

Policy Title: 4.1 Governing Style

The Winooski School District (WSD) Board of Trustees present our Monitoring Report on Policy Title: 4.1 Governing Style, which states: **The board will govern lawfully, observing the principles of the Policy Governance model, with an emphasis on (a) outward vision rather than an internal preoccupation, (b) encouragement of diversity in viewpoints, (c) strategic leadership more than administrative detail, (d) clear distinction of board and superintendent roles, (e) collective rather than individual decisions, (f) future rather than past or present, and (g) proactively rather than reactive.**



Board President

9/6/2024

Date

Policy 4.1.1:

The board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The board, not the staff, will be responsible for excellence in governing. The board will be the initiator of policy, not merely a reactor to staff initiatives. The board will not use the expertise of individual members to substitute for the judgment of the board, although the expertise of individual members may be used to enhance the understanding of the board as a body.

Interpretation: We interpret this to mean that ultimately all decisions made by the Board must be made as a whole, while also recognizing that each Board Member brings different life experiences and knowledge that can help us make those group decisions. We further interpret this to mean that the Board needs to fulfill its role without being too overly reliant on staff, who have their own role to play in our governance structure.

Evidence: Our actions and work as a Board over the past year. Our Board has been in a rebuilding period over the last year and a half as we have had significant Member turnover and it could be said that we, including our new Chair, have at times been too reliant on staff to guide our work. As we move forward, we have no doubt we will continue to come into our own as a Board.

Conclusion: We report partial compliance.

Policy 4.1.2:

The board will direct, control, and inspire the organization through the careful establishment of broad written policies reflecting the board's values and perspectives. The board's major policy focus will be on the intended long-term impacts outside the staff organization (Ends), not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those effects.

1. Board values will be drawn from the diverse values of the community informed by expert sources both internal and external to the organization

Interpretation: We interpret this to mean the Board must lead the District primarily through our policies and that those policies should always be made with our Ends Statement and long term success in mind, not the day-to-day work of the District. Further, that we will seek a diverse array of viewpoints and expertise in crafting those policies, including those stakeholders directly affected.

Evidence: Our policy reviews and discussions over the past year. This Board has done an excellent job in the last year of focusing on policy as our means of governing and we have frequently sought expert and stakeholder input on many of the policies we have discussed.

Conclusion: We report compliance.

Policy 4.1.3:

The board will enforce upon itself whatever discipline is needed to govern with excellence. Discipline will apply to matters such as attendance, preparation for meetings, policy making principles, respect of roles, and ensuring the continuance of governance capability. Although the board can change its Governance Process policies at any time, it will scrupulously observe those currently in force.

Interpretation: We interpret this to mean that individual Board members, as well as the Board as a whole, commit to doing all the prep work and other things necessary for our Board to govern effectively. Further, that we will follow the policies we set for ourselves until and unless we change those policies.

Evidence: Board Members attendance, our sense of our own preparedness as evidenced by our various discussions, and how closely we seem to follow our Governance Process policies. This has been a growth area for us as a Board over the past year. Being prepared and present for every meeting is not always easy when we have so many other responsibilities in our lives. We have all been learning together how to govern well using Policy Governance and there is always going to be room for growth.

Conclusion: We report partial compliance.

Policy 4.1.4:

Continual board development will include orientation of new board members in the board's Governance Process and periodic board discussion of process improvement.

Interpretation: We interpret this to mean that new Board Members will receive appropriate training in Policy Governance and that we as a Board and as individual members will engage in regular professional development.

Evidence: What training has been offered to new Board Members over the last year as well as how much the Board as a whole and individual members have had the opportunity to participate in Professional Development and training. In the past, when we were newly elected to the Board, we were handed a book on Policy Governance and that was the extent of the onboarding. Our Chair has tried to find ways to offer far more initial orientation to new Board Members, as well as regular opportunities for more Professional Development for all. But there is definitely far more work to be done in this area.

Conclusion: We report partial compliance.

Policy 4.1.5:

The board will allow no officer, individual, or committee of the board to hinder or serve as an excuse for not fulfilling group obligations.

Interpretation: We interpret this to mean the Board will ensure Board decisions are made by the Board in appropriately warned open meetings and nowhere else, nor by anyone else. No subdivision of the Board should be allowed to circumvent or override the Board's decisions or authority.

Evidence: The Board has done a good job of making its decisions at regular Board meetings after thorough public discussion. Although Committees exist, they act in a purely advisory capacity in order to streamline our work.

Conclusion: We report compliance.

Policy 4.1.6:

The board will monitor and discuss the board's process and performance on a regular basis. Self-monitoring will include comparison of board activity and discipline to policies in the Governance Process and Board-Management Delegation categories.

Interpretation: We interpret this to mean the Board will do regular self evaluations, paying particular attention to whether we are in compliance with our Governance Process and Board-Management Delegation policies.

Evidence: The Board has fallen out of the practice of doing regular monitoring reports or other self evaluations. We did do some self evaluation over the last year, including reflection on our budget process, but there is a lot of work to be done in this area.

Conclusion: We report partial compliance.