessions:** Include educational sessions or workshops on topics relevant to the board's responsibilities, fostering continuous learning and professional development among members.
- **Engage Technology:** Use technology to enhance engagement, such as live polling tools, interactive presentations, or online collaboration platforms that allow real-time interaction and feedback.
- **Evaluate and Adjust:** Regularly seek feedback from board members and stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of meetings and make adjustments based on suggestions for improvement.

By incorporating these strategies, a school board meeting can become more engaging, informative, and inclusive, fostering a collaborative environment that benefits the entire school community.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 Board Members' Responsibilities

Utah Code [§53A-4](#) outlines the authority and duties of an elected local school board.

To fulfill his or her responsibilities to the students and taxpayers, each school board member must work for the welfare of all the children in the district and base decisions on what is best for the entire community. The law emphasizes that each school board is a "body corporate, with the powers and constraints of a governmental entity." Utah Code [§53G-4-401](#)(5) also states, "... an elected member of a local school board serves and represents the residents of the local school board member's district, and that service and representation may not be restricted or impaired by the local school board member's membership on, or obligations to, the local school board."

The primary day-to-day responsibility of each board member is to be prepared. This means studying every agenda and its supporting documents. Any questions or need for more information should be referred to the superintendent or board president before a meeting. If a board member has received a complaint or is dissatisfied with the agenda, he or she should call the superintendent before the meeting and try to resolve the problem. Raising issues with the superintendent or board president ahead of the meeting allows them time to develop thoughtful answers that might not be possible without time to gather information.

The board should devote most of its time to significant issues and policies. A board member who is not thoroughly prepared may be embarrassed at the meeting and cause needless delay in reaching decisions on agenda items.

School board members sometimes demand more information before voting on a challenging issue or additional time to study the matter. Board members must feel reasonably comfortable with their votes. Sometimes this means trusting the judgment of the superintendent or other staff expert, delaying a decision for further research, or recognizing that a decision must be made quickly without all the desirable facts on hand.

When a board member refuses to vote without further information, other members of the board must listen closely to determine which reason best explains the abstention:

- The abstaining member disagrees with majority sentiment and wants to block a decision.
- The member failed to adequately study the information already provided.
- It truly is advisable to postpone the decision pending further research or study.

Some other essential responsibilities for the individual board member include:

- Know and follow board policies that govern meeting procedures.
- Keep an open mind in board deliberations.
- Be prepared to compromise where possible to reach a decision the entire board can support.
- Respect the confidentiality of privileged information that is made available in closed meetings or written material from the superintendent. Leaking information to favored friends or family members violates the trust of both the board and the individuals whose reputations might be harmed.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions when you don't understand or to ask, "why?" when you don't know the reason for something.

8.2 The Board President's Responsibilities

The most visible responsibility of the school board president, of course, is to preside at meetings. The president is, first and foremost, a member of the board and therefore, is expected to participate in discussions and to vote on all motions and as any other member.

In addition to presiding at meetings, Utah law requires the board president to "appoint all committees, and sign all warrants ordered by the board to be drawn upon the business administrator for school money." (Utah Code [§53G-4-205\(1\)](#)).

Many school boards also enact policies that impose additional duties on the president. For example:

- prepare board-meeting agendas in concert with the superintendent,
- serve as the board's official spokesperson to the media.
- represent the board on other boards or agencies.

The president plays a crucial role in the successful operation of a board of education meeting. He or she sets the tone for the meeting through fair, reasonable, and impartial treatment of all members. It is critical for the board president to remain calm and keep the meeting under control which may be difficult when board meetings deal with highly controversial issues, a discussion of a routine matter suddenly becomes charged with

emotion, or when an angry speaker makes derogatory remarks about the board or superintendent.

8.2.1 Presidential effectiveness

Before each meeting, the president should confer with the superintendent to build the agenda, identify potential trouble spots, and review any items that may need additional information.

During the meeting, the president should establish a businesslike tone by adhering to the agenda and the time allocation for each item. The meeting should begin on time, proceed efficiently, and adjourn at a reasonable hour.

Private conversations and digressions among board members also should be discouraged. The president must take charge of the meeting, ensuring that the discussion stays on topic, and managing the length of individual comments. When the discussion on an agenda item exceeds a reasonable time or the time allocated (if used), the president should consider deferring a decision until further research can be conducted.

The school board should have written policies for conducting board meetings, and the board president should follow them. Policies and procedures pertaining to school board meetings should be reviewed regularly and revised as needed.

While the president is expected to vote on all matters that come before the board, some restraint is necessary to maintain the impartiality demanded of a chair. The president should not attempt to influence the board unduly. For this reason, some board policies require the president to relinquish the chair to a president pro tem in order to make or second a motion. (This should be rare.) The president should not return to the chair until the motion is disposed of.

Because emotions are contagious, it is crucial for the board president to display a positive and enthusiastic attitude during board meetings. A lackluster or indifferent chair can hinder the productivity of the board. The president should prioritize setting aside personal feelings and maintain a consistent attitude that provides stability. As a presiding officer, the president is a facilitator who guides the meeting and fosters an environment for decision-making. It is important for the president not to dominate the meeting, but rather provide each member a reasonable opportunity to speak, debate, or challenge the rulings of the chair. A president should not take offense to a challenge

and should address it using parliamentary procedure. To meet these expectations, the president must be well informed about each agenda item.

8.2.2 Selecting a president

There are various ideas about who should be president, and how frequently an individual should be re-elected. Some boards regularly rotate this position among the membership. Other boards expect their most senior or longest-serving member to assume the position. Still, other boards have been led by a particular member for so long that it may not occur to them that someone else could do the job.

The quality of leadership should determine the board's president and how long he or she should serve. There should be no assurance that any individual will be elected or reelected, but a school board with a good president should keep him or her as long as the majority of the board agrees.

Regardless, school boards should not play musical chairs with the board presidency. The practice of taking turns or using longevity to determine the board's presidency indicates a lack of respect for leadership. The board should seek a president who has the knowledge, skills, time and desire to do the job well.

Among the characteristics to look for in a good president:

- The president should be able to subordinate personal views and represent those of the collective board.
- The president must be adept at communicating with the news media. Because the majority of the public does not attend school board meetings, most people rely on news media coverage of school board meetings for their information. The extent and quality of that coverage can be significantly improved by the president who properly, openly, candidly, and honestly deals with the media.
- The president should possess the skills necessary to preside over a meeting. This would include a basic knowledge of both parliamentary procedures and the laws regulating board meetings.
- The president must understand and respect the roles of the board and superintendent as defined in board policy.
- The president must be a person who avoids playing one member or group against another. At times it may be tempting to do so to pursue a particular goal. On certain issues, where there is a divided board and strong feelings, it isn't easy to rise above these differences and reach a majority conclusion.

- The president must be a leader, but not so far ahead of the other board members or constituents as to appear to abandon them or their interests. The president personifies the board. If the president is good, the board will be viewed as good. If the president is weak or ineffective, the public will view the board in that light.
- If conditions are right, the board president can capitalize on the visibility of the office to be a very effective cheerleader for the district, and especially for the superintendent and staff.

8.3 The Vice President

The School Board is also required to elect a vice president who performs the duties of the president in the event of a vacancy or if the president is unavailable to act. A board is well advised to select a vice president who has many of the same skills and qualities of the president. The term of office for both the president and vice president is two years.

8.4 Superintendent's Responsibilities

The law requires each local school board to "appoint a district superintendent of schools who serves as the board's chief executive officer." The superintendent's term of office is two years.

Before every board meeting, the superintendent should meet with the board president or designee to establish the agenda, clarify any points of concern, and provide a list of people who have, to that point, asked permission to address the board and the subjects of their interests.

Prior to an upcoming meeting the superintendent should meet with top administrative staff members, distribute the completed agenda and make plans for staff to present or participate on any agenda items.

During board meetings, the superintendent's involvement will depend on the nature of the agenda items and the expectations of the board. The superintendent's role must be clearly spelled out in the board policy manual. The superintendent should not dominate board meetings. His or her chief roles are to coordinate the preparation of the agenda and carry out decisions made at board meetings. The superintendent should not be expected to repeat orally at length what was already written and mailed in advance. However, he or she can clarify complicated matters to the public, as well as the board.

Other staff members should speak at meetings only at the request of the superintendent and recognized by the board chair. If the superintendent is to be held accountable, board communications with the staff must be through the superintendent. However, wise superintendents utilize the expertise of appropriate staff members by involving them in presentations at board meetings.

8.4.1 Administrative recommendations

When the agenda is planned, the superintendent should make a recommendation or take a position on most action items. During board meetings, members of the board discuss and vote on these recommendations. In general, boards tend to approve the recommendations made by their superintendents, assuming that the superintendent has adequately researched the issue and weighed the alternatives in light of existing board policy.

Where a recommended decision has financial implications, care must be taken to align board decisions with available district resources, such as staff, facilities, and operating funds. Steps may be needed to find the necessary resources by re-prioritizing existing programs or seeking new sources for funds.

If the board rejects all or a part of the superintendent's recommendation, the board should ask the superintendent to return to the board with a revised recommendation. When the final board decision is made, the superintendent is obligated to support and implement the board's decision.

Following each meeting, the superintendent is accountable for seeing that board decisions are carried out and is delegated the authority to do so. Some decisions will require immediate implementation, others can be delayed. There may be a time lag between board action and implementation. Variables to be considered include: the board's priorities; resources available, such as the size of the administrative staff; the need for a timetable; and the scope of the assignment.

If the superintendent has adequate staff, much of the work can be delegated. In a small school district, the superintendent probably will do most of the work and will need to establish priorities. A time-table that lists tasks, dates started, and dates to be completed is useful. Deadlines must be realistic. Tasks that require several months to complete need to be carefully scheduled and monitored. The superintendent should make progress reports to the board on how decisions made by the board are being implemented.

8.5 Business Administrator's Responsibilities

The law requires each local school board to appoint a business administrator whose term of office is also two years. Utah Code §53G-4-303 prescribes the duties of the business administrator, subject to the direction of the superintendent of schools:

- Attend all meetings of the local school board, keep an accurate record of its proceedings, and have custody of the seal and records.
- Be custodian of all district funds.
- Be responsible and accountable for all money received and disbursed.
- Keep accurate records of all revenues received and their sources.
- Countersign with the present of the local school board all warrants and claims against the district as well as other legal documents approved by the local school board.
- Prepare and submit a written monthly report of the district's receipts and expenditures to the local school board for approval.
- Use uniform budgeting, accounting, and auditing procedures and forms approved by the state board, which shall be under accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or auditing standards and Title 63J, Chapter 1, Budgetary Procedures Act.
- Prepare and submit a comprehensive annual statement to the local school board, detailing the district's revenue and expenditures for the period ending June 30. This statement should include the beginning and ending fund balances.
- Assist the superintendent in the preparation and submission of budget documents and statistical and fiscal reports required by law and the Utah State School Board.
- Ensure that adequate internal controls are in place to safeguard the district's funds.
- Perform other duties as the superintendent may require.

8.6 Monitoring Administrative Performance

The school board relies on the superintendent and business administrator for leadership and action. The board is the "governing body", and the superintendent is the "manager of the enterprise". This means the board must place a good deal of trust in the superintendent. Still, a school board also must be satisfied that the superintendent and business administrator are managing the district within board policies.

Here are some questions that each board must resolve for itself:

- Is our board prioritizing the decisions it should be making, or is it getting overwhelmed with administrative matters? Is the superintendent involved with making policy decisions?
- Does the board receive effective leadership from the superintendent in the form of information, advice, and recommendations on board actions?
- Do the board and superintendent understand and support one another? Is there mutual trust and respect?
- What kinds of problems are coming to the board? Would they be more readily solved by adequate policies and planning?
- Is the board adequately informed about the district's problems, progress, accomplishments, and needs? Do board members and the superintendent agree on what the schools are supposed to accomplish?
- Do board members feel comfortable with the programs and operations of the school district? Are they comfortable with the work of the superintendent? Is the feeling based on fact, informed opinion, or blind faith?

A board that does not have satisfactory answers to the above questions probably should consider reviewing the relationship between the superintendent and board and installing a system for monitoring the performance of both. An efficient monitoring and evaluation system offers advantages to both the board and the superintendent as it necessitates their collaboration to clearly define their individual roles and duties, and establish a mutual understanding on how the execution of those responsibilities will be assessed.

It is required and expected that school board, superintendent and business administrator evaluations be completed annually, but it is at the discretion of the board how these evaluations occur. As a service to local school districts, the Utah School Boards Association has developed effective evaluation tools for the school board, superintendent and the business administrator. These tools are available at the request of the board president and can be adapted to meet the individual needs of a school board. USBA would be glad to assist any Utah school board with any or all of these processes.

8.7 The School Board Attorney

Most school boards rely heavily on having immediate access to legal counsel, as the role of a school administrator is increasingly filled with numerous legal challenges and risks.

While it is not necessary for most boards to have an attorney present at all meetings, some may choose to do so. Matters needing legal analysis are typically referred to counsel through the superintendent, or the attorney is asked to be present whenever a particular matter deems it necessary. In any event, each school board should have a policy that sets forth how it will fill its needs for legal assistance. Board members need to know how they will select and work with an attorney.

9. Conducting a School Board Meeting

School board meetings should be conducted in an organized and professional manner to ensure efficient decision-making, collaboration among members, and transparency in governance. Here are steps for conducting a school board meeting effectively:

Establish an Agenda:

- Create a comprehensive agenda listing the topics to be discussed, actions to be taken, reports to be presented, and any other relevant items. Distribute the agenda to board members and the public before the meeting.

Start on Time and Follow Protocol:

- Begin the meeting promptly at the scheduled time. Follow established protocols for opening the meeting, such as calling it to order, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance (if customary), and reviewing the agenda.

Public Comment Period:

- Allocate time for public comments early in the meeting, allowing community members to address the board on relevant topics. Set time limits for each speaker to ensure fairness and manage the meeting's schedule.

Review and Approve Minutes:

- Review and approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Correct any inaccuracies or omissions before approval.

Reports and Presentations:

- Allow time for presentations and reports from the superintendent, board committees, staff, or guest speakers. Encourage concise and informative presentations.

Discussion of Agenda Items:

- Discuss agenda items thoroughly, allowing board members to ask questions, share perspectives, and deliberate on issues. Maintain focus and ensure discussions remain relevant to the agenda item being addressed.

Decision-Making and Voting:

- When necessary, take formal votes on motions or resolutions. Follow parliamentary procedures and ensure accurate recording of votes and decisions made during the meeting.

New Business and Action Items:

- Address any new business or action items that were not part of the original agenda but require immediate attention. Ensure these items are relevant and important for discussion.

Time Management:

- Manage time effectively to ensure that discussions and presentations stay within the allocated time frames. Consider setting time limits for each agenda item to maintain meeting efficiency.

Maintain Order and Decorum:

- Encourage respectful dialogue among board members and attendees. Ensure that discussions remain civil and focused on the issues at hand and that all board members are given equal opportunity to speak. Address any disruptions or violations of meeting decorum promptly.

Adjourn the Meeting:

- Properly conclude the meeting by summarizing key decisions, actions to be taken, and next steps. Announce the date, time, and location of the next meeting before adjourning.

Evaluate Meeting Effectiveness:

- After the meeting, assess its effectiveness by gathering feedback from board members and stakeholders. Use this feedback to improve future meetings and address any concerns raised.

Conducting a school board meeting in an organized, transparent, and respectful manner allows for productive discussions, informed decision-making, and effective governance of the school district.

9.1 Parliamentary Procedure

The following motions are common in school board meetings:

Main Motions:

- Purpose: Introduce new items or topics for discussion and decision-making during a board meeting.
- Example: "I move that we approve the proposal for a new after-school program."

Amend:

- Purpose: Modify or adjust the wording, details, or specifics within a main motion.
- Example: "I move to amend the motion by adding 'pending teacher approval' to the proposal for the after-school program."

Substitute Motion:

- Purpose: Substitute a new motion for the motion on the floor. Substitute motions should be used if there are significant changes to the original motion.
- Example: "I make a substitute motion to create a before-school program."

Refer to Committee:

- Purpose: Send the motion or proposal to a specific committee for further review, study, or recommendation.
- Example: "I move to refer the proposal for the after-school program to the Curriculum Committee for evaluation."

Postpone to a Certain Time:

- Purpose: Delay consideration or action on a motion until a specific future meeting or designated time.
- Example: "I move to postpone voting on the after-school program proposal until our next board meeting."

Close Debate (Limit or Extend Debate):

- Purpose: End or extend the discussion on a motion or topic under consideration.
- Example: "I move to close debate and proceed to a vote on the after-school program proposal."

Previous Question (End Debate):

- Purpose: Immediately conclude discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion.
- Example: "I call for the previous question on the after-school program proposal."

Postpone Indefinitely:

- Purpose: Set aside or discard a motion without outright rejecting it, effectively removing it from consideration.
- Example: "I move to postpone indefinitely the discussion on the after-school program proposal."

These simplified parliamentary motions can assist a school board in managing discussions, making decisions, and ensuring orderly and effective meetings. The specifics of parliamentary procedure may be governed by the board's bylaws or rules of order.

9.3 Voting Details

Voting during a school board meeting involves following established procedures to make decisions on various agenda items. Here's a guide on how a school board typically conducts voting:

- **Call for a Motion:** When an agenda item requires a decision or action, a board member usually makes a motion to address the issue. The motion must be clear and specific about what action is proposed.
- **Second the Motion:** Another board member must second the motion to indicate support for discussing the proposal. If no one seconds the motion, it typically dies without further discussion.
- **Discussion:** After the motion is seconded, the board engages in discussion on the proposed action. Board members can ask questions, express their viewpoints, and share opinions or concerns related to the motion.
- **Voting Procedure:**
 - The board president or chairperson calls for the vote by asking for all those who are in favor of the motion and then asking for those who are opposed.
 - Although Utah does not require a roll call vote for most decisions, a roll call vote is required to move into closed session. During a roll call vote, each board member responds individually, stating "yes," "no," or "abstain" when their name is called.
- **Counting the Votes:** The presiding officer or the board secretary tallies the votes to determine the outcome. The majority vote typically decides the action, but certain decisions might require a specific majority (e.g., simple majority, two-thirds majority) as specified in the bylaws or regulations.
- **Announcing the Results:** After the vote is counted, the presiding officer announces the results of the vote, specifying the number of votes for and against the motion, and whether the motion passed or failed.
- **Recording the Vote:** The minutes of the meeting should include a record of the motion, the names of board members voting for and against, and the outcome of the vote for documentation purposes.

- **Resolutions and Formal Actions:** For formal resolutions or significant decisions, the board might draft and approve a written resolution or official document summarizing the action taken.
- **Maintain Confidentiality and Transparency:** Ensure that votes and discussions are conducted with transparency, adhering to confidentiality requirements when discussing sensitive or private matters.

It's crucial for school boards to follow their established rules, bylaws, or parliamentary procedures regarding voting to ensure fairness, transparency, and effective decision-making during meetings.

10. Recording the Meeting

10.1 The Purpose of Minutes

A School board can transact business or take official action only by majority vote at a legal meeting. When the meeting is over, what assurance does the board have that its votes will actually set official actions in motion? It's in the minutes!

Through its minutes, for example, the school board directs its business administrator to pay the bills and tells county officials how much to levy in taxes. Minutes of school board meetings represent a good deal more than a record of who said what. They represent the only evidence that a board performed its lawful duties and did so in the manner prescribed by law.

Because board minutes have the status of legal documents, they must be accurate and complete. State law directs that the business administrator keeps an accurate record of all board proceedings.

10.2 Courts look to the minutes in deciding disputes

Important actions of the school boards, such as the dismissal of an employee, often call for the guidance of an attorney. It follows that the record of such actions, including the wording of any motions or resolutions, should be prepared with legal counsel.

10.3 The recording secretary

The taking, transcribing, and filing of school board minutes should be the responsibility of a competent recording secretary. This may be the business administrator, the superintendent's secretary, or other staff member as designated.

The secretary should accurately restate and record each motion, including who made and seconded the motion. Minutes should be drafted as soon after the meeting as possible. As the board's chief executive officer, the superintendent should review draft minutes before a final copy is prepared. The board secretary should do the same. During the meeting, the recording secretary must be located in a position where it is easy to see and hear all participants. The secretary should also be informed and knowledgeable about the agenda and its supporting materials. In many districts, the same person who prepares the agenda also records the minutes.

10.4 Recording the minutes

State law requires that a recording and an official set of board minutes be kept to record all transactions of the school board. The Open and Public Meetings Act lists several items that must be included in the recording and minutes.

Board meeting minutes should be as brief as possible but must also provide a clear and accurate record of each board action, as well as a summary of the discussion. In the interests of brevity, lengthy discussions may be summarized. Motions and resolutions must be worded carefully so they appear in the record precisely as the board acted upon them.

Documents the board acts upon, such as budgets, written plans, and lengthy resolutions, need not be repeated in the minutes. Copies can be incorporated by reference to a clearly distinguishing title and/or indexing number or filed together with the minutes. In any case, the related documents must be retained to make the record of the board's action complete. The minutes need to properly identify the document and where it is filed.

All the board's resolutions, awards of contracts, approval of executive actions, policy adoptions, and other actions can be numbered consecutively in chronological order of occurrence. Marginal notations or brief subject titles can be used to indicate the location of the more important items. They will be useful in searching for specific actions.

10.5 Disposition of a motion

The minutes should record the manner of disposing of each motion before another motion is made and recorded. This does not apply to subsidiary motions pertaining to the motion before the board, such as motions to amend, substitute, or table. Any

unrelated motion is out of order when a motion is before the board. If the presiding officer does not remember that a motion is before the board, it is the duty of the secretary or another member to remind him or her that such is the case.

State law requires that the minutes record the votes of individual members on each vote taken by the board. The word passed or carried following the statement of a motion in the minutes is insufficient. Each separate action should be recorded separately.

10.6 The Contents of Recordings and Minutes

The Open and Public Meetings Act requires that minutes of all open meetings include:

- the date, time, and place of the meeting;
- school board members recorded as either present or absent;
- the substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided by the board, which may include a summary of comments made by board members;
- a record, by individual member, of votes taken;
- the name of each person who is not a board member who was recognized by the presiding board member and presented testimony or comment to the board and the substance, in brief, of that testimony or comment;
- the vote of each member present when a vote is taken to hold a closed meeting or portion of a meeting, the reason for the closed meeting, and the location of the closed meeting; and
- any other information that a board member requests be included, as long as such information is a record of the proceedings of the meeting.

10.7 Type of meeting

The minutes should open with a statement as to whether the meeting is a regular, reconvened, special or emergency meeting and the time (date and hour) and place of the meeting. If it is an adjourned meeting, the minutes should show the date of the meeting from which the adjournment was taken. If the minutes pertain to a rescheduled or special meeting, the notice of that meeting should be included in the minutes by reference or by attaching a copy.

10.8 Reports and actions

Most open board meeting minutes will include notations or records of some or all of the following:

- board members who arrive late or leave early, including a record of the time;

- presentations from delegates or visitors who have oral communications or petitions to present, along with a record of any actions by the board referring such matters to committees or the superintendent for study;
- dated statement of written communications and petitions read, such as those from service clubs, parent- teacher groups teacher organizations, pupil groups, churches or individuals, and a record of any subsequent action;
- reports from committees and members of the board;
- reports requested from administrative staff, such as the business administrator, an architect, an athletic director, or a school nurse (written reports may be numbered and filed as documents and incorporated into the minutes by file and document number);
- reports from the superintendent;
- motions and actions on unfinished business taken from the table by the board;
- motions and actions on matters of new business, including names of each motion's maker and second;
- any motion (which should include purpose) to close the meeting to the public with the votes of individual members on the motion, a record of the times at which the meeting was closed and reopened, separate minutes of the closed session must be recorded, except where state law provides a specific exception; and
- motion to adjourn.

10.9 Monthly statements

The business administrator is required to present the board with a written report of the district's receipts and expenditures each month. The report may include information on (1) amounts budgeted, (2) amounts expended to date, (3) current bills, and (4) unexpended balances for each of the significant budgetary funds and extra-curricular activity accounts. Although a board action is not usually called for on the report, it is often included on the consent agenda, but the report should at least be incorporated into the minutes for reference.

10.10 Current bills

Even if the bills are incorporated in a consent agenda, a list of the audited invoices submitted for board approval may be incorporated in the minutes. Where invoices are too numerous to list individually in the minutes, the total amount approved can be

recorded with a reference to a separate itemized list. The record may show each itemized amount, to whom paid, for what purpose, and the budgetary item debited.

10.11 Contingent or special business

The school board frequently adopts resolutions to set complex transactions in motion. These resolutions must be incorporated into the minutes directly or by reference. It is good practice to introduce each resolution with a formal motion and to record the "yes" or "no" vote of each member, even though the law does not always require the latter.

Resolutions most often brought before school boards include the following:

- authorizing the issuance and sale of tax anticipation warrants, interest-bearing orders, bonds, or other obligations against the district, usually after advance approval of legal and bond counsel;
- authorizing the establishment of revolving funds or the rules governing the handling of student activity funds or other trust funds;
- authorizing "a person or persons designated," usually the superintendent, to prepare a tentative budget for the coming year;
- authorizing the acceptance of bids for maintenance, repairs, alterations, or new construction;
- authorizing the certification of the tax levy;
- authorizing the acceptance of bids for furnishing, supplies, equipment, or services (other than those furnished by teachers or regular employees);
- ratifying teacher contracts, as required in the employment of new teachers or where an increase in compensation is being authorized for teachers who hold continuing contracts;
- granting leaves of absence to administrators or teachers;
- submitting a public question to referendum;
- adopting the superintendent's contract;
- adopting the business administrator's contract; and
- recording the retirement of employees.

10.12 Initiating a referendum

When a board calls for an election, whether to vote upon increasing the tax rate or any other matter that must be submitted to a referendum of the voters, the minutes must show a meeting of the board and its order or resolution calling the election. A full resolution calling the election must cite the statute that authorized the referendum and must be incorporated by reference in the minutes of the meeting.

When the business administrator certifies the public question to the election authority (county clerk or election commission), the certification must include the form of the public question, a certified copy of the board's resolution, and the date on which the resolution was adopted.

10.13 Adjournment to another date

If an adjournment is to another date, the time and place of the reconvened meeting must be specified in the minutes. A copy of the board's agenda should be attached to the minutes.

10.14 Other Official Requirements

10.14.1 Approval of minutes

Although there is no requirement in statute for this action, it is advisable that the minutes be approved at the next regular meeting of the board, so that any inaccuracies may be corrected promptly. Minutes must accurately reflect what happened. A board cannot amend its previous actions by amending its minutes, although many actions can be rescinded or revised by subsequent actions.

10.14.2 Certification of minutes

The business administrator, as keeper of the board records, should certify the minutes of meetings as being the lawful record of board actions. Special certification forms may be adopted for this purpose.

10.14.3 Amendments to minutes

A board may amend its minutes at any time to conform to what, in fact, occurred at a given meeting. Amendments may be made to the minutes, even though the membership of the board has changed, and a long period of time has elapsed. However, the board may not amend its minutes to change the action taken. It may only change the record of such action so that the record may correctly reflect what transpired at the meeting.

Courts are reluctant to allow the amendment of minutes by oral evidence, but it may be concluded that minutes need to be amended where they are shown to be deficient. Any relevant evidence may be introduced to establish a definitive record.

10.14.4 Distribution of minutes

Minutes of each meeting should be duplicated and distributed to members of the board with the agenda for the next meeting. In some districts, the minutes are distributed to all board members as soon as possible after the meeting. Either practice provides members an opportunity to study the minutes carefully and to retain a copy for their files. It also makes it unnecessary to consume meeting time with an actual reading of the minutes. The minutes may be approved as circulated, or corrected and then approved.

The minutes of closed meetings present a different problem. Because of their confidential nature, and because disclosure of some issues can be devastating, some boards prefer to avoid distribution, even to members. In place of distribution, minutes may be shared at a subsequent closed meeting and then collected.

10.15 Storing and Indexing

Because recordings and minutes of school board meetings are official records, each school district is responsible for maintaining these records. The district may also devise some system for indexing the minutes of its school board meetings so that specific actions or topics can be located. Most districts also keep and maintain electronic versions of board agendas and minutes.

10.15.1 Storing minutes

The traditional method for conveniently storing minutes is in a loose-leaf book, of convenient size, with a stiff cover. It may be useful to print blank forms to be filled with regular and recurring data. Where meeting materials are more voluminous, business administrators may find it helpful to store meeting packets, complete with agendas, approved minutes, and other official documents related to each meeting.

The board's official copy of the minutes, signed by the business administrator (and sometimes the president) as approved, should be kept in a secure location. Documents that belong to or with the minutes should be kept in the same location.

The minutes of closed meetings should be kept in a separate confidential file and may only be made public under court order.

10.15.2 Indexing

Usually, the minutes are filed in a minute book with numbered pages, bound annually, and placed in a convenient location. A chronological index, arranged by meeting dates,

may be developed each year and bound with the official copy of minutes for that period. A topical or subject index is also recommended.

School system needs will determine the degree of sophistication required. A subject index can be maintained on separate pages bound with the minutes, in a separate computer file, or through computerized indexing of digitized records. Search engines in most database and word-processing programs make it easy to search records for key words or phrases.

Electronic indexing is particularly helpful to researchers and archivists, so even if an index is kept on pages of a paper minutes book, a computerized version should be maintained to allow efficient updating.

Electronically stored minutes and other records require regular back-ups. Moreover, means for public viewing of the electronic files must be provided during regular business hours, unless print versions of the public records are also available.

A simple way to keep track of documents approved or adopted by the board is to type, print or stamp "Adopted: (date)" on all policies, resolutions, salary schedules, contracts, and other documents. In this way, the document itself is referenced to the minutes of the appropriate meeting.

10.16 Public Records

The minutes of school board meetings are public records; therefore, the board has an obligation to see that its minutes are retained permanently and that the public is given access to the minutes under reasonable controls.

Board minutes, like other public records, should be made available for inspection at the school board's official place of business during regular office hours, under the supervision of a responsible employee, according to the Open and Public Meetings Act. Some school districts require advance notice (24 hours) from persons wishing to inspect board minutes or other available school records.

10.16.1 Utah Government Records Access Management Act (GRAMA)

Any citizen can request board meeting minutes under provisions of GRAMA. It is proper to charge an amount sufficient to cover costs when copies are requested.

Making appropriate meeting minutes and supporting documents publicly available online will reduce the number of requests for public inspection or copies of paper records.

10.16.2 Open meetings

As interpreted by the State Auditor, local school boards are subject to the requirements for state public bodies, which means that pending minutes have to be made available to the public within 30 days of the meeting, approved minutes have to (1) be posted to the state website and (2) be made available at the main office within 3 days of approval, and the RECORDING of the meeting must be made available by link or by posting on the state website within 3 business days of the meeting.

11. Encouraging Public Participation

Encouraging public participation in school board meetings is essential for fostering transparency, community engagement, and understanding between the board and the public. Here are some strategies that school boards can implement to promote and enhance public involvement:

- **Publicize Meeting Information:** Advertise meeting dates, times, and locations well in advance through various channels, such as the district website, social media, local newspapers, newsletters, and community bulletin boards.
- **Create a Welcoming Environment:** Ensure that the meeting location is easily accessible, welcoming, and accommodates the public's attendance comfortably. Consider factors like seating arrangements and accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- **Provide Opportunities for Public Comment:** Allocate dedicated time during meetings for public comments or questions on agenda items or other relevant topics. Establish reasonable time limits per speaker to accommodate multiple voices.
- **Establish Clear Guidelines for Participation:** Develop and communicate clear guidelines or rules for public participation to maintain decorum, respect, and relevance during the meeting. Ensure that these guidelines are easily accessible to the public.
- **Offer Remote Participation Options:** Consider providing remote access or live streaming of meetings for those unable to attend in person. Virtual participation through video conferencing or online comment submissions can broaden participation.

- **Engage in Community Outreach:** Actively engage with the community through town hall meetings, forums, or focus groups to gather feedback and address concerns outside formal board meetings.
- **Include Diverse Perspectives:** Encourage participation from diverse community groups, including parents, students, teachers, local organizations, and minority groups, to ensure a broad representation of opinions.
- **Encourage Collaboration and Input:** Invite stakeholders to participate in decision-making processes by seeking their input on important matters, such as policy development, budget planning, and curriculum changes.
- **Respond to Public Input:** Acknowledge and address concerns raised by the public during meetings. Even if immediate solutions aren't possible, ensure that feedback is considered and responded to appropriately.
- **Seek Feedback on Meeting Format:** Periodically solicit feedback from the public regarding the meeting format, accessibility, timing, and overall effectiveness to make necessary improvements.
- **Promote Transparency:** Share meeting agendas, minutes, and relevant documents in advance to provide the public with sufficient time to review and prepare comments or questions.
- **Recognize and Appreciate Engagement:** Acknowledge and appreciate public participation to demonstrate the board's value for community involvement and contributions.

By implementing these strategies, school boards can foster an inclusive and participatory environment that encourages community members to engage actively in school board meetings and contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process.

11.1 Dealing With Complaints and Criticism

Dealing effectively with complaints and criticism is crucial for a school board to maintain transparency, address concerns, and uphold its responsibilities. Here are steps a school board can take to manage complaints and criticism effectively:

- **Establish Clear Procedures:** Develop clear and accessible procedures for receiving, documenting, and addressing complaints. Ensure these procedures are known to the public and stakeholders.
- **Listen Actively and Empathetically:** Create a culture of active listening and empathy when receiving complaints. Give individuals the opportunity to express their concerns fully without interruption or judgment.
- **Acknowledge and Validate Concerns:** Acknowledge the legitimacy of concerns or criticisms raised. Validate the emotions behind the complaints and express understanding of the impact they may have.

- **Respond Promptly and Professionally:** Create a procedure for board members to respond promptly to complaints, preferably within a reasonable timeframe. Responses should be professional, respectful, and address the specific issues raised.
- **Maintain Confidentiality When Appropriate:** Respect confidentiality where necessary, especially when dealing with sensitive matters or personal information.
- **Provide Transparent Updates:** Transparency builds trust and demonstrates commitment to resolution.
- **Offer Solutions or Redress:** Offer practical solutions or redress whenever possible. Work collaboratively with the complainant to follow proper chains of command and seek resolutions.
- **Learn and Improve:** Use complaints and criticisms as opportunities for improvement. Analyze recurring issues to identify underlying problems and implement changes to prevent similar problems in the future.
- **Document and Review:** Create process to document complaints received, actions taken, and resolutions reached. Regularly review complaint patterns to identify systemic issues that need attention. Most complaints should and will be resolved at the classroom/school level and should be filter to the lowest level for resolution before being resolved at the board level.
- **Provide Training and Support:** Train staff and board members in complaint handling, conflict resolution, documentation, and effective communication. Provide support to individuals handling complaints to ensure consistency and professionalism.
- **Seek Feedback on Process:** Encourage feedback from complainants about their satisfaction with the complaint resolution process. Use this feedback to refine and improve procedures.
- **Maintain a Positive Reputation:** Communicate the board's commitment to addressing concerns and criticisms effectively. Uphold a positive public image by demonstrating responsiveness and accountability.

Dealing with complaints and criticism in a proactive, respectful, and transparent manner not only resolves immediate issues but also fosters trust, enhances community relations, and strengthens the credibility of the school board.

11.2 Aggravating the General Public

School boards, like any governing body, can sometimes take actions or exhibit behaviors that may aggravate the public. Some common actions or behaviors that might lead to public dissatisfaction or aggravation include:

- **Lack of Transparency:** Making decisions behind closed doors or without providing adequate explanations to the public can lead to distrust and frustration.
- **Poor Communication:** Inadequate communication about decisions, policies, or changes within the school district can leave the public feeling uninformed or disconnected.
- **Ignoring Public Input:** Disregarding or not seriously considering community input or concerns when making decisions may alienate stakeholders and create a sense of disempowerment.
- **Frequent Changes in Leadership or Direction:** Rapid turnover in school board leadership or inconsistent policies can create confusion and a lack of stability, leading to public frustration.
- **Not Addressing Key Issues:** Failure to address pressing issues such as student safety, educational quality, or budget concerns can evoke public concern and dissatisfaction.
- **Lack of Accountability:** Failing to take responsibility for mistakes or not being transparent about addressing shortcomings may erode public trust.
- **Unilateral Decision-Making:** Making decisions without seeking adequate input from teachers, parents, or community members can lead to dissatisfaction, especially if decisions directly impact them.
- **Ineffective Conflict Resolution:** Mishandling disputes or conflicts within the board or with the community can create an impression of dysfunctionality and lack of professionalism.
- **Inflexibility and Resistance to Change:** Being resistant to new ideas, innovations, or improvements, and refusing to adapt to changing needs or circumstances, can alienate progressive-minded stakeholders.
- **Perceived Favoritism or Bias:** Public perception of favoritism toward certain schools, individuals, or groups within the district can breed resentment and distrust.
- **Not Prioritizing Student Well-being:** Actions perceived as prioritizing administrative or political interests over the well-being and educational needs of students can lead to public backlash.

Addressing these issues by promoting transparency, effective communication, active engagement with the community, and a focus on student welfare can help mitigate public aggravation and build a positive relationship between the school board and the community it serves.

11.3 Sample Policy: Public Participation at Board Meetings

From [Juab School District Policy](#) (9/20/2023)

Every meeting of the Board shall be open to the public unless closed pursuant to Utah Code §§ 52-4-204, 52-4-205, and 52-4-206.

Utah Code § 52-4-201(1) (2006)

Public Comment

At open meetings other than work sessions or emergency meetings, the Board will receive verbal and written comments from the public on topics which are germane to the Board's authority. Written comments can be submitted by sending them through email to the Superintendent before the meeting or by hand delivering them to District staff members at the meeting. Written comments will not be read at the meeting but will be provided to the members of the Board and will be included in the meeting minutes.

Verbal comments at the meeting shall be received from members of the public who sign up prior to the time for public comment and will be taken in the order that individuals sign up. Each individual will be allowed up to 3 minutes to provide comments to the Board. The Board's agenda will specify the amount of time for public comment, which will generally be between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

Utah Code § 52-4-201.3 (2023)

The Board does not by allowing public comment endorse any such comment. Therefore, persons providing comment bear any and all legal liability which may arise under governing law from making such comments. For example, defamatory comments about specific individuals may expose the commenter to legal liability from those individuals; similarly, threats of violence towards other individuals may expose the commenter to prosecution.

The public comment period is to allow members of the public to provide input to the Board in its capacity as a legislative body. The public comment period is not a forum for discussion or debate between the Board and members of the public. The Board does not engage in discussion during public comments, but may later follow up on comments made during public comment.

Public hearing

A public hearing is an open meeting at which members of the public are given a reasonable opportunity to comment on a subject of the meeting. The Board shall hold a

public hearing when considering whether to close a school or change the boundaries of a school, when submitting a ballot issue regarding bond authorization or a tax increase, when considering the adoption of the District budget, before authorizing issuance of bonds, and when considering changes to the Board member compensation schedules, as required by statute.

Utah Code § 11-14-318 (2023)

Utah Code § 53G-4-402(23) (2023)

Utah Code § 53G-7-303(3) (2019)

Utah Code § 53G-4-204(2) (2023)

Utah Code § 59-1-1605 (2016)

Interference With Conduct of Board Meetings

Those in attendance at Board meetings are prohibited from interfering with the conduct of the meeting by demonstrations, whether audible or visual or by conduct. Those who do not abide by Board procedures for orderly presentation of comments when permitted may be asked to leave or the Board may use appropriate legal means to remove those disrupting the meeting.

Distribution of handbills, flyers, or other printed materials by members of the public is prohibited during Board meetings. Similarly, members of the public may not circulate petitions or similar requests for participation during a Board meeting.

12. Working with the News Media

School boards can effectively work with the news media to ensure accurate reporting, share information, and maintain transparency. Here are some best practices for school boards to engage with the news media:

- **Establish Relationships:** Build and maintain positive relationships with local journalists and media outlets. Establishing rapport helps foster understanding and trust.
- **Appoint a Media Liaison:** Designate a spokesperson (often the superintendent) or media liaison within the school board or district administration to handle media inquiries and facilitate communication.
- **Be Accessible and Responsive:** The designated spokesperson for the board should be available and responsive to media requests for information or interviews. Timely responses can prevent misinformation or speculation.
- **Provide Accurate Information:** The designated spokesperson should ensure that information provided to the media is accurate, factual, and up-to-date. Avoid speculation or dissemination of unverified information.

- **Be Transparent and Open:** The designated spokesperson should practice transparency by sharing relevant information with the media, especially regarding important decisions, policies, or events within the school district.
- **Offer Opportunities for Engagement:** The board may consider organizing press conferences, media briefings, or interviews to provide insights into school board decisions, initiatives, or key educational issues.
- **Prepare Spokespersons:** Train and prepare designated spokespeople to effectively communicate key messages, stay on topic, and handle difficult questions from journalists.
- **Share Success Stories:** Highlight positive achievements, success stories, and innovative programs within the school district to showcase its strengths and successes.
- **Respect Deadlines and Press Ethics:** The designated spokesperson should honor media deadlines and respect the ethical standards of journalism. Avoid attempting to control the narrative or manipulating information.
- **Address Concerns or Issues Promptly:** Concerns or issues raised by the media should be addressed promptly and accurately, usually delegated to the superintendent. Be open to providing clarification or additional information when needed.
- **Use Social Media and Online Platforms:** Utilize social media and online platforms to share news updates, announcements, and information directly with the public and media.
- **Prepare Press Releases and Media Kits:** Create press releases, media kits, or information packets that provide comprehensive details about important events, policies, or initiatives.
- **Build Long-Term Relationships:** Foster ongoing relationships with journalists beyond immediate needs, establishing a foundation of mutual respect and understanding.

By following these practices, school boards can effectively collaborate with the news media, enhance public understanding, and ensure accurate reporting, ultimately contributing to a positive portrayal of the school district and its initiatives.

13. Reorganizing the School Board

Following each election of new members in even-numbered years, every Utah school board has an opportunity to start over. Utah school boards reorganize by electing or re-electing officers following the election, even if no new members are being seated. After electing officers, the new board is ready to conduct business.

13.1 Seating the New Board

The retiring president can act as temporary chairman for the new board unless someone else is selected, which the board may do at its discretion. The temporary chair retains power until a successor is elected.

The retiring board is generally understood to continue in existence until the new board is organized, and that occurs as soon as the new board elects its own president and vice president and thus becomes a body duly constituted to transact business.

13.2 Oath of office

"The term of office for an individual elected to a local board of education is four years beginning the first Monday in January after the election." "A member of a local board of education is 'qualified' when the member takes or signs the constitutional oath of office" (Utah Cod §20A-14-203).

Each board member, following their election, at the first January board meeting or after being appointed recites the following oath: *"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, obey and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Utah, and that I will discharge the duties of my office with fidelity"* (Constitution of Utah Article IV, Section 10).

13.3 Election of officers (Utah Code §53G-4-203)

School board officers are the president and vice president, who are elected to two-year terms. These officers are elected at the first local school board meeting in January following a regular school board election.

A president pro tem chairs the organizational meeting of a new board. The president, who must be a member of the board, should be elected first.

Nominations need not be seconded, but may be, to show support for the candidate. If only one member is nominated, the business administrator is instructed to cast a unanimous ballot for that member, who is there upon declared elected. The president pro tem then relinquishes the chair to the newly elected president.

If two or more members are nominated, the election for president and vice president must be by an open vote and not by any form of secret ballot. There is no provision in

the law for a secret vote, and the declared public policy of the state, as expressed in the Open and Public Meetings Act, is that actions of public bodies be taken openly.

Typically, voting continues until one member receives a majority of the votes cast.

The newly elected president then takes over the duties of the chair, and the board proceeds to elect a vice president in the same manner it elected its president. The vice president, who also must be a member of the board, performs the duties of the president when the presidency is vacant or when the president is absent or unable to perform them.

Both the president and the vice president play key roles in the effective functioning of the school board. Individuals selected for these key positions should be fully aware of the responsibilities involved and possess the requisite skills.

13.3.1 Absence of officers

If the president is absent from any meeting or is unable or unwilling to perform his/her duties, the vice president serves as president pro tem.

In the absence of both officers, any other member of the board may be appointed president pro tem.

13.4 Establishing Regular Meetings

All school boards are required to hold regular meetings and public notice of the schedule must be given at least once a year.

13.5 Adoption of Policies

Board policy development and adoption is the primary responsibility of the school board. Every board should have a process for keeping all policies current. This process should include the opportunity for staff and community input. The board's annual agenda should include schedules for both reviewing policy appropriateness and monitoring policy compliance.

School board policies provide the continuity needed by the board and the district during a change in membership on the board. New board members should make it a priority to become familiar with the contents of board policy. (The board should maintain and make available copies of its policy manual to every new board member, as well as to all candidates for the board.)

Moreover, school board meetings cannot be successful unless members of the board agree on procedures for conducting board business. These procedures should be found in board policy.

Unfortunately, new board members often don't know how the board operates or believe they do not have the opportunity to influence how the board operates. They can feel frustrated in their attempts to contribute to the work of the board. Every board member must have the opportunity, through the board policy development, adoption, and review process, to suggest changes in how the board operates.

13.6 Board Structure and Committees

School board committees are most useful in gathering and summarizing information, identifying alternatives, and making recommendations to the full board. However, a committee cannot be empowered to act for the board; its authority is limited to making recommendations or advising the board. A board has no authority to delegate its discretionary powers, even to a committee of board members.

Some school boards create standing committees made up of staff and citizens who are not members of the board. State law requires some committees of this type, including school traffic safety committees.(Utah Code §53G-A-17,18)

13.6.1 Special or ad hoc committees

A special or temporary committee can prove useful, provided it is established for a specific purpose and with a predetermined lifespan. After the committee has made its report and recommendations to the full board, it should be thanked and disbanded. The decision to create a special committee should be made with input from the superintendent to be sure board and staff roles and responsibilities are understood. The charge to the committee should be very clear so that the committee does not misunderstand the extent of its authority.

13.6.2 Citizens' advisory committees

School board governance requires solid connections with the community. One way to do this is through a citizens' advisory committee. These board committees can be used to gather information about community aspirations for its children and its schools. Details and research about creating and working with citizens advisory committees can be explored beyond the scope of this book.

The role of any committee must be purely advisory to the board (or to the administration). Legally binding decisions may be made only by the Board of Education in a properly convened open public meeting. Committee members must understand the advisory and temporary nature of their roles from the outset.

13.7 New Member Orientation

Change is a challenging process for everyone, including School Boards. . Every two years, most school boards experience the addition of at least one new member, and some even undergo a significant shift in their composition with a majority being comprised of new members. This can lead to complex situations arising. To ensure a smooth transition, School Boards should anticipate the inevitability of change and develop plans that take into account both procedural aspects and the dynamics within the Board.

A school board does not function efficiently with members who are not prepared to contribute. The Board, therefore, has a responsibility to both itself and the community to support newly elected members in becoming integrated into the Board team.

New board members must work hard to acquire the factual knowledge, conceptual understanding, and interpersonal skills to do the job well. In addition to individual effort, finding a place on the board calls for teamwork. Many school boards adopt policies for getting the new member(s) "on board" as rapidly as possible. Workshops sponsored by school boards associations or other agencies can help the inexperienced board member become familiar with school board governance, school finance, school law, and other broadly applicable matters. Much of the knowledge a board member needs, however, is available only at the local level in the form of policies, financial statements, minutes of past meetings, administrative procedures, and the like.

The entire school board should take responsibility for encouraging board member development and providing new board member orientation. Training and orientation sessions for new school board members need not involve all members of the board, although even the most experienced veterans could find a "refresher course" helpful. Typically, the superintendent and board president work most closely in orienting new members, with help as needed, from other board members and staff.

School boards are in the business of education. New and experienced board members should take advantage of training and development opportunities to become better board members and to model life-long learning for the students in their district. Some school boards take steps to ensure that new members come on board with early preparation; others have found innovative ways to make new member training useful to a wider audience. Consider the following for example:

- Plan one or a series of orientation sessions with board candidates before the election. The winning candidate will be a jump ahead in the learning process. In addition, the campaign is more likely to focus on worthwhile issues as candidates make use of the accurate information they have acquired.
- Where possible, make formal presentations open and appealing to as many people as possible. Some school districts develop videos or other visual presentations to orient new board members and invite the public to view the presentations.

School boards function properly when members are knowledgeable, develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school board versus the superintendent and staff and act within those roles.

13.8 Filling Vacancies

Utah state law gives a local school board 30 days, after a vacancy on the board occurs, to appoint another individual to fill the remainder of the vacating board member's term. If the vacancy occurs because of the death of a board member, the board has 45 days to fill the vacancy. Otherwise, the county legislative body or municipal legislative body in a city district could appoint a new board member.

However, if the vacancy occurs more than 14 days before the filing deadline for the next board election and there are still two years remaining of the vacating board member's term of office, the vacancy will be filled by an interim appointment followed by an election to fill a two-year term. In other words, the interim appointee or another eligible candidate must run and be elected to complete the term of the vacating board member.

Two weeks before appointing a person to fill a vacancy, the local school board must give a public notice of the vacancy. The notice must include the date, time, and place of the meeting where the vacancy will be filled, the contact person who is accepting names for consideration, and the deadline for submitting a name. A board member appointed to fill a vacancy must live in the same school board precinct/district as their predecessor (Utah Code §20A-1-511)

Appendix A: Utah Open and Public Meetings Act (2023)

[52-4-101. Title.](#)

[52-4-102. Declaration of public policy.](#)

[52-4-103. Definitions.](#)

[52-4-104. Training.](#)

[52-4-201. Meetings open to the public – Exceptions.](#)

[52-4-201.3. Local school boards – Public comment.](#)

[52-4-202. Public notice of meetings – Emergency meetings.](#)

[52-4-203. Minutes of open meetings – Public records – Recording of meetings.](#)

[52-4-204. Closed meeting held upon vote of members – Business – Reasons for meeting recorded.](#)

[52-4-205. Purposes of closed meetings.](#)

[52-4-206. Record of closed meetings.](#)

[52-4-207. Electronic meetings – Authorization – Requirements.](#)

[52-4-208. Chance or social meetings.](#)

[52-4-209. Electronic meetings for charter school board.](#)

[52-4-210. Electronic message transmissions.](#)

[52-4-301. Disruption of meetings.](#)

[52-4-302. Suit to void final action – Limitation – Exceptions.](#)

[52-4-303. Enforcement of chapter – Suit to compel compliance.](#)

[52-4-304. Action challenging closed meeting.](#)

[52-4-305. Criminal penalty for closed meeting violation.](#)

Appendix B. Utah School Boards Association's Foundational Principles of Effective Governance

As the corporate entity charged by law with governing a school district, each school board sits in trust for its entire community. The obligation to govern effectively imposes some fundamental duties on the board:

- The Board Clarifies the District Purpose

As its primary task, the board continually defines, redefines and articulates district ends to answer the recurring question-who gets what benefits for how much?

- The Board Connects With the Community

The school board engages in an ongoing two way conversation with the entire community. The purpose of the conversation is to enable the board to hear and understand the community's educational aspirations and desires, to serve effectively as an advocate for continuous improvement, and to inform the community of the district's performance.

- The Board Employs a Superintendent and a Business Administrator

The board employs and evaluates two people, the superintendent and business administrator, and holds them accountable for the performance of the school district. The board delegates authority to the superintendent for employing and evaluating district staff.

- The Board Delegates Authority

The board delegates authority to the superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff. Such authority is communicated through written policies that designate board ends and define operating limits.

- The Board Monitors Performance

The board constantly monitors progress toward district ends and compliance with written board policies.

- The Board Takes Responsibility for Itself

The board, collectively and individually, takes full responsibility for board activity and behavior. Board deliberations and actions are limited to board work, not staff work.

Appendix C. Possible Annual Agenda Items

The following are examples of items that a school board and superintendent may decide to include on the board meeting agenda each month.

The items listed on this "annual calendar" are merely suggested as possibilities. Some items are required by law, and have important deadlines which should be included in any school board's annual agenda. Many of the items listed here may be placed at different times throughout the year.

January

- Swear in newly elected board members (only in odd-numbered years).
- At the first board meeting in January the board shall elect a board president and vice president (only in odd numbered years).
- Swear in the board president and vice president.
- Review board goals and objectives.
- Attend the USBA Annual Conference.

February

- Consider a resolution to sell building bonds.
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.
- Review superintendent and business administrator evaluation policy and procedures.

March

- Confirm the sale of building bonds.
- Appoint leader preparation program candidates for next year.
- Approve professional leave requests for next year.
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.
- Remind board, superintendent, and business administrator to attend USBA Region meeting.

April

- Present Teacher of the Year awards.
- Establish board meeting schedule for the coming year.
- Review and adjust district fee schedules for the next school year.
- Study need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.
- Report on board's attendance at NSBA convention, including possible new ideas for implementation.

May

- Thank the PTA organization for their volunteer service this school year.

- Approve retirement requests.
- Consider superintendent's recommendations for administrative appointments.
- Review the need for policy in consideration of actions at the Utah State Legislature.
- Review graduation attendance and speaking assignments.
- In closed session the board and the superintendent evaluate the work of the business administrator.

June

- Conduct budget hearings for old and new budgets.
- Adopt final legal budget for current year.
- Discuss and adopt tentative budget for next fiscal year.
- Appoint or re-appoint business administrator (every other year).
- Ratify or reject certified negotiated agreement for the coming year.
- Set administrative salary schedule for the coming year.
- Ratify or reject classified negotiated agreement for the coming year.
- Evaluate School Professional Development Plans, School Improvement Plans, Elementary Reading Achievement Plans, and School Trust Lands Plans.
- Study need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.
- In closed session, evaluate the superintendent.

July

- Appoint or re-appoint superintendent (every other year)
- Set the tax rates for the coming year.
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.

August

- Conduct a board self-evaluation (best handled in a training session).
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.

September

- Review, evaluate and set board goals (best handled in a training session).
- Review tentative attendance numbers and their ramifications.
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.

October

- Review official attendance numbers and their ramifications.
- Review official annual state testing reports
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.
- Remind board, superintendent, and business administrator to attend USBA Region meeting.

November

- Approve school calendar for the next school year.
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.

- Remind board, superintendent and business administrator to register for USBA State Convention.

December

- Receive and approve or disapprove the Independent Financial Audit Report and report to the public on the district's financial health.
- Approve or disapprove the District Annual Financial Report.
- Study the need for policy or adequacy of policy in selected areas.

Draft

Appendix D: Items on Consent Agenda

State law requires the school board to take official action on a wide variety of matters that often include routine duties delegated to the superintendent and staff. However, because many of these duties are essential to the day-to-day functioning of the district, the school board cannot fail to act on them.

The presence of these board duties on the agenda explains in large part why many people may find school board meetings to be dull. Duties in this category include the formal approval of such things as minutes of the previous meeting, bills for payment and all contracts (including employment contracts).

Although most of these essential, but routine tasks fall in the category of "staff work," they can consume an inordinate amount of time at board meetings. In fact, some boards appear to focus their discussions primarily on work that must be (or already has been) performed by the superintendent and other staff. (A good test of whether a task is staff work and a candidate for the consent agenda, is whether the board must rely on the superintendent to put the item on the board meeting agenda).

It does appear that the trend is for boards to spend decreasing amounts of time on these routine actions, perhaps because they find so many other matters demanding their attention. Some boards ensure that required actions are disposed of in short order simply by adopting the superintendent's recommended actions with little or no discussion.

One growing practice is for school boards to roll many of the routine items into a single vote, using what is known as a "consent agenda." That is, members of the board agree that none of the items on the consent agenda requires separate discussion or action. The board adopts all of the measures with one vote.

Boards with consent agendas treat items on that agenda as essentially "staff work" and devote most of their meeting time to dealing with major policy questions, developing goals, refining and checking for compliance with school board policies, and monitoring district progress.

One critical aspect: It is critical that the term "consent" imply that every member consents to the consent agenda. Any member of the board must be empowered to remove any item from the consent agenda to be dealt with separately for any reason or no reason at all. Most boards wisely allow any member to pull any item from the

consent agenda without a vote. Once removed from the consent agenda, an item is then treated the same as any separate agenda item.

On the negative side, it is easy for a board to overlook the importance of clearly communicating to the superintendent and staff what it expects in the handling of these routine consent agenda items. That is, some or all members of the board may have some minimum standards in mind that the staff is expected to meet as a condition for routine board adoption. But if the board does not express those standards in advance, the superintendent and staff have no opportunity to address them.

Waiting until it is time to vote at a board meeting for a member to voice those expectations is a form of second-guessing likely to cause a rift between board and staff. If there is any chance, therefore, that an item placed on the consent agenda might become a topic of board questioning, then the school board should provide the superintendent with policy guidance in advance.

Moreover, the concept of "due diligence" suggests that board members need to know what they are voting upon. For that reason, board members often need to ask questions.

When a board member has questions about any agenda item, including any item on the consent agenda, good practice suggests a telephone call to the superintendent or other knowledgeable administrator who can answer the question. Getting questions answered in advance will save meeting time and should enable the board member to vote yes or no with a clear understanding of the issue.

What are some of the routine board actions that might reasonably be placed on a consent agenda and what sorts of standards might a board establish to govern them? Consider these:

- Approve the annual school calendar.

Board policy can direct the superintendent to develop a calendar that has the support of the teachers union (it may be a negotiated item), provides adequate emergency days, articulates with other key schools and other community groups, and meets all legal requirements. If the board wishes to judge the annual calendar by any other criterion, that criterion should be added to the policy by board vote. With these standards in place and with assurances from the superintendent that the recommended calendar complies with those standards, the calendar should be appropriate for the consent agenda.

- Approve bills for payment.

Bills represent legal obligations and ordinarily must be paid, but the business administrator needs board action authorizing payment. Moreover, routine expenditures

that were included in the budget when the board approved it have, as a policy matter, already been authorized. Any substantial expenditure that is un-budgeted was most likely addressed prior to the actual expenditure (or should have been). If the board is concerned about the staff's spending decisions, the focus should be on standards for such decisions that can be written into policy and the matter addressed as a separate item.

On the other hand, a small district may not have the financial expertise and staffing essential for thorough internal controls. In these situations, board members may feel a need to review expenditures listed among approved bills and to let the superintendent know if they have questions or concerns. (Again, these issues should be handled with a phone call prior to the meeting.) Board members should feel comfortable with the bills, regardless of whether they review them personally or know that they are reviewed with sound internal procedures.

- Approve contracts for goods and services.

Contracts of all kinds must be approved by the board and signed by the board president, including employment contracts as well as contracts for goods and services. Before putting contracts on the consent agenda, it would be prudent for the school board to enact policies that stipulate the dollar amount of contracts that the superintendent can authorize (even though the board must give final approval) and set forth any standards the board might want, such as those banning conflicts of interest and requiring compliance with state laws.

- Approve employment contracts.

Staff positions usually are included in the approved budget, so the only real issue is who will be selected for employment. Wise boards hold the superintendent accountable for hiring and developing a competent staff so they do not become involved in employment decisions. However, such boards often use policy to state their intent for the district to hire the best and avoid favoritism. In the hiring of coaches, for instance, a board might set forth in policy its goals for the athletic program, indicating whether winning is more or less important than wide participation and the teaching of values. If compliance with such policies is checked from time to time, employment contracts may be prudently added to the consent agenda.

- Select textbooks.

Although a school board rarely has the expertise necessary to select textbooks, and would be ill-advised to take this choice away from its teachers and staff even if it did, a board does need to ensure that the selection meets certain standards. First, it may be prudent for board policy to address the process for selecting textbooks, that is, who should be involved in the decision. The board might want to stipulate that no parent group should react unfavorably to the selection, or that textbooks must meet certain

standards of both morality and academic excellence. Once the board's criteria are expressed in policy, the staff can be turned loose with the task of textbook selection. The staff's final choice can be put on the board's consent agenda if the superintendent believes the board's criteria have been met.

- Approve budget and tax levy.

The superintendent and staff must do the heavy work of projecting expenses and estimating income for the annual district budget. Members of the board can pore over the budget and come up with ways to cut a few dollars here and there. However, in the final analysis, the budget belongs to the superintendent and staff. They know most about what is in the budget and they have to live with it. The board must approve a budget and then approve a tax levy to provide the local share of the budgeted revenue. Some boards also work hard at establishing priorities to guide the budget making process.

Budget development involves endless talking and consulting, including a public hearing on a tentative budget. Even the tax levy may require a truth in taxation hearing. Although the discussion may be over by the time the board finally votes to approve, the budget and tax levy probably should not go on the consent agenda. Both items are just too big and too important. However, the district budget needs a clear statement of board policies governing staff choices. That is, does the board insist on a balance between income and expenditures? Is the budget expected to reflect school board goals? What are the criteria by which the school board judges the budget, and can the superintendent assure the board that the budget meets those criteria? Some school boards test the budget primarily by evaluating the assumptions on which the staff based its projections for enrollment, expenses, revenue and other key factors.

Other decisions that a school board might consider for a consent agenda:

- approve employment decisions hiring, transfers, layoffs, notices to remedy, dismissals;
- set salaries (usually as negotiated with unions);
- adopt resolution putting public policy issue on the ballot (i.e., tax rate increase);
- suspend/expel students;
- approve construction and repair of buildings;
- approve school boundary changes.

NOTE: that many of these issues involve weighty choices. Some of them reach the voting stage only after several months of discussion and public and staff involvement. Whether any of these decisions calls for separate action or can go on a consent agenda

probably depends on how big the decision is and the comfort level of the individual board and superintendent.

Avoid the rubber stamp

Regardless of what the board puts on its consent agenda, the board president should regularly explain to the community what is on the agenda, why it is there, the kind of preparation that preceded placement of the issue on the consent agenda, and any relevant board policies governing the matter.

Draft

Appendix E: School Board Professional Governance Standards

School board members are elected to represent the community and advocate for all public education students.

These Standards, based on best practice and research, are designed for Local School Boards to use as a common framework of excellence in school board governance.

Duties of the School Board

1. Sets the general direction and expectations of the School District.
2. Hires, supervises, and evaluates the Superintendent and Business Administrator.
3. Determines employee compensation and makes ultimate decisions on hiring and termination.
4. Establishes the District vision, goals, and priorities.
5. Develops, adopts, and revises policies for District and Board operation as required by law and as determined by the Board.
6. Approves a balanced budget that supports District vision and goals, approving all expenditures.
7. Oversees implementation of the District plan, including establishment and operation of schools, and adoption of school curriculum.
8. Ensures accountability and sets clear expectations for administration and staff.
9. Reports as required by law to the Utah State Board of Education and communicates as required with parents.

Utah Code 53G

Effective board members are:

Respectful

- Approach role with integrity
- Treat board members, families, employees, students, and community members with dignity and consideration
- Listen to and acknowledge stakeholder input
- Safeguard confidentiality

Engaged

- Connect community and district by involving families and other stakeholders
- Commit to the work of the board with resilience and a spirit of inquiry
- Are prepared, attentive, and active participants in meetings

Collaborative

- Develop a cohesive board team
- Seek for understanding
- Problem-solve within proper roles
- Support board decisions
- Avoid promoting a personal agenda

Knowledgeable

- Understand and follow state and federal law, administrative rule, and board policy
- Understand board member duties, roles, and responsibilities
- Seek continual improvement through professional development
- Make decisions informed by data

Accountable

- Focus on student achievement
- Communicate data-driven results
- Ensure fiscal responsibility
- Model ethical and transparent behavior
- Build public trust

Advocates

- Champion public education
- Promote student success
- Seek support for local governance and district needs
- Develop relationships with community and state leaders

Appendix F: A Model for Orienting New Board Members

One of the USBA Foundational Principles of Effective Governance states that "the school board takes responsibility for itself," meaning its own procedures, activities and behaviors. An essential part of any board's activities should be the orientation and training of newly elected members.

Following is a comprehensive list of areas that might be covered during the orientation of new school board members. Each school board should review this list to determine what is applicable locally and should take action to ensure that new members are adequately prepared to take their seats at the board table.

Orientation to the Board:

These items are generally the school board's areas of expertise and, therefore, should be the board's responsibility in the orientation process. Often, the board president will take the lead for this part of the orientation process with the assistance of the superintendent and other members of the board.

1. A personal copy of the written board policy manual and explanation of its use development, review, etc., including the following:
 - A copy and explanation of the district's mission, vision, values and beliefs, and/or educational philosophy.
 - A copy and explanation of the district's latest short- and long-range goals, along with related needs assessment results.
 - An explanation of school board organization (including officers and standing or ad hoc committees, if any).
 - An explanation of any policies governing board member conduct and activities (for example, code of conduct, travel expenses, conflict of interest, and professional development).
 - An explanation of how board meetings are conducted, including parliamentary procedures used, Open and Public Meetings Act requirements, placing items on the agenda, superintendent's informational packets, etc.
 - A discussion about the board's need to speak with one voice, the authority of the board vs. the authority of any individual board member, the chain of command, etc.
 - An explanation of board processes, such as gathering community input, monitoring district progress, self evaluation and communication with the media.

2. A historical summary of the board's current work, including how to access minutes from the past year's board meetings.
3. An explanation of the superintendent's informational packets and communication methods.
4. An explanation and list of board and board member development opportunities available throughout the year including USBA's New Board Member Workshop and the Annual Conference.

Orientation to Board/Superintendent Roles and Relationships: These items are generally shared areas of expertise between the board and superintendent, and, therefore, should be a joint responsibility in the orientation process.

1. Clarification of roles and responsibilities including discussion about "who decides" particular types of issues.
2. Explanation of how authority is delegated to the superintendent.
3. Explanation of the administrative procedures manual.
4. A copy of the superintendent's job description and performance-based contract and discussion of how it evolved.
5. A copy of any superintendent evaluation materials and discussion of how and when they are used.
6. An explanation of how communication flows between board members and superintendent and how to use the chain of command.
7. A review of written board policies governing the board/superintendent relationship.
8. Orientation to the District:

These items are generally the superintendent's areas of expertise and responsibility in the orientation process.

1. School Finance
 - A copy of the district's budget. Explanation of how, when and by whom it is prepared; how the district's mission and goals are translated into a dollars and cents plan; where the money comes from, where it goes and how it gets spent.
 - An explanation of financial accountability processes: how funds are accounted for; how expenditures are authorized; what financial reports are provided and how to interpret them, etc.
 - An explanation of the state's financial plan and what it means in terms of local district budget.
 - Data on district per-pupil cost and expenditures.
 - An explanation of the assessed valuation and tax structure of the district.
 - An explanation of the funding process for the school district.

- A description of the district's student enrollment trends and projections.
 - Data on the existing bond indebtedness of the district and when various building debts will expire.
 - Information on federal and state aid to the district's education program.
2. School District Facilities and Transportation
- A list showing the number, location, and condition of schools and other buildings owned and/or operated by the district.
 - An explanation of construction projects contemplated and in process.
 - A description of the district's building maintenance program.
 - An explanation of the student transportation system the number, condition and maintenance program of district-owned vehicles and/or the contract for transportation services.
 - A description of the geographic boundaries and attendance zones of the school district.
3. School Curriculum and Instruction
- An explanation of curriculum standards required by state law and implemented by the State Board of Education.
 - Copies of recent state and/or accrediting agency evaluations.
 - An explanation of the district's overall curriculum program.
 - An explanation of local school improvement initiatives (what, why, who, how).
 - An explanation of the educational organization of the district, including student groupings, departmentalization, team-teaching, shared pupils/teachers, etc.
 - An explanation of how elementary and secondary curricula are coordinated.
 - Student dropout statistics.
 - Information on standardized testing, recent test results and the uses of test results.
 - Data on the percentages of students who go on to college or other post high school programs.
 - Documents showing teacher-pupil ratio and median class size for the district and for appropriate sub-groupings.
 - An explanation of the district's program for exceptional children: those with higher or lower than normal mentality, impaired sight or hearing, and emotional, neurological and other problems.
 - Data on age and condition of textbooks and other school equipment.
 - A description of libraries, technological tools and other instructional materials in use now or planned for the future.
 - A listing of extra- and co-curricular activities in the district.
4. Administration and Staff

- A copy of the job description of the superintendent, business administrator and other top administrators.
 - An organization chart of the school district's management structure.
 - An explanation of personnel recruitment and hiring procedures.
 - A copy of staff salary schedules and fringe benefit programs, including data on average and median salaries of teachers and administrators.
 - Data on staff-administrator ratios.
 - A copy of the district's collective bargaining agreements and a brief history of the recent collective bargaining activities in the district.
 - An explanation of the district's evaluation criteria and procedures for administrators, teachers and support staff.
 - An explanation of the district's orientation program for new teachers.
 - An explanation of the district's staff development program.
5. School-Community Relations
- An explanation of programs, activities and interests of education-oriented groups and associations (i.e., PTA/PTO, booster clubs, education foundations, advisory committees).
 - An explanation of the district's public relations program, how it is coordinated, and what activities regularly take place.

Appendix G: Screening Candidates to Fill a School Board Vacancy

Every school board at one time or another must face the task of filling a vacancy. In many cases, the remaining members find themselves in a recruitment mode, trying to find someone they want who is willing to serve.

However, where two or more people are interested in filling the school board vacancy, the challenge facing the board is obviously quite different. Here the remaining members must make a choice that is bound to displease someone. For boards in this situation, there are some simple procedures that can eliminate the confusion and emotion that often surround screening and choosing appointments and make the process go quickly and smoothly.

It's important to note that a school board has 30 days in which to fill a vacancy (45 in the case of the death of a board member). If the board fails to act within that time, "the county legislative body, or municipal legislative body in a city district, shall fill [the] vacancy by appointment" (Utah Code § 20A-1-511(1) (b)).

In either case, the appointed member serves until the next regular election, at which time he/she may be elected to a new term. However, if the vacancy occurs more than 14 days before the filing deadline for the next board election and there are still two years remaining of the vacating board member's term of office, the vacancy will be filled by an interim appointment followed by an election to fill a two-year term. In other words, the interim appointee or another eligible candidate must be elected to complete the term of the vacating board member.

The process of screening candidates and making an appointment should have at least two purposes: to ensure selection of the most qualified applicant and to avoid haggling and hard feelings.

In addition, a vacancy presents a school board with a challenge to maintain its standards for excellence and to set an example for the staff. Put another way, if administrators are expected to do a good job of selecting staff members for employment, the board should do a good job of handpicking a board member for appointment.

To begin, members of the board must agree in advance on the qualifications they will seek in a new member. These qualifications can vary from board to board, depending upon how members view their role and the kinds of problems facing the district. One approach is to appoint the candidate who can be of most help to the board. However, this criterion may not be suitable for all boards. One board might place the highest value on intellectual capacity. Another might want someone with influence in the community. In any event, the board should produce a list of attributes that all members can agree on and then use that list to evaluate candidates.

The rating sheet below includes a list of attributes that might be appropriate where the board wants to appoint a person who can most help the board with its work. The list of attributes ranges from "desire to serve" to "knowledge of schools and board organization" to "availability."

Each school board should determine the qualifications it will seek. All members of the board must be committed to the agreed-upon attributes. If each member evaluates candidates by his or her own criteria or standards, the whole board will never agree on an appointee. The result may be an emotional and argumentative process with lingering resentment.

With criteria in hand, the board can set about recruiting and screening, a process that can be carried out in as little as two weeks. Here are the steps:

1. At least two weeks before the local school board meets, the school board shall give public notice of the meeting to fill the vacancy. The notice must identify the date, time, and place of the meeting where the vacancy will be filled, the deadline for submitting a person's name for consideration, and the person to whom the submission must be made.
2. As a whole board, in an open meeting, interview each candidate whose name was submitted for consideration and who meets the qualifications for office. All Interviews and discussions of a person applying to fill an elected position (or potential applicants) must be held in an open meeting. (Utah Code § 52-4-205). Each board member should use a rating sheet as a guide to asking questions and evaluating responses. Interviews should be designed to determine how well the candidate fulfills the board's criteria.
3. Following the interviews, have each board member individually list all of the candidates who are acceptable—that is, those who meet the qualifications.
4. The board president tabulates the results and determines which candidates show up on all the lists, or at least those who show up most frequently. The aim is to get the top three candidates.

At this point, the board may adjourn to give each member time to consider the top candidates with the intent of making a selection at the next regularly scheduled board meeting. If the 30-day deadline comes before the next regular board meeting, the board will need to schedule a special meeting for the appointment.

Conducting interviews

- The critical part of this process is the interview in which board members must decide how well each candidate measures up. Proper questioning is extremely important.
- For example, in determining a person's level of interest, the board can examine past school activities. Does the candidate take part in parent organizations? Attend board meetings? Has the candidate ever run or board election?
- Candidates might receive credit for experience in fraternal organizations, because this indicates a desire to serve the community. If the candidate can display some knowledge of the schools and how the board functions, a higher score might also be given.
- The board might ask a candidate to identify district priorities. The answer indicates knowledge of the district's direction and major concerns. A candidate might also be expected to know the difference between board work and staff work and to respect the superintendent's role as distinct from the board's role.
- A board might also look for people with different skills and perspectives, such as management experience.

Appendix H: School Board Common Sense

by McKay Jensen, former President of the Utah School Boards Association.

The levels of complexity in public education can be overwhelming for school board members. Local boards are accountable to operate with regulations that come from rules from the State Board of Education, statutes from the State Legislature, and guidelines from the Federal Government. New board members are especially sensitive to the mountains of bureaucratic jargon, mazes of procedures, and conversations filled with too many acronyms.

In response to this complexity, I would like to offer a few simple things that will make your service on a school board a little more pleasant and a lot more productive.

Number 1 - Believe school boards matter and take your position seriously.

Every school board member should have a “big picture” perspective of what can be accomplished through education.

A school board member should believe in public education as a generator of hope, success, and well-being for individuals, families, and communities. You should believe in education as an indispensable solution to economic and social perils.

You should:

- Believe in education as a catalyst for opportunity.
- Believe in education as a disrupter of poverty.
- Believe in education as a facilitator of prosperity.
- Believe in education as a promoter of understanding and decency.
- Believe in education as an enabler of the disabled, a sanctuary for the sufferer, and a vital provider of services to the most vulnerable among us.

You should unequivocally affirm that public education is vitally important to both the immediate needs of your community and your community’s greatest ambitions for the future.

You should respect the power of education enough to come to your meetings on time and be prepared. You should allow the enormity of your responsibility to humble you enough to listen closely and motivate you to speak carefully. School boards make a

difference—if that is a positive difference or a negative difference is largely a function of how serious you take the job.

Number 2 - Embrace gratitude as a critical factor of leadership.

Being involved in public education is often rewarding, but it is also extremely challenging for all involved. It can really be a battle; therefore, you should be just as conscious that tools that can heal wounds are often more powerful than tools that are designed to inflict them.

An article from a division of the Harvard Medical School entitled “Giving thanks can make you happier” defines gratitude as “a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible,” and states that “with gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives.” Most importantly, the article summarizes research which shows that “Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.” All of these outcomes are crucial for school board members.

School board members should remember that gratitude is a powerful tool to:

1. Help you, and those around you, feel more positive and confident in your decisions.
2. Relish the good that you see happening all around you.
3. Improve not only your own health but to improve the health and function of your board.
4. Deal effectively with the adversity that is here today and the adversity that is sure to come.

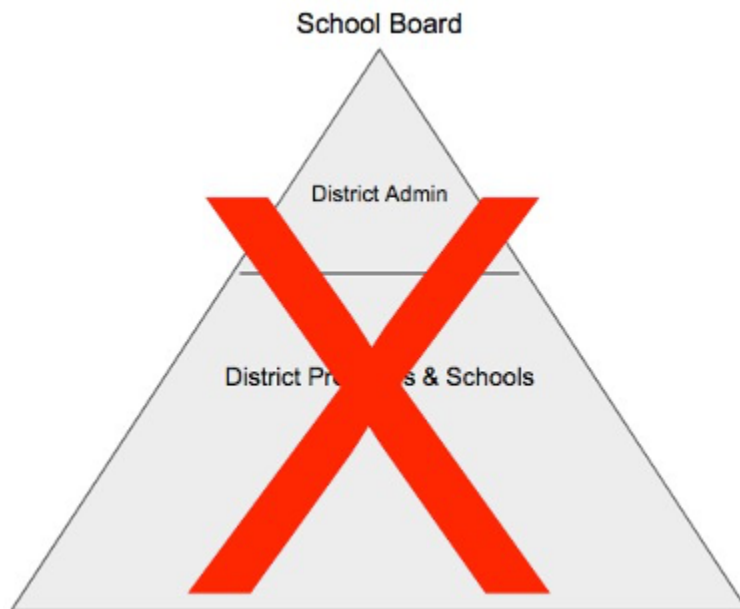
And perhaps most importantly, gratitude can:

5. Build strong relationships with your fellow board members—which will help you solve the problems that arise along the way.

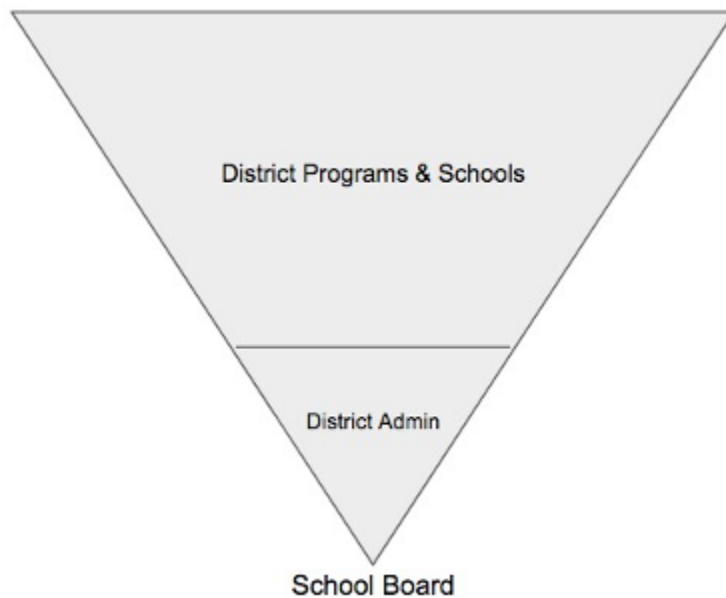
As a school board member, you should thank people publicly, often, and sincerely. You should write thank-notes and even take a little time each day to make mental notes of gratitude just to improve your own well-being and happiness. Practicing gratitude when things get difficult in your work on a school board (and they will get difficult) will make you more optimistic, more energetic, more satisfied, and more successful.

Number 3 - Remember, the success of a school board comes only one way—strength through unity.

Often, when we think of our district leadership structure, we think of the school board, superintendent, and district admin sitting at the top of an organizational pyramid. That concept is incorrect.



School board members should think of their district's leadership structure as almost the direct opposite of that, with the position of the board being at the bottom and the pyramid of the district organization rising up from there.



It is more important for the school board to demonstrate strength sufficient to support the district organization than to simply have the skills to administer the district from the top. Simply put, a school board has a choice to lift a district to new heights or to preside over an organization that slowly erodes from the top.

The strength of a board to lift and support from the bottom only comes from standing firmly together. Yes, there will be differences and disagreements; however, a school board's power truly comes from collaboration, compromise, and collegiality. As has been noted before, "For all practical purposes, a school board exists only while it is convened in a legal meeting" (Coming to Order , Page 62). A school board's authority is, therefore, derived from shared action. The more that authority is used in unity, the more powerful it is. Unity should always be the goal. Detractions from unity should always be recognized as a diminishment of authority and as a depreciation of the district's ability to do good.

This way of thinking about the authority of the school board should be natural for school board members, as the school board truly supports the entire district but actually supervises only two positions, the superintendent and the business administrator. That relationship between the board, the superintendent, and the business administrator is obviously key to the health of the entire district. It is much better to visualize that relationship as the fulcrum of district direction rather than conceive of it as simply the pinnacle of district authority.

Remember:

1. Believe school boards matter and take your position seriously.
2. Embrace gratitude as a critical factor of leadership.
3. The success of a school board comes only one way—strength through unity

These three things are the common sense keys to a school board's success. No one will make you do them, but your success will largely be measured by them.