POLICY TOOLKIT

1. CSBA's Policy Framework 101

As part of its efforts to support policy review, adoption, and implementation, CSBA has developed a series of resources for individual and governance team use. This document provides a brief overview of the different resources and the framework upon which they're based. In addition to Policy Framework 101, members can access the following documents:

COMPANION TOOLS

Cover Letter The cover letter provides a brief overview of the toolkit and suggestions for the review process.

Policy Framework The Policy Framework equips board members with the tools to create effective policies, fostering shared understanding and informed decision-making, while enhancing the local educational agency's (LEA) ability to adopt and maintain strong policy practices.

Individual Board Member Reflection The individual reflection sheet poses a series of questions to help board members understand their current policy literacy and practices related to policy development.

Board Policy Process Evaluation This evaluation is used to guide the process of weighing and scoring the current practices that the board is engaging in when revising and adopting policies. The rubric helps boards understand where they can aspire to improve.

Policy Principles Quick Reference Guide The quick reference guide helps board members understand how to engage in high-quality policy review and discussion at the dais.

Additional CSBA Policy Resources *(Available by subscription only)*

GAMUT Policy — The most comprehensive set of sample school policies in California.

CSBA's Mandated and Conditionally Mandated Policy Language — A chart summarizing state and federal laws that mandate districts to adopt policies and regulations on specified topics, and the CSBA policy or regulation that addresses each mandate.

Policy Document Workshops — Develop a robust, up-to-date policy manual that addresses key issues and complies with state and federal mandates through a 2-3 day workshop facilitated by a CSBA consultant.

Policy Manual Reviews — A review of a board's policies resulting in a report identifying individual polices that need to be updated or added to the manuals.

WHAT DO THESE DOCUMENTS COVER?

Understand the role of school boards in policy development — Gain knowledge of how school boards develop, adopt, revise, and monitor implementation of policies to promote equitable learning environments.

Identify key components of effective governance — Understand how governance teams contribute to creating strong teaching and learning conditions; includes CSBA recommendations to support the policy literacy of new and veteran board members.

Recognize the importance of inclusive policy development — Learn how to include diverse community voices in policy development to ensure policies are reflective of all educational partners' needs.

Evaluate the impact of policy on LEA operations — Learn how sound policies help prevent legal and financial challenges while promoting transparency and accountability in LEAs.

Foster policy literacy among board members — Develop the ability to recognize reliable source material and vetted resources for better decision-making and policy development.

Understand the legal framework for school policies — Learn how policies must comply and/or align with state and federal laws and other legal requirements.

Promote consistency and clarity in policy implementation — Understand how well-crafted policies help ensure consistent practices across schools, reducing confusion and preventing inequities.

Develop skills for continuous policy evaluation — Learn the importance of regular policy review and implementing adjustments in response to legislative changes, community feedback and data analysis.

Ensure effective communication of policy changes — Learn the steps necessary to communicate policy changes effectively to all stakeholders, including students, staff, and families.

Build a collaborative policy development process — Understand how boards, superintendents, staff, and community members working together leads to better-informed policies that align with the LEA's mission and vision.

POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL BOARDS

The Policy Framework tool helps school boards create and manage policies that benefit students. By understanding policies, board members can work together as a team to make better decisions and improve the schools they serve. The full-length guide is useful for board members, regardless of their experience, to understand how to navigate future policy questions effectively.

What is Board Policy?

Board policy refers to how the Governing Board legislates; sets policy direction of LEA.

Types of policies

Board Policy (BP) — The what and why. The big picture and general direction. The general principles by which an LEA directs its operations.

Administrative Regulation (AR) — The who, how, and when. Procedural steps outlining a rule of order prescribed for management. ARs are often established by the superintendent. They can exist alongside a BP, or alone without a corresponding BP.

Board Bylaws (BB) — Rules adopted by the governing board for its own operations.

Exhibits — Examples, standard forms, or other additional information necessary to understand and/or comply with a policy.

County Superintendent Policies (SP) — This document sets both policy and regulation for COEs.

Other documents — Schools may also have handbooks, agreements, and plans that help manage things like safety, health, and technology. Some boards also have board protocols that address board member interactions with one another and with the superintendent and/or staff.

CSBA SAMPLE POLICY RESOURCES *(Available to subscribers)*

CSBA's Policy and Governance Technology Services Department offers sample policies as source materials for both school districts and county offices of education to craft and create their own policy documents.

What a policy does

Policies create clear rules for everyone to follow, ensuring fairness for students, staff, and the community. They set the rules for how schools should be run, whether it's setting minimum expectations or reaching for higher goals.

Who should understand policy

Everyone in the community, from board members to students, should be familiar with policies. Board members, school staff, and the community work together to make sure policies are followed and achieve their intended outcomes.

Why policy matters

Effective policies help schools run smoothly and fairly. They build trust with the community, create an environment where students can learn and succeed, and protect schools from legal and financial problems.

Developing policies

Creating comprehensive policies requires team effort. Board members should work together, as well as with staff and the community, to make sure the policies reflect the community's needs. Involving different voices ensures that policies are understood and followed in everyday school activities.

The role of the superintendent

The superintendent works with the board to make sure schools meet community needs and follow state and federal rules.

When is a new policy needed?

When LEAs face new challenges or issues, or the law requires it, the board may need to create new policies or update existing policies. This ensures consistency and helps avoid unfair treatment or confusion.

Reviewing and updating policies

Policies should be reviewed regularly to ensure they align with the LEA's local context, reflect current practices, and comply with state and federal laws. Consistent review helps identify and close gaps between what the policy states and what is happening in schools.

Engaging the community and gathering data are essential parts of the review process. Input from stakeholders ensures that policies remain relevant, equitable, and widely supported. Keeping policies up to date not only helps schools stay on track but also prevents issues, such as legal challenges, confusion, or inconsistent implementation.

CONCLUSION

Good policies make schools work better, help students succeed, reduce confusion, and build trust with the community. By regularly reviewing policies, boards of education can make sure their schools run smoothly, meet legal requirements, and serve the needs of all students.