

MPS Governance Process Policies

4.0 Governance Process

Community members are the owners of the school district. The purpose of the Board, on behalf of the citizens of Montpelier, is to see that (a) the Montpelier Schools achieve appropriate results for students reflective of overall community values at an appropriate cost (as specified in the Ends policies), and (b) avoids unacceptable actions and situations (as prohibited in the Board's Superintendent Limitations policies). The Board obligates itself to rigorous and continual improvement of its capacity to govern effectively, using its policies to define its values and expectations.

4.1 Governing Style

The Board will govern with emphasis on school district vision and results for students, encourage diversity of viewpoints, focus on strategic leadership rather than administrative detail, observe clear distinction between Board and superintendent roles, make collective rather than individual decisions, exhibit future orientation rather than past or present, and govern proactively rather than reactively.

Accordingly:

- 1) The Board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The Board will work in partnership with the Superintendent, staff, students, parents and the community. The Board, not the Superintendent or staff, will be responsible for excellence in governing. The Board will use the expertise of individual Board members to enhance the ability of the Board as a body, but will not substitute individual judgments for the Board's collective values.
- 2) The Board will hold itself accountable for continual governance excellence. This self-discipline will apply to attendance, preparation for meetings, policymaking principles, respect of roles, and ensuring the long-term capacity for excellent governance for the organization. To ensure that the board's business meetings are conducted with maximum effectiveness and efficiency, members will:
 - a. Come to meetings adequately prepared.
 - b. Speak only when recognized.
 - c. Not interrupt each other; hear people out.
 - d. Not engage in side conversations.
 - e. Not repeat what has already been said; e.g. build on prior statements.
 - f. Not "play to the audience" or monopolize the discussion.
 - g. Support the Board Chair's efforts to facilitate an orderly meeting.
 - h. Communicate openly and actively in discussion and dialog to avoid surprises.
 - i. Value equal participation of all members.
 - j. Practice respectful body language.
- 3) The Board will direct, control, and inspire the district through the careful establishment of written policies reflecting the Board's values and perspectives. The Board's major policy focus will be on the intended long-term benefits for students, not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those benefits.

Accordingly, members will not:

- a. Assume responsibility for resolving operational problems or complaints, or

b. Give personal direction to any part of the operational organization.

- 4) Since the Board understands the importance of continuous development, each member will commit to attending one or more conference per year related to Board matters.
- 5) The Board will allow no officer, individual, or committee of the Board to hinder or be an excuse for not fulfilling its commitments.
- 6) The Board will monitor its process and performance quarterly. Self-monitoring will include comparison of Board activity and discipline to policies in the Governance Process and Board-Superintendent Relationship categories.
- 7) In order to facilitate the functioning of future boards, the active Board will inform candidates about its governing practices during the three months prior to the spring election using open meetings with the candidates and providing resource materials for their review.

4.2 Accountability of the Board

The job of the Board is to represent its owners and advocate for the Montpelier School District through responsible stewardship and lead the district by determining and demanding appropriate and excellent school district performance. To distinguish the Board's own unique job from the jobs of the superintendent and staff, the Board will:

- 1) Use strategies that involve input from students, staff, parents and the community.
- 2) Develop written governing policies which, at the broadest levels, address:
 - a. Ends: District impacts, benefits, or results and their relative worth for specified recipients (what end result is desired for whom and at what cost);
 - b. Superintendent Limitations: Constraints on executive authority, which establish the practical, ethical, and legal boundaries within which all executive activity and decision-making will take place;
 - c. Governance Process: How the Board will conceive, carry out and monitor its own work;
 - d. Board-Superintendent Relationship: How authority is delegated and its proper use monitored; the Superintendent role, authority, and accountability.
- 3) Define and require demonstration of accountability for successful organizational performance on Ends and Superintendent Limitations.
- 4) Advocate for the district and the students it serves, including legislative awareness of the district's viability and needs.
- 5) Adopt a budget and other ballot issues that reflect the Board's values and citizen affordability.
- 6) Name schools and mascots.

4.3 Agenda Planning

To accomplish its stated objectives, the Board will adopt and follow an annual agenda which includes continuing review, monitoring and refinement of all policies, linkage meetings with identified ownership and staff groups, and activities to improve board performance through educational, enriched input and deliberation.

Accordingly:

- 1) The planning cycle will end each year in May in order that administrative decision-making and budgeting can be based on accomplishing the next one-year segment of the Board's most recent statement of long-term Ends.
- 2) The planning cycle will start with the Board's development of its agenda for the next year, and will include:
 - a. Scheduled linkage discussions and consultations with selected groups and persons whose opinions will be helpful to the Board;
 - b. Educational discussions on governance matters, including orientation of new Board members in the Board's governance process, and periodic discussions by the Board about means to improve its own process;
 - c. Consideration of student achievement as defined by Ends policies (e.g. examining data and presentations by futurists, demographers, advocacy groups, staff, etc.);
 - d. Scheduled monitoring of all policies;
 - e. Superintendent monitoring, policy criteria, and monitoring schedule, if monitoring reports show policy violations; and
 - f. Superintendent remuneration after a review of monitoring reports.

4.4 Board Officers

Board Chair:

The Chair of the Board ensures the integrity of the Board's processes. Accordingly, the Chair has the following authority and duties:

- 1) Monitor Board behavior to ensure that it is consistent with its own rules and policies and those legitimately imposed upon it from outside the organization.
 - a. Conduct and monitor Board meeting deliberations to ensure that only Board issues, as defined in Board policy, are discussed.
 - b. Ensure that Board meeting deliberations are fair, open, and thorough, but also efficient, timely, orderly, and to the point.
 - c. Preside and chair all Board meetings in accordance with law and with all the commonly accepted power of that position as described in Robert's Rules of Order.
- 2) Make all interpretive decisions that fall within the topics covered by Board policies on Governance Process and Board/Superintendent Relationship, except where the Board specifically delegates such authority to others, using any reasonable interpretation of the provisions in those policies.
 - a. Refrain from making any interpretive decisions about policies created by the Board in the Ends and Superintendent Limitations policy areas.
 - b. Refrain from exercising any authority as an individual to supervise or direct the superintendent.
- 3) Perform all statutorily required duties or those assigned by the Board.
- 4) Compile and facilitate the Board's summative evaluation of the Superintendent.
- 5) Appoint members of all Board-approved committees.
- 6) Develop proposed board meeting agendas.

Vice Chair:

The Vice Chair has the following authority and duties:

- 1) Perform all duties legally assigned to the office.
- 2) Assume the duties assigned to the Chair in the event the latter is absent or unable to act.

Clerk/Treasurer:

The Clerk/Treasurer has the following authority and duties:

- 1) Perform all duties legally assigned to the office.
- 2) Assume the duties assigned to the President in the event of the absence or inability to act of the Chair and Vice Chair.

Parliamentarian:

The Parliamentarian has the following authority & duties:

- 1) Perform all duties legally assigned to the office.
- 2) Assume the duties assigned to the President in the event of the absence or inability to act of the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk/Treasurer.

4.5 Board Members Code of Conduct

The Board commits itself and its members to ethical, businesslike, and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as Board members.

Accordingly:

- 1) Board members will represent the interests of the citizens of the entire school district. This accountability to the whole district supersedes:
 - a. Any conflicting loyalty a member may have to other advocacy or interest groups;
 - b. Loyalty based upon membership on other boards or staffs;
 - c. Conflicts based upon the personal interest of any Board member who is also a parent of a student in the district;
 - d. Conflicts based upon being an employee or a relative of an employee of the district; or
 - e. Loyalty to staff/school employees.
- 2) Members must avoid conflicts of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibility:
 - a. There will be no business conducted by a member with the organization except to the extent expressly permitted by law and appropriately disclosed. Members will annually disclose their involvements with other organizations, with vendors, or any associations that might be or might reasonably be seen as being a conflict.
 - b. When the Board is to decide upon an issue about which a member has an unavoidable conflict of interest, that member shall absent herself or himself from, not only the vote, but also from the deliberations.
 - c. Board members will not use their Board position to obtain employment in the organization for themselves, family members, or close associates. Should a Board member apply for employment, he or she must first resign from the Board.

- 3) Board members may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the organization.
 - a. Members' interactions with the Superintendent or with staff must recognize the lack of authority vested in individuals except when explicitly Board authorized. Members will not give personal direction to any part of the operational organization or assume personal responsibility for resolving operational problems or complaints.
 - b. Except for participation in Board deliberation about whether the Superintendent has achieved a reasonable interpretation of Board policy, members will not express publicly individual negative judgments of performance of the Superintendent or the Superintendent's staff.
- 4) Members will protect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature and other matters that may compromise the integrity or legal standing of the Board and district, including matters discussed in executive session.
- 5) To build trust among members and to ensure an environment conducive to effective governance and interacting with the press, public, or other board members, individual members will:
 - a. Focus on issues rather than personalities
 - b. Support decisions of the full board
 - c. Exercise honesty in all written and interpersonal interaction, never intentionally misleading or misinforming each other,
 - d.
 - e. Make every reasonable effort to protect the integrity and promote the positive image of the district and one another, and
 - f. Never embarrass each other or the district

4.6 Board Committee

Board committees, when established, will be used to support the work of the Board and to reinforce the wholeness of the Board's job. The role of a committee is to make recommendations to the board and never to interfere with delegations of authority from the Board to the Superintendent.

Accordingly:

- 1) Board committees are to assist the Board to do its job, not to direct or advise the staff. Committees ordinarily will assist the Board by preparing policy alternatives and implications for Board consideration. In keeping with the Board's broader focus, Board committees will not have direct dealing with staff operations unless specifically given that authority by the Board.
- 2) Board committees may not speak or act for the Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes. Expectations and authority will be carefully stated by the Board to assure that committee authority will not conflict with authority delegated to the Superintendent.
- 3) Board committees may not exercise authority over the Superintendent or staff. Because the Superintendent works for the full Board, any direction to the Superintendent related to a committee recommendation must come from the full Board.
- 4) Board committees are expected to avoid over-identification with organizational parts rather than the whole. Board committees are to evaluate specific issues in the context

of the entire organization. Monitoring organizational performance is the responsibility of the full Board, notwithstanding the work of a Board committee that has helped create a policy.

- 5) All committees will be ad hoc and formed only by board action, whether or not they are called committees and whether or not they include Board members. It does not apply to committees formed under the authority of the Superintendent. All Board committee meetings are subject to the Vermont Open Meetings Law.

4.7 Board Committee Structure

A committee is a Board committee only if its existence and charge come from the Board and its work is intended to support the Board's work, whether or not Board members serve on the committee. The only Board committees are those established by the Board. Unless otherwise indicated, a committee ceases to exist as soon as its task is complete.

Board committees will have the following structure:

- 1) Charge: A description of the purpose of the committee.
- 2) Membership: The names of the individuals appointed to the committee.
- 3) Reporting Schedule: The timetable for reporting progress to the Board.
- 4) Term: A description of how or when the committee ends.

4.8 Cost of Governance

The Board will invest in its continuing governance capacity.

Accordingly:

- 1) Board skills and resources will be sufficient to assure governing with excellence.
 - a. Training and retraining will be used appropriately to orient new members and candidates for membership, as well as to maintain and increase existing member skills and understandings.
 - b. Outside monitoring assistance will be arranged as needed so that the Board can exercise confident control over organizational performance. This includes, but is not limited to, the fiscal audit.
 - c. Outreach mechanisms will be used as needed to ensure the Board's ability to listen to the viewpoints and values of the Montpelier School District community.
- 2) Costs will be prudently incurred, though not at the expense of endangering the development and maintenance of superior capability.
- 3) Annually, the Board will develop and approve a budget for training, monitoring, and advocacy mechanisms for the coming year. Additional member commitments or expenditures require approval of the Board.

Date Warned: June 8, 2007

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