Survey reveals board operation, community engagement and student representation

PSBA conducts periodic surveys to collect statewide information to give school directors insight as they strive to effectively govern their local public schools. The PSBA Research Inquiry on School Board Operations is conducted every three years to compile information on how boards operate, engage the community and provide opportunities for student representation. The 2021 data were compiled from 361 responses (72%) of the 500 school districts surveyed.

Here are a few highlights. The voting meeting with the full board is most often held the third week of the month (43%) and most often on Mondays (45%). More than three-quarters (81%) of boards use standing subcommittees. The method most often used for electing school directors is the at-large plan (61%). Most school districts (82%) participate in cooperative projects with business and community organizations. More than half (60%) of school districts involve students in their local board meetings.

The following detailed survey results are divided into three parts: board operations, community engagement and student representation.

### Board Operations

**Agenda discussion (nonvoting) meeting***:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of the week</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUESDAY</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEDNESDAY</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17%</td>
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**Voting meeting with the full board***:

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**Frequency of sunshine voting meetings with full board per month**:

- **ONE - 76%**
- **TWO - 24%**

**Frequency of sunshine “agenda discussion” (nonvoting) meetings with full board per month**:

- **1 - 81%**
- **2 - 13%**
- **3 - 1%**
- **4+ - 5%**

*NOTE: *(Meeting information, method of election and principles adoption are compiled from PSBA membership data, not the survey.)*
### Board Operations

**Board routinely holds executive sessions:**
- Yes .............................................. 86%
- No ................................................ 14%

**When executive sessions generally take place:**
- Before ......................................... 49%
- As needed ..................................... 28%
- After ............................................ 15%
- During ..........................................  3%
- Other ............................................. 5%

**Board uses standing subcommittees:**
- Yes ............................................... 81%
- No ................................................ 19%

**Standing committees established:**
- Appointed by president ............... 62%
- Board members volunteer based on their preference .... 35%
- Membership guaranteed by tenure on committee .......... 0%
- Board members choose annually based on seniority ........ 0%
- Other ............................................. 3%

**Standing committees used:**
- Budget/finance ................................ 88%
- Buildings & grounds ....................... 87%
- Curriculum ..................................... 74%
- Policy ............................................. 68%
- Personnel ....................................... 65%
- Athletics/activities .......................... 62%
- Negotiations .................................... 42%
- Transportation ............................... 35%
- Technology ..................................... 33%
- Safety/security ................................ 25%
- Public/community relations .............. 18%
- Other ............................................. 15%
- Food service .................................... 14%
- Equity ............................................. 6%

**Hold annual evaluation of board’s own functions, evaluating areas such as board procedures, relationships, and activities:**
- Yes ............................................... 26%
- No .................................................. 74%

**Board develops specific goals for itself that align to the district goals outlined in the comprehensive and/or strategic plan:**
- Yes ............................................... 47%
- No .................................................. 53%

**PSBA Principles for Governance and Leadership – school district adoptions:**
- Adoption by policy ......................... 84%
- Adoption by resolution/motion .......... 16%

**Solicitor required to attend sunshine voting meetings:**
- Yes ............................................... 70%
- No .................................................. 30%

**Public comment periods during a meeting, number permitted:**
- One ............................................. 44%
- Two .............................................. 49%
- Three or more ...............................  52%
- Three or more ...............................  52%
- Time is limited:
  - Yes ............................................... 83%
  - No .................................................. 17%

**If limited, minutes allowed per person:**
- Two ............................................... 6%
- Three ............................................ 49%
- Four ............................................. 3%
- Five ............................................. 39.5%
- Ten ............................................... 2%
- Fifteen .......................................... 0.5%

**If limited, minutes allowed per period:**
- Three ............................................ 7%
- Five ............................................. 12%
- Six ............................................... 12%
- Ten ............................................... 1%
- Fifteen .......................................... 14%
- Twenty-twenty-one ....................... 8%
- Thirty .......................................... 35%
- Forty-forty-five .............................. 8%
- Sixty ............................................ 11%
- Ninety .......................................... 3%

85% make their meetings available digitally to the community.
by the numbers

School director method of election*:
- At large ........................................ 61%
- Three-region plan .......................... 31%
- Nine-region plan ............................. 5%
- Combined at-large/regional plan ....... 3%

New school director orientation for newly elected/appointed members:
- Yes .............................................. 78%
- No ............................................... 22%

Mentoring program for new school directors:
- Yes .............................................. 14%
- No ............................................... 86%

Board conducts paperless meetings:
- Yes .............................................. 57.5%
- No .............................................. 42.5%

Administrators who participate in board meetings in addition to the superintendent:
- Business officials ................................ 79%
- Other central office administrators .... 73%
- Building principals ............................ 62%
- Other ............................................... 18%

Board uses email to communicate with each other:
- Yes .............................................. 94%
- No ............................................... 6%

Laptop computer, tablet or other internet-connected device provided for each school director:
- Yes .............................................. 66%
- No ............................................... 34%

Each school director has a district-provided email address:
- Yes .............................................. 90%
- No ............................................... 10%

Participate in cooperative projects with business and community organizations:
- Yes .............................................. 82%
- No ............................................... 18%

Board meeting available digitally to the community:
- Not available digitally ..................... 15%
- Local television ............................. 8%
- Online livestreaming ...................... 77%
- Meeting recording is made available online ................... 41%
- Other ............................................. 7%

Board communicates with the community about board issues using the following means:
- District website ............................. 91%
- District social media ...................... 65%
- Regular contact with local media ... 36%
- By attending local government meetings ............... 24%
- By attending local community group meetings .... 19%
- Providing school speakers for community group meetings ...... 7%
- Other ............................................. 3%

Community Engagement

Cooperative business and community projects:
- Education foundation ..................... 71%
- Career shadowing/mentoring .......... 57%
- Academic enhancement ................ 47%
  (i.e., art/music/theater/dance, quiz bowl, science fair)
- Volunteer opportunities ................ 46%
  (i.e., senior centers, hospitals, public library, civic organizations)
- School-to-work .............................. 43%
- Recreation/parks commission ......... 25%
- Summer internships ....................... 19%
- Community garden ......................... 14%
- Economic development council ....... 14%
- Technology partner ...................... 11%
  (i.e., donate hardware, software, installation, training)
- Other ............................................. 2%

Use citizen advisory committees:
- Yes .............................................. 20%
- No ............................................. 80%

District website lists a general email address for public inquiries or comments to be submitted to the full board, in addition to listing individual school director email addresses:
- Yes .............................................. 60%
- No ............................................. 40%

Percentage of boards providing internet-enabled devices to board members:
- 66%
- 34%
Student Representation

Board provides structure for student representation in board operations:
Yes .............................................. 60%
No ............................................... 40%

Value of the student representation is:
Highly satisfactory ....................... 59%
Satisfactory ................................. 36%
Less than satisfactory ................... 5%

Number of students:
One ............................................. 28%
Two ............................................. 50%
Three ......................................... 7%
Four ............................................. 8%
Five or more............................... 7%

Student participation is for:
Seniors only ................................. 20%
Juniors and seniors ...................... 45%
Unrestricted ................................. 33%
Other ............................................. 2%

Student selection:
From student council .................... 34%
By principal or other administrator .. 50%
By students .................................... 6%
By teachers or other
  faculty personnel ......................... 5%
By board or board committee ........ 3%
Other ............................................. 2%

Student representation practices in operation for:
Less than 2 years ............................ 1%
Two to 5 years ............................... 20%
Six to 10 years .............................. 22%
Eleven to 15 years ....................... 18%
Sixteen years or more ................. 39%

Student representation provides for members of student body to:
Regularly participate in sunshine school board meetings
  (not executive sessions) ............... 60%
Regularly report at all sunshine meetings ............................ 32%
Participate occasionally as
  deemed necessary ........................ 6%
Other ............................................. 2%