Characteristics of Effective School Boards

The order of importance of these characteristics may be debatable, but it holds true that boards with a history of effective decision making, efficient board operations and harmonious relationships with each other, their administrators, staff and public display these qualities in their work together. Some are similar to qualities demanded in the Code of Ethics, but arranged this way, they are simple to understand and follow.

**COMMITMENT:** The absolute knowledge that the cause of public education is paramount. The welfare of all children in your charge is what drives your decisions and your actions. You are willing to spend the time and energy necessary to make proper decisions for the district. Once those decisions are made, you are committed to enforcing/implementing them.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** You recognize the need for appropriate lines of communications between the board members, the administration, and the public. You actively participate in setting goals and expectations, work cooperatively to explore roles and responsibilities, and accept your responsibility to listen as well as speak.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** The business that the board conducts appropriately in closed session remains the board’s business, until it becomes the public’s business. No issues from executive session are shared appropriately. The bond between board and superintendent is respected, and the welfare of the district is valued above personal gain.

**CHAIN OF COMMAND:** The board is the public’s last resort; all complaints, requests, and questions are handled at the appropriate level. You understand the value of this chain and can not only explain it when questioned, but promote it as a necessity for effective operations within the district.

**CONFIDENCE:** In yourself, your fellow board members, the administrators. You know the value of trust, and the board actively works to maintain this level of confidence by employing sound decision making techniques, good human relations, and a non-threatening method of conflict resolution. In this manner you insure the public’s confidence in your district.

**COURAGE:** To make the hard decisions, based on facts and in the best interest of the children in your care. Armed with the knowledge that you can not please everyone all the time, you are not afraid to tackle the large issues. Listening to appropriate in-put from those affected, you none the less are prepared to take responsibility for making the difficult decisions without bowing to public pressure. This attribute is almost always a result of understanding and practicing the other characteristics listed above.