

# PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

for

## Wyoming School Boards



Wyoming School Boards Association

2323 Pioneer Avenue

Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001

[www.wsba-wy.org](http://www.wsba-wy.org)

## **WSBA PROFESSIONAL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

Public oversight of local government is the foundation of American democracy. Nowhere is this more evident than in our public schools, where local boards of education are entrusted by their diverse communities to uphold the Constitution, protect the public interest in schools and ensure that a high quality education is provided to each student. To maximize the public's confidence in local government, our local boards must govern responsibly and effectively.

The Wyoming School Boards Association (WSBA) recognizes there are certain fundamental principles involved in governing responsibly and effectively. These principles - or Professional Governance Standards - reflect consensus among hundreds of board members, superintendents and other educational leaders.

These Professional Governance Standards describe the four components vital to effective school governance:

1. the attributes of an effective individual trustee,
2. the attributes of an effective governing board,
3. the attributes of an effective superintendent, and
4. the specific jobs the board performs in its governance role.

The intent of these standards is to enhance the public's understanding about the critical responsibilities of local boards and to support boards in their efforts to govern effectively.

## **The Individual Trustee**

In Wyoming's public education system, a trustee is a person elected or appointed to serve on a school district board of trustees. Individual trustees bring unique skills, values and beliefs to their board. In order to govern effectively, individual trustees must work with each other and the superintendent to ensure that a high quality education is provided to each student.

- Keeps learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus.
- Values, supports and advocates for public education.
- Recognizes and respects differences of perspective and style on the board and among staff, students, parents and the community.
- Acts with dignity, and understands the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- Participates in professional development and commits the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.
- Understands the distinction between board and staff roles, and refrains from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the superintendent and staff.
- Understands that authority rests with the board as a whole and not with individuals.

## **The Board**

School districts are governed by boards, not by individual trustees. While understanding their separate roles, the board and superintendent work together as a "governance team." This team assumes collective responsibility for building unity and creating a positive organizational culture in order to govern effectively.

To operate effectively, the board must:

- Have a unity of purpose.
- Keep the district focused on learning and achievement for all students.
- Communicate a common vision.
- Operate openly, with trust and dignity.
- Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.
- Take collective responsibility for the board's performance.
- Periodically evaluate its own performance.
- Connect with the community.

## **The Superintendent**

The board employs as their chief executive officer a superintendent who is responsible to implement the board's policies and directives.

Effective superintendents:

- Promote the success of all students and supports the efforts of the board to keep the district focused on learning and achievement.
- Acts with dignity, treats everyone with civility and respect, and understands the implication of demeanor and behavior.
- Works with the Board as a "governance team" and assures collective responsibility for building a unity of purpose, communicating a common vision and creating a positive organization culture.
- Recognizes that the board/superintendent governance relationship is supported by the management team in each district.
- Understands the distinction between board and staff roles, and respects the role of the Board as the representatives of the community.
- Understands that authority rests with the Board as a whole; provides guidance to the Board to assist in decision-making; and provides leadership based on the direction of the Board as a whole.
- Communicates openly with trust and integrity including providing all members of the Board with equal access to information, and recognizing the importance of both responsive and anticipatory communications.
- Accepts leadership responsibility and accountability for implementing the vision, mission, expectations and policies of the district.

## **The Board's Responsibilities**

The primary responsibilities of the board are to set a direction for the district, provide a structure by establishing policies, ensure accountability and provide community leadership on behalf of the district and public education. To fulfill these responsibilities, there are a number of specific jobs that effective boards must carry out.

Effective boards:

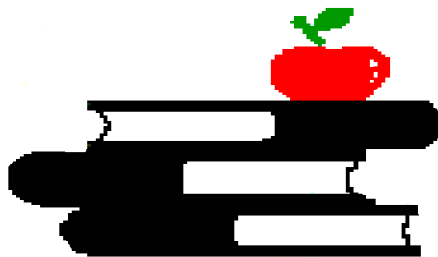
- Involve the community, parents, students and staff in developing a common vision, mission and expectations for the district focused on learning and achievement and responsive to the needs of all students.
- Adopt, evaluate and update policies consistent with the law and the district's vision, mission and expectations.
- Maintain accountability for student learning by adopting the district curriculum and monitoring student progress.
- Hire and support the superintendent so that the vision, mission, expectations and policies of the district are implemented.
- Conduct regular and timely evaluations of the superintendent based on the vision, mission, expectations and performance of the district, and ensure that the superintendent holds district personnel accountable.
- Adopt a fiscally responsible budget based on the district's vision, mission and expectations, and regularly monitors the fiscal health of the district.
- Ensure that a safe and appropriate educational environment is provided to all students.
- Provide community leadership on educational issues and advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local, state and federal levels.

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