

NEW BOARD MEMBER ORIENTATION

In order that newly elected Board members may cast informed votes and function effectively as board members, the Board and Superintendent will extend to them the fullest measures of courtesy and cooperation, and will make every reasonable effort to assist newly elected Board members [OR: members-elect] in understanding the Board's functions, policies, procedures and current issues.

A. In the interim between a new member's election or appointment and his/her assuming office, the Board, through the Superintendent, will invite newly elected members to attend meetings, except those held in executive session, and provide newly elected members with agenda, minutes and reports applicable to those meetings. During the time between election or appointment and the assumption of office, the status of the future-member remains that of a private citizen and not that of an elected or appointed official.

B. The Board, through the Superintendent, will provide new members with copies of appropriate publications, such as the Board policy manual, student handbook(s), collective bargaining agreements, and current budget documents.

C. The Superintendent will remind Board members of their obligation to complete, not later than the 120th day after the date of taking the oath of office, training on the requirements of Maine's Freedom of Access Law. The Superintendent will provide Board members with information regarding available training options. Each Board member shall attest by means of a written or electronic record that he/she has completed the training and provide a copy of such record to the Superintendent's Office. To facilitate documentation of training, the Superintendent will make available to Board members copies of the State's sample Certification of Completion of Freedom of Access Training form.

[NOTE: The Freedom of Access Law is ambiguous as to whether an elected official must complete the required training only the first time he/she is elected, or every time. Given the importance of this training and the potential for changes in law, we recommend that a Board member complete Freedom of Access training each time he/she is elected. Also, while the law requires an elected official to "keep the record [of training] or file it with the public entity to which the official was elected," we recommend that training documentation be maintained at the Superintendent's Office for ease in fulfilling Freedom of Access requests.]

D. The Board will encourage new members to attend appropriate in-district and out-of-district orientation and/or boardsmanship workshops. Reimbursement for such activities must be approved in advance by the Board Chair, in consultation with the Superintendent, and is subject to the availability of funds.

E. The Chair and Superintendent will schedule and arrange for an orientation session for new Board members as soon as practicable after election or appointment. A reasonable amount of time will be provided for discussion of:

1. The roles and responsibilities of the Board and individual members;
2. Basic operational procedures of the Board;
3. Placement of items on the agenda;
4. The role of committees, subcommittees and advisory committees;
5. How and why executive sessions may be held;
6. What is considered confidential or privileged information;
7. Appropriate responses of an individual member when a request or complaint is made directly to him/her by a student, parent or member of the community;
8. How the Board responds to complaints involving personnel;
9. General information about the school system and its resources;
10. How Board members, in fulfilling their duties, may request information concerning schools and District operations, finances and personnel;
11. How Board members may make arrangements to visit schools and the protocol for such visits;
12. Protocol for dealing with the media; and
13. Other relevant topics.

All Board members will be invited to the orientation session and encouraged to attend. The orientation is intended to serve as a useful review of basic boardmanship concepts for experienced members, as well as an opportunity to provide information and counsel to new Board members.

Legal Reference: 1 M.R.S.A. § 412

Cross Reference: BIC – Board Member Freedom of Access Law Training

Adopted: August 15, 2019