

# TORRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## BY-LAWS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

### **Role and Responsibility of Individual Board Members**

#### **Statement of Integrity**

The long-term health of a representative democracy requires that citizenship and leadership act upon what is right, rather than what is popular. The goal of Board of Education members is to improve the education of Torrington's children and to advocate for them and their best interests. Board members must be working effectively together and with others in the community to successfully reach this goal. A Board of Education that operates with integrity will be a more effective Board. Integrity is, first, discerning what is right and what is wrong; second, acting upon what you have discerned even at personal cost; and, third, saying openly that you are acting on your understanding of right from wrong. It requires that students, colleagues, constituents and others in the community be considered in every decision. A Board of Education with a sense of integrity will consider what is right and what is wrong. This takes discipline and an awareness of one's environment.

To this end as a Board of Education with integrity, Board members will:

1. Understand that their first and greatest concern is the educational welfare of the students and that all decisions must be based on this understanding;
2. Render all decisions based solely on the Board's judgment of the available facts and not surrender that judgment to individuals, special interests, or their own personal agendas;
3. Attend all Board meetings, and committee meetings of which they are members, insofar as possible, and be prepared to discuss and/or act upon all agenda items;
4. Be responsible for becoming informed on any and all issues coming before the Board;
5. Seek to facilitate ongoing communication between the Board and students, staff, parents and all elements of the community;
6. Conduct their meetings and foster an environment where all elements of the community can express their ideas;
7. Declare a conflict of interest where it arises and excuse themselves from related discussion and action on that issue;
8. Refrain from using their position on the Board for personal or partisan gain;
9. Insist on regular and impartial evaluation of all staff, conduct a yearly self-evaluation, and set annual goals;
10. Fairly assess all non-instructional aspects of the school operation;

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11. Recognize the importance of speaking with a single voice to the community, deferring all requests or inquiries for public comment on issues to the Board chair, unless authorized by the Board chair to speak on behalf of the Board on that particular issue; and,
12. Support all decisions by the Board to the community once a decision has been reached.

The Torrington Board of Education is committed to the highest legal and ethical standards essential in governing the school system. It endeavors to encourage growth and support both established and innovative educational objectives.

### **Role of the Board and its Members**

The Board of Education is the governing body of the Torrington School District and derives its power and exists under the Constitution and General Statutes of the State of Connecticut and the procedures of the Connecticut State Board of Education.

The Board has the power and responsibility to discharge any duty imposed by law upon it or the district of which it is the Board of Education.

### **Board-Related Responsibilities**

In order to assure that its operations support the schools in providing all students with a high-quality education, the Board of Education hereby establishes as its goals:

1. To work closely with the community to ensure that Board actions and performance reflect the concerns and aspirations of the community;
2. To identify the educational needs and aspirations of the community, and to transform such needs and aspirations into policies aimed at stimulating the students and the learning process;
3. To communicate the educational programs to the community;
4. To provide leadership in order that the goals and objectives of the school system, as set forth by the Board, can be effectively carried out;
5. To employ a Superintendent capable of ensuring that the district maintains a position as an outstanding school system and that school personnel carry out the policies of the Board with energy and dedication;
6. To formulate and monitor Board policies which best serve the educational interests of students and to provide the Superintendent with sufficient and adequate guidelines for their implementation;
7. To develop and provide data useful to the planning, evaluation, organization and, execution of Board management functions;

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8. To perform all Board functions and operations in conformity with state, federal and, local laws, rules, and regulations;
9. To evaluate the Board's performance in relation to these goals, and to establish and clarify policies based upon the results of such evaluation; and
10. To approve by a majority, any individual expenditure over \$500 or cumulative expenditure for a singular event over \$500, from the board expense account, prior to the expenditure being incurred.
11. To adopt an annual budget.
12. To make good faith effort to attend at least one Board-sponsored professional development activity a year.

### **Board Officers**

#### **Chairperson**

The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Torrington Board of Education and shall perform other duties as directed by law, State Department of Education regulations, and by this Board. In carrying out these responsibilities, the Chairperson shall:

1. Sign the instruments, acts and orders necessary to carry out state requirements and the will of the Board;
2. Meet with the other Board officers (Vice-chairperson and Secretary) and consult with the Superintendent in the planning of the Board's agendas, and communicate proceedings of these meetings to other Board members in a timely fashion;
3. Appoint a Board member to preside at a Board meeting in the event that Chairperson or Officers of the Board are not available;
4. Confer with the Superintendent on crucial matters which may arise between Board meetings and communicate such matters to the other Board members in a timely fashion;
5. Appoint Board committees, subject to Board approval;
6. Call special meetings of the Board as necessary, or if requested by three (3) or more members;
7. Be public spokesperson for the Board at all times except as this responsibility is specifically delegated to others;
8. Be responsible for the orderly conduct of all Board meetings;
9. Accept such other duties as prescribed or authorized by the Board;
10. Appoint a clerk of the Board;

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As presiding officer at all meetings of the Board, the Chairperson shall:

1. Call meetings to order at the appointed time;
2. Announce the business to come before the Board in its proper order, asking for changes or additions to the agenda;
3. Enforce the Board's policies relating to the order of business and the conduct of the meetings;
4. Give recognition for persons to speak, and protect the speaker who has the floor from disturbance or interference;
5. Explain the effect of a motion if it is not clear to every member;
6. Restrict discussion to the question when a motion is before the Board;
7. Answer all parliamentary inquiries, referring questions of legality to the Board attorney if necessary;
8. Put motions to a vote, stating definitively and clearly the vote and result thereof.

### **Vice-Chairperson**

The Vice-Chairperson will:

1. Act in place of the Chairperson when necessary and preside at meetings when the Chairperson is temporarily absent. The Vice-chairperson cannot fill vacancies required to be filled by the Chairperson and does not serve as an ex-officio member of committees;
2. Work with the Chairperson and Superintendent to become generally informed of Board business and work with the other Board officers and the Superintendent to plan the Board's agenda;
3. In the absence of the Chairperson, act as a resource to the Superintendent on decisions which may require further input between Board meetings;
4. In case of illness, resignation or death of the Chairperson, will become Chairperson. The Board will meet to elect a new chairperson within 90 days of the date the chairmanship is vacated.

The Vice-chairperson's signature shall be an alternative signature on all legal documents requiring the signature of the Secretary.

### **Secretary**

A member of the Torrington Board of Education will be elected Secretary by the members of the Board and shall perform the duties assigned by law and the Board.

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The Secretary will:

1. Act in the place of the Chairperson when necessary and preside at meetings when the Chairperson and Vice-Chair are temporarily absent. The Secretary cannot fill vacancies required to be filled by the Chairperson and does not serve as an ex-officio member of committees;
2. As stated in the Connecticut Education Laws, Section 10-224, keep a record of all the Board's proceedings in a book which such Secretary shall provide for that purpose at the expense of the town at its annual meetings a report of the doings of the Board;
3. Act as a resource (within the responsibilities of the office) to the Superintendent on decisions which may require further input between Board meetings;
4. Work with the other Board officers and the Superintendent to plan the Board's agenda;
5. Endorse/sign all legal documents requiring the signature of the Secretary.

### **Standing Committees**

The Torrington Board of Education shall have standing committees to address the operations of the Board which shall include committees on:

1. Budget
2. Personnel
3. Policy
4. Negotiations (one each for Certified, Non-certified, and Administrators bargaining units)
5. School Improvement & Community Relations
6. Grievance Hearing Committee

Standing committees shall meet as required to consider matters coming within their jurisdiction or as referred to them by the Board or the Superintendent and shall submit a report at the next regular meeting of the Board. (The Negotiating committees' reports may by necessity be very brief and general.)

A majority of committee members shall constitute a quorum for committee meetings.

No action of any standing committee shall be binding on the Board unless such committee has been previously so empowered by the Board.

Ad-hoc or special committees may be appointed by the Board and shall have duties as outlined at the time of their appointment. These committees will be dissolved upon submission of their report unless otherwise specified by the Board.

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The Board Chairperson may name board members as liaisons to other committees or organizations, or as members to other district committees, as warranted.

### **Standing Committee Membership**

1. The Chairperson of the Board shall appoint no more than four members to a standing committee so no committee meeting, including the Board chair as ex-officio member, can constitute a quorum of the Board; The Board chair as ex-officio member has no vote.
2. Ad hoc and liaison assignments are not considered to be standing committees;
3. Any member of the Board who is interested in serving on a standing committee shall notify the Chairperson of the Board promptly concerning their interest;
4. Each Board member must serve on at least two (2) standing committees;
5. No Board member may serve on more than three (3) standing committees, in addition to Negotiations;
6. No Board member may chair more than one (1) standing committee, with the exception that a member may chair one standing committee and one negotiating committee concurrently;
7. The membership of a standing committee shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the Board, subject to Board approval;
8. The Chairperson of the Board of Education shall appoint a committee Chairperson of each standing committee from among its members;
9. The Chairperson of the Board will serve as an ex-officio on all standing committees;
10. Any member of the Board may attend meetings of a standing committee of which he or she is not a member; however that member will be unable to vote, except with the Grievance Committee;
11. Standing Committee Chairpersons and members on standing committees shall serve for the same term as a Board Chairperson as prescribed by Connecticut General Statutes.

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### **Record Keeping**

All committees shall keep minutes of business conducted at meetings. The minutes will be kept on file in the Superintendent's office and available at all times to the Board of Education members.

### **Standing Committees - Duties and Responsibilities**

#### **Budget**

1. Will consist of a committee chair and three (3) other board members;
2. Will consult with the Superintendent and with other committees as required in preparing a budget for the ensuing fiscal year and shall recommend a tentative budget to the entire Board for approval, with or without modifications, consistent with city charter;

#### **Negotiations**

1. There will be three (3) negotiating committees, one each to represent the Board with regards to negotiations with the non-certified, administrative, and certified personnel bargaining units;
2. Each negotiating committee will consist of a committee chair and two (2) other Board members;
3. Each negotiating committee will negotiate with a positive, honest and sincere attitude towards reaching a fair and equitable agreement;
4. Confidentiality will be maintained while negotiations are ongoing unless both negotiating parties have agreed to waive confidentiality ground rules;
5. Follow clear directions and parameters for negotiations from the full Board;
6. Keep the Board apprised of the negotiation process;
7. Select a primary spokesperson and Secretary who keeps all official meeting minutes;
8. Present a final package of negotiated items for the Board's approval

#### **Personnel**

1. Will consist of a committee chair and three (3) other Board members;
2. Will take the lead, within parameters approved by the full Board, in negotiating the initial contract and any adjustments to it between the Torrington School District and the Superintendent; approval of the contract or any changes is a matter for the full Board;
3. Will also consider other matters of hiring and personnel as requested by the Superintendent;

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### **Policy**

1. Will consist of the committee chair and three (3) other board members;
2. Formulate policies to be presented to the entire Board for action;
3. Suggest amendments/revisions of existing policies;
4. Be knowledgeable of policies adopted and why;
5. Conduct annual reviews of policies;
6. Monitor implementation of policies in schools.

### **School Improvement & Community Relations**

1. Will consist of the committee chair and three (3) other Board members;
2. Will consult with the Superintendent on significant program improvements, modifications, and Board Goals;
3. Will promote good community relations which support the educational program, program improvements, and Board Goals;
4. Will consult with the Superintendent to monitor progress on NEASC recommendations at least annually;
5. Will identify and recognize an exemplary graduate of the TPS educational program through the annual Alumnus Award to be presented at THS Awards Night.

### **Grievance Hearing Committee**

1. Will consist of the committee chair and three Board members;
2. Be knowledgeable of all union contracts;
3. Will provide an impartial hearing to aggrieved personnel as described in the union contracts;
4. Will render binding decisions on grievances heard.
5. All Board members who are not appointed to the Grievance Committee by the Board Chair may participate in any Grievance Committee meeting and have full voting privileges.
6. Any three Board members present shall constitute a quorum.

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### **Board Meetings**

1. The Torrington Board of Education will hold general meetings once a month, generally on the third Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m.; frequency dates and times of meetings, as well as agendas, may be changed by majority vote;
2. Recommended agenda for each meeting is as follows:

#### First Meeting

Executive session if needed  
Visitor Recognition  
Adoption of Agenda  
Approval of Minutes  
Reports: Students, Superintendent  
Consent  
Discussion/Action  
Committee Reports  
Comments for the Good of the Order  
Executive Session if needed

3. Presentations/discussion items to begin at 6:00 p.m. prior to the regular Board meeting, when needed.
4. Meetings should conclude by 10 p.m. A majority vote of the Board is required to extend the meeting beyond 11:00 p.m.
5. The Board will conduct its meetings following Robert's Rules of Order.

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### **Board of Education Self-Evaluation**

1. The Board of Education will hold a special meeting annually for the express purpose of evaluating its performance and effectiveness; said meeting should precede the annual evaluation of the Superintendent and the onset of the Board's budget process;
2. The Board Chair will assign the duties associated with the evaluation and meeting, such as development of an evaluation instrument, format, venue, timing, outside facilitation, etc. to an ad-hoc committee charged solely with this responsibility;

### **Amending of the By-Laws**

1. Amendments to the by-laws of the Torrington Board of Education (additions, changes or deletions) require six (6) votes for acceptance;
2. Amendments are to be acted on in an open meeting, having been received at a previous meeting;

Adopted November 20, 2000

Revised April 18, 2002

Revised June 19, 2002

Revised August 20, 2003

Revised September 19, 2007

Revised January 23, 2008

Revised January 21, 2009

Revised August 19, 2009