



**NEW SCHOOL
BOARD MEMBER
ORIENTATION HANDBOOK**



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

Revised April 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Foreword

Welcome aboard! The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) welcomes you to the challenges of serving your community and schools. This orientation booklet has been prepared as a service to you and is presented to new board members upon notification of appointment or election. It will answer as many questions as it will create when you read it. The booklet has several purposes: (1) to offer resources to help you gain expertise to become a better board member; (2) to provide sample questions for interviewing school personnel to becoming familiar with your school system; and (3) to provide a summary of information presented at the VSBA New Board Member Orientation.

The VSBA endorses orientation programs for school board members in the belief that well-informed board members are better able to accept their responsibilities and to function more effectively as productive members of the board. Best wishes in your efforts to become a better board member. Please think of the VSBA as your extended staff and use us as an additional resource as the need arises. The staff of VSBA looks forward to working with you throughout your term of office.

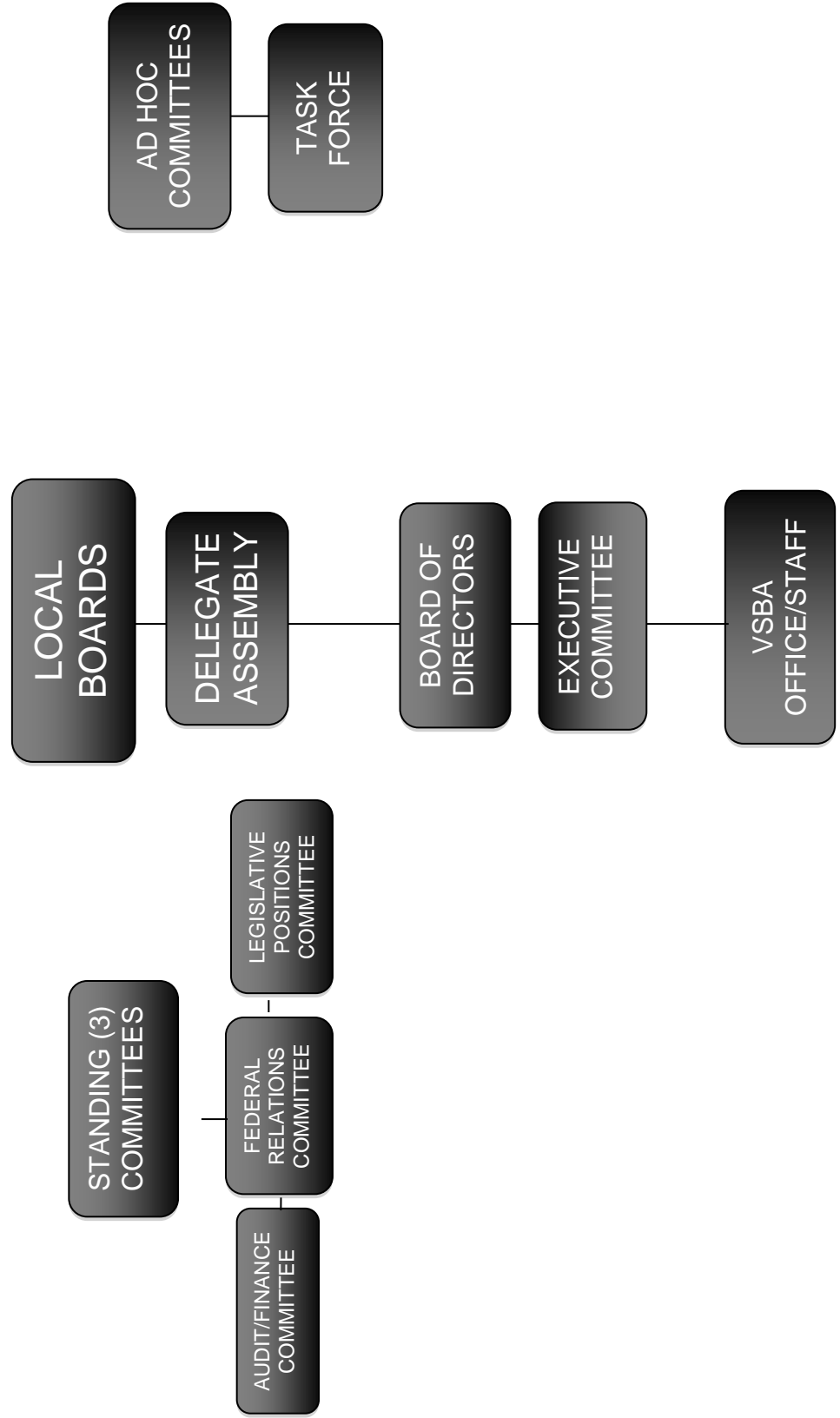
About VSBA

The Virginia School Boards Association is a nonpartisan, self-supporting organization whose primary mission is the advancement of education through the unique American tradition of local citizen control of, and accountability for, the Commonwealth's public schools. In this way, education policy is decided by local school boards, which are directly accountable to the community. VSBA promotes the quality of education through services to local school boards. It represents school boards' interests before the legislature, state agencies, Congress, and other state and national regulatory bodies.

Membership of the VSBA includes all local school boards of Virginia. Founded in 1906, VSBA represents the Commonwealth's school boards, which in turn, govern the schools attended by 100% of the public school children in Virginia.

Our Mission: Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through advocacy, training and services.

BIG PICTURE OF VSBA



*Consists of: a President, President-Elect, Past President and two (2) members at-large elected by the VSBA Delegate Assembly; nine (9) regional chairs elected by the VSBA regional membership; and two (2) standing committee chairs appointed by the VSBA President for a sixteen (16) member board.

2016-2021 VSBA Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through leadership, advocacy and services.

Vision Statement

VSBA is recognized and respected as an innovative leader in public education.

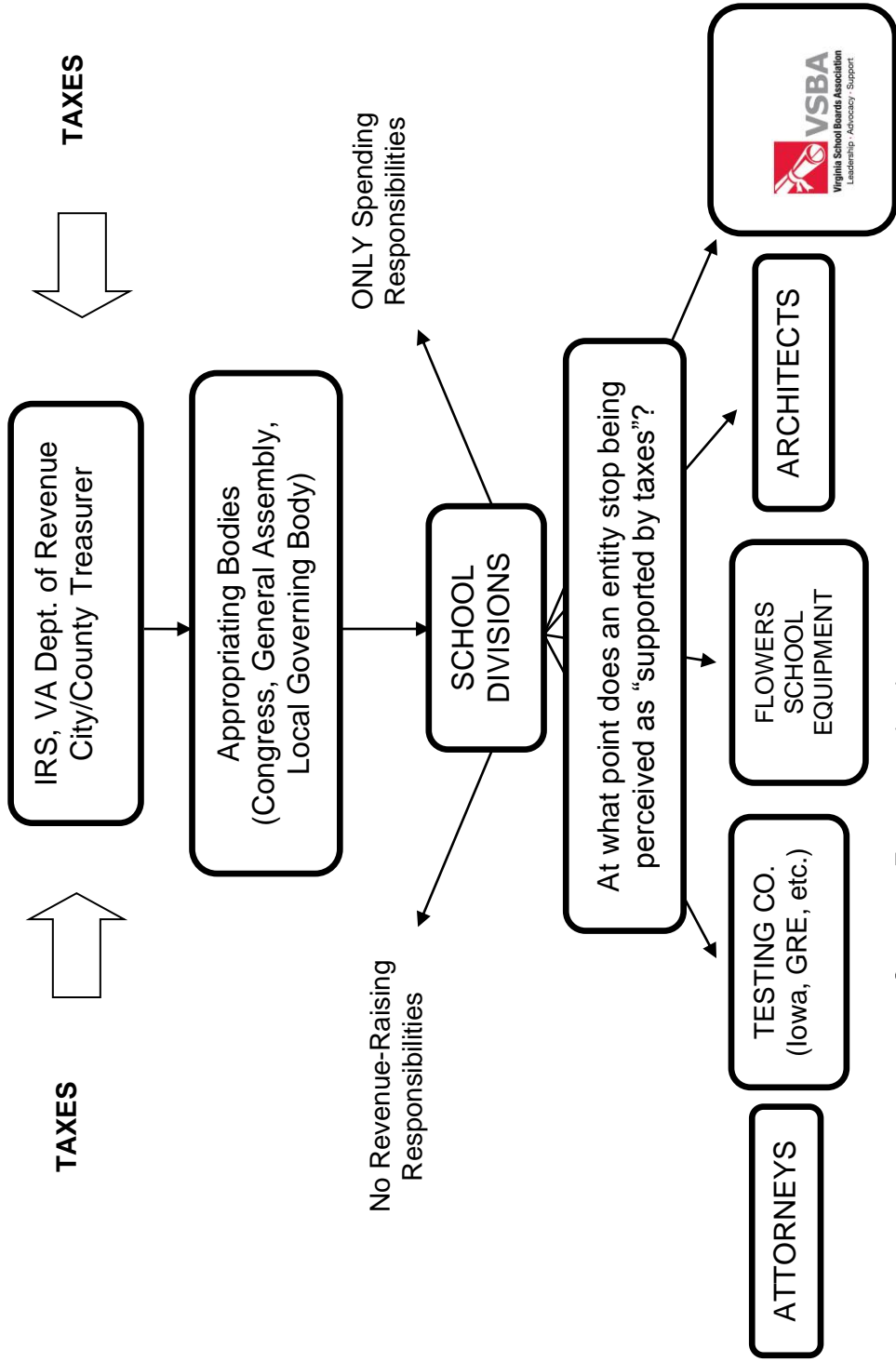
Goals

To maximize student achievement by taking a leadership role in education reform.

To advocate effectively for Virginia's public schools and children before all levels of government and the public.

To increase engaged participation of member boards and stakeholders in all VSBA services and activities.

VSBA: A Business or Tax-Supported Organization?



Common Factors as businesses

- For profit or not-for-profit
- Revenue-Raising and Spending Responsibilities
- Creates value for services or goods provided
- Source of income is not relevant to definition

School Board Member Self-Test

New Board Member Self-Test

1. List as many functions of a school board as you can.
2. What is the difference between the policy-making function of a school board and the administrative function of the superintendent?
3. What is board policy?
4. How might a board go about developing and adopting policy?
5. What is generally considered the single, most important decision a school board makes?
6. True or False? Discussion of an issue at a regular monthly meeting should occur at a specified time, based on the meeting agenda.
7. True or False? Board members should, whenever possible, inform the public as far in advance as possible, as to how they will vote on issues to be brought before the board.
8. True or False? If a board member is asked how and why he or she voted on an issue, he or she should only explain board action and not personal reasons.
9. The following is a recommended process for decision-making. It has been jumbled out of order. Please put the statements in order by placing the number 1 in the space for the first step and continue through the sequence until all five steps have been numbered.
 - A. _____ List all possible ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS you could take.
 - B. _____ Clearly state the DECISION to be made.
 - C. _____ List the ALTERNATIVES in priority order.
 - D. _____ Consider the DESIRABILITY of the results of each action.
 - E. _____ Gather all pertinent INFORMATION.
10. Draw a diagram that shows to whom a parent should go if he has a complaint or a compliment about his or her child's school; i.e., channels of communication.

11. When a board member is contacted by community members about concerns, outside a regular scheduled meeting, which of the following should be followed: (Select one answer)
- A. Tell them to call the superintendent, who will direct them to the appropriate source.
 - B. Listen to the concern, refer them to the appropriate source, and call the superintendent to notify him or her about what you have done.
 - C. Listen to the concern, explain that you can do nothing as a board member until it is placed on the agenda, but you will have the appropriate staff person call them.
 - D. Listen to the concern, explain that you can do nothing as a board member until it is placed on the agenda, and tell the appropriate staff person to call.
12. What is the school board's responsibility in the area of curriculum development and evaluation?
13. Briefly describe one way a school budget is developed.
14. True or False? The board should act only upon the recommendation of the superintendent in the hiring and non-hiring of all employees.
15. If you did not understand, or were unaware of a specified law that affected public schools, you should: (Select one answer)
- A. Call or visit the school board's attorney.
 - B. Call or write the VSBA.
 - C. Ask your superintendent.

Answer Key to New Board Member Self-Test

1. LIST AS MANY FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD AS YOU CAN.

- *To develop policy.
- *To develop a school budget.
- *To approve or reject hiring recommendations of the superintendent.
- *To approve or reject recommended textbooks.
- *To approve or reject special education placement recommendations.
- *To see that the buildings are kept in good condition.
- *To keep the public informed.
- *To evaluate the superintendent.
- *To protect student rights.
- *To follow state statutes and the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education.

2. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE POLICY-MAKING FUNCTION OF THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT?

The board is a policy-making body. Its policies set out the goals and objectives for the school system. The administrator's responsibility is to see that these goals and objectives are implemented effectively.

If you ever wonder, as a board member, whether you are stepping into an administrative area, ask yourself, "Am I establishing a goal or am I doing something to carry one out?" The former is the board's responsibility; the latter is that of the superintendent.

3. WHAT IS A BOARD POLICY? WRITE A DEFINITION.

A school board policy is a statement of the division's philosophy and goals. The statement should include the policy is for (what), its purpose in being adopted (why), whom it will affect (how much). In other words, policy is the written expression of the board's desires for the division's children. Policies are guidelines and courses of action that tell is wanted, why, and how much. Administrative rules, set by the superintendent, include the mechanics and details of how, by whom, where, and when.

4. HOW MIGHT A BOARD GO ABOUT DEVELOPING AND ADOPTING A POLICY?

- a. Define the issue
- b. Gather necessary information
- c. Get recommendations from the superintendent
- d. Discuss and debate
- e. Draft policy
- f. Hold first meeting
- g. Make revisions desired
- h. Hold second meeting
- i. Adopt policy
- j. Disseminate to public and all affected parties

5. WHAT IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION A SCHOOL BOARD MAKES?
Hiring the superintendent.
6. DISCUSSION OF AN ISSUE AT A REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING SHOULD OCCUR AT A SPECIFIED TIME, BASED ON THE MEETING AGENDA.
True. The meeting agenda should allow for discussion of specific issues at specific times. This will keep the meeting focused and help keep it on target.
7. BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, INFORM THE PUBLIC AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS POSSIBLE, AS TO HOW THEY WILL VOTE ON ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE BOARD.
False. A board member should always be open for input, from administrators and community members on issues coming to the board. Making up one's mind in advance on an issue effectively shuts out any information, ideas, or recommendations coming from those or other sources. Telling the community you have your mind made up would only make them believe you don't listen to them.
8. IFA BOARD MEMBER IS ASKED HOW AND WHY HE OR SHE VOTED ON AN ISSUE, HE OR SHE SHOULD ONLY EXPLAIN BOARD ACTION AND NOT PERONAL REASONS.
False. Having made a decision and voted, the board member certainly owes the public reasons for coming to the conclusion made. As a representative of the public, he or she should be willing to explain his or her views.
9. THE FOLLOWING IS A RECOMMENDED PROCESS FOR DECISION-MAKING. IT HAS BEEN JUMBLED OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE PUT THE STEPS IN ORDER BY PLACING THE NUMBER 1 IN THE SPACE FOR THE FIRST STEP AND CONTINUE THROUGH THE SEQUENCE UNTIL ALL FIVE STEPS HAVE BEEN NUMBERED.
 - A. 3 List all possible ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS you could take.
 - B. 1 Clearly state the DECISION to be made.
 - C. 5 List the ALTERNATIVES in priority order.
 - D. 4 Consider the DESIRABILITY of the results of each action.
 - E. 2 Gather all pertinent INFORMATION.
10. DRAW A DIAGRAM THAT SHOWS TO WHOM A PARENT SHOULD GO IF HE OR SHE HAS A COMPLAINT OR COMPLIMENT ABOUT HIS OR HER CHILD'S SCHOOL: I.E., A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION.
Parent ⇔ Teacher ⇔ Principal ⇔ Superintendent ⇔ School Board
11. WHEN A BOARD MEMBER IS CONTACTED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS ABOUT CONERNS OUTSIDE A REGULAR SHEDULED MEETING, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE FOLLOWED: (Select one answer)

D. You can see, by referring back to the channels-of-communication in Question 10, that the school board is the last step. By inserting yourself into a situation prior to your proper step in the channels, you may cause problems for staff at whose level the problem should have and most probably would have been solved. In a case where the person calling is very angry, or the situation is serious, however, Answer B is a good idea.

12. WHAT IS A SCHOOL BOARD'S RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AREA OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION?

The responsibilities of a school board in the area of curriculum are to approve what is to be taught, to make sure that what is supposed to be taught is being learned, and to ensure that the resources needed for learning are available and being used efficiently. The school board causes good curriculum development and evaluation to occur through board policy.

13. BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW A SCHOOL BUDGET IS DEVELOPED.

One common method: Teaching staff, secretaries, and custodians send their recommendations covering their needs to their building principal. The principal meets with the superintendent and the finance assistant to pass on those recommendations, along with his/her own. The superintendent and the finance assistant make adjustments in the principal's recommendations, based on their educational judgment and monies available. The superintendent brings the information to the school board, which makes a decision on the final budget based on the recommendations received, supporting material, monies available, and the tax impact on the community.

14. THE SCHOOL BOARD SHOULD ACT ONLY UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IN HIRING AND NON-REHIRING OF ALL EMPLOYEES.

True. The superintendent is the professional trained to evaluate needs and personnel. His/her personnel recommendations should always precede actions by the board and should not be overruled without strong and substantive reasons.

15. IF YOU DID NOT UNDERSTAND, OR WERE UNAWARE OF A SPECIFIC LAW THAT AFFECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS, YOU SHOULD: (Select one answer)

C. In the vast majority of cases, the superintendent will be able to answer your questions. Where he or she cannot, he or she will contact the board attorney for the answers. An alternative for both the superintendent and the board is to call the office of the VSBA. Your superintendent is your best source of information. The VSBA is number two!

ABOUT SCHOOL BOARDS

Customer Service is Always Right

By James Lyons

Stick close to the customer: More and more, businesses are emphasizing this hallmark of corporate excellence. They realize that providing excellent service to clients, as Thomas J. Peter and Robert H. Waterman Jr. pointed out in their book, *In Search of Excellence*, is essential in building a positive corporate image. And that's a lesson your school board can capitalize on and benefit from too.

The "corporate image" your school system establishes, like that developed by any business, is based on direct and indirect contact with the public. When you understand just how important those human interactions are in determining public perceptions about your school system, you'll want to look closely at each and every contact; the public meetings your boards holds, the conversations teachers have with parents, and the telephone calls received at the central office.

The point is simple: No matter how hard your board works at sprucing up buildings, balancing the budget, improving programs and streamlining policies, as far as the public is concerned, the school system is your board and school staff members. **The school system is people**-that approachable principal, caring teacher, friendly aide, courteous secretary, and telephone-call-returning superintendent. Improving board and school system contacts with the public is a matter of studying where and how those contacts occur, and then taking some simple steps to ensure the resulting interactions are positive. The following guidelines and basic advice will help you do just that.

Burnishing Your Board's Image

The arena in which your board is most visible is the public meeting. How you conduct these meetings determines how the public perceives your board. Consider the following stumbling points, and how the public interprets them:

- If meetings fail to begin and end on time, your board looks like it's not serious or business-minded.
- If you get bogged down with trivial or minor items, you seem unable to distinguish between what's important and what's not. If one of your board colleagues makes off-the-cuff remarks to individuals or news reporters, board members appear to be flippant showoffs.
- If board members must be educated on agenda items during the meeting, the board seems uninformed.
- If the board fails to stick to the agenda, it comes across as lacking direction.

- If discussion drags on beyond the productive stage, your board gives the impression of being inefficient and ineffective.
- If you devote little discussion to curriculum and programs, you seem to have the wrong priorities.

On the other hand, when your board, led by an effective Chair, conducts meetings in an efficient, businesslike, courteous manner, it comes across as an effective public body. This doesn't mean everyone always agrees. What is important is that your board receives members of the public in a friendly, courteous manner.

Effective public meetings can be the most important vehicle through which your board informs the community about the schools and builds trust, confidence, and support.

Handling Complaints

In the business world, complaints are a normal part of operations. Indeed, large businesses view complaints as one of their best sources of consumer feedback and they keep detailed records of complaints and review them periodically. Complaints are normal in public schools, too. Expect complaints – but demand they be handled systematically and efficiently. Why? Because people complain when they have grievances, real or imagined. Welcome complaints and take positive action or you'll end up destroying goodwill and breeding resentment.

Appearance Matters

Appearance might not be everything but it's an important part of public perception. And just as people judge your bus drivers, cafeteria workers, teachers and principals on their personal appearance, the public also evaluates the school system on the basis of appearance. Untidy, disorderly offices; broken, scarred worn furniture – these convey unmistakable messages. By contrast, clean attractive, well-kept buildings and grounds convey a sense of pride, attentiveness, and respect for the public's investment. By attending to the system's appearance then, you are helping sustain healthy community relations.

Most items on this checklist are not new or surprising. Indeed, most of these tips are based on old-fashioned common sense. First-rate service, businesslike meetings, efficient and courteous personnel attractive facilities: Your public expects all of this, and students deserve it. Providing it is your board's responsibility.

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Sample: Guidelines for Addressing the Board

The Board asks that you follow the guidelines below when addressing the Board. If you wish to address the Board, please sign in with the Clerk of the School Board prior to the meeting. If you fail to sign in and if there is time available please stand when the Chair asks for other comments to be identified. In order to give all speakers equal treatment and courtesy, the Board requests speakers follow these guidelines:

- Sign in with the Clerk prior to the meeting
- At the speaker's podium, please state your name
- Address comments to the Board as a whole
- State your position and give facts
- Debate is prohibited
- Give written statements and supporting material to the Clerk

The Board will try to hear everyone who wishes to speak on a subject but sometimes discussion has to be limited because of time. Time limitations will be set at the beginning of each meeting, based on the number of people who wish to address the Board. In most cases, no more than five minutes is allowed.

Speakers are generally allowed one appearance per meeting, although the Board can allow exceptions at its discretion. If you represent a group, you may want to have others in agreement recognized by standing. Meetings of the Board are formal proceedings and are recorded on tape. For that reason, you are requested not to speak from your seat or out of turn.

ETHICS AND POLICY

Ethics & Policy: The Need To Have Both The Importance of Policy

What is Policy?

POLICIES

Principles are adopted by the local school board to chart a course of action. They tell what is to be done and may also include why and how much. They indicate a broad line of action to be taken by the administration in dealing with day-to-day activities and are narrow enough to give the administration clear guidance. Policies are binding.

Who? Policies are adopted by the local school board.

The school board is the legislative body which enacts local school law. Policy making is the board's major responsibility and this function belongs solely to the school board by virtue of the powers conferred upon it by law. [Constitution of Virginia, Art VIII, Sec. 7 – Supervision of schools vested in the local school board].

REGULATIONS

Detailed directions to put policy in practice. Regulations flush out the requirements of the regulations. They are the mechanics, the administrative procedure. Regulations are binding. They are not discretionary. Until the regulations have been changed, its requirements must be followed.

Who? Superintendents may promulgate regulations without prior school board approval unless board action is required by law or unless the board has specifically asked that certain types of regulations be given prior board approval. The board should be kept informed of all school division regulations by the administration.

GUIDELINES

Set forth best practice and procedures for implementing policy. Guidelines are not binding, they are discretionary.

Who? The administration develops guidelines unless board action is required by law or unless the board has specifically asked that certain types of guidelines be given prior board approval. The board should be kept informed of all school system guidelines issued by the administration.

Why Do We Need Policies?

Provide Guidance to the School Board, Superintendent and Staff

SECURE THE BOARD'S POSITION

Without policy, the board is exposed. Written policy enables the division to function in accordance with the law. It creates a legal record.

Policies are the laws of the school division. Each school board shall maintain and follow an up-to-date policy manual (Code of Virginia §22.1-253.13:7).

In addition to providing for the general governance of the school division, Virginia law and federal law require some specific written policies.

The Virginia Standards of Quality (each school board shall provide, as a minimum, the programs and services, as provided in the standards of quality prescribed in the Code of Virginia §22.1-253.13:7 provides that the policy manual must include, but not be limited to:

- teacher grievance procedure;
- cooperatively developed procedure for personnel evaluation;
- system of 2-way communication between employees and local school board and its administrative staff;
- policy for the selection and evaluation of all instructional materials;
- standards of student conduct and attendance and enforcement procedures designed to provide that public education be conducted in an atmosphere free of disruption and threat to person or property and supportive of individual rights;
- policy for school-community communications and community involvement; and
- guidelines to encourage parents to provide instructional assistance to the children in the home.
- Policies and procedures to address complaints of sexual abuse of a student by a teacher or other school board employee.
- Certain federal regulations require detailed policies.

CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

- Expectations of the board members, the administration, the staff, the students, and the parents. Disarms critics.

INFORM THE PUBLIC

- Standards of Quality require that a current copy of school division policies be posted on the division's website. An annual announcement shall be made in each division, informing the public that the manual is available in such places.

ENSURE CONTINUITY

- The school board is a continuing body; however, board members and administrators change and the policy manual provides the written guidance which enables new board members and staff to carry on existing laws, programs, and standards.

Criteria for Good School Board Policy

STATED BROADLY/SHORT AND GENERAL

Long-term policies must be stated broadly with room for adjustment to fit special or emergency situations. Policy statements are short and general. When policies are detailed and list many specifics, often the one specific situation the school division is dealing with is not covered by the policy.

FLEXIBLE

Good policy must have built-in flexibility.

WRITTEN AND APPROVED

Policies should be written and approved by the school board, then placed in the school board policy manual.

COMMUNICATED

Policies should be communicated to the administration, the faculty, the parents, and the students.

NUMEROUS SOURCES OF INPUT

Many sources of input must be considered by the school board in adopting policy.

CITE LEGAL REFERENCES

Legal references should be cited. They give authority for the board's action. They set parameters of what you must do, what you may do, and what you are forbidden to do.

Ethical Considerations

Conflict of Interest

[Note: The descriptions below serve as a synopsis of the corresponding Code of Virginia citations and are not complete recitations of the Code sections. Local school board members should review these Code sections in their entirety.]

PROHIBITED CONDUCT IN GENERAL-Code of Virginia §2.2-3103

Outlines general prohibitions related to gaining economic benefit, except compensation and expenses, by way of a person's position in government. Also prohibits acceptance of money, gifts, or business/professional opportunities that reasonably tend to influence the government official in the performance of his or her official duties.

PROHIBITED CONTRACTS- Code of Virginia §2.2-3109

Outlines general prohibitions of officers or employees of any local governmental agency from having a personal interest in a contract with the agency of which he is an officer or employee other than his own contract of employment.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT CONCERNING PERSONAL INTEREST IN A TRANSACTION- Code of Virginia §2.2-3112

Outlines requirements regarding when an officer or employee of a local governmental body having a personal interest in a transaction must disqualify himself from participating in the transaction and when he or she may participate in a transaction.

BOARD MEMBERS AS EMPLOYEES- Code of Virginia §22.1-30

No employee of a school board may, during his or her term of office, be appointed as a member of the same school board.

RELATIVES AS EMPLOYEES- Code of Virginia §2.2-3119

Prohibits, except in certain circumstances, a school board from employing or paying any teacher or other school board employee from the public funds, federal, state, or local, or for a division superintendent to recommend to the school board the employment of any teacher or other employee if the teacher or other employee is the father, mother, brother, sister, spouse, son, daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law or brother-in-law of the superintendent or of any member of the school board.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION- Code of Virginia §2.2-3115

Members of every school board of each county and city and of towns with populations in excess of 3,500 shall file, as a condition to assuming office and thereafter annually on or before January ii, a disclosure statement of their personal interests and other information as specified on the disclosure form.

Freedom of Information Act

OPEN MEETINGS- Code of Virginia §2.2-3707

Except in limited circumstances, all meetings shall be open meetings, including meetings and work sessions during which no votes are cast or any decisions are made.

- “Meetings” means the meetings including work sessions, when sitting physically, or through telephonic or video equipment, as a body or entity, or as an informal assemblage of (1) as many as three members, or (2) a quorum, if less than three of the membership, wherever held, with or without minutes being taken, whether or not votes are cast.
- Notice including the time, date, and place of each meeting shall be placed in a prominent public location where notices are regularly posted and in the office of the clerk. This notice must be posted at least three working days before the meeting. Moreover, publication of meeting notices by electronic means is encouraged. Notice, reasonable under the circumstances, of special or emergency meetings shall be given contemporaneously with the notice provided to the school board members. Finally, the school board must provide individual, direct notice of all its meetings to any individual who requests such notification. Best practice: give advance notice of regular and special meetings of the school board through the news media.
- Agenda packets must be made available to the public at the same time it is given to board members.

CLOSED MEETINGS- Code of Virginia §2.2-3711

Public bodies are not required to conduct closed meetings, but can do so for certain purposes which include, but are not limited to: (1) certain personnel issues; (2) student disciplinary matters; (3) consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation if such consultation or briefing in an open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigation posture of the school board; (4) consultation with legal counsel employed by the school board regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by counsel; and (5) discussion or consideration of the acquisition or disposition of real property where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the school board.

OPEN RECORDS- Code of Virginia §2.2-3704

All writings and recordings, regardless of physical form or characteristics, prepared or owned by, or in the possession of the school board or its officers, employees or agents in the transaction of public business shall be open, upon request, to the citizens of Virginia and the media circulating or broadcasting in Virginia, unless prohibited by law or specifically exempt.

“Sharing Information”

STUDENT INFORMATION

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act requires that personally identifiable student information be kept confidential and, except in very limited circumstances, not be released to any individual, agency or organization without written parental consent.

INFORMATION DISCUSSED IN CLOSED SESSION

The law of common sense applies.

Functioning As an Individual

Board members function as part of the whole and do not have authority as individuals, except as is expressly delegated by the local school board as a whole.

VSBA Sample Code of Conduct for School Board Members

As a member of my local school board, I will strive to be an advocate for students and to improve public education and to that end:

1. I will have integrity in all matters and support the full development of all children and the welfare of the community, Commonwealth and Nation.
2. I will attend scheduled board meetings.
3. I will come to board meetings informed concerning the issues under consideration.
4. I will make policy decisions based on the available facts and appropriate public input.
5. I will delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent, and establish a process for accountability of administrators.
6. I will encourage individual board member expression of opinion and establish an open, two-way communication process with all segments of the community.
7. I will communicate, in accordance with board policies, public reaction and opinion regarding board policies and school programs to the full board and superintendent.
8. I will bring about desired changes through legal and ethical procedures, upholding and enforcing all laws, state regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools.
9. I will refrain from using the board position for personal or partisan gain and avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety.
10. I will respect the confidentiality of privileged information and make no individual decisions or commitments that might compromise the board or administration.
11. I will be informed about current educational issues through individual study and participation in appropriate programs, such as those sponsored by my state and national school boards associations.
12. I will always remember that the foremost concern of the board is to improve and enhance the teaching and learning experience for all students in the public schools of Virginia.

Therefore, I will always strive to demonstrate appropriate behavior/conduct as a public school board member. (Each member of this school board voting to adopt this Code should sign.)

Name: _____	Name: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____

School Board: _____ Date: _____

Better Boardsmanship

Things “I think I think” about holding onto your integrity and ethics in an increasingly sleazy world

1. Know who you are, and hold onto that. When you lose sight of that answer, take a good look in the mirror and ask yourself again. Wait for an answer!
2. Losing your integrity has long-term implications, sometimes based on the actions of a single moment. When that happens, it could take you years or even longer to regain your integrity, self-respect and the respect of others.
3. Successful people know that character, integrity and a strong sense of ethics outweigh any personal skills or knowledge one might have.
4. Be true to your conscious. When you're not, it almost always breeds trouble.
5. What you say and do does not mean nearly as much as who you are. If you do not serve as the social conscious of your institution or organization, then who will? Assume that role. Others are depending on your strength.
6. Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to act or not act in a given situation. Courage is sometimes called self-respect, dignity or confidence. You do have the potential to exhibit courage.
7. Know your limits: exactly how far you will go, for whom and why. And when you've reached those limits, stop. It is possible to say “no” or “enough” and still survive personally and professionally.
8. When you believe you have been treated unfairly by others, remember that what goes around usually comes around. Don't seek revenge. The tactic frequently is self-destructive.

by Jacqueline Price, President, National School Public Relations Association

Test Your Ethics

It is enough to do what is required by law. Board members also must observe the ethics of public office. The Public entrusts school board members with a great responsibility to do what is best for the students and community. Take this test and see how you measure up with these principles of conduct for school board members.

Do you:

Resist every temptation and outside pressure to use the office to benefit yourself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the school division?

Devote time, thought and study to the duties and responsibilities of school board member in order to render effective and credible service?

Work with fellow board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation, in spite of differences of opinion?

Base your decisions upon all available facts?

Vote your convictions in every case, un-swayed by bias of any kind?

Uphold the final majority decision of the board?

Take seriously your personal obligation to the community and your legal obligation to the state?

Give first and greatest concern to the students of your school system, without any distinction to who they are or what their background may be?

Work toward effective school board service in a spirit of teamwork and devotion in public education and all that it can mean to the citizens of this democracy?

Seek self-improvement by attending meetings and conventions of VSBA, NSBA and other education organizations?

Key: The answer to each of these questions should be yes.

Adapted from Georgia School Boards Association materials

Ethical or Unethical? That is the Question!

Read each description of behavior. Indicate ethical or unethical.

- A. You recommend that the administration hire your best friend's daughter.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- B. You are visiting schools following the district's visitation procedures.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- C. At a board meeting, you ask for more documentation from the business manager.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- D. You commented to your spouse about a board report of a teacher's inappropriate behavior at a school function.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- E. You told the superintendent that you were disappointed in his ability to complete a district goal after several deadlines were missed.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- F. You stressed the need for a special program listed on the meeting agenda by providing additional data during the board meeting.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- G. You interviewed a parent whose child had problems with a teacher and then called the principal and recommended a class change.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- H. You had the school secretary type your personal correspondence during school hours.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- I. You failed to study the budget proposal you've had for three weeks. Tonight is the budget meeting and you are unprepared.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- J. You make recommendations to a teacher about how to manage his or her class.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____
- K. You spoke to a neighborhood group as the board's designated spokesperson.
Ethical _____ Unethical _____

SCHOOL BOARD DEVELOPMENT

VSBA School Board Academy

The VSBA School Board Academy is a comprehensive program of orientation and education specifically designed for local school boards. As a VSBA member, you are automatically enrolled in the Academy.

Through participation in the VSBA Academy, you have the chance to meet with fellow school board members from across the state to share ideas and solutions. You also become more knowledgeable about educational issues and learn to effectively fulfill your responsibilities as a board member by focusing on topics such as:

- * **Superintendent/School Board Roles**
- * **Policy Development**
- * **School Law**
- * **Legislative Issues**
- * **Communication Skills**
- * **Media Relations**
- * **Board Operations**
- * **Strategic Planning**
- * **Educational Technology**
- * **Budget and Finance**

Why Participate in the VSBA Academy?

- Improve your effectiveness as a board member through systematic instruction
- Increase your accountability as a school policy-maker
- Expand your knowledge of complex and constantly changing educational issues
- Enhance skills needed to tackle future educational demands
- Understand the latest developments in both state and federal legal issues
- Maximize your opportunity to take part in high-quality training sessions offered by both VSBA and NSBA
- Receive public acknowledgment for your voluntary efforts to improve your school division
- Demonstrate to your community your commitment as a school board member
- Symbolize your achievement in leadership education

Ways to Grow & Learn

- Annual board self-evaluation
- Board development seminars
- Visiting schools
- Staff “briefings” on education programs and activities
- Using consultants to advise the board
- Simulated exercises designed to increase understanding of board process and educational issues
- Attending VSBA and NSBA conventions and workshops

Why Should I Spend My Time and the School Division's Money on Continuing Educational Conferences?

Today's schools are on the front lines of school reform. You probably were elected or appointed because you believe you can make a positive difference. So now it's your turn. You must advocate for students and schools, set the district's vision and provide the structure for students to succeed. You also are accountable to your community. There's not enough time or dollars for mistakes.

You will be asked to make decisions regarding:

Policy – The school board's primary function is setting policy. To accomplish this, board members must keep abreast of educational trends, as well as ever-changing federal and state statutes, regulations and court rulings. Board members must be able to translate community and student needs into educational programs that best meet those needs.

Personnel – The school board is often the largest employer in the community. One of the board's most important decisions, therefore, is the selection of a superintendent, or chief executive officer. That person's job is to manage the school system and its personnel within the policy framework set by the school board. The selection of the superintendent, as well as approving the hiring of other staff members, requires a high degree of knowledge and skills to successfully carry out this responsibility.

Finance – Education is big business. In fact, it is the biggest business in most communities. From transportation systems to food services to education programs and facilities, school budgets run in the millions of dollars. Considerable expertise is necessary to effectively balance a community's educational needs with its available resources. Determining educational priorities through sound budgetary allocations requires a variety of continuing board development programs.

Curriculum – Providing an effective instructional program for students is a school's most important function. The content and scope of the curriculum is, therefore, a primary concern for the school board in its role as policy-maker. Decisions must be made on what to teach, which instructional materials to use, including textbooks, and which methods of instruction meet acceptable community standards as well as national, state, and local mandates for school improvement. Other decisions relate to what funds are needed, what is required to comply with state and federal laws and regulations, judicial decisions or rulings, and a host of other concerns. Being well informed and up-to-date on such matters is essential to competent boardmanship.

Communications – Open and continuous two-way communication between a school board and its publics, and within the school system itself, is essential to fulfilling a board's mandate for accountability and responsiveness to the community in meeting the needs of the schools and their students. An informed constituency helps ensure public trust, understanding and support of the board's policies and practices. Communications training programs enable board members to discharge their policy-making responsibilities more effectively.

Show That Your Continuing Education at National and State Conferences Is Worth the Time and Money

Sometimes the general public reacts to reports in the news media about their representatives attending conferences and educational seminars by saying, “It’s not worth the public’s money.”

Local school boards, therefore, have a responsibility to help their publics and news media understand why participation in board member development programs is essential, how the school district benefits from what is learned, and why attendance is not only legitimate but also extremely advantageous for the school district. By tailoring procedures and communication practices to the local community, a school board can strengthen its relations with the community and the news media, and thereby minimize any criticism that may arise from misinformation or lack of proper information.

The following are steps a school board can, and should take to communicate these objectives. These steps were developed, and are recommended by, public relations professionals.

Things To Do Before the Event...

- Make a public announcement at a board meeting prior to a workshop or convention that board members and administrators will attend. Indicate specifically who will attend, the purpose, the value to the school district of their participation, approximate budgeted cost to the district, and any restrictions on that cost.
- Cite official board policy that endorses participation by the board and staff in development programs. If your board does not have such a policy, now is the time to develop one.
- Consider preparing a double-spaced news release on the school district’s stationery or news letterhead to coincide with the public announcement. Incorporate basic information about the program and the board members’ participation. Distribute the news release to media representatives at the board meeting and to other local media not represented.
- Answer factually and promptly any inquiries about the upcoming workshop or convention. All inquiries should be channeled for response to one official spokesperson, usually the board president or the superintendent.
- Review the meeting program and map out how your time can be used most advantageously. Determine which sessions, discussions and other activities, such as exhibits, will directly benefit your school district. Be prepared to explain your choices.
- If more than one person from your board is attending, determine which sessions each will attend. Try to avoid duplication so that board members benefit as much as possible.
- Designate one attending board member to prepare a written or verbal summary report to the board following the workshop or convention.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Working with the Media

Developing a Media Policy and a Media Relations Plan

Establish a good working relationship

- Know your reporters' publications and deadlines
- "Tip" the media
- Treat all reporters fairly

Designate a spokesperson

- School division
- School board

Provide information and access

Building Trust

Know publications and deadlines

Read the bylines!

Recognize good work with a note or phone call

Return calls promptly

- Anticipate and prepare in advance

Provide information equally and be honest

Assisting Reporters

Basic information

- Names and titles of central office staff
- School names and addresses
- Enrollment and budget figures
- Board member names
 - Personal background
 - Photos/name cards at meetings

Meeting agendas

- Background information
- Staff recommendation and rationale

Interview Basics

Be honest – never lie or mislead!

Avoid jargon, euphemisms, "red flag" words

Keep answers simple and brief

- Yes or No
- Provide rationale or evidence for answer

Avoid "no comment"

Never speak "off the record"

Be certain of your facts

Refuse to be manipulated, e.g. the "Would you say....?" syndrome

Interviews with Newspaper Reporters

Ask questions about the story's angle: What is the story about?

Be familiar with the publication and reporter

Be prepared to answer questions!

- Who, what, when, where, why, and how
- Anticipate tough questions and your responses

Television Interviews

Stand up interviews

- Pause and think before speaking
- Keep it short
- Repeat your main point several times
- Look at the reporter

Talk shows

- Wear solid colors, avoid flashy jewelry
- Use hand gestures
- Look attentive at all times

Create your own Sound Byte

State your position

Describe supporting facts/actions

Closing statement

Tips for Radio

Keep statements short!

Use descriptive language

Use reference materials if needed

Speak in complete thoughts

Avoid pause language: Um...Ah...

Repeat your main point several times

What if...? Would you say...? Can you comment on...?

Deflect negative questions

- "I prefer to deal with the facts right now."
- "No, I would say..."
- "I don't agree with that statement. I think..."
- "I'm not sure what it is you're asking. Could you rephrase the question?"
- Try to give some information
- Repeat the procedure being followed
- Repeat what is already known
- Describe future action if you know it

Correcting Inaccurate Stories

Correct a story if –

- You responded accurately but information released was wrong
AND
- The misinformation caused substantial damage
- A correction will not give more visibility to the opposite view
- You reach the same audience that saw the error
- You won't look petty or vindictive

To Correct A Story

Talk to the reporter

Talk to the editor

Request a correction

Write a Letter to the Editor

- Avoid defensive tone
- Greater exposure than correction

Dealing with the Media in a Crisis

Tell the bad news quickly

Designate a reliable and accessible contact person

If you can't reveal information, tell reporters why

As you learn more, contact reporter with updates

Ask yourself what the public would want to know

Don't forget to be human

Promoting Good News

Good news comes from good relations

Find a "hook" or twist

Visual stories have more appeal

Invite press to participate in school activities, e.g. Career Day

Give them choices of topics

Timing is essential

- Advance notice
- Spur of the moment, esp. TV

PR=Positive Response

Familiarity breeds contentment

Local Information Source

- Newspapers (30%)
- Neighbors and Children (21%)
- Television (17%)
- Other: School officials (12%), School newsletter (9%), Radio (5%), Other (3%), Don't Know (3%)

National Information Source

- Television (43%)
- Newspapers (31%)

The Board Member: Complaint Central?

Does being on the school board sometimes feel as though you are the Director of “Complaint Central”? Things may not be as bad as they appear. No one likes complaints, and the idea would be to have a school division that runs so flawlessly that complaints are never uttered. However, such is rarely the case. Complaints are a form of conflict and conflict is both natural and, if it is well-managed, healthy. However, unjustified complaints can be bothersome and time-consuming.

If you think it’s negative that people bring their complaints to you, think again:

- People who complain care.
- People who complain are in communication with you. You can’t solve a problem or clean up a misconception until it is on the table.
- Your chances of retaining loyalty are better with the complaining taxpayer than they are with the unhappy, but silent, taxpayer. According to research findings for the White House office on Consumer Affairs:
- Only four of 100 dissatisfied customers will complain.
- For every complainer, there are 24 with the same complaint who will never say anything.
- About 13 percent of dissatisfied customers will tell 20 other people about it.
- Almost 90 percent of dissatisfied customers won’t repurchase from (or vote for, support, or become involved in) the offending company, compared to 54 to 79 percent who remain loyal when complaints are satisfactorily handled.
- Receiving the complaint with the attitude that people care about the school and are sincere in their concerns will facilitate its resolution.

Create an atmosphere that lets people know they can talk with you about school concerns by being visible, available and approachable.

Avoid thinking of responses while the person is complaining to you. Listen carefully.

Ask questions to clarify points that may not be clear to you.

Recognize that the person giving you the complaint likely cares about the division and wants it to improve.

When listening to a complaint, watch your body language. Jiggling change, tapping a pencil, avoiding eye contact, walking around, playing with papers, sighing or folding your arms will all be interpreted as a lack of concern.

It's easier to deal with a complainant who lacks information, has incorrect information, or simply does not agree with a course the division is taking that it is with complaints who have become emotionally involved to the point that there is some threat to their egos.

Never miss an opportunity to keep your mouth shut. When people get themselves ego-involved with a complaint, they put up barriers to cooperative communication that are only lowered by being allowed to express their relevant concerns. In other words, sometimes it helps to let people vent.

Avoid giving the impression that you can solve a problem if, in fact, you can't. Explain your role as a policy maker and communications link.

If the complaint is based on incorrect information, and you have the correct information, relay the correct information in a gentle, positive manner. Your goal is to leave the person's self-respect intact.

Accept some of the responsibility for the person not having the correct information with a comment such as, "I'm sorry our communications on this topic were not adequate."

If someone has a grievance with you, remember: No one cares why you mess up (if you did) or what the problems of your organization are. What they want to know is: What are you going to do about it?

When you get a complaint, ask the complainant to suggest a solution to the problem. Ask them, "What would you do if you were in our shoes?"

No matter how much you care about the division and/or the object of the complaint, remain objective. You represent the complainant, too.

Guide the complainant to a solution, whether it's correct information or information on whom he/she should contact in the chain of command. If you refer the person to someone else, preface it by explaining your board's policy and the reasons for it.

If the complaint is serious or repetitive, let the superintendent know about it.

Taken from VSBA CommunicationsPLUS. VSBA CommunicationsPLUS is prepared for the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) by the Washington State School Directors' Association. For additional information, contact Gina Patterson at (800) 446-8722.

INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

This section of the orientation package contains lists of suggested questions to be used as discussion points during meetings the new board members will have with professionals in the school system. These meetings should take place within the first weeks of the new member's team. The importance of these meetings relates to obtaining a clear understanding of the information gathered. Time to digest the information is an important decision in scheduling these meetings.

The first interview should be with the school board chair and the division superintendent. Following that meeting, the superintendent might need to set up the remaining interviews. A suggested order includes the following: (titles may differ from division to division)

- * Division superintendent
- * Assistant Superintendent for Finance
- * Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
- * Assistant Superintendent for Personnel
- * Director for Pupil Services
- * Elementary School Principals
- * Middle School Principals
- * High School Principals

Your division may not have all of these positions. If not, the superintendent should schedule interviews with the appropriate school personnel to best accommodate the information sought in the question set. In smaller school divisions, the superintendent may handle the responsibilities of several of these positions. In that case, he or she would be the person with whom all of the topics would be discussed.

The new board members should be provided these questions or similar ones at least a week before the interviews. They should try to answer as many questions as possible on their own. This will give them a better idea about where they may need to concentrate their questions, and what preconceptions they may have.

It is important that all administrators who will meet with the new board members have copies of these questions at least a week in advance. This will allow them to prepare answers, gather necessary information, and be as helpful as possible.

It should be emphasized to all involved that these interviews are **not** evaluation sessions or critiques. They are only a means by which new board members can become informed about the school system from those with the most professional expertise and experience.

Before the interviews, the new board members should have read all other orientation materials supplied by the VSBA and their local school division. This will provide the necessary background for a more effective discussion.

New board members should conduct the interviews alone with the administrators involved. The exception to this might be the board chair and superintendent, both of whom might find it more convenient to meet together with the new member. Since informality and free discussion are important for effective meetings, the administrators might be more comfortable, and less likely to think they were being evaluated, if they met only with the new members.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR A MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

(Prior to the meeting, the new member should review the board bylaws and the board committee structure – if it works with a committee system.)

1. What does the board chair do that is different from other board members? What is the role of the superintendent? What is the chair's relationship to the superintendent?
2. What is the procedure used to evaluate the superintendent? Has the board evaluated itself? If so, how did it go about that? What is the role of the superintendent in this evaluation process?
3. (If the board operates on a committee system) What are the committees? How do they function? How are their deliberations and recommendations brought to the full board? How often? Are committee meetings open to other board members? Are they open to the public? How are the committee chairs selected?
4. How is the board chair selected? If there is a vice-chairman, how is this person selected?
5. Is there any particular order for the roll call vote? Is there any particular order for the board members to read motions at a public meeting?
6. When can the public speak at meetings?
7. With what community or parents' groups does the board meet? Does the board meet with any student or teacher groups?
8. Does the board have any ad hoc committees functioning at this moment? If so, what are their charges? When are the reports due?
9. How does the board approve textbooks and curricula?
10. Does the whole board have work session meetings where no action is taken? If so, how often?
11. What is the channel of communication in the division for citizen complaints? How should I handle those that come to me?
12. How do I get an item on the agenda for a meeting? Whom should I call if I have questions about agenda items?
13. How do I go about having any questions about the schools or personnel answered?
14. Does the board have an attorney? If so, how does the board get opinions and information from the board attorney? What is the practice for who calls the attorney?
15. Is there a spokesperson for the board?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR A MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

1. How does your administration function differ from the board's policy-making one?
2. What does the central office organizational chart look like? Are there written job descriptions for the various positions available for review?
3. What orientation programs are held for the new staff?
4. How are the principals involved in decision-making for the district?
5. What parent involvement activities are you personally involved in? How often do you meet? What are the communitywide activities? Is there a public relations/information person on the staff?
6. What do you see as the optimum relationship between a superintendent and the school board?
7. What do you think can be done to maintain and upgrade our educational program in the face of decreasing revenues and increasing costs?
8. What relationship should board members have, if any, with central office personnel? With principals?
9. What is your management philosophy for the school system?
10. What evaluation system for employees is in place?
11. How are school policies monitored for compliance with current laws and regulations? How often does this occur?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR MEETING WITH THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR FINANCE

(Prior to the meeting, the new member should review the school board budget and become familiar with the budget format.)

1. What do you do as Assistant Superintendent for Finance? What is a line item budget?
2. What is the process, with staff, for gathering information, recommendations, and other data prior to the central office putting a tentative budget together? What are the timelines for each step in the process? Who is involved at each step?
3. When, and how, does the school board participate in the budget-making process?
4. What are our per pupil costs? How do we compare with compatible divisions?
5. What are the division's short-range and long-range building maintenance plans?
6. What kinds of back-up materials does the board receive in order to make budgetary decisions?
7. What percent of the budget is fixed charges? What has been the rate of increase in these areas in the past several years?
8. What is the total amount of surplus monies in our budget?
9. What has been the tax rate in the community for school costs over the past ten years? What is the history of budgets passed or defeated over that period of time (if the budget is voted on)?
10. How many students do we bus? What are the state mandated distances? How many of our bussed students are from shorter than mandated distances? How many bus routes do we run and what is the cost per route? Do we own the busses?
11. Does the school conduct regular risk management evaluations? What steps are taken to ensure competitive pricing for insurance rates?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR A MEETING WITH THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR INSTRUCTION

1. What are your job responsibilities?
2. How do you decide what courses should be taught and what materials should be used?
3. Are there any sub-committees? How are the members of these committees selected? How long do they serve? Who is the chair?
4. What parent/student/community involvement is there in curriculum development and revision?
5. How are textbooks reviewed and adopted by the board?
6. How are elementary, middle, and secondary curricula coordinated?
7. What is the process by which a curriculum is recommended, developed, and then brought to the board for approval? What kinds of information on a particular curriculum does the board receive prior to its vote on the recommendation?
8. What evaluation instruments are used to determine whether what is being taught is being learned? How are the test results and student progress information used in evaluating curricula?
9. How often are curricula reviewed for update and revision? Who is responsible for this? What are the procedures?
10. How is curriculum development tied into the budget requirements?
11. What are the state graduation requirements? Do our requirements exceed them? If so, how?
12. What subjects seem to be losing student interest? Which are gaining interest?
13. What provision is made for teacher in-service prior to curriculum implementation?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR MEETING WITH THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR PERSONNEL

(Prior to the meeting, the new member should review the school division's personnel policies.)

1. How is the board kept informed regarding personnel issues?
2. How many grievances have come to the board in the past three years? How were they settled?
3. Would you clarify for me the meaning of the portions of the contracts in which I do not understand? (Board member should come with a list of contract items that are unclear.)
4. How does the school division work to expand the potential talent pool of applicants? What are the targeted needs and personnel for the future of the school division?
5. Does the school division make any special efforts toward minority recruitment?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES

1. What are your job responsibilities?
2. How many students do we have in special classes? Where are they housed for their education? What type of special classes and/or resource rooms do we have in our division?
3. How many special education students are being mainstreamed? For what portion of their day? What subjects?
4. How many staff members are in this department division-wide? What are their job titles? Job descriptions? Student loads?
5. What outreach activities do you conduct with the community? With parents of special education students?
6. How do special services personnel interact with teachers and building administrators? What procedures are used to ensure that the necessary knowledge about a special education student is received and understood by the proper staff?
7. What in-service training does all staff receive regarding how to work with special education students in regular classes?
8. What in-service training does special services' staff receive?
9. What medical and health services are available in the schools? Are Medicaid reimbursements applied for in the division?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR MEETING WITH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

(General Questions for All Levels)

1. How many staff do you have, including secretarial, lunchroom, custodial, and other groups?
2. How is your school organized? What is the average class size per grade level?
3. What is the educational philosophy of your school? How do you implement this philosophy in your building?
4. How do you coordinate activities with Special Services?
5. What types of involvement do you and your staff maintain with the parents? With the PTA? Do you have a newsletter?
6. What types of student testing do you do? How are the results reported to the parents? What is your grading system? How often are parent conferences held?
7. What is the school policy on homework?
8. What in-service programs have your staff participated in over the past two years? What are planned for the next year? Are these division-wide programs?
9. What extra-curricular activities does the school have?
10. What equipment does your media center have? How many books? Computers?
11. Do you have any team teaching? Open classrooms? Do they work?
12. What do you see as the area of greatest concern over the next few years for your school?
13. What are you proudest of for your school?
14. How do you prepare students for entry into the school?
15. How do you prepare the students for the next level of schooling?
16. How many guidance counselors does your school have? What is their per pupil load? What do you believe is the primary job of the guidance counselor?
17. What clubs does your school have? How many students join them?
18. Does your school provide any alternative educational settings for students who might function better in a nontraditional approach?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

1. What curricular departments do you have? How many staff is in each curricular department?
2. Does the school have different classes for different ability levels? Does the school have any advanced placement courses?
3. Do you have any work-study programs? Vocational courses? How many students are involved in them?
4. Are your graduation requirements beyond those required by the state department? If so, how?
5. What has the drop-out rate been for the last few years at your school?
6. What percent of students go on to four-year colleges? To two-year colleges? Work?

GLOSSARY

Glossary of Educational Terms and Organizations

AASA

American Association of School Administrators

AAUW

American Association of University Women

ACCOUNTABILITY

A process designed to determine whether schools are producing the results promised.

ACHIEVEMENT TEST

A test that measures the extent to which a student has acquired, and can demonstrate, certain skills and proficiencies that are usually a result of instruction.

ACLD

Association for Children with Learning Disabilities

AD HOC

A committee formed for a specific purpose and for a limited length of time. Often made up of community members brought together to study a particular problem or issue and write a report for the board of education.

ADA

Average Daily Attendance. A formula derived by taking the sum of the days attended by each student enrolled and dividing it by the number of days school is in session, usually figured for a period of one school year.

ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

The body of rules and regulations enacted by a state board of education or the chief executive of a state system, under statutory authority, to govern the operation of the public schools in the state.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

A statement adopted by a board of education or an administrative agency outlining principles to be followed with respect to a specific matter. It usually requires rules or regulations to be adopted for its implementation. It should be broad enough to provide for administrative leeway in its implementation, although the fact that it be implemented in some manner is mandatory.

AG's OPINION

Attorney General's opinion

AMICUS BRIEF

A written document prepared by a counsel to support a position in a court case. This is often referred to as a "friend of the court" brief which is submitted to provide support to a case.

ARBITRATION

A method of settling disputes through resources to an impartial third party, whose decision can be binding. Arbitration is commonly resorted to in the interpretation of existing contract terms or other rules and regulations (grievance arbitration). It can also be used in jurisdictional matters when parties cannot reach agreement on a contract.

ASBO

Association of School Business Officials

ASCD

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

ASSESSED VALUE

The standard by which the worth of taxable property within a community is measured.

BUDGET CAP

The limitation on the annual increase in the net operating current expense budget allowed in each division.

BUSINESS MANAGER

The school division administrator directly responsible for business affairs. Sometimes the business manager is an assistant superintendent in charge of business and, as such, is responsible to the superintendent (unit control system). Sometimes the business administrator reports directly to the board of education (dual control system).

BYLAWS

Collection of rules adopted by the board of education for the regulation of its own organization. They must not conflict with statute, but may be more specific than statute.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

Expenditures that result in the acquisition of fixed assets or additions to fixed assets; i.e.: land, existing buildings, improvement of grounds, and construction or remodeling of buildings. It may include installment or lease payments on property (except interest), which have a terminal date and result in the acquisition of property.

CAUCUS

A closed meeting for the members of a political party for the purpose of determining policy for the party. In negotiations, a closed meeting for members of one side in the negotiations for the purpose of discussing strategy and issues in the bargaining.

CETA

Comprehensive Employment and Training Act

CHARTER SCHOOL

A publicly funded independent school established by teachers, parents, or community groups.

COGNITIVE LEARNING

The acquisition of knowledge by the application of an intellectual process, as opposed to emotional or physical activities.

COHORT

The group of individuals, each with similar characteristics, which is the subject of a longitudinal study.

COL

Cost of Living

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Negotiations between the representatives of employers and employees to develop a contract specifying the conditions of employment. Presently collective bargaining is not legal in the state of Virginia.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

A school which is intimately involved with the life of the community around it, serving as a center for many activities outside the normal educational hours. Programs can include health clinics, athletic activities, adult schools, mental health groups, senior citizen organizations, etc.

COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

Instruction designed to remedy or prevent the loss of basic skills by a student due to socio-economic or academic deficiencies.

COMPUTER TERMINOLOGY

BASIC-Beginners All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code. A high-level programming language, approximating business English, which is used in an interactive computer environment. It is favorable among financial analysts.

BIT-The smallest piece of data recognizable to a computer. The term bit is a contraction for binary digit.

BYTE-An electronic data processing term that is used to describe one position or one character of information, made up of eight bits. A character of data or a position of computer storage of the eight-bit variety is called a byte of memory.

CAI-Computer Assisted Instruction. Instruction based upon student interaction with a computer in order to learn a specific task or lesson.

CPU-Central Processing Unit. The CPU is the part of the computer that contains the arithmetic, logic, and control functions. For practical purposes, it is everything except computer storage (memory) and input/output.

HARDWARE-A term for the machine (computer) or piece of equipment.

K-An expression signifying a unit-of-memory size. It refers to 1024 positions of computer memory. For example, a 28K memory contains 28,672 positions of memory.

OS-Operating System. An operating system is a collection of programs that control the execution of other programs. It handles such tasks as scheduling, allocation of resources, input and output, data management, and related services of the computer.

PROGRAM-Instructions given to the computer to perform a specific task. The program, written in computer language, is called software to distinguish it from the physical hardware of the computer itself.

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS

An educational system in which the student moves through the various levels of subject matter at an individual rate rather than by arbitrary assignment with others of the same age.

CO-OP

Cooperative program. Involves vocational work-time outside of the school building, along with regular courses in the building.

CPI

Consumer Price Index

CRITERION-REFERENCED TEST

A measuring device used to determine whether a learner has achieved a pre-defined set of objectives at the specified level of proficiency. The learner's abilities are compared to the criterion and to other individuals.

CURRENT EXPENSE

Any expenditure in a school budget, except for those for capital outlay and debt services.

DE FACTO SEGREGATION

Racial separation not directed by law, but which exists and which is maintained by housing patterns, gerrymandered school district lines, and social class barriers.

DEIURE SEGREGATION

Racial separation directed by laws, as in South America.

DEBT SERVICE

The payment of interest and the amortization charges of debt.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A branch of statistics which studies the size, composition, and distribution of population.

DIFFERENTIATED STAFFING

A method of using and compensating teachers on the basis of the greatest use of their individual strengths. For example a teacher willing and capable of assuming more responsibility would be on a higher salary scale than one who wishes to work more as a technician in administering already prepared materials. Aides, specialists, and laymen are usually used to provide more individualized instruction.

DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION

A public vocational instructional program designed to meet the needs of students over 14 years of age who have entered or are preparing to enter occupations in marketing, merchandising, and management.

DUE PROCESS

Constitutional rights as defined by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

E & O

Errors and Omissions insurance.

EMINENT DOMAIN

1) The power to take private property for public use, whether exercised by the sovereign power directly or by one to whom such power has been delegated for quasi-public purposes; 2) the right by which private property may, in certain cases, be taken or its use controlled for the public benefit without regard to the wishes of the owner.

EQUALIZED VALUATION

A measure of taxable property within a district using a formula designed to allow comparisons among communities, even though tax ratios may vary.

ERIC

Education Research Information Center – a computerized system of educational clearing houses providing access to educational literature.

ESEAW

Elementary and Secondary Education Act IV – an act designed to encourage districts to develop imaginative solutions to education problems, use research findings, create, design, and make use of supplementary centers and services.

ESL

English as a Second Language

ETS

Educational Testing Service, Princeton. Runs various student tests, including the SAT's, Achievement Tests, and the Advanced Placement Tests.

FEDERAL REGISTER

The formal record of actions, and proposed actions, by the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.

FISCAL YEAR

The twelve-month period used as the basis of an operating budget.

FULL VALUATION

The true value of real estate in a taxing district. Usually based on examinations of real estate sales in the district over a given period.

GOAL STATEMENTS

Generalizations about the intended results of a curriculum. Goal statements can be expressed in two ways: outcome goals (ends) which state what a curriculum is intended to accomplish; process goals (means) which state how the ends are to be accomplished.

GRANDFATHER CLAUSE

A part of an agreement which exempts certain persons from provisions in the agreement which came after the start of their current employment.

GRANT-IN-AID

A financial grant, frequently in the form of periodic payments, made by a government or agency to another government or agency or to an individual, for assistance in a general or specific project. (For instance, a grant by the Federal government to the states for the promotion of vocational education.) Usually these grants require a preliminary or matching contribution and the meeting of certain stipulations.

HALO EFFECT

A bias in ratings arising from the tendency of the rater to be influenced by his personal impression of the person being rated.

HETEROGENEOUS

In education, a grouping of students in a manner unrelated to their intellectual abilities.

HOUSTIC

An approach or study which considers the subject as a single entity, rather than an interrelated system of distinct elements.

HOMOGENEOUS

In education, the grouping of students according to their intellectual abilities.

IEP

Individualized Education Plan. Required by state and federal law, this is a set of prescribed instructional activities and services developed by a local child study team in conjunction with teaching staff and parents, for the identified needs of a handicapped student.

IMPACT AID

Federal funds to districts or communities to offset the loss of tax revenue from tax exempt federal facilities located within the district or community, which nonetheless draw upon locally supported services such as schools, police, and fire departments.

INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

A student centered education model, which recognizes individual needs and provides opportunities for the student to proceed at his/her own rate commensurate with his/her own ability, interest, and motivation.

IPL

Institute for Political and Legal Education

JOB DESCRIPTION

A written statement of the duties and responsibilities involved in any one position. Includes a summary of the education, experience, and training the person must possess in order to qualify for the position.

LDT (LDS)

Learning Disability Teacher Consultant (Learning Disabilities Specialist). Person directly responsible for the identification and classification of handicapped children and development of the educational prescription designed to remediate their deficiencies.

LOAD FACTOR

Any factor that is considered in determining a teacher load; for example, time required per week, diversity of subjects, size of classes, type of subject, extra duties, etc.

LOCAL AUTONOMY

The power the state grants to local school districts to make many of their own decisions, administer their own schools, etc.

MAGNET SCHOOL

A school offering special courses not available in regular school programs and attracting students, on a voluntary basis, from all parts of the school district. Often used to aid in the integration of a school system. Examples of magnet schools – Gifted and Talented, Agriculture, Arts, Vocational.

MAINSTREAMING

An instructional strategy in which a handicapped child is placed among the regular student population of a school for a portion of the school day. The specific amount of time spent in the mainstream of students is determined by the particular needs and handicap of the student.

MASTERY LEARNING

School of thought which assumes that mastery of a topic is possible for all individuals, provided that each learner is given the optimum quality of instruction which is appropriate for his/her particular makeup and that each learner is given the time he/she needs.

MBO

Management By Objectives. A process in which all involved in a project or process identify goals and define individual major areas of responsibility in terms of expected results. These measures are then used as guides for operating the unit and assessing the contribution of each of the members.

MEDIAN

The point in a distribution of scores below which 50% of the scores lie. It divides distribution of scores into two equal parts.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

In education, school principals are referred to as middle management.

MODE

The most frequently occurring score in a distribution of scores.

NAESP

National Association of Elementary School Principals

NASBE

National Association of State Boards of Education

NASSP

National Association of Secondary School Principals

NEA

National Education Association

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In education, an evaluation to determine whether the present curricula is achieving the intended results.

NORM-REFERENCED TEST

Testing which seeks to compare an individual performance with the normal or average performance for a large group of similar individuals.

NSBA

National School Boards Association

NSPRA
National School Public Relations Association

PDK
Phi Delta Kappa – an honorary education fraternity

PEDAGOGY
The art, practice, or profession of teaching.

PL94-142
The 142nd law passed and signed during the 94th Congress of the United States. The statute prescribes that a free and appropriate education be available to all children, regardless of any handicap of the student.

POB
Program Oriented Budgeting. A budget based upon the specific cost related to each element of the educational program.

PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS
The safeguards to one's liberty and property mandated by the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. It provides specific steps for a person to be notified, be provided counsel, and other rights.

PROFESSIONAL DAYS
Days taken off by teachers and other professionals for educational meetings, seminars, or workshops. Usually provided for in a limited number in a negotiated contract.

PROJECT HEAD START
A federal preschool child development program of the Office of Economic Opportunity which provides a comprehensive program of education, medical care, social services, and nutritional help for preschool children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

PTA
Parent – Teacher Association

PTO
Parent – Teacher Organization

PUPIL RESOURCE SERVICE
The department in a school system whose primary purpose is to help classified students receive the education best suited to their needs and abilities. It can include; health services, remedial classes, and guidance.

RBS
Research for Better Schools, Philadelphia

READING IN THE CONTENT AREA

An instructional approach which stresses the application of specific reading skills in relation to subject matter.

REAL PROPERTY

A legal term relating to permanent or immovable things such as buildings.

RECALL

The legal procedure by which qualified electors may remove from office those officials who have been elected by them.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The planning and organization within a business which takes into account the handling of risks. This form of management is a means to protect the human and financial assets of the organization.

SAT

Scholastic Aptitude Test. A test taken by high school juniors and seniors for college entrance requirements.

SCHOOL SITE COUNCILS

A group of lay or professional individuals put together to advise and counsel the school managers.

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

A school site council with the increased responsibility of making decisions regarding budget, personnel, and programs. The degree and latitude of responsibility assigned by a board of education to the council may vary greatly.

STANDARD DEVIATION

A measure of variation from a specific percentage used in standardized testing and statistical sampling. For example, if the standard deviation for a test were 5, then scores 5% below or 5% above the actual score would be relatively equal for the purposes of assessment.

STANDARD ERROR OF MEASUREMENT

The estimate of the amount of error to be expected in a test score. It is used to indicate the number of points an obtained score may vary from its true score.

STANDING COMMITTEE

A regularly constituted committee of a board of education, usually appointed by the board president for a definite period of time; for example, finance committee, building committee, policy committee.

STANINE

A mathematical division into nine groups, commonly used in the reporting of standardized test scores.

SUBSTANTIVE DUE PROCESS

The Constitutional guarantee that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property by arbitrary and unreasonable action.

TEAM TEACHING

A type of instructional organization in which two or more teachers are given joint responsibility for the same group of students; the team may include aides and student teachers. Also, a method whereby the teachers of adjoining rooms in an elementary school plan and work together so that students have a homeroom teacher and other teachers for specific subjects.

TENURE

A condition in which employment in a position is guaranteed upon the completion of a period of probation. Tenured employment cannot be terminated except upon the completion of a procedure of due process.

TITLE IV OF ESEA

Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The act which includes library and learning resources and educational innovations.

TITLE IX

Education Amendments of 1972. This amendment prohibits sex discrimination.

TO

Table of Organization

TORT

Any negligent or willful and wrongful act of school officers or employees by which pupils or other innocent persons are injured.

TRUE VALUATION

The market value of property, as opposed to the assessed valuation of property for taxation.

TUITION TAX CREDIT

An allowance against a family's annual federal income tax, for a specified amount of money, which has been spent on their child(s)' education in a private school.

VASS

Virginia Association of School Superintendents

VEA

Virginia Education Association

VIRTUAL LEARNING

Employing information and communication technologies to deliver instruction. Virtual learning is a term frequently used interchangeably...

VIRTUAL SCHOOL

A virtual school or cyberschool describes an institution that teaches courses entirely or primarily through online methods.

VOUCHER PLAN

A plan to distribute educational monies through issuance to parents directly of a voucher allocating public funds to pay the cost of their children's education in either a public or private school of their choice.

VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

WHITE PAPER

A government or other authoritative report giving information or proposals on an issue.



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