

Mountainside School District



Chain of Command Roles & Responsibilities of Members of the Board of Education

What is the Role of the School Board?

The school board is a policymaking body that oversees the Superintendent of Schools. It is the Superintendent who is responsible for the operation of the school district and its employees.

What does a School Board Member Do?

- ❖ The Mountainside Board of Education is comprised of 7 school district residents who are elected by voters to 3-year terms in the annual election held on the first Tuesday of November. The terms of office are staggered so that all board positions are never open at the same time.
- ❖ Under state law, school board members must be registered voters, at least 18 years of age, and have lived in the school district for at least one year. They cannot be a school employee, cannot reside in the same household as another school board member, and must be able to read and write English.
- ❖ Board members serve without compensation. Board members attend at least one regular board meeting each month along with committee meetings and various school-related activities. At the annual reorganization meeting in January the board elects a president and vice-president.
- ❖ Board members are kept informed about programs and activities in the district through weekly informational notes from the Superintendent and various other means. Board members receive extensive training through the district's own board development materials and through workshops sponsored by the NJ School Boards Association (NJSBA).

What are the different kinds of Board Meetings?

The Mountainside Board of Education holds different kinds of meetings: **Regular Meetings**, **Special Meetings**, and an **Annual Reorganizational Meeting**. During any of these meetings, a segment of the meeting may be devoted to a Public Hearing, or the Board may opt to go into **Executive Session**. Each is described below.

Regular & Special Meetings:

- ❖ These are the meetings during which most of the district's business is conducted. The Board takes action of items listed on an agenda. These items include actions such as accepting resignations, appointing employees, accepting minutes from previous meetings, approving business reports, approving contracts, etc.
- ❖ The Board has at least 5 days to review agenda items before they go into a meeting and vote. Supporting documentation is provided and questions are asked for the administration in advance of the meeting so that the Board members are prepared to take action at the meeting.
- ❖ Public participation is permitted at these meetings during the "Public Comments" sections of the agenda.
- ❖ The Board also hears presentations about the district programs and events and/or engages in discussions about district matters. It is sometimes necessary to call a special meeting to address a time-sensitive issue or to deal with a circumstance that has arisen.

Board Meetings (continued)

Reorganizational Meeting:

- ❖ This meeting is when the school board elects and appoints its officers and committees for the coming year, and board members take or renew their oaths of office. The Reorganizational Meeting must be held each year and one day during the first week of January (the 1st through the 7th).

Public Hearings:

- ❖ Certain school matters, such as the budget adoption, tax exemptions, and changes to certain plans or policies require a public hearing, which is advertised as such, and which not only permits, but encourages public participation and dialogue.

Executive Sessions:

- ❖ An executive session is a portion of a school board meeting that is not open to the public. It is permitted only for a limited number of specific purposes that include the following subjects:
 - Matter that will imperil the public safety if disclosed
 - Any matter that may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer
 - Information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that would imperil law enforcement if disclosed.

Board Meetings (continued)

Executive Sessions (continued):

- Discussions involving proposed, pending, or current litigation
- Collective bargaining with the teachers' union
- The medical, financial credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation.
- The preparation, grading, or administration of exams.
- The proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale, or exchange of securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value of these things.
- With certain limited exceptions, no official action can be taken on issues discussed in executive session without first returning to the public session. An exception includes voting on charges against a tenured teacher.

The Board's Powers and Duties

- ❖ The Board's powers and duties are derived from the State Constitution, the laws of the state of New Jersey, and ruling of the State Commissioner of Education. The Board's four main areas of responsibility are to:
 - Establish all school district policies
 - Develop an annual budget for public approval
 - Approve or disapprove the Superintendent's recommendations regarding personnel matters and the many contracts the district must negotiate
 - Act as a 2-way communication link between the residents and Superintendent
- ❖ Collectively, the Board of Education has the legal responsibility for the operation of the entire district. The Board establishes the policies under which the school district is operated and the Superintendent of Schools is responsible for administering the school program within the context of these policies.
- ❖ In other words, the Board oversees the education of students and is responsible for school district operations, but does not directly run the district's day-to-day operations.

Chain of Command for Communication

- ❖ On occasion, a parent may have a concern, complaint, suggestion, or request related to a school or classroom issue, decision, policy, or practice. Many of these questions are easily and completely answered by communicating directly with the educator in charge of a class or program. Each situation should first be addressed at whatever level the initial action was taken with appeals moving on to the next level in the chain of command.
- ❖ As a guide, the following charts illustrate the process.

Curriculum & Instruction Questions or Concerns

Teacher or Case Manager for Special Education



**Principal / Supervisor of Special Education /
and/or Supervisor of Curriculum**



Superintendent



Board of Education

Student Discipline Issues

(including bus discipline)

Teacher or Bus Driver



Principal (*will contact bus company if necessary*)



Superintendent



Board of Education

Athletics or Extracurricular Activities

Coach or Activity Advisor



Principal



Superintendent



Board of Education

Transportation Route Issues **(or items left on the bus)**

Transportation Coordinator



Business Administrator



Superintendent



Board of Education

Facilities / Buildings & Grounds Issues

Principal

(who will contact Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds)



Business Administrator



Superintendent



Board of Education