



Engage | Learn | Improve

School District of Menomonee Falls Board Candidate Information

What do School Board Members Do?

The focus on service to the community is significant with the roles of a school board member. Skill and background will vary among the members of the board; yet, the focus will be on educating every child well and preparing the children of the community for the demands of their futures. Public schools are legally responsible for educating each child to a high level of performance with equal access regardless of need. In order to give the best service to the community of Menomonee Falls, the board members develop skills and knowledge in a variety of areas. Service to a public school board is nonpartisan. The focus for the board service is not on political affiliation; rather, the focus is in sound decision making for a major community resource in preparing the children and the future workforce for the demands of a rapidly changing job market and economy.

The position as a board member involves the following:

Policy-Making: The board policy committee is responsible for drafting and advancing the policies to the full board for consideration. A major function of any school board is to develop and adopt policies regarding how the system will operate. Policies are based on the vision for the school district and should cover every aspect of operations. These include employment, administration of student services, educational programming, instruction, facilities, and finance and support services. The board evaluated implementation through the accountability procedures and continuous improvement process established. Policies are reviewed and updated regularly, and a 5-year review cycle is sustained. Policies legally mandated must be monitored and permissive policies established based on what best guides decision making based on community vision for quality.

Hiring: The full board is responsible for recruiting, hiring, and evaluating the performance of the superintendent of schools to carry out policy and manage the system.

Planning, goal setting, and continuous improvement: Each board member will engage in strategic planning for the schools' system. Each board committee will review the priorities and the progress made in specific areas. The board and leadership team must establish a shared community vision for the district and translate that vision into long and short-range goals that are measurable. The Baldrige questions for continuous improvement and excellence are used to guide our strategic planning process and our accountability process. The critical target must ensure students and staff meet the accountability and learning goals set for the district by the state and the nation. Each area of operations must also demonstrate continuous improvement and effective operations. The depth of programs offered should prepare students for the changing market demands and strong post-secondary transitions as well as the values of the community for the range of programs offered as co-curricular activities.

Baldrige Framework and Categories for Continuous Improvement Planning

The core values in the Baldrige educational criteria for performance excellence are related to the following concepts:

- Visionary Leadership
- Student-centered excellence
- Organizational and personal learning
- Valuing workforce members and partners
- Agility in decision making and organizational vision
- Focus on the future
- Managing innovation
- Management by fact
- Responsibility to the community and the impact on society
- Focus on results and creating value
- Systems thinking and perspective

US Department of Commerce, the American Society for Quality (ASQ), and the National Institute for standards and Technology promote innovation and industrial competitiveness by advancing ways to enhance economic health of our nation and quality programming for business, healthcare, and education. The standards set for continuous quality are rigorous. Those organizations that adopt the quality principals move beyond compliance to perform at a level of expectations beyond what would be typical. For more than 7 years, the focus has been to improve US competitiveness and further the pursuit of performance excellence.

The planning and framework for continuous improvement include a system perspective on quality practice for the following areas:

- Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Customer Focus
- Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management
- Workforce Focus
- Operations Focus
- Results

The School District of Menomonee Falls uses the framework for the Baldrige Criteria of Excellence as the guiding questions for our continuous improvement process. We are partnering with Waukesha County Technical College, the area Chamber of Commerce, Wisconsin forward, the Village of Menomonee Falls, and Froedtert Menomonee Falls Hospital in our commitment to organizational and systemic quality.

Board Instruction Committee: is directly responsible for monitoring student programming and services. Board instruction reviews instructional program improvement and legal compliance for programming.

Financial Resources and Facilities: Board finance Facility committee is directly responsible for working with the Director of finance and the business office in monitoring the fiscal health of the district and the fiscal requirements set by the law. Long-range and short-range planning will include all areas of operations and major facility planning. In consultation with the superintendent and the leadership team, the full board is responsible for the approval and adoption of an annual budget. The budget should reflect sound long-range planning for all areas of programming and operations. The ability to achieve the goals set and sustain continuous improvement will depend on the alignment of resources to the priorities set for the system.

Staffing and evaluation: Board Personnel Committee is directly responsible for working with the Human Resource Department to establish the policies for recruitment, hiring, evaluation, compensation, benefits, and sustaining procedures for employment practice that reflect state and federal requirements.

Students and Staff: The board does not manage the daily decisions that impact students of staff, but the board does set policies to guide the decision making. Policies must be viewed in light of the impact on all students' equal access to educational opportunities in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Board and school districts can be held responsible for discriminatory actions and can be subject to legal action. Therefore, holding the system accountable for ensuring the rights of every individual is important.

Communication: Effective two-way communication is important to maintain with the staff and members of the community. Communication should be both formal and informal.

Advocacy: Many children come to school with challenges outside of their control that impede their ability to learn. School board members serve as advocates for children and for the community as a whole as they ensure each student is prepared will to transition to the community as a member of the workforce, future taxpayer, and future citizen.

Other board activities include but are not limited to:

- Establishing procedures for board operations
- Electing board officers
- Committee Service (typically each board member serves on two committees)
- Approving school Calendar
- Retaining legal services
- Setting strategy and coordinating litigation decisions when a system is involved in a lawsuit
- Establishing and maintaining effective relationships among board and staff
- Self-evaluation of the board
- Establishing and maintaining an effective relationship among the community, Village Leaders, Legislators, Etc....
- Establishing procedures

Board Ethics (National Board Association)

- Base Decisions on available facts; refuse to surrender judgment to individuals or special interests
- Take no private action that will compromise the system, or you will be individually and legally responsible for your individual actions
- Support and protect the civil and human rights of all members of the school community
- Respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged
- Keep an open mind so that you can accept the evaluation of new information and concepts
- Listen objectively to feedback and constructive criticism
- Know the difference between influence and persuasion
- Maintain a sense of humor you will need it
- Learn and practice the arts of listening and compromise
- Do not attempt to avoid conflict for the sake of re-election
- Share responsibility for all Board decisions regardless of how you voted
- Strive for effective teamwork
- Do not undermine the authority of the leadership team or micro-manage their areas of responsibility if your focus is developing a strong system

School Board Orientation Topics

- Structure for regular meetings
 - Two meetings are scheduled per month for the formal school board meeting
 - Board members also serve on two committees per month
 - “typical” Meeting Obligations
 - Work sessions
 - Community roundtables
 - Closed Sessions
 - Hearings or expulsions
- Open Records Laws
 - Quorum of the board
 - Posting Obligations
 - Walking Quorum
 - Email obligations of the board and Open Records Laws
- Strategic Focus
 - Teaching and Learning
 - Students with special needs
 - Technology, state accountability, student assessment, staff & school accountability
 - Human resources
 - Finance and Facilities
- Board self-reflection
- Other topics or questions

Frequently asked questions for board candidate:

- **Can I change my mind?**
 - Taking out papers is not a final decision
 - Once you “declare candidacy” in writing, your name will be on the ballot even if you change your mind. That cannot be altered and your contact information does become public record for the media.

- **How many meetings will I need to attend per month?**
 - Typically two board meetings and two committee meetings per month. Board members will also typically participate in school events throughout the year. Special work sessions and hearing are held as needed but can and have occurred monthly in addition to the other meetings.

- **How are board committees assigned and officers selected?**
 - Officers are selected typically at the first meeting in May.
 - Each member of the board will identify the committee of interest. The board president has the responsibility to make the final committee assignments.
 - No committee may have more than three board members seated as members, or it will create a quorum of the board.
 - Board members will serve typically on 2 committees
 - Board members may attend any committee meeting, whether they are formal members or not. They cannot participate in any “vote” however until it goes to the board table as again it would create quorum of the board.

- **How do I access Board Policies?**
 - Board policies are posted on the website. The focus for the policy committee is to review, and update policies on a 5-year cycle. This is the beginning point for this process.

- **What do I need to know about the Open Meetings Laws?**
 - All board meetings and committee meetings are subject to the open meetings laws. No individual board member can speak on behalf of the board as a whole. And, other than the laws specifically established for closed session subjects, all board decisions need to be made in a public session.
 - Emails are subject to open records. Use the district email system for all board work. Individual email accounts can be subject to open records, and board members are then individually responsible for laws pertaining to custodial records and possible seizure of home computer equipment in the case of a complaint.
 - All committee and board meetings are required to be publically posted.

- **Who is allowed to speak at meetings, and when can they speak?**

- Residents of the community are allowed to address the board during the public engagement portion of the board meeting. The individual may elect to speak after the item is discussed on the agenda or to give their input at the beginning of the meeting.
- **As an individual board member, how should we handle public complaints or individual contacts?**
 - Remain objective, listen, and remember as one board member, no one can speak on behalf of the board as a whole. Your position does reflect a governing body, not individual viewpoints. Individual board members have no public authority.
 - The media key contact is the Board President and the superintendent. Legal talking points will be framed by the legal counsel as needed. Any situation involving student discipline, staff discipline, contract, etc.... are subject to closed session rules and should not be discussed publically.
- **What information of mine is a public record?**
 - As a public official, your name, phone number, and address will be public record. Remember again to use the district email account only for all work of the board. On occasion individuals will try and approach board members at their homes. This is not a practice you will want to encourage for the privacy and safety of your family.
- **What happens if I cannot make a meeting?**
 - Board members are responsible for safeguarding the dates of the meeting and committee meetings; there are times that can create occasional conflict, however. The board member needs to notify the board president and the executive assistant of the superintendent if they know they have a conflict. The board cannot meet without a quorum of the board.
- **What is the role of the committee versus the full board?**
 - The detailed work is the role of the committees. The committees will examine issues fully, and when the items are prepared for full board discussion, the committee will advance the item for the discussion and action sequence, typically over two regular board meetings.
 - Topics will typically be advanced for discussion at one board meeting, and then at a subsequent board meeting the item will be considered for action.
- **When do individual board members speak at a board meeting?**
 - The committee chairs will give an update to the full board at each board meeting regarding their committee reports
 - The Board President is responsible for the meeting operations.
 - When an item is moved and seconded for discussion, individual board members may then participate in the discussion.
 - Board members will typically work to advance topics to a committee level first to complete the appropriate background work on a topic prior to any topic advancing to the full board for discussion.

- Items discussed may go back to the committee if additional work is requested by a majority of the board members.

- The leadership team and the full board work hard to honor the “no surprises” practice of behavior. The leaders working with each board committee focus on keeping the board member up to date on key issues and not surprising the board members with information at the board table in the same partnership. The board member has called the leadership chairs for additional background if they have questions without surprising the administrator at board meetings with concerns they know they have in advance of the meeting.

- The focus is on sustain a healthy working relationship between the members of the board and among the leaders of the system. Disagreement on individual topics will be natural, but the focus is on sustaining a professional working relationship in service to our community.