ENGAGING A NEW BOARD MEMBER

Board elections can be challenging for superintendents, as well as, the board. Educating candidates regarding the districts' focus prior to the election and intensive training of the newly elected person enables the individual to succeed as a board member. When faced with an election, superintendents can make a significant difference by working hard to prepare the candidate/newly elected board member for their new role and the responsibilities of being a school board member. Providing comprehensive candidate training and a board professional development plan for the first year of service will ensure the individual is equipped with the working knowledge and tools to serve public education.

The superintendent and/or board are not alone when facing the task of orienting the new board member(s). ASBA provides many resources to our members. Following an election, the Association provides professional development opportunities for the new board member. You may locate a current list of board development workshops at www.azsba.org. We hope that you will keep this in your favorites for quick reference. We also offer customized services.

Orientation Plan for New Board Members:

To provide you with a starting point, we have included protocol and tools we consider to be effective procedures to follow when orienting board members into their new role.

Immediately following the election and/or appointment of a new board member, the superintendent, board president, and current sitting board members should call and welcome the new member(s) to the leadership team. There are numerous tasks that must follow the welcome call including, but not limited to, the following list per responsible party:

Quality leadership and advocacy for children in public schools

PREPARING FOR THE NEW BOARD MEMBER(S)

Orientation:

The superintendent and sitting board members should share the following responsibilities when orienting new board members:

Superintendent responsibilities:

- Notify ASBA of the newly elected board members, who they will replace and appropriate contact information and email address

- Register new board members for the next ASBA New Board Member Workshop

- Organize packets to distribute at the district-conducted New Board Member Orientation

Superintendent/Board Member responsibilities:

- Invite the new board member to the district office to meet staff/tour district facilities

- Organize New Board Member Orientation (include current administrators, board president, and board members)

ORIENTATION MATERIALS TO BE REVIEWED:

TOPIC: School-Community Relations and General Responsibilities

Superintendent will review:

- Board policy manual and administrative guidelines (or instructions for accessing manual on the district and/or ASBA website)

- Minutes from the past year's board meetings

- Completed "What Every Board Member Needs to Know" document

Board members will review:

- Board meeting procedures utilized by board, explanation of how board meetings are conducted
- Explanation of the organization of the school board (officers, standing and ad hoc committees, if any, etc.)
- Explanation of the board's Code of Ethics

Superintendent/board members together will review:

- District short and long-range goals, School Improvement Plan, and strategic plan including timelines
- District grievance procedures (i.e., public, staff, curriculum, student, etc.)
- Explanation of authority and responsibilities of the board, superintendent, administrators, and individual board members.
- List of ASBA board member development opportunities throughout the year

TOPIC: School Finance

Superintendent will review:

- Current District Budget Summary. Explanation of how, when and by whom it is prepared; how educational needs are translated into a budget plan, how the money is derived and the board's role in the process
- Explanation of the assessed valuation and tax structure of the district
- Explanation of the funding/budgeting process for school districts
- Data to address current existing bond indebtedness of the district and when various building debts will expire
- Information regarding federal aid to school district's education
- Explanation of how the tax rate is determined

Quality leadership and advocacy for children in public schools

TOPIC: Curriculum and Instruction

Superintendent will review:

- Explanation of the district's overall curriculum program, including local standards and assessments

Superintendent/board members* together will review:

- District's educational philosophy
- Most recent student test data

TOPIC: Administration and Staff

Superintendent will review:

- District Organization Chart of personnel structure
- District salary schedules and fringe benefit program, and recent salary array data for certificated staff and Administration
- Copies of all handbooks including Certified, Classified, Student, and other pertinent district handbooks
- Copy of the district's evaluation criteria and procedures for administrators, certificated and classified support staff
- Copy of the district's staff development program

Board will review:

- Copy of the Superintendent's Contract, evaluation, job description, salary and benefits
- Master calendar of board/district/activities

Superintendent/board members will review:

- Copies of all district's collective bargaining agreement(s), if any and a brief history of recent collective bargaining activities in the district

TOPIC: School District Facilities

Superintendent/board members* together will review:

- A current list of all district facilities and/or property, location and condition of each building

- Explanation of construction projects contemplated and in progress

- Description of the district's building maintenance program

- Explanation of the student transportation system

- Current District Facility Survey/Plan

**If the board utilizes the committee structure, committee members could present the appropriate information during the new board member orientation.*

Be prepared to answer any of these questions from new board members:

- What is the primary function of the school board and what are some of the powers and duties of the board?

- What are the duties of each elected officer?

- How do the school board's responsibilities differ from the superintendent's?

- Where or who does the board member go to for information?

- How much time can a board member expect to spend on school board responsibilities?

- What guidelines should a board member follow to be effective?

- What is the purpose of the Educational Service Unit?

- What is the role of the board when there are problems with an administrator?

- Is it okay for a board member to call the superintendent?

- If a board member disagrees with the board or the superintendent, what is the best way to handle the matter?

- Is it okay for board members to talk about board business outside of the board meeting?

- What can a board member say, or not say to parents, friends and family regarding school issues?

- What information is considered confidential?

- How does a board member address concerns for their children with a teacher once they are elected and serve the district?

- How does a board member respond to community questions regarding the board's decisions?

- How does a board member respond to media?

- How does a board member respond to parental complaints?

- Should board members communicate with each other via email?

- What is the Open Meetings Act?

- Can board members meet socially without violating the Open Meetings Act?

- When is it appropriate to abstain or vote no?

- How does a board member support what they think is a bad decision?

- When and how does the board evaluate the superintendent?

- What laws govern what a school board can or cannot do?

- How are public schools funded?

- What is a school bond levy and how does a school board set the levy?

- How does a board member identify a conflict of interest and what must a board member do to protect him/herself from violating law?

- What is option enrollment?

- Is board development mandatory?

- What is ASBA?

Revised 08.08.13