

# **SCHOOL BOARD OPERATIONS**

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## **SECTION I – SCHOOL BOARD OPERATIONS**

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## **1:1    LEGAL STATUS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

By the authority of Article 14 of the Arkansas Constitution, the General Assembly has provided that locally elected school boards will be responsible for the lawful operation and maintenance of its local schools.

While the Board has a broad range of powers and duties, its individual members only have authority when exercising their responsibilities in a legally convened meeting acting as a whole. The sole exception is when an individual member has been delegated authority to represent the Board for a specific, defined purpose. In matters such as personnel discipline, expulsions, and student suspensions initiated by the superintendent, the Board serves as a finder of fact, not unlike a jury. For this reason, the board should not be involved in or, to the extent practicable, informed of the facts or allegations of such matters prior to a board hearing or those disciplinary matters in which the Board could become involved.

It is the policy of the Cabot School Board that its actions will be taken with due regard for its legal responsibilities and in the belief that its actions shall be in the best interests of its students and the District as a whole.

Legal Reference:        A.C.A. § 6-13-620

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: July 19, 2010

## **1:2 BOARD ORGANIZATION**

The Board shall elect a president, vice president, and secretary at the first regular meeting following the annual school election. In the case of a runoff election, the officers shall be elected at the first regular meeting following the runoff election. Officers shall serve one-year terms and perform those duties as prescribed by policy of the Board.

By resolution adopted by majority vote, the board of directors shall designate one (1) of its members who shall serve as the primary board of directors disbursing officer of the school district. This resolution shall be filed with the county treasurer and the Director of the Department of Finance and Administration.

Legal Reference:       A.C.A. § 6-13-618

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Last Revised: May 21, 2013

### **1:3 DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT**

The duties of the president of the Board of Education shall include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Presiding at all meetings of the Board;
2. Calling special meetings of the Board;
3. Working with the Superintendent to develop Board meeting agendas;
4. Signing all official documents that require the signature of the chief officer of the Board of Education;
5. Appointing all committees of the Board and serving as ex-officio member of such committees;
6. Performing such other duties as may be prescribed by law or action of the Board.

The president shall have the same right as other members to offer resolutions, make or second motions, discuss questions, and to vote.

Legal Reference: A.C.A. § 6-13-619 (a) (1)

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: February 18, 2003

## **1:4 DUTIES OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT**

The duties of the Vice President of the Board shall include:

1. Serving as presiding officer at all school board meetings from which the president is absent.
2. Performing such other duties as may be prescribed by action of the Board.

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: February 18, 2003

## **1:5 DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY**

The duties of the Secretary of the Board shall include:

1. Being responsible to see that a full and accurate record of the proceedings of the Board are kept.
2. Serving as presiding officer in the absence of the President and the Vice President.
3. Being responsible for official correspondence of the Board.
4. Signing all official documents that require the signature of the Secretary of the Board of Education.
5. Calling special meetings of the Board.
6. Performing such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board.

Legal Reference: A.C.A. § 6-13-619 (a) (1)

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: February 18, 2003

## **1:6 Board Members' Voting**

All Board members, including the President, shall vote on each motion, following a second and discussion of that motion.

Any member who abstains from voting shall be counted as having voted against the motion or resolution.

If a member announces a conflict of interest with regard to an issue, the member may leave the meeting until the voting on the issue is concluded. A member who leaves a meeting due to a conflict of interest shall not be counted in the board's vote and shall not be considered present for the purpose of establishing a quorum until the member returns to the meeting after the vote.

Legal Reference: A.C.A. § 6-13-619 (c) (1)(B) & (C)

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: May 21, 2013

## **1:7 POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD**

The Cabot Public Schools' Board of Education, operating in accordance with State and Federal laws, assumes its responsibilities for the operation of Cabot Public Schools. The board shall concern itself primarily with the broad questions of policy as it exercises its legislative and judicial duties. The administrative functions of the District are delegated to the Superintendent who shall be responsible for the effective administration and supervision of the District.

Some of the duties of the Board include:

1. Developing and adopting policies to effect the vision, mission, and direction of the district;
2. Understanding and abiding by the proper role of the Board of Directors through study and by obtaining the necessary training professional development;
3. Electing and employing a Superintendent and giving him/her the support needed to be able to effectively implement the Board's policies;
4. Conducting formal and informal evaluations of the Superintendent annually or no less often than prior to any contract extension;
5. Employing, upon recommendation of the administrative staff and by written contract, the staff necessary for the proper conduct of the schools;
6. Approving the selection of curriculum and seeing that all courses for study and educational content prescribed by the State Board or by law for all grades of schools are offered and taught;
7. Reviewing, adopting, and publishing the district's budget for the ensuing year;
8. Being responsible for providing sufficient facilities, grounds, and property and ensuring they are managed and maintained for the benefit of the district;
9. Monitoring district finances and receiving, reviewing, and approving each annual financial audit;
10. Understanding and overseeing District finances to ensure alignment with the District's academic and facility needs and goals;
11. Visiting schools and classrooms when students are present no less than annually;
12. Setting an annual salary schedule;
13. Being fiscally responsible to the district's patrons and maintaining the millage rate necessary to support the district's budget;

14. Involving the members of the community in the district's decisions to the fullest extent practicable;
15. Striving to assure that all students are challenged and are given an equitable educational opportunity.

Legal References: A.C.A. § 6-13-620, 622

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: July 19, 2011

## **1:8 GOVERNANCE BY POLICY**

The district shall operate within the legal frameworks of the State and Federal Constitutions, and appropriate statutes, regulations, and court decisions. The legal frameworks governing the district shall be augmented by policies adopted by the board of directors which shall serve to further define the operations of the district.

When necessitated by unforeseen circumstances, the Superintendent shall have the power to decide and take appropriate action for an area not covered by the legal frameworks or a policy of the Board. The Superintendent shall inform the members of the Board of such action. The Board shall then consider whether it is necessary to formulate and adopt a policy to cover such circumstances.

The official copy of the policy manual for the District shall be kept in the Superintendent's office. Copies of the manual within the District shall be kept current, but if a discrepancy occurs between manuals, the Superintendent's version shall be regarded as authoritative.

Administrative regulations shall be formulated to implement the intentions of the policies of the Board. Regulations may be highly specific. The Board shall review administrative regulations prior to their implementation.

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: July 19, 2011

## **1:9 POLICY FORMULATION**

The Board affirms through its policies and its policy adoption process, its belief that: (1) the schools belong to the people who create them by consent and support them by taxation; (2) the schools are only as strong as an informed citizenry and knowledgeable school staff allow them to be; (3) the support is based on knowledge of, understanding about, and participation in the efforts of its public schools. The following shall be the guidelines for policy adoption for the Cabot School District.

### **General Policies**

Policies which are not personnel policies may be recommended by the Board or any member of the Board; by the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, any other administrator or employee of the District; committee appointed by the Board; or by any member of the public. Policies adopted by the Board shall be within the legal framework of the State and Federal Constitutions, and appropriate statutes, rules, and court decisions.

When reviewing a proposed policy (non-personnel), the Board may elect to adopt, amend, refer back to the person proposing the policy for further consideration, take it under advisement, reject it, or refuse to consider such proposal.

### **Personnel Policies**

Personnel policies (including teacher salary schedules) shall be created, amended, or deleted in accordance with State law:

#### **(1) Board Proposals:**

The Board may propose a personnel policy by a majority vote. Such policies may be presented to the Board by a Board member or the Superintendent. The Board may choose to adopt the proposal, as a proposal only, by majority vote.

Following the adoption of a proposed personnel policy, the proposal must be presented to the Personnel Policy Committee. Such presentation should be done in writing, to all members of the Committee.

When the Personnel Policies Committee has been in possession of the proposal for a minimum of ten (10) working days (i.e., ten weekdays, not including weekends or state or national holidays), the Board may vote to adopt the proposal as a policy.

#### **(2) Personnel Policies Committee Proposals:**

The Personnel Policies Committee may recommend changes in personnel policies to the Board. When making such a proposal the Chairman of the Personnel Policies Committee, or the Chair's designee, may make an oral presentation to the Board.

The Board may vote on the proposal at the same meeting at which the proposal is made, or, in any case, no later than the next regular Board meeting. In voting on a proposal from the Personnel Policies Committee, the Board may:

- (a) Adopt the proposal;
- (b) Reject the proposal; or
- (c) Refer the proposal back to the Personnel Policies Committee for further study and revision.

Effective date of policy changes:

All personnel policy changes enacted during one fiscal year will become effective on the first day of the following fiscal year, July 1. This specifically includes any changes made between May 1 and June 30 to ensure compliance with state or federal laws, rules, or regulations or the Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner's Memos.

Changes made to personnel policies between May 1 and June 30 that are **not** made to ensure compliance with state or federal laws or regulations will take effect on July 1 of the same calendar year provided no later than five (5) working days after final board action, a notice of the change is sent to each affected employee by first class mail to the address on record in the personnel file.<sup>1</sup> The notice of the change must include:

- a. The new or modified policy or policies provided in a form that clearly shows the additions underlined and the deletions stricken;
- b. A statement that due to the change(s), the employee has the power to unilaterally rescind his/her contract for a period of thirty (30) days after the school board took final action on the policy (policies). The rescission must be in the form of a letter of resignation within the thirty (30) day period.

For a policy change to be made effective prior to July 1 of the following fiscal year, a vote must be taken of all certified personnel, with the vote conducted by the Personnel Policies Committee. If, by a majority vote, the certified personnel approve, the policy becomes effective as of the date of the vote, unless otherwise specified by the Board in requesting such vote. No vote taken prior to final board action will be considered effective to make a policy change.

All other policy changes may become effective upon the Board's approval of the change, unless the Board specifies a different date.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> Districts should plan carefully to avoid accidentally triggering the late-adopted personnel policy right of recession. School employees who take the opportunity to escape their contractual obligations and leave the school district would be very disruptive to staffing plans for the next school year. Salary schedules for the upcoming school year, in particular, should either need to be adopted prior to May 1, or on July 1 (and requiring a vote of the applicable staff to be effective) thus avoiding the right of rescission.

Legal References: A.C.A. § 6-17-204, 205

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: July 19, 2011

## **1:10 ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS**

The Board shall be a member of the Arkansas School Boards Association and may be a member of the National School Boards Association and other organizations which, in the opinion of the Board, will be beneficial to the Board in carrying out its duties more effectively.

Legal Reference:       A.C.A. § 6-13-107

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: February 18, 2003:

## **1:11 BOARD TRAINING**

Board members who have served on the board for twelve (12) or more consecutive months are required to obtain a minimum of six (6) hours of training by December 31 of each calendar year. Effective with the 2006 school election, board members who are elected to serve an initial or non –continuous term shall obtain a minimum of nine (9) hours of training by December 31 of the year following their election and six (6) hours of training by December 31 of each calendar year thereafter. Hours obtained in excess of the required minimums may be carried forward through December 31 of the third calendar year following the year in which the hours were earned.

The training shall be focused on topics relevant to school laws, school operations, and the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the members of the board of directors. The responsibilities include, but are not limited to legal requirements, role differentiation, financial management, improving student achievement, reading and interpreting an audit report, and the duties and responsibilities of the various levels of employees within the district as well as those of the board of directors.

The district is responsible for maintaining a record of the hours of training received by each board member. Board members shall make a concerted effort to submit documentation of training they have received to the superintendent or his/her designee. In the absence of such documentation, the district shall attempt to obtain records of training received from training providers.

Such training may be obtained from an institution of higher learning, from instruction provided by the Arkansas Department of Education or the Arkansas School Boards Association, or from other providers approved by the Arkansas Department of Education.

A statement regarding the number of hours of training received each preceding calendar year shall be:

- Part of the district's comprehensive school plan and goals;
- Published in the same way as other components of the comprehensive plan and goals are required to be published;
- Part of the annual school performance report required to be submitted to, and published by the Arkansas Department of Education.

Board members shall be reimbursed, from school funds, for expenses relating to such training and Board members shall be paid a per diem stipend for days necessary to attend such training with the amount of such stipend to be determined by the Board in July of each year.

Legal Reference: A.C.A. § 6-13-629

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: July 19, 2011

## **1:12 COMMITTEES**

From time to time, in order to obtain and/or encourage public participation in the operation of the District, the Board may appoint committees, which may include members of the public, students, parents, and school employees, as well as members of the Board.

Any committee, which includes among its members a member of the School Board, shall operate according to the requirements of the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.\*

\* Legal Reference:     A.C.A. § 25-19-105

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: February 18, 2003

## **1:13 SUPERINTENDENT/ BOARD RELATIONSHIP**

The Board's primary responsibility is to develop, working collaboratively with the community, a vision and mission for the District. The Board formulates and adopts policies to achieve that vision and elects a Superintendent to implement its policies. The Board and the Superintendent and the relationship between them set the tone for the district to follow. The relationship is enhanced when both parties understand their roles and carry them out in an ethical and professional manner working to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

The Superintendent and staff are responsible for administering the Board's policies and will be held responsible for the effective administration and supervision of the District. The Superintendent is authorized to develop and implement administrative regulations to fulfill the Board's policies, provided such regulations are consistent with the intent of the Board's policies.

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: February 18, 2003

## **1:14 MEETING AGENDA**

The agenda guides the proceedings of the Board meeting. The Superintendent shall prepare the agenda with consultation from the Board President. Items may be placed on the agenda upon request by any Board member or by members of the community. Community members must submit their agenda item requests to the Superintendent, in writing, at least five (5) days prior to the meeting of the Board. The written request must be sufficiently descriptive to enable the Board to fully understand and evaluate its appropriateness to be an agenda item. Such requests may be accepted, rejected, or referred back to the individual for further clarification.

The Superintendent shall be responsible for Board members receiving copies of the Agenda with all accompanying pertinent information at least three (3) days prior to the meeting.

This policy's advance notice requirements do not apply to special or called board meetings.

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: May 21, 2013

## **1:15 TORT IMMUNITY**

The District, as well as its agents, officers, employees, and volunteers are immune from liability for negligence, pursuant to A.C.A. § 21-9-301. When allegations of negligence are raised, whether in litigation or not, the statutory grant of immunity will be asserted.

Date Adopted: February 18, 2003

Last Revised: February 18, 2003

## **1.16 —DUTIES OF BOARD DISBURSING OFFICER**

The disbursing officer, along with the superintendent, shall be responsible for signing, manually or by facsimile, all warrants and checks other than those issued for food service and activity funds.

Legal Reference:     A.C.A. § 6-13-618(c)  
                      6-13-701(g) delineates what constitutes “activity funds.”

Date Adopted: May 21, 2013  
Last Revised: May 21, 2013

## **1.17—NEPOTISM**

### **DEFINITIONS:**

Family or family member means:

- a. An individual's spouse;
- b. Children of the individual or children of the individual's spouse;
- c. The spouse of a child of the individual or the spouse of a child of the individual's spouse;
- d. Parents of the individual or parents of the individual's spouse;
- e. Brothers and sisters of the individual or brothers and sisters of the individual's spouse;
- f. Anyone living or residing in the same residence or household with the individual or in the same residence or household with the individual's spouse; or
- g. Anyone acting or serving as an agent of the individual or acting or serving as an agent of the individual's spouse.

Initially employed means:

- A. Employed in either an interim or permanent position for the first time or following a severance in employment with the school district;
- B. A change in the terms and conditions of an existing contract, excluding;
  - I. Renewal of a teacher contract under A.C.A. § 6-17-1506;
  - II. Renewal of a noncertified employee's contract that is required by law; or
  - III. Movement of an employee on the salary schedule which does not require board action.

### **NEW HIRE OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER'S RELATIVE AS SCHOOL EMPLOYEE**

The district shall not initially employ a present board member's family member for compensation in excess of \$5,000 unless the district has received approval from the Commissioner of the Department of Education. The employment of a present board member's family member shall only be made in unusual and limited circumstances. The authority to make the determination of what qualifies as "unusual and limited circumstances" rests with the Commissioner of the Department of Education whose approval is required before the employment contract is effective, valid, or enforceable.

Initial employment for a sum of less than \$5,000 per employment contract or, in the absence of an employment contract, calendar year does not come under the purview of this policy and is permitted.

The board member whose family member is proposed for an employment contract, regardless of the dollar amount of the contract, shall leave the meeting until the voting on the issue is concluded and the absent member shall not be counted as having voted.

### **EXCEPTION: SUBSTITUTES**

Qualified family members of board members may be employed by the district as substitute teachers, substitute cafeteria workers, or substitute bus drivers for a period of time not to exceed thirty (30) days per fiscal year.

A family member of a school board member having worked as a substitute for the district in the past does not “grandfather” the substitute. The 30 day maximum limit is applied in all cases.

### **EXISTING EMPLOYEES WHO ARE FAMILY MEMBERS OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS—RAISES, PROMOTIONS OR CHANGES IN COMPENSATION**

Any change in the terms or conditions of an employment contract including length of contract, a promotion, or a change in the employment status of a present board member’s family member that would result in an increase in compensation of more than \$2,500, and that is not part of a state mandated salary increase for the employee in question, must be approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Education before such changes in the employment status is effective, valid, or enforceable.

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR RUNNING FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER UNCHANGED**

The employment status of a citizen’s family member does not affect that citizen’s ability to run for, and, if elected, serve the school board provided he/she meets all other statutory eligibility requirements.

Legal References: A.C.A. § 6-24-102, 105

Date Adopted: May 21, 2013

Last Revised: May 21, 2013

## **1:17 DISTRICT AUDITS**

The District's annual audit serves as an important opportunity for the Board of Directors to review the fiscal operations and health of the district. As such, it is vital Board members receive sufficient explanation of each audit report to enable the members to understand the report's findings and help them better understand the District's fiscal operations.

The District shall have an audit conducted annually within the timelines prescribed by law. The audit shall be conducted by the Division of Legislative Audit or through the audit services of a private certified public accountant(s) approved by the Board.

The Board of Directors shall review each annual audit at the first regularly scheduled board meeting following the receipt of the audit if the District received the audit prior to ten (10) days before the regularly scheduled meeting. If the audit report is received less than ten (10) days prior to a regularly scheduled board meeting, the board may review the report at the next regularly scheduled board meeting following the ten (10) day period.

The Superintendent shall present sufficient supporting/background information relating to the report's findings and recommendations which will enable the Board of Directors to direct the Superintendent to take appropriate action in the form of a motion or motions relating to each finding and recommendation contained in the audit report. Actions to be taken will be in sufficient detail to enable the Board of Directors to monitor the District's progress in addressing substantial findings and recommendations and subsequently determine that they have been corrected. The minutes of the Board's meeting shall document the review of the audit's findings and recommendations along with any motions made by the Board or actions directed to be taken by the Superintendent or designee.

The Board of Directors is responsible for presenting the audit's findings each year to the public .<sup>1</sup>

Notes: <sup>1</sup> The Standards of Accreditation (7.03.3.1) requires a report to the public by November 15, but doesn't specify it include the audits' findings. A.C.A. § 6-13-620(6)(F) requires the reporting of the audit's findings, but doesn't specify any date by which they must be reported. In other words, you MAY go over the audit report at you annual meeting, but it is not required.

Legal References: A.C.A. § 6-1-101(d)(1)(2)(3)  
A.C.A. § 6-13-620(6)(F)

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