

**The toughest job
you will ever have**

**It's up to you
to make it work**



**South Carolina School Boards Association
New Board Orientation
February 19, 2026**

**If you haven't ever felt this
way...you will!**



Let's talk about ...

1. Major roles and responsibilities of boards
2. Effective board/superintendent relationships
3. Building and maintaining a unified board
4. Excellent school board ethics
5. Confidentiality and liability

Boards in conflict

If any of these actions are happening, you are (or you will) have problems:

1. Members not “staying on their page”
2. Members acting as individuals
3. Members thinking they have authority
4. Individuals forgetting their success as a member is tied to the success of the board
5. Members breaking the promise of confidentiality leading to a lack of trust

**Board members not
“staying on their page”**

News Flash #1...

**As a school board member,
it is not your job to
run the schools!!!!**

Board members acting as individuals

News Flash 2

**Finding the balance between
being an “individual” board
member versus being a “team”
board member**

**Board members thinking
they have authority**

News Flash 3

You have none!

**Forgetting to emphasize the
success of the entire board**

News Flash 4

**There is no “I”
in the word “team”**

**Lack of trust among
members**

News Flash 5

**Nothing breaks down the
board quicker than
breaking confidentiality**

**The reasons may vary,
but many times....:**

**We have met the enemy
and he is us!!**

**Pogo Comic Strip
Walter Kelly, 1971**

**Let's talk about these
conflict “flash points”**

Your School District's Education Leadership Team

The board and the superintendent

**To be effective, we start with agreeing on
the work of the board**

versus

the work of the superintendent.

Governing and managing:

- **Policy adoption is the function of the board**
- **Policy implementation is the function of the superintendent**
- **Stay on your page and remember lessons learned!!**

Board Powers and Duties

- **Policymaking...adoption of policy**
- **Executive...hold the supt. accountable**
- **Quasi-judicial...a court of appeals**
- **Appraisal...evaluate policy effective**
- **Planning...continuous improvement**
- **Interpretation...being the link to citizens**
- **Operational...effective board meetings**
- **Budget...providing necessary resources**
- **Reviewing action...the final authority**
- **Visits to schools...use proper protocol**

BOARD –SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIP

- There is nothing more important than both parties dealing with each other in an *ethical, honest, straight-forward, open-and-above-board manner*
- The superintendent is the CEO of the board and

In a sense, the superintendent is a “member” of the board ... with limits

BOARD–SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIP

Sample Policy Language

- **The relationship that exists between a board and its superintendent is an intrinsic part of the educational process within a community.**
- **A knowledge of what each can reasonably expect of the other can help substantially in promoting sound working relationships.**

School board's job versus Superintendent's job

Sample Policy BDD

School Board

Select Superintendent

Set policy

Adopts budget

Approves organization

Approves personnel matters

Functions as a board only

Staff matters through Supt.

Acts as a court of appeals

Adopts curriculum

Superintendent

Select Staff

Recommends and implements

Proposes and administers

Proposes organization

Recommends personnel matters

Deals with the board as a whole

Staff matters through Supt.

Actions based on policy

Recommends curriculum

In short ...

Boards govern

and

Superintendents manage

**What about
Individual board members....**

BOARD MEMBER AUTHORITY

Sample Policy BBAA

Simply stated ...

- All powers of the board lie in its action as a body. Board members acting as individuals have no authority over personnel or school affairs
- Individual members of the board, including the chair, only have individual authority when given to them by the board

BOARD MEMBER AUTHORITY

Sample Policy BBAA

- The power of individual board members exists exclusively in their action as a group.
- Individual board members, including the chair, have only such authority as delegated by Board vote or policy provision
- The board and its members deal with administrative services through the superintendent and should not give orders to any subordinates (of the superintendent) either publicly or privately.

BOARD MEMBER AUTHORITY

Sample Policy BBAA

- **The board will not be bound in any way by actions or statements of an individual**
- **Individual board members making information requests to the superintendent**
- **The board officers may, when appropriate, counsel individual members who are acting outside his/her authority and responsibilities or abusing his/her privileges**

**It is not your job
to “fix” things**

**You have to follow the proper
chain of command**

The problem is....

**Your “public” doesn’t
know that**

Memorize this statement

This problem could end up requiring board action, and if I am involved in it at this level, I will be unable to act on it as a member of the board because it could be a violation of due process.

You really need to go through the proper channels.

**Nothing breaks apart a
board and the relationship
between the board and their
superintendent than the
loss of trust**

**... and breaking confidentiality and
being less than truthful are the two
biggest reasons**

The FUN PART:

- Be an **ADVOCATE** for your schools and your students



Some discussion points –

- Do you vote for what is best for your specific “electors” or for the school district as a whole?
- How do you handle those situations where you are on the minority side of a vote?
- If the board is over-involved in personnel matters, you can't hold the superintendent accountable for the outcomes

Some discussion points –

- **Individual board member directives or requests to the superintendent...should there be any?**
- **Individual board members involvement in the day-to-day operations: how far is too far?**
- **How do you as a board member handle such situations when you see it happen?**
- **How do you want the superintendent to handle such situations when felt?**

Some discussion points –

- **Are surprises common at board meetings and how do you prevent them?**
- **Board unity: its importance, consequences of not having it, and the image/perception of not having it creates in the community and among the staff**

Now the hard work begins

**We are ready to go and
nothing can go wrong**

Right?

Think Again!

