

**FRANKLIN CENTRAL SUPERVISORY UNION AND ITS MEMBER SCHOOL DISTRICTS
COMMON PROCEDURE FOR BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES
(B1, B2, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6)**

Board Responsibilities:

The Board, with community participation, envisions the district's educational future and then formulates goals, defines outcomes, and sets the course for its schools. Its key responsibilities include:

- Serving on behalf of the greater community.
- Defining the vision and mission of the district.
- Developing policies that reflect community values, ensure compliance with statute, and delineate responsibilities.
- Setting priorities and assessing outcomes.
- Aligning the budget, policies, and priorities with that of the district's vision and mission.

Board Governance: The Board member shall:

1. Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings insofar as possible and review study materials about the issues to be considered on each agenda.
2. Set goals for the school system and establish policies to direct its administration.
3. Maintain confidentiality of discussion conducted in executive session and of other privileged information.
4. Abide by board decisions regardless of how individuals voted.
5. Act only as a member of the board and not assume authority as an individual in school matters when the board is not in session.
6. Be familiar with and observe Vermont education laws.
7. Consider legal counsel and constructive criticism to protect the board and the school system from liability.

Board-Administration Relations: The Board member shall:

1. Give school officials authority commensurate with their responsibility, work through the properly appointed school officials according to the school system's organization and policies, and support school officials in the performance of their duties.
2. Expect the superintendent to keep the board adequately informed through regular written or oral reports and hold the superintendent accountable through an annual job performance evaluation.
3. Refer complaints, requests, and concerns to the superintendent or other appropriate staff member.
4. Use the chain of command and avoid making commitments or promises that compromise the board, administration, or school system.
5. Listen to the recommendations of the superintendent and staff before making decisions and provide advice and counsel to the superintendent.
6. Recognize that a board member's responsibility is to see that schools are well run, but not to run them.

Board Member Relations: The Board member shall:

1. Retain independent judgment and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.
2. Voice opinions responsibly, maintain good relations with other board members, respect other board members' rights and opinions, and make no disparaging remarks in or out of the board meeting about other board members or school staff; instead, express opinions in a professional, fair manner.
3. Accept the responsibility to secure facts before arriving at conclusions.
4. Expect more time to be spent on educational programs and procedures than on business details at board meetings.

Personnel Relations: The Board member shall:

1. Support employment of the best qualified people as school staff and insist on regular, impartial evaluation of all staff.
2. Hire no superintendent, principal, or teacher already under contract with another school unless assurance is first secured from the proper authority that the person can be released from contract.

Community Relations: The Board member shall:

1. Represent the entire community and vote for what seems best for the children and youth of the school system.
2. Interpret the attitudes, wishes, and needs of the community to school staff and communicate the aims, methods, and goals of the schools to the community.
3. Create an environment that fosters community participation and involvement.

Conflict of Interest: The Board member shall:

1. Refrain from using board membership for political, personal, or business advancement.
2. Recognize conflicts of interest and avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest in hiring, letting bids, approving contracts, and other financial affairs of the school system.

Board Preparation and Training: The Board member shall:

1. Be informed about educational issues by individual study and through participating in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by the Vermont and National School Boards Associations.
2. Take advantage of opportunities to improve his/her knowledge and to build his/her skills as locally elected members of school governing boards.
3. Associate with board members from other schools to discuss school problems and cooperate in the improvement of public school conditions.
4. Provide assistance to new school board members and make sure adequate orientation and training opportunities are offered them.

Board Member Education

The Franklin Central Supervisory Union and its member school districts will encourage and support board members' efforts to remain knowledgeable about their roles and the issues with which they deal.

Implementation: The superintendent will provide training opportunities to help the board understand its roles and responsibilities. Individual board members should take advantage of opportunities to understand their roles, educational issues in general, school programs, Vermont Department of Education <http://www.education.vermont.gov> functions, and legislative activities. The superintendent and board chair will be responsible for assuring that information on leadership development opportunities is available to all members.

Members who take part in workshops and seminars offered by the Vermont School Boards Association <http://www.vtvsba.org> and other relevant organizations will be reimbursed for travel and other expenses related to participation in training activities, provided funds for these purposes are available. (*See FCSU Website: documents/forms/HR-Business Office Forms/general request for reimbursement*)

Board Goal Setting and Evaluation

The board participates in goal-setting and self-evaluation activities at least annually. These activities will be developed and/or arranged by the superintendent.

Implementation: Particular attention will be given to board goals and performance in the following areas:

- Policy making

- Policy implementation
- Community relations and other local issues
- Board interpersonal communication skills
- Board/superintendent relations
- Fiscal/budget management
- The instructional program
- Labor relations
- Board in-service training
- Government relations
- Action planning aligned with school and supervisory union goals
- Other relevant areas

Goal Planning Process:

1. *Recognize Needs:* The administration (superintendent, principal/director) will identify key areas of focus for the districts based on required state, federal, or local mandates and/or specific building/district needs. (Target date: end of August)
2. *Review Identified Needs:* The school district boards will review all required state, federal, or local mandates; other identified needs; and budget considerations for their district and set key areas of focus. (Target date: end of September)
3. *Submittal to FCSU Executive Board:* School district boards will share key areas of focus to the FCSU Executive Board. Questions and clarification discussions posed to school board representatives. Coordination of similar projects and resource needs identified. Fiscal information for budget development presented. Draft of goals developed for FCSU and member schools. (Target date: end of October)
4. *Goals Communicated:* Goals are shared with other board members and school administrators. Discussion and adoption of goals. Budgets are drafted. (Target date: end of December)
5. *Goals Adopted:* From adopted goals, the school administrators will develop broad action steps. Boards adopt budgets. (Target date: end of January)
6. *Action Steps Implemented:* Action steps with timelines and responsibilities developed and shared with appropriate persons. (Target date: beginning of July)
7. *Status of Goals:* Action step activities and status of goals communicated to boards on periodic basis.

Preparation and Distribution of Board Meeting Agenda

Franklin Central Supervisory Union and its member school districts will ensure that board meeting agendas are developed and distributed in a way that allows open access to the process.

Agenda Preparation: The superintendent's office will prepare all agendas for meetings of the boards after consultation with the board chair. Items of business may be suggested by any board member, staff member, student, or citizen of the district. The inclusion of items will be at the discretion of the board chair and superintendent, unless a majority of the board votes to place an item on the board's agenda. The agenda will include all items on which the board will take action and any proposed executive sessions including the reasons for such sessions. The usual order of business at regular meetings will be as specified in the individual district's board bylaws.

Agenda Distribution: The agenda, together with supporting materials, will be distributed to board members by the superintendent's office five (5) days prior to regular meetings and as soon as practicable before special meetings.

The superintendent and board will adhere to the provisions of 1 V.S.A. §312 regarding notice and agenda distribution.

Board Meetings

All board meetings will be held in compliance with Vermont's open meeting laws, 1 V.S.A. §§310 et seq.

Schedules: Regular meetings will be held according to a schedule fixed in advance of the school year. The meeting schedule will be published and made available to the news media by the superintendent. Special and emergency meetings will be called by the board chair on his/her own initiative or when requested by a majority of the board and warned appropriately. Only items on the agenda may be discussed at these meetings.

Conduct of Board Meetings: Meetings will be conducted in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

Executive Sessions: Executive sessions of the board will be convened only for the purposes stated in 1 V.S.A. §313. Minutes of executive sessions will NOT be kept, though notes may be taken if the board determines that it is necessary. Any notes taken will not be made public and board members will not make public the confidential issues discussed during an executive session.

Public Participation at Board Meetings:

FCSU encourages public participation at its meetings. Public participation is very important to the successful function of the Franklin Central Supervisory Union and its member school districts. The board wants to carry out its business with the benefit of public input and expertise. It also wants to keep the public informed and up-to-date on what is happening in the community's schools.

Implementation: Reasonable rules of participation may be used to insure that meetings are conducted in an orderly fashion and that the business at hand is completed in a timely manner. Such rules may take into consideration such things as length of each speaker's presentation and the number of times each speaker may comment.

Persons Who May Address the Board:

1. Any resident
2. School staff members, students and parents
3. Persons who have been requested by the Superintendent and/or the Board to give a presentation
4. Persons who are directly affected by matters on the Board agenda
5. Others at the discretion of the Board.

Public Comment on Agenda Items:

1. The board chair will ask for comments on agenda items before action is taken by the board.
2. When the number of people wishing to speak is large, the board may authorize the board chair to use a speakers' list. Members of the public will be given an opportunity to sign the speakers' list, indicating which agenda item will be addressed.

Public input on items not on the agenda:

1. There will be time set aside for public input on items not on the agenda at every regular, special, or emergency meeting of the board.

2. The time allotted to this item will be assigned by the board chair or the person responsible for organizing the agenda.
3. The board chair shall rule out of order any presentation to the board which breaches the privacy or other rights of students, parents or school employees, or which does not comply with board policy on complaints.

School Visits by Board Members

Franklin Central Supervisory Union and its member school districts encourage school board members to become familiar with their schools, programs, and the needs of its staff and students.

Implementation: Individual board members may visit schools periodically to expand their knowledge of school programs, staff, and student needs. Notification to the principal prior to the visits is expected. Concerns raised as a result of school visits by board members should be directed to the superintendent. Board members must follow school protocols for signing in.

Board Relations with School Personnel

School board members of the Franklin Central Supervisory Union and its member school districts will follow the chain of command when interacting with school personnel.

At School Board Meetings: Board will request the superintendent/principal/director to invite school personnel to school board meetings regularly to report on and discuss such topics and issues as curriculum programs, action planning, and student achievement.

Relations with the Principal: The superintendent will develop guidelines for board relations with principals and other administrators. Guidelines for board relations with principals should take into account:

1. The responsibility of the superintendent to direct the administration and coordination of educational programs in the district;
2. The periodic need of board members for information most readily available from school principals; and
3. The need to maintain a distinction between the administrative role of the principal and the policymaking role of the board.

Relations with Other School Staff:

1. Individual board members will communicate with staff members on matters of school business only at the direction of the board as a whole.
2. Staff participation in the development of educational and personnel policies will be encouraged and facilitated by the board.
3. Board members will adhere to procedures required by board policy and Vermont law related to collective bargaining and teacher evaluation.

Board Commitment to Non-Discrimination

The board will seek to comply with all applicable federal and state non-discrimination laws. The board will not unlawfully discriminate against any person or group on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or member or any other protected class. The following "Notice of Non-Discrimination" will be given to appropriate recipients as required by law.

Notice of Non-Discrimination: Applicants for admission and employment, students, parents, employees, sources of referral of applicants for admission and employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with the Franklin Central Supervisory Union are hereby notified that this Supervisory Union does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion,

national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, or any other member of a protected class, in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in its programs and activities.

Any person having inquiries concerning the FCSU's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, or other state or federal non-discrimination laws or regulations is directed to contact:

Kevin Dirth, Superintendent
28 Catherine Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-2600

This person has been designated by the Franklin Central Supervisory Union to coordinate the Supervisory Union's efforts to comply with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other non-discrimination laws or regulations.

Grievance Procedure

1. *Definitions:*

- (a) A grievance is a claim made by a student, teacher, or employee of the school district that he/she has been subjected to discrimination because of specific actions of the school board or its employees.
- (b) A grievant shall be a student(s) and/or parent(s), employee, or applicant making the claim.

2. *Intent:* Nothing contained within this grievance procedure shall be construed as limiting the right of an aggrieved person or persons to informally discuss a problem with the school administration or staff. Should such an informal process fail to resolve the situation, then a formal filing of a grievance may be made in accordance with the following procedure:

3. *Procedures:* For collective bargaining positions, the Board shall follow the established protocols negotiated and documented in the Master Agreements. For all other positions the process shall be as follows:

Step I: Within fifteen (15) days of an alleged violation of this policy, the aggrieved shall submit in writing to the superintendent/designee the nature of the grievance and the remedy the grievant seeks. The superintendent should arrange for a hearing within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the grievance. The superintendent shall provide a written answer on the grievance within ten (10) days of the meeting.

Step II: If the grievance is not resolved at Step I, then the aggrieved may, within ten (10) days of the denial, request in writing that the school board or a committee of the school board hear the grievance. The board chair/designee shall establish a meeting before the board or a committee of the board within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the request. Such a meeting will be in a public or in an executive session, at the discretion of the grievant. The board or its committee shall provide a written answer on the grievance within ten (10) days of the board's next regularly scheduled meeting. The decision of the board or its committee shall be final and binding to the extent of the jurisdictional limits and authority of the school board.

School Board Self-Assessment Survey

The school boards will participate in a self assessment survey annually. A sample survey from the VSBA is contained in the Resource Directory at <http://www.vtvsba.org/> or in the Appendix Section of this document.

VSBA Code of Ethics for School Board Members

A school board member has no legal powers or authority unless acting at a school board meeting or acting for the school board after it formally grants power to act on its behalf. A school board member should perform the duties of a school board member in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics. (*See Appendix B for Code of Ethics*)

Legal Reference(s): V.S.A. §§310 et seq. (*Public meetings*)
16 V.S.A. §554 (School board meetings)
21 V.S.A. §495 et seq.
21 V.S.A. §1726
Equal Pay Act, as amended by the Education Amendment of 1972
Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975
Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964, and as amended by the
Equal Employment Act of 1972
Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972
Age Discrimination in Employment Act, P.L. 95-25
Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964
9 V.S.A. §4501, et seq.
Americans with Disabilities Act, P.L. 101-336 (1990)

Cross Reference VSBA Policy Codes: Board Member Education (B1)
Board Goal-Setting and Self Evaluation (B2)
Board Meeting Agenda Preparation and Distribution (C1)
Board Meetings (C2)
Public Participation at Board Meetings (C3)
School Visits by Board Members (C4)
Board Relations with School Personnel (C5)
Board Commitment to Non-Discrimination (C6)

On-line Resources: <http://www.vtvsba.org/>

Approved by FCSU Policy Committee on 06.20.2011
Update Non-Discrimination Contact 2/26/2015