



New Jersey School Boards Association

Best Practices for Effective Committees



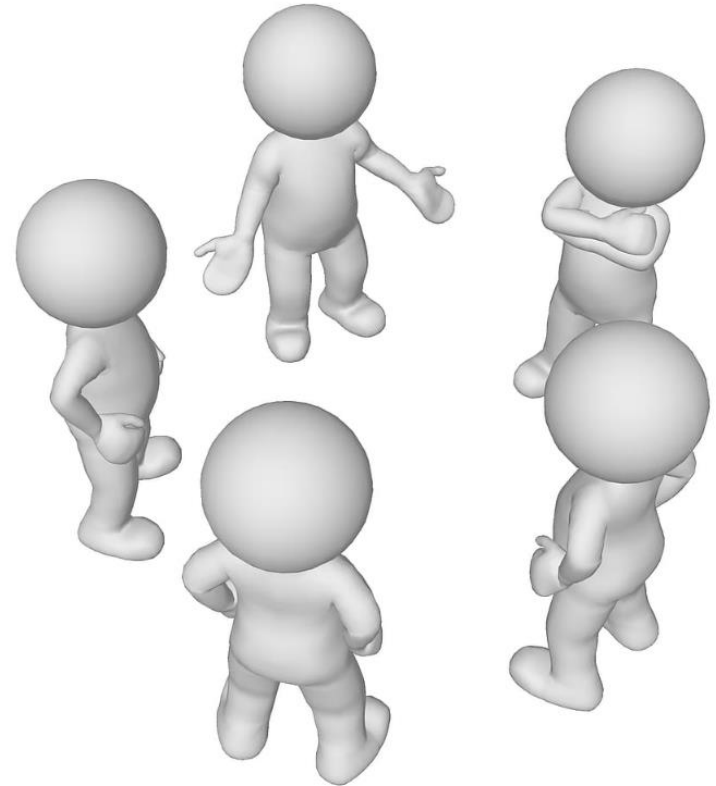
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Why Have Committees?

- Committees are formed to enable in-depth discussion on a set of related issues.
- They allow the board to explore, ideate, and drill-down in a way that would be too time consuming at a regular board meeting.





Types of Committees

Standing Committees

Committees approved annually to assist the Board in its work. Less than a quorum of the Board.



Temporary committees appointed by the Board for a specific purpose and time.

Committee of the Whole

Committee meeting open to the full Board. Advertised as a public meeting with public comment.



Established in Policy/Bylaws

- Your committee format is designated in your bylaws.
- Typically describes how they are formed, staffed, their scope, and role in relation to the whole board.
- Regulations provide greater detail on responsibilities, resources, and procedures.

BYLAWS

RIDGEWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION

BYLAWS
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Board Committees

0155 BOARD COMMITTEES

The Board of Education authorizes the creation of committees of Board members charged to conduct studies, make recommendations to the Board, and act in an advisory capacity. Committees are not authorized to take action on behalf of the Board.

The President shall appoint Board members to serve a one-year term on Board committees.

All other matters will be handled by the Board as a Committee of the Whole.

An ad hoc committee may be created and charged at any time by the President or a majority of the Board members present and voting. The President shall appoint members to any committee so created and charged; members shall serve until the committee is discharged.

Committees shall consist of no more than two Board members. A member may request or refuse appointment to a committee; a member's refusal to serve on any one committee shall not prejudice his/her appointment to another committee.

The Board reserves the right to meet and work as a Committee of the Whole in informational, discussion, and exploratory sessions. No official action shall be taken at these meetings, unless so advertised.

Committee members shall be appointed by the President.

Committee meetings may be called at any time by the committee chairperson or when a meeting is requested by a majority of the members of the committee.

Committee meetings shall not be open to the public, except that a majority of the committee or the chairperson may open the meeting to the public or invite persons whose knowledge or expertise may be useful to the committee.

Adopted: 7 December 2009

Revised: 1 November 2010



Standing Committees

Bylaw 0155	STANDING COMMITTEES
Established	By action of Board and dissolved at reorganization meeting.
Members	Up to 2 board members, appointed by President for 1 year. Members may request or refuse appointment.
Call a Meeting	Chairperson or majority of committee
Functions	Empowered by Board to make recommendations, conduct studies and act in an advisory capacity.
Current Standing/Ad Hoc (italic) Committees (per district website)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finance• Policy• Communications• Curriculum• Facilities and Joint Review• Federate Home & School• Policy• Ridgewood High School HSA• Learning Services HSA• Fields Committee• Parks and Recreation• Green Ridgewood• Citizens Safety Advisory Committee (CSAC)• <i>Negotiations</i>• <i>Alternative Schedules Committee</i>



Ad Hoc Committees

Ad hoc committees are appointed by the President or a majority of the board members present. They are formed for a specific purpose and time. Typically the Board would agree on a charge for the committee and a timeline for the committee to report back to the Board.

Common examples of when a Board would utilize an ad hoc committee:

- Superintendent Search
- Negotiations
- Referendum
- School Security
- Shared Services
- Strategic Planning



Committee of the Whole

- The Board may operate as a Committee of the Whole on specific topics as determined by the Board.
- It is an advertised meeting that would include public notice and provide for public comments.
- No official action shall be taken at these meetings, unless so advertised.



Committee of the Whole vs. Standing Committees

Committee of the Whole

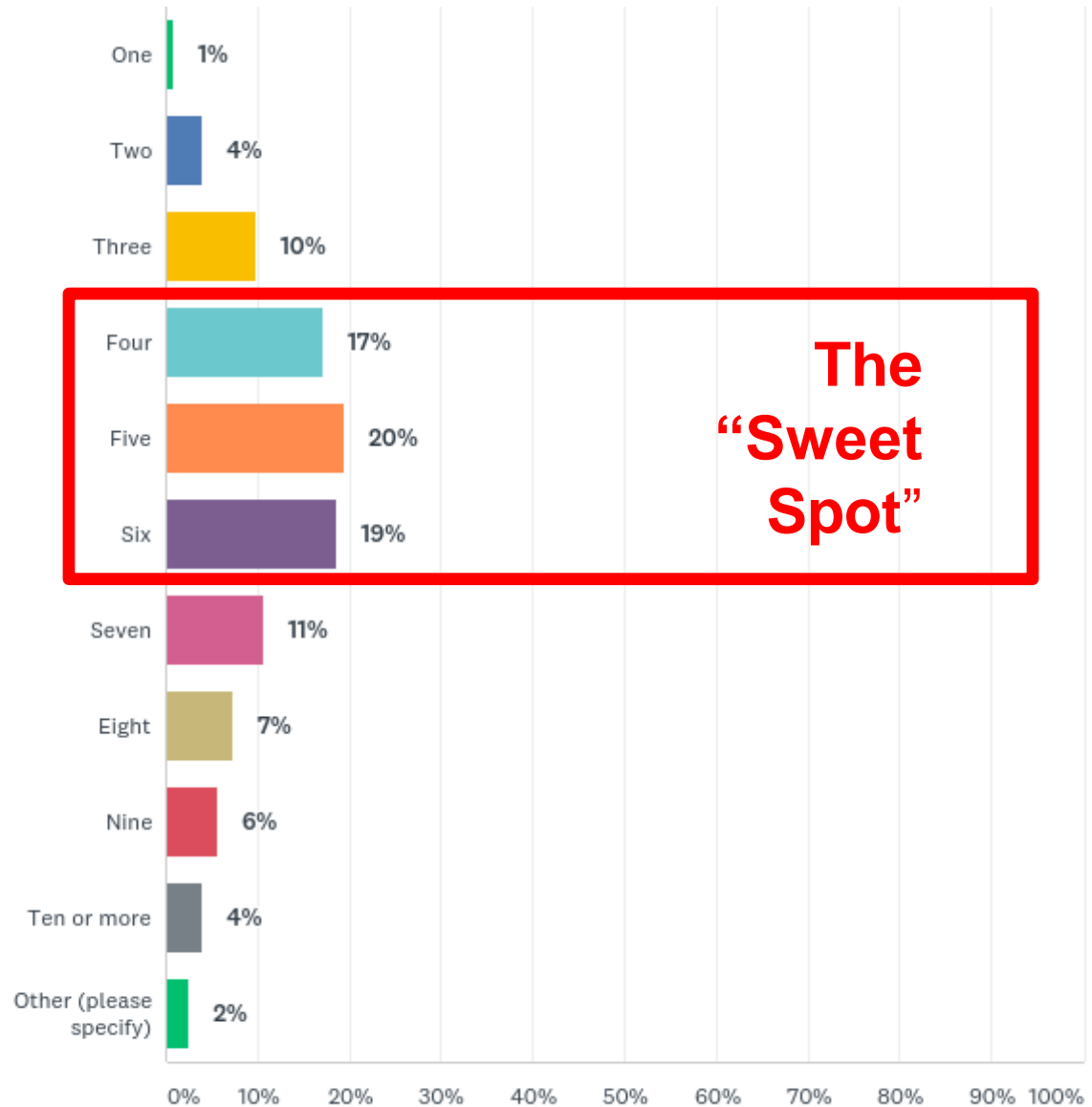
- Common understanding of issues by all members
- Everyone gets same information at same time
- Increased transparency
- Opportunity for increased stakeholder input
- Work is focused on the needs of the full Board.

Standing Committee

- Thorough research and consideration of information
- More time at regular meetings for other Board business
- Build ownerships and accountability among the members
- Builds a more cohesive board-administrative working relationship.



How many committees does your board use?



*School Board Notes, March 2015



Board Committees Are Effective When They...

- Meet a clearly defined need
- Are established in an appropriate manner
- Operate under clearly defined bylaws
- Lessen the total work of the board members
- Explore issues related to board goals and objectives in depth
- Have a clearly defined reporting process

- Develop and investigate, as requested by the full board, either options or recommendations
- Meet in a timely fashion
- Have an effective chairperson
- Include appropriate administrators and staff
- Provide for minority opinions



Committee Meeting Agenda

- The committee agenda should be a cooperative effort between the chair and the administrative liaison and/or the CSA.
- Boards should use the creation of an agenda strategically, to help advance the mission and goals of the district.
- Agenda items can come from:
 - direction from the board majority
 - administrative priorities
 - emerging issues.





Idea Surfaces: Preliminary Discussion

administration / professional staff, board member, community



Given to Appropriate Committee / Administrator

Research / recommendations / alternatives; fit mission, goals, long-range plan, budget, time-lines



Discussed by Appropriate Committee

Report / information / questions / clarification / alternatives / discussion / committee recommendation



Brought by Committee to the Full Board for Discussion and Action

Report / information / back-up sent prior to meeting / questions / clarification / alternatives



Board Approves Committee Recommendation

Administration develops implementation plan, evaluation. Board provides oversight.



Board Denies Committee Recommendation

Does not pass; may refer back to committee for researching alternatives to bring back to full board



Role Of The Committee Leaders

A

**Coordinate
the work
of the
committee**

1. Work with the administrative liaison in establishing the agenda and calendar (if not set by policy or the board calendar).
2. Distribute agenda prior to the meeting to the committee members and full Board.
3. Lead discussion on aligning the committee's focus to DISTRICT GOALS - and how the goals assigned to committee will be handled.
4. Work with the administrative liaison or board secretary to arrange meetings.
5. Organize the work of the group -- divide responsibilities, assign recorder, distribute minutes, do necessary follow-up.
6. Facilitate group process/chair meetings.



Role Of The Committee Leaders (cont.)

B

**Communicate
between the
committee /
the board /
CSA**

1. Arrange for committee report form to be completed each meeting, and ensure distribution of meeting notices and committee report.
2. Communicate & anticipate any problems or concerns to the board president and CSA.
3. Arrange (through the CSA) for other administrators to work with the committee (resources, presentations, ideas).
4. Set dates for completing tasks and reports.
5. Serve as resource to members not on the committee to address questions or to introduce new items for consideration.



Guidelines for Committee Members

- **Committee members can help make committee meetings more effective by:**
 - Reviewing the agenda prior to the meeting
 - Arrive on time and prepared
 - Contact the committee chair prior to the meeting with any questions you have after reviewing the agenda
 - Let chair know if you cannot attend.
 - Stick to the agenda during the meeting
 - Refrain from side-bar conversations
 - Ask questions at the proper time
 - Make comments that are on-point
 - Engage in active listening
 - Request additional information if needed





Reporting on Committee Work

- Committee chair or designee should generate a report of committee findings and/or recommendations after a meeting.
- Distributed to entire board as soon as feasible.
- Report out highlights at Board meeting.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOARD COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Board Secretary should receive this report one day after the meeting was held, for distribution to the entire board.

Committee: _____ Chairperson: _____

Date of Meeting: _____ Time: _____ / _____
Start End

Board Member in Attendance: _____

Administrators in Attendance: _____

Others: _____

Business Discussed:

Pending Business:

Recommendations:

Contact Person for additional information: _____
Name Telephone

Next Meeting: _____
Date Time Place

Possible Topic: _____

Signature of Preparer _____ Date _____



Best Practices Summary

A Well-run Committee Meeting

- Starts and ends on time
- Follows an agenda
- Maintains focused discussions
- Is led by an effective chairperson
- Members are thoughtfully appointed
- Provides administrative liaison and materials

Accountability to Board

- Sends committee agenda to committee and all board members.
- Reporting mechanism so all members have a thorough understanding of recommendations prior to voting.
- Focuses on furthering the work of the Board
- Examines its effectiveness





Think about this...

- What if your committee structure ...
 - Was organized along governing and not program or administrative lines.
 - Was created in such a way that members are having more strategic discussions?
 - Had a districtwide view, cutting across all programs and functions and enabling a vertical versus a horizontal perspective.



Four streams

Following the rule that structure should correspond to function, a school board's committees could/should be based on these key governing streams:

1. Board operations and coordination
2. Strategic and operational planning/budget preparation
3. Performance oversight and monitoring
4. External/community relations

Doug Eadie, *American School Board Journal*, February 2006



Governance Committee

A governance committee responsible for:

- Superintendent's evaluation
- Board self-evaluation
- Orient and educate new members
- Board professional development
- Annual board calendar
- Board leadership development
- Board goals
- Board bylaws





Planning or Oversight Committee

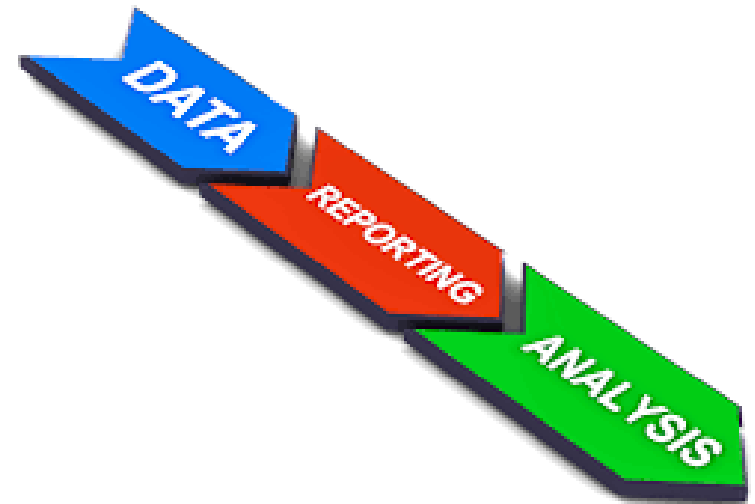
- A planning committee responsible for overseeing board involvement in strategic and operational planning and annual budget preparation and for reviewing and recommending key planning actions to the board.





Performance Monitoring Committee

- A performance-monitoring committee responsible for keeping track of the district's educational and financial performance and for recommending updated operating policies to the board as appropriate.





External Affairs Committee

- An external affairs committee responsible for overseeing the district's relationship with the public at large and with key people in the community.

