

Linn-Mar Board of Education Operations Manual

*A Guide for Board
Operations and Functions*



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Introduction

In order to provide the necessary and appropriate leadership for the district, the Linn-Mar Community School District Board of Education, both collectively and individually, is committed to governing as a professional board of directors. This means a commitment to the principles and practices of professional governance; the sharing of a common understanding of board policies, practices, procedures, and principles; a focus on continuous learning and improvement; and a willingness to serve as a model of effective, ethical leadership for students, staff, and the community.

The *Board Operations Manual* explains the duties, structure, and responsibilities of the Linn-Mar Community School District Board of Education as per the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) recommendations and State of Iowa Code. This manual is a living document and is in no way meant to be the final word as to how the board will direct its business. Each iteration of the board will reflect the personality of that board and may result in additions or revisions.

Board Authority

Board authority is derived from State of Iowa Code, which includes many different powers and duties of school boards. As a corporate body, the board may transact business only with a quorum of its membership present during a regular or special meeting.

According to *Dillon's Rule*, a local school board can only do what it is authorized to do per code, as opposed to home rule where action can be taken unless it is stated in code that the action is not allowed. The Linn-Mar Community School District Board of Education policy manual includes a listing of the school board's general powers and duties in [Policy Series 200-Board of Directors](#).

The following is a partial listing of the duties and powers the board has the authority to carry out and reflects the authority vested in local school boards:

1. Determine major educational needs and develop plans to meet those needs.
2. Fix time and place of regular and special meetings.
3. Fill, by appointment, any vacancies occurring between elections.
4. Employ a superintendent.
5. Approve the employment and salaries of administrators/managers, teachers, principals, other licensed personnel, and staff members.
6. Terminate the contract or immediately discharge any employee subject to the provisions of any applicable law and/or board policy.
7. Become members of the Iowa Association of School Boards and pay dues.
8. Utilize funds received through gifts, devises, and bequests in the general or schoolhouse funds, unless limited by the terms of the grant.

9. Employ legal counsel and bear the cost of litigation.
10. Allow all just claims against the school corporation.
11. Insure against loss of property.
12. Appoint a board secretary and treasurer.
13. Require bonds for individuals having custody of school corporation funds, funds from extra-curricular activities or other sources, and pay premiums from the general fund.
14. Determine district attendance centers and the particular school each student will attend.
15. Maintain attendance centers based upon the needs of school-age students and include in the educational program additional courses, subjects, or activities that fit the needs of the students.
16. Provide transportation services.
17. Acquire, hold, convey, lease, rent, and manage property; real and personal.
18. Incur indebtedness when authorized by the voters of the school corporation.
19. Make rules for its own government.
20. Maintain adequate administration, school staffing, personnel assignment policies, teacher qualifications and licensing requirements, facilities, equipment, grounds, graduation requirements, instructional requirements and materials, maintenance procedures, and policies on extra-curricular activities.
21. Expel students from school for violation of rules established by the board or when their presence is detrimental to the best interests of the school.

Board Member Responsibilities

Board member responsibilities include attending board meetings; being prepared in advance by reading agendas, supporting documentation, presentation materials, and other informational documents; seeking information that is necessary; and suspending all judgement prior to the decision-making process at the board table. Effective board members also resist presenting surprises at board meetings by abiding by board policies and rules and holding off personal decisions until all evidence is in and all board discussion has occurred.

The board is made up of seven members of the Linn-Mar Community School District with each member assuming responsibility for the total board's effectiveness, functions, and efficiency. No individual can speak for or act on behalf of the board. The board acts only when a quorum is present and when a majority of that quorum reaches a decision. The Linn-Mar Community School District Board of Education strives to be unified and professional at all times. This does not mean, however, that board members cannot have disagreements or open discussions about district issues. Open discussions are encouraged in order to thoroughly examine each issue. Disagreements are to be handled in a respectful manner at all times with board members displaying courtesy for each other and for differing points of view.

Board Ethics

Board member actions, verbal and nonverbal, reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the Linn-Mar Community School District. Therefore, board members must conduct themselves in accordance with the Iowa Association of School Board's Code of Ethics as outlined in [Policy Series 200](#).

Board members must avoid conflicts of interest, either real or perceived, related to serving on the board. Both Iowa law and board policy describe limitations placed on board members in carrying out their duties, but these limitations cannot address every situation where a conflict of interest may arise. Therefore, board members must be vigilant in avoiding any actions that may be perceived as creating a conflict of interest and disclose any conflicts of interest on an annual basis by completing the district's School Board Conflict of Interest form (Policy 202.7-E).

Iowa law states that all actions of the board shall be conducted in public, while at the same time the law allows for specific situations and procedures wherein the board may meet in private to discuss confidential information. Board members are privy to confidential information in the course of their service to the district. It is imperative that each board member respect the confidentiality of information shared with them.

Refer to [Policy 202.7-School Board Conflict of Interest](#) and [202.7-E-School Board Conflict of Interest Form](#) for additional information.

Board Guiding Principles

1. Deliberate in many voices, but govern in one voice.
2. Cultivate a sense of group responsibility with the understanding that it is the board, not the staff or administration, which is responsible for excellence in governance.
3. Be an active part of the district's leadership team striving to lead the district through a clear mission statement, an articulated vision for the district, shared and commonly understood goals, broad and clearly written policies, and continual monitoring of the performance of the schools and students.
4. Be willing to hold itself to the highest standards of excellence in governance and professional responsibility, including a willingness to hold individual board members and the board as a whole accountable for its actions.
5. Continually monitor its own processes, performance, and progress.
6. Vigorously and intelligently advocate for the district and its students on the local, state, and national levels.
7. Commit both individually and collectively to being well-informed and educated on local, state, and national educational issues, initiatives, and practices.
8. Regularly communicate as one voice while exercising confidentiality, when appropriate, to all stakeholders about district performance, direction, initiatives, issues, and ideas.

9. Formally and informally recognize and celebrate school, staff, and student success.
10. Insist on the pursuit of excellence on the part of all with a role in the district; staff, students, and board members.
11. Always strive to act in the interest of what is best for all students, believing that all students can learn and succeed at a high level.
12. Serve as a model of positive, professional, and ethical conduct in an open and transparent manner.

Board Meetings

Work Session Agenda Format:

- 100: Call to Order and Determination of a Quorum
- 200 Adoption and/or Revision of the Agenda
- 300: Informational Reports and Discussion
- 400: Adjournment

Work sessions will have the following characteristics:

1. No formal board action or decisions will take place;
2. Discussions are informational or for data analysis;
3. Are for building board member awareness and learning; and
4. Are for board member team building.

Regular Session Agenda Format:

- 100: Call to Order and Determination of a Quorum
- 200: Adoption and/or Revision of the Agenda
- 300: Audience Communications
- 400: Informational Reports and Discussion
- 500: Unfinished Business
- 600: New Business
- 700: Consent Agenda
- 800: Board Communications and Calendar
- 900: Adjournment

The board shall make rules for its own governance. The board may make and enforce reasonable rules for the conduct of its meetings to ensure they are orderly and free from interference or interruption by spectators. The Linn-Mar Board of Education has chosen to follow *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised* latest edition as a procedural model for operational purposes.

Board meetings shall be held at a place accessible to the public and at a time reasonably convenient to the public, unless such a place or time is impossible or impractical which shall be stated in the minutes. The public may use cameras or recording devices at any open meeting.

Board meetings are held IN the public, but not FOR the public. Meetings are to conduct district business in an open and transparent manner, not to engage in dialogue with the public. Public comments are allowed at the start of each open, regular meeting; but not during the order of business. Guidelines for addressing the board are outlined in the agenda and shared with the public prior to the audience communications section of the meeting. The guidelines for public participation in board meetings are also found in policies [204.7-Board Meeting Agendas](#) and [204.9-Public Participation in Board Meetings](#).

When participating in discussion, the board directs the superintendent and administration. The directive will be restated for clarity and conciseness by the board president to ensure there is common agreement and consensus from the entire board. Board meetings should allow business to be transacted efficiently, protect individual rights, and maintain the working relationship among members.

The role of the superintendent during board meetings will be that of advisor and facilitator in helping the board work through its business and reach decisions. As the chief executive officer of the district and the chief advisor to the board, the superintendent will provide timely information, materials, adequate time for deliberation, and recommendations given prior to board meetings and prior to board deliberations when making decisions. Reports, presentations, and documentation will follow a format developed by the superintendent and shared with the board.

Reports to the board during regular meetings will be concise. Written materials will be provided to the board in advance for their review and preparation for the presentations. All visual aids will be of a quality that the board and audience can view from their seats. The preferred format is electronic projection.

The board is to come prepared and ready to participate in the discussion and decision-making process. The board will also be given advance notice as to whether or not presentations or reports are for information only or if they are for deliberations and/or action.

Board Committees and Advisories

The administration will inform all board advisory committees of requirements as stated in legislation regarding open meetings. The board will be aware that any committee that it appoints is under the open meetings law requirement. Care will be taken to assess whether a committee already functioning in the district may be used for the purposes of the board, rather than the creation of a new committee.

Board members are encouraged to be active on committees and other advisory groups that function within the district. Board member participation is to be advisory only, since it might be construed that a board member may have the potential to persuade others with their vote.

Therefore, no board member will be a committee chairperson or a voting member of a committee or advisory group within the district.

Schedules

It is important for board members to be actively involved in board events to not only learn about the district, but to also show support for Linn-Mar and advocate for the district. Therefore, board members are expected to attend board meetings, school and site visits, special meetings for community input, and other meetings and events throughout the district and community. A rotating schedule will allow board members to attend Marion City Council meetings in order to facilitate communication between the two entities.

Schedules for board meetings, school/site visits, and committee/advisory meetings are developed at the beginning of each school year. Ongoing calendars can be found at the end of each board meeting agenda and on the board/policy website (<http://.policy.linnmar.k12.ia.us/>).

Policy

A school board fulfilling its policy-making duties fulfills the board's most important function. Written board policy represents that the school district is managed in a business-like manner and informs all stakeholders of the board's intent, goals, and objectives. Written policy fosters stability and continuity whenever board members or district personnel changes. Written policy also disarms critics by providing clear-cut, thoroughly researched, and planned solutions.

Written board policies have the same force and effect in a school district as Iowa laws have in the state, and as federal laws have in the country.

Iowa Code places the authority to develop and adopt policy for a school district in the hands of the school board. The Iowa State Department of Education Educational Standards, which set the requirements for an accredited education program, require the board to adopt and maintain a board policy manual. The district's board policy manual can be accessed via the district's school/policy website (<http://.policy.linnmar.k12.ia.us/>).

If an issue or area of concern is one that only the board can change and determine, it is policy. If an issue or area of concern is one that the administration can change, it is administrative regulation.

Policy Development

The policy development process has been designed so that several sources of input can be given to the board regarding review and development of its policies. By law, each board policy must be reviewed at least once every five years.

A policy committee made up of board members, the superintendent, and key administrators will be used to review board policies and make recommendations to the board. The policy committee will meet regularly during the school year to review the policies. It will be the duty of this committee to review the policies for accuracy, content, appropriateness, timelines, and necessity. In order to accomplish this, each member of the committee will review current board policies and recommendations for changes that have been communicated to the district by the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB), along with state and federal requirements and changes.

Policy committee recommendations will be presented to the board during regular meetings for discussion, first and second readings, and adoption upon board approval.

Relationships and Communications

There are two types of communications that board members will incur, internal (owner/district) and external (customer/patron). Board members should assess all communications and be aware of which type of communication they are being engaged in at all times.

As board members engage in communication with various patrons, they should remember that patron concerns should be addressed from the lowest level of authority first and then, if not satisfied, patrons should work upward to the superintendent or board level. (Ex: teacher>building administrator>human resources>superintendent>board) Patrons should be directed to contact the superintendent regarding an issue only after exhausting the appropriate channels of communication.

Internal Communications and Relationships

Board members are encouraged to interact and communicate with staff members as a means of gathering information and knowledge of the workings of the district. If staff members want board members to solve managerial issues, or when a board member is not satisfied with staff performance, these situations should be directed to the superintendent for resolution, supervision, or evaluation.

Board members need to separate their role as a board member from their role as a parent/patron when dealing with staff and administrators and should clarify which role they are in when communicating with staff and administrators. Administrators or staff may be hesitant to speak openly with board members for fear of retribution, especially if the conversation includes a complaint about district operations.

Staff should reflect respect for the district and its employees when stating concerns or opinions, and their concerns and opinions should be based on factual information not rumors. When listening to and speaking with staff members, conversations should be mutually respectful of the district, board, and all employees. All board members and staff are governed by the board policies which prohibit retaliation, bullying, or discrimination.

The board needs to exercise caution in personnel issues. Board members must always keep in mind that they are the final hearing officers in any personnel dispute. If a board member becomes involved in a personnel issue, they may need to recuse themselves from a hearing due to the possibility of being prejudiced. For that reason, personnel issues should be handled only by administrators hired for that purpose.

Any discussion by the board that could be interpreted as evaluative must be done in a meeting with the employee given the opportunity to be present to give their side of the issue, as well as the option of a closed session. Staff members may try to have board members solve problems outside board meetings, or a board member may not be satisfied with staff performance, but according to board procedure and policy these situations should be directed to the superintendent for resolution, supervision, or evaluation.

The board and staff members (certified and classified) will engage in a variety of communication strategies. Board retreats are one option that has been successfully used to further interaction and open communication.

Internal Board and Superintendent Relationship/Communications

Because of the relationship the board and superintendent must have to conduct the work of the district, it is imperative that they keep each other informed of current issues. There should not be surprises at board meetings from either the board or superintendent. Board members will refrain from lobbying efforts with other board members outside of board meetings.

The superintendent will publicly support the Linn-Mar Board of Education and its decisions and the board will publicly support the superintendent and his/her decisions. Additionally, each board member is expected to publicly support decisions reached by the board as a whole, even if the board member voted with the minority on an issue.

Board members will be charged with maintaining relationships within the board in accordance with board standards per the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB).

External (Public) Relationships and Communications

Reminder: There are two types of communications that board members will incur, internal (owner) and external (customer). Board members should assess and be aware of which type of communication they are being engaged in at all times. Patron concerns should be addressed from the lowest level of authority first and then, if not satisfied, patrons should work upward to the superintendent or board level. Patrons should be directed to contact the superintendent regarding an issue only after exhausting the appropriate channels of communication.

On controversial issues, the board will have a public statement drafted by the superintendent that board members may utilize for any public comment that needs to be made. As individuals, board members should support the actions and statements of the board. It is board procedure that the entire board be polled by the president prior to any public statement being made on

behalf of the board as a whole. The board president shall be the official spokesperson for the board. The superintendent may also speak publicly on behalf of the board. If any board member wishes to address a point of view before the public, it is imperative that each board member communicates that they are speaking from their own personal viewpoint versus a board viewpoint in such a manner that does not contradict the work of the board or district.

Per board [Policy 1001.2-News and Media Relations](#): *The board president shall be the spokesperson for the board and the superintendent shall be the spokesperson for the district. It shall be the responsibility of the board president and superintendent to respond to inquiries from the media about the district. Members of the news media seeking information about the district shall direct their inquiries to the superintendent [or designee]. The superintendent [or designee] shall accurately and objectively provide the facts and the board's position in response to inquiries from the news media about the district.*

The board's strategic planning process will include a plan for district public relations and communications developed by and implemented by the administration and relevant departments.

Refer to policies [1001.2-News and Media Relations](#), [403.35-Social Networking](#), and [403.42-Employee Expression](#) for additional information.

Finance/Audit Committee Commission

Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of the committee is to assist the board in discharging its responsibilities relating to financial oversight, budget, internal controls, financial policies, capital structure, and other related matters while helping to achieve the mission and vision of the Linn-Mar District. The Finance/Audit Committee shall serve a dual purpose for the district.

1. Finance Role:
 - a. Oversee the financial affairs of the district
 - b. Review and make recommendations to the board regarding district financial affairs and policies.
2. Audit Role: Oversight of external and internal audit processes

Committee Composition:

The committee shall be made up of up to three members of the Board of Education, the chief financial officer/board treasurer, and the board secretary. Ad hoc members shall be appointed on an as needed basis for matters of technical expertise or tacit knowledge. Committee members must be capable of:

- Meeting on a quarterly basis (minimum);
- Demonstrating a willingness to learn about school finance;
- Broadly understanding the fiduciary responsibility as it relates to public funds;
- Objectively evaluating proposed finance related decisions;
- Asking questions that are representative of the understanding of the rest of the board;
- Bringing a positive, constructive attitude and well-developed emotional intelligence to work with the board; and
- Effectively communicating financial related matters to the broader constituency.

Responsibilities:

- Monitor the district budget: 1) ensure funds are spent to accomplish strategic initiatives as described within the Strategic Plan and 2) ensure the district is operating in a fiscally sustainable manner;
- Regularly review financial and operational metrics;
- As appropriate, provide reports and guidance to the full board;
- Review and recommend major district expenditures;
- Ensure compliance of existing policies and/or recommend new policies as it relates to the finance and business operations of the district;
- Provide analysis and guidance related to capital and debt issuances;
- Analyze financial implications of any proposed or enacted legislation by local, state, or federal governments; and
- Confer with the independent auditor to ensure the financial affairs of the district are in order.

Policy/Governance Committee Commission

Statement of Purpose:

The Board of Education for the Linn-Mar Community School District calls for the board to appoint a Policy/Governance Committee to review and enact board policy to provide broad rules and guidelines governing the school district operations, which are developed within the overall framework of state laws and regulations as well as help to achieve the mission and vision of the Linn-Mar District and to train board members in their work and the work of the district.

The expected outcome from the work of this committee will be to ensure an effective board and district by guaranteeing that the board:

- Has a current policy manual that is responsive to all federal and state laws and requirements;
- Has a policy manual that is responsive to local community needs;
- Has a three-year policy manual review cycle;
- Has a board learning agenda;
- Communicates policy changes to the broader constituency; and
- Systematically engages in policy setting, enforcement, and execution.

Committee Composition:

The committee shall be made up of up to three members of the Board of Education (to be appointed at the annual organizational meeting): the board secretary, the superintendent, and staffed by a member of the executive office. Ad hoc members shall be appointed on an as needed basis for matters of technical expertise or tacit knowledge. Committee members must be capable of:

- Meeting on a quarterly basis (minimum);
- Objectively evaluating proposed policy changes;
- Identifying, cultivating, and brainstorming avenues of policy development;
- Bringing a positive, constructive attitude and well-developed emotional intelligence to work with the board;
- Demonstrating an eagerness to become an expert in high-impact governance; and
- Assuming responsibility for developing board policies.

Commission:

The committee is commissioned to develop the board by focusing on:

- Policy:
 - Policy Setting (Governance):
 - Lead the board in regularly reviewing and updating the board policy manual
 - Help initiate policy design
 - Policy Management (Stewardship):
 - Help manage policy library
 - Maintain policy history
 - Policy Enforcement and Execution (Operational Implementation):
 - Conduct policy performance review and audit
- Board Learning:
 - Create and maintain board learning plan
 - Survey individual board member needs
 - Stay abreast of staff learning plan and district strategic efforts related to staff development

- Knowledge:
 - Design and oversee a process of board orientation to include providing information prior to election as a board member and, when needed, during the first cycle of board activity for new board members.
 - Design and implement an ongoing program of board information and education.
- Effectiveness:
 - Lead the periodic assessment of the board's performance. Propose, as appropriate, changes in board structure, roles, and responsibilities.
 - Provide ongoing counsel to the board president and other board members on steps to take to enhance board effectiveness.
 - Regularly review the board's practices regarding member participation, conflict of interest, confidentiality, etc., and suggest improvements as needed.
 - Periodically review and update the board's policies and practices.
 - Conduct meeting analysis on an as needed basis.

Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee Commission

Statement of Purpose:

The Board of Education for the Linn-Mar Community School District calls for the board to appoint a Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the board in the areas of career and technical education (CTE). The expected outcome of this committee will be to ensure that students are exposed to a well-rounded experience in the career and technical education fields as well as help to achieve the mission and vision of the Linn-Mar Community School District.

Committee Composition:

The committee shall consist of members representing parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives from the community, which may include representatives of business, industry, labor, community agencies, higher education, or other community constituents. To the extent possible, committee membership shall have balanced representation with regard to race, gender, national origin, and disability.

Commission:

The committee is commissioned to:

1. Receive updates from administration and teaching staff in regard to the Linn-Mar Career and Technical Education programs;
2. Discuss and explore the current programs, as well as look at potential enhancements and changes to the curriculum and course offerings;
3. Align and implement initiatives from the state and federal levels;
4. Assess progress toward strategic initiatives as outlined in the district's *Strategic Plan*;
5. Assess progress at the department, programmatic, and student level and make recommendations for future growth opportunities;
6. Report areas of strength and continued areas of focus, as appropriate, to the board and community;
7. Utilize the expertise of the counseling department in order to better facilitate student Pathways to Success within the CTE framework; and
8. Work with community partners (MEDCO, Marion Chamber of Commerce, City of Marion, Kirkwood Community College, Marion Independent School District, Iowa BIG, etc.) to provide comprehensive and coordinated opportunities for Linn-Mar students to experience and pursue future Pathways to Success within the CTE framework.

School Improvement Advisory Committee Commission

Statement of Purpose:

The Code of Iowa (280.12) calls for the board to appoint a School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) to make recommendations to the board. This committee is charged to make recommendations to the board in several areas based on analysis of the needs assessment data. The board will use these recommendations to adopt annual improvement goals that will help to achieve the mission and vision of the Linn-Mar District.

Committee Composition:

The advisory committee shall consist of members representing students, parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives from the community which may include representatives of business, industry, labor, community agencies, higher education, or other community constituents. To the extent possible, committee membership shall have balanced representation with regard to race, gender, national origin, and disability (280.12(1)). Ad hoc members shall be appointed on an as needed basis for matters of technical expertise or tacit knowledge.

Commission:

The committee is commissioned to make recommendations to the board to help determine the following:

1. Major educational needs;
2. Student learning goals;
3. Long-range and annual improvement goals that include, but are not limited to, the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science achievement;
4. Desired levels of student performance;
5. Progress toward meeting the goals set out in paragraphs “b” through “d” as referenced in the Iowa Code; and
6. Harassment or bullying prevention goals, programs, training, and other initiatives (280.12(2)).

In addition, the board shall consider recommendations from the School Improvement Advisory Committee to infuse character education into the educational program (280.12(3)).

At least annually, the School Improvement Advisory Committee shall also make recommendations to the board with regard to, but not limited to, the following:

1. Progress achieved with the annual improvement goals for the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science;
2. Progress achieved with other locally determined core indicators; and
3. Annual improvement goals for the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science achievement.