

# Mecklenburg County School Board Training Transition to Public Life – Survival Skills for New Board Members

Presented by

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# Introduction

- Why are we here?
  - Code of Virginia Requires it.
  - More important, to lay a foundation for you to do your job!!
- What do we hope to accomplish?
  - Leave Friday afternoon knowing more about your responsibilities and more about this school division
- Team building chips.

# Training Outline

- Statutory Powers, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, FOIA
- School Board/Superintendent Relationship
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Characteristics of Effective School Board

## Statutory Powers:

- Article VIII, chapter 7 of the Constitution of Virginia places responsibility in General Assembly and establishes school boards.



# Code of Conduct

- In meetings and otherwise conducting the business of the School Board, every member shall conduct him/herself in a professional, courteous manner and encourage community involvement.
  - Avoid abusive language
  - Courteous and considerate toward colleagues and community
  - Being tolerant, attentive and respectful
  - As one person, you cannot speak for the Board or commit the Board to specific actions, but your comments can be misconstrued.
  - Confidentiality. Specifically personnel matters. (must certify after each closed session you have not talked about matters other than those specified before closed session.

## Code of Conduct - Continued

- Follow procedure of communicating directly with Superintendent and/or Chairman of the Board.
- Only Chair and Superintendent can contact School Board Attorney unless permission granted by Board or Superintendent.
- **Primary role** of school boards is to **make policy** and therefore concentrate on issues pertaining to programs and operations.

# Conflict of Interest

- Special anti-nepotism rules relating to School Board members and superintendent of schools
- General rules governing public conduct by School Board members regarding acceptance of gifts and favors
- Prohibited conduct regarding contracts
- Required conduct regarding transactions
- Disclosure required from certain school board members

# Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

- Promotes an increased awareness of government activities by all people.
- Open meeting laws gives public access to the deliberations and descision making process
- Closed meetings authorized for certain, limited purposes
  - Personnel
  - Discipline
  - acquisition of property
  - Protection of privacy in personal matters not related to public business
  - Matters leading to litigation
  - Other purposes listed in policy manual



# School Board and Superintendent Relationship

- Have a clear, mutual understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities
- One of trust, goodwill, candor and communication
- Complements one another
- Board retains final authority in the division
- Goal should be to become a highly effective, trustworthy, and resilient board/superintendent team

## School Board Powers and Duties – File BBA

- Sets policy and sees that policies and regulations are enforced
- Stays informed about the school division
- Controls school board property and maintains
- Consolidation of schools and redistricting
- Sets school term
- Obtains public comment on consolidations, redistricting, budget, transfer of instruction to private entity
- Surveys for critical teacher shortage and informs VDOE
- Ensures schools are registered to receive info on sex offenders from the State Police

# Superintendent Duties

- Primary responsibility is administering the school division
  - Direction, leadership, and coordination of students and staff to attain the vision and mission of the division.
    - Decision making
    - Communications
    - Planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs
    - Developing and maintaining working relationship with school district and community.

## Board - Governance

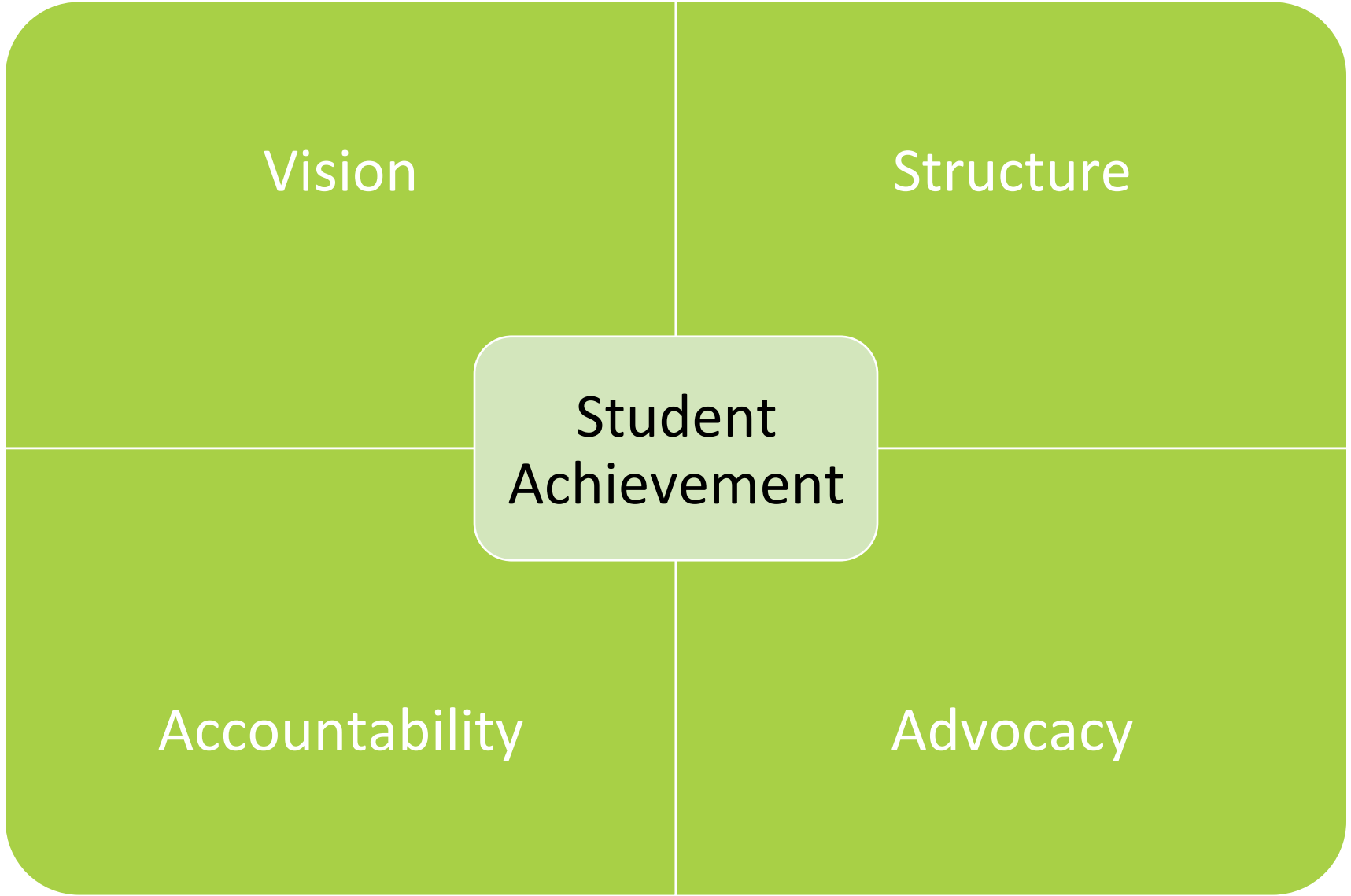
- Governance function is to ensure there are clearly defined, desired end results in place for the major areas under management and that they are monitored to ensure that the end results are being achieved
- **Focused on the end**
- **Sometimes seen as legislative**
- **Operates from the 30,000 foot level**
- **Establishes the what ( vision and mission)**

## Superintendent - Management

- Is an administrative function
- A process of accomplishing goals and objectives by putting plans, procedures, programs and systems in place to achieve clearly defined, desired end results
- **Focused on the means**
- **Responsible for the implementation (hows)**

Need Agreement on some common process questions.  
Should be in policy manual.

1. Communications between school board members and superintendent
2. Communicating between members
3. Board members communicating with staff
4. Communicating with the public and media
5. Responding to complaints
6. Visiting school campuses
7. Participating in public forums
8. Developing the agenda and placing items on the agenda
9. Conducting closed sessions
10. What is missing that you as a Board want to add now and agree to.



# Vision

- Keeping students as the focus of the work of schools
- Identifying direction and purpose
- Determining what students need in order to achieve their highest potential
- Alerting stakeholders to needed change
- Adopting a shared vision, based on community beliefs, to set directions for every aspect of local education
- Demonstrating a strong commitment to the shared vision and mission using them to guide decision making
- Communicating the vision to others
- Encouraging openness to unique and creative solutions
- Promoting interest and commitment and building confidence in the system

# Structure

- Employing the superintendent and supporting him
- Communicating clear expectations to the superintendent
- Developing processes to use information and to make informed decisions
- Making decisions that advance student learning when reviewing and adopting policies and allocating resources
- Setting high instructional standards based on best information of the knowledge and skills students will need in the future
- Ensuring that long term and short term plans are developed and annually revised through a process involving extensive participation, information gathering, research and reflection



## Structure Continued

- Encouraging an environment conducive to innovative approaches to teaching and learning and being supportive of continuous renewal of education
- Establishing a policy for hiring personnel, including job descriptions
- Identifying, adopting and defending budget priorities
- Overseeing facilities issues
- Setting benchmarks and discussing progress toward student achievement goals
- Establishing mechanisms for feedback from parents, administrators, teachers, and the community regarding student achievement goals.

# Accountability

- Monitoring student achievement
- Receiving regular reports on students' progress and needs based on a variety of assessments that measure the quality and equity of the district's education system
- Using student achievement data and all other available information as a basis for making programmatic modifications
- Keeping the community and parents informed of the status of the district's programs and students' progress
- Evaluating both the superintendent and board performance- including a review of the board's effectiveness in aligning district priorities with the district's vision

## Accountability continued

- Monitoring, reviewing and revising policy
- Providing appropriate staff and board training opportunities
- Overseeing and adjusting district finances
- Representing views of constituents
- Assessing progress toward the achievement of the district's long and short term goals aligning board decisions with the vision
- Ensuring that policies and allocation of resources effectively support the district's vision
- Evaluating the superintendent's effectiveness and leadership skills
- Encouraging curricular and assessment innovation

# Advocacy

- Advocating for children and families and establishing strong relationships with parents and other mentors who assist students
- Promoting the schools' instructional programs and other activities
- Leading celebrations for achievements for students, employees and others in education
- Communicating effectively to constituents by being informed about the school district, legislative and state policy issues, and local concerns in education
- Providing information to legislators about local education needs
- Staying informed by reaching out for the community input and concerns
- Seeking to influence decision making in the community

## Mission Statement

- How you will get to where want to be
- Defines purpose and primary objective
- Talks about the present leading to the future
- Statement may change but should relate back to core values, beliefs
- Who are the organizations primary stakeholders
- What are the responsibilities towards the stakeholders

## Vision Statement

- Outlines where you want to be
- Talks about the future
- As you grow, may want to change vision, but this is your foundation. Changes should be at a minimum.
- Where do we want to be going forward, when do we want to reach this stage, how do we want to do it.
- Clear, lack of ambiguity, describes a bright future, realistic aspirations, achievable, aligned with beliefs.

## Vision

Build a model 21<sup>st</sup> century learning organization that cultivates thoughtful, engaged citizens prepared to contribute to the prosperity of the County, Commonwealth, Nation and World.

## Mission

Foster a culture of excellence where proud students and educators become the craftsman of beautiful, quality work.

# Characteristics of an Effective School Board

What is the difference between effective and efficient???



## Effective School Board – Meta analysis of data – Timothy Waters and Robert Marzano, 2006

- Vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction
- Strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible
- Spend less time on operational issues and more time on policies to improve student achievement
- Have collaborative relationship with staff and strong communication structure
- Data savvy, embrace and monitor data, use it to drive continuous improvement
- Policies and resources are targeted to promote student achievement, aligned with what they believe
- Lead as a team with the superintendent
- Take part in team development and training to build knowledge



# Ineffective School Board

- Only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives
- Focused on external pressures as reason students do not succeed, such as poverty and lack of parental support
- Offers negative comments about students and teachers
- Micro-manages day to day operations
- Disregard the agenda process and the chain of command
- Little communication with the superintendent
- Quick to describe a lack of parent interest in education or barriers to community outreach
- Look at data from a “blaming” perspective describing students, teachers and parents as the reason for poor performance
- Little understanding on the importance of staff development for teachers
- Slow to define vision
- Did not hire the superintendent who agreed with their vision
- Little professional development together as a board.

