

**SUMMARY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND
SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS IN CONNECTICUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AS PREPARED BY THE AVON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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“The focus of both must always be collaboration on behalf of children.”

(Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Joint Position Statement, 2004)

Recently, there has been expressed public interest with understanding the roles and responsibilities of the boards of education and school superintendents leading public schools in Connecticut. In response to these recent local inquiries and the perceived need to educate the general public about the differentiation of the duties of the Board of Education and its Superintendent of Schools, this summary has been prepared detailing the collaborative leadership model.

Preface

(Adapted from a 2004 Joint Position Statement by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.)

Connecticut's educational leaders recognize the authority and potential to improve teaching and learning in our public schools through cooperative, purposeful and professional working relationships between superintendents and boards of education. At a time when public education is under tremendous pressure from various constituencies, it is imperative that the roles and responsibilities between those elected to public service to govern our schools as members of a board of education and those hired as the singular employee (i.e., superintendent of the board of education) work collaboratively to implement its policies. The significance of this relationship and a commitment to meeting the roles and responsibilities as intended is widely recognized as one of the most significant influences on student achievement and the functionality of a school district. Given the public nature of school districts, it is not uncommon that questions are raised with respect to what authorities boards of education have and which are confined to the superintendent of schools. This summary is being provided to assist the public with understanding the functions of the Board of Education as an elected body and those that lie within the authority of the Superintendent of Schools.

In a 2004 publication, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) specifically communicated its collaborative view on the nature of and expectations for superintendent and board working relationships. It is presented as both a description for statewide reference and a call to action for superintendents and boards to work toward strengthening these relationships, which they believe will result in greater student success. It is their attempt to develop a “*best practice*” in this area, understanding that many of the issues addressed are best determined at the local level.

The hope of this joint position paper is that it becomes the focus of statewide discussions and local conversations among and between boards of educations and superintendents to provide the best leadership possible for the students in our schools.

For success, the board of education and the superintendent of schools in any school district must share the same goals and visions for providing students with quality education. While board and superintendent roles are different, they should complement each other. For the greatest success, board members and the superintendent must work collaboratively as a governance team, with each clear on their roles and areas of responsibility, respecting the others' roles and responsibilities and collaborating effectively on those responsibilities that are shared (*Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Joint Position Paper, 2004*).

In general, “...*the board is a legislative body that develops, evaluates and oversees education policies. The superintendent is the professional educator chosen by the board to implement policies and to provide professional leadership (and vision) for a district's schools.*” (*AASA-NSBA, 1994, p. 7*).

According to the 1994 study of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA), school districts with high-quality governance teams and high student achievement are characterized by excellent working relationships between the superintendent and boards of education.

The following information is a summary of the specific roles and responsibilities of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools and the roles they share as a governance team.

Role of the Board of Education

(Adapted from a 2004 Joint Position Statement by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.)

- To establish and regularly review all policies, ensuring they are lawful and designed to improve the quality of the school district.
- To hire, support, and work effectively with the superintendent of schools.
- To conduct an annual formal evaluation of the superintendent of schools.
- To refer administrative communications, including questions, complaints and personnel inquiries to the superintendent, as appropriate, and to follow the board established chain of command.
- To seek the superintendent's recommendation before taking action.
- To adopt, advocate for and oversee a school budget, which is responsive to district goals and meets the needs of all students.
- To delegate to the superintendent responsibility for all administrative functions, except those specifically reserved to the board through board policy.
- To conduct an annual self-evaluation of its own leadership, governance and teamwork.
- To ensure appropriate resources for the superintendent to carry out his/her responsibilities.
- To have the board chair work with the superintendent to develop meeting agendas.
- To determine and include in district policy, hiring procedures that clearly define board and superintendent responsibilities to participate in termination procedures and decisions as prescribed by Connecticut General Statutes.
- To communicate and interpret the school district's mission to the public and listen, and incorporate appropriate community perspectives into board action.
- To ensure there is a supportive, smoothly, operating leadership team, which advocates for both children and the community.

Role of the Superintendent of Schools

(Adapted from a 2004 Joint Position Statement by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.)

- To implement policies approved by the board and recommend changes, if appropriate and to develop, implement and inform the board of administrative procedures necessary to implement board policy.
- To serve as the school boards' chief executive officer and educational leader.
- To participate, as appropriate, in his/her annual evaluation.
- To respond to communications, as appropriate, and ensure the adherence and appropriate response through the chain of command, and to keep board members informed about district issues in a timely manner.
- To provide the board with good information for informed decision-making, as appropriate.
- To prepare, advocate for and implement an annual budget that addresses district goals and meets the needs of all students; and reports regularly to the board on status of the budget and any concerns or other issues about which the board should be informed.
- To oversee the organization and management of the district's day-to-day operations.
- To participate, as appropriate, in the annual self-evaluation of the board.
- To recommend appropriate resources to ensure he/she can carry out his/her responsibilities.
- To work closely with the board chair to develop meeting agendas.
- To hire personnel, as pursuant to best practice and board policy, for the school district and ensure that each employee is properly supervised and evaluated; and to make recommendations for termination of employment when necessary.
- To communicate community perspectives, research information, performance results and educational needs to the board for possible board action and to the school staff.
- To serve as a key, effective member of the leadership team.
- To work collaboratively with school staff on an ongoing basis.

Shared Board/Superintendent Roles

(Adapted from a 2004 Joint Position Statement by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.)

- To work together with the community to develop a vision and goals for the school district and to monitor the achievement of those goals.
- To advocate for students and the school district, and promote the benefits of public education.
- To inform community leadership of educational issues by creating strong linkages with appropriate organizations, agencies and other groups to provide support for healthy development and high achievement for all children.
- To collectively execute their legal responsibilities.
- To work collaboratively with agencies, and other bodies, as appropriate, on an ongoing basis.
- To collaborate with other school boards and superintendents to inform legislators of local concerns and issues relative to education.
- To participate in continuing education specifically regarding their roles and responsibilities and on relevant content areas.
- To support board actions and decisions.
- To semiannually set aside time, to discuss school board/superintendent relations.
- To belong to, actively support and participate in each other's professional organizations, and encourage the other to do so.
- To institute a process for long-range and strategic planning that will position the school district for success. Leadership should also be distributed, as appropriate, throughout the school system, for the long-term stability and progress of the district.
- To ensure that quality professional development opportunities, consistent with district goals, are available to all school district employees.
- To serve as liaisons to the community.
- To ensure adherence to federal and state laws and board policies.

Conclusion

(Adapted from a 2004 Joint Position Statement by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.)

This summary attempts to outline the various roles and responsibilities of boards of education and school superintendents. Its primary purpose is to emphasize the importance and necessity of a close working relationship, based on trust, between the two, an understanding of each other's unique roles and abilities, and a shared vision for the school district's success. The focus for boards and superintendents must always be: how we can work together to ensure educational excellence for our children?

References

- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Joint Position Statement, 2004.
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