

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ's

How is the Board of Education selected?

Members are elected to three year terms by the local voters. School board elections are in November. Board members elected in November will be sworn in and take their seats at the Reorganization Meeting in January.

Requirements to run for Board member include:

- Be able to read and write
- Hold U.S. citizenship and one year residency in the school district
- Have no interest in any contract with, or claim against the Board
- Not hold office as mayor or member of the municipal government body
- Be registered to vote in the district

What are the major functions of the Board of Education?

The Board of Education does not “run” the West Orange Public Schools. The Superintendent runs the schools. The Board’s job is to ensure that the schools are well run. The Board is an elected, unpaid group of 5 citizens who act as a single body to set policy and make decisions on educational, financial and personnel matters for the West Orange Public Schools on behalf of all residents. While the Board is legally responsible for school programs and operations, it delegates authority for the district’s daily operations to the Superintendent of Schools. Individual Board members may bring any question, concern or suggestion to a Board Committee or full Board for discussion, but no action can be taken without Board approval by majority vote. Individual Board members do not exercise authority over or direct staff. Following are the most important functions of the Board:

- Setting and maintaining policies that define the district’s value and expectations
- Representing the community’s priorities and educational philosophy
- Approving the annual school budget
- Formulating Board and District Goals as well as supporting and implementing the district’s 5 Year Strategic Plan
- Hiring and evaluating the Superintendent on an annual basis

What are Board member Roles?

According to the New Jersey School Board Association, the responsibilities of a School Board include the responsibilities outlined below:

- Keep the overall mission of the school district in focus and satisfy itself that the objectives of the various parts of the school district are in harmony with the mission.
- Approve and periodically revise long range plans for the district.
- Oversee the district’s programs to ensure that objectives are being achieved in the most effective manner possible.
- Communicate the goals and performance of the district to its community members.
- Work closely and interactively with the Superintendent and Business Administrator .

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- Establish such broad policies governing the school district as are necessary to cover continuing or recurrent situations in which consistency of action is desirable.
- Assure itself and the public that the basic legal and ethical responsibilities of board members and district personnel are fulfilled.
- Accept responsibility for securing and providing oversight for allocating adequate financial resources appropriately.
- Assure itself that the school district is effectively integrated with its community and the external institutions to which it should be related.
- Continuously appraise itself and periodically devote time to analyzing its own performance in order to develop corrective action plans for board development and improvement.
- Individual board members are appointed to participate on the following committees: Negotiations, Legislative, Policy, and Public Relations.
- The board also has liaisons to the following : WO Town Council and the Essex County School Boards Association

What is the Superintendent's Role?

- Serve as the chief executive officer, professional planner and educational advisor on all matters.
- Remain loyal to the board and faithfully implements its decisions and policies.
- Keep the board fully and accurately informed about school programs, problems and progress.
- Interpret the needs of the school system and make professional recommendations on all problems and issues considered by the board.
- Devote a large share of time to the management of instruction, be alert to advances and improvements in educational programs, and be prepared to recommend initiatives to the board.
- Lead in the development and operations of an adequate program of school-community relations, and participate in community activities to stay visible and accessible.
- Exhibit high standards in recommending all candidates for appointment and promotion. Be a strong proponent for both effective staff supervision and a productive staff development program.
- Develop and present for consideration an annual budget that is designed to serve the needs of the school system. Establish and manage the financial operations of the school district.
- Encourage the board to evaluate progress of the district toward stated goals and objectives; participate in the board self-evaluation as a member of the team.

What Happens at Board of Education Meetings?

At regular public meetings, which occur twice a month and generally on the 2nd and 4th Monday, the board discusses and takes official action on school business, policy and confirms personnel changes/appointments recommended by the superintendent.

The board also has special meetings which can be for board training, town halls or workshops.

At every public meeting of the board, there are two opportunities for the public to address the board. One opportunity is designated for questions on agenda items only and comes prior to the board business and the second opportunity is designated for agenda and non agenda items and follows board business.

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Where and when can upcoming agendas be found?

Board of Education agendas are available on the District website on Friday afternoon prior to a Monday meeting or on the day before a special meeting. Agendas are also available in print at in person meetings. All meetings are announced on the district website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages.

Where can minutes from prior meetings be found?

Minutes of public Board meetings are available on the District website. Board minutes are presented for approval at subsequent board meetings, in order to be voted into the public record.

What happens when the Board goes into the Executive Session ?

The Board is allowed to meet in closed Executive Session prior to or at the end of a regular public meeting. In accordance with the NJ Open Public Meetings Act or the Sunshine Law, closed Executive Sessions are not open to the public. Only the following topics may be discussed during closed Executive Sessions:

Personnel issues	Items excluded by statute
Collective bargaining agreements	HIB Hearings
Protected items by attorney-client privilege	
Matters confidential by law	
Pending or anticipated litigation	
Protecting public safety	
Purchase or lease of real property	

What are the best ways to contact the Board?

The best way to communicate with the board as a whole, is to attend a regular public meeting and voice your opinions and thoughts during one of the public comments periods. You may also write a letter to the Board President, at 179 Eagle Rock Ave., West Orange, NJ 07052, or you may email the Board President and/or individual board members. (click below for email addresses)

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Eric Stevenson, Board Member	estevenson@westorangeschools.org
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