



MASB Board of Education Governance Standards

Frequently Asked Questions

What are “standards?”

Standards are commonly agreed upon principles often used as criteria for comparison or measurement. In public education, the standards movement has led to the development of new student standards that describe what students should know and be expected to do at each grade level. There are professional standards for teachers, superintendents and administrators as well.

What are the Board of Education Governance Standards?

The Standards provide a shared framework for effective school board governance. Not only do they define the principles that should affect board decision-making, they also identify the specific behaviors of school boards and school board members that contribute to positive outcomes for students. And they do so in simple terms so as to be easily understood by board members and the entire school district community. The Standards reflect 30 years’ worth of research showing a correlation between the work of school boards and student achievement. The State Board of Education endorsed the Board of Education Governance Standards on Sept. 12, 2017.

What is the intent of the Board of Education Governance Standards?

The intent of the Standards is to support boards in their efforts to govern effectively and to provide a useful tool for the community to assess how its board is doing. The Standards also serve as critical information for citizens who are considering seeking a seat on a school board.

Why did MASB develop Board of Education Governance Standards for boards?

MASB, which represents more than 3,500 public local and intermediate board of education members, is committed to providing school leaders with the support they need to effectively carry out their elected role. As part of the statewide and nationwide discussion about accountability, many individuals and entities have been taking a closer look at school board governance. We recognize that any efforts to enhance the effectiveness of boards must be led by the practitioners themselves—locally elected board members—based on research and training that has proven to be effective.

What does the term “governance” mean?

MASB defines governance as the “act of transforming the needs, wishes and desires of the community into policies that direct the community’s schools.” One of the hallmarks of our democratic society is that lay citizens are elected to “govern” our public institutions.

What is the “governance team?”

The “governance team” includes all members of the board and the superintendent.

What are the benefits for local and intermediate school district boards that adopt and utilize the new Board of Education Governance Standards?

The Standards can enhance the effective governance capabilities of school boards, including promoting greater self-accountability. Also, they define the principles that should affect board decision-making and identify the specific behaviors of school boards and school board members that contribute to positive outcomes for students.

How should boards adopt and utilize the Standards?

MASB has provided a toolkit that includes information about adopting and utilizing the Standards. These materials are also available at www.miboardstandards.com. Once adopted, the Board of Education Governance Standards can be utilized in an ongoing manner including having the Standards posted at meetings, revisiting the Standards regularly and respectfully discussing when the conduct of the board, or individual board members, is inconsistent with the Standards. After all, striving to operate effectively as a board is an ongoing commitment. Adopting the Board of Education Governance Standards signals the board’s commitment to effective governance—but the Standards serve as only part of the framework for the board’s ongoing efforts.

Our board already has an effective governance team. The members are experienced and work well with the superintendent. Should we adopt and use the new Board of Education Governance Standards?

Absolutely. Boards that have established a highly effective organizational culture can benefit from adopting the Standards. Adopting the Standards helps to formalize the components of the culture, so that over time the same principles of effective governance can be commonly understood and practiced, even though the membership of the board may change.

Our board has experienced some serious challenges. How will the Standards help us?

The Standards provide a framework for boards to enhance their effectiveness. They are designed to focus a board’s efforts and enhance understanding about what it takes to operate effectively as a team. For a board that has been experiencing challenges, reaching a common understanding about the key building blocks of effective governance is often an essential first step. Many governance teams will want to formalize their commitment to effective governance by adopting the Standards as a guiding document, continually evaluating the extent of their ability to ‘live’ the Standards and engaging in dialogue and training to support continuous improvement.

What types of training and support for the Standards are available to boards?

MASB offers facilitated workshops to assist Boards in adoption and implementation of the Standards as well as a wide range of Board Member Certification (CBA) classes, workshops and

other resources for board members to strengthen their skills in a number of areas. In January, MASB will be launching a complimentary Board Self-Assessment that is fully aligned with the Standards.

Can we distribute the Board of Education Governance Standards to future school board candidates?

Yes. The Board of Education Governance Standards are designed to provide a description of what an effective trustee and board should do based on 30 years' worth of research. We expect that individuals considering running for a board would want to receive the Standards so they can gain a better understanding up front about what it takes to be an effective member of a governing board.

Will adopting and utilizing the Board of Education Governance Standards really make a difference?

Board members know better than anyone: there are no magic formulas. Board of Education Governance Standards for boards are not a panacea. They are a tool, a framework to assist boards in the very complex and difficult job of governing effectively. As such, the Standards can be an important part of a board's overall commitment to excellence.

Are there any consequences for boards or board members who are not in compliance with the Standards?

The Board of Education Governance Standards are voluntary and advisory. Local and intermediate boards can utilize the Standards in a number of ways to enhance effective governance. We encourage boards to conduct periodic evaluations based on the Standards, and boards should, as appropriate, encourage the local community to assess their progress toward achieving the Standards as part of an effort to engage the public.