

Understanding the Responsibilities of the Members of the Board of Education

How well do you know what the responsibilities of the members of the Board of Education are? January has been designated as “School Board Recognition Month” and we take this opportunity to recognize the efforts of the Board of Education in providing the necessary resources for the Piscataway School District which allow our staff and students to meet the many important educational goals that are set for them.

It should be understood that the Board of Education doesn’t “run” the district, however the BOE ensures that the district is “run well.” So, for example, we should understand that the board makes and sets policies that affect how the district functions.

The Curriculum committee doesn’t read and select the books that students use, however they review the curriculum and explore opportunities for new programs that might benefit our students’ educational advancement.

The Policy Committee reviews current policies and may suggest new policies that impact decision-making throughout the district. Policies are set to provide guidelines in areas such as drug testing, student trips, how our buildings are used, etc.

It’s the board’s responsibility to set the long-range and annual goals for the district. These goals are then “divided up” into objectives which may be addressed and accomplished by various departments, staff and/or students. An example might be to increase college admission rates. Students might not even be aware that their achievements in school (which ultimately impact their college acceptances) could ultimately serve as a measure of success in our district goals. It’s important to understand that, as district goals are set, the board of education also must ensure that the administration and staff have adequate resources and tools to accomplish these goals. This leads to budget considerations.

The school board members work in conjunction with the district staff and administration to adopt an annual budget that is within reason for the taxpayers of the community, yet serves to fulfill our educational goals and commitments. The board members work with the schools and community to ensure that the members of the public who vote on our school budget truly have the information that they need to make an educated decision about what they are voting on. The board as a whole is not allowed to say “vote yes” on the budget, however, as individuals, they can say “I am supporting this budget because...”

It’s important for everyone to understand that no individual board member has the power to make a decision on any particular item of interest, issue or concern. They must work together as a unit to provide oversight and ensure that the district is run well. They are not paid, and they are required to take continuing education training throughout their 3-year term of office. (Re-elected board members are only required to take one training course during the year he/she is re-elected).