

TIFFIN CITY SCHOOLS



Board Member Handbook

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
TIFFIN CITY SCHOOLS
244 SOUTH MONROE STREET
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Preamble

The Tiffin Board of Education understands that access to a quality public education is not just a constitutional requirement, but is also a moral imperative to ensure that all individuals have an opportunity to fully develop their talents, moral imagination and essential humanity. Accordingly, all students of the Tiffin City Schools are entitled to a quality educational experience that prepares them to be lifelong learners.

In order to provide the necessary and appropriate leadership for the Tiffin City Schools, the Tiffin Board of Education, both collectively and individually, is committed to governing as a professional board of directors. This means a commitment to the principles and practice of professional governance, the sharing of a common understanding of Board policies, practices, procedures and principles, a focus on continuous learning and improvement, and a willingness to serve as a model of effective moral leadership to students, staff and the community. This handbook is an attempt to set down in writing the Board's procedures and principles for the benefit of current and future members of the Tiffin Board of Education.

Core Commitments, Mission, and Vision

Tiffin City Schools is dedicated to fostering a learning environment that ensures student success through rigorous academic programs, ethical governance, and active community engagement. The board's core mission is to prepare students to be college and career ready while promoting an inclusive culture of high expectations.

Mission:

Tiffin City Schools, in partnership with students, families, and the community, will create a learning environment where all students achieve at their full learning potential.

Vision:

Great Schools!
Great Students!
Great Future!

Core Commitments

- Student-Centered: Prioritize student success in decision-making.
- Accountability-Based Management: Focus on measurable impacts on student outcomes.
- Strong Relationships: Foster inclusion with stakeholders and the community.
- Technology-Oriented: Adapt to the demands of the digital age.
- Rigorous Curriculum: Implement standards-based, future-ready education.





District Charting the Course Goals

CAREER-BASED EDUCATION

1. To create career exploration/preparation activities at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
2. To partner with our business community for the purpose of career exploration.
3. To provide one-on-one guidance regarding future career aspirations.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

4. To implement a character education program based on the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets to develop strong relationships within school, community and family.
5. To promote community service through volunteerism and organized projects.
6. To encourage and promote pride and ownership within the school community.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNING

7. To guarantee that all students are College and/or Career Ready when they graduate from the Tiffin City Schools.
8. To maximize resources (personnel, programs, materials, funding, etc...) to guarantee that students are receiving the intervention and/or enrichment necessary to reach their full learning potential.
9. To meet and exceed all state indicators of educational progress as defined by the local report card.
10. To create a PreK-12 learning environment that meets the diverse needs of all learners.



District Charting the Course Goals

STUDENT SAFETY

- 11. To provide a secure environment.
- 12. To ensure bully-free schools.

USING TECHNOLOGY IN INSTRUCTION

- 13. To establish a technologically rich learning environment that allows for the implementation of Ohio's PreK-12 Common Core State Standards and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills.
- 14. To develop an ongoing systematic method for securing and maintaining up-to-date technology.
- 15. To provide targeted technological training to complement the instructional skills of staff, the cognitive abilities of students, and the functional capabilities of parents and the community.

District Belief Statements

1. High expectations are directly related to student achievement.
2. Our schools should provide the technological and social skills to compete in a global society.
3. It is essential for our school system to embrace diversity, including ethnicity, ability level, and socioeconomic status.
4. Our schools must be safe, promote a positive learning atmosphere and be organized around the needs and interests of our students.
5. Our families, students, staff and community share responsibility in the education of our children.
6. Each person has intrinsic value and worth and is a unique individual.
7. Every student should/will contribute to the community/society.
8. Increased accountability (parents/students/staff) will foster an environment of respect and acceptance.
9. Every child needs basic skills – conflict resolution, problem solving, and innovative thought process.
10. Our district should be a source of PRIDE for our community.

Key Work of the Tiffin City School Board

In addition to its Mission Statement and Board Goals, as well as responsibilities defined by law, the Board subscribes to the Key Work of School Boards. This framework for planning and action, developed by the National School Board Association, is based on the system's concept that no action or progress is accomplished in isolation.

The eight essential areas for Board focus and action are as follows:

Vision

establishing a clear vision of student achievement as a top priority of the Board, staff and community.

Standards

setting clear standards for student performance.

Assessment

establishing regular and valid assessments to measure district and student progress.

Accountability

establishing a process that holds the school system accountable for student success.

Alignment

aligning of all district resources to focus on student performance.

Climate

creating a positive climate throughout the school district to promote student success.

Collaborative Relationships

building collaborative relationships with the community to promote and develop a consensus and understanding of the priority of student achievement.

Continuous Improvement

committing all individuals within the school district to the idea of continuous improvement in the pursuit of student achievement and success.

Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members

From the original handbook—Board Member Qualifications Under State law, a board member must be an elector residing in a particular district. To qualify as an elector, a person must be a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age or older, a resident of the state for 30 days prior to the election and a resident of the county and precinct in which he/she offers to vote for at least 30 days prior to the election.

A variety of other public positions, elected and appointed, have been determined by the General Assembly or the courts to be incompatible with board membership. Generally, offices are considered incompatible when one is subordinate to or in any way provides a check upon the other, or when it is physically impossible for one person to discharge the duties of both positions.

Before taking office, each person elected or appointed to a board is required by law to take an oath of office.

Board members serve as policymakers and advisors, ensuring the district is managed effectively by professional administrators. Key responsibilities include:

- Collaborating with the superintendent to establish effective policies.
- Supporting the district's mission while respecting the authority of professional administrators.
- Evaluating the superintendent and treasurer, but not directly managing day-to-day school operations.

Board Member Conflict of Interest

The Board and individual members follow the letter and spirit of the law regarding conflicts of interest.

A Board member will not have any direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a contract with the District; will not furnish for remuneration any labor, equipment, or supplies to the District; nor be employed by the Board in any capacity for compensation.

A Board member may have a private interest in a contract with the Board if all of the following apply:

- the subject of the public contract is necessary supplies or services for the District;
- the supplies or services are unobtainable elsewhere for the same or lower cost, or are being furnished to the District as part of a continuing course of dealing established prior to the Board member's becoming associated with the school district;
- the treatment accorded the District is either preferential to or the same as that accorded other customers or clients in similar transactions and
- the entire transaction is conducted at arm's length, with full knowledge by the Board of the interest of the Board member, member of his/her family, or his/her business associate, and the Board member takes no part in the deliberations or decision with respect to the public contract.

The law specifically forbids:

- the prosecuting attorney or a city attorney from serving on a Board;
- a member from serving as the school dentist, physician or nurse;
- a member from being employed for compensation by a board;
- a member from having, directly or indirectly, any pecuniary interest in any contract with a Board;
- a member from voting on a contract to employ a person as a teacher or instructor if he/she is related to that person as father, mother, brother or sister;
- a member from authorizing, or employing the authority or influence of his/her office to secure authorization of, any public contract in which he/she, a member of his/her family or any of his/her business associates have an interest;
- a member from having an interest in the profits or benefits of a public contract entered into by, or for the use of, the District and
- a member from occupying any position of profit during his/her term of office or within one year thereafter in the prosecution of a public contract authorized by him/her or a Board of which he/she was a member at the time of authorization of that contract.

Board Member Code of Conduct

- Respect confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest.
- Act in the best interest of all students and render decisions based on available facts.
- Commit to attending all meetings and improving governance skills through training.

Evaluation and Oversight

- Evaluate the superintendent and treasurer regularly using district-approved criteria.
- Provide feedback to ensure alignment with district goals and objectives.

Social Media Guidelines for School Board Members

Many school board members are active users of social media, including online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as other media such as blogs and personal websites. Social media can be a positive tool for fostering community engagement with the school district, but board members need to operate within appropriate guidelines when they are communicating online about school district business. In using social media to communicate about school district business, a school board member should:

1. State that you are stating your individual thoughts and not speaking as an official district spokesman. Because the board acts with a single voice, many boards appoint the board president as the spokesperson for the board of education. Other board members are free to speak on school issues but should clarify that their statements reflect their own views and not that of the board of education.
2. Board members are not permitted to deliberate school business with a quorum of the school board. School Boards are required to follow Ohio's Open Meetings Act (ORC Section 121.22) which states that if a quorum (3 members) of a school board meet and deliberate, this meeting must take place in an open meeting. Therefore, board members should not use online communications as a vehicle to communicate with each other outside of meetings. Besides possibly violating OMA laws, such communications undermine good working relationships and the purpose of open meetings.

3. If board members receive complaints or concerns online, those complaints or concerns should be directed to the appropriate administrator. One board member does not and cannot make any decisions, therefore complaints need to be directed to the appropriate administrator to maintain the proper chain of command.

4. Board members should avoid posting content that may indicate that the member has already formed an opinion on any pending matters. In a dispute, the school board sits as a neutral tribunal to hear and resolve an issue. The concept of due process calls for the board to serve as an impartial decision maker.

5. Social media may be used to gather community input but should not be used to direct any board decisions. Yielding decision making authority on matter of public business to social networks violate local policy, board ethics, and, in some instances, the law.

6. Board members should only post content that has already been released by the school district.

Board Committees and Communication

Board committees play a vital role in maintaining district operations. Committees are structured to address specific areas such as finance, policy review, and curriculum development. Members are rotated annually, with updates provided to the full board after each meeting.

Communication Best Practices:

- Community concerns should be directed to the superintendent for resolution.
- The board president serves as the primary liaison for board communications.
- Transparency is maintained through clear communication with stakeholders and adherence to public meeting laws.

Ethics and Governance

Board members must uphold the highest ethical standards, as guided by Ohio's Ethics Laws and local policies. Key ethical guidelines include:

- Avoiding misuse of authority for personal benefit.
- Ensuring decisions are free from undue influence by special interest groups.
- Disclosing financial conflicts of interest as required by law.

Code of Ethics

Board members pledge to support public education, respect diverse perspectives, and act with integrity in all board-related activities.

"While serving as a member of my Board of Education, I accept the responsibility to improve public education. To that end I will:

- *remember that my first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of all students attending the public schools;*
- *obey the laws of Ohio and the United States;*
- *respect the confidentiality of privileged information;*
- *recognize that as an individual Board member I have no authority to speak or act for the Board;*
- *work with other members to establish effective Board policies;*
- *delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the Superintendent and staff;*
- *encourage ongoing communications among Board members, the Board, students, staff and the community;*
- *render all decisions based on the available facts and my independent judgment rather than succumbing to the influence of individuals or special interest groups;*
- *make efforts to attend all Board meetings;*
- *become informed concerning the issues to be considered at each meeting;*
- *improve my boardmanship by studying educational issues and by participating in in-service programs;*
- *support the employment of staff members based on qualifications and not as a result of influence;*

- *cooperate with other Board members and administrators to establish a system of regular and impartial evaluations of all staff;*
- *avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof;*
- *refrain from using my Board position for benefit of myself, family members or business associates and*
- *express my personal opinions, but, once the Board has acted, accept the will of the majority."*

Financial Oversight

The board oversees the district's financial health through careful budget reviews, levy approvals, and monitoring of five-year financial forecasts. Tiffin City Schools receives funding from local, state, and federal sources, with an emphasis on transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

- Key Financial Responsibilities:
- Approve annual budgets and appropriations.
- Review financial reports to ensure fiscal stability.
- Collaborate with the treasurer on levy campaigns and alternative revenue strategies.

Key Administrative Roles

The superintendent and treasurer are the board's two direct hires, responsible for executing the district's policies and maintaining fiscal health. Regular evaluations of these positions provide feedback and ensure alignment with district goals.

Superintendent's Role:

- As the Chief Executive Officer, the superintendent's major roles include,
 - Manage staff evaluations and oversee personnel decisions.
 - Implement board policies and communicate district priorities.

Treasurer's Role:

- Serve as the district's chief financial officer, ensuring compliance with state reporting requirements.
- Present financial forecasts and advise on budgetary matters.

Board Meetings and Decision-Making

The board conducts organizational meetings annually and holds regular sessions to discuss district operations. Decisions are made via resolutions, following thorough deliberations within committees. Transparency and adherence to open meeting laws are paramount.

Meeting Guidelines:

- The board president and vice president are elected during the annual organizational meeting.
- Resolutions are prepared in advance and discussed within committees before presentation.
- Participate actively in regular and special board meetings.
- Follow established protocols for motions, resolutions, and executive sessions.
- OSBA Guidelines for Parliamentary Procedure:
<https://www.ohioschoolboards.org/sites/default/files/OSBAParliamentaryProcedureFactSheet.pdf>

Committees:

- Engage in committees focused on curriculum, finance, policy, and infrastructure.
- Rotate committee assignments annually, ensuring balanced participation.

Reimbursement:

- Submit expense claims for board-related activities according to district policy.
- Avoid unauthorized expenses, including personal entertainment or non-board-related travel.

Staff and Employment:

- Approve hires and separations as recommended by the superintendent.
- Support professional development initiatives for staff and administrators.

Graduation and Ceremonial Duties:

- Participate in graduation ceremonies as representatives of the board, celebrating student achievements.

Vacancies

A vacancy on the Board may be caused by:

- Death;
- Nonresidence;
- Resignation;
- removal from office;
- failure of a person elected or appointed to qualify within 10 days after the organization of the Board or of his/her appointment or election;
- relocation beyond District boundaries or

- absence from Board meetings for a period of 90 days, if the reasons for the absence are declared insufficient by a two-thirds vote of the remaining Board members. (The vote must be taken not earlier than 30 days after the 90-day period of absence.)

Any such vacancy will be filled by the Board at its next regular or special meeting not earlier than 10 days nor later than 30 days after the vacancy occurs. A majority vote of all the remaining members of the Board is required to fill the vacancy.

Each person selected to fill a vacancy holds office:

- until the completion of the unexpired term or
- until the first day of January immediately following the next regular Board election taking place more than 90 days after a person is selected to fill the vacancy. (At that election, a special election to fill the vacancy is held. No such special election is held if the unexpired term ends on or before the first day of January immediately following that regular Board election. The term of a person elected in this manner begins on the first day of January following the election and is for the remainder of the unexpired term.)

The shorter of the above options determines the length of office.

Board Culture and Community Engagement

Building a Positive Culture:

- Promote shared beliefs and behaviors that align with district outcomes.
- Support initiatives that reinforce community involvement and academic excellence.

Effective Communication:

- Coordinate communication through the board president and superintendent.
- Ensure transparency and inclusiveness in district-related correspondence.

Resources for Board Members

- Training Opportunities: Attend the Ohio School Boards Association Capital Conference and other training sessions to stay informed.
- Policy Manual Access: Reference district policies for detailed guidance on governance and operations.
- Ethics and Compliance: Regularly review state ethics laws and district-specific ethical guidelines.



HISTORICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Tiffin City Schools operate within Ohio's robust public education framework, guided by state laws and standards. The district's governance reflects a commitment to ensuring all students receive a quality education aligned with 21st-century needs.

Key Historical Note: Ohio's public school system, rooted in the principles of universal education, serves as a foundation for the district's mission to empower students to succeed.

This document provides a comprehensive reference for new and current board members, aligning their responsibilities with the district's mission and operational goals. Board members are encouraged to refer to this guide alongside the district's policy manual for further details.

Mission: Tiffin City Schools, in partnership with students, families, and the community, will create a learning environment where all students achieve at their full learning potential.