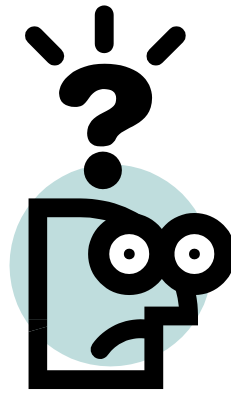


Highmore-Harrold School District

New School Board Member

What You Need to Know to Get Started



2023

Information From:

Associated School Boards of SD, School Board Handbook

Administrative Handbook, presented by School Administrators of SD

School Dist. Accounting Manual, State of SD

Highmore-Harrold Policy Handbook

New Board Member – What You Need To Know **Highmore-Harold School District**

Introduction

How should you handle this new job? You have no legal authority or power as an individual except during a legal meeting of the school board. Outside of a board meeting you are an ordinary citizen, within the meeting you are an official of the state, exercising, along with your fellow board members, a great deal of authority which has been delegated to the board by the state.

It will become quite apparent you will find yourself out on a limb quite early if you begin giving definite answers to questions about changes in school policy. Undoubtedly the best answer you can give to citizens making requests is to advise them to consult with the Superintendent, who, if the request can be solved no other way, can invite such citizens to attend a board meeting. This is not only the ethical way, but also the legal way.

Your relations as a school board member with your Superintendent are extremely important. Your job is to develop the board policies which will govern your school district. Once those policies have been established it is your Superintendent's duty to carry them out. As a board member you have neither the time, the energy, nor the specialized training to perform the multitude of duties necessary for the proper functioning of a public school system. We call this tried and tested concept policy governance. Policies have the impact of law.

From time to time, you will find that the rest of the members on the board do not agree with you. If you complain to citizens of the community, or attempt to justify yourself, you will find that the community soon will lose confidence in you and the school board. However, if you can accept defeat gracefully, recognizing that the basis of board action is majority rule, the community will gain respect for the board and for you.

Board Meetings Open to Public

Board Meetings should be open to the public. There will be occasions, however, when the board must meet in executive session. It is always a great temptation for someone "in the know" to inform his good friends about what happened, cautioning them of course, to keep the secret. Unfortunately, they seldom do, and before long the entire community knows what should have remained, for the time being at least, in confidence. It should be emphasized that even though there may be an occasional need for an executive session of the board, all motions and voting on any issues must be in the open meeting.

Public board meetings are for the school board to conduct its business in public and are NOT meetings of the public.

As a new school board member, it is not necessary that you remain silent during your "initiation", but it is a good idea to "get your feet on the ground" before attempting to change the long-established policies of the school system. Above all, don't enter board membership with a suitcase full of preconceived ideas or binding commitments. You likely will find the school system is being managed much better than you had imagined, and that the main reasons your educational system may not be the best in the nation are probably lack of money, creativity, and community involvement.

In your work as a new school board member, remember that you do not represent any one segment of the population in your district. You represent no organization or vested interest group. You represent all the people and are interested in the welfare of all children.

School Board and Its Powers

The Highmore-Harrold School board usually meets the second Monday of every month. Meetings normally begin at 7:00. Board Meetings are held in the High School Business Classroom. We try and mail out the board agenda, financial statements, and the bills for approval a few days before the meeting. By law, the agenda of public meetings is to be posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Agendas for board meetings are posted on the high school east main entrance and on the school website.

The Highmore-Harrold School board is made up of seven individuals who serve a three-year term. If a vacancy occurs with years remaining on the term, someone from the district is appointed to fill the position for the remainder of the year, and the position would be up for election for the remaining years of the term.

The annual meeting of the School board is the July Board Meeting. The school year runs from July 1 thru June 30th. At this meeting we hold election of officers, appoint certain committees for the year, delegate legal paper, bank, authorized representatives for federal programs, and a host of other motions that are required yearly.

A proposed budget hearing is to be conducted and is usually held at the July meeting. At this time, interested community members may present questions regarding the proposed budget. The budget must be adopted before October 1st.

Special meetings are occasionally needed. Special meetings should be called only in unusual situations, not for handling matters of minor importance or routine matters that can be handled at regular meetings.

The Attorney General has written an opinion that an official meeting occurs when a majority of the board is present and official business within the jurisdiction of the board is discussed. So, apply that ruling to a majority of the board at a local café or lounge. If you find yourself in this situation, what should you do? If a majority is present and school business becomes part of the discussion, you should point out the problem and change the subject to a non-school issue or leave the discussion.

An agenda is prepared for each board meeting. The purposes of an agenda are to expedite procedure and prevent waste of time by furnishing a plan, and to give board members an opportunity to think about the matters to be brought before them for attention. The primary purpose of the board meeting is to conduct district business. Nonetheless, a modest portion of the meeting should be set aside for visitor comments or questions. No one is allowed to participate without permission from the chairman, and the time for public comments should be limited. No one should be allowed to interrupt or interfere with the school board session. The public should also be aware that it is board policy that an item they wish to discuss should go thru the proper channels of being placed on the agenda in advance. Citizens should be thanked for their interest, told that the matter will be taken under advisement, and, if necessary, placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Minutes of the meeting are required and are a permanent record of the district. Law requires minutes to be published in the legal newspaper within 20 days of a meeting. Salaries of all employees of the district are to be published once a year, usually after the July meeting.

Executive Session:

Law provides that meetings of public boards be open to the public except as provided in SDCL 1-25-2, which allows for executive session for the following. Any official actions, including those discussed in executive session shall be taken during the open public meeting. Executive session shall be held only if there is a majority vote of the members present and voting. The board should never meet in executive session without the Superintendent present unless the session is being held to discuss his contract. All that transpires in executive session is to be considered confidential and should not be discussed with anyone, not even one's spouse. Below are the subsections of SDCL 1-25-2 that define the scope of an executive session:

- 1. discuss the qualifications, competence, performance, character, or fitness of any public or prospective officer or employee.*
- 2. discuss the expulsion, suspension, discipline, assignment of or the education program of a student.*
- 3. consult with legal counsel or review communication from legal counsel about proposed or pending litigation or contractual matters.*
- 4. preparing contract negotiations or negotiating with employees or their representatives.*
- 5. discuss marketing or pricing strategies by a board when public discussions may be harmful to the competitive position of the district.*

School Board Delegates and Committees

Members of the Highmore-Harold School Board participate in various district committees and serve as delegates for community organizations associated with the district. The number of delegates for the various committees will be three or less to allow the committee to meet outside of official board meetings.

Negotiations

Negotiations with public employees are required by law. Boards must meet and negotiate with employees at reasonable times and in good faith.

Board members must not negotiate with a teacher privately as an individual. This may result in an unfair labor practice charge. There is no reason to be intimidated by threats of calling in the labor department or other agencies. Classified employees should be dealt with separately from the teachers.

Most administrative contracts, janitors and some secretary contracts begin in July. Teachers and aides' contracts start in September each year. Employees receive 12 monthly salary payments made on the 20th of the month except for August, when their salary payment is made on the 15th.

Policy Handbooks

Highmore-Harold has a School District Policy Handbook, a Student Policy Handbook and several Negotiated Policies. Board members should be familiar with all of these. Policies are updated regularly.

Anytime questions arise, or more information is needed, please contact the Superintendent or the Business Manager.

Introduction to School Finance

CAPITAL OUTLAY FUND: An account for purchases of a permanent nature, buildings, vehicles, transportation contracts, textbooks, computers, furniture, etc.; normally a higher cost item. The main source of revenue for the Capital Outlay Fund is property tax. The 2016 Legislature made several changes to the Capital Outlay tax, effective with the 2016-17 school year:

1. The flexibility to use Capital Outlay funds for any general fund purpose was made permanent and capped at 45% of Capital Outlay tax revenue.
2. Requires a District to request tax as a dollar amount instead of a mill levy rate of so much per thousand.
3. Limits the growth in Capital Outlay collections by capping the maximum amount at 3% or inflation, whichever is less, plus new construction.

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUND: The special education fund is for expenses associated with providing an education to special education students. To be considered a special education student, an individual education plan must be in place. Services can range from speech therapy to full-time placement for a severely handicapped child. The main source of revenue for the special education fund is tax revenue with Federal IDEA funds and state aid.

TRUST AND AGENCY FUND: The Trust and Agency fund is set up to take care of school organization funds. Examples of this would be the FFA and FCCLA organizations, Band and Choir Fund, various sports teams, Student Council, etc. The board really has no control over most of this money as it is being held for others. The Imprest fund is part of the Trust and Agency fund, it is general fund money used for immediate needs, the major expense is game officials, registration fees for sport and activities, meal money needed for a state event before the next meeting is held, etc. The use of the Imprest fund is guarded carefully, and the actual expenses are reviewed by the board when funds are requested to replenish the Imprest account monthly.

FOOD SERVICE FUND: The food service fund is responsible for the expense and revenue associated with running the lunch program. The district gets reimbursed with Federal dollars for each meal served, different reimbursement rates for free, reduced or regular priced lunches. We try to keep lunch prices as low as possible. However, the Federal Food Service Program requires Districts to raise their average price yearly to reach the federal reimbursement amount of a free lunch. Through the lunch program we receive government commodities, including fruits and vegetables, based on enrollment.

GENERAL FUND: The General Fund is used to account for all expenses and revenue except those required to be accounted for somewhere else. The general fund is the main fund of the district. All expenses for Elementary, Junior High, High School, Janitor, co-curricular, administrative, library, guidance, etc. are accounted for through the general fund. We receive some state and county apportionment; in addition, we receive federal Title funds that can only be spent for specified items (Title teacher salaries and benefits). Title I is federal money to provide supplemental remedial reading and math to students at the elementary level.

Major changes were made to school funding by the state in 2016. One of the changes is to the amount of general fund reserves (general cash balance) a district may have and is based on school enrollment. The Highmore-Harold School District will be capped at 30% and this took effect in the 2018-19 school year. Monthly cash balance numbers compiled from the school year, in relation to the district's yearly

budget, will determine what dollar amount the 30% cap will be. A General Fund balance in excess of the 30% cap will cause our District to lose state aid dollar for dollar.

The main source of revenue for the General Fund is property tax combined with state aid. New laws passed in 2016 resulted in a massive overhaul to the funding formula for education. The new funding formula is based on a target statewide average salary currently at \$59,659.00 multiplied by our student teacher ratio of 17.75 (current fall enrollment divided by 15, from a sliding scale based on enrollment), plus 29% for benefits and 38.78% to cover non-instructional costs. Once this number is arrived at, what the district can raise in general fund property tax is subtracted, and the balance would be the amount expected in State Aid to Education. What the district can raise in general fund tax is calculated by taking the tax mill levies set by the state times our district's property valuations for each category of land to see what our local effort is.

Two different accountability standards are required to ensure the new money to districts is used for certified teacher salaries and benefits.

Another part of the new law implemented addresses other revenue sources. In the past these other revenue sources that schools receive were counted outside of the funding formula, and not equalized across all districts. The intent of the new law is to bring equity to other revenue over time by counting these sources as local effort with a phase in period. The six sources to be counted as local effort and equalized across districts are: gross receipts tax on utilities, local revenue in lieu of tax, county apportionment, county revenue in lieu of tax, wind farm tax, and the bank franchise tax.

Districts can "opt out" and request additional property tax revenue. Opt out requests may be referred to a vote of the district. Approved opt outs are for a set dollar amount, and usually for a set number of years(five). The Highmore-Harold School District has not opted out of the tax limitations.

Along with the other school funding changes made in 2016, a District can now use up to 45% of their available Capital Outlay Tax collected to address shortfalls in general fund spending. The District needs to be careful not to over-use this optional funding source to the detriment of our facilities.

The Business Manager prepares the proposed budget for Capital Outlay in April, and the full Proposed Budget in May for the board's review. The proposed budget hearing for the public to attend is conducted at the July meeting, with the budget adopted during August or September (before Oct. 1st). A budget is the operating plan for the fiscal year and is one of the most important documents a school board can adopt. The proposed budget for the Highmore-Harold School District provides historical and current data, with projections for the next several years.

The school year is July 1 thru June 30th. At the end of the year, an annual financial report is submitted by the Business Manager. This report has several parts, GASB 34 consists of ten additional audit reports. All the annual financial reports are due August 15th.

Audits of the District finances are required. All years must be audited, either with a two-year or a one-year audit. It is recommended to have a yearly audit.

*Associated School Boards of SD, School Board Handbook
Administrative Handbook, presented by School Administrators of SD
School District Accounting Manual, State of SD*



SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

Five Basic Principles

Principle # 1: Focus on Children

Providing the best possible learning environment for the children of the district must come first.

Principle # 2: Govern as part of a board, not individually

School board members function as a board and not individually; it is a board member's vote, along with other board members' votes, that has power.

Principle # 3: Understand and achieve your role

A school board is responsible for seeing that the schools are managed, but it does not directly manage them. Lines of authority should be observed. The superintendent is responsible to the board, principals are responsible to the superintendent, and teachers and staff members are responsible to the principal. Be tactful and understanding in dealing with citizens' complaints. Help them understand the nature of your authority and avenues open to them to resolve their concerns.

Basic Principle # 4: Come to the table with an open mind

School boards should be progressive, but innovations should be initiated after careful consideration is given of their ultimate effect on the school program. Consider the recommendations of the superintendent and the discussion at the board table before making any commitments.

Principle # 5: Respect the law

Take time to learn about state and federal laws that can impact your duties as a school board member. Acquaint yourself with your policy manual.

A BOARD MEMBERS JOB

The job of a board member is a set of complex responsibilities. Each board member has the responsibility to prepare, participate and maintain a focus on students and student achievement. Board members must believe that every child can learn. These responsibilities are assumed by the group and with the group. The following provides board members with a perspective of the job and more important to facilitate your success as a board member.

1. **You must believe that every child can learn** – This idea is as critical to success as a board member as well as critical for the children for whom the board has responsibility.

2. **You must participate responsibly** – Come to meetings on time and prepared to act. A boards' work is to listen, agree or disagree as your values dictate and accept that the group decision is appropriate/legitimate even when it is not your personal choice.

3. **You must identify with the community and students, not staff** - You serve the community on behalf of the students not on behalf of the staff. However, quality staff is a critical element.

4. **You represent the community, not a single constituency** – Individually you may identify with certain constituencies, but as a board member you serve in trust for the entire community. Your board cannot provide a spokesperson for every constituency or legitimate interest. Morally you must stand for them all, and cannot permit yourself to represent a single constituency.

5. **You are responsible for the behavior and productivity of the group** – You are responsible for yourself and the board. If the board breaks its own rules, meddles in administration or doesn't do its job, remember that you personally share in that responsibility.

6. **You must honor divergent opinions without being intimidated by them** – Each board member is obligated to express honest opinions on issues. Encourage colleagues to express opinions and give them due consideration, but don't be intimidated by a loud and insistent member.

7. **You must use your special expertise to inform your colleagues** – In areas of your special expertise, you are not personally responsible for decisions relating to that area. Use your expertise to inform board members or staff. Don't take personal responsibility for those decisions. Boards govern as a team and you are simply volunteering expert advice. Acceptance of that advice is the prerogative of the recipients.

8. **You must be aware of community and staff perceptions of the board** – If the board is perceived as unethical, dishonest, secretive or self-serving that is the reality for the community and staff. One must carefully consider how our decisions and behaviors might be interpreted. Then act accordingly. Perception is reality until that perception is changed.

9. **You must think "big picture", not micromanagement** – There is a temptation to focus on what goes on with staff and management instead of making a difference in the larger world. One must ignore minutia and details and focus on the big picture. This is governance. This is the boards' work.

10. **You must not permit big issues to be put off indefinitely** – Big difficult decisions are the boards' to make. Not making a decision abdicates the boards' responsibility. Not making a decision is in fact a decision and others will then make that decision by fault.

11. **You must function as a team** – The board and the administration are the leadership team for the district. The board governs and the superintendent administers the policies of the board.

12. **You support board decisions** – No matter how you voted on an issue, you are obligated to support a majority board decision. The legitimacy of the choice must be supported even if you didn't agree (i.e. Support the superintendent implementing a board decision even though you voted against it.) The integrity of your dissent is maintained, but your support of the majority decision is never in doubt. Chaos will occur and factions will be created when the board is not unified.

13. **You address the boards questions** – What? Why? How much? How well? Are the board's questions and are at the heart of board governance. The superintendent answers the questions (How? When? Where? By whom?). These are not necessarily easy questions, but they are concrete rather than conceptual in nature.

14. **You must focus on ends** – Keep the conversation focused on values, vision, mission and goals. Who gets what level of benefits, for this time-frame, in this program, is reported by the superintendent.

15. **You must differentiate between form (looks) and substance (performance)** – Having a public relations committee does not assure good public relations. Beware of the trap of having procedures rather than substance.

16. **Your interests do not form the basis for the board agenda** – The board agenda isn't made up of individual member interests. Rather it is the district governance plan. Being a board member doesn't make the district your personal possession. The board determines what the district should provide to assure each child has a quality educational offering and opportunity to achieve.

17. **You must insist on having plans in writing** – When monitoring the performance of the superintendent or the success of a program it is absolutely necessary that the board establish and document criteria (goals and objectives), by consensus, in writing. Your value system comes into play when establishing policy or plan, not at the time of monitoring or evaluation.

18. **You focus on the question: "Is this the work of the board?"** – Board actions focus on making positive differences for students. Dealing with fundamental, long-term school system issues is "the work of the board". The decision making and wisdom of the diversity among board members, as they focus on the big picture is critical to the continued success of public education. Local school board service is local government and local control at its best. Board members' policies and employment decisions enhance educational programming for children. Good stewardship of school district resources, while making all decisions in public, is an awesome task.