



Welcome to your Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Directors

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

The Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Education members are governed by the Code of Iowa. The Board, acting on behalf of the District, will have jurisdiction over school matters within the territory of the District.

The Board is empowered to make policy for its own governance, for employees, for students and for District facilities. The Board is also empowered to enforce its policies. The Board may, through its quasi-judicial power, conduct hearings and rule on issues and disputes confronting the District.

The Board has these powers and all other powers expressly granted to it in federal and state law as well as the powers that can be reasonably implied from the expressed powers.

Below are some Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
to help community members to better understand
the role and responsibilities of the
Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Education.

All information provided below may be referenced at one of the following Web sites:

Reference: Cedar Rapids Community School District Board Policy Manual
<http://www.cr.k12.ia.us/aboutUs/BoardOfEd/supportDocs/PolicyHandbook/PolicyHandbook.pdf>

Reference: Code of Iowa
<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/IowaLaw.html>

Reference: Iowa Association of School Boards
<http://www.ia-sb.org/>

- ***What is the role of a school board member?***

The Board of Education is a policy-making and planning entity, and does not get involved with the day-to-day operations of the school system.

- ***What are the primary responsibilities of the Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Education?***

The Board is authorized to govern the school district which it oversees. As the governing Board of the District, the Board has three duties to perform: legislative duty, executive duty and evaluative duty.

- ***What is the composition of the Board?***

The Board of Education consists of seven community members elected to four-year terms. Members serve without pay. There are three at-large positions and four elected to represent geographical areas. However, all board members represent the entire school District when executing their responsibilities. The Board elects its own president and vice-president, appoints a secretary and treasurer, and hires a chief executive - the Superintendent.

- ***Do Board of Education members receive any stipend, salary or benefits?***

No

- ***When and where are Board meetings held?***

Regular meetings of the Board of Education are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month, unless otherwise scheduled by action of the Board of Education. Work Session meetings of the Board of Education are held at 5:30 p.m. on the fourth Monday of the month, unless otherwise scheduled. These meetings are always open to the public. The meetings will be held at the Educational Leadership & Support Center, Boardroom, which is located at 2500 Edgewood Road NW in Cedar Rapids, IA. All regularly-scheduled meetings are noted on the District Web site, and submitted for publication to the Cedar Rapids *Gazette*. You may also call 319/558-2000 for the meeting schedule.

- ***What transpires at Board meetings?***

There are several types of meetings, but the two most asked about include Work Sessions/Regular Meetings and Regular Meetings. At Work Session/Regular Meetings, the Board often reviews reports from school administrators and staff and discusses general District matters. At every Board meeting, the Board has an opportunity to formally vote on and/or resolve agenda items.

- ***How do items get on an agenda?***

The agendas for each work session and regular or special meeting shall be prepared by the Superintendent and Board Secretary, in consultation with the Board President. The agendas shall set forth the order of business and, in the case of the regular meeting agenda, shall contain supporting information for the various items of business, along with the recommendations of the Superintendent and District Leadership Team. Items for the agenda are suggested by the Board of Education, Superintendent, and/or District Leadership Team.

- ***What is the Open Meetings Law?***

Chapter 21 of the Iowa Code establishes state requirements with which governmental bodies, including school boards, must comply in their meetings and records. The open meetings law was written to provide the public accessibility to a board's deliberations and the decisions made by the board. Open meetings serve both the board and the public. Open meetings allow the public to know what decisions are being made about the education of their children and the expenditure of public funds. There is often confusion about the role of the public in a board's open meeting. The term "open meeting" means that the meeting is open to the public to observe and listen to the proceedings of the meeting. It does not mean the public may join in the board's discussion.

- ***What role does the public play at Board meetings?***

All Board meetings are open to the public, with the exception of Closed Sessions and Exempt Meetings. The Board of Education encourages and welcomes input from the community. In order to assure citizens are heard and Board meetings are conducted efficiently and in an organized manner, the Board may set time aside for citizen participation, at a specific time during the meeting. The procedure for addressing the Board is as follows:

- Complete "Request to Address the Board" form and give it to the Board Secretary prior to the meeting.
- When your name is called, step up to the podium and clearly state your name, address, and the organization you represent, if any.
- You will have five minutes to make remarks. Please be aware that answers or solutions may not be offered immediately. Normally, any request or concern will be referred to the administrative staff for follow up. In addition, elected bodies are precluded from directly addressing questions posed at a public meeting on any item that has not been published as an agenda item. In order to abide by the Open Meetings Law, there will be no dialogue between Board members and the public at Board meetings except to clarify the nature of questions or comments.
- At a public Board meeting, no person may orally initiate charges or complaints against individual District employees or challenge instructional materials used in the District. All complaints or challenges to instructional materials should be presented to the District administration or the Board in writing, signed by the complainant. All such complaints or challenges, if presented to the Board directly, will be referred to the District administrator as outlined in Board policy. Charges or complaints against individual employees will be dealt with according to Board policy.

Persons attending the Board meetings should practice good conduct. All persons will be treated with respect and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

- ***Is the Board permitted to meet privately?***

There are occasions when the full Board meets in Closed Session and/or Exempt Meetings. Closed Sessions are those sessions within an open Board meeting which take place without the public present. The Open Meetings Law sets out specific exceptions which allow Boards meet in Closed Session. Exempt Meetings not subject to the Open Meeting Law and have very specific procedures with which Boards must comply.

- ***Does the Board have Ad Hoc Committees?***

School Boards are the legal body charged with duties, responsibilities and authority. Regardless of who advises the board, the board is held accountable for its decisions. The board does not have the authority to delegate decision-making ability to a committee. No committee created or appointed by the board can usurp the board's authority. Whenever the Board deems it necessary, the Board may appoint a committee composed of residents, employees, and/or students to assist the Board. Committees formed by the Board are ad hoc committees and most likely subject to the Open Meetings Law. All Board committees are advisory in nature, created for a specific purpose and related to specific issues. The committee will provide advice and recommendations for the Board's consideration. Once their duties are carried out, the committee dissolves; therefore, the Board does not appoint standing committees. The Board of Education retains the authority to make a final decision on committee issues. Examples of Board-Appointed Committees required by Iowa statute include: School Improvement Advisory Committee and Teacher Quality Committee. Other Board-Appointed Committees that are not required by law include: Audit Committee, Diversity Committee, PTA Reconsideration Committee, SILO Infrastructure Oversight, and SILO Technology Oversight.

- ***Can I bring concerns about a classroom situation to the Board of Education?***

There is a District process that helps ensure that all concerns, requests, and questions are handled efficiently. The District encourages parties with a complaint or concern to first address the issue on an informal basis at the closest level to the situation. The Board will direct individuals with concerns to the District regulation and procedures.

- ***What happens if a member moves away or decides to step down from the Board?***

As directed by the Code of Iowa, if a vacancy occurs prior to the expiration of a term of office, the vacancy will be filled by Board appointment within 30 days of the vacancy. The newly-appointed Board member will hold the position until the next scheduled school election.

If the Board is unable to fill a vacancy by appointment within 30 days after the vacancy occurs, the Board secretary will call a special election to be held no sooner than thirty days nor later than forty days after the thirtieth day following the occurrence of the vacancy.

- ***What are the requirements necessary to run for the Board of Education?***

School Board elections are held on the second Tuesday in September of odd-numbered years. Citizens of the District seeking a seat on the Board must file their nomination papers with the Board secretary, or the Board secretary's designee, starting on the Monday, 64 days before the regular school election (Second Tuesday of September) and no later than 5:00 p. m. on Thursday, 40 days before the school election, unless otherwise directed by the Code of Iowa. Each candidate shall be a qualified voter of the District and of the designated director District if appropriate, a citizen of the school district, an eligible elector of the District, and free from a financial conflict of interest with the position. For additional information, the Iowa Association of School Boards publishes a "School Board Candidate Kit," which is available by contacting the IASB at www.ia-sb.org

- ***What kind of time commitment should Board members anticipate?***

Board members can anticipate attending two Board meetings a month, several professional development opportunities, and various school district events. A significant amount of time for reviewing written materials is also necessary.

- ***Where can I get additional information about the Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Directors?***

For more information, please contact the Cedar Rapids Community School District Board Secretary at (319)558-2223, emailing Lday@cr.k12.ia.us, or mailing to Board Secretary, Cedar Rapids Community School District, 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405.