Challenges Facing New Board Members
All About Us
The Role of the School Board

As the entity legally charged with governing a school district, each school board is responsible to its community to govern efficiently and effectively. This obligation imposes some fundamental duties on the board.
Duties of the School Board

1. Vision, Mission, Beliefs, Expectations
   • The board, with community input, envisions the educational future and formulates the goals, defines the outcomes, and sets the course for its district.

2. Structure
   • The board establishes a structure and hires a superintendent to accomplish the vision, mission, beliefs, and expectations.

3. Accountability
   • The board is accountable to the community for constantly monitoring the conditions affecting the district as a whole.
4. **Advocacy**
   • The board advances its vision by focusing on student achievement, partnering with the community, and being proactive in addressing issues that affect education on local, state, and national levels.

5. **Conduct and Ethics**
   • The board, as a whole, provides leadership to the community on behalf of the district by conducting its business in a fair, respectful, legal, and responsible manner.
Top Board Tips

- Read through all the tips.
- Put a ★ next to any tips that really resonate with you.
- Put a ‍ next to any tips you think might be challenging.
Visiting Schools

1. Do school board members have the right to visit schools in the district?

2. Should board members “drop in” on schools without making prior arrangements?

3. May school board members talk to principals, teachers, and staff members when they visit schools?

4. May school board members visit classrooms when they are in operation?
Visiting Schools

5. Can a school board member give directions or orders to a principal, teacher or staff member in a school building?

6. Should a school board member make personal commitments or promises when talking to staff members?

7. What is the first thing a school board member should do when arriving at a school?

8. If a school board member has a particular question or concern about something at a school, how can it best be addressed?
YOU MIGHT BE MICRO-MANAGING IF WHAT YOU ARE DOING....

1. has to do with day to day operations of the district instead of governance or the big picture future of the district

2. is part of a staff member’s job description

3. takes a board member out of the chain of command as established by your board policy and best practices

4. should only be undertaken as part of a whole board deliberation not as an individual’s decision or responsibility
WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE APPROACHED WITH A CONCERN?

L = Listen

A = Acknowledge

S = Send

(Send: to the Superintendent or Board Chairman)

T = Thank

(Think: is this an issue for the Board)
The superintendent has complete authority to decide and act within the limits of law, board policy, propriety and common sense.

The superintendent has complete authority to act but must inform the board about each decision or action.

The superintendent must obtain prior approval from the school board before taking action.

The school board makes the final decision but may permit or require a recommendation from the superintendent.

The manner in which decisions are to be made should result from discussion between the board and superintendent.
Wyoming Ethics and Disclosure Act

Use of Title and Prestige
- No benefit of gifts as a result of office

Nepotism
- Can’t advocate for employment of, supervise, or discipline family members

Misuse of Office
- Can’t use public funds, personnel, time facilities, equipment for private use or political campaign

Decisions and Votes
- Can’t disseminate information not available to full public
- Don’t vote if gives financial benefit to self or family

Penalties
- If violate and are guilty, is a misdemeanor
- If convicted, fined up to $1000 and removal from office
A. You strongly recommended that the administration hire your best friend’s daughter.

B. You visited schools following the district's visitation procedure.

C. At a board meeting, you asked for more documentation from the business manager.

D. You commented to your spouse about a board report given during executive session concerning a teacher's inappropriate behavior.

E. You told the superintendent that you were disappointed in his inability to complete a district goal after several deadlines were not met.
F. You advocated for a special program that was listed on the meeting agenda by providing additional data during the board meeting.

G. You intervened for a parent whose child had problems with a teacher by calling the principal and recommending a class change.

H. You had the school secretary type your personal correspondence during school hours.

I. You failed to study the budget proposal you've had for three weeks. Tonight is the budget meeting and you are unprepared.

J. You made recommendations to a teacher about how to manage a noisy class.
K. You spoke to a neighborhood group as the board’s designated spokesperson.

L. You agreed with members of a local men's club that the school's instructional program is "bad."

M. You gave your side of the story to the newspaper after your motion failed to pass at last night's board meeting.
✓ Lived in Wyoming for 5 or more years.
✓ Graduated from a school in Wyoming.
✓ Have a story about traveling during a wicked Wyoming winter.
✓ Am a parent.

✓ Have previously served on a board.
✓ Have a funny school memory.
✓ Have a favorite sports team.
✓ Voted in the last election.
Executive Session
Nine (of 11) Statutory Reasons

1. Threats to public security
2. Litigation
3. Consider appointment, employment, right to practice, or dismissal of employee
4. National security
5. Selection of or purchase of real estate
6. Consider accepting donations requesting confidentiality

7. Receive information classified as confidential from an attorney
8. Consider expulsion, suspension, or other disciplinary action of a student
9. Consider accepting or tending offers concerning salaries, wages, benefits, and terms of employment

Must have a motion and second
1. Board members **should vote** on all matters that come before the board.
2. Board members **cannot be compelled to vote** on an issue.
3. Board members **must abstain** from voting and taking part in discussions about action in which they have a conflict of interest.
4. Board members **should not abstain** on difficult or controversial issues.
5. Board members **should vote** by weighing the information presented to them.
6. A board member **should consider** each issue independently.
7. A board member **should consider the ramifications** of his or her decision to abstain from voting.
1. The Board member who made a motion may withdraw that motion. T F
2. Consensus is the same as a unanimous vote. T F
3. The chairman’s decision may be overruled with a majority vote. T F
4. Once a motion is tabled, it is dead. T F
5. A motion would be passed if the vote was as follows T F
   Aye – 3   Nay – 2   Not Voting – 2
6. The board chairman only votes in case of a tie. T F
7. An item may not be discussed until a motion is on the floor. T F
8. A motion to reconsider can be made by any board member. T F
9. A motion to adjourn is not debatable. T F
10. On important questions before the board, the chairman may limit T F
    the length of discussion on the motion.
11. Explanations are always necessary when the chairman rules a motion out of order. T F
12. The chairman cannot enter into debate on an issue unless he/she yields the chair to vice-chairman. T F
13. When addressing the chairman of the board, it is Chairman regardless of gender. T F
14. A school board has the authority to adopt a set of Rules of Order other than Roberts Rules of Order as Board Policy. T F
15. Each member of the school board, (even those who usually don’t speak up) should be allowed to speak on any issue under debate. The chairman may refuse to call upon other board members for second comments until each member has had a chance to speak. T F
The Real World

Vignette #1 – P. 4

Vignette #3 – P. 6

Vignette #5 – P. 8

Vignette #7 – P. 10

Vignette #2 – P. 5

Vignette #4 – P. 7

Vignette #6 – P. 9
The Hardest Lessons

- Learning to acknowledge publicly that you have no power and authority as an individual board member, that only the board as a whole can make policies and decisions for the school district.
- Determining what your role and responsibility is on the board and how to accomplish it effectively.
- Understanding, that no matter what you initially think you know about board service you still have a lot to learn.
- Realizing that the focus of all board decisions should be based on kids.
The Hardest Lessons

- Recognizing the difference between setting policy (the board’s job) and administering the schools (the superintendent’s job)

- Understanding that you must represent all students: your decisions must be made in the interest of the total school system and not made solely for special groups or interests

- Learning how to respond to the complaints and concerns of citizens, school administrators, and other staff
The Hardest Lessons

- Recognizing that change comes slowly
- Knowing that you can’t solve everyone’s problems by yourself
- Realizing that sometimes you must accept a reality that is contrary to your own beliefs
- Agreeing that even when you hold the minority viewpoint on a given issue, you will publicly support the majority vote of the board
- Learning the correlation between board decisions and district finances
Close To The Final Thoughts

- Relationships matter
- Team building yields dividends
- Developing governance skills takes time
- Not on your own
Don’t squat with ‘yer spurs on.

Never, ever, miss a good chance to shut up.

If you’re ridin’ ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it’s still there.

The easiest way to eat crow is while it’s still warm.

If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.

Letting the cat out of the bag is a whole lot easier than puttin’ it back.