

NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION presents

Board Success Through Good Policy Processes At Your Fingertips



Introduction: Adopting policies is among the most fundamental responsibilities of any school board. Many problems faced by boards could have been prevented or resolved by the deletion of a poor policy or the adoption of a good policy. Policy is the tool that provides the board power to allow or require action. It is through policy that lay citizens can govern effectively. The board is a policy-making body and the policies that it enacts are the local law of the school district. Policies are broad guidelines, philosophical statements et by the school board to chart the district's course of action. This issue of At Your Fingertips focuses on the elements of policy development.

Element #1: Identify the New for New or Revised Policies

Policy develop begins when the Board recognizes that it faces an issue or problem requiring a long-term solution; when it becomes aware that the school has an ongoing need to be answered through a new or revised program or way of function. Some problems, issues, and needs will be of first-rank importance. Others may be less significant, but still they demand solution.

Element #2: Assemble Background Material

First, the Board needs facts: How will state law control board actions and decisions on the issue? What costs are involved? How has this problem been solved in other school districts? Additionally, the Board will want suggestions from those persons who will administer policy and from those whom the policy will affect.

Element #3: Study, Discuss, Agree on Basic Substance

The Board must have time to study the problem and background materials. As it sifts suggestions, discussions nd debates, the Board should pinpoint basic content-key-points that its policy should cover and try to reach agreement on the Board's position.

Element 4: Policy Drafting

Policy drafting and redrafting occur simultaneously with other phases of policy development. After the Board has reached tentative agreement on the content or key points that should into a policy, however, it is a good idea to assign one person to draft the statement. That one person may be a Board committee chairperson, or very likely the Superintendent.

Element 5: First Reading

The policy proposal is placed on a Board meeting agenda for a "first reading" and persons most interested in it are notified that the Board action is pending. Opportunity is given them and others at the meeting to voice their opinions.

Element 6: Second Reading, Adoption

The period between the first and second reading gives all concerned persons a further chance to ask questions and offer improvements in the policy. By the time of the second reading, the research and examination of facts, alternatives, and divergent points of view should have been accomplished. The final draft presented will reflect such changes in position and modifications as determined by the Board at the first reading. The Board is then ready to vote.