

New
School
Board
Member

GUIDE

Developed by: Tennessee School Boards Association



WELCOME

Congratulations on being elected to serve on our Board of Education! We applaud your willingness to dedicate yourself to serve the children of our community.

Following is information to help assist you as a new member of our Board. We hope you will find these materials to be valuable as you provide leadership for our community in fulfilling its vision and mission for quality education.

DISTRICT INFORMATION

1. Name of school district: _____

2. School district address: _____

3. Main district phone number: _____

4. Superintendent: Phone: Cell Phone: Email:

5. Superintendent's secretary/assistant: Phone: Fax: Email:

6. Board secretary: Phone: Fax: Email:

7. Other board members: Home Phone: Work Phone: Email:

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

8. Communities served by the district: _____

9. Number of employees in district: Certificated: _____ Classified: _____

Names of County Commission/City Council Members:

10. Grade levels served by the district: _____

11. Number of students enrolled: _____

Pre-school _____ Elementary school _____ Middle School _____

High school _____ Alternative school _____

12. STUDENT POPULATION:

Ethnic groups by percentage: _____

Percentage of English language learners: _____

Primary languages spoken at home other than English: _____

Percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch: _____

13. Number of square miles the district covers: _____

14. Home to school transportation: District operated? _____ Contracted to? _____

15. Number of Schools: TOTAL: _____

Pre-school _____ Elementary school _____ Middle School _____

High school _____ Alternate school _____

16. DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Name of School:	Grade Levels:	Principal:	Phone Number:
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
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17. District office departments:

Title/name of department head:

Phone Number:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

18. Standing advisory committees:

Staff member responsible:

Board representation:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

19. District Documents:

- Policy Manual
- District Budget
- Strategic Plan

20. Current District Issues:

Status of the Issue:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

BOARD OPERATION

INFORMATION

1. Board meeting dates and times: _____

2. Board officers: _____ Role: _____

Chairman: _____

Vice chairman: _____

Secretary: _____

3. Order of items on the board meeting agenda:

1.	6.	11.
2.	7.	12.
3.	8.	13.
4.	9.	14.
5.	10.	15.

4. The purpose of the public comment section of the board meeting: _____

5. GOVERNANCE NORMS: How we behave toward members of the governance team and others:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

6. GOVERNANCE PROTOCOL CHECKLIST: How we do business:

How the board meeting agenda is developed and reviewed by whom:	
Placing items on the board meeting agenda:	
Obtaining additional information about board meeting agenda items before the meeting:	
Obtaining answers to questions about board meeting agenda items before the meeting:	
Alerting the board chairman of the desire to speak on a particular agenda item:	
Introducing new ideas for the board's consideration:	
Responding to staff or community complaints or concerns at board meetings:	
Communications between and among the board, board members and the superintendent:	
Communications between the board and other staff:	
Responding to community or staff complaints or concerns outside of board meetings:	
How, when and whom to notify about visiting school sites or participating in district activities:	
Individual board member requests for information from staff:	
Board member participation on committees and in district activities:	
When and how the board conducts a self-evaluation:	
When and how the board evaluates the superintendent:	

7. BOARD MEMBER BENEFITS:

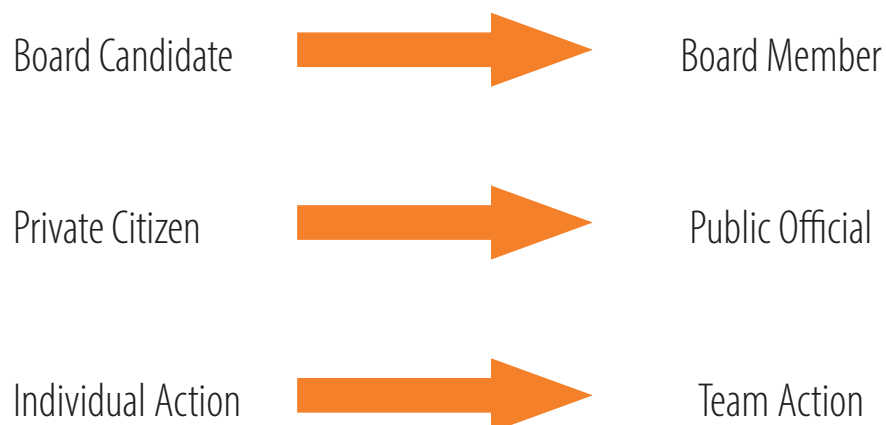
Stipend:	
Attending conferences/educational meetings/community events:	
Making reservations for conferences/workshops/business trips:	
Travel expenses and reimbursements:	

Why are school boards **necessary**

1. To check on the proprietary interests of professional employees
2. To provide varying points of view in policy development
3. To provide a means for those who are best informed to make decisions for the community
4. To keep public possession of public schools

HOWEVER

Changes must take place when you walk through that door...



Board Member

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Board adopts these standards as recommended by the Tennessee School Boards Association as a guide to its members as they provide educational leadership for the youth of our state.

ARTICLE I. My Relations to the Children

Section 1. I will at all times think in terms of “children first,” always determining how my actions and decisions will affect the education and training of children.

Section 2. I will seek to provide equal educational opportunities for all children.

ARTICLE II. My Relations to My Community

Section 1. I will endeavor to appraise fairly both the present and future educational needs of the community and to support improvements as finances permit.

Section 2. I will represent at all times the entire school community and refuse to represent special interests or partisan politics.

Section 3. I will endeavor to keep the community informed about the progress and needs of the schools.

Section 4. I will represent the Board and the school district to the public in such a way as to promote both interest and support.

Section 5. I will refer to other board members, staff, students, and the public with respect when using social media.

ARTICLE III. My Relations to Teachers and Personnel

Section 1. I will support the employment of those best qualified to serve as employees and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation of all staff.

Section 2. I will support and protect personnel in performance of their duties.

Section 3. I will not criticize employees publicly but will express any relevant concerns to the Director of Schools for investigation and action if necessary.

ARTICLE IV. My Relations with other Board Members

Section 1. I will understand that the Board makes decisions as a team and that individual board members may not commit the Board to any action.

Section 2. I will accept the will of the majority vote in all cases and give support to the resulting action.

Section 3. I will work harmoniously with other board members without trying to dominate the Board or neglect my share of the work.

Section 4. I will refuse to make promises as to how I will vote on a matter that will come before the Board.

Section 5. I will make decisions only after a complete discussion of items at a board meeting.

Board Member

CODE OF CONDUCT

ARTICLE V. My Relations with the Director of Schools

Section 1. I will support the full administrative authority as well as responsibility for the Director of Schools to properly discharge all professional duties.

Section 2. I will hold the Director of Schools accountable for working with staff and requiring them to work within the framework of policies set up by the Board.

Section 3. I will understand that the Board sets the standards for the school district through policy and that board members do not manage the district on a day-to-day basis.

Section 4. I will refer all complaints and concerns to the Director of Schools and abstain from individual counsel and action in regard to staff members.

ARTICLE VI. My Relations to Myself

Section 1. I will uphold the integrity and independence of the position.

Section 2. I will become familiar with federal and state education laws and school board policies.

Section 3. I will educate myself about my duties and responsibilities and current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information.

Section 4. I will continually advocate for the goals of the school district.

Section 5. I will vote and act impartially for the good of the school district.

Section 6. I will avoid conflicts of interest, and I will refrain from using my position on the Board for personal or partisan gain.

Section 7. I will attend all board meetings and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.

Section 8. I will model civility to students, employees, and all elements of the community by encouraging the free expression of opinion by all board members and engaging in respectful dialogue with fellow board members on matters being considered by the Board.

Mandatory Duties

OF THE BOARD

The Legislature has specified the duties and powers of the local board of education. The duties can be divided into several categories and are found primarily in TCA 49-2-203. The mandatory duties include:

Management and Control

The Legislature has delegated the duty to the board of education to manage and control all public schools established under its jurisdiction. This gives the board of education primary authority over school matters.

Employment

A school board working with the superintendent has the following duties regarding employment:

- make a written contract with the superintendent (the only employee who reports to the board)
- authorize positions and set salaries
- dismiss tenured employees after providing hearings if requested
- award tenure to eligible employees

Purchasing

The board may purchase supplies, furniture, fixtures and materials of every kind. All expenditures for such purchases estimated to exceed \$10,000 shall be made by competitive bids, or the board may follow the limits adopted by the local legislative body. Furthermore, no board of education shall contract for the construction of school buildings values greater than \$10,000 or additions to existing buildings valued at greater than \$10,000 unless competitive bids have been made. The Tennessee Supreme Court held that boards of education are not required to have competitive bidding for professional services.

Budget Preparation

The Board of Education is required to prepare a budget and to submit it to the appropriate legislative body. The statute also provides that the county board of education shall submit its proposed budget to the county legislative body by May 1. For municipal or special school districts, dates will be determined by charter or private act.

Students

The Board of Education has several duties regarding students. The Education Code gives the board the duty to discipline students after a hearing (this can also be accomplished by a Student Discipline Hearing Authority) and the duty to establish standards and policies governing student attendance.

Minutes, Policies

TCA 49-2-203 requires boards of education to prepare or have prepared minutes of each board of education meeting and mail copies to the members of the board. TCA 49-2-207 requires the local boards of education to compile and publish an official operating policy pamphlet.

MODEL OF SCHOOL BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

LESS Effective Boards

MANAGEMENT

- Personnel --
- Purchasing --
- Problem Solving --

MORE Effective Boards

GOVERNANCE

- Planning --
- Policy --
- Promotion --

Why Delegate Management Responsibilities?

- Superintendents are paid to manage
- Management by a board is neither efficient nor expedient
- Boards don't meet long enough to manage
- Superintendent's decisions are insulated from political pressures
- Personnel decisions cause more negative than positive reactions
- Boards don't have enough information to manage

The School Board **DOES NOT** Run the Schools ... It sees that they are run well.

PROMOTION

What is Promotion?

The act of promoting or the fact of being promoted; advancement

Encouragement of the progress, growth or acceptance of something; furtherance

Advertising; publicity

Make the Transition

Personal connections create positive perceptions

Transition the positive feelings parents have for their own child's school to the other schools in the district.

Personally connect community members without children to your schools.

Creating Public Opinion

1. Create your message
(identify 3 things about your system you would like the public to know)

2. Develop a community leadership plan
 - a. Identify who you want to communicate your message to and why
(identify your target groups)
 - b. Determine how you intend to communicate that message and gain support

3. Communicate your message!

PROMOTION

Key Stakeholder Groups

- Media
- Elected Officials (Governing Bodies)
- Staff
- Parents/Families
- Students
- Business Community

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

THINGS TO REMEMBER DURING AN INTERVIEW

- Avoid saying “No Comment.” If you are faced with a question you can’t or don’t want to answer, tell the reporter you are not ready to answer and give a reason why.
- Be very cautious when speaking “off the record.”
- Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know, but I will get back to you as soon as possible with the answer.”
- Keep your answers short and to the point. A reporter can’t report what you don’t say.
- Never, EVER lie to a reporter.
- THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK!
- Before the interview (if possible), learn as much as you can about the reporter and the particular media outlet.
- Find out what specific topics the reporter wants to discuss. Be prepared to speak about “hot topics.”
- Decide what your communication goals are for the interview.
- Don’t speak in jargon. Use plain English.
- Relax.
- Recognize the differences between different types of media.
- Stay positive. Don’t repeat reporter’s negative statements.

PROMOTION

Tips for Effective Promotion through Legislative Advocacy

- Research your legislator's background, committee assignments and voting records on your issues.
- Develop relationships by routinely communicating.
- Invite your legislators to your schools.
- Set priorities. When everything is important, nothing is important.
- Gather allies from your community to demonstrate broad support for your schools.
- Always be positive and courteous.
- Develop and submit resolutions to TSBA.
- Ensure that your board is represented at important meetings, functions of your governing bodies.

PROMOTION

Staff

- Implement staff appreciation days and recognize outstanding employees for good work.
- Encourage staff input on items before the board.
- After each board meeting, send out a report notifying the staff of board action.
- Include a wide range of staff in strategic planning, budget development, policy development and major curriculum changes.

Families

- Hold a new parents breakfast to welcome families to the school community.
- Create a yearly school calendar with important dates and deadlines and feature creative child/parent activities each month.
- Develop online parent portal to communicate with parents.
- Conduct parent/student/teacher conferences each year.

Leaders do not simply react to public opinion -
they create it.

POLICY

A board exercises its power through policy

- Policy: Guidelines established by the board to ensure that its vision becomes reality
- The board should continuously question how it can use policy to require the system to be better
- Policy allows the Board to determine how situations will be handled BEFORE they arise
- Policy establishes guidelines before they apply to individuals or groups
- Through policy the board should determine What and Why?
- The further the board goes with policy the more likely it is to get bogged down.

The board adopts policies . . .

The Superintendent administers them through Administrative Procedures

The Superintendent determines **How, Who, Where** and **When**

POLICY

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY

- Suggestions are not policy, policy must be enforceable.
- Policy complies with federal and state mandates.
- Effective policy is supported by the public.
- Policy is consistent with board goals.
- Policy is clear and understandable to all who are expected to comply with it.
- Effective policy promotes consistent compliance.
- Policy is not static it must be continually refined toward perfection.
- Policy should be reviewed regularly.
- The Board should not consider questions already answered in policy.
- Policy should not include what may be found elsewhere including in the law.
- Policy may be more restrictive but not more permissive than the law.

Should Boards Have Policies Online?

Advantages

- Make up-to-date policies available to all citizens.
- Available 24 hours a day
- Electronically searchable.
- Reduce secretarial workload and paper costs.
- Reduce liability associated with using inaccurate, outdated manuals.
- Users can easily print any school board policy when it is needed.
- Shows a school board's willingness to be held accountable for the policies it adopts.

PLANNING

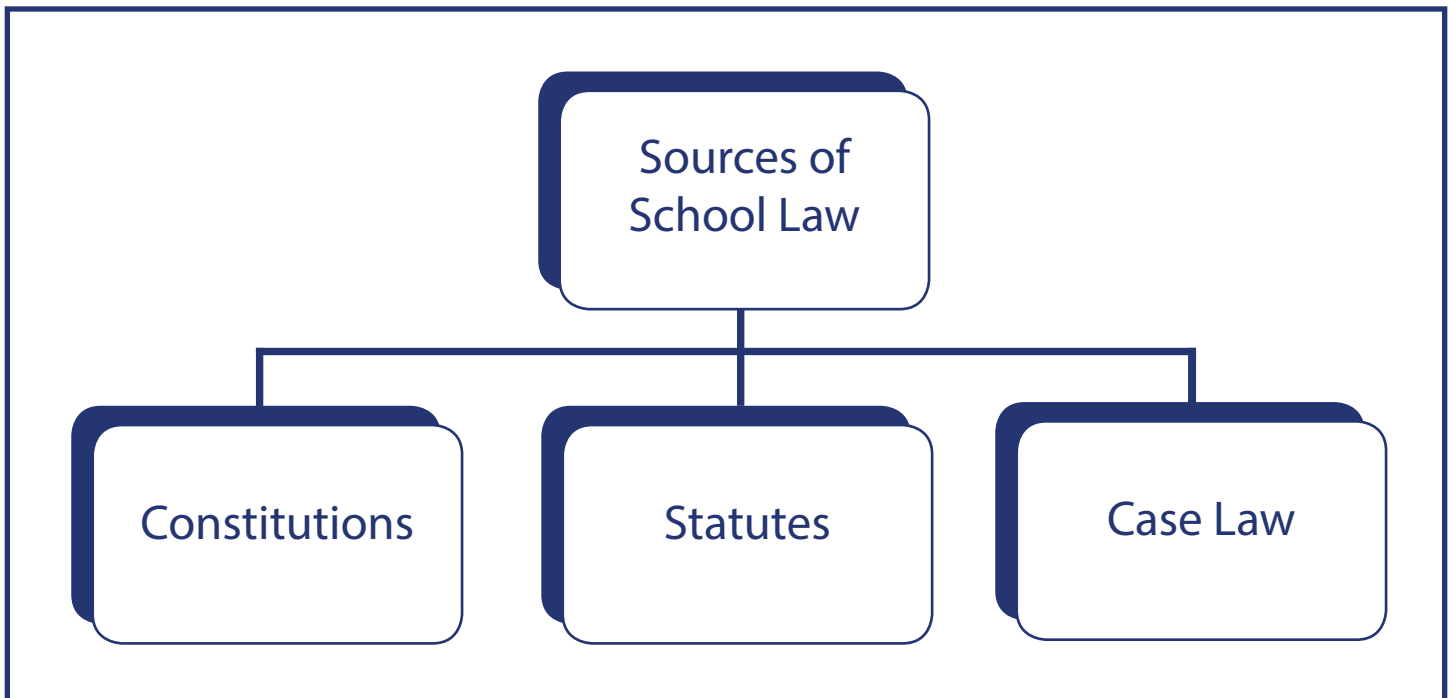
Key Principles in the Planning Process

- Mission, Vision and Beliefs are the foundation of the District's Strategic Plan
- Planning is the development of a blue print to achieve the Board's vision.
- If the Board knows where it wants to go it is more likely to get there.
- Maximum utilization of a community's resources is only possible through planning.
- A community's educational program is too important to be left to chance.
- Our Schools will not be what we believe they should be until Boards identify and develop strategic plans to achieve their goals.
- A long-range plan should set out the board's goals for a period of four or five years.
- An annual plan determines which goals, objectives and strategies will be accomplished in the current year.
- The Board and Superintendent must be committed to planning and involve the staff and the community in setting goals.
- A plan must be evaluated regularly to ensure that it is accomplishing the Board's goals.
- Effective planning allows a Board to develop and maintain a continuity of purpose.

SCHOOL LAW

Schools & The Law

The School Law Maze



SCHOOL LAW

IMPORTANT LAWS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Conflict of Interest

School Board members shall have no direct or indirect interest in supplying books, maps, furniture, or apparatus to public schools. TCA 49-6-2003

However a spouse or family member of a teacher or administrator may transact business with the school under sealed, competitive bidding.

As to a board member providing services to the school system a direct interest is prohibited. Indirect interest should be publicly acknowledged and the member should abstain from voting. TCA 12-4-101

Penalties

- Disgorge profits
- Dismissed from office
- Ineligible to hold office for 10 years

The Sunshine Law

The General Assembly hereby declares it to be the policy of this state that the formation of public policy and decisions is public business and shall not be conducted in secret. TCA 8-44-101

Open Meetings

All meetings of any governing body are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times, except as provided by the Constitution of Tennessee. All votes must be public.

TCA 8-44-102-104.

SCHOOL LAW

Meeting

The convening of a governing body in order to make a decision or to deliberate toward a decision on any matter. TCA 8-44-102

Deliberation

If two or more board members meet and deliberate (to examine and consult in order to form an opinion . . . to weigh arguments for and against a proposed course of action) it is a violation of the law.

Notice

Boards must give “adequate public notice” of any meeting it holds. The courts define that as adequate public notice under the circumstances, or such notice based on the totality of the circumstances as would fairly inform the public. This notice gives interested citizens a reasonable opportunity to become aware of the meeting and attend if they choose. TCA 8-44-103

Special Requirement

If the board plans to extend, renew, or terminate the director’s contract, it is required to give fifteen (15) days notice prior to the meeting and must state clearly in the notice that the action will be considered at that time. The law also requires the board to place the item first on the agenda. TCA 49-2-203(a)(14)(C)

Attorney-Client Exception

A Board may meet in private with its attorney to discuss pending litigation or matters that are likely to result in litigation. The board may not use this meeting to deliberate toward a decision but only to seek advice from counsel.

SCHOOL LAW

Penalties for Violation of Open Meetings Law

- Prohibited actions void
- Permanent injunction
- Court retains jurisdiction
- Semi-annual reports

Open Records

All state, county, and municipal records . . . shall at all times, during business hours, be open for personal inspection by any citizen of Tennessee. . . TCA 10-7-503

A record is a document created in the course of official business or information made or received in connection with the transaction of official business.

Exceptions

The records of students are confidential and board members do not have access simply by virtue of being on the board. TCA 10-7-504

Some employee information is also confidential including:

- Medical information
- Telephone numbers and addresses of employees and immediate family members
- Bank account information
- Social security numbers
- Driver license information (if driving is not a part of the job)

E-Mail

Correspondence of employees and board members in the form of electronic mail may be a public record under the public records law and may be subject to public inspection. TCA 10-7-512(b)

THE BOARD AND THE SUPERINTENDENT

*A board cannot be effective unless
the superintendent is fulfilling her responsibilities*

*The Board as a whole must protect the superintendent
from the board as individuals.*

What should the Superintendent expect from the Board?

- To recognize that policy is the core of effective school governance
- To accept the consequences of board policy
- To evaluate the performance of the superintendent
- To operate efficiently
- To maintain 2-way communication
- To support the staff
- To lead in a single direction
- To refuse to yield to external pressures which challenge the role of the superintendent
- To represent the entire community not a section, clique or group
- To require and rely upon professional judgments of the school staff

THE BOARD AND THE SUPERINTENDENT

What should the Board expect from the Superintendent?

- Integrity
- Ability to withstand pressure
- Firm and definite recommendations
- An understanding of the pressures on the board
- To communicate clearly both orally and in writing
- High competency in finance, business, management, personnel management and school law
- Accurate evaluations of personnel and programs of the district
- Ability to be open-minded and avoid becoming involved in personalities
- Commitment to keeping the public informed
- Professional growth
- Willingness to bring educational issues before the board for evaluation and study

Problem areas in Board/Superintendent Relations

- Failure to understand the difference between policy and administrative procedure
- Failure to keep each other informed
- Failure to listen
- Being physically or intellectually lazy
- Failure to exert leadership
- Failure to keep the children the center of the decision-making process
- Over-delegation of authority

BOARD/STAFF RELATIONS

- The major factor in school success is the employment and retention of an excellent staff.
- The key to maintaining and improving personnel is effective evaluation.
- Teachers must complete a five-year probationary period, score above expectations or significantly above expectations for two consecutive years and receive a positive recommendation from the superintendent before being eligible for tenure
- Boards grant tenure to teachers based upon the recommendation of the superintendent
- Tenure is not a lifetime guarantee of employment but is designed to protect competent teachers from unjust dismissal by allowing dismissal only for cause and entitling a teacher to written charges and a hearing
- Tenure may be revoked and a teacher returned to probationary status if he/she scores below or significantly below expectations for two consecutive years.
- **Causes for Dismissal**
 - Unprofessional conduct
 - Incompetence
 - Inefficiency
 - Insubordination
 - Neglect of duty
- All certified educators receive annual evaluations

EDUCATION ACRONYMS

AASA	American Association of School Administrators (www.aasa.org)
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act (www.ada.gov)
ADA	Average Daily Attendance
ADM	Average Daily Membership
AIMS	Association of Independent and Municipal School Districts
BEP	Basic Education Program
BM	Board Member
Board Talk	Online TSBA Publication
BOD	Board of Directors
CH	Abbreviation for Chairman
COSA	Council of School Attorneys (part of NSBA)
CUBE	Council of Urban Boards of Education (part of NSBA)
DOTH	Day on the Hill (a TSBA meeting)
ECS	Education Commission of the States (www.ecs.org)
EIA	Education Improvement Act (http://comptroller.tn.gov)
ELL	English Language Learner (www.state.tn.us/education/acctellaccomodations03.pdf)
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESL	English as a Second Language (www.state.tn.us/education/acctesl.htm)
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FDM	Fall District Meeting (TSBA meeting)
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (a type of Sunshine Law)
FRN	Federal Relations Network
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Journal	TSBA Publication
LEA	Local Education Agency
MASS	Metropolitan Area School Systems
UofM	University of Memphis
MTSU	Middle Tennessee University
NAESP	National Association of Elementary School Principals (www.naesp.org)
NAIS	National Association of Independent Schools (www.nais.org)
NASSP	National Association of Secondary School Principals (www.nassp.org)
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics (nces.ed.gov)
NCLB	No Child Left Behind act
NEA	National Education Association (www.nea.org)
NSBA	National School Boards Association (www.nsba.org)

EDUCATION ACRONYMS, cont.

PET	Professional Educators of Tennessee (www.teacherspet.com)
PTA	Parent Teacher Association (www.pta.org or www.tnpta.org)
SBA	School Board Academies (training sessions held by TSBA)
SBOE or BOE	State Board of Education (www.state.tn.us/sbe)
SCOPE	Student Congress on Policies in Education (a TSBA meeting)
SCORE	State Collaborative on Reforming Education (www.tennesseescore.org)
SDOE or DOE	State Department of Education (www.state.tn.us/education)
SRO	School Resource Officer
Sunshine Laws	US federal & state laws (passed in 1974) requiring regulatory authorities' meetings, decisions & records be made available to the public.
Supt./SU	Abbreviation for Superintendent
TABS	Tennessee Association of Board Secretaries
TAEMSP	Tennessee Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals (www.taemsp.net)
TASBO	Tennessee Association of School Business Officials (www.tasbo.net/const.htm)
TASC	Tennessee Association of School Communicators
TASCD	Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
TASSA	Tennessee Association of School Supervision and Administration
TASSP	Tennessee Association of Secondary School Principals (www.tnassp.org)
TBR	Tennessee Board of Regents (www.tbr.state.tn.us)
TCSBA	Tennessee Council of School Board Attorneys (tcsba.tsba.net)
TEA	Tennessee Education Association (www.teateachers.org)
THEC	Tennessee Higher Education Commission (www.state.tn.us/thec)
TOSS	Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (www.tnsupts.org)
TRTA	Tennessee Retired Teachers Association (www.tnretiredteachers.org)
TSA	Tennessee Supervisors Association
TSBA	Tennessee School Boards Association (www.tsba.net)
TSSAA	Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (www.tssaa.org)
TSSE	Tennessee School Systems for Equity
TSU	Tennessee State University
TVAAS	Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (www.shearonforschools.com/TVAAS_index.html)

Did you know?

Our Board is a member of the Tennessee School Boards Association. Their mission is to assist us in effectively governing our school district. TSBA helps school boards and their members to reach their highest potential through association programs, meetings and services.

Visit TSBA's website *www.tsba.net* where you can find information about:

- Professional Board Development
- Education Legislation
- Policy Recommendations and Updates
- Superintendent Searches
- Other Tennessee School Systems
- Information on all of TSBA's services
- TSBA Award Programs
- TSBA, local, state and national publications
- Register for School Board Academies and TSBA Meetings and Workshops
- Read TSBA Position Statements and Constitution and Bylaws
- Find contact and e-mail information for each TSBA staff member

Social Media

TSBA has two easy ways to stay connected through social media:

1. Become a fan of the Tennessee School Boards Association on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/TennesseeSchoolBoardsAssociation>
2. Follow TSBA on Twitter: **@TSBA_News** and **@TSBA_OnTheHill**. Use the hashtag **#TSBA**

TSBA TEAM



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New Board Member Guide

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