

Policy Title: 4.2 Board Job Description

The Winooski School District (WSD) Board of Trustees present our Monitoring Report on Policy Title: 4.1 Governing Style, which states:

Specific job products of the board, as an informed agent of the ownership, are those that ensure appropriate organizational performance. Accordingly, the board has direct responsibility to:



10/9/24

Board Member

Date

Policy 4.2.1.1:

Create and maintain the linkage between the ownership and the operational organization to represent the informed voice of the owners. This linkage will include:

1. Seeking input regarding owner values on issues of Ends, prudence and ethics

Interpretation:

We interpret the above policy as our responsibility to act as a link between the Winooski community (owners) and the school district's operational team, through the superintendent. This involves seeking input from the public on key issues such as desired outcomes for students, responsible use of resources, and maintaining ethical standards. By representing the informed voice of the community, we help ensure their values are reflected in the decisions and direction of the school district.

Evidence:

As board members, we believe the board has made significant efforts to incorporate community feedback into our decision-making process. During the budgeting cycle, we utilized a budget buddy system, held multiple in-person or virtual public budget presentations, and hosted at least one television presentation with public comments. For non-budgetary governance discussions, especially on divided issues, we have engaged multi-stakeholder community groups to ensure all voices are heard before making final recommendations to the operations department. Additionally, we held occasional community gatherings and participated in existing groups to listen to concerns and feedback.

However, one area where we still need improvement is in our soliciting more community feedback before approving the budget.

Conclusion:

We report partial compliance.

Policy 4.2.1.2:

Create and maintain the linkage between the ownership and the operational organization to represent the informed voice of the owners. This linkage will include:

2. Educating owners on issues impacting the organization

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy that WSD board's role is to represent the informed voice of the community, and this includes educating the public on important issues impacting the district. By ensuring that community members are well-informed, we can facilitate better decision-making and ensure their values are reflected in the direction and operations of the school district.

Evidence:

We send out monthly newsletters from the board, hold budget presentations, and respond to community members' questions regarding board policies or requests for additional information. However, we recognize that we need to do more to educate the entire community about the structure and role of board governance, the budgeting process, and how the school system functions. We cannot assume that all community members are familiar with the complexities of public school systems in the United States, and we must work to provide clear and accessible information for everyone.

Conclusion:

We report partial compliance.

Policy 4.2.1.3:

Create and maintain the linkage between the ownership and the operational organization to represent the informed voice of the owners. This linkage will include:

3. Reporting to the owners on organizational performance

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy as the board's responsibility to communicate with the community about the district's performance.

Evidence:

During the budget cycle, we provided summary data on school programs, costs, student demographics, trendlines, and other relevant information. We continue to send monthly newsletters. However, we still have more work to do on the information delivery side.

Conclusion:

We report partial compliance.

Policy 4.2.1.4:

Create and maintain the linkage between the ownership and the operational organization to represent the informed voice of the owners. This linkage will include:

4. Ensuring owners and other stakeholders that bring non-governing issues to the board understand the process for getting their issue addressed by the system in a courteous and respectful manner.

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy as our role is to ensure that when owners or other stakeholders bring non-governing issues to the board, they clearly understand the process for having their concerns addressed by the appropriate system. This process will be handled with courtesy and respect, ensuring open and respectful communication between all parties involved.

Evidence:

Over the years, whenever operational issues have been brought to the board by an individual or group, we have consistently informed and forwarded those concerns to the superintendent. Depending on the nature of the request and the requester, we have chosen to respond by explaining that the concern or issue is not within the direct purview of the board but has been forwarded to the superintendent for further attention.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.2.1:

Create and maintain written governing policies that realistically address the broadest level so fall organizational decisions and situations

1. Ends: organizational outcomes, impacts, benefits, recipients, and their relative worth (what good for which recipients at what cost)

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy as our responsibility to create and maintain written governing policies defining the “ENDS”—the desired organizational outcomes, impacts, benefits, and the recipients of those benefits. We recognize the importance of evaluating the relative worth of these outcomes, considering what is beneficial for each group of recipients and the associated costs. By doing so, we aim to ensure that our policies align with the community's needs and values while promoting transparency and accountability within the district.

Evidence:

We have been practicing policy governance for some time, and while there are certain policies that require ongoing attention, we have made significant efforts in drafting/ updating policies that reflect the needs and values of the community. Our work involves governing and evaluating our superintendent based on these policies. All of our policies are available on the school district's website:

<https://www.wsdvt.org/school-board/policies/>

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.2.2:

Create and maintain written governing policies that realistically address the broadest level so fall organizational decisions and situations

2. Executive limitations: constraints on executive authority that establish the prudence and ethics boundaries within which all executive activity and decisions must take place

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy as our responsibility to establish executive limitations that define the boundaries of executive authority, ensuring that all executive activities and decisions are conducted within the framework of good judgment and ethical standards. By doing so, we aim to promote transparency and accountability while guiding the administration in making informed and responsible choices for the district.

Evidence:

Section II of our policies, which are all posted on the WSD website, outlines the limitations for the executive body. These policies include, Policy Title: 2.1 Treatment of Students, Parents/Guardians and Community, Policy Title: 2.2 Treatment of Staff, Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Condition and Activities, Policy Title: 2.4 Financial Planning and Budgeting, Policy Title: 2.5 Emergency Superintendent Succession, Policy Title: 2.6 Asset Protection, Policy Title: 2.7 Compensation and Benefits, Policy Title: 2.8 Communication and Support to the Board, and Policy Title: 2.9 Race and Equity.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.2.3:

Create and maintain written governing policies that realistically address the broadest level so fall organizational decisions and situations

3. Governance process: specification of how the board conceives, carries out, and monitors its own task

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy as our responsibility to include a clear definition of our governance process, and outlines how we, as a board, conceive, carry out, and monitor our tasks.

Evidence:

Section IV of our policies outlines the governing style, board job descriptions, board linkage to owners, handling of operational complaints, agenda planning, roles of the chair, board code of conduct, and more. Additionally, although we are somewhat late in the process, we have been making efforts toward self-monitoring as a board. This document serves as evidence of those efforts.

Conclusion:

We report partial compliance.

Policy 4.2.2.4:

Create and maintain written governing policies that realistically address the broadest level so fall organizational decisions and situations

4. Board-management delegation: how power is delegated and its proper use; the superintendent's role, authority, and accountability

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy to include a clear framework for board-management delegation, detailing how authority is transferred and how power is appropriately used. Additionally, it emphasizes the superintendent's role, outlining their responsibilities, authority, and accountability within the governance structure to ensure transparency and effective leadership.

Evidence:

Under Section III, we have policies in place board management delegation, for unity of control, accountability of the superidents, delegation of the superintendent, and monitoring superintendent performance.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.3:

Gain assurance of successful organizational performance on Ends and Executive Limitations.

Interpretation:

We interpret the policy on gaining assurance of successful organizational performance concerning Ends and Executive Limitations as a commitment to

systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the school board's operations.

Evidence:

Our meeting structures, budgeting processes, and policies regarding executive limitations are all designed to achieve our overarching goals. Despite changes in board members and executive personnel, we have upheld our organizational framework and remained committed to our existing Ends statement. For instance, our meetings include a dedicated section to monitor the superintendent's performance on a monthly basis. Additionally, the superintendent provides reports to keep the board informed about school activities for the month.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.4:

Advocate for legislative change, which positively impacts public education.

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy as our role is to advocate for reforms that enhance the quality, accessibility, and equity of education within our district, ensuring that the needs of our students, educators, and community are effectively represented at the legislative level.

Evidence:

Over the years, many of our former and current board members have played crucial roles in advocating for policies that benefit our district, particularly in seeking changes to the funding formula. We remain committed to reaching out whenever there are changes in state legislation that impact our district, whether financially or in other ways.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.5:

Appoint the external auditor.

Interpretation:

We interpret this to mean that an external auditor will be hired and vetted to guarantee that the auditing process meets all relevant federal, state, and association guidelines and legal requirements.

Evidence:

We engage an external firm to conduct our annual audits, and they share their findings with the finance committee members as well as the entire board.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.6:

Operational Decisions which the Executive Limitations policies prohibit the superintendent from making. Determine the expenditure of surplus funds.

Interpretation:

We interpret the policy regarding Operational Decisions as specifying that the superintendent is restricted from solely determining how to expend surplus funds. This limitation is designed to ensure that decisions about the allocation of surplus resources are made with appropriate oversight from the board and in alignment with the school board's strategic priorities, fostering transparency and accountability in financial management.

Evidence:

There has not been any evidence or reports of the district leadership or superintendent misusing funds or using funds without the board's approval.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.7:

Determine the expenditure of long-term reserves.

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy to have a “rainy-day” reserve fund as per the appropriate guidance of the subject matter experts and or any legal requirements.

Evidence:

We continue to maintain reserve funds.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.8:

Determine any closing of buildings as public schools.

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy to mean that, as representative of the owners, the board majority is responsible for making decisions regarding the permanent closure or merger of our school in unfortunate circumstances. However, this policy does not cover temporary school closures due to weather, construction, or other non-financial operational causes.

Evidence:

Fortunately, we have not yet faced the need to make this decision. However, if and when such situations arise (something we sincerely hope to avoid) the board understands its role.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.9:

Negotiating union contracts.

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy that it's board role to negotiate the contracts.

Evidence:

We have a committee responsible for negotiations, and we seek legal advice as needed.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.

Policy 4.2.10:

Conduct fair hearings in its role as a quasi-judicial body.

Interpretation:

We interpret this policy to mean that it is the board's responsibility to function as a quasi-judicial body when issues are presented for its consideration. The board should exercise its best judgment in making decisions and seek legal counsel when necessary.

Evidence:

There have been instances in the past when the board has fulfilled this duty, demonstrating its understanding of this role.

Conclusion:

We report compliance.