

A guide for candidates interested in running for a seat on the School Board:

The intent of this document is to help orientate interested individuals to Board service. It is our hope that the information included will help to prepare you as you begin your journey of being an effective School Board member.

Being an effective Board member begins with a genuine commitment to striving for high quality education. Effective Board members put the needs of the children first. A school Board’s primary functions are to establish local policy (within State and Federal guidelines) and to monitor and evaluate the School’s progress. Policy should be geared toward the District’s vision (which should be focused on all children’s educational needs).

The School Board hires, works with, and evaluates the Superintendent; allocates funding; ensures the safety of students and employees; and sets a positive tone of operations by modeling the respectful, courteous, cooperative, and professional behavior they expect from employees, children, and the community.

School District Guiding Philosophy – “Continuous Improvement”

Continuous Improvement is one of the Potosi School District’s (PSD) core values. At its essence, it means the desire to get better minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. It is an acknowledgement that nothing in any organization is perfect and that there are multiple opportunities for improvement that continuously present themselves and that we all need to be reflective and open to these opportunities so that we can take advantage of them by improving ourselves and our practice.

Continuous improvement is the primary strategy District staff uses to achieve the District vision of a relentless pursuit of excellence. The continuous improvement philosophy is the recognition that the pursuit of excellence is a moving target. What is excellent today may be the definition of mediocrity tomorrow. Never accepting the status quo is the only way to make a good school district great.

Continuous improvement is what we desire for our students as they learn throughout the year and move from grade level to grade level and subject area to subject area. It is the Potosi staff’s commitment to this philosophy that fosters outstanding student performance levels in academics, the arts, and athletics. The results staff members achieve are a reflection of how well continuous improvement is practiced across all areas within the District. The Board understands the excellence begins at the top of an organization and the Potosi School Board is committed to continuously learn, grow, and improve as a Board in order to model and foster continuous improvement across our School District.

Table of Contents:

3	Reflective Questions for Yourself as You Think About Board Service
3	Signs of an Effective School Board Member
4	Signs of an Ineffective School Board Member
5	“Top 10” Jobs of a School Board
5	Believe it or Not...
5	Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
7	Some Roberts Rules to Use at Board Meetings
8	The Secrets of School Board Success: Practical Tips for Board Members
9	Personal Characteristics of Highly Effective School Board Members
10	Successful Board Members Help Create Successful Superintendents
10	Relating to Fellow Board Members
11	Productive Relationships with School District Employees
11	Effective School Board Meetings
12	Continual Growth and Learning
13	The Chain of Command
13	Closed Session or Executive Session
14	Potosi School District Board of Education – Operating Protocol
15	Board Member Use of Telecommunications and Email
15	Public Participation at School Board Meetings
16	Board Member Absences
16	Who Has the Authority for What – The Board and Superintendent as a Team
18	What are the Different Kinds of Quorums?
18	Tips when Cornered by the Gossiper
18	Tips when Somebody Comes to you with a Problem
19	Sources

Reflective Questions for Yourself as You Think About Board Service:

- What are your visions for this School District five to ten years from now and what systemic changes will you work toward to achieve that vision?
- What policies would you initiate to improve student achievement?
- What are the characteristics of a superintendent you most admire?
- How would you measure success for a superintendent?
- What level of skills should high school students have upon graduation?
- How would you go about working with people who may have different beliefs or opinions than you?
- How do you plan on collaborating with your fellow Board members?
- How will you go about analyzing an issue prior to making a decision?

Signs of an Effective School Board Member:

Here are some signs of a School Board member focused on moving the School District forward in a positive manner, and educating all students to meet high standards.

1. *Strong School Board members have a clear vision for the District.* They set the vision, mission, strategic plan, and goals. They measure the success of the District and Superintendent against the goals.
2. *Strong School Board members communicate their actions to the community.* Through public discourse and written reports, strong School Board members keep the public informed of the District's progress and challenges.
3. *Strong School Board members work as a team.* They collaborate well with others and are respectful of the other Board members and the Superintendent.
4. *Strong School Board members adopt a fiscally sound District budget.* They pay attention to finances and regularly monitor the fiscal health of the District.
5. *Strong School Board members focus on what is best for all students.* They focus on student achievement and implementing policies that will ensure success for all students.
6. *Strong School Board members advocate at the local, state, and national level for public education.* They take advantage of opportunities to communicate the needs of public schools to other levels of government and advocate for strong public schools.
7. *Strong School Board members attend all Board meetings insofar as possible, and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.* They are serious about their service to the District and are willing to invest their time to do a good job.

8. *Strong School Board members render all decisions based on the available facts and independent judgment. They refuse to surrender their judgment to individuals or special interest groups.*
9. *Strong School Board members actively participate in discussions during meetings, and ask questions (if necessary) to seek clarification. They contribute to the process and get involved in determining solutions to issues.*
10. *Strong School Board members keep executive session discussions confidential. They will not reveal the content, discussion, or participants of closed sessions afterward when asked by others; will use the reason of “confidential issues were discussed” and not say “no comment” which makes others think you have something to hide.*
11. *Strong School Board members do not participate in “parking lot” meetings. If an item of concern exists, they speak to all members during the meeting rather than to a few after.*
12. *Strong School Board members bring concerns to the President and/or Superintendent so they may be resolved ahead of time or placed on the agenda for Board input and resolution.*
13. *Strong School Board members respect the decision of the Board, even if not agreed with. They may be on the minority side of an issue, however to the public they communicate support for the Board’s decision.*
14. *Strong School Board members remember that the Superintendent takes orders from the Board as a whole, and not from individual Board members.*

Signs of an Ineffective School Board Member:

If you notice any of the following signs, it’s time to find some new candidates to run for your local Board:

1. The School Board member continually focuses on one issue, or talks aimlessly at meetings.
2. The School Board member doesn’t conduct him or herself in a respectful, collaborative manner in public or with the superintendent.
3. The School Board member comes to meetings unprepared.
4. The School Board member “rubber stamps” all of the superintendent’s proposals.
5. The School Board member tries to micromanage rather than focusing attention on District-wide policies.
6. The School Board member uses his/her position on the School Board: as an opportunity to put forth a political agenda (with little relevance to student achievement), to fee his/her ego, or to “be in the know” regarding what is happening in the Schools.
7. The School Board member has difficulty with controversy and making difficult decisions that are in the best interest of all students or the District.

“Top 10” Jobs of a School Board:

1. Attend Board meetings and come prepared by reading one’s Board Packet.
2. Setting the mission, vision, direction, and strategic plan of the School District.
3. Follow all laws pertaining to the School District.
4. Make and follow Board Policies.
5. Hire the Superintendent.
6. Evaluate the Superintendent.
7. Make decisions using data based on what is best for all students and the District.
8. Oversee finances and the budget.
9. Attend School events.
10. Get training. The District’s Philosophy is continuous improvement. Leadership and quality begin at the top of the organization at the Board table. Everyone, including Board members need to constantly grow and learn.

Believe it or not.....

Public School Districts are run more like private corporations than some may think. The power structures that govern the two share many similarities. Just as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) oversees a company, a Superintendent oversees and supervises a School District. Contrary to what many believe, however, neither the CEO nor the Superintendent is at the top of the ladder. Instead, a company’s CEO is elected by, and reports to, a Board of Directors. Likewise, a School District’s Superintendent, is hired by, and is accountable to, his/her School Board.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

What are the main responsibilities of board members? The Board of Education adopts policies under which the School District operates; oversees the budget; approves the curriculum; hires and evaluates the Superintendent; and serves as a communications link between the community and the School District. School Board members must remember that they have no authority except that which results from participation in decisions of the Board during an official meeting. Actions, promises or commitments made by individual Board members are without legal basis and have no binding commitment upon the District. Board members should be aware that they are elected to represent the entire District in all matters pertaining to education, and not any one segment.

How much time does it take to be a school board member? A survey by the National School Boards Association found 63 percent of Board members spend 11 to 50 hours a month on board duties – with some dedicating even more time to the position. As a School Board member, you will provide oversight of one of the largest operations in your community. By accepting this responsibility, you effectively agree to attend regular and special board meetings, to review the board packet in advance of meetings, and to keep yourself informed about the issues on which you will make decisions.

What is the relationship between the board and superintendent? The function of the School Board is not to run the schools, but to see that they are run effectively. The Board establishes School District policy and goals and communicates those goals to the Superintendent. The Superintendent is accountable to the Board, and all other staff members are accountable to the Superintendent. Teamwork between the Board and Superintendent is essential. Board members should look to the Superintendent for leadership and guidance on educational issues and procedures.

What is the relationship between board members and teachers? The Board is responsible for adopting the policies, rules and regulations that define the responsibilities of teachers (as well as other school employees), and for approving all employment contracts that are recommended by the Superintendent. Observation and evaluation of teachers is the job of the Superintendent and those supervisors to whom he or she delegates the responsibility. The Board’s role is to set standards, or expectations, in the form of policies that detail the criteria the Superintendent should use in recommending and evaluating staff members. Board members should treat teachers and other staff members with respect, and must always observe the chain of command, recognizing that the appropriate channel for board/staff communications is through the Superintendent. Board members should also keep in mind that the Board can appoint, transfer or remove employees only upon the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Who decides how district money is spent? The school budget is the District’s financial plan, and reflects all program needs. The Board’s budgeting responsibilities include discussing these needs and setting the parameters for budget development. The Superintendent then works with other staff members to draft a budget that meets Board goals and student needs, complies with state regulations, and stays within the District’s financial resources. The Board adopts the budget after a public hearing, called an Annual Meeting and Budget Hearing. After the budget is finalized, the Superintendent is responsible for administering it. The Board provides financial oversight by signing off on the bill list to approve expenditures throughout the year.

Who hires and evaluates a district’s superintendent? The selection of a superintendent is considered to be one of the most significant decisions a school board makes. A systematic procedure for selection should be used, requiring months of careful planning and well-organized steps in screening the most qualified candidates. In addition, state law requires that boards evaluate superintendents annually. An effective evaluation process is based on the achievement of specific, agreed-upon goals between the board and the superintendent. In Potosi, we use the CESA 6 system called “DAPES” (District Administrator Performance Evaluation System) to evaluate the Superintendent.

When are executive sessions permitted? All meetings of the School Board are open to the public, except for specific topics that may be discussed in “executive,” or closed session. Executive sessions are limited to matters deemed confidential, including matters that by law must remain private, such as student records; pending litigation; topics involving attorney-client privilege; discussion of land purchases; negotiations strategies; and personnel issues. The purpose of an executive session must be announced prior to going into closed session. Only the specifically announced subject may be discussed. Minutes must be kept and approved at a subsequent meeting, and then released to the public when the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

Will I have a say in deciding what is taught and which textbooks are used? The Board is required by state law to approve courses of study, including all textbooks and materials. The Board should ask its administrators to demonstrate how these curriculum materials will help students achieve the state’s Core Curriculum Content Standards. The Board establishes what will be taught, when and where it will be taught, to whom it will be taught, and with what materials. Administrators and teachers manage and carry out the instructional tasks. Since the decision-making authority is vested in the Board and not in the individual members, you will be successful in achieving your personal goals only

if you can convince a majority of the members of the Board that your proposals have merit. As a Board member, you have an obligation to express your views and then to accept and support the Board’s final decisions.

Will I be involved in collective bargaining with employee unions? Since Act 10 became law in 2011, school districts and unions had to significantly change the way negotiations take place. School districts have moved away from negotiated collective bargaining agreements and have adopted Personnel Handbooks. School districts are limited to the CPI (Consumer Price Index) as the maximum salary increase allowed to give to bargaining units. Other items, such as the length of the school day, are no longer allowed to be negotiated and are instead established by the School Board.

How can a board remove poor employees? State laws and local District policies spell out employment, discipline, and release procedures for all employees. The administration and Board follow these procedures. Wisconsin no longer has tenure laws for teachers. State law spells out the non-renewal process for teachers.

Some Robert’s Rules to Use at Board Meetings:

To Make a Motion:

“I move that ...” (whatever action you feel the Board should take; examples: ***“we adjourn to closed session with a five minute break”*** or ***“we accept the report of the committee as presented”*** or ***“we approve the financial report and all vouchers for payment”*** or ***“we hire _____ for the position of special education teacher.”***)

If the President has just given the wording of the motion, you may say, ***“I so move”*** rather than repeating the entire motion.

All motions need a second for action to continue. When the President asks for a second after someone has made a motion, you may signal your second by saying, ***“I second that.”*** If no one seconds a motion, the motion dies – meaning only the mover of the motion was interested in taking action on the item. An example: ***“I move that all Board members attending regular meetings to be paid \$50 an hour rather than \$25 for the entire meeting.”*** The President then asks, ***“Is there a second?”*** No one says a thing. The President says, ***“The motion dies for lack of a second.”*** And we move on to the next agenda item.

Motions may be amended numerous times but each amendment needs a second; in addition, an amendment may also be amended with a second but only once. Examples: ***“I amend the motion to read: all Board members attending regular meetings be paid \$25 an hour rather than \$25 for the entire meeting.”*** Someone says, ***“I second that.”*** Before the amendment is voted on, someone says, ***“I’d like to amend the amendment to read: ‘all Board members attending regular meetings will be paid \$25 an hour after the meeting goes three hours, rather than \$25 for the entire meeting.’”*** Someone says, ***“I second that.”*** At this point, no more amendments may be made and each must be voted upon, starting with the last amendment first, until reaching the main motion which may then be voted upon.

Sometimes after a motion has been made and seconded, another person will ask if he/she may make a **friendly amendment** (some change that the amender thinks the original motion maker would accept

without voting on it); example using the above motion: *“Would you accept a friendly amendment that reads **“ALL meetings attended by Board members --instead of regular meetings?”**”* The original maker of the motion agrees as does the one who seconded it and the motion goes forward as amended. The original maker of the motion may disagree – and then the person may attempt to make it as an amendment, if it receives a second.

According to our present policy, except for financial items and closed sessions, all motions may be voted upon using a voice vote; the President, with a motion on the floor, says, *“All those in favor signify by saying ‘Aye.’”* Everyone says *“aye.”* *“Those opposed, nay”* No one votes against or the votes are definitely for the motion rather than against. The President then says, *“Motion passed.”*

If there is one or more votes against the motion, anyone may ask for a roll call vote – and it must be carried out, either before the vote is taken or even after the vote was taken. For example, during discussion it appears that several members will vote against a particular motion; anyone, including the President, may say *“I request a roll call vote on this motion.”* If it was voted but not apparent who voted against a motion in a voice vote, and someone wants to make sure the minutes are accurate showing who voted in what way, a roll call vote may be asked for, even after the motion was voted on. We note in our minutes the names of the Board members who are in the minority of a vote.

The Secrets of School Board Success: Practical Tips for Board Members

By Lynn Hamilton (a 15 year board member from Arkansas)

“As a school board member, you have two sources of power to help students and families: (1) the limited formal authority that comes from being elected (or appointed) and (2) the potentially much more effective informal authority freely given by other board members, employees of the school district, and citizens of the community.... Formal authority mandates your right to vote at meetings.... and also gives you the right to speak at board meetings; however, no one is forced to listen to you.... You acquire the power to help students by inspiring confidence. You build your authority by inspiring trust and respect through sharing ideas and encouragement. When the entire board is composed of members who inspire such confidence, good things happen as administration and teachers consistently will feel true leadership coming from the top. That atmosphere will spread thru the schools so ultimately the students will benefit. Any organization will reflect its leadership, whether good or bad. The district’s culture and level of professionalism begins at the top.”

Personal Characteristics of Highly Effective School Board Members:

By Lynn Hamilton (a 15 year board member from Arkansas)

- a. Don't publicly or privately criticize the schools or school employees. Any negative comments you make will be magnified and likely spread as gossip. If someone comes to you with a complaint, listen politely, let that person know you understand, and if need be, encourage him or her to take the concern to the proper person on the chain of command.
- b. Respond quickly to problems. A slow response tells the person you really aren't too concerned. Listen and then suggest some form of action but do not undertake the administration's job. One way to do so is to tell people: "***Call the superintendent and use my name to set up a meeting. Then call me back if you aren't satisfied after your conversation.***"
- c. Don't be evasive with people. Be honest. If you don't know the answer or how you feel about a particular issue, say so. People will respect your honesty.
- d. Make the hard decisions even though you find them painful. Strong Board members make decisions that are in the best interest of all the students and the District overall, even if it means the possibility of losing friendships.
- e. Be humble. Successful board members project an understated, quiet sense of self-confidence. Oversized egos do not generate confidence from the public.
- f. Learn the art of apologizing. Everyone makes mistakes, including Board members. A sincere, well-worded apology is one of the most powerful forms of communication you can employ, especially when it's done in public. How to do it?
 - 1.) Acknowledge that you made a mistake. If you're embarrassed, say so.
 - 2.) Specifically describe the nature of your error. Don't make any excuses for your action.
 - 3.) Then say, "***I want you to know how sorry I am. I apologize.***" Don't use the word, "if" as in "If I've offended you, then I'm sorry." An "if" statement sends a message that you really don't believe you did anything wrong.

A sincere apology almost always will be perceived as genuine, and as a result, you're likely to build a strong, productive relationship. People know how difficult it can be to openly admit a mistake, and they will respect your courage and honesty.
- g. Develop and use your sense of humor. Conversely, never use humor that cloaks criticism directed toward someone else.
- h. Dress in a manner that invites respect. You should dress in business casual for all public meetings.

Successful Board Members Help Create Successful Superintendents:

By Lynn Hamilton (a 15 year board member from Arkansas)

1. Provide encouragement. "Superintendents routinely hear more complaints than compliments. So tell the superintendent how much you appreciate him or her. Say it privately and publicly, and often. Point out specific actions you appreciate. Remember how much you appreciate recognition yourself for a difficult job well done."
2. Avoid criticizing the Superintendent to someone else. "An important part of your job is to tactfully and constructively make the Superintendent aware of mistakes so they aren't repeated. He or she needs your guidance. However, it's essential that this be done between the two of you alone in order to preserve the community's confidence and prevent embarrassment."
3. When you want the Superintendent to take some specific action, politely phrase your request in the form of a suggestion or recommendation. "If possible, first make your request privately, not in a public meeting, so your reasoning may be explored and the Superintendent can react."

Relating to Fellow Board Members:

By Lynn Hamilton

1. Treat all members with equal respect. "Be friendly and warm to everyone, especially new members and those who may be a little shy. As always, words mean things, but your actions speak louder than words."
2. Your actions should demonstrate clearly your concern for all children in your School District. "Practice the credo 'The Students Come First.'"
3. Let the other Board members know from time to time how much you enjoy serving with them. "Sharing appreciation helps to build trusting relationships."
4. If you disagree with another member, address the issue, not the person. "Allow the other member to defend him/herself and their position at length without interruption. Make eye contact to show you're listening. When you reply, don't begin a sentence with the word 'you' as in, 'You are mistaken.' Instead talk about your own perception of the issue, as in 'I feel....' Also, don't feel you must have the last word."
5. If you're on the losing side of a split vote, don't take the loss personally and don't carry a grudge. "Be friendly. It's important for you to take your loss well, because you'll want the other Board members to do the same at some point in the future when they're on the losing side."
6. Lose the little battles now so you can win the big ones later. "Learn the art of compromising. Your flexibility demonstrates your respect for the opinions of others and confirms for everyone that you're a team player."
7. Except on rare occasions, don't be the only "no" voter. "If you frequently find yourself alone in voting "no," you need to examine your motives. What are you accomplishing? You're telling the community that you're not a team player, and you're hurting your rapport with the other Board members."
8. Actively encourage bright, energetic citizens to get involved with the School District. "This may mean serving on a committee or joining a Booster Club or PTO. Strong Boards have a succession plan with a pool of qualified and competent individuals who are interested in serving on the Board sometime in the future."

Productive Relationships with School District

Employees: By Lynn Hamilton (a 15 year board member from Arkansas)

1. Be active in the schools. *"You need to know firsthand about the climate and personalities in the District. You can volunteer in the schools and schedule visits thru the principal."*
2. Any employee with a complaint must be encouraged to use the chain of command. *"Remember that you are hearing only one side of the issue. Do not try to be their hero. Direct them to the appropriate channels."*
3. Don't be a pest in the School. *"This can be seen as meddling by employees and over-involvement by other Board members."*
4. Don't every give employees orders, and don't offer any unsolicited suggestions or recommendations to anyone other than the Superintendent. *"The Superintendent is the only employee of the Board. The Superintendent directs the other employees of the District."*
5. The payoff for actively listening to employees and conducting yourself with professionalism is that you will be trusted. *"Without trust, very little can be accomplished."*

Effective School Board Meetings: By Lynn Hamilton (a 15 year board member from Arkansas)

1. Follow a simple set of parliamentary rules that allow for fair and efficient meetings. *"Generally you only need to use main motions, amendments to main motions, motions to table (temporarily delay consideration), and motions to postpone to a specific date."*
2. Use the "unanimous consent" procedure. *"This concept eliminates meaningless votes and wasted time in meetings. For instance, if a member asks for a brief recess, the President can say, "with the Board's consent, we will take a five minute recess." Then after a brief pause, he or she can follow with, "Hearing no objections, we are recessed and will reconvene in five minutes." The President makes the assumption that the Board has given its unanimous consent when no one objects."*
3. Apply your rules consistently to be certain all Board members are treated fairly and equally. *"Consistency creates expectations and a comfort level. Applying the Board's rules consistently helps keep the meeting on track."*
4. Allow each Board member to feel fully heard on any topic. *"If you see a member who is quiet and not contributing, ask them for their thoughts during deliberation on a subject."*
5. You must maintain a quorum to conduct business. A quorum with a 7 member Board is 4 members. If less than 4 members show up for a Board meeting, then the meeting needs to be rescheduled.
6. Arrange your meeting in a "C" formation. *"Allowing all Board members to see each other promotes more effective discussion and understanding of positions."*

7. Use a pre-published, written agenda of business. *“Your Board should have an established agenda format that is used for meetings. The Board President and Superintendent traditionally collaborate to create the meeting agendas.”*
8. Start your meetings on time. *“Not doing so lowers expectations and encourages tardiness of Board members.”*
9. Allow time for public comment and don’t keep visitors waiting a long time to hear you consider a particular item on your agenda. *“However, members of the public shouldn’t interrupt the Board’s business or discussion; ask for comments in the “public comment” portion of the agenda.”*
10. Do your homework. *“Read your packet before the meeting.”*
11. If possible, avoid asking potentially embarrassing questions in Board meetings. *“It presents a better image to the public and your thoughtfulness will be appreciated.”*
12. Don’t needlessly drag out meetings by rambling off track in your discussions. *“Doing so is a waste of people’s precious time and gives you the reputation of being full of hot air.”*
13. *“Ways the President can promote successful meetings:”*
 - a. Set the tone by being impartial, fair, and conciliatory.
 - b. Include and recognize all members during Board discussion.
 - c. Go slowly when first taking office as President.
 - d. Talk very little in meetings.
 - e. Refer problems to the Board; you don’t need to provide all answers yourself.
 - f. Invite differences of opinion. If possible, alternate your recognition of members.
 - g. Be consistent in following your Board’s rules and parliamentary procedures. Don’t allow the public to interrupt the Board’s business.

Continual Growth and Learning: By Lynn Hamilton (a 15 year board member from Arkansas)

1. Read your daily newspaper and news magazines to keep up with current events and trends.
2. Pay attention to education issues on TV and radio.
3. Use the internet to gather information on education. The following websites are suggested:
 - WASB –Wisconsin Association of School Boards
 - NSBA –National School Boards Association
 - ASBJ –American School Board Journal
 - Study Circles Resource Center
 - Center for Public Education

The Chain of Command:

All successful and effective organizations have and consistently use a chain of command. When you as a Board member receive a complaint or concern, listen intently, ask clarifying questions, and restate the concern to promote understanding. Then follow these steps:

1. Inquire who the person has talked to in the District about their concern.
2. Explain the chain of command for complaints:
 - a. Teacher, Coach, or Supervisor
 - b. Principal, Athletic Director, or Pupil Services Director
 - c. Superintendent
 - d. Board of Education
3. Remind the person that using the chain of command results in a quicker and more efficient response.
4. Encourage the person bringing the complaint to contact the appropriate person in the District.
5. Thank him or her for bringing a concern to attention.
6. Encourage the person to let you know when the problem is resolved.
7. As an informational courtesy, contact the superintendent about the concern. Do not expect that the superintendent will “fix” each problem.
8. Make no promises to the person that you will “fix” the problem. As an individual Board member, you do not have the authority to do this.
9. The Board should be the very last recourse for complaints. It’s reasonable to assume that complaints that follow the chain of command can be resolved by school personnel before it ever reaches the Board level.

Closed Session or Executive Session:

The law is very strict on what topics can be discussed in closed session. Also, the topics must be specifically defined on its agenda, along with the stat statute that allows it – Wisconsin Statutes 19.85 (1). The Board will not allow executive sessions take the place of public discussion issues. Closed sessions shall be attended only by members of the Board, the Superintendent, and persons designated by the Board. All discussions shall be treated confidentially by all in attendance. If a formal vote on a matter is necessary, the vote or the results of the vote must be announced in open session.

Legal reasons to move to closed session:

- a. Considering dismissal, demotion, licensing, or discipline of an employee or student;
- b. Hearing complaints or charges brought against an employee or Board member;
- c. Considering a periodic personnel evaluation of an employee;
- d. Conducting strategy and negotiation sessions;
- e. Considering the purchase or lease of property;
- f. Consulting with legal counsel regarding pending litigation;
- g. Reviewing applications for employment or appointment when the applicant requests confidentiality;
- h. Considering material exempt from discussion or disclosure by law.

The Potosi School District Board of Education – Operating Protocol

For the purpose of enhancing teamwork among members of the board and between the board and administration, we, the members of the Potosi School Board, do hereby publicly commit ourselves collectively and individually to the following operating protocol:

- Surprises to the board or the superintendent will be the exception, not the rule. There should be no surprises at a board meeting. We agree to ask the board chair or the superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting;
- Communications between staff and the board are encouraged. However, board requests that will likely require considerable time or have political implications are to be directed to the board chair and/or superintendent. All personnel complaints and criticisms received by the board or its individual members will be directed to the superintendent;
- The last stop, not the first, will be the School Board. We agree to follow the chain of command and insist that others do so. While the board is eager to listen to its constituents and staff, each inquiry is to be referred to the person who can properly and expeditiously address the issue;
- As a parent, a board member retains the right to express his/her own personal opinions in verbal and/or written form.
- A board member will not “solicit an issue”, become a “ball carrier” for others or work around administrative employees and will encourage others to present their own issues, problems or proposals in a constructive manner.
- The board will emphasize planning, policy-making and public relations rather than becoming involved in the management of the schools;
- The board will address its behavior by yearly self -evaluation and by addressing itself to any individual problems, such as poor meeting attendance or leaks of confidential information;
- The board will set clear goals for themselves and the superintendent. The board and superintendent will set clear goals for the Potosi School District;
- The superintendent is the chief executive officer and should recommend/propose/suggest on most matters before the board;
- Individual board members do not have authority. Only the board as a whole has authority. We agree that an individual board member will not take unilateral action. The board chair will communicate the position(s) of the board on controversial issues.
- When board members serve on various school committees their role shall be defined by the board as silent observer or active participant;

- Conduct at a board meeting is very important. We agree to avoid words and actions that create a negative impression on an individual, the board, or the district. While we encourage debate and differing points of view, we will do it with care and respect to avoid an escalation of negative impressions or incidents. Individual members may disagree with a board action, but will support the decision of the board as a whole;
- To be efficient and effective, long board meetings must be avoided. Points are to be made in as few words as possible; speeches at board meetings will be minimal. If a board member believes he/she doesn't have enough information or has questions, either the superintendent or the board chair is to be called before the meeting;
- Board meetings are for decision-making, action and votes, not endless discussion. We agree to "move the question" when discussion is repetitive;
- The board will not play to the audience. We agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and attend to our fellow board members. Facts and information needed from the administration will be referred to the superintendent;
- The board will represent the needs and interests of all the children in the Potosi School District.

Board Member Use of Telecommunications and E-Mail:

Each Board member shall be provided an e-mail account on the District's network, and shall use this account for all District communication. No Board member shall allow anyone else, including family members and other Board members, to use his/her individually assigned email account. The District provided email account is managed by the District in a like manner to other user accounts. Just as District employees, Board members have no expectation of privacy when using the District email. Due to Public Record Retention and Public Record Request laws, Board members are discouraged from using a non-District email account for Board communications. If, for any reason, a Board member uses a personal email account for communications involving Board issues, any email sent from or received by that account is a public record that must be retained in accordance with the public records law, and must be made available upon request.

Public Participation at School Board Meetings:

By Diane Nichols (Board member Oconto, WI)

“Meetings of the School Board are not public meetings – but meetings held in public. In other words, the public is invited to observe what goes on in all open sessions but its participation is limited. To begin with, “public comments” are part of every agenda. This means that any person who comes to the meeting may sign up to address the Board during this part of the agenda with the total time devoted limited to five minutes. Personnel issues cannot be discussed nor individual District employees or students.

The public may also speak to specific agenda items if they request and the President agrees. These comments will be limited to three to five minutes, or a total of ten minutes if there are more speakers. The Board may extend the available time with a majority vote. Written comments may also be addressed to the Board if signed by the presenter and given to the Board so they may be read during correspondence.

In both of these areas (public comment and during the remainder of the agenda) the Board will not respond to any of the comments of the public. I initially found this hard to understand. Why not open up the floor to citizens who had shown their interest by attending a meeting? The answer lies in the “public participation” part of the meetings; the intent of the rules on this is to allow everyone a fair and adequate hearing; to allow the Superintendent to take direct action or recommend action to the Board when a policy already exists; to minimize the possibility of the Board’s making an ill-advised, illegal, or improper ruling through hasty action; and to see to it that public comments do not take up the whole meeting so the Board cannot fulfill its responsibilities of dealing with the agenda. In addition, if the subject needs to be addressed, the Board can place it on an upcoming meeting agenda so all the public knows about it. According to our Board Policy, the Board President is allowed to rule individuals out of order if these rules are not followed.

Since I started coming to Board meetings, attendance by the public has been very limited. People show up when they have a concern. I’ve never heard anyone give praise for an employee’s job being well-done or to express appreciation to the Board for the time they give to their jobs. Of course, that’s not why we Board members do what we do; we receive our satisfaction when we know we’ve done the best we could as we work to make our educational system the best around.”

Board Member Absences: If Board members cannot make a meeting, please inform the President or Superintendent as soon as possible. If a quorum cannot be reached, the meeting may need to be rescheduled.

Who Has Authority for What – The Board and Superintendent as a Team:

A question often asked by Board members and Superintendents is “What is the role of the Board; and what is the role of the Superintendent in the operation of the School District?”

The age-old statement that the Board sets policy and the Superintendent administers that policy would seem to indicate a very distinct and clear dividing line between the respective roles of each. That division, however, is not always so clear nor is it one upon which everyone involved agrees.

Board members are usually “doers”; they operate businesses, they run homes, they dig ditches, they buy supplies. “Doers” often find it hard to look at the big overall picture and make decisions that cause other people to “do” the job. Many times they are tempted to get in and “do” the job themselves.

Conflict situations arise when the Board and the Superintendent have not defined their specific roles within the District.

Because the needs of a District vary; because leadership and management styles vary, there are not encompassing answers to “who has the authority for what.” The real need in each District is for the Board and Superintendent to decide what each is to do and establish proper procedures that will lead to the performance of those duties.

Board members, as they make decisions and find themselves involved in the business of the district, should ask themselves: Are we providing leadership to the Superintendent and staff and establishing policy for the District or have we stepped into the role of the administration? Superintendents should ask themselves: Am I providing 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.

Keeping roles clear and communications open is the key to good Board/Superintendent relationships.

The following division of roles and responsibilities between the board and superintendent are provided as examples.

	<u>School Board</u>	<u>Superintendent</u>
1. Policy	Adopts	Implements and suggests
2. Meetings	In charge of	Serves as a resource person
3. Budgets/Finance/ Audits	Adopts and monitors	Prepares, administers, monitors details
4. Instruction	Establish criteria, approves and monitors	Recommends, oversees staff’s efforts, provide reports to the Board
5. Personnel	Establishes criteria, approves or rejects	Interviews, recommends, hires, evaluates, promotes staff development
6. Facilities / Transportation / Food Services	Develops policy on use of facilities, transportation, food services	Implements policy, writes rules and regulations, makes recommendations, monitors the program and details.
7. Community Relations	Creates a positive image for District	Creates a positive image for District, directs communications
6. The Board and Superintendent	Hires the superintendent, establishes expectations, evaluates	Works at the pleasure of the Board, is chief executive officer of the District

What are the Different Kinds of Quorums?

Quorum: A majority of the members of the Board (4) shall constitute a quorum needed for the transaction of business during a meeting. A majority vote of the total membership is necessary for the adoption of any motion or resolution.

Walking Quorum: A walking quorum is a series of meetings, telephone conversations, emails, text messages, or other means of communicating such that groups of less than a quorum are effectively meeting and can arrive at a consensus or understanding regarding governmental business that, collectively, would constitute a quorum.

Negative Quorum: A negative quorum is a sufficient number of members to determine a governmental body’s course of action if the group votes as a block. If enough members are present to block action by the body on an issue that requires a super-majority over-riding a veto, for example, then there is a negative quorum.

Tips when Cornered By the Gossiper....

“I understand why you’re concerned.”

“Out of respect for all of the people involved. I can't give specifics but everyone is trying their best.”

“We need to get our strategy right before we talk about it in public.

“It's balance between having information and respecting people's privacy.

“How's your kid doing in basketball (or softball, baseball, volleyball, football, forensics, etc.)?”

Tips when Somebody Comes To You with a Problem....

You say, “I'm really sorry. Thank you for calling me.”

“Have you reported it by following our protocols?”

“I know it can come across as being blown off, but reporting it like this is the best way for us.”

“You understand the full nature of the problem. If we don’t follow through with the process, we won’t have a chance of keeping the kid’s safe and holding the right people accountable.

“Feel free to check back with me by x date. It's my responsibility to do best.”

Sources:

School Board Policy:	112.1 Strategic Planning
	133 Filling Board Vacancies
	141 Board Officers
	142 District Legal Counsel
	150 Board Governing Principles
	151 Board Policy Adoption, Review and Implementation
	153 Board Self-Evaluation
	165.1 School Board Member Conflict of Interest
	166 Board Member Electronic Communications
	171 Regular Board Meetings
	171.2 Agenda Preparation and Dissemination
	172 Closed Sessions
	180 Operating Protocol
	181 Rules of Order
	183 Voting Methods
	184 Board Minutes
	185 Board Minutes
	187 Public Participation at Board Meetings
	188 Board Member Participation in Meetings Via Technology

Roberts Rules of Order, Revised for the brief summary of main points.

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