SECTION A: Foundations and Basic Commitments

SCHOOL DIVISION LEGAL STATUS

The Constitution of Virginia provides that the General Assembly establish a system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the state, and seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained. The General Assembly requires that such an educational system be maintained and administered by the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, division superintendents and school boards. The Board of Education divides the Commonwealth into school divisions of such geographical area and school-age population as will promote the realization of the standards of quality and will periodically review the adequacy of existing school divisions for this purpose. The supervision of schools in Surry County school division is vested in Surry County School Board.

Adopted: July 10, 2018

_____
_____

Legal Refs.: Constitution of Virginia, article VIII, §§ 1, 5, 7.

Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-2, 22.1-28.

Cross Ref.:   BB   School Board Legal Status
              BBAA   Board Member Authority

NONDISCRIMINATION

The Surry County School Board is committed to nondiscrimination with regard to sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, color, national origin, disability, religion, ancestry, age, marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, military status, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law. This commitment prevails in all of its policies and practices concerning staff, students, educational programs and services, and individuals and entities with whom the Board does business.

Adopted: July 13, 2021

_____
_____

Legal Refs.:   20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688.
                29 U.S.C. § 794.
                42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d-2000d-7, 2000e-2000e-17, 2000ff-1.

                34 C.F.R. 106.9.

                Constitution of Virginia, article I, section 11.

                Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 2.2-3900, 2.2-3901, 2.2-3902, 22.1-23.3, 22.1-295.2.

Cross Refs.:   GB   Equal Employment Opportunity/Nondiscrimination
                GBA/JFHA   Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation
                JB   Equal Educational Opportunities/Nondiscrimination

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Surry County Public School Board is committed to providing equal opportunity for every student to achieve intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth and to ensuring that each student be equipped to communicate effectively with other people, to be competent both in the work place and in higher education and to feel confident of the ability to make creative and constructive decisions.

Surry County School Board:
- provides the necessary trained and dedicated leadership, qualified personnel, equipment and materials to assure an appropriate education for every student
- treats all members of the school community equitably and with respect
- allocates and uses assets fairly and efficiently

Adopted: July 13, 2021

_____
_____

Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-23.2, 22.1-78.

Cross Refs.: AC   Nondiscrimination
              GA   Personnel Policies Goals
              GB   Equal Employment Opportunity/Nondiscrimination
              GBA/JFHA   Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation
              IGBC   Parent and Family Engagement
              JB   Equal Education Opportunities/Nondiscrimination

SCHOOL DIVISION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Generally

The school division is committed to excellence in education, equality of educational opportunity, and the recognition of each student's individuality. Inasmuch as students differ in their rate of physical, mental, emotional and social growth and vary in their needs and abilities, learning opportunities are provided that are consistent with personal development and potential. Programs emphasize diagnostic and prescriptive instruction, allowing an individual approach to each student's learning style and educational needs.

The educational program introduces each student to a variety of interest and subject areas that offer exposure to the range of opportunities available in later years. These experiences produce the basis for further education and future employment. As students demonstrate increased maturity, they may assume more responsibility for the decisions regarding their education.

The school environment should be responsive and conducive to learning. The physical environment facilitates and enhances the learning experiences available to each student. A responsive environment includes competent, dedicated teachers using a variety of techniques and a classroom atmosphere where students can function and develop according to their abilities. Safety, physical comfort, and appearance also are vital environmental components.

Standards of Quality and Objectives

The school board accepts the overall goals of public education as expressed by the Standards of Quality legislated by the Virginia General Assembly and implemented by State Board of Education regulations.

The school board reports its compliance with the Standards of Quality to the Board of Education annually. The report of compliance is submitted to the Board of Education by the chairman of the board and the superintendent.

Standards of Quality--Programs and Services

The school board commits itself to providing programs and services as stated in the Standards of Quality to the extent funding thereof is provided by the General Assembly.

Adopted: July 13, 2021

_____
_____

Legal Ref.:   Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-23.3, 22.1-253.13:1, 22.1-253.13:8.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Surry County School Board adopts a divisionwide comprehensive, unified, long-range plan based on data collection, an analysis of the data, and how the data will be utilized to improve classroom instruction and student achievement. The plan is developed with staff and community involvement and includes, or is consistent with, all other divisionwide plans required by state and federal laws and regulations. The school board reviews the plan biennially and adopts any necessary revisions. Prior to the adoption of the plan or revisions thereto, the school board posts the plan or revisions on the division's Internet website if practicable and makes a hard copy of the plan or revisions available for public inspection and copying and conducts at least one public hearing to solicit public comment on the plan or revisions.

The divisionwide comprehensive plan includes

(i)   the objectives of the school division, including strategies for first improving student achievement, particularly the achievement of educationally at risk students, then maintaining high levels of student achievement;

(ii)   an assessment of the extent to which these objectives are being achieved;

(iii) a forecast of enrollment changes;

(iv)   a plan for projecting and managing enrollment changes including consideration of the consolidation of schools to provide for a more comprehensive and effective delivery of instructional services to students and economies in school operations;

(v)   an evaluation of the appropriateness of establishing regional programs and services in cooperation with neighboring school divisions;

(vi)   a plan for implementing such regional programs and services when appropriate;

(vii) a technology plan designed to integrate educational technology into the instructional programs of the school division, including the division's career and technical education programs, consistent with or as part of the comprehensive technology plan for Virginia adopted by the Board of Education;

(viii) an assessment of the needs of the school division and evidence of community participation, including parental participation, in the development of the plan;

(ix)   any corrective action plan required pursuant to Va. Code § 22.1-253.13:3; and

(x)   a plan for parent and family involvement to include building successful school and parent partnerships that will be developed with staff and community involvement, including participation by parents.

The school board presents a report to the public by November 1 of each odd-numbered year on the extent to which the objectives of the divisionwide comprehensive plan have been met during the previous two school years.

Each school prepares a comprehensive, unified, long-range plan, which the school board considers in the development of the divisionwide comprehensive plan.

Adopted: August 13, 2019

_____
_____

Legal Ref.:   Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-253.13:6.

EVALUATION OF SCHOOL BOARD OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The school board reviews its performance annually to ensure its proper discharge of responsibilities to the community. Evaluation is based on a positive approach, identifying the strengths of the school board and opportunities for improvement.

The following elements are included in the self-evaluation process:

1. school board members are involved in the development of an evaluation instrument and procedure.

2. The school board evaluation instrument is completed by individual Board members and submitted to the school board Chairman, or the Chairman's designee, for compilation.

3. The school board meets, with all members present, to review and discuss the composite results.

4. Each conclusion is supported by objective evidence.

Based on discussion of the results, the school board develops both short- and long-range goals and objectives to ensure continued proficiency in its areas of excellence, to strengthen weak areas and to improve the efficiency of the board.

Adopted: August 13, 2019

_____
_____

Legal Ref.:   Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-78.

Cross Refs.: AE   School Division Goals and Objectives
             AF   Comprehensive Plan
             BBA   School Board Powers and Duties

THE KEY WORK OF SCHOOL BOARDS
Self Assessment and Question for Each Key Work Area

I. Vision

Vision Self-Assessment - Use this tool to assess your initial understanding of vision and also to get a sense of where you are as a board on this essential work. Indicate the degree to which your board/district staff has achieved the following elements toward establishing a vision to improve student achievement.

Objective: To understand how school boards can develop and implement an effective vision that focuses on student achievement, positively guides district strategies, and involves the community.

	Fully Achieved	Mostly Achieved	Partially Achieved	Beginning to Achieve	Don't Know/Unsure
Stakeholder representatives (school board, senior leadership, district staff, school staff, employee organizations, parents, community advocates, higher education, business leaders and students) helped create the vision					
As a board we have discussed the core values of our school district, supervisory union/employee groups, and community and these values are reflected in our vision					
Our board has established a written vision that commits to student achievement as the top priority of the school board, staff, and community.					
Our vision is clearly articulated and known to all community members who have a vested interest.					
We frequently revisit and reaffirm our vision to ensure our constancy of purpose					
Our vision is the foundation for all long-range, strategic planning, and policy decisions.					
Our vision is the guiding force that sets the framework for how we operate as a local district and supervisory union.					
We base our resource and budget decisions on our vision. Everything we do as a board of education aligns to achieve our vision					

Key Work of School Boards
Copyright 2015, National School Boards Association

Vision

Questions the School Board Should Ask Itself:

1. Do you use data to tailor solutions based on the needs and assets of each school and its community?

2. Is your accountability system based on best practice and sound research?

3. Do you embrace vigorous standards?

4. Do you recognize that sustained or pervasive underperformance cannot be tolerated?

5. Do you see that advocacy is the only way to shift state and federal policy matters from mandatory prescriptive programs to providing assistance and resources to spur innovation?

6. Are you a catalyst for innovation with a customer service approach to the education of every student?

7. Do you realize year-round or other non-traditional school calendars and extended days and years will be common in the school district of the future?

8. Do you see the need to expand innovation to business operations and infrastructure (outsourcing, facility sharing, job sharing, etc.)?

9. Do you respect the fact that parents and students have choices?

10. Do you see the need to provide a portfolio of public school options in your jurisdiction to help parents and students determine their best option?

11. What is the ideal school year?

12. What is the ideal school day?

13. Do you think the curriculum that your students need most can be taught effectively within a traditional classroom setting?

14. How much freedom should students be given in deciding when, where, and how they connect to learning?

15. How do we ensure that all children have access to the full range of connective technologies and are taught the skills necessary to use them effectively?

16. Do you educate your students with educational constructs that were created to serve the agricultural and industrial ages?

II. Accountability

Accountability Self-Assessment - Use this tool to access your initial understanding of accountability and to get a sense of where you are as a board on this essential work. Indicate the degree to which your board/district/staff has achieved the following elements toward establishing measures of accountability to improving student achievement.

Objective: To explore how effective school boards maintain public confidence through a shared understanding of expectations, roles and responsibilities, and standards/desired results.

	Fully Achieved	Mostly Achieved	Partially Achieved	Beginning to Achieve	Don't Know/Unsure
Our district publishes an annual report of progress.					
Our annual report includes data on student achievement and district performance related to district goals and standards.					
The format of our report is consistent from year to year and includes data from prior years.					
We compare our data with data from other districts that are similar to ours.					
We examine our data by gender, race, and socioeconomic status to measure the success of all students.					
We use our student achievement data to make decisions and establish district priorities.					
We communicate to the public how our decisions are linked to student achievement data.					
Principals and teachers use student achievement data to make decisions and set instructional priorities					
We use our student achievement data to plan staff development and to recognize and reward teacher performance.					
We tie evaluations of staff and ourselves as board members to student achievement results.					

Accountability

Accountability Questions the School Board Should Ask Itself:

1. How do we ensure that our policy and budget decisions are research-based and data driven?

2. How do we recognize and reward students, teachers, and schools that meet or exceed student performance standards?

3. What are the consequences and interventions for students, teachers, and schools that have not met standards?

4. How are achievement measures and results reported to teachers, parents, and the public?

5. What role do student achievement results play in the evaluation of the superintendent?

6. How does the school board evaluate itself in terms of student achievement?

Accountability Questions the School Board Should Ask the Superintendent and Staff:

1. Do we have an information system that provides adequate data for accountability?

2. How do staff and students learn what is expected of them?

3. How is success or failure assessed?

4. What are the system's rewards and consequences for success and failure?

5. How do student achievement results factor into staff evaluations?

III. Policy

Policy Self-Assessment - Use this tool to assess your initial understanding of policy and to get a sense of where you are as a board on this essential work. Indicate the degree to which your board/district/staff has achieved the following elements toward establishing policies to improve student achievement.

Objective: To examine how effective school boards use policy to remain accountable to citizens for the governance and management of schools and to explore how visionary policy can support the district's educational mission and philosophy.

	Fully Achieved	Mostly Achieved	Partially Achieved	Beginning to Achieve	Don't Know/Unsure
Stakeholder representatives (school board, senior leadership, district staff, school staff, employee organizations, parents, community advocates and students) helped with the policy development process.					
As a board we have discussed the how our role as policymakers is to ensure alignment of school district action to the board's vision.					
The superintendent has developed administrative procedures that are aligned to appropriate board policies.					
We have a policy review protocol that ensures that our entire policy manual is reviewed annually.					
Our policies are comprehensive, practical, consistent, and based on current law.					
Our policies identify measurable outcomes or objectives, where appropriate.					
Our policies assist us in appraising district educational services.					
Our policies allow for fair, reasonable, consistent, and objective treatment of issues.					

Policy

Questions to Ask During Policy Development or Amendment

Drafting and Changing Policy
Consider these aspects when drafting new policy or revising a current one:
1. Does the policy use simple language?
2. It is based on current law?
3. Is the Policy comprehensive, practical, and consistent?
4. Is the policy repetitive?
5. Is it current?

Debating Policy:
In evaluating policy changes, the board should discuss all foreseeable issues:
1. Do we understand the problem or issue?
2. How has this issue been handled in the past?
3. Where does this issue fit into our mission, goals, and budget?
4. Do we have a choice?
5. Is the issue covered by other authority?
6. What do we want from this policy?
7. Have we received an analysis of how the policy affects various individuals or groups?
8. Who is responsible for carrying out the policy?

Inviting Public Comment
The board should engage in thorough and thoughtful discussion involving at least these four questions:
1. Does the policy language specify what the board wants and who is supposed to carry it out?
2. Does the policy identify measurable outcomes or objectives?
3. Will the policy create implementation problems?
4. Does the policy need to be reviewed by the board's attorney?

Final Questions
Here are some final questions to ponder before the policy is adopted:
1. Are measurable outcomes established based on the feedback we have received?
2. Have we set a date when the superintendent will report to the board on how the policy is working?
3. Have we told the superintendent what information we want?
4. Are the administrative procedures that have been developed sufficient?

IV. Community Leadership

Community Leadership – Use this tool to assess your initial understanding of community leadership and to get a sense of where you are as a board on this essential work. Indicate the extent to which your board/district/staff has achieved the following elements toward establishing community leadership to improve student achievement.

Objective: To analyze how effective school boards employ the art of influence-through legislation and strategic engagement, to generate public and parental support.

	Fully Achieved	Mostly Achieved	Partially Achieved	Beginning to Achieve	Don't Know/Unsure
The school board fosters collaborative relationships as a philosophy in: strategic planning, community vision, and instructional improvements.					
The school board approves and periodically reviews a district plan to build collaborative relationships with stakeholders at all levels based on gaining support for student achievement as the top priority.					
The school board models collaboration and trust.					
The school board advocates student achievement as a top community priority.					
The school board ensures a climate of open communication at board meetings and throughout the district.					
The school board practices two-way communication as a basis for working together to identify and address issues.					
The school board engages the community by keeping them well informed and aware that their reactions and feedback are welcome.					
The school board focus on issues that unite, not divide by finding common ground to accomplish mutually beneficial goals.					
The school board uses social media to change the way the community talks about the schools.					
The school board provides funding for collaborative efforts.					

©NSBA 2015   SURRY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Community Leadership

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities in Community Leadership

Questions the School Board Should Ask Itself:
School Board

1. Does the board understand the community engagement is one of the main school board governance functions?

2. Does the board have a process to keep them better informed about school issues?

3. Does the board make decisions based on facts and data instead of public opinion?

4. Does the board take proactive measures to promote its school and school district?

5. Are school board members, staff and students involved in the promotion of its schools and school district?

6. Does the school board understand and use the tactics of politics and lobbying to support their role as advocates for children, public education, lifelong learning, excellence and equity, and parental involvement?

7. Does the board understand the link between educational excellence and the community's economic and social health?

V. Board and Superintendent Relationships

Board and Superintendent Relationships – Use this tool to assess your initial understanding of board and superintendent relationships and to get a sense of where you are as a board on this essential work. Indicate the extent to which your board/district/staff has achieved the following elements toward establishing board and superintendent relationships to improve student achievement.

Objective: To understand how the board-superintendent leadership roles are interconnected as well as the process for decision making and evaluation.

	Fully Achieved	Mostly Achieved	Partially Achieved	Beginning to Achieve	Don't Know/Unsure
The board and superintendent understand that the board establishes policies and the superintendent implements them and is responsible for the operation of the school district.					
The board should function as a unit/team, not as a collection of individuals with individual agendas to achieve the main objective of both school board and superintendent to educate the district's students.					
The board and the superintendent will specify how decisions will be made – by consensus or by majority vote.					
The board recognizes the superintendent as the chief executive officer of the school district.					
The board and the superintendent focus is on the future of the district's students.					

Board and Superintendent Relationships

Planning for Superintendent Evaluation

1. Does the board understand the interconnected relationship between the board and the superintendent?

2. Does the board understand that it cannot be effective unless the superintendent is fulfilling his/her responsibilities?

3. Does the board's relationship with the superintendent may differ according to local customs, personalities, state law, or local policy?

4. Does the board understand and work to develop a productive partnership with the superintendent that draw on, and respects the backgrounds and abilities of everyone involved?