

BULLETIN BOARD

Getting Your New Board Members Up to Speed

Hundreds of new board members will take their seats in Michigan this January, and your board should start preparing for their arrival. With so much to learn, how can you get them up to speed in a hurry before they take their oath in just two months?

The National School Boards Association has a few tips to help prepare newly elected board members by providing them with the following:

- Current board policies and/or the board's policy manual.
- Minutes from the past year's board meetings.
- An explanation of school board structure (officers, standing or ad hoc committees, etc.).
- A list of board member development opportunities throughout the year.
- An explanation of how board meetings are conducted, including parliamentary procedures.
- An explanation of the authority and responsibilities of the board, superintendent, administrators and individual board members.
- An explanation of how the chain of command works within the district.
- The district's budget and how it's put together (where money goes, comes from, etc.).
- A school calendar.
- The district's strategic plan.
- The plan to evaluate the superintendent and his/her goals.
- Job descriptions for board members, the board president and the superintendent.
- An explanation of curriculum standards and recent standardized testing scores.
- The basics of Michigan's Open Meetings Act.
- The most recent annual report or "State of the District" report.

You'll also want to make all of your new board members feel welcome. You can do that in a number of ways including; developing a written orientation plan for new members; having a small reception at their first board meeting to recognize and introduce them; and holding private orientation meetings. These simple suggestions could go a long way toward preparing board members for service. Work with your superintendent to develop a plan that works best for your district.

It can also be beneficial for each of the returning board members to meet with new board members individually. It could be a casual lunch or a cup of coffee. The one-on-one interaction can be less intimidating and will allow for a more honest dialogue. These conversations are also an opportunity to inform new board members about the functions of the board.

It's important for new board members to understand they can't accomplish anything alone. How does your board go about finding consensus or discussing controversial issues? Informing them that the board functions as one entity rather than a bunch of individuals will help them to better understand how to get things done and create good policy.



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Now is the time to finalize your orientation plan and begin implementation before new board members are sworn in this January. The more preparation they have for the job, the more effective your board will become.