

# IASB Standards for Effective School Boards

## With Competencies, & Indicators

The Iowa School Board Standards are designed for use by local school boards as a common framework for excellence in school board governance. Based on best practice and research, the standards encourage boards to focus on student achievement as their primary responsibility. The framework includes six standards, along with competencies and key indicators that help clarify the work of high-performing school boards.

**In pursuit of world-class education that results in high achievement for all Iowa students, effective school boards commit to these standards and competencies:**



## Standard 1: Visionary Team

Effective school boards operate as a visionary governance team in partnership with the superintendent.

Competencies	Indicators/Examples of Best Practice
<p><b>1.1 Vision and Planning</b> – Develops a shared vision and plans for student achievement that reflects common values and core beliefs of the school community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approves a comprehensive planning process to create a district vision and goals focused on student achievement.</li> <li>2. Develops district definition of high expectations for all students.</li> <li>3. Builds ownership with entire community.</li> <li>4. Supports existing multi-year plan through board decision-making and annual board review.</li> <li>5. Understands rationale that describes how goals will lead to achievement of district vision.</li> <li>6. Determines that understandable indicators exist and are used to clarify goals.</li> </ol>
<p><b>1.2 Operating Practices</b> – Uses productive practices for its own operations and development.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Develops shared understanding of principles of governance and the distinction between governance and management.</li> <li>8. Clarifies rules for meeting procedure and conduct in written policy.</li> <li>9. Expresses expectations for agendas to focus on the district vision and goals.</li> <li>10. Dedicates sufficient meeting time to addressing district goals and priorities.</li> <li>11. Demonstrates respect for each other and board decisions.</li> <li>12. Orients new board members to board operating procedures.</li> <li>13. Uses self- evaluations to strengthen board focus and operations.</li> <li>14. Regularly participates in individual and whole-board development activities.</li> </ol>

<p><b>1.3 Decision-Making</b> – Ensures board decisions are based on data and deliberation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. Allows time for administration to research, analyze, and provide data.</li> <li>16. Uses data and information as the primary source to inform and guide decision making.</li> <li>17. Engages in deliberative dialogue to ensure all perspectives are considered in decision making.</li> <li>18. Makes decisions aligned with district vision, goals, and student needs.</li> <li>19. Ensures stakeholder needs are considered in decision making processes.</li> <li>20. Supports majority decisions of the board to ensure ongoing progress of the district.</li> <li>21. Provides constructive feedback to staff on information most helpful in reaching good decisions.</li> </ol>
<p><b>1.4 Board/Superintendent Relations</b> – Cultivates a strong relationship and partnership with the superintendent, based on clear expectations and accountability.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22. Establishes clear practices for effective board and superintendent communication.</li> <li>23. Works collaboratively with the superintendent to set goals and priorities.</li> <li>24. Uses board policy to delegate appropriate authority to the superintendent to manage the district.</li> <li>25. Supports ongoing professional development for the superintendent.</li> <li>26. Engages in regular discussions to support and hold the superintendent accountable for progress toward goals and the Iowa Standards for School Leaders.</li> <li>27. Evaluates the superintendent annually in relation to goals and the Iowa Standards for School Leaders.</li> </ol>

## Standard 2: Student Learning

Effective school boards provide leadership for quality instruction and high, equitable student learning.

Competencies	Indicators/Examples of Best Practice
<p><b>2.1 Clear Expectations</b>– Sets and communicates high expectations for student learning with clear goals and a focus on strengthening instruction.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Speaks with one voice about the conviction that all students can learn and the belief that student learning can improve regardless of existing circumstances and resources.</li><li>2. Communicates high expectations to reinforce the district vision, mission, and goals (e.g. opening statements and comments to presenters and guests during board meetings, district website, conversations with the community, etc.)</li><li>3. Discusses and identifies with staff leadership the desired amount of “stretch” for student learning goals and targets.</li><li>4. Establishes or approves priority goals and targets with “stretch” for improving instruction and student learning.</li><li>5. Sets expectations for the staff to describe the alignment between the evidence-based staff initiatives and the priority student learning goal(s).</li></ol>

<p><b>2.2 Conditions for Success</b>– Supports conditions for success through board actions and decisions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Learns and can describe the alignment between key district initiatives/staff actions and the district’s priority student learning goals.</li> <li>7. Ensures improvement actions align with and support a culture to enable the district to reach its student learning goals.</li> <li>8. Learns from district leadership at the board table about key supports needed to implement improvement initiatives/actions to achieve priority goals.</li> <li>9. Commits to provide the key supports to implement improvement initiatives/actions (e.g. time for professional development, resources, etc.); maintains focus and stays the course during challenges.</li> <li>10. Ensures the budget includes funding to support the district’s priority student learning goals and initiatives.</li> <li>11. Ensures powerful instruction, rigorous standards, and assessment are driving district improvement efforts.</li> </ol>
<p><b>2.3 Accountability</b>– Holds the system accountable to reach student learning goals.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Receives and discusses regular progress updates to ensure that a significant amount of the staff’s collective time and effort are spent on the district’s priority student learning goals (professional development on instructional improvement, strengthening assessment, etc.)</li> <li>13. Discusses summarized reports of both formative and summative student data throughout the year as a key way of monitoring progress toward the district’s student learning goals.</li> <li>14. Engages in regular discussions to support and hold the superintendent accountable for his/her leadership for making progress toward the district’s student learning goals.</li> <li>15. Engages in regular reflection and self-evaluation to hold itself accountable for maintaining a focus on student learning.</li> </ol>

<p><b>2.4 Collective Commitment</b>– Builds the collective commitment of community and staff to achieve the student learning goals.</p>	<p>16. Communicates with one voice to stakeholder groups about the district’s high expectations and goals for student learning to deepen commitment.</p> <p>17. Describes student learning goals and communicates a sense of urgency for improvement with community and staff at the board table and through conversations with individuals and groups away from the board table.</p> <p>18. Expects alignment among district, superintendent, and building goals.</p>
<p><b>2.5 Team Learning</b> – Learns together as a whole team to inform decision-making around the student learning goals.</p>	<p>19. Identifies whole-board team learning needs to enhance board knowledge and skills to provide leadership to achieve the district’s priority student learning goals and instructional improvement efforts.</p> <p>20. Dedicates whole-board learning time for work associated with the district’s student learning goals and instructional improvement efforts.</p> <p>21. Uses whole-board conversations to stay focused on and reinforce the board’s commitment to high expectations and the district’s priority goals.</p>

## Standard 3: District Culture

Effective school boards foster a culture that enables excellence and innovation.

Competencies	Indicators/Examples of Best Practice
<p><b>3.1 High Quality Staff</b> - Empowers the superintendent in hiring and developing the best employees available to meet the district's goals.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sets policy and allocate supports for administration in recruiting, mentoring, induction and evaluation of staff best positioned to help the district to meet its goals.</li><li>2. Recognizes the board's dual role in human resources:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hiring and evaluation of the superintendent.</li><li>• Overseeing the employment processes impacting all other employees but not directly involved in the processes unless hiring, discipline or termination are brought to the board by the superintendent.</li></ul></li><li>3. Expects and supports the superintendent and appropriate administrative staff to remain current on state and federal employment laws.</li><li>4. Sets clear parameters to guide the board and administration in collective bargaining and negotiations.</li></ol>

<p><b>3.2 Shared Leadership</b> - Supports structures that develop instructional leadership and collaboration.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Sets the expectation that the district operate in a way that builds widespread instructional leadership around student learning.</li> <li>6. Ensures a framework exists that describes key leadership roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>7. Ensures support for teacher and principal leadership and collaboration to achieve district goals and priorities.</li> <li>8. Develops appropriate structures to communicate with staff leadership at board meetings.</li> <li>9. Monitors progress with leadership teams through discussions at the board table.</li> </ol>
<p><b>3.3 Staff Learning</b> - Supports research-based staff professional development aligned with district goals.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Receives assurances from the administration that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all professional development plans align with the district goals and with the educational standards</li> <li>• employees had the opportunity to provide input into the planning of professional development</li> </ul> </li> <li>11. Approves funding to implement the professional development plan in the annual budget.</li> <li>12. Adopts a school calendar which allocates adequate time for teacher development and collaboration.</li> <li>13. Supports a creative culture and provides resources for staff to create and innovate if shown to improve student learning.</li> </ol>



<p><b>3.4 Environment</b> - Fosters a safe and secure environment for all students, staff, and visitors.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>14. Ensures available resources provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.</li><li>15. Analyzes data or information on student and employee behavior, attendance, and discipline regularly to monitor how well the policy is being followed and whether additional funds need to be allocated to improve training for all.</li><li>16. Ensures the district has developed safety and emergency plans and procedures that are well communicated to employees and students.</li></ol>
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## Standard 4: Policy & Legal

Effective school boards lead through sound policy, ensuring transparent, ethical, legal operations.

Competencies	Indicators/Examples of Best Practice
<p><b>4.1 Policy Leadership</b> - Develops sound, written policy to clarify the board's intent for district direction.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognizes the board's main role is to develop and adopt board policy which guides the administration. The policy is written answering the "what" and "why" question leaving "how" to the discretion of management.</li> <li>2. References board policy when making decisions and implementing board policy.</li> <li>3. Reviews policy manual thoroughly and thoughtfully at least every five years and more often should laws or practices regarding the policy change.</li> <li>4. Discusses the role of board policy regularly and how commitment to board policy helps the board stay on task</li> <li>5. Ensures compliance with state and federal laws in making local policy decisions.</li> <li>6. Develops and complies with board policy regarding the orderly procedure of board meetings and detailed agendas to ensure the board focuses on those issues that will have a positive impact on student achievement.</li> </ol>

<p><b>4.2 Legal</b> –Ensures that board and district actions are in compliance with state and federal laws, appropriately addressing legal issues when they arise.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Acquires and uses fundamental school law knowledge to ensure that actions are in compliance with the law and board policy.</li> <li>8. Expects all inquiries, complaints, etc. will be responded to promptly and in compliance with board policy to settle the issue at the lowest level possible.</li> <li>9. Appoints an attorney to work with and represent the board on legal issues.</li> <li>10. Adopts board policy outlining who can contact the board legal counsel without prior board approval.</li> <li>11. Recognizes the board’s legal counsel is the board’s attorney and the attorney/client privilege resides with the board, not an individual board member or superintendent.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4.3 Ethics</b> - Models ethical and legal behaviors which enable the board to stay focused on district goals.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Adopts, annually commits to, and models a Code of Ethics policy.</li> <li>13. Models the importance of personal ethics so board members, district employees and students recognize this and follow the lead of the board when working with each other and conducting their jobs or completing schoolwork.</li> <li>14. Acts in a professional manner as befitting the role of an elected official and a representative of the school district.</li> </ol>
<p><b>4.4 Transparency</b> - Establishes policies and ensures processes that are open and accountable.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. Complies fully with open meetings and public records laws in board operations.</li> <li>16. Actively seeks ways to promote public understanding and access to district information, especially on achievement, finances and major decisions impacting stakeholders.</li> <li>17. Assigns district and board spokespersons so media and community are hearing a consistent message.</li> <li>18. Holds the system accountable for transparency throughout all layers of the district.</li> </ol>



## Standard 5: Fiscal Responsibility

Effective school boards sustain and enhance district resources through planning and fiduciary oversight.

Competencies	Indicators/Examples of Best Practice
<p><b>5.1 Financial Health</b> – Monitors and evaluates the financial health of the district, ensuring accountability and transparency in board decision making.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understands key concepts of school funding and fiduciary oversight.</li> <li>2. Reviews district’s key financial measures and understands how district measures compare to recommended targets.</li> <li>3. Adopts, reviews, and monitors progress toward achievement of financial goals for the district.</li> <li>4. Receives and discusses monthly financial statements to understand changes in district finances.</li> <li>5. Meets with auditor and reviews annual audit report highlights; monitors progress on actions taken to address audit recommendations</li> </ol>
<p><b>5.2 Financial Forecasting</b> – Ensures strong financial planning for the district.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Oversees a multi-year financial planning process for all district funds based on sound, realistic assumptions and district needs.</li> <li>7. Annually reviews 5-year financial forecasts and sets parameters on key financial indicators.</li> <li>8. Makes budget decisions understanding the impact of board decisions on the district’s viability into the future.</li> </ol>
<p><b>5.3 Budgeting</b> - Ensures the district budget aligns with district goals and multi-year plans.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Establishes clear, published budget parameters/priorities and uses them to guide budget discussions.</li> <li>10. Supports the need for and ensures the development of a district line item budget aligned with all district goals and plans.</li> </ol>

<p><b>5.4 Risk Oversight</b> - Ensures sufficient risk management is in place to protect district resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Reviews risks to the district and ensures steps are taken to mitigate or sufficiently ensure against those risks.</li> <li>12. Uses oversight mechanisms, such as independent audits and external reviews, to ensure accountability, to deepen their understanding of the organization, and reduce risks to loss of time, money or reputation for the district.</li> <li>13. Ensures the district has adequate insurance, contingency plans, safety plans, and financial controls.</li> <li>14. Hears reports from administration on significant district exposures to loss of time, money or reputation. Ensures administration is identifying strategies to mitigate risks and prevent loss.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.5 Facilities</b> – Ensures school facilities enhance and enrich student and staff learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. Adopts, evaluates and monitors progress in implementing the district’s long-term facilities plan.</li> <li>16. Ensures adequate funds are budgeted to meet the physical plant needs of the district.</li> <li>17. Advocates for funding sources needed to support the learning environment.</li> </ul>



## Standard 6: Advocacy

Effective school boards advocate for public education and the needs of Iowa students.

Competencies	Indicators/Examples of Best Practice
<p><b>6.1 Championing Local Governance &amp; Public Education</b> – Clearly articulates and advocates for the value of public education and the important role of local school governance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Models effective and efficient board governance.</li><li>2. Clearly articulates the role and value of local school boards in improving public education so all students reach world-class expectations.</li><li>3. Regularly discusses the important role of public education in a democratic society at the board table, in newsletters, public communications, etc.</li><li>4. Speaks with one voice about district goals and priorities.</li><li>5. Develops common messages to communicate the needs of students and public education.</li></ol>

<p><b>6.2 Legislative Advocacy</b> – Develops and strengthens on-going relationships with policymakers around improving student achievement and the needs of public schools.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Develops a board advocacy plan that outlines annual commitments to the board’s legislative advocacy efforts.</li> <li>7. Makes it a regular practice, either individually or as a board, to meet with policymakers to discuss issues of common interest as well as the needs of the district.</li> <li>8. Encourages and supports the superintendent to build and sustain relationships with policymakers.</li> <li>9. Informs and recruits supporters, community members, and other stakeholders to influence policymakers.</li> <li>10. Monitors local, state, and national public education issues and uses the information to inform and impact advocacy.</li> <li>11. Includes a regular agenda item where board members and the superintendent give updates on their advocacy efforts and discuss state and national policy issues.</li> <li>12. Monitors legislators’ votes and holds legislators accountable for their votes.</li> </ol>
<p><b>6.3 Community Engagement</b> - Fosters engagement and collaboration with all stakeholders to ensure high and equitable student learning.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Establishes policy expectations and provide supports for the district to engage families and the community.</li> <li>14. Uses methods for encouraging community input and developing community understanding when planning and implementing the educational program.</li> <li>15. Clarifies through policy an approach to media relations in order to communicate district priorities and positions on key issues impacting the district and public education.</li> <li>16. Supports and enhances partnerships with business and community organizations to help advocate for support of public education.</li> <li>17. Encourages parent and community leaders to consider school board service.</li> </ol>

