Wanted: Policy Wonks
How a district’s policy committee develops and maintains the all-important policy manual

BY JEAN HARKNESS

Each year when we conduct the policy portion of NJSBA’s New Board Member Orientation, we encounter an enthusiastic and large show of hands in response to the question: Who among you has been assigned to the policy committee?

Many of these new members express varying degrees of concern ranging from uncertainty to fear about what they have agreed to in accepting the appointment to the policy committee.

Once they are in possession of the district policy manual, it doesn’t take long to realize the weight of the responsibility. The “weight” figuratively refers to the importance of policy to sound district operations, and literally refers to the size of district manuals, which sometimes exceed 10 pounds.

Serving on your district’s policy committee is an important job. So, thank you to all enthusiastic new board members and the faithful policy wonks out there for contributing their time and expertise to the cause.

We hope that the information below helps clarify the role and responsibilities of the member and the policy committee – and helps assuage any uncertainty and fear committee members may have.

Who should be appointed to a policy committee? It is usually the board president’s responsibility to appoint committee members and committee chairpersons (see policy # 9121, “Duties of the President”). At a minimum, appointees to any committee should demonstrate an interest in and a willingness to participate on the committee. Most board presidents try to determine if individual board members have skill sets that match the subject area and encourage members to participate on committees related to their area of expertise.

Many board presidents appoint new members to the policy committee because they want the member to become familiar with the policy manual. The policy committee is different from other committees because policy drives every aspect of school and board operations and overlaps with all the subject area committees. This allows new board members to gain experience in all the different board oversight areas. When new members are placed on the policy committee, it is important to include seasoned board members on the committee to help train and mentor the new members in the committee process.

One district sample regulation from the NJSBA Policy Clearinghouse takes a different approach and requires the chairpersons of the subject area committees (i.e. personnel, finance, curriculum, etc.) to serve on the policy committee. This approach is interesting because it recognizes that policy review and development is a function that necessitates interaction and input from all the other standing committees. By placing the chairpersons on the policy committee, work on subject-related policies for finance, curriculum, negotiations etc. is divided up and channeled to the subject area for review and recommendations.

What should a policy committee do? Committee charges differ from district to district. Reviewing and/or formulating the committee charges at the beginning of the committee calendar is a good way to focus the group and set up a structure for a productive year. In general, most policy committee charges include the following duties:

• Review recommended board action on those policies not specifically in the purview of another board standing committee;

• Oversee the review of all policies in the board-adopted policy manual on a continuing basis;
  • Evaluate suggestions for board policy that come from board members and the public. The committee may recommend development of policies for adoption;
  • In consultation with the super-
intendent and the administration, establish priorities for policy review and adoption, and set review goals and schedules.

How does the policy committee determine the priorities? The NJSBA Critical Policy Reference Manual (CPRM) policy # 9311, “Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Policies” states, “In order to ensure that the total policy process is implemented effectively, the board appoints the superintendent as policy coordinator.”

One of the most important functions of the policy committee is to work cooperatively with the superintendent regarding setting policy priorities and determining the committee agenda. The position of superintendent requires extensive training, experience, and education to qualify for state certification. Aside from the knowledge and training that are prerequisite to the position, the superintendent represents the hub of information and communication between the board, the state Department of Education, the staff, and the school community. The role of superintendent in all aspects of the school program, position him or her at the frontline for evaluating the effectiveness and identifying the problems with policy implementation.

One of the top priorities is to ensure that policy is in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. Policy committee members can help the superintendent keep tabs on compliance updates by reading School Board Notes and visiting the policy page of www.njsba.org. NJSBA maintains a model policy manual (the CPRM) that is updated as laws change. These changes and sample updates can be obtained through the Policy Update List, which is linked directly to the CPRM.

Updates that are required by law normally do not involve a great deal of controversy or negotiation because the board is legally obligated to comply with the law. These updates however, still require board review, attorney review and must be adopted into practice.

How do policy committee members enact policy changes that are discretionary and not legally required? Discretionary policies are district-specific policies that communicate the board’s position on practices that are not specifically regulated by the law. Some good examples are school dress code policy, school recycling policy and policy for live animals in the classroom.

Again, priorities for policy amendment and development must be set in consultation with the superintendent. The superintendent is responsible for the operation of the educational program and the implementation of board policy and is therefore in a position to determine and recommend important policy priorities that include:

- Updating district policies that are inconsistent with the current district practices;
- Identifying district policies for revision that are unclear and create confusion about how to handle a situation;
- Informing the committee of problems that arise for which no policy exists, necessitating the need for policy development;
- Developing policy that reflects new district initiatives and programs.

These policy priorities may involve research to determine how best to change or amend the district position. It is important to remember that the legal and policy consulting services at NJSBA can be very helpful for exploring different approaches, researching topics and evaluating the pros and cons for taking a position.

Recently a district contacted NJSBA policy services regarding the participation of home-schooled children on school athletic teams. Districts are not required by law to allow home-schooled children to participate in school activities. Because of this, it can be a controversial topic for the school community – at issue is the right of families of home-schoolers to receive some benefit from the taxes they pay, versus the principle that children who attend the school should be given priority. Policy development in this area requires the board to take a position – the board will allow it or the board will only provide the services required by law. The work of the policy committee in this case might include investigating the different arguments, polling the school community to assess their preferences, investigating what other neighboring districts are doing and collecting different samples for each side of the argument. The policy committee may even enlist the committee assigned to student activities for input, research, and recommendations.

Even though discretionary policies are not required by law, they may have legal implications and liability issues. Redeveloped and newly developed policies should be submitted to your board attorney for review prior to recommending the changes to the board for approval.

How do board and administrator relationships affect policy development? The decision to accept a proposed change to an existing policy or operate with a new policy requires consensus. Updates to the policy content and/or new policies including legally required language must be voted on and adopted by a simple majority vote of the board. Some district board policies even require a majority vote of the full board to amend a bylaw for changes in
board operation (the NJSBA model policy on bylaws at file code # 9312 requires a simple majority vote).

It may be surprising but board members sometimes have different opinions on what the district should do. Even more shocking, board members sometimes disagree with the superintendent.

The policy committee is instrumental in assessing the information and developing a recommendation based on the facts that are explored. A well-researched argument supported by evidence is a very valuable tool in winning the debate and commanding the consensus. Working with other subject-area committees develops more support for recommendations when the two committees agree on the recommendations. Additionally, board members who vote in opposition to facts and evidence can run the risk of damaging their public image and appearing arbitrary or motivated by self-interest. Voting for self-interest is also a violation of the Board Member Code of Ethics (file code # 9271).

Individual board members and even administrators may stand on different sides of an issue from time to time. However, constant conflict and disagreement among board members as well as frequent disagreement between the superintendent and the board can reduce the public’s confidence in the board’s ability to work toward a common goal.

Good board policy provides direction and continuity for the educational process in your district. The work of a policy committee also forms a type of legacy for the district. Long after individual board members are gone, policy drafted or updated can help set the course for a district. There a few jobs on a board more important than that of the policy committee.

Jean Harkness is an NJSBA policy consultant. She can be reached at jharkness@njsba.org.
Taming the Dragon
Common sense strategies can help keep your board’s policy manual up-to-date and understandable to community members

BY JEAN HARKNESS

One of the fundamental responsibilities of an NJSBA policy consultant is to read and evaluate board policy manuals. This dues-based service is called the Wellness Check and consists of a chart of all the policies in your manual, with comments about the condition of each policy and a summary report that includes suggestions to improve your board policy manual.

As a new employee, my first actual assignment was to conduct a Wellness Check for a district. Back in those days, manuals were sent to us in binders with paper documents and we kept them in the order of the date received, on the bookshelf outside the administrative assistant’s station. I cracked my knuckles, reached up and dislodged the ten pound book from the shelf, embracing with tentative anxiety the task ahead. As I hauled the manual back to my desk, my hands felt this rough crud on the back of the binder. On closer inspection, I was horrified to discover that the crud was actually the veneer from the shelf the manual had been sitting on at the district all these long years. I thought to myself: “This is going to be a hard job.”

When I try to convince board members to open their manual and get acquainted with their policies, I frequently get an apprehensive look that makes me feel like I have just assigned them to read the “Monster Book of Monsters” from the Harry Potter series. It is a sad fact, but school policy manuals are very long.

Education in New Jersey is highly regulated and even though the NJSBA takes a “less-is-more” approach to policy, our model manual has 190 documents and is more than 500 pages long. This is the legal minimum in the most concise policy system available in New Jersey. Needless to say, there is a lot for board members to know.

We understand that it is overwhelming; however, policy development, review, revision and repeal are essential board responsibilities. The board is directed by law to “make, amend and repeal rules… for the government and management of the public schools.” The courts have interpreted the phrase “make, amend and repeal rules” to mean that policy is the board’s legal responsibility. Knowing the rules is also important because the board member’s indemnification against liability extends only as far as member’s conduct is in compliance with policy.

While your board may be too busy to embark upon a total manual update, it is never too late to start updating the manual’s content as laws are enacted or revised. NJSBA announces policy developments in School Board Notes and maintains a Policy Update List on the Policy page of www.njbsa.org for boards to access model policy language that is updated as laws change. There are also policy services that provide updates. Whether using your dues-based resources or receiving updates from a vendor the board is still responsible to review, tailor and adopt the language so that the final policy is accurate to the unique operation of the district or school.

Over the years, members of the NJSBA policy staff have read hundreds of manuals sent to us for all kinds of reasons. Perhaps the district is scheduled for state monitoring; maybe there is a new administrator who wants to get an idea of how current the manual is; or perhaps someone has simply noticed that the corners of the pages are starting to crumble and takes this as evidence that the manual may be out of date. Having reviewed so many manuals, we find recurring problems with the policy manuals of New Jersey schools. Many of the problems that give your policy consultants red eyes can be corrected with common sense and minimal effort.

Fill in the Blanks and Select the Options
Often policies require the district to select among a few options, and to literally fill in a blank to make the policy relevant to a specific district. Seeing blanks in a policy where there should be information is nearly the scariest problem of all because it begs the question: “Did anyone look at this before putting it in the manual?” Often blanks indicate that a staff position like the superintendent or the principal needs to be responsible for the requirement. When the options are not selected, you can create conflicting rules. For example in NJSBA model policy 5136 on Student...
Fundraising, the board needs to determine if door-to-door solicitation is prohibited or allowed. When a board keeps both statements in the policy it is confusing and leaves the issue open to individual interpretation.

Notes and Directions Notes and directions in sample policies are there to help the board member customize the document. They should be read and considered but they are not part of the policy and should be removed.

Unnecessary Policies If you do not have the program, you do not need a policy. I reviewed a manual from a K-6 district that had a policy on military recruitment. I don't think the military is taking them that young yet. Other common examples are safety patrol, preschool, electronic surveillance or district-owned vehicles. Just because a policy update or new policy is posted does not mean that it is the right policy for your district or school. If you do not have a program, then most likely you do not need a policy on it.

There are more subtle revisions and edits that also should be made when your board reviews updates and new policies. Most policy services, including the NJSBA services, do generic updates that apply to grades K-12. References to adult students and high school requirements may be edited out if you only operate an elementary school program. Likewise rules specific to pre-school and K-8 requirements may be edited out for high school districts. Some changes in education law may not apply to your situation at all.

Illegal content The most common mistakes that I read usually fray the boundaries between conduct expectations and student and staff rights. For example: 24/7 policies that restrict student conduct outside of school can be problematic when there is not a clear connection between the behavioral violation being disciplined and disruption to the school program; while pregnant student policies that require a pregnant student to submit to a physical examination as a prerequisite for participation in the instructional program are discriminatory. The laws regarding personal rights and freedom of speech can be tricky. To prevent potential conflicts with law, the board should consider using the NJSBA legal and policy departments in the development of policy and have all new and revised policies reviewed by their board attorney before the final adoption vote.

No Policy History When a policy is added, revised, or reviewed by the board, the board should vote to accept the change to the manual. After the change is accepted, the policy should be marked with the adoption, revision or review date. By recording the date of the change's adoption on the policy, the board can save time searching the board minutes for the adoption resolution when a policy issue arises. The adoption date gives the reader a frame of reference for when the policy was last reviewed. When I read an undated policy, I wonder if the board ever saw the policy. If the board cannot prove the policy was adopted, then it probably will not stand up to a challenge.

Multiple Policy Versions and Content Redundancies Multiple policy versions can occur when the board does not realize that they have an existing policy on the topic and then adopts a whole new policy leaving the older version in the manual. Before you add anything to a district manual, you should first locate and review all the related policies. Sometimes these related documents can also be updated, consolidated, or even repealed if they are no longer necessary or inconsistent with the current law. If you have an existing policy, the revised or updated version should replace the older version. Board members tend to be very busy people. Creating quick reference tools like an accurate table of contents and policy cross references can reduce time searching through large documents. Publishing a searchable version of the manual online with a decent search engine can also make finding documents easier.

I have also read manuals that contain an archive of all the policy revisions the board has adopted over the years. It is important to separate your policy work archives from the master district manual. All publicly elected officials and school leaders are expected to be accountable, so archiving and tracking your policy work resonates with a board's duty to be transparent in the leadership of the district. When a board keeps the work documents and past versions in the manual, the manual gains weight, gets longer and becomes unmanageable. Which policy applies in a given situation can also become muddled.

Content redundancies, where a topic is covered over and over again in multiple policies and in multiple chapters, contribute to a manual's obesity. These redundancies can be overlooked in the updating and revising process causing conflicting rules. Again, the issue of which rule applies can become confusing.

Bad Language Bad language can take many forms but for the purpose of a clear policy, it consists of text which is difficult to understand and must be read numerous times to derive the meaning or is altogether incomprehensible to the reader. I find legalese particularly annoying. Here is a perfect example from the policies of one New Jersey district:

An account in the name of the Somewhere High School Cafeteria Account shall be maintained in a designated school bank for the deposit in said bank to the credit of this account from time to time of any and all monies. Payment from the funds on deposit by check signed by the president, custodian of funds, and board secretary is authorized.

What does that mean? It means that the district is going to create a cafeteria account and authorize certain people to make payments from the account. This statement may be legal but it is confusing and hard to read.
Paragraphs that refer to and/or end in legal citations leave the reader hanging:

The district will comply with the requirements of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.2 and 7.3, in addition to all the procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14, for each pupil with a disability who is subject to a short-term or long-term suspension.

Policies are public documents and many of the potential readers out there are regular people who may not know that N.J.A.C. 6A stands for the Department of Education regulations. If you were the parent of a student classified with a disability, and your son or daughter was suspended from school, how helpful would you find this policy statement?

Clear writing is an art and no one does it perfectly. It is a best practice to keep things simple. Break up compound sentences, use the simplest vocabulary possible, and as my former co-worker David Bosted always advised: You cannot go wrong with the “subject, verb, object” sentence structure.

An entire manual is overwhelming but it is nothing more than the sum of its parts. Applying some common sense strategies and perseverance can go a long way to making this important board document understandable not only to the board members but to the school community. Taking the time to check your policies on the issues that are listed on the board agenda, reviewing updates and revisions as they are presented for board adoption and scanning the table of contents for other related polices will familiarize you with the book a little at a time and help keep your policies up-to-date and accurate.

Finally, if you get stuck, cannot find a policy or have trouble understanding what you are reading, ask for help. You will always find the NJSBA policy staff ready and willing to provide model policy samples, research and suggestions regardless of the manual system you use.

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BEST PRACTICES FOR A SUCCESSFUL POLICY COMMITTEE

Presented by:
Jean Harkness, Policy Consultant
Charlene Peterson, Field Services
Agenda

Overview of Roles and Policy Development

Scenarios – Group Activity

Evaluate Policies – practical application

Wrap-up, Q & A – how can we help?
# Definitions

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<th>POLICY</th>
<th>REGULATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Board</td>
<td>Superintendent/Administration</td>
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<td><strong>Who, What, and Why</strong></td>
<td><strong>How</strong></td>
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<td>Broad statements of the goals of the Board and the direction it wishes to take</td>
<td>Supports and implements board policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct expression of Board’s desires for students</td>
<td>Provides direction of administrative decisions and district procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defines, guides, and aligns administrative responsibilities</td>
<td>Generally designed by the administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establishes oversight and evaluation procedures</td>
<td>Typically do not require board approval</td>
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Summary of Roles

Board sets destination

Admin. navigates

Board decides if district reached its goal
<table>
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<th>Policy or Regulation?</th>
<th>P / R</th>
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<tr>
<td>A guideline or course of action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informs the public</td>
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<td>Step-by-step instructions</td>
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<td>Assigns specific responsibility</td>
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<td>Clarifies expectations</td>
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<td>Superintendent can change it</td>
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<td>Secures the board’s position</td>
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<td>Ensures continuity</td>
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Bylaws are policies that guide the Board in its own conduct and operations. Bylaws are the board’s internal rules.

- Identify laws that grant and limit Board authority.
- Prevent arbitrary and capricious actions.
- Impacted by OPMA, School Ethics Act, and case law.
Good Policy

CLEAR, LEGAL & WORKABLE
• Understandable to all who read it
• Complies with 18A, 6A, other statutes
• Outlines doable plan of action with resources and traditions of district.

Policies are working if:
• Students are achieving
• Staff is supportive and enthusiastic
• Parents and community are supportive
• Stay out of court
What Effective Policies Accomplish

- Compliance with laws
- Fair and reasonable actions
- Stability in district oversight
- Operating principles to address local needs
- Reduces crisis decision making
- Keeps community and staff informed
Policy Dangers

- Blurring line between policy and regulations
- Failure to maintain policies/regulations
- Lack of staff communication and training around policy changes
- Lack of easy access to policies
- Misalignment between policy and practice
- Reactive policy-making
Duties of Policy Committee

• Periodically review Policies and regulations for relevancy, accuracy, and consistency.
• Develop and present additional policies
• Be familiar with policies and interpret them
• Determine if policies are being implemented correctly
• Become familiar with state laws and emerging issues
4 Basic Steps to Policy Development

1. Identify and define need
2. Get all relevant information
3. Reach agreement
4. Implement and evaluate

What Board expects to accomplish
Law, negotiated agreements, stakeholder input, existing policy, what other districts do

Viable and effective actions

Arrive at decision acceptable to most of Board

New Jersey School Boards Association
Policies need constant review - are they working, comply with laws, and represent district needs?

- Evaluate key policies at each meeting
- Review each section of the policy manual on a regular basis
Policy Leadership Summary

- Aligns district’s actions to meet board’s vision
- Considers big picture for district
- Leads others on how to think about student achievement
- Communication with multiple stakeholders for awareness of attitudes, desires, and ideas.

Board policy represents the intersection of vision and accountability.
II. SCENARIOS-Group Activity

- **Attendance**- promotion/retention; compare vs. micro-management
- **Fundraising**- outside groups
- **AUP**- Bylaw for BOE use: electronic use by staff
- **Discipline**: stakeholders involvement
- **Controversial policies**: dissection; calendar holidays; field trips

- Each small group **reports out** to larger group
III. Group work - Evaluate Policies:

• Evaluate 6 policies

• Practical application

• What to look for, avoid and include?

• Each group reports out to larger group
IV. Wrap up and Q&A

• Resources and materials
  – Map for manual review
  – Policy Checklist
  – Determine applicability

• Your questions????

• How can we help?
  – What the NJSBA Policy Dept. does for boards?
Best Practices to Make your Committees
More Effective, More Efficient

1. Define the duties and expectations of each committee. Each committee can be provided with a list of its functions and duties.

2. Define the duties and expectations for chairing a committee.

3. Ask yourself: A. Are you using the right set of committees? B. Have you considered the alternatives? C. Have you considered abolishing all committees and allowing the new board president to create and make new assignments after the reorganization meeting?

   All standing committees shall be dissolved at the end of the board’s year— at the annual organizational meeting. They may be dissolved at any time by a majority vote of the board.

4. Permanent committees are often called “standing committees.” The five committees most frequently named in policy #9130 are:

   - Facilities (also called “building and grounds” or “property”)
   - Curriculum (also called “curriculum/education” or “instruction” or “program”)
   - Finance (also called “budget & finance”)
   - Policy
   - Negotiations (sometimes considered a recurring ad hoc committee).

Other committee options: Executive (to assist the board president), Transportation (sometimes combined with property), Personnel (sometimes combined with negotiations), Discipline review, Athletic/sports. Recreation, Hospitality, Legislative, Long range planning, Equipment and supplies, Special education advisory team, Vocational education advisory team, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) liaison (committee or individual), Drug Intergovernmental representative (committee or individual), Liaison (to teachers or municipal government, or both), Community relations. 


5. Ad hoc committees are formed for special purposes and can be used to fulfill some policy requirements for community involvement in policy development and/or review. These temporary committees have many advantages. An Ad hoc committee might be established to investigate a topic that is highly technical, confusing or perhaps controversial. The committee would study the issue, discuss alternatives, and make recommendations back to the entire school board. For controversial issues, an Ad hoc committee can seek consensus and defuse anger that might otherwise be (mis) directed at board members.

6. Be clear about limits. A committee may make recommendations for board action, but it may not act for the board. Also, dysfunctional committees may be dissolved by the board president, have members added or dropped, or have duties changed.

7. Reports on committee meetings can make your committees more effective, more efficient.
The board secretary should receive this report one day after the meeting was held, for distribution to the entire board.

Committee: ________________________________  Chairperson: ________________________________

Date of Meeting: ________________________________  Time: ________________________________ / ________________________________

Board Member in Attendance:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Administrators in Attendance: ________________________________

Others: ________________________________

Business Discussed:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Pending Business:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Recommendations:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Contact person for additional information:

Name ________________________________  Telephone ________________________________

Next meeting: ________________________________  Date ________________________________  Time ________________________________  Place ________________________________

Possible Topic: ________________________________

Signature of Preparer ________________________________  Date ________________________________
Many school boards, even though they are made up of intelligent and honorable people, do not govern their school system very effectively. Boards can discuss without hesitation the weaknesses of the school system and point out where the superintendent, principals or supervisors are failing to carry out their responsibilities. But boards that govern effectively look first in the mirror when things are not working to see if the situation is caused by something the board has done or failed to do.

As stated in the article above: “Many of the problems a board faces could have been prevented or resolved by the deletion of a poor or the addition of a good policy. Policy is the tool that provides the board the power to allow or require action. Policy enables lay citizens to govern schools effectively.”

Does Your Board Govern Through Policy?

by Dan Tollett, Past Executive Director, Tennessee School Boards Association

Board members can discuss without hesitation the weaknesses of the school system and point out where the superintendent, principals or supervisors are failing to carry out their responsibilities. But boards that govern effectively look first in the mirror when things are not working to see if the situation is caused by something the board has done or failed to do.

Many of the problems a board faces could have been prevented or resolved by the deletion of a poor or the addition of a good policy. Policy is the tool that provides the board power to allow or require action. Policy enables citizens to govern schools effectively.

Guidelines That Help Boards Govern Effectively Through Policy

1. Consider policy as a leadership function of the board. School board members are selected to lead—not administer. It is adequate leadership for a board to adopt policy which merely identifies things that the board “will not put up with.” However, when a school board accepts that role, it is sacrificing its authority to lead and abrogating its responsibility to lead. Board members should not be intimidated into accepting a “laissez-faire” approach to policymaking simply because an administrator says that to do otherwise is micromanagement.

2. Develop a policy on policy. Boards should have a policy that sets out the policy development process. It should contain the how, who, and when of policy development, revision and review.

3. Primarily, develop and maintain only policy designed to achieve the vision and mission of the school system.* School boards are frequently asked to adopt policy that appears to have little or nothing to do with the achievement of the mission and vision established by the board. Such policy deals with administrative issues and is designed to transfer responsibility for unpopular action from administration to the board. The policy usually contains excessive detail and the board adopts them because administrators say they will provide “clout.”
Such policy moves the board into administrative issues and results in the board hearing complaints and attempting to solve problems that should be handled by administrators.

*School boards must comply with federal and state authorities that sometimes require school boards adopt procedures on certain issues that should not be policy.

4. **Make school better through policy.** Board members should continuously ask, "How can we use our policy-making authority to cause our school to become better?" Board members who complain about the weaknesses of the school system or its staff become part of the problem. Those who creatively use policy to cause improvement in schools are engaged in responsible governance. For example, board members who complain that principals or teachers do not want community involvement in schools simply create staff morale problems and greater community dissatisfaction. But a board that adopts a policy to require each principal to develop an annual written plan for community engagement will see progress toward the desired result. The policy will not necessarily produce all results the board had hoped to achieve but it will move the system in the right direction.

5. **Monitor policy to ensure that it is being followed.** A school board should never condone policy not being followed. Policy is not a set of suggestions. It either mandates that something happen or permits something to happen that would otherwise not be permissible. The board must insist that policy is followed and that there are consequences when a policy is not followed.

6. **Evaluate policy to see if it is producing the intended results or unintended consequences.** A policy on discipline may result in fewer behavioral problems but still not be an effective policy. The principal suspending large numbers of students from school may have caused improvement in discipline but the unintended consequences of high absenteeism may cause the policy to be unacceptable in its overall effect.

7. **Make certain that every citizen has access to policy.** The easiest and most effective way to make sure that citizens have access to policy is to post policy online. The next best way is to ensure that policies are available in every public and school library and at the board offices.

8. **Ensure that school board policies are current.** The job of policy development is never done. Policies must change in this changing world. Boards should put a section of the policy manual on the consent agenda each month for review and revision as necessary. This procedure results in annual review of the entire policy manual and provides board members and citizens an opportunity to propose change in an orderly fashion.

9. **Require the superintendent to develop written administrative procedures.** Every superintendent should have written administrative procedures to ensure the board that policies are implemented fairly and consistently. Administrative procedures provide guidance and direction for principals and other administrators in uniform administration of policy and procedures. Administrative procedures are not adopted by the board but do provide assurance that the superintendent understands and is attempting to carry out the intent of each policy.

A board with a vision for an excellent school system must not squander its policy-making power. Rather, it must give full attention to the challenge of making schools continuously better through policy development. That is truly policy governance.
Staff Training List

1. Professional development – All teachers must complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing professional development for annually. Professional development has to be in line with the teacher evaluation goals (policy reference: 4131/4131.1; legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3).

   a. Particular rules for who conducts and oversees the development and implementation of the professional development plans (PDP) for the CSA and principals and supervisors, is specified in N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.7 and policy 4131/4131.1 Staff Development.
   b. Supervisors of classroom teachers must complete training on the teacher practice instruments shall be provided for any supervisor who will conduct observations for the purpose of evaluation of teachers. Training shall be provided before the observer conducts his or her first observation for the purpose of evaluation N.J.A.C. 6A:10-2.2(b). “Supervisor” means an appropriately certified teaching staff member, employed in the school district in a supervisory role and capacity, and possessing a school administrator, principal, or supervisor, endorsement;
   c. Principals and supervisors shall have an annual plan (legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.7e);
   d. All school leaders shall complete a minimum of 12 hours of in-person and/or on-line instruction on ethics, law and governance within four years of their initial date of hire. Additionally there shall be periodic follow-up training to address changes in law (legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.8);
   e. Gang training for school administrators (see #16 below).


3. Affirmative Action/Antidiscrimination, Harassment (N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.6)

   Training required for certified and noncertified staff on all aspects of the district’s affirmative action program: employment practices, sexual harassment, preventing bias in the teaching program, equity, ADA and Section 504, etc. (policy references: 2224, 4111.1/4211.1, 6121)


   New requirement that students are screened for potential dyslexia and the screening shall be administered by a teacher or other teaching staff member properly trained in the screening process for dyslexia and other reading disabilities (does not apply to all teaching staff members).

5. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) (N.J.S.A. 13:1F-22(a); N.J.A.C. 7:30-13.2(c))
   a. Training for all staff about potential pest problems;
   b. Pest management training for staff administering the IPM plan (policy reference: 3510).
Mandated Training List (continued)

6. Training must be provided to provisional teachers (policy reference: 4111; legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-8.3 (b)).

7. Training must be provided to the mentors of novice teachers (policy reference: 4112.1; legal references: N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-8.3(b), N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-8.4 through -8.5).

8. Training on occupational containment of bloodborne pathogens for all staff (policy reference: 4112.4/4212.4; legal references: N.J.A.C. 8:61-2.1(e)).


10. Training on the Family Educational Rights Act (FERPA) that should cover the appropriate exercise of confidentiality of student information and records (policy reference 5125):

   a. There are no legal citations that explicitly require staff training but FERPA, (20 USCS § 1232g) and the implementing regulation 34 CFR § 99.62, require that staff comply with all aspects of the policy and that violations be disciplined. Specifically, 34 CFR § 99.62 lists “trainings” as an example of proof of compliance;
   b. Failure to comply and violating student rights can result in loss of the federal funding, making training an important element in assuring compliance.

11. Drugs, alcohol, anabolic steroids, tobacco, controlled and dangerous substances (annually)

   Awareness, identification, prevention, reporting, treatment, education (policy references: 4131/4131.1; 4231/4231.1; 5131.6; legal references N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-3(a); N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-18(c); N.J.A.C. 6A:16-3.1(a)4; N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(d)).

12. Training for all staff on the code of student conduct (policy reference: 5131; legal reference N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6.3 related to the implementation of the COSC in the district because HIB and substance abuse are incorporated within).


14. Two hours training for all staff on suicide awareness, identification, prevention, reporting by a licensed health care professional. This training must include the connection of suicide with harassment, intimidation and bullying (policy reference: 5131.1; legal references: N.J.S.A. 18A:6-112).

15. A minimum of two hours of professional development each year for general education teachers; kindergarten – grade 3, special education, basic skills, and English as a second language teachers; reading specialists; learning disabilities teacher consultants and speech and language specialists on the screening, intervention, accommodations, and use of technology for students with reading disabilities, including dyslexia – Is count as part of the 20 hours PD annually (legal reference: P.L. 2013, c. 105).


17. Mandatory gang training for school administrators (superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal or other administrator) employed by a public school district on gang education including how to recognize signs of gang involvement or activity (policy reference: policy on gangs is not mandated but districts cover it at 5131; legal reference N.J.S.A. 52:17B-4.7).

18. Health
Mandated Training List (continued)

a. The school nurse is responsible for instructing teachers on communicable disease and other health concerns pursuant to (policy references: 3516, 4147/4247, 5141.2; legal references: N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3 (b)(3)(v))

b. The school nurse is responsible for instructing teachers and other staff members on life threatening allergies for staff who manage a situation (policy references: 5141; 5141.21 discretionary; 5141.20; legal references: N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.5, N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(a));

c. Training to relevant staff by the school nurse either for classroom management of a situation or for coverage when the nurse is unavailable on the administration of epinephrine (N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.6 and -12.14; N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(a); N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3 (b)(vii)), use of prefilled auto-injectors, (policy references: 5141; 5141.21; 6153);

d. The nurse shall recruit and train additional school employees as volunteer designees within each school building as deemed necessary to administer epinephrine for anaphylaxis when the school nurse is not physically present. The Department of Education and the Department of Health shall jointly develop training protocols, in consultation with the New Jersey School Nurses Association (policy references: 5141; 5141.21; 6153; legal references: N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.6c);

e. The nurse shall provide training to designated staff and school bus drivers as necessary to administer glucagon (diabetes treatment) when the nurse is not physically present at the scene (N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.14 and N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12.16);

f. School nurse must receive training on nebulizers and inhalers (policy references: 5141; 5141.21; legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3 (b)(2))

g. AED – a team coach, licensed athletic trainer, or other designated staff member if there is no coach or licensed athletic trainer, who is present during the athletic event or team practice, must be trained in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of the defibrillator (policy references: 5141; legal reference: N.J.S.A. 18A:40-41a).

19. Safety

Training within 60 days of new employment on the district’s safety plan that includes dealing with illness and accident management and reporting (policy references: 5141.1; 5141.2; 5142; legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(d)).

Inservice education for bus drivers (including management of pupils; safe driving practices; recognition of hazards; special concerns in transporting pupils with disabilities; emergency procedures on the road; accident report; information on required drug and alcohol testing (policy references: 3541.33; legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:27-1.1 et seq.).


a. School staff receive training on law enforcement operations for substances, weapons, and safety and the exchange of information between education and law agencies (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6.2);

b. Recognizing and responding to a crisis (annual training) (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(d));

c. Safety and Security plan including fire and security drills within 60 days of employment (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(d)).
Mandated Training List (continued)

24. Technology use and safety (policy reference: 6142.10) for staff and students. Student training regarding cyberbullying for federal CIPA participants (policy reference: 5131.1 HIB and 6142.10; legal reference: 47 U.S.C. 254(h), known as the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA))

25. School staff who participate in and who seek assistance from each building's system of intervention and referral services receive support, guidance, and professional development (policy reference: 6164.1; legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6.2);

26. Asbestos training - all members of the custodial staff who may work in a building with asbestos-containing building materials must have awareness training. All new custodial staff must be trained within 60 days of hire (40 C.F.R. § 763.92).

27. The in-service training needs for professional and paraprofessional staff who provide special education, general education or related services are identified and that appropriate in-service training is provided (policy reference: 6171.4; legal reference: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.2 (b)14; IDEA Part B 1462 Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities).


Mandated Board Training (policy reference: 9200)

1. NJQSAC training (N.J.S.A. 18A:12-33)

   Required for each newly elected or appointed board member during the first year of his/her term. This training shall include information regarding the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum, and the five key components of school district effectiveness on which the school district is monitored: instruction and program; personnel; fiscal management, operations and governance.


   Required of each newly elected or appointed board member or charter school trustee to complete during the first year of his/her term.

   Additional training is required in both the second and third year of service on any board. An advanced training program that includes information on changes in New Jersey school law must be completed within one year of re-election or reappointment to the board of education or charter school board of trustees.


   Required within one year after being newly elected or appointed or being re-elected or re-appointed to the board of education.


   Required of newly elected or appointed board members within six months of commencing his/her term of office.
## NJQSAC and Policy Review

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<td>No</td>
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<td>3000/3010 Concepts and Role/Goals and Objectives Business and Noninstructional operations</td>
<td>Yes – internal controls</td>
<td>Yes – SOP manual for business</td>
<td>Fiscal Management – 2</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>3100 Budget Preparation and Planning</td>
<td>Yes – fiscal planning aligned to district goals and state assessment measures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>3220/3230 State and Federal Funds</td>
<td>Yes – theft and fraud prevention</td>
<td>Yes – SOP manual for business</td>
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<td>3329 Payment for Good and Services</td>
<td>Yes – over-expenditures</td>
<td>Yes – SOP manual for business</td>
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<td>3541.33 Transportation Safety</td>
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<td>Yes – SOP manual for business</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4112.6/4212.6 Personnel Records</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>4112.8/4212.8 Nepotism</td>
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<td>4115 Supervision</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4116 Evaluation</td>
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<td>Instruction and Program – 17a</td>
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**Mandated Policies in statute and code for compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1**

- 1410 Local Units
- 1600 Relations/Other Entities
- 2131 CSA
- 2224 Affirmative Action/Nondiscrimination
- 3160 Transfer Line Items
- 3220/3230 State, Federal Funds
- 3453 School Activities Funds
- 3510 Operation/Maintenance of Plant
- 3515 Smoking Prohibition
- 3516 Safety
- 3541.1 Transportation Routes/Services
- 3541.3 Nonschool Use of District Vehicles
- 3541.31 Privately Owned Vehicles
- 3541.32 District Owned Vehicles
- 3541.33 Transportation Safety
- 3542.1 Wellness/Nutrition
- 3542.31 Free/Reduced Price Lunch/Milk
- 3542.44 Purchasing (food)
- 4111 Hiring
- 4111.1/4211.1 Affirmative Action/Nondiscrimination
- 4112.4/4212.4 Employee Health
- 4112.8/4212.8 Nepotism
- 4113/4213 Assignment/Transfer
- 4116 Evaluation
- 4211 Hiring
- 4219.23 Substance Abuse (drug testing drivers)
- 5020 Role of Parents/Guardians
- 5111 Admissions
- 5113 Attendance, Absences and Excuses
- 5114 Suspension/Expulsion

At least annually, and more frequently if required by changes in law or statute, the district board of education or advisory board reviews, updates and, by resolution, adopts policies, procedures and by-laws reflective of current statutory authority (N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1). (Documentation: mandatory policies; non-mandatory policies; adopting resolution for each policy; district procedures manual attachments; board agendas)
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Your board’s policy manual is its lighthouse — and its shelter in a storm.

Just as baseball is more than just hitting balls with a stick, being a school board member is more than just voting “yes” or “no” each time someone “calls the question.” In baseball, there is a strategy that involves using the talents of every player by placing them in the best position on the field and in the batting order.

On your school board, you can manage with a strategy or you can just swing at balls with a stick. Your policy manual sets forth your strategy. When you write policy, you make decisions on questions that arise today, tomorrow, and perhaps for years to come.

Policies describe how the board wants the district to function. Policies are statements of the goals of the board and the direction it wishes to take; they are the direct expression of the board’s desires for the school children of the district or charter school.

The board will want its employees to comply with state and federal laws. Therefore, the policy manual will include detailed legal citations that make it clear to employees how they must act to be in compliance with applicable laws.

Policies provide a legal basis and a business foundation for the actions of the board. A board’s actions should be fair and reasonable at all times—and policies help keep them so.

Further, policies support stability in district oversight. The nature of a local board of education is that the membership is continually changing. And while turnover can be a source of strength by bringing in new ideas and new talent, it also works against continuity of action. The policy manual is one way in which a district can have continuity despite turnover in its membership.

Policy also provides board members with a chance to make a lasting difference. A good policy is a type of legacy that endures long after individual board members have moved on.

In times of confusion or turmoil in a district, a good policy can be like a lighthouse that guides the district through fog and storm.
**How Policies Guide Boards**

Board members individually, and boards of education as a whole, do not run schools. They see that schools and districts are well run by the administrators hired for that purpose. A process of policy development and oversight is the key to effective oversight.

The board’s role in the policy process has two major components. One is the development of policies that state the educational goals of the district to guide the administration. The other is the evaluation of how well these policies achieve the goals.

To carry out its role of seeing that the schools are well run, the board will need procedures for the rational development of policies and their regular review; procedures for evaluating district and school progress toward policy goals; and appropriate standards of measurement and criteria for judging such progress.

**Who Does What in Policy Development?**

A policy is both philosophical and practical. It states:

1. what the board wants to have done and why;
2. who is responsible for implementation; and
3. how the board will know that the policy is effective and achieving its purpose.

Policies provide directions and instructions for staff, including administrators, to follow. The board’s role is to set goals to be achieved by a particular policy. Having set broad policy, it then tasks the administration with developing the details of implementation.

The administrators write regulations to provide structure and procedures — who will do what, where and when — to accomplish the policy goals. The regulations supplement the policies by providing particulars.

Such regulations do not necessarily require board approval; however, most boards will want to see the regulations to be informed on how its policies are being carried out.

In some areas, the law requires the board to adopt regulations — for example, pupil records, identification of educationally disabled pupils, drug/alcohol programs and drug-free school zones, etc. Otherwise, the board does not become involved in regulations unless a pupil, parent/guardian or other community member grieves a rule or regulation as not correctly implementing board policy.

Where is the line between giving the administration clear and sufficient guidance and overstepping bounds by venturing into rulemaking? It can vary from district to district or from topic to topic.

For example, only the board may authorize busing of pupils who live less than the state-defined “remote” distance from the school. Having set the distance or the conditions under which it will pay for transportation without state reimbursement, however, the board would leave to the administration the
determination of eligibility for the individual pupil.

In summary, when it comes to policy, the board sets the destination; the administration navigates; and the board decides how nearly the district reached its ultimate goal.

For specific procedures regarding how policies are formulated, adopted and amended, please see sample policies 9311, 9312 and 9313 on pages 30, 31, and 32.

What are Critical Policies?

Known as the “general enabling statute,” N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 directs local boards of education to adopt policies for the operation of the district’s schools and bylaws for its own operations.

However, all policies are not created equal; some are more important than others. “Critical policies” are those that are mandated by law or regulation, are monitored by the state, or are vital to district governance.

A policy is critical to a local school district or charter school when the consequences of not having policy in that area are likely to be damaging. Such consequences may include:

- failure to comply with statute and administrative code;
- likelihood of litigation;
- failure to pass the monitoring process;
- damage to the district’s or board’s public image;
- impairment of the board’s ability to function;
- impairment of the administration’s ability to function; and
- failure to fulfill obligations to the children of the district.

Critical policy topics fall into one or more of the following categories:

- monitored: policies addressing areas of operation on which the district will be monitored;
- mandated: policies explicitly required by statute, administrative code or State Board resolutions;
- addressed in court or in commissioner of education decisions;
- implicitly required by a legal mandate to develop rules and regulations; and
- necessary or sensitive aspects of district operations.

Because districts differ in size, grade plan and other characteristics, not every district or charter school will require policy on a critical topic. For example, a district or charter school that chooses not to use the vehicles of parents and/or employees to augment its own vehicles for extracurricular transportation will not need policy on the topic.

Good Policy/ Bad Policy

Good policy can be described as “clear, legal and workable.” In other words,
first-rate policy will be clear and understandable to all readers, in compliance with the law, and workable within the resources and traditions of the district. Individual policies address specific aspects of a district’s operation or direction. Taken as a whole, the policies serve as a comprehensive guide to district operations. In addition, the policies are kept up-to-date to reflect changes in law or community needs.

Bad policy, on the other hand, is ambiguous, contrary to current law, or not workable given the district’s resources.

**Bylaws of the Board**

Bylaws, the board’s own internal rules for operation of the board, are a specific kind of policy. The manner in which the board conducts its business in developing and adopting policies is governed by its bylaws. These include the board's statements on public participation at meetings, election and duties of the board president, and other meeting procedures. Bylaws remind board members of the laws that both grant and limit authority, and prevent arbitrary and capricious actions.

**Developing Good Policy**

There are four basic steps in developing good policy:

1. identifying and defining the need;
2. getting all the relevant information;
3. reaching agreement; and
4. providing for implementation and evaluation

The board action plan should ensure that none of these components is skipped when policies are being considered, developed or approved.

**Defining the need:** A policy should express in straightforward language what the board expects to be accomplished. Setting forth exactly what the board wants to address and reviewing the circumstances — is the first step.

**Getting information:** Relevant data may include pertinent law; current negotiated agreements; existing policy and practice; staff, parent, and community input; district demographics and resources; and information on what other districts are doing. All these things will help the board develop a useful and workable policy that complies with the law.

**Reaching agreement:** Many different opinions may surface on any detail of a particular policy. It is the board’s obligation, after careful review of the facts, to arrive at a decision acceptable to most of the board. “Acceptable” means just that — not necessarily preferred, but not anathema. Gaining acceptance by “most of the board” is a necessity unless the board is prepared to have its policies changed or reversed at every other board meeting.

**Implementation and evaluation:** When a board provides for implementation and evaluation, it ensures that the action called for by the policy is and remains both viable and effective. Some policies will specifically require evaluation of
the major areas they address. However, because each individual policy is also part of a whole governance system, it may not be necessary to specify times or techniques for the evaluation in every policy. Nonetheless, the expectation of evaluation will be there. It may exist in policies linked by cross references or in the application of the action plan developed by the board as part of its policy oversight strategy.

For example, a policy that permits the use of facsimiles in place of individually written signatures would be reviewed in a general evaluation of business practices. By contrast, evaluation of various special education programs — gifted and talented, special needs, and so on — would be included specifically in the policies addressing them. (Evaluation of specific programs would also be included in the overall policy on evaluation of the educational program.)

Evaluation, Review and Amendment

When the time comes to evaluate how effectively the policy has been implemented and to decide whether the policy itself is appropriate to its purpose, the board should follow the provisions of its policy oversight action plan. With goals set, intermediate objectives established, and criteria for achievement determined, the information required from the chief school administrator will directly relate to measurement of progress toward achievement. If appropriate progress is found, the policy and its implementation will be deemed satisfactory. If no progress has been made, the board will want to know why.

Policy is a Cycle, or Process

Most school boards have a policy committee. That group should periodically review the school policies, as well as develop and present additional policies to conform to the board’s wishes.

Finding and Using the District’s Policies

Policies must be organized. The best policy in the world cannot be implemented, evaluated or kept up to date unless the board or administrators can find it. Nor can all the facts be gathered to develop new policy unless the related existing policies are readily identifiable.

The board should select a coding system with a master index. The NJSBA Policy Unit uses a numerical index that allows for insertion of a new topic at an appropriate place when necessary, and that also demonstrates the logical relationship among topics, making cross referencing easy.

Most school districts and charter schools in New Jersey follow the numbering system used by NJSBA. All policies are assigned a file code number.
How to Stay on Top of Policy

New laws, administrative code and court decisions, as well as individual district issues, necessitate regular changes in school district policies. Despite its girth and complexity, your district’s policy manual should be considered a “living document,” one that is monitored and discussed on a regular basis. NJSBA offers the following dues-based services:

**The Wellness Check:** An NJSBA policy consultant will review your current policy manual and provide a report on the condition of each policy and the manual as a whole.

**Critical Policy Reference Manual (CPRM):** Online, updated CPRMs for public and charter school districts are available at njsba.org.

**The Policy Update List:** A regular posting of all the changes to the CPRM that result from state and federal statute and regulation amendments.

**The Manual for the Development of Job Descriptions (JD):** The JD manual is a collection of sample school district job descriptions

NJSBA also provides phone consultation on policy issues, as well as timely policy information at county association meetings, at Workshop, and school board member training sessions, and through its periodicals, School Board Notes and School Leader.

NJSBA offers the following fee-based services:

**Policy Manual Writing:** An NJSBA policy consultant will review, update, and write your entire policy manual. This service includes free email updates.

**Online Policy Manual Publishing:** This service creates an online, searchable manual, linked to all the pertinent legal citations and policy cross-references.

For more information, visit njsba.org or call (609) 695-7600.

For example, policies about “pupils” are in the 5000-series, and “admission to kindergarten” is in #5111. The major series are:

- 1000 Community relations
- 2000 Administration
- 3000 Business and non-instructional operations
- 4000 Instructional and support personnel
- 5000 Pupils
- 6000 Instruction
- 7000 Construction, remodeling and renovation
- 8000 (reserved, not currently in use)
- 9000 Bylaws of the board

The logical order makes it possible to quickly locate policies on any topic. Another handy feature is the NJSBA alphabetic index, which locates policies according to topics and key words.

Your policies should be kept together in one place. A ring binder is the least expensive and most efficient organizer for a district’s governance manual. (Most districts have also placed a copy of their policy manual on the district website; that practice provides an accessible and convenient reference for community members who wish to learn more about school district policies.)

In addition to policies and bylaws, such a manual should contain district-wide regulations, an index to contract references, legal citations, cross
references, the coding system, and exhibits, such as forms that the board considers public knowledge.

The governance manual is more than just a handy organizer. Used properly by board members and administration, it allows the board to concentrate its attention on matters it has not yet addressed, rather than making the same decisions over and over again. It provides for consistency in making decisions, which in turn protects the board from charges of being arbitrary, unreasonable or capricious. With its legal citations and other references, it informs the public of the authority for board actions. It reminds the board of the legal limits of its own authority and of the distinctions between its role and that of the administration.

Maintaining the Governance Manual
Maintaining the manual has two aspects: keeping up with changes in the law, in education, and in community needs; and review, both on a regular basis and when some question or protest comes up.

Boards should have a policy coordinator in charge of (a) keeping track of changes so that appropriate policies are reviewed in a timely fashion; (b) presenting appropriate sections of the manual for board review/reaffirmation on a regular basis so that the manual as a whole is kept harmonious and up to date; and (c) providing the board with all relevant information when new policy is being developed. Many boards appoint a new board member to be the chair of a policy committee. This brings a fresh set of eyes to the task, with the additional benefit of making the new member of the board familiar with the existing policies. The chief school administrator or business administrator is often assigned to physically maintain the manual.
This is a list of all the policies must be disseminated or that contain notification requirements to parents/guardians in the policy.

1100 Communication with the Public (annual dissemination of school report card)
1250 Visitors (rules for parent visits)
1312 Community Complaint and Inquiries
2224 Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action
3220/3230 State and Federal Funds (parent participation and consultation)
3250 Income from Fees, Fines and Charges (charges for lost or damaged school issued materials)
3510 Operation and Maintenance of Plant (integrated pest management)
3516 Safety (notice of construction/hazardous substances)
3541.1 Transportation Routes and Services (transportation waiver)
3541.33 Transportation Safety (bus conduct)
5113 Attendance, Absences and Excuses (procedures absences, for early and late arrival and dismissal)
5114 Suspension/Expulsion (appeal procedures/right to due process)
5119 Transfer (unsafe school option, transfer options)
5120 Assessment of individual Needs (dissemination of assessment results to parents)
5124 Reporting to Parent/Guardians (regular reporting related to academic progress/deficiencies)
5125 Student Records (annual notification of rights regarding student records)
5131 Discipline and Conduct (code of student conduct)
5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying
5131.5 Violence and Vandalism (notification of procedures for reporting and dealing with violence and vandalism)
5131.6 Student Substance Abuse Policy (identification, intervention, treatment and reporting)
5141 Health (NJ Family Care)
5141.8 Sports Related Concussion and Head Injury (distribution of DOE fact sheet to student athletes and parents/guardians)
5141.21 Administering Medication
5142 Safety (supervision of dismissal)
6111 School Calendar (the calendar)
6114 Emergency and Disaster Preparedness (school closing information)
6142.1 Family Life (right to opt out of family life curriculum)
6142.2 ESL/Bilingual (notify parents of school program)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6142.10</td>
<td>Internet Safety and Technology (rules for network use and computer safety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6145.1/2</td>
<td>Interscholastic/Intramural Competition (pamphlet on sudden cardiac arrest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6146.2</td>
<td>Promotion and Retention (standards and appeal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6147</td>
<td>Standards of Proficiency (notification if student in danger of not meeting proficiency standards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6161.1</td>
<td>Guidelines for the Selection of Instructional Materials (opt out of dissection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6162.5</td>
<td>Research (policy has to be distributed: rules for student participation in surveys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6171.3</td>
<td>At-Risk, Title 1 (parent involvement and all aspects of program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6171.4</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using Policy To Affect Student Learning

Boards must govern in a manner that concentrates on policymaking to improve student achievement. This means boards must relentlessly focus on determining the district’s mission, setting short-term and long-term goals and monitoring student outcomes. Boards fulfill their purpose by developing policies that specify desired end results (goals) and determine acceptable means of reaching those end results. Once end results and objective measures for determining whether or not the end results have been met are developed and approved, executive limitations (identified methods or behaviors that are unacceptable) are imposed. Within accepted boundaries, the superintendent is free to take whatever steps he or she thinks is advisable to reach the desired end without further permission from the board.

Once policies are established, boards hold themselves to evaluating the superintendent’s performance in light of the policy. To do this, the board asks three questions:

1. **Were the end results (goals) achieved?**

2. **How do we know the end results were achieved (objectively measurable results)?**

3. **Were any policy procedural limitations violated?**

By their nature, boards do not create learning: rather, they work through others by creating conditions that promote learning (Iowa Association of School Boards). Boards create the proper conditions through policy. Many of the problems a board faces could have been prevented or resolved by the deletion of a poor or the addition of a good policy. **Policy is the tool that provides the board the power to allow or require action.** Policy enables lay citizens to govern schools effectively.

Boards must also hold the superintendent accountable for implementing the policies and operating the district within financial, educational and ethical parameters established by the board. This is more difficult to practice than to preach, partly because constituents expect a board member to be Mr. or Mrs. Fixit. When they have a concern that is really an administrative problem, rather than a policy matter, it is often hard for a board member to resist the temptation to call a staff member or tell the superintendent what to do. But resist they must or they become part of the problem and not the solution in board governance.

Holding the ultimate accountability for results, boards should take a systems approach that ensures consistency among goals, plans, resources, capacity, incentives and assessment. Policy is a key tool in ensuring alignment.
Using Policy To Affect Student Learning

Policy is also a tool that boards use to communicate their priorities and expectations to school staff, parents and the community about the district’s goals and values. The fact that boards have a policy on student learning demonstrates the board’s commitment to student achievement as a priority. This in turn generally has a positive impact on the staff, parents and local community, which ultimately impacts on student achievement.

Policies that support student achievement are not restricted to curriculum and instruction. Other areas where policy can impact student learning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Governance &amp; Planning</th>
<th>Academic Standards &amp; Assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Board Philosophy</td>
<td>• Graduation Requirements</td>
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<td>• Strategic Planning</td>
<td>• Grade Level Skills</td>
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<td>• Policy Development</td>
<td>• Methods of Assessment</td>
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<td>• Budget Planning</td>
<td>• Grading Scale</td>
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<td>• Homework</td>
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<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
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<td>• Instructional Goals</td>
<td>• Curriculum Development and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delivery of Instruction</td>
<td>• Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highly Qualified Teachers</td>
<td>• Instructional Material</td>
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<th>Education program</th>
<th>Learning Climate</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Integrated and Applied Instruction</td>
<td>• Equal Education Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Alternative Education</td>
<td>• Safety and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>• GED</td>
<td>• Student Rights and Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specialized Learning Programs</td>
<td>• Student Welfare Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High School Re-design</td>
<td>• School Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Vocational/Technical Education</td>
<td>• Student Activities</td>
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<tr>
<th>Professional Standards</th>
<th>Parent / Community Engagement</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Recruitment and Selection of Staff</td>
<td>• Shared Decision-Making</td>
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<td>• Staff Development</td>
<td>• Parent Involvement</td>
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<td>• Volunteers</td>
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<td>• Community Partnerships</td>
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<td>• Adopt-A-School</td>
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For example, board members can set policy committing themselves to strategic planning or establish a goal that all students will receive training from highly qualified teachers. Other areas where well thought out policy will affect student achievement are: student discipline and safety, employment and hiring, homeless students, special education child find, etc.
Policy Making

A board’s major function, and the foundation upon which the district’s “structure” is built, is the setting of policy. The board develops and adopts district policy governing all aspects of school operation, including employment of staff, administration of pupil services, education programs, instructional material, school facilities, finance and support services. A board can adopt policy upon the recommendation of the superintendent, but the final decision cannot be delegated. However, a board does delegate the implementation of policies to the superintendent. The school board evaluates the execution and effects of policy through observations, special oversight studies and periodic reports by administration.

To Govern by Policy

To “govern by policy” means the school board has adopted written policy that defines the work of the school board and of the superintendent and staff.

A board that truly “governs by policy” always remains focused on policy. Every issue that arises is examined as a policy matter rather than as an isolated problem for the board to solve. When a decision by the superintendent or staff is challenged, the board first asks itself: “Did the decision or action reflect a reasonable interpretation of our policy?”

The board is obligated to support the superintendent if the decision or action reflected a reasonable interpretation of board policy. But the board might opt to make the policy clearer or narrower to reduce the range of options available to the superintendent in the future.

On the other hand, if the challenged decision or action did not appear to be a reasonable interpretation of board policy, the board has a policy violation on its hand to be dealt with in a manner the board deems appropriate.

In either case, the board focus remains on continuously improving its policies, not on making ad hoc decisions or rehashing decisions already made by the superintendent or staff. Placed under pressure, a board that is not truly committed to govern by policy will shift its focus from policy to the issue at hand and literally take the decision away from the superintendent and staff. Such a board is not governing by policy, for its staff knows that board policy does not tell the whole story and lives in fear of being second-guessed.
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW BENCHMARKS
POLICY AND LEGAL PRECEDENTS

Policies Requiring Community Input on Policy Development

Firm Requirement:

**5131.1 Harassment Intimidation and Bullying** – (DOE checklist) annual review with community involvement

*N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15a* Each school district shall adopt the HIB policy through a process that includes representation of parents, school employees, volunteers, students, administrators community, representatives

*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.7(a)1* Each district board of education shall develop the policy in consultation with, at a minimum, parents and other community members, school employees, school volunteers, students, and school administrators.

SE file code: 5512

Soft Requirement:

**5124 Reporting to Parents** – community involvement in policy development

*N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.9* requires adoption of policies and procedures on pupil promotion and remedial services which include timely reporting to and consultation with parents/guardians. Procedures to ensure that parents, teachers and students participate in policy development where appropriate.

SE file codes: 5420, 9280

**5131 Conduct and Discipline** – community involvement in policy development (where possible)

**5131 Conduct and Discipline, Code of Student Conduct, Regulation** – (DOE checklist) community involvement

*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1 (a)1* The code of student conduct may be based on parent, student, and community involvement that represents, where possible, the composition of the school district's schools and community.

SE file code: 5500, 5561, 5600

Policies Requiring Annual Review with Community Involvement

**5113 Attendance, Absences and Excuses** – (DOE checklist) annual review with community input

*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1(a)(3)(i)* the BOE has established a process for the annual review and update of the CSC that includes parent, student and community involvement.

In the policy it says “on a regular basis” but the CSC code indicates differently.

SE file code:  5200, 5230, 5240, 5250

5131.6 Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco – annual review with community involvement

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.2 Review and availability of policies and procedures for the intervention of student alcohol or other drug abuse.

a) Each district board of education shall establish a process for the annual review of the effectiveness of its policies and procedures on student alcohol and other drug abuse. The district board of education shall solicit parent, student and community input, as well as consult in the review process with local alcohol and other drug abuse prevention, intervention and treatment agencies licensed by the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

b) Each district board of education shall annually disseminate to all school staff, students and parents its adopted policies and procedures for implementing N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.

SE file code:  5530, 5533

6171.3 At-risk and Title 1 – Title 1 (sec. 1118) periodic policy review with parent input

Each local educational agency that receives funds under this part shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parent involvement policy.

Involve parents in the joint development of the plan under section 1112, and the process of school review and improvement under section 1116.

SE file code:  2414 and 2415 (entire series including all the decimal policie)

Policies Requiring Annual Review and Best Practices

5131 Conduct and Discipline – annual review

5131 Conduct and Discipline, Code of Student Conduct, Regulation – (DOE checklist) annual review

community input

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1(a)2 The board of education establishes a process for annually reviewing and updating the CSC.

SE file code:  5500, 5561, 5600

5131.1 Harassment Intimidation and Bullying – (DOE checklist) annual review with community involvement

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1(e)(3) Annually conduct a re-evaluation, reassessment and review of its harassment, intimidation, and bullying policy, and make any necessary revisions, consistent with N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15.c. (i) The programs or other responses shall be planned in consultation with, at a minimum, parents and other community members, school employees, school volunteers, students, and school administrators;

SE file code:  5512

5141.8 Sports Related Concussion and Head Injury – annual review by the district


The policy shall be reviewed annually, and updated as necessary, by the district to ensure that it reflects the most current information available on the prevention, risk, and treatment of sports-related concussions and other head injuries.

SE file code:  2431.4
POLICY AND LEGAL PRECEDENTS (continued)

3542 Wellness and Nutrition – ongoing review by the DA and noncompliance means loss of funding

N.J.A.C. 2:36-1.9 Review and Evaluation

(a) Each sponsor's implementation of the Free and Reduced Price Policy and the New Jersey School Nutrition/Wellness Policy shall be reviewed and evaluated by the Division on a continuing basis.
(b) Federal and State child nutrition program funds may be withheld and/or fiscal action taken against sponsors (see 7 CFR 210.19(c), 215.12(a), 220.14(a) and 245.10) found not to be in compliance with applicable Federal regulations (7 CFR Parts 210, 215, 220 and 245) and the New Jersey School Nutrition/Wellness Policy.
(c) Sponsors shall not alter or amend standards set forth in the Free and Reduced Price Policy or the New Jersey School Nutrition/Wellness Policy without prior written approval by the Division.

SE file code:  8505, 8506

4116 Evaluation – annual adoption (should review if annual adoption required)

Annually adopt policies and procedures developed by the chief school administrator pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:10-2.4, including the evaluation rubrics approved by the Commissioner pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:10-2.1(c).

SE file code:  3221, 3222, 3223, 3224

6146 Graduation Requirements – annual policy review

Policy Statement – The board shall review this policy annually and shall adopt all regulations required by law (no legal precedent).

SE file code:  5460

9322 Public and Executive Sessions – annual review with board attorney

Policy Statement: The board shall annually review its electronic communication policy and practices with the board attorney (no legal precedent).

SE file code:  0133, 0166, 0167, 0169

Programs Requiring Annual Board Review

2224 Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action – annual review of the program

N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.4(d) Each district board of education shall, at the end of each school year, report on their annual progress in the Quality Annual Assurance Report on achieving the objectives of the comprehensive equity plan...

SE file code:  1140, 1510, 1523, 1530, 1550, 1555

3510 Operation and Maintenance of Plant – annual review of IPM program

N.J.S.A. 13:1F-22 requires that the DEP develop a model policy and the model IPM policy requires the principal to report annually to the local school board on the effectiveness of the IPM plan and make recommendations for improvement as needed. For non-public schools and charter schools, the Lead Administrator or Principal shall report to their respective governing boards on the effectiveness of the school IPM plan and make recommendations for improvement as needed.

SE file code:  7410, 7421, 7422

4131/4131.1 Staff Development, Inservice Education, Visitations and Conferences
The superintendent shall be responsible for the content and implementation of the district professional development plan. The superintendent shall present the plan to the district board of education to review for fiscal impact (N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.6f).

SE file code: 2414 and 2415 (entire series including all the decimal polices)

5141 Health – annual review of nursing plan

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(b) annually adopt the Nursing Services Plan.

SE file code: 5300, 5305, 5307, 5310, 5331, 5332, 5335, 5338

5141.1 Accidents and 5141.2 Illness – annual review of nursing plan

Policy statement (5141.1) – The board directs the chief school administrator to report on the effectiveness of the emergency medical procedures to the board annually for its review.

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(b) annually adopt the Nursing Services Plan – as part of the nursing plan care in emergency situations and accidents are included.

SE file code: 8441, 8442, 8451

5142 Pupil Safety – annual review of the safety and security plan

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(a) School district develop school safety and security plan

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(b)2 CSA ensure the plans, procedures and mechanisms shall be reviewed annually and updated, as appropriate.

Board has to review dismissal procedures annually (Jenkins vs. Anderson)

SE file code: 8462, 8601, 9321, 9323, 9324

6010 Instruction Goals and Objectives – annual review of the written educational plan

Required by NCLB, Title 1

SE file code: 2414 and 2415 (entire series including all the decimal polices)

6114 Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness – annual review of the safety and security plan

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(a) School district develop school safety and security plan

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1(b)2 CSA ensure the plans, procedures and mechanisms shall be reviewed annually and updated, as appropriate.

SE file code: 8420, 8468

6146 Graduation Requirements – annual policy review

Policy Statement – The board shall review this policy annually and shall adopt all regulations required by law (no legal precedent).

SE file code: 5460

6171.4 Special Education – annual program review

Policy Statement - To implement achievement of the board’s goal for provision of special education, the chief school administrator shall oversee development of a written plan for special education conforming to the state plan for the educationally disabled. After the plan has been approved by the
board of education and the executive county superintendent, the chief school administrator shall implement it in this district and supervise its operation so that it will accomplish its stated goals and objectives. The plan, any alterations to it, and an evaluation of its effectiveness will be shared annually with the community.

SE file code: 2460, 2461, 2466, 2467

**Programs Requiring Community Input**

6171.4 Special Education

The board of education shall ensure that a special education parent advisory group is in place in the district to provide input to the district on issues concerning students with disabilities (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.2h).

SE file code: 2460, 2461, 2466, 2467

**Curriculum and Community Input**

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1 Curriculum and Instruction – District boards of education shall encourage the active involvement of representatives from the community, business, industry, labor, and higher education in the development of educational programs aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

6141 Curriculum Design and Development
6142 Subject Fields
6142.1 Family Life Education - policy statement: The curriculum, developed under the supervision of the chief school administrator with the active participation of teachers, administrators, pupils, parents/guardians, physicians, members of the clergy and representative members of the community...
6142.2 English as a Second Language; Bilingual/Bicultural
6142.4 Physical Education and Health
6142.6 Basic Skills
6142.9 Art
6142.10 Internet Safety and Technology
6142.12 Career and Technical Education
6171.1 Remedial Education
6171.2 Gifted and Talented

SE file code: 2200, 2210, 2270, 8810, 2422, 2423, 2425, 2360, 2361, 2363, 3321, 4321, 5516, 2421, 2464
A POLICY MAKER’S CHECKLIST

Active policy-making is best pursued through asking questions - questions that will help board members learn what to act on, what to leave to the superintendent, and what to leave alone.

THE ORIGIN OF POLICY:
1. Do you understand the problem or issue?
2. How has the issue been handled in the past?
3. Where does this issue fit into your mission, goals and budget?
4. Do you have a choice in the matter?
5. Is this issue covered by contract language?
6. Do you really need a policy?
7. What do you want from the policy?
8. Who is supposed to carry out the policy?

AT THE FIRST READING:
9. Does the policy language clearly convey the board’s intentions?
10. Have the measurable outcomes or objectives of the policy been identified?
11. Have you reviewed relevant administrative procedures?
12. Have you discussed potential implementation problems?
13. Does the policy need to be reviewed by the board attorney?

AT THE TIME OF ADOPTION:
14. Have you reviewed the measurable outcomes?
15. Have you set a date when the superintendent will report back to the board on how the policy is working?
16. Have you told the superintendent what information you want?

POLICY OVERSIGHT:
17. Did the superintendent report to the board as agreed upon?
18. Did the report include the measurable outcomes you identified as well as other pertinent information?
19. Does the policy need to be adjusted?
20. Do you need to adjust the measurable outcomes?
21. Do the administrative procedures allow effective application of the policy?

Adopted from Richard Funk, Michigan Association of School Boards
Required Committees and Teams

NJQSAC Committee

N.J.A.C. 6A:30-3.2 details the responsibilities of the chief school administrator in the appointment of the district committee responsible for the completion of the District Performance Review. The makeup of the district committee is specified as well as the district’s requirements regarding public notice and public participation in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

School Level Planning Team

N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2.2 secondary school districts shall have a school-level planning team to guide the development and implementation of the secondary education reforms described in this section. A representative group of teachers and administrators shall determine team membership and operating procedures.

Affirmative Action Team

N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.5 requires the board to annually designate a staff member as the affirmative action officer and form an affirmative action team.

Negotiating Committee

N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-6.2 and N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-22.10 restricts who can participate on this team because of nepotism. No law requiring this committee.

Advisory Grievance Committee (charter schools only)


School Improvement Panel

N.J.A.C. 6A:10-1.2 and N.J.A.C. 6A:10-2.2 means a school-level panel whose purpose is to ensure the effectiveness of its teachers by overseeing the mentoring of teachers, conducting evaluations of teachers, and identifying professional development opportunities for all instructional staff members. The panel includes the principal, or his or her designee, an assistant or vice-principal, and a teacher.

District Evaluation Advisory Committee (staff evaluations)

N.J.A.C. 6A:10-2.2 Establish a District Evaluation Advisory Committee to oversee and guide the planning and implementation of the school district board of education's evaluation policies and procedures as set forth in this subchapter.

Members of the District Evaluation Advisory Committee must include representation from the following groups: teachers from each school level represented in the district; central office administrators overseeing the teacher evaluation process; supervisors, where available or appropriate, involved in teacher evaluation;
REQUIRED COMMITTEES AND TEAMS (continued)

and administrators conducting evaluations including a minimum of one administrator conducting evaluations who participates on a School Improvement Panel, as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:10-1.2. Members must also include the superintendent, a special education administrator, a parent, and a member of the district board of education.

Peer Review Committee

N.J.A.C. 6A:9-16.4 The role of the peer review committee will be to provide support, review progress in plan implementation, review for assurance of compliance with the professional standards for school leaders referenced in N.J.A.C. 6A:9-3.4 and the professional development standards referenced in N.J.A.C. 6A:9-15.2(d) and recommend the certification of the successful completion of the professional growth plan to the New Jersey Association of School Administrators.

Attendance Review Committee

School Safety Team

N.J.S.A. 18A:37-21 requires each school to form a school safety team which at a minimum includes the principal or his or her designee (who shall be a senior school administrator), a teacher, the anti-bullying specialist, a parent/guardian of a student in the school and other members as determined by the principal. The school safety team is required to meet at least twice a year, and its responsibilities are enumerated and include the review and analysis of bullying reports; investigations; school bullying program and policy assessment and revision; training and staff development programs; community education; and district data accumulation and reporting. Parents may not participate in certain activities, including those that would compromise student confidentiality.

Intervention and Referral Services Team

Referred to in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.3(a)9ii(6) regarding long term suspension but not defined in the I&RS code – The district board of education shall make decisions regarding the appropriate educational program and support services for the suspended general education student, at a minimum, based on

Note: Pupil Assistance Committee – used to be related to I&RS but the code was revised and this committee no longer appears in law or code

Parent Advisory Committee

N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.15 Each district board of education implementing a bilingual education program shall establish a parent advisory committee on bilingual education on which the majority will be parent(s) of students of limited English proficiency.

504 Team

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3 defines 504 team a a group of persons which makes program and placement decisions according to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, and 34 CFR § 104.35(c).

IEP Team

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3 Definitions "IEP team" means the group of individuals who are responsible for the development, review and revision of the student's individualized education program. The members of IEP team are listed at N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)2.

Multidisciplinary Team

Relevant to determining alternative placement

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.5 special education evaluations are conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals
REQUIRED COMMITTEES AND TEAMS (continued)

consisting of a minimum of two members of the child study team, and, where appropriate, other specialists who shall conduct the evaluation in accordance with the procedures in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3. A minimum of one evaluator shall be knowledgeable in the area of the suspected disability;

District Regionalization and Consolidation of Services Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee)

N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-2.5 for regionalization only

Suggested Best Practices from the CPRM

Attendance Review Committee (5114)

HIV Advisory Committee (6142.13)

Discipline Committee (6145)

Records Review Committee (3570)

Athletic Awards Committee (5126)

Curriculum Review Committee - N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1 requires boards of education shall encourage the active involvement of representatives from the community, business, industry, labor, and higher education in the development of educational programs aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards.
Superintendent Roles

**KEY QUESTION:** “Am I providing effective educational leadership to the board in pointing out areas where policy is needed, or am I usurping the board’s responsibility by establishing policy? Worse yet, am I forcing the board to make administrative decisions because I don’t want to take the responsibility?”

**The Superintendent Should:**

1. **C.E.O.**
   
   Serve as the chief executive officer, professional planner and educational advisor on all matters. Insist that the board – with community and staff input – participate in setting the goals and direction for the district.

2. **Loyal**
   
   Remain loyal to the board and faithfully implement its decisions and policies, even if it has opposed their adoption.

3. **Source of Information**
   
   Keep the board fully and accurately informed about school programs, problems and progress.

4. **Management Expert**
   
   Interpret the needs of the school system and make professional recommendations on all problems and issues considered by the board.

5. **Education Expert**
   
   Devote a large share of time to the management of instruction, be alert to advances and improvements in educational programs, and be prepared to recommend initiatives to the board.

6. **Public Relations**
   
   Lead in the development and operations of an adequate program of school-community relations, and participate in community activities to stay visible and accessible.

7. **Personnel**
   
   Exhibit high standards in recommending all candidates for appointment and promotion. Be strong proponent for both effective staff supervision and a productive staff development program.

8. **Fiscal Operations**
   
   Present for consideration an annual budget that is designed to serve the needs of the school system. Establish and manage the financial operations of the school district to ensure adherence to the budget and wise use of school funds.

9. **Welcome Constructive Evaluation**
   
   Encourage the board to evaluate progress of the district toward stated goals and objectives; participate in the board self-evaluation as a member of the team.
Many districts summarize the following notifications in their personnel handbook.

2224  Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action
3510  Operation and Maintenance of Plant (integrated pest management)
3516  Safety (notice of construction/hazardous substances)
4111.1/4211.1  Nondiscrimination/Affirmative action
4112.2  Certification (arrest reporting requirements)
4112.4/4212.4  Health
4112.6/4212.6  Personnel Records
4116  Evaluation of Teaching Staff Members
4119.21/4219.21  Conflict of Interest (not required but good idea)
4119.22/4219.22  Conduct and Dress (not required but good idea)
4119.23/4219.23  Substance Abuse (new employees)
4119.26/4219.26  Electronic Communication with Students
4131/4131.1  Staff Development (not required but good idea)
4216  Staff Evaluation
5126  Student Records (not required but good idea for FERPA requirements, confidentiality)
5131.1  Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (policy posted on the website)
5131.5  Violence and Vandalism (procedures for reporting and dealing with violence and vandalism)
5131.6  Student Substance Abuse Policy (identification, intervention and reporting)
5131.7  Weapons
5141  Health
5141.4  Child Abuse and Neglect (not required but good idea for identification and reporting procedures)
5141.6  Crisis/Suicide Intervention (not required but good idea for identification, intervention and reporting)
5141.20  Life Threatening Allergies
5141.21  Administering Medication
5142  Safety (dismissal procedures)
5145.4  Equal Educational Opportunity
6114  Emergency and Disaster Preparedness
6121  Nondiscrimination/Affirmative Action: Students (not required but good idea)
6142.10  Internet Safety and Technology (district network and computer rules)
What is the Board’s Policy Role

Policy adoption is one of the primary roles of school boards in today’s system for governing public education. School boards establish the direction and structure of their school district through the act of adopting policies, under the authority granted by state legislatures.

However, in most school systems policy making is not aligned to the mission of the school system—educating all students. If the primary purpose of school board policies is to establish and communicate priorities, expectations and programs of the district, especially those that target student achievement, then the time has now come for school boards to re-examine and refocus their policymaking efforts on improving student learning and achievement.

Boards support the school’s mission of educating all students in several ways:

1. **Advocating for public education,**
2. **Mobilizing community support for public education,**
3. **Ensuring the school district has adequate resources and that these resources are aligned to district goals,** and
4. **Hiring a highly qualified superintendent.**

But to really impact student achievement, boards must concentrate on their traditional role of policy-setting. Policy-making needs to be better integrated with district planning and priorities. It is urgent that local school boards begin to focus most of their attention on policymaking designed to improve student learning, and that superintendents develop more effective general management practices and processes to support student learning.

The Iowa Association of School Boards’ Lighthouse Study of the school board’s role in student achievement has revealed that school boards in high achieving school districts clearly and consistently express a belief system and expectations that all students can learn.
What is the Board’s Policy Role

**Iowa Lighthouse Study Key Findings**

Research by the Iowa School Boards Association identified five areas that differentiate effective boards from ineffective ones. Boards in High-Achieving Districts:

1. Consistently express the belief that all students can learn and that schools can teach all children.
2. Were knowledgeable about teaching and learning issues.
3. Made student-centered and data-driven decisions.
4. Created a supportive workplace for staff.
5. Involved their communities.

This finding highlights the critical role of the school board in impacting student learning. School boards are well advised to articulate their expectations and beliefs about student learning and communicate those beliefs through written board policy.

Of critical note regarding the Lighthouse Study is the link between the school and the community. Although school boards need to make time to work on student learning policies, and to organize their policymaking to more effectively handle those topics directly related to student learning, there still must be time for conversation and interaction with the community. Any reform that neglects this reality will do more harm than good.

Boards and superintendents must be familiar with their policy role:

- **Boards set policy.**
- **Administrators carry out policy.**

While the above is true, most boards spend a very small percentage of their time making policy and regularly abdicate policy-setting to the superintendent. Furthermore, more often than not, policymaking is reactive rather than pro active. A first step in sound policy-making is to develop and adopt a policy on how the board will go about the task of adopting policy. This policy should not only address the process, but also the means of staff and community input into the policy.