

Board Chair 101

Effective School Board Leadership

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Success

The success of a school board depends greatly on its chair. The chair is responsible for leadership of the team, board operations, and setting the overall direction of the board's work, plus running efficient and productive meetings. Whether you're a current board chair, an aspiring chair for your newly organizing board, or a board member who is about to vote on your chair for the next year, it is critical to understand the importance and complexity of this crucial role on the board.

Roles of the School Board Chair

Team Leader

- Promote the development of a strong team that understands its role and performs its essential work.

Link to Administration

- Maintain a strong connection with the administration to build common vision and teamwork.

Meeting Leader

- Organize and conduct effective meetings.

Legal Guardian

- Promote lawful and ethical operations.

Key Role of the Chair: Leadership

Lead the development of a strong board team that understands its role and performs its essential work.

Develop the Team

Relationships

- Build a relationship with each member

Welcome New Members

- Ensure they receive a thorough orientation
- Assign a mentor

Inclusion

- All members understand they are an integral part of the board

Board Dynamics

- Be mindful of the needs and interests of each member

Ground Rules

- Operating Protocols

Learning Together as a Team



The Role of the School Board

Trustee

- Provide oversight on behalf of the community of public education

Education

- Ensure high quality education for all students

Investment

- Ensure the public gets a good return on its investment

Operations

- Ensure that the system operates effectively and ethically

The Role of the Supervisory Union Board

Oversee education for the region through the Supervisory Union, promoting equal education opportunity across the SU, assuring mutual accountability with superintendent, and seeking greater student opportunity and operating efficiency.

Key Role of the Chair: Partnership

Establish a strong connection with the administration to build common vision and partnership.

Good governance is neither

Rubber stamping



Micromanaging



Chain of Command: Board, Superintendent, and Principal

Board: Vision, Policy, Resources, Accountability



Superintendent: Systems Leader and CEO for the district, accountable to SU and District boards



Principal: Educational Leader for school, accountable to the superintendent

Guidance, Support, and Oversight

- Set Goals
- Evaluate the Superintendent
- Communicate
- Identify and resolve issues as a district board
- Address appropriate issues through the SU board



Key Role of the Board Chair: Meetings

Organize and conduct effective meetings.

Conduct Effective Meetings



Build clear and intentional agendas

Follow Robert's Rules of Order

Obey open meeting and public records laws

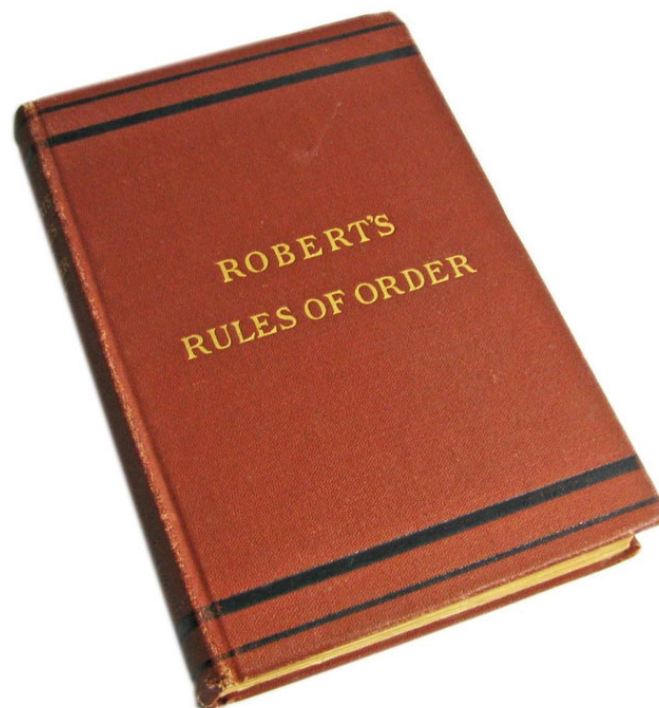
Facilitate community conversations

Work for consensus

Build Effective Agendas

- Align agendas with board goals
- Include a manageable number of issues, so that each item can be given necessary consideration, while keeping meetings to a reasonable length.
- Limit action to items that the board has had time to consider
- Ensure clarity, so the public can be informed of the topics to be discussed

Become Familiar with Robert's Rules



Obey Open Meeting and Public Records Laws

1 V.S.A. §312(a): All meetings of a public body are declared to be open at all times...No resolution, rule, regulation, appointment, or formal action shall be binding except as taken or made at such an open meeting.

1 V.S.A. §316(a): Any person may inspect or copy any public record of a public agency...

1 V.S.A. §317(b): Public record means any written or recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which is produced or acquired in the course of public agency business.

Follow Executive Session Requirements

- **Boards must first meet in public session and then vote to enter executive session by a motion that “indicates the nature of the business” to be discussed.**
- **Permissible reasons for entering executive session are listed in 1 V.S.A. §313. No other matter may be considered.**
- **Boards may invite their attorney, administrative staff, and persons who are subjects of the discussion or whose information is needed.**
- **No binding action may be made in executive session. Ultimate action must be taken by motion and voted in open session (1 V.S.A. §313(a)).**

Facilitate Community Conversations

Board meetings are held in public, but they are not a meeting of the public

16 V.S.A. §554(b): a reasonable opportunity to appear and express views on any matter considered by the board shall be given to any person in the school district

1 V.S.A. 312(h): public comment shall be subject to reasonable rules established by the chair

Key Role of the Board Chair: Legal Guardian

**Promote lawful and ethical operation
by the board**

Guidelines for Lawful and Ethical Operations

Unified Voice

- Be clear you have no power apart from the board

Confidentiality

- Maintain confidentiality of executive session

Oversight

- Assure that schools are well run, and don't try to run them

Conflict of Interest

- Avoid even the perception of conflict of interest

Majority Rules

- Recognize and accept the validity of all board decisions

Establish a Code of Ethics

As a board member I will:

Act within the scope of my official role

Uphold the highest ethical standards

Respect my peers, my constituents, and confidentiality considerations

Manage Potential Conflicts of Interest

Policy

- Every board must have a conflict of interest policy. 16 V.S.A. § 563(20)

Legal and Ethical Duty of Board Members

- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest

Disclosure and Recusal

- Members with potential conflict should follow the procedures

Accountability

- Chairs can help members hold each other accountable for following policy



Resources for Board Chairs

Board Chair Tool Kit

Reorganizational Meetings Tool kit

www.vtvsba.org

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